

GRADPLANHQ · TEACHING & LEARNING / EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING BRIEF

Help More Faculty Implement Applied Learning Without Building Everything From Scratch

A Teaching & Learning / Experiential Learning Brief for Service-Learning,
Experiential Learning, and Community-Engaged Practice

The assignment ends. The proof doesn't.

**Students do the work. Faculty guide the learning. GradPlanHQ provides the
partnership structure.**

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge isn't belief. It's implementation.

Institutions already encourage faculty to use Service-Learning, community-engaged learning, applied projects, capstones, undergraduate research, and other high-impact practices. The challenge is helping more faculty implement these experiences consistently within the realities of teaching, assessment, partner coordination, student supervision, course scheduling, and limited time. Students gain Proof tied to learning. Faculty gain an easier way to bring applied learning into the courses they already teach.

Most institutions already have the assets

- Faculty expertise
- Service-Learning processes
- Community Engagement offices
- Experiential-learning initiatives
- Career Services
- Courses and capstones
- Students who want meaningful work
- Communities with real needs

Where support is often needed

- Identify an appropriate community need
- Find a reliable partner
- Define a manageable project
- Connect the project to learning outcomes
- Coordinate student progress
- Build reflection into the experience
- Capture student artifacts
- Document participation and outcomes

Nearly 90% of employers say they look for evidence of a student's ability to solve problems when reviewing resumes.¹

The opportunity is not to convince faculty to care more. The opportunity is to make participation easier to implement.

1. NACE, *Job Outlook 2025* (Nov. 2024).

THE URGENCY

Why this matters now

Not every student will secure an internship, and students cannot wait until junior or senior year to begin building meaningful experience.

Roughly four in ten currently enrolled bachelor's students have completed an internship.²

Students need additional ways to build credible Experience. Volunteering, Service-Learning, community-engaged learning, and Project-Based Learning already provide familiar pathways for meaningful contribution, and their community and civic value remains the reason they exist. What has changed is what students need to make visible. With entry-level hiring expectations shifting and AI-assisted applications making many resumes sound alike, students increasingly need to explain and demonstrate what they practiced, what they contributed, what they produced, what changed, what they learned, and who can verify the work.

From participation to capability

- **Participation** — “I volunteered 30 hours at an animal shelter.”
- **Demonstrated capability** — “I organized an adoption event, coordinated volunteers, created outreach materials, and can show the results.”

Both students served. The second can show what the service built. Participation creates Experience. Artifacts, outcomes, reflection, and verification help turn that Experience into Proof. The people involved can become Relationships. Documenting and sharing the contribution creates Visibility. Repeating the process builds Career Momentum.

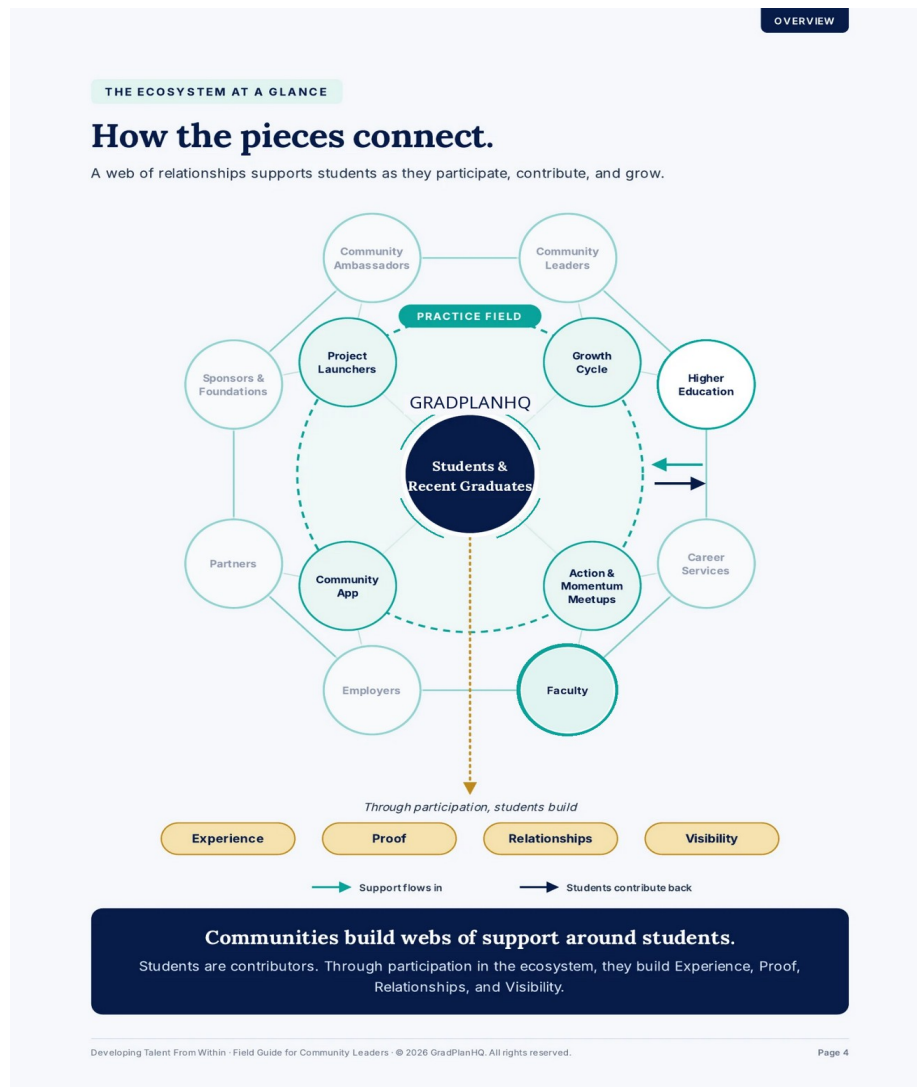
Teaching & Learning leaders are positioned to help more faculty offer applied, course-connected experiences without each faculty member building the structure alone. They can help faculty make the value of that work easier for students to recognize, capture, and carry forward, so students leave with Experience, Proof, Relationships, and Visibility that continue creating value after the semester ends.

Hours record participation. Proof communicates what a student practiced, produced, learned, and contributed.

2. Gallup, “Four in 10 College Students Have Had Internship Experience” (Aug. 16, 2023).

WHERE TEACHING & LEARNING FITS

Distinct roles. Connected support.



Faculty — Courses, capstones, and projects become starting points students can carry forward as **Proof**.

Teaching & Learning leaders connect institutional priorities with faculty practice.

HOW GRADPLANHQ HELPS

Clear roles. A repeatable term.

The partnership works because responsibilities remain clear. Faculty retain academic authority, students own the work, and GradPlanHQ supplies the implementation structure.

- **Faculty provide** — Course context, learning outcomes, academic expectations, project approval, guidance, grading, and appropriate ethical and academic oversight.
- **GradPlanHQ provides** — Community-partner structure, project framing support, student project briefs, scheduled working sessions, scope and progress support, Growth Cycle support for reflecting on and capturing Proof, proof-artifact guidance, and a term-end participation summary.
- **Students provide** — The work, participation, collaboration, reflection, deliverables, and proof of contribution.

How the term runs

1. **Planning Session** — Clarify the community need, learning outcomes, project scope, student deliverable, reflection expectations, evaluation approach, and reporting fields.
2. **Kickoff** — Introduce the community need, project goal, intended audience, strategy, available student assets, and proof students should capture.
3. **Midpoint** — Review work in progress and address scope, coordination, roadblocks, stakeholder needs, proof collection, and next actions.
4. **Showcase and Reflection** — Students present results and leave with a completed deliverable, a proof artifact, reflection on learning, and a clearer professional story.

TWO WAYS FACULTY CAN BEGIN

Faculty don't have to start from a blank page.

1. **Student-Initiated: Framework Discovery → Project Brief → Faculty Approval** — Students connect a course concept to a project, complete most of the planning, and arrive with a printable proposal. The faculty member decides whether it fits the course.
2. **Faculty-Led: Faculty Project Planner → Service-Learning Project Bank → Adapt to the Course** — Faculty begin with course outcomes and adapt an existing project structure instead of inventing one.

Either way, faculty keep approval, grading, expectations, and evaluation. Students can later use the results in resumes, interviews, LinkedIn, graduate school applications, and professional networking.

The assignment ends. The proof doesn't.

An easy first test

One faculty member. One course. One framework. One project. One visible result. It can work as extra credit, an assignment enhancement, an optional project, or an applied-learning activity: no course redesign, no campus-wide rollout, no new program.

Faculty-level detail is in the Faculty page and one-pager at gradplan.com/faculty, which Teaching & Learning leaders can forward directly.

WHAT LEADERS GAIN

A practical pathway for interested faculty

- A reliable project and community-partner structure
- A repeatable term structure
- More consistent project documentation
- More visible student artifacts
- Better proof of applied learning
- Information that may support HIP tracking

Reporting note: Term-end reporting fields, permissions, timing, and deliverables will be defined in each partnership agreement.

Planning starts before registration

Service-Learning and community-engaged courses are often planned months before students enroll. The partner conversation should begin while course schedules, learning outcomes, and project structures are still being developed.

One example: PeerTakes

PeerTakes, developed over seven semesters in a leadership Service-Learning course, is one Project Launcher example, not the whole model.

SUCCESS AND NEXT STEP

What Success May Look Like

- More faculty able to offer meaningful applied projects
- More students participating in high-impact experiences
- Stronger alignment between projects and course learning
- More student proof artifacts
- More consistent term-end documentation
- A clearer pathway for testing and expansion

Success is not simply adding another activity to a course. Success is helping students carry valuable learning beyond the final grade.

Resources to share: Faculty page and one-pager · Higher Education Brief · Sample Term-End Summary (a fictional demonstration of one proposed reporting format; not results achieved by GradPlanHQ or a partner institution).

Start With One Course

A Teaching & Learning leader may begin with:

- One interested faculty member
- One course
- One project
- One planning conversation

Start small. Expand what works.

START A TEACHING & LEARNING CONVERSATION

www.gradplan.com · highered@gradplan.com

Founder: Kim Scott

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