**The State University *of* New York  
 Applied Learning Plan**



**Executive Overview**

* **All SUNY campuses have an Applied Learning Team led by collaborative groups of faculty, professional staff, administrators and students**
* **Every SUNY student has the opportunity to engage in a campus-approved applied learning activity before they graduate**
* **Campus structure for applied learning is collaborative and usually includes faculty support, discipline-specific student supports, and office-based supports.**
* **Individual faculty members support students in the formation and execution of approved applied learning activities, and formal programs that include applied learning are available to students across campus.**
* **Most approved applied learning activities inventoried were courses or course sections embedded into curriculum, and 37 campuses noted that they offer students co-curricular or non-credit activities.**
* **In total, campuses currently offer 9,473 approved applied learning opportunities to SUNY’s 460,000 students. This number represents opportunities that are available to multiple students, such as courses and campus-wide programs.**
* **Based on campus submissions, 40% of all registered programs in SUNY currently require approved applied learning experiences.**
* **Almost all campuses reported that applied learning activities will be tracked at the course level within their student information system, with an identifier added to the individual course.**
* **Faculty review individual SUNY Applied Learning Plans at the campus level.**
* **Most campuses acknowledge faculty through print and digital publications and campus-level award ceremonies. Over 30 campuses present faculty with awards in the area of applied learning.**
* **Based on Campus Applied Learning Plans, nearly all campuses cited degree requirements and academic advisement as the primary means of informing students about applied learning opportunities.**
* **Campuses utilize orientation, open house, fairs, clubs, flyers, social media posts and databases to alert students about approved applied learning opportunities.**
* **Nearly all campuses report that student grievances are typically handled through a campus grievance process as outlined in college policy/student handbooks.**
* **We will continue to build campus plans over the course of the next year.**

1. **Introduction**

In Governor Cuomo’s 2015 Opportunity Agenda (Executive Budget 2015-16), he called on SUNY to require experiential learning of all students to receive a degree. After negotiations, the following language was included as part of the final New York State 2015-16 budget:

Notwithstanding any law, rule or regulation to the contrary, the state university of New York board of trustees shall pass a resolutions by June first, two thousand fifteen, to develop a plan to make available to students enrolled in an academic program of the state university of New York beginning in the two thousand sixteen—two thousand seventeen academic year, approved experiential or applied learning activities.

Such experiential or applied learning activities may include completion activities related to students’ program of study, including, but not limited to, service-learning activities completed as part of a course, paid or unpaid internships, faculty-supervised undergraduate research in journals or similar publications, production or performance of creative works, and iterative “co-op” partnerships that explicitly link the curricula to a temporary, paid position in industry or the public sector.

Such plan, to be completed by June first, two thousand sixteen, shall be developed in consultation with the university faculty senate, the faculty council of community colleges, the SUNY student assembly, and other stakeholders.

Such plan shall define approved experiential or applied learning activities, methods of faculty oversight and assessment, responsibilities of the business, corporate, non-profit or other entities hosting students, and include a requirement for collecting and reporting data associated with such experiential or applied learning activities.

Such plan shall have each college examine the feasibility of including such experiential or applied learning activities as a degree requirement.

Such college shall examine its ability to administer and provide such opportunities to students; the local community’s capacity to support such experiential or applied learning activities; the impact such a requirement would have on the local workforce, if any; potential for such a requirement to enhance learning outcomes for students; and whether adding such a requirement would cause potential delays in graduation for students.

In response, on May 6th, 2015, the SUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution stating that SUNY shall develop a plan to make approved applied learning activities available to SUNY students enrolled in the 2016-17 academic year, and that this plan will include individual campus plans.

To coordinate this significant undertaking, System Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Alexander N. Cartwright established a representative Applied Learning Steering Committee. The Committee is co-chaired by Peter Knuepfer, SUNY Trustee and President of the University Faculty Senate, and Christy Fogal, Vice President of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges. The Committee includes representatives from the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the Student Assembly, the SUNY Distinguished Academy, and is ably assisted by Ms. Elise Newkirk-Kotfila, SUNY’s Director of Applied Learning.

This Steering Committee has worked tirelessly since May 2015, in monthly meetings and a day-long retreat, to develop specific guidance to campuses about how to proceed in developing applied learning plans. The guidance proposed plan components, included a timeline of expected activities, and importantly, defined criteria as to what would be considered an approved applied learning activity for the purposes of SUNY’s official plan. The Steering Committee’s work was sent out in draft for campus comment and revised in response.

The final guidance breaks campus plans down into seven parts, the first four of which were to be completed in 2015-16, with the last three to follow in 2016-17:

1. Overview of Applied/Experiential Activities,
2. Campus Plan for Data Collection and Reporting,
3. Campus Plan for Faculty Engagement,
4. Campus Plan for Student Engagement,
5. Regional Feasibility Study,
6. Campus Collaboration Plan, and
7. Campus determination of feasibility for an Applied Learning Graduation Requirement.

The Applied Learning Steering Committee combined campus-level quality assurance standards and principles of good practice from the National Society of Experiential Education to form criteria for determining approved applied learning activities:

* The Activity is Structured, Intentional and Authentic - All parties must be clear from the outset why this specific experience was chosen as the approach to the learning, and intentional about defining the knowledge that should result from it. The activity needs to be a structured experience with a formal process, which includes a course syllabus or learning contract between parties (students, faculty, and other supervisors as appropriate) and/or defined assessable learning outcomes. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined. Faculty and site supervisors (as appropriate) are expected to take the lead in ensuring the quality of both the learning experience and the work produced. The applied learning activity should have hands-on and/or real world context and should be designed in concert with those who will be affected by or use it, or in response to a real situation.
* The Activity Requires Preparation, Orientation and Training - Participants and mentors must ensure that students enter the experience with sufficient background and foundational education, as well as a plan to support a successful outcome. The training and plan should include learning expectations and be referred to (and potentially updated) on an ongoing basis by all parties.
* The Activity Must Include Monitoring and Continuous Improvement - Applied learning activities are dynamic. Therefore all facilitators in the activity share responsibility for ensuring that the experience, as it is in process, continues to provide a rich learning environment and is meeting learning outcomes. Activities include a defined and flexible method for feedback related to learning outcomes and quality performance for all parties.
* The Activity Requires Structured Reflection and Acknowledgment - There must be a structured opportunity for students to self-assess, analyze, and examine constructs/skills/insights from their experience and to evaluate the outcomes. Reflection should demonstrate the relevance of the experience to student learning, including the student’s articulation of how the experience draws on and improves this learning and meets defined objectives. Post-experience learning should include a formal debriefing. All facilitators and students engaged in the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment.
* The Activity Must be Assessed and Evaluated - Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented with regard to initial intentions and quality outcomes. Students must receive appropriate and timely feedback from all facilitators.

Using these criteria to guide their plans, campuses have inventoried all approved applied learning opportunities currently offered to students, including which academic programs currently require their activities. These inventories were submitted to the Applied Learning Steering Committee in February 2016.

Each campus has an Applied Learning Team representative of faculty, professional staff and campus administrators. Campus Applied Learning Teams engage not only with faculty in disciplines that have traditionally supported hands-on learning, but also with faculty governance representatives

Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders have been identified in the guidance and supportive documents developed by the Applied Learning Steering Committee and disseminated to campuses by Provost Cartwright.

The Applied Learning Steering Committee, University Faculty Senate, Faculty Council of Community Colleges and SUNY Student Assembly have also formally detailed aspects of faculty and student responsibility when offering and overseeing approved applied learning experiences. Furthermore, Campus Applied Learning Plans include local-level information about faculty engagement, student engagement and collaboration with partners and host entities.

On April 15th of this year, campuses submitted detailed narratives describing their plans for: data collection and analysis; current and planned faculty engagement in applied learning, paying particular attention to extensive faculty oversight and assessment responsibilities as well as current and proposed enhancements to the faculty supports available; and current and planned mechanisms for student engagement in applied learning opportunities, including identifying methods of informing students of opportunities and student responsibilities when pursuing applied learning.

It is also important to note that applied learning is a key component of the SUNY Excels Performance Framework adopted by the Board of Trustees in January 2016 and the SUNY Completion Agenda. In 2015, theSUNY Completion Agenda was developed in an attempt to increase the number of degrees awarded by SUNY to 150,000 by 2025. Applied learning is one of the initiatives chosen to be a point of leverage for the Completion Agenda because of the positive student engagement and success outcomes associated with applied activities.

SUNY campuses also included language about their applied learning work in their Performance Improvement Plans - the documents in which they set forth their SUNY Excels goals in the areas of: access, completion, success, inquiry and engagement. Each campus worked through 2015 to develop comprehensive Performance Improvement Plans that included a narrative about their strategic priorities as well as data commitments on a standard series of metrics. Approved Performance Improvement Plans for all SUNY campuses were required for receipt of Investment and Performance Fund awards for state-operated campuses and for receipt of Jobs Linkage funding for community colleges. Two metrics within the Performance Improvement Plans are Applied Learning and Civic Engagement. Notably, progress in meeting plan goals will be part of the evaluation of each SUNY state-op campus president.

SUNY has leveraged the $18 million Performance and Investment Fund to take various projects to scale across campuses. Campuses competitively applied for funding and many of the projects that were funded included applied learning as a component of expected campus work. The Office of Applied Learning will monitor project progress and outcomes and disseminate project results across campuses.

1. **SUNY Applied Learning Plan**

A tremendous amount of work has been completed to date and while at this point we have met the legislative duty for June 1, 2016, more work is planned for the coming year. In short, of the seven components SUNY identified as critical to an effective applied learning plan, four have been completed to date. We are now able to say that every student will have available to them an applied learning experience in the 2016-17 academic year. However, there is more fine-tuning that needs to be done to ensure that campuses have strong plans to sustain and guide their work and that SUNY’s leadership role in this area continues. Furthermore, additional guidance to and work by the campuses remains to be completed on parts V – VII.

Here we review in more detail parts I – IV of the SUNY Applied Learning Plan (Appendices A and B of this report include campus plans from SUNY Broome Community College and Farmingdale State College):

**Part I: Overview of Applied/Experiential Activities**

Many campuses have included applied learning and high-impact practices as part of their strategic plans. All SUNY campuses have an Applied Learning Team led by collaborative groups of faculty, professional staff, administrators and students. Although team makeup and size varies by campus, teams generally include campus governance leaders, faculty from disciplines offering embedded applied learning experiences, and supportive administrators and professional staff in academic and student affairs. Offices of career services, study abroad, institutional research and alumni affairs are frequently represented.

Campus structure for applied learning is collaborative and includes support from faculty, discipline-specific student supports as well as office-based supports. Many campuses are moving toward a more centralized process for identifying and tracking applied learning, and a few campuses house physical central locations in the form of centers of civic engagement, community engagement, applied learning. Many individual faculty members support students in the formation and execution of approved applied learning activities. These activities are frequently represented as independent studies, capstone projects, or internships. Additionally, formal programs that include applied learning are available to students across campus. These may take the form of Honors programs, Study Abroad programs, Internship programs or other campus-based leadership programs. They are usually administered by a single staff person or through experiential or civic engagement offices when they exist on campuses. Most approved applied learning activities specifically identified in campus inventories are courses or course sections embedded into curriculum, and 37 campuses noted that they offer students co-curricular or non-credit activities.

In total, campuses currently offer 9,473 approved applied learning opportunities to SUNY’s 460,000 students. This number represents opportunities that are available to multiple students, such as courses and campus-wide programs. We can reasonably say that every SUNY student has the opportunity to engage in a campus-approved applied learning activity before they graduate.

Based on campus submissions, 40% of all registered programs in SUNY currently require approved applied learning experiences. Programs for teacher preparation, healthcare, performance art, professional and technical education and the sciences are all likely to require approved applied learning.

As a system of 64 anchor institutions, SUNY has a long history of engaging students in applied learning. SUNY’s community colleges have a long-standing tradition of offering engaged professional and technical education programs as pillars of their local communities. SUNY’s comprehensive colleges have long histories as normal schools and a commitment to civic education. SUNY’s agricultural and technical colleges frequently offer hands-on learning on campus and support advanced practica. SUNY’s doctoral granting and specialized campuses support excellence research/entrepreneurship programs as well as formal clinical placements. Opportunities for different types of applied learning can be found at every campus. The Office of Applied Learning has had and will continue to have monthly check-in calls with campus applied learning teams and develop a communications plan for sharing individual campus profiles and success stories.

**Part II: Data Collection and Reporting**

SUNY has now created and broadly vetted SUNY-wide definitions for all forms of applied learning, allowing related data to be captured in the System-wide SUNY Institutional Research Information System (SIRIS) or through other campus-identified submissions. These definitions have been included in the SIRIS Data Dictionary and are currently available for campuses to use. While previous data collection on applied learning had been done annually with a survey, the SUNY Applied Learning Plan calls for more specific information. On February 16th 2016, each campus provided the Applied Learning Steering Committee and Director of Applied Learning with a comprehensive list of every approved applied learning opportunity that is currently available to students at that campus. On April 15th 2016, campuses submitted detailed narratives describing plans for ensuring the accurate tagging and tracking of applied learning data to measure not only student and faculty engagement but also to compare such data to other institutional metrics like retention and graduation rates.

Many campuses have conducted an inventory of course and program data to determine a baseline of campus-approved applied learning opportunities and activities are being done by students, given SUNY’s criteria. Some campuses reported that the data collection process was being managed by programs or departments. Almost all campuses reported that applied learning activities will be tracked at the course level within their student information system (Banner, Argos, Colleague, PeopleSoft), with an identifier added to the individual course. This includes data for credit and non-credit-bearing courses. Many campuses cite that their activity-tagging will go deeper by specifying the type of approved applied learning activity (internship, research experience, co-curricular activities, practicum, study abroad, service, etc.), student information, enrollment, and hours. Furthermore, many campuses note that they will be submitting data through SIRIS, which will facilitate compiling SUNY-wide data. In addition to the remaining three parts of campus plans, each campus will submit student-level applied learning information to System Administration following the Spring 2017 semester, including the number of students that engaged in different types of approved applied learning activities during the 2016-17 academic year.

A number of campuses noted that they have implemented and continue to refine processes to document and review new and existing applied learning courses and sections to ensure that they meet the SUNY criteria noted above. Many campuses are developing plans to use the data collected (once all coding and tagging has been vetted) to inform institution-wide goals pertaining to graduation and retention rates. The Office of Applied Learning will compile campus plans and data reports to develop a baseline of all currently available approved applied learning activities on campus, including which types of applied learning occur most frequently. This information will be used to track long-term student outcomes for students who engaged in applied learning at SUNY compared with those who did not. Department of Labor wage data, first destination surveys and other tools will also be used to determine outcomes. The Office of Applied Learning will continue to support campuses in their data tagging and tracking efforts by engaging with Institutional Research, Registrar and other offices at the System Administration and campus levels and by hosting faculty and professional development workshops to consider the specific challenges in tracking applied learning and determining long-term student success outcomes.

**Part III. Faculty Engagement**

SUNY’s applied learning efforts unquestionably benefit from the expertise of faculty who have been ensuring experiential opportunities for their students for decades. Faculty review individual SUNY Applied Learning Plans at the campus level, and the SUNY-wide faculty governance structures have also had a hand in developing system-wide policy and supportive documents. All Campus Governance Leaders are copied on communications from SUNY System Administration and given the opportunity to edit documents as they are being formed by the Applied Learning Steering Committee, which also has faculty and student governance representation.

Notably, the University Faculty Senate produced a service-learning toolkit and internship guidebook in 2006-07, and as applied learning has become a focus for SUNY System Administration, both of those documents have now been updated. Additionally, the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges have passed resolutions detailing the faculty purview over curriculum in applied learning.

In applied learning, the faculty has ownership over course assessment, and practices include course evaluations, site visits, and individual student assessments. Most campuses have a solid process in place for the oversight and assessment of credit bearing applied learning courses (including, but not limited to, study abroad, internships, etc.).

There is inconsistency across campuses in how faculty are compensated for their oversight of applied learning experiences, but also among individual departments on campuses. There is the desire for a campus-wide policy on compensation. Not all campuses pay a stipend directly to faculty who are engaged, but many provide a stipend or grant application for professional development. Non-monetary supports also include regular trainings on high-impact practices and the development of a formal mentoring program where expert practitioners can guide those interested in developing and using applied learning in their courses.

Most campuses acknowledge faculty through print and digital publications and campus-level award ceremonies. Over 30 campuses present faculty with awards in the area of applied learning. Some noted that these awards are given out at special events to honor faculty. Additionally, some campuses are discussing adding faculty engagement in applied learning to existing promotion and reappointment policies.

The Office of Applied Learning and the Applied Learning Steering Committee are creating a program to support faculty and professional staff travel across campuses and will move forward with a focus on faculty recognition and professional development.

**Part IV. Student Engagement**

Based on Campus Applied Learning Plans, nearly all campuses cited degree requirements and academic advisement as the primary means of informing students about applied learning opportunities. Academic advisement is provided by both faculty advisors and campus advisors who support students in identifying and choosing applied learning activities that advance their degree completion and enhance their employment opportunities. Applied learning opportunities are communicated through the course requirements/options of specific programs and include portfolio projects, internships, research, practicum courses, and other department based programs. A few campuses have implemented a tagging/coding/key-word system in their catalogs to allow students to search for approved opportunities.

Campuses utilize orientation, open house, fairs, clubs, flyers, social media posts and databases to alert students about approved applied learning opportunities. Faculty and professional staff across campus also help students find opportunities, and many campuses are making plans to enhance their promotional efforts to help students better navigate their applied learning opportunity options. Nearly all campuses reported that student feedback is gathered campus wide through mid- and end-of-course evaluations at the faculty/department level, as well as informal, formative, on-going feedback gathered through site visits, reflection papers, supervisor evaluations, and student comments/discussions. In addition to these feedback mechanisms, student input about existing and new applied learning activities is gathered through discussions with student focus groups, student government representatives, and the inclusion of students on applied learning committees. Nearly all campuses reported that student grievances are typically handled through a campus grievance process as outlined in college policy/student handbooks.

The Office of Applied Learning will continue to focus on student engagement and outcomes in Applied Learning by hosting regional engagement meetings with all campuses to discuss common assessment tools and policies. Preliminary research has been done to determine student perceptions of applied learning and this research will continue. Additionally, individual student success stories will be shared on the Generation SUNY Blog and the Applied Learning website.

1. **Next Steps**

In May of 2017 campuses will report the number of students engaged in approved applied learning activities to System Administration and the remaining sections of Campus Applied Learning Plans will be collected:

**Part V. Feasibility Study**

Campus administrators and governance bodies will be asked to work together to examine the feasibility of including approved applied learning activities as a degree requirement, including examining the campus’ ability to administer and provide such opportunities to all students. This is different from providing opportunities (already identified)—this part will ask campuses to consider the impact of *requiring* that all students complete at least one applied-learning experience. Additionally, campuses will answer questions about the local community’s capacity to support activities, the impact a local requirement would have on the local workforce, and whether adding such a requirement would cause potential delays in graduation for students.

**Part VI. Collaboration Plan**

Similar to the faculty and student section of the Applied Learning Campus Plans, campuses will be asked to describe the various types of on and off-campus collaborators engaging in Applied Learning and their specific responsibilities as applied learning facilitators. Campuses will describe responsibilities of business/corporate, non-profit and other hosts/facilitators and describe the methods used to support intentional and reciprocal relationships on and off campus. They will be asked to list the offices or structures on campus currently supporting these relationships and to describe campus policies that ensure student support and safety in all approved applied learning activities.

**Part VII. Graduation Requirement**

Based on Parts I-VI of campus plans, each campus faculty governance body will decide whether or not to require an applied learning experience as part of a campus graduation requirement, including a list of the specific reasons for that campus decision. Finally each campus will describe their plan for sustaining their applied learning work.

At this time, campuses will also report on the number of students engaging in the approved applied learning activities noted, including the type of applied learning. The Office of Applied Learning and the Applied Learning Steering Committee will continue to support campuses with annual conferences, monthly check in calls, professional development and promotion of the initiative to state and national audiences. The Applied Learning Steering Committee will share specific guidance to campuses on the remaining parts of campus plans following the June Board of Trustees Meeting. An update will be made to the SUNY Board of Trustees following final submission of campus plans in May of 2017. Following the collection of student-level data the Office of Applied Learning will provide the Board of Trustees with a data brief.