



ELON
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR
Engaged
Learning

(Re)Examining Conditions for Meaningful Learning Experiences
2020-2022 Center for Engaged Learning Research Seminar

Year 1: July 5-10, 2020

Year 2: June 27-July 2, 2021

Year 3: June 26-July 1, 2022

Work by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), their affiliated scholars (e.g., Kuh, O'Donnell, Finley, Gonyea, Kinzie, etc.), and other researchers has focused higher education's attention on "[high-impact educational practices \(HIPs\)](#) that correlate with persistence, graduation rates, and potentially, academic achievement. Over the past decade, both institutional and multi-institutional research has examined additional outcomes of HIPs, including behavioral and attitudinal outcomes, critical thinking, civic engagement, intellectual curiosity, and improved communication strategies. Given these potential outcomes, institutions increasingly are exploring how to scale-up access to HIPs to more – and more diverse – students.

With the 2020-2022 Center for Engaged Learning Research Seminar, we wish to flip the focus from *outcomes of* to *conditions for* meaningful learning. HIPs are one category of meaningful learning experiences; how do we make learning experiences meaningful for all students? To explore this question, we invite applicants to focus on the conditions that facilitate high-impact educational practices and other meaningful learning experiences. While scholars could draw from any number of lists that describe what makes a learning experience high-impact, the 2020-2022 Research Seminar focuses on five conditions consistently identified as key characteristics for meaningful learning by researchers [across the Center's previous research seminars](#). Those five conditions are:

- Meaningful relationships, including substantive interaction with faculty/staff mentors and peers, and development of diverse networks;
- Connections to broader contexts, including practice in real-world applications of students' developing knowledge and skills;
- Frequent feedback on both work-in-progress and final products;
- Opportunities for reflection; and
- Integration of prior learning and experiences.

We invite applications from scholars affiliated with high-impact educational practices (e.g., first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, undergraduate research, etc.) and other engaged learning practices that have the potential to facilitate these conditions (e.g., on-campus employment, immersive learning experiences, etc.) to join a multi-institutional study of meaningful learning experiences.

<https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/cel-seminars/conditions-for-meaningful-learning/>

We anticipate that Year 1 of the study will focus on “What is?” (Hutchings, 2000), constructing a comprehensive, descriptive analysis of (high-impact) educational practices at 18-24 institutions. This analysis will enable participants to speak to how colleges and universities foster these conditions for meaningful learning, identifying both strategies specific to case study institutions and those shared by multiple participating colleges.

Year 2 then will move to examining “What works?” or “Visions of the possible” research questions (Hutchings, 2000) to explore strategies for scaling up access to these conditions so that more students can engage with – and more institutions can offer – meaningful learning experiences.

We particularly encourage applications from scholars at campuses with independent (e.g., undergraduate students over the age of 24, active duty military or veterans, students with legal dependents, etc.) and historically underrepresented minoritized student populations.

How to Apply

The review committee will select participants from a range of disciplines, institution types (e.g., research-intensive universities, liberal arts colleges, teaching institutions, etc.), and geographic locations to ensure variety in the seminar’s multi-institutional studies. The Center for Engaged Learning is committed to a diverse community of scholars across our programs and welcomes all applicants.

To apply, submit a completed application and abbreviated curriculum vita (CV, 4 pages maximum) **by January 6, 2020**. The [online application form](#) asks for the following information (limit each answer to 250 words or fewer):

- Which condition(s) for meaningful learning experiences above are you most interested in examining, and why? You may pose a sub-question or topic if appropriate, but please keep in mind that accepted participants will collaborate on developing *shared* research questions for their research seminar study.
- How does this topic fit with your existing scholarly/professional work or an anticipated trajectory for your scholarly/professional identity?
- What research methods do you have experience using?
- How do your research interests for this research seminar relate to your institution’s or organization’s priorities or programs?
- What kinds of expertise or connections do you bring to the study of meaningful learning experiences?

[More than one person per institution may apply](#), particularly if institutional representatives are interested in different research areas. Although CEL Seminar projects will be multi-institutional, applicants should not form these teams before they apply; CEL Seminar leaders will create initial teams based on applicants’ information.

A committee will review applications, make selections, and notify all applicants by February 6, 2020.

Please direct questions about the 2020-2022 research seminar or the Center for Engaged Learning’s work to the Center’s Director, Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu; 336.278.5649).

<https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/cel-seminars/conditions-for-meaningful-learning/>