



VCU

Relevant, Experiential
and Applied Learning

&



Student
Opportunity
Center

Building an institution-wide
Experiential Learning Infrastructure

REAL TIMELINE

**Spring
2016**

**Fall
2016**

**Spring
2017**

**Fall
2018**

**Spring
2019**

**Fall
2019**



State of the University Address

"All students will have a real-world experience as part of their VCU education."
- President Rao



Steering Committee convenes

19 faculty and professional staff from the MPC and MCV campuses. "REAL" name adopted



VCU Making It REAL report published

Four REAL themes identified and 10 recommendations offered in steering committee report



REAL levels up

AVP for REAL hired, REAL Task Force convened, implementation plan drafted and started



REAL Opportunity Audit

Inventory of over 1,000 courses assessed through a REAL taxonomy. Course codes and pilot tracking mechanisms developed.



REAL Council, data dashboard created

Council of six work groups charged with advising REAL within key areas convenes, dashboard for data derived from inventory created, audit of co-curriculars begins

VCU Profile

- Founded in 1838 as the medical department of Hampden-Sydney College
- 1854: Becomes the Medical College of Virginia in 1854
- 1965: Report of the Wayne Commission calls for the founding of VCU as a unique and prescient model of higher education that will “confront on an intellectual and practical level the social environment which surrounds it”
- 1968: General Assembly merged MCV with the Richmond Professional Institute, which had been founded in 1917, to create Virginia Commonwealth University
- Today: Main and Health Sciences Campuses (22,000 + undergraduates, total enrollment 31, 076) and VCU Arts Qatar in Doha Qatar (328 UG, 14 Grad, 37 non-degree)



Defining REAL's Mission in 2020

VCU's REAL initiative ensures that **all VCU students** engage in transformative, career-building activities that connect classroom knowledge to real-world experience, that create novel approaches to complex problems, and that contribute actions that benefit our educational, professional, and civil communities.



The limits of what we know: Internships

- We have participation gaps — URM, Pell, and male students are not participating at the same rates as their majority peers in internships, as one example, taken for academic credit.
- We have information gaps — The good news is that student self-report data (NSSE and First Destination surveys) indicate a much higher participation rate in undergraduate internships and experiential learning generally occurring *outside* of academic coursework.
- We have some evidence that the gaps are closing — There has been a steady increase in the number of URM, Pell, and male students participating each year in internships.

REAL experiences include

- Internship
 - Co-operative education (Co-ops)
 - Practicums/clinical placements
 - Field experiences
- Project/performance-based learning
 - Capstone
 - Research
 - Independent Study
 - Interprofessional collaboration

← Workplace learning experiences

- Integrative learning
- Global Learning
- Labs
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Career exploration and development
- Service-Learning
- Civic learning and engagement
- Leadership education
- Living learning communities

Beginning in Fall 2019, through the REAL initiative VCU tracks student engagement in 18 types of experiential learning, four of which are within the category of workplace learning.

Next steps

- **Expand engagement of internal stakeholders and of business and industry leaders**
- **Establish student pathways and pipelines** through a career counseling model (Major Maps and Transfer Maps)
- **Target IT investments** to increase student access to employment, experiential learning activities, and employer engagement events and provide verifiable records of participation (Handshake, Student Opportunity Center, and Suitable)

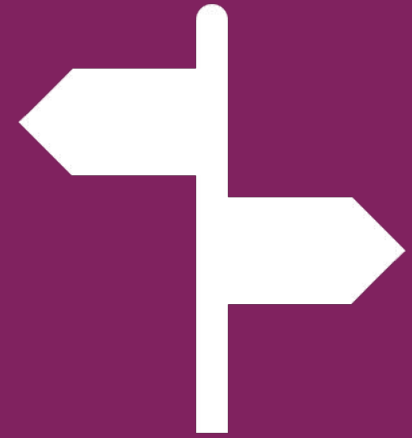
REAL is about connection

REAL has been integrated into a number of units and initiatives, including:

- Major Maps
- Career Services
- Service Learning
- Undergraduate Research
- Student Affairs

REAL is a common thread tying together many aspects of the VCU experience.





Key milestones

2018-2020



REAL Council founded



REAL taxonomy/classification system



Opportunity Audit inventory and [data dashboard](#)

REAL Council

- Standing committee that serves as advisory board and curriculum committee for REAL
- Made up of six work groups tasked with taking a deeper dive into specific focus areas



* SOC, or the Student Opportunity Center, platform provides students a clearinghouse of experiential learning activities and courses.

REAL taxonomy



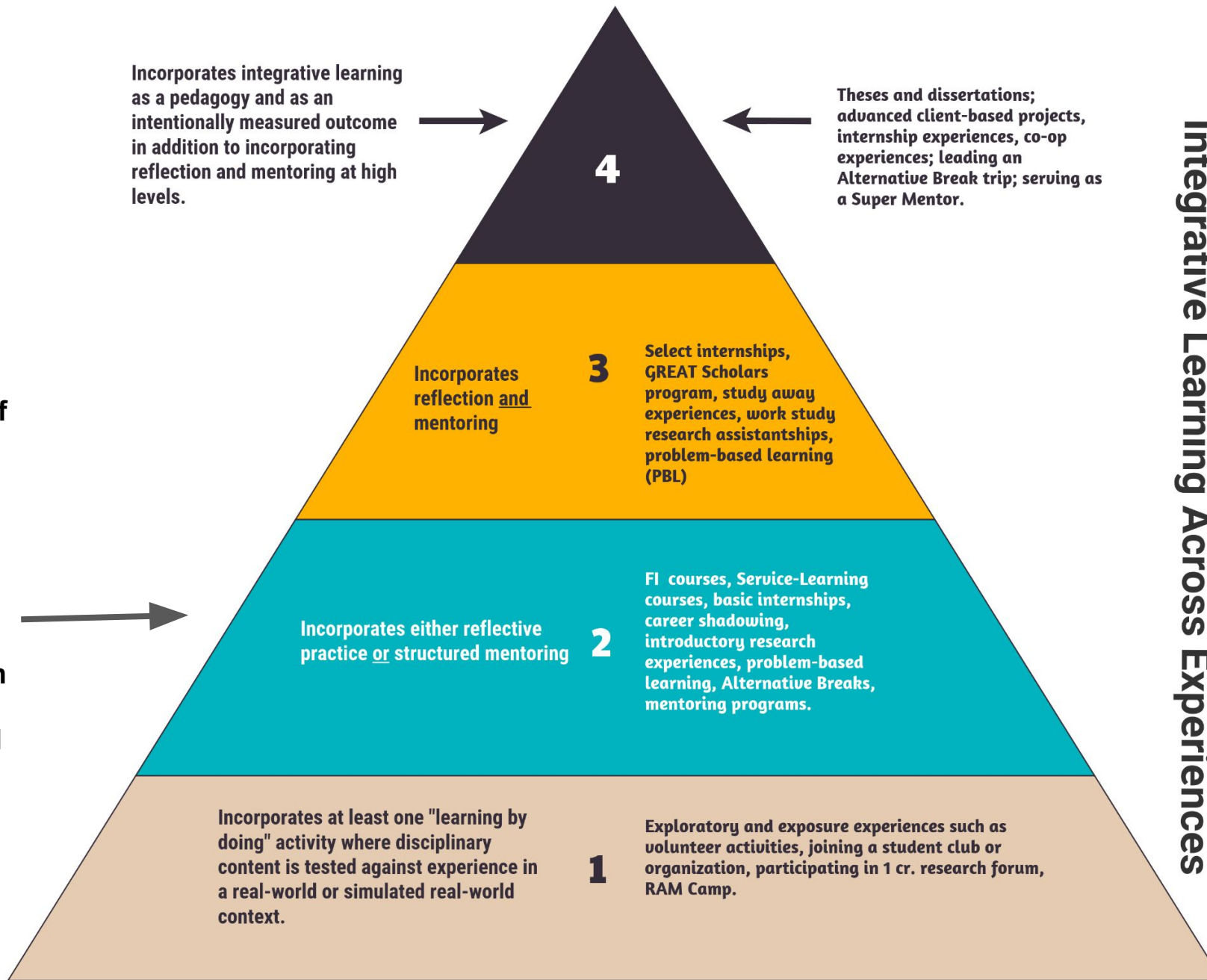
What traits define a **REAL activity at VCU?**

What **kind of activities count** as part of REAL?

How can we **classify, tag, and track REAL activities** in a meaningful way?

VCU REAL Taxonomic Levels

GOAL: Adoption of a REAL Requirement for the incoming class of 2021: All students must complete a REAL Level 2 or higher course occurring in the disciplines at the 300 or 400 level or an approved signature co-curricular experience.



Opportunity Audit inventory and dashboard



What REAL activities are **already happening in VCU curriculum?**

Which students have access to these activities, and **where are the gaps?**

Why this inventory matters

- A first step towards a comprehensive and holistic picture of experiential learning at VCU (credit and non-credit activities, curricular and co-curricular)
- Helps establish baselines against which we can measure growth because we can track information at the course/section and student participation levels.
- Helps us, over time, identify which student populations have access to experiential learning opportunities, and, more importantly, which do not



VCU's Implementation of SOC

Starting with the Vision: “What does VCU look like at 100% ?”

For Students: One-stop for REAL opportunities

For Faculty: Embedding and managing REAL opportunities in courses

For Administration: Centralized quality control to report REAL opportunities on an experiential transcript



VCU's Implementation of SOC

Phase 1: Mapping the Experiential Learning Ecosystem

-Configuring SOC:

- Communities (Honors, School of Pharmacy, etc)
- Categories (internship, undergraduate research, etc)
- Tags (Art, Biology, Chemistry, etc)

-Identifying and Integrating opportunity data-sources

- Internal tools (Handshake, GivePulse, TerraDotta, etc)
- External tools (HandsonRVA, Idealist, etc)

-Initial 'Experiential Opportunity Availability & Participation Report'

- 46 places students can find opportunities
- no one tools captures more than 12% of what is available
- 125+ places students report participation (LinkedIn, Github, Behance, Resumes from other sites)

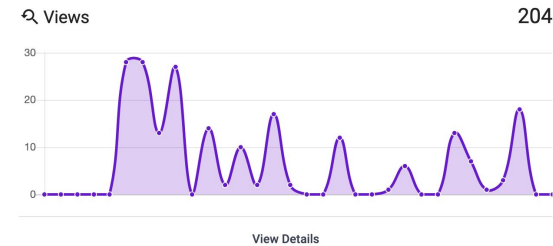
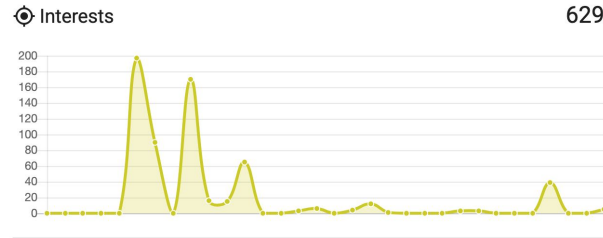
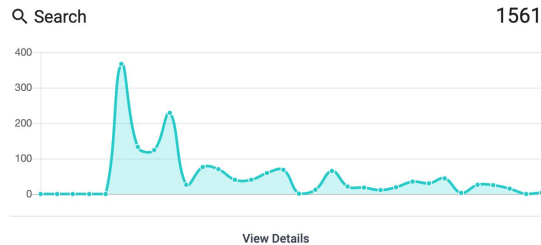
VCU's Implementation of SOC

Phase 2: Pilot & Optimize

- **Student Cohort:** Honors, Contemporary Arts, Aspire

420 of 1185 signed up & started using SOC (1/1-2/15)

Launch Methods: 1) eLaunch: Newsletter Announcement, LMS | 2) Misc: Advising Sessions, Events, Flyers



- **Faculty Cohort:** VCU Pharmacy, select Faculty champions

100 co-curricular opportunities being managed in SOC (1/1-2/15)

- **Admin Cohort:** VCU REAL - preparing 'REAL definitions' & 'level 1-4' tagging process

33 Admins of 26 Custom Communities identified

Custom analytics and administration for each community

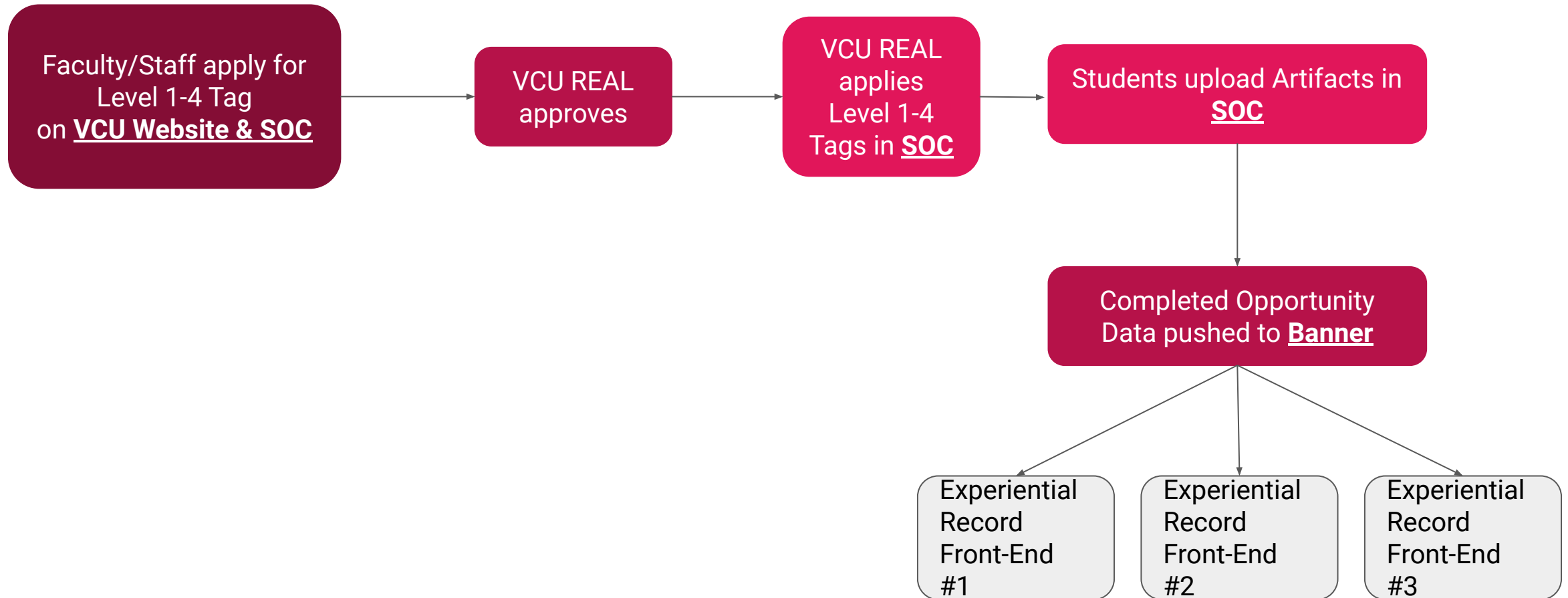
VCU's Implementation of SOC

Phase 3: Scaling up to 100% (Fall 2020+)

Strategically growing through centralized marketing and grassroots culture

- For Students:** One-stop for all REAL opportunities
- For Faculty:** Embedding REAL into the curriculum
- For Admins:**
 - Levels 1-4 tagging
 - Centralizing campus REAL participation data & uncovering external data-sources
 - Finding and targeting the “Experiential Learning Deserts”
 - Pushing verified participation to the Experiential/Co-Curricular Transcript

End-to-End REAL-SOC Process





Student
Opportunity
Center

our mission



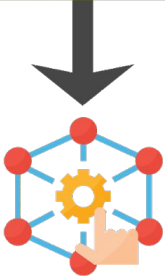
GETTING TO 100% PARTICIPATION



IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE EXPERIENTIAL SUCCESS STRATEGY



MATCH
students
to opportunities
at the right time



EMBED
opportunities
in the curriculum
and align with
learning objectives



ANALYZE
participation &
outcomes data
from previously
inaccessible sources



Centralize and Scale Experiential Learning

PROBLEM

Experiential & High-Impact Practices (HIPs) are required for student success.

However, opportunities are siloed across campus and in countless external websites. At scale, it is not possible to know what opportunities are available, manage students through experiences, and track outcomes.

SOLUTION

INTERNSHIPS
Ex: GradLeaders, Indeed, Internships.com

VOLUNTEERING
Ex: CampusLabs, Volunteer.gov

STUDY ABROAD
Ex: TerraDotta, StudyAbroad.com

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
Ex: NSF REUs, ScholarBridge

OTHER EL
Co-ops, Capstones, Project-Based Learning



MATCH
students to opportunities at the right time



EMBED
opportunities in the curriculum and align with learning objectives



ANALYZE
participation & outcomes data from previously inaccessible sources

USE CASES



ADMINISTRATORS

Manage a cohesive institution-wide experiential learning strategy. Maintain quality control while scaling programming to the entire student population.



FACULTY AND STAFF

Save valuable time and resources in sourcing and managing experiential programming. Custom services to design and embed experiences into the curriculum.



STUDENTS

Find and manage all experiential opportunities in one easy to use dashboard. Export participation data to a variety of sources to showcase what you've learned.

Q&A

-How are you working to scale HIPs at your institution?

-What are your biggest challenges? Opportunities?

-What is your “technological infrastructure”?

-Where do you want to be 5 years from now?

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