

The purpose of the initial proposal is to identify a problem or opportunity as it relates to one of the strategic framework priorities. It is not intended to outline a specific plan or solution.

**Title** (*Brief working title that captures the essence of the problem or opportunity.*)

\* Enhancing Experiential Career- and Civic Engaged Learning at Washburn

**Problem/Opportunity Statement** (*One or two sentence description of the problem or opportunity. Should focus on specific, observable indicators. Should not infer cause and should not include solutions.*)

\* Experiential learning has been identified by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as a high-impact practice (HIP) based on evidence of significant educational benefits for students who participate, particularly students from demographic groups historically underserved by higher education. Washburn has an opportunity to further enhance the academic quality of its programs and drive educational pathways to success for every student by expanding experiential learning experiences that integrate career- and civic-engagement and readiness content throughout multiple touchpoints in every student's experience.

**Proposal Themes** (*Select one quality initiative theme for the proposal*)

- \*  Expand Learner Success Opportunities and Pathways
  - Enhance our Environment to Learn, Work, and Thrive
  - Accelerate Collaborative Partnerships to Grow the Community

(For more on Washburn's Strategic Framework, see the [Strategic Framework](#))

**Description of how the problem or opportunity relates to the identified theme**

\* High-Impact Practices (HIPs), as defined by AAC&U, are evidence-based teaching and learning strategies that have been proven to confer significant educational benefits, particularly for students from historically underserved demographics. Research shows that "students involved in at least one high-impact practice during their undergraduate experience are likely to enjoy higher levels of learning success." Washburn has already adopted many of AAC&U's 11 HIPs, including a common first-year seminar, learning communities, service and community-based learning, global learning, and internships. Washburn has an opportunity to expand experiential learning opportunities and more intentionally integrate career- and civic-engagement and readiness concepts into existing HIPs and throughout the student experience to help further drive learner success. A municipal institution with an undergraduate population comprised of almost 50% first-generation students and newly designated as an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, Washburn must prioritize expanding access to career- and civic-engaged learning opportunities. These initiatives will guide our students along their unique paths to success and empower them to reach their highest potential. There is also opportunity to develop and implement new assessment and tracking mechanisms, including a public-facing dashboard, to ensure that experiential learning is accessible and impactful for all students, as well as to share these experiences with the community and region.

**Benefits** (*Description of desired outcomes, both tangible, such as decreased costs or increased revenue, and intangible, that is those improvements that are important to control, protect or enhance but are difficult to quantify. Benefits should be realistic and measurable.*)

\* In an effort to further contribute to Washburn's mission of creating inclusive educational pathways to success for every student, this proposal seeks to enhance and expand experiential learning opportunities and more meaningfully embed career- and civic-readiness concepts and practices throughout existing HIPs and the entire undergraduate experience. Specifically, the project seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Expand internships through infrastructure and employer partnerships.
- Support internship participants by helping students articulate the skills they develop.
- Incorporate on-campus student employment opportunities and student organization leadership roles as experiential learning by providing intentional structure and support.
- Enhance a culture of experiential learning with a faculty development model that includes undergraduate research, study abroad, and community engagement and connects academic and career development.
- Standardize assessment with an experiential learning task force and a public-facing online dashboard.
- Connect and align existing HIPs by emphasizing career- and civic-readiness and engagement.

**Scope** (*Description of the scope or impact on the institution as a whole. Specify if the scope is focused on specific areas, units or departments.*)

\* Washburn already offers impactful experiential learning opportunities and internships, especially given its location in Topeka, but access and quality to such opportunities vary across programs and student groups.

By using the career- and civic-ready framework and building on the success of the Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE) initiative, this project will further leverage our culture of experiential learning and create more support and consistency across the institution. The project also emphasizes the value of on-campus student employment and

significant leadership roles within student organizations as essential career-development and civic-engagement experiences. Strengthening support for these on-campus initiatives, along with expanding partnerships with regional employers, is vital to fostering growth within our community. Thus, the project seeks to positively impact Washburn's mission to provide a pathway to educational success for all students and its priority to accelerate partnerships to grow the community.

**Stake Holders** (Identify all persons/groups that have an interest or position in the issue – both internal and external to the University.)

- Students, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups
- Faculty, through their support and supervision of students in high-impact practices, including experiential learning
- Local and regional community, through acceleration of collaborative partnerships to grow the workforce and citizenry of the future
- Washburn through enhancing the institution's reputation for providing educational pathways to success for everyone

**Team Members** (Individuals who will work on development of full proposal and/or may work towards project implementation.)

- Academic Affairs
- o Provost's Office
- o Existing WTE Areas
- o Academic Units, deans, and identified faculty
- Student Life
- o VPSL Office
- o Career Engagement Office
- Community
- o Greater Topeka Partnership
- o Additional employers and organizations

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11/01/2024

Submitter Signature

Date

After signing, click Submit Form below. Submitters will be contacted after committee review in late November 2024.