

# Strategies to Improve Experiential Learning Opportunities at a University Equine Center

**Kristine Vernon, PhD**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Clemson University**

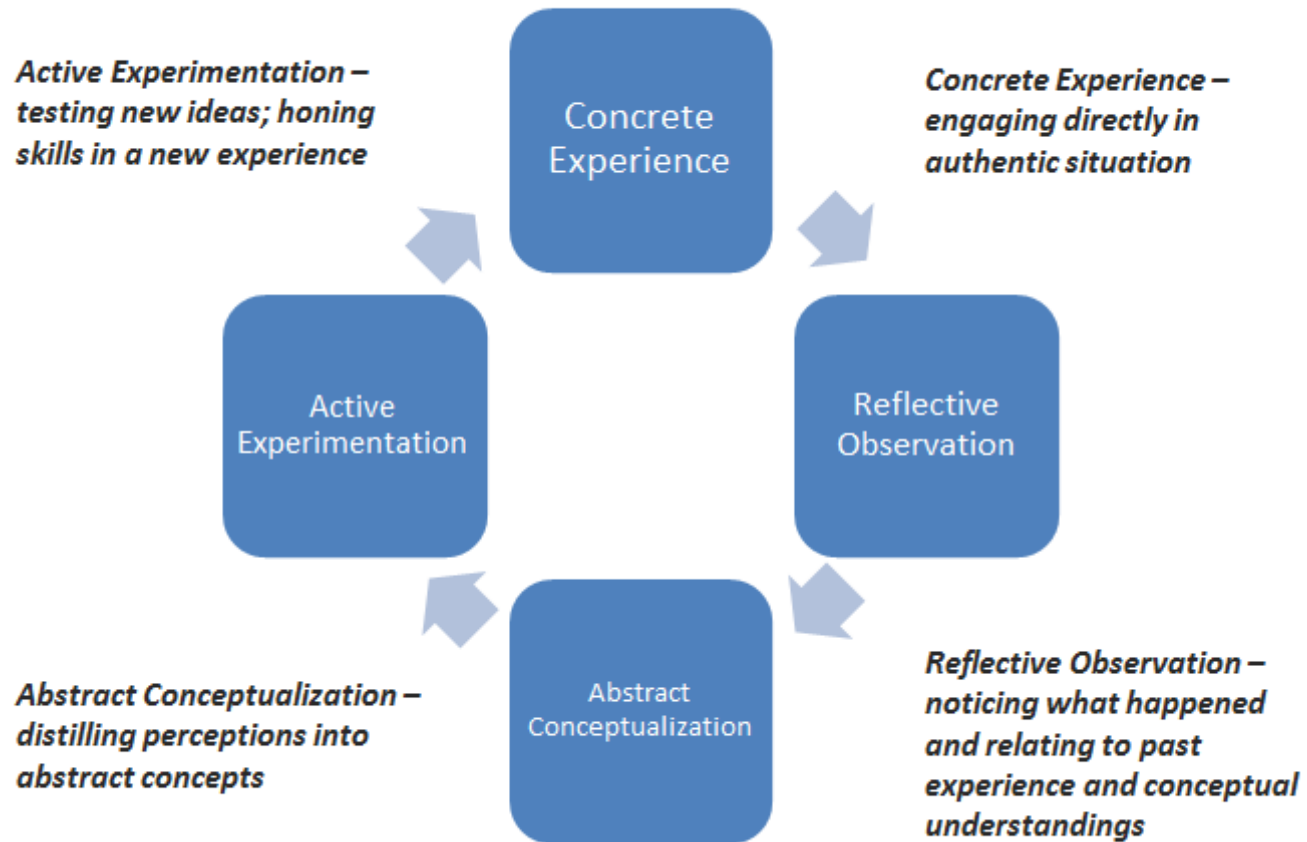


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# Experiential Learning

- John Dewey's model of experiential learning
  - Emphasizes experience in the learning process
    - Different than other cognitive or behavioral learning processes
- Kolb continued this work
  - "...the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience."
- Holistic approach to learning
  - Multivariate
  - Cognitive; behavioral; language/discussion; experiential; etc.

## Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning



# The Need

- Shift from farm/rural to urban and suburban
- Reese et al., 1987. NACTA. June 1987: 23 – 25
  - Univ. of Nebraska: 1980 – 1986
    - Student enrollment in Animal Science decreased by 10%
    - 86% Rural; 14% Urban
    - 92.5% Livestock or poultry experience
    - Interest in the field of study was leading influence
- 2016 – Iowa State Univ.; *Animal Industry Report*
  - 42% farm/rural; 32% small town/city; 26% urban
  - Primary species interests:
    - Companion 34%; Equine 19%; Beef 16%; Exotics 12%
    - Swine 8%; Dairy 6%; Sheep 2%; Goats 2%

## Clemson University is no different...

- Suburban/Urban background – 60%
- Companion animal and equine interests
- Veterinary field is primary career goal
  - 77% of incoming freshman
- Alternative career options

# The Strategy

- Hands-on laboratory courses
- Internships/Practica
- Immersion Projects
- Working student positions
- Special problems courses
- Undergraduate research
- Creative inquiry



# Clemson University's Equine Business

- Hands-on Techniques courses
  - Species specific
    - Handling techniques
    - Basic husbandry
      - health care assessment, management, welfare
      - products or industry applications
- General and Animal Science courses
- Equine Science courses
- Business Administration minor



# Our recipe...

- STEM major
  - 3 concentrations
  - Common core
- Equine Business
  - Science; management; industry/horsemanship skills; business/entrepreneurial development
  - Immersive
- Business minor
- Equine Industries minor





# Methods

- Recognized diverse backgrounds, preparation and career interests
- Identified key staff positions needed
- Developed student employee tier system
- Refined resources
  - Herd size reduction
  - Developed/deleted programs
  - Infrastructure improvements

# Curriculum Design

- Revised curriculum
  - Customizable by students
    - General competencies
      - Course options to fulfill
  - Electives
    - Minors; additional interest to create emphasis area
  - Additional course development opportunities

# Co-Curricular Opportunities

- Students have diverse backgrounds
- Much interest in business aspects
  - Allied animal health industries
  - Sales/marketing
  - “Corporate” side of the industry
- Tailor course content, laboratory experiences, field trips and immersion projects to individual students

# Personnel

- Faculty Director
- Redefined job descriptions
- Program Coordinator
- T/T Faculty; Lecturer
- Student employees → senior student
- Equestrian Team Coaches



# Resources

- Facilities to support new/evolving programs
- Herd size reduction
  - “right size” to meet teaching, research and outreach



# New Programs

- Open House – Student coordination
- IHSA and IEA riding teams; 4-H mentorship
- CLEAT – therapeutic riding program
- 4-H club
- Horsemen's Association
- Student Boarding
- Equestrian Camps
- Working Student
- Extension Workshops
- Increased research projects



# Results

- Increased student number served by 50%
- 100% of all EQUI students complete an immersion project
- 20% increase in direct career placement
  - 5 years



# Adequate Career Readiness

- Adequate hands-on handling experience
- Industry diversity and exposure
- Experiential learning/Immersion experience
- Simulate real-world scenarios
  
- Make it a teaching mission to provide experiences for students of all experiences



