Appendix C

A Guide to High-Impact Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
First-year seminars bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis and place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars also involve students with cutting-edge scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The older “core” curriculum model has evolved into a variety of modern forms, including common courses or vertically organized general education programs that include advanced integrative studies and/or participation in a learning community (see below). These programs combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options.

Learning Communities
Learning communities often encourage integration of learning across courses and involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link liberal arts and professional courses; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and ethical inquiry.

Diversity and Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—addressing US diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” related to racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning and Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. In these programs, students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they’re called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of college to create a project that integrates and applies what they’ve learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio, or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones can be offered in departmental programs and in general education as well.

Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels
*Example:* A writing- or inquiry-intensive first-year seminar in which assignments, projects, and activities—such as multiple short papers, problem sets, or projects—challenge students to achieve beyond their current ability levels as judged by criteria calibrated to students' precollege accomplishment evidenced by placement tests or ACT or SAT scores.

Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time
*Example:* A multiple-part class assignment on which a student works over the course of the academic term—beginning with a synopsis of the problem or issue to be examined and the methods or procedures that will be used; followed subsequently with narrative sections describing the methods, findings, and conclusions which together culminate in a completed paper; concluding with demonstration or performance evaluated by an independent third party or faculty supervisor.

Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters
*Example:* Out-of-class activities in which students in a learning community or first-year seminar come together at least once weekly to attend an enrichment event—such as a lecture by a visiting dignitary and/or a discussion of common readings and assignments facilitated by an upper-division peer mentor.

Experiences with diversity, wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar
*Example:* A service-learning field assignment wherein students work in a setting populated by people from different backgrounds and demographics, such as an assisted living facility or shelter for abused children, which is coupled with class discussions and journaling about the connections between class readings and the field assignment experience.

Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
*Example:* A student-faculty research project during which students meet with and receive suggestions from the supervising faculty (or staff) member at various points to discuss progress, next steps, and problems encountered and to review the quality of students' contributions up to and through the completion of the project.

Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
*Example:* Linked courses in a learning community wherein an instructor of one course designs assignments that require students to draw on material covered in one or more of the other linked courses, supplemented by a peer preceptor who coordinates student attendance and discussion at relevant campus events, or a capstone course in which students submit a portfolio and explain the relative contributions of the artifacts contained therein that represent the knowledge and proficiencies attained at various points during their program of study.

Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
*Example:* An internship, practicum, or field placement that requires that students apply the knowledge and skills acquired during their program of study, or supervisor-mediated discussions among student workers that encourage students to reflect on and see the connections between their studies and experiences in the work setting.

Public demonstration of competence
*Example:* An oral presentation to classmates of the required capstone seminar product that is evaluated by a faculty member and/or an accomplished practitioner, or a narrative evaluation of an internship, practicum, or field placement by the work setting supervisor and/or supervising faculty or staff member.