The IU Kokomo Experience

Summary of Process and Proposal for Initial Implementation

Submitted by the IU Kokomo Experience Task Force, April 2016, for the consideration of the campus

Introduction and Process

We began designing the IU Kokomo Experience at our August 2015 Academic Affairs retreat, where about half of our full-time faculty, as well as several advisors, heard a presentation on the IUKE and began discussing it. Over the next four months, Academic Affairs sponsored four brainstorming sessions in which faculty and staff crafted outcomes, brainstormed possible activities, and discussed a possible framework for these activities and miscellaneous considerations. A Task Force was formed in January 2016 to further discuss ideas and issues, and a survey of all faculty and staff on main elements of the IUKE was administered in February-March 2016. Survey results were discussed in early March 2016, and areas of agreement were brought together with past discussion notes into the present proposal.

Definition

The IU Kokomo Experience is our internal "shorthand" term for a set of learning experiences, selected and designed by faculty within each academic area, which guarantee every IU Kokomo student high-impact learning opportunities for each year he or she is enrolled at IU Kokomo.

Faculty in each area will typically design and deliver specific learning opportunities in a four-year sequence. Students will be actively encouraged to engage at least once as freshmen, as sophomores, as juniors, and as seniors, and to reflect on these important experiences for their intellectual, professional, and personal development. It is in students' best interest to engage in these activities, so coercion should not be necessary (for example, by making these required activities for graduation). Rather, educating students about their benefits, and enthusiastically facilitating their participation, should be sufficient.

Above all, activities nested within the IUKE are intended to deepen student learning; enhance their engagement with faculty, staff, and one another; promote their success; and support regional transformation.

Guiding Principles

The following main principles have emerged as key to the success of this effort.

HIGH-IMPACT LEARNING AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS:

The objectives and guidelines described here represent best practice in teaching and learning, and are known to be especially impactful with disadvantaged student populations (e.g., low SES, 1st

generation, racial/ethnic minority, academically underprepared). To ensure that all IU Kokomo students have an opportunity to benefit from the activities we are nesting under this framework, these opportunities must become our standard practice in all areas.

Once the goals and timeline for implementation of the IUKE are endorsed by the campus, all units will develop a plan for implementing the IUKE. All faculty, staff, and administrators should find ways to support this work, to offer every single student full opportunity for the truly transformative experience of higher education we offer at IU Kokomo.

AUTHENTIC LEARNING THAT CONNECTS STUDENTS TO THEIR EDUCATION AND THEIR FUTURE:

The activities nested within the IUKE should have the general characteristics of being Authentic in nature, and/or helping students build important Connections through their education. These two principles can help units determine the specific activities that would be best for them to include in their IUKE offerings:

- Authentic: Focused on engaging students in a genuine experience of each discipline's theoretical stance, art, science, and practice, with emphasis on real-world problems and relevant learning experiences.
- Connections: Focused on helping students make meaningful connections to each other, their faculty and discipline, the community, and their careers.

SUPPORT THROUGH ACADEMIC FREEDOM:

This proposal provides objectives and guidelines which must have the active support of the full campus in order to succeed. However, within the bounds of these guidelines, it is highly important that unit autonomy be preserved. Faculty delivering programs know best what specific activities their students will benefit most from, and creative innovation should be encouraged. Therefore, if faculty within a unit agree to modify any aspect of the IUKE (while still meeting the intended learning objective for students) that should be respected.

RECOGNITION AND REWARD FOR MEANINGFUL EFFORTS:

Providing educational experiences of the kinds outlined here take preparation, careful delivery, and attention monitoring and assessment – in short, they require a major investment of time and resources by involved faculty and staff. Support for implementation through funding as well as formal and informal recognition must be enacted to maintain this effort for the long term.

ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:

Assessment of the activities nested within the IUKE must be planned and undertaken. An oversight structure and feedback mechanism must be determined through shared campus governance, and then made known to the full campus. Administration and assessment efforts should emphasize enhancement of student learning and engagement. Multiple constituencies (such as students and community partners, as well as members of the campus) must be consulted regularly to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to plan ongoing changes.

To the degree that the IUKE connects with other initiatives on and off campus (such as Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, national initiatives such as LEAP, and the AASCU Re-imagining the First Year Initiative), those should be considered in the iterative process of assessing the IUKE.

Outcomes

The following learning outcomes are the intended result of student engagement in the IUKE:

- **Application:** Experiential learning connects knowledge from classroom learning to the world outside the classroom.
  - DQP: Collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, describes the result.
- **Integration:** Through multifaceted and/or interdisciplinary experiences and discussions, students will see ways to connect diverse fields and issues in order to solve problems.
  - DQP: Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret the importance for society of a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology.
  - DQP: Differentiates and evaluates theories and approaches to selected complex problems within the chosen field of study and at least one other field.
- **Collaboration:** Internships, field experiences, clinical and similar experiences provide opportunities to work with others on a team, both as a leader and as a contributor.
  - DQP: Frames, clarifies and evaluates a complex challenge that bridges the field of study and one other field, using theories, tools, methods and scholarship from those fields to produce independently or collaboratively an investigative, creative or practical work illuminating that challenge.
- **Initiative:** Undergraduate research allows students to follow their interests, carve out a niche, and apply their energies to meaningful work in a discipline.
  - DQP: Investigates a familiar but complex problem in the field of study by assembling, arranging and reformulating ideas, concepts, designs and techniques.
  - DQP: Defines and frames a problem important to the major field of study, justifies the significance of the challenge or problem in a wider societal context, explains how methods from the primary field of study and one or more core fields of study can be used to address the problem, and develops an approach that draws on both the major and core fields.
- **Mindset:** Students will develop a greater sense of themselves as engaged, constructive, actualized men and women who are ready to grow into greatness, and pursue lifelong learning.
  - Kolb Experiential Learning Model:
    1. Experience: What did we get to experience?
    2. Reflect: What did we connect with, feel about, discern about the experience?
    3. Conceptualize: What made sense to us about the experience, what questions do we still have?

4. Apply: What can we do to answer our questions, take action, move forward?

References:

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. (2015). *Degree qualifications profile.* Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation.

Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Framework

The Task Force recommends the following framework of activities for all students.

A four-year sequence of high-impact practices made available in all programs. These would be largely developed by faculty, in collaboration with one another and with the appropriate Student Services areas.

The specific order of activities may vary depending on program faculty preference, and students may complete fewer or more than the basic activity set (depending on their circumstances and goals).

- Freshman classification: The Freshman Learning Community or First Year Seminar course
- Sophomore classification: A learning experience the bridges disciplinary exploration/immersion and professional development; for example:
    - A Sophomore Sojourn, with a reflection paper/activity
    - A major-specific orientation course, with reflection
    - Career readiness, through job shadowing, engagement with Career Services, mentoring by faculty or upper-level students, and/or development of an e-portfolio with faculty guidance and external evaluation
    - Service-learning course or project
- Junior classification: A significant applied learning activity; for example:
    - An internship, field placement, or clinical
    - Undergraduate research project
    - International study
- Senior classification: A capstone course or experience

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the campus focus first on repackaging existing efforts such that a coherent and exciting experience of education at IU Kokomo is defined and available to all students. If larger changes to the learning experience are desirable later (such as integrating an interdisciplinary learning experience into all programs, or founding hubs of

entrepreneurship all across campus), those can be considered later when the most known and common HIPs on campus are fully implemented for all programs.

- It is recommended that the IUKE activities be integrated into curricula as much as possible, for long-term sustainability of this effort.
- It is recommended that members of the professional community in our area receive outreach from units as much as possible, to make clear to students that the IUKE is not only in their intellectual best interest, but in their professional best interest.
- It is recommended that it be made clear to all students, staff, faculty, and involved community members that the IUKE is not "just a marketing tagline." It is an intentional, sequenced set of learning experiences meant to deepen student learning and prepare them for lifelong success.
- It is recommended that an ongoing system for asking questions, reporting problems or frustrations, or seeking resources to support efforts in the IUKE be developed and made known to all faculty and staff involved.
- It is recommended that a user-friendly system for students to track their own engagement with the IUKE be developed (such as a form that students would bring to Advising meetings, and/or development of an e-portfolio), as these activities will NOT be tracked as graduation requirements at this time.
- Student feedback on the framework may not be possible to obtain in time for our final Faculty Senate meeting of the year. Therefore, whatever feedback comes back from student focus groups before August 2016 will be communicated to units as soon as possible, to assist them in planning.

Implementation and Timeline

Upon endorsement by the faculty via affirmative vote, initial implementation is targeted for August 2016. The following may be involved in those preparation efforts:

- Administration: Design a coordination and assessment structure; specify how communication/feedback about the IUKE will be handled; plan resources/incentives for unit development of IUKE efforts; develop a means, in consultation with faculty and staff, for students to track their engagement in IUKE activities
- Faculty: Discuss desired activities for students in their programs; determine unmet needs; communicate plans and requirements via the specified channels to Administration; collaborate with support units as appropriate to begin Fall 2016 implementation; develop ways to seek student input on faculty efforts; create a plan and target timeline for scaling up to full implementation within the unit (that is, all four years of activities in full delivery).
- Staff: Consider existing efforts that can support the IUKE; educate faculty about those efforts as needed; determine unmet needs; collaborate with programs to implement efforts; develop feedback channels for programs to report their results and questions; develop ways to seek student input on support efforts.