

# Tech Snacks: High-Impact Practices in Higher Education

Learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting can have a number of positive impacts on students' learning. "High-impact practices" (HIPs) like cooperative education, undergraduate research, and global learning can help increase academic engagement and performance, promote a sharper sense of purpose and connectedness, and develop 21st century skills and perspectives among students.<sup>1</sup>

## Cooperative Education (Co-ops) & Internships

Cooperative Education (Co-op) experiences integrate career-related work with academic course work. Co-ops provide students with a realistic sense of their chosen field and add relevancy to their coursework. Outcomes include professional skills development, interpersonal development, maturity, increased motivation, resume-building, and insight into interviewing and hiring processes. Many students are offered full-time positions by their co-op employer upon graduation.

MSU-Northern Career Center  
<https://www.msun.edu/career/>

Mary Heller, Director  
[mary.heller@msun.edu](mailto:mary.heller@msun.edu)  
Cowan 213F

### What faculty can do to promote co-op experiences:

- Talk about co-ops while advising students.
- Build partnerships with potential co-op employers and refer them to the Career Center.
- Help shape meaningful learning objectives for the co-op experience.

### Did you know...?

- MSUN prefers to use the older term "co-op" rather than internship to distinguish its emphasis on advanced educational outcomes and cooperation between employers and the university.
- In most cases at MSUN, co-op/intern students do receive wages. Pay varies depending on the skill and experience of the student, and the type of business or agency.
- Seven majors require co-op credits. Even for students in majors that do not require them, co-ops can count as upper division electives.

## Undergraduate Research and Field Work

Undergraduate research can help students develop a relationship with a faculty mentor, connect their learning to real-world impacts, build research and presentation skills, explore career connections, improve their resume, and prepare for graduate school.

### What faculty can do to promote undergraduate research:

- Incorporate research components into their courses (e.g., through data collection, field work exercises, sample collection, monitoring)
- Apply for funding to employ students as assistants for faculty members' own research projects
- Guide students to pursue their own research projects and help them seek out opportunities to present their findings

---

<sup>1</sup> The HIP categories articulated in this document are taken from the framework presented by: George D. Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2008; and George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell, *Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale*, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013.

### Did you know...?

- Students involved in undergraduate research are more likely to persist in college, to report intellectual and personal gains during college, and to pursue a career in a research-related field.<sup>2</sup>
- Undergraduate research components often strengthen research grant applications.
- Several large federal grants awarded to Montana's flagship institutions offer subawards for related projects at other colleges and universities throughout Montana (e.g., EPSCoR, MT INBRE and other programs funded through agencies like NIH, NSF, Department of Ed).

## Global Learning

There are many benefits to helping students explore cultures, perspectives, and life experiences other than their own, within or outside of the US. Study abroad opportunities in particular can help students develop linguistic, critical thinking, and intercultural skills while also experiencing personal development.

### What can faculty do to promote global learning?

- Avoid US-centrism by referencing other nations and cultures where appropriate within your course. (Better yet—build intercultural competencies into your course objectives.)
- Encourage students to consider co-ops or other experiential learning opportunities that would provide them insight into different cultures, perspectives, and life experiences other than their own.
- Arrange for guest speakers with different cultural perspectives and life experiences to visit your course and talk to students, where appropriate to course content.
- Encourage students to consider study abroad opportunities when feasible.

### Did you know...?

- Studies have also shown that at-risk students in particular have significantly higher levels of academic engagement and success after participating in study abroad experiences.<sup>3</sup>
- MSUN students can apply for study abroad exchanges through MSU's Office of International Programs (<http://www.montana.edu/international/>).
- Some international direct exchange programs are relatively affordable: students pay their tuition/fees and room/board as if they were studying in Montana (travel costs and the \$150 study abroad fee are additional).
- In many cases, Financial Aid can count towards study abroad costs.
- Exchange programs like DAAD RISE pay students to complete internships abroad.

## Other High-Impact Practices

### Learning Communities

The term "learning community" has been used in different contexts to mean different things. In this context, it refers to situations in which multiple courses are linked so that students participating in the courses examine a common topic from different disciplinary lenses. Often, this format involves multiple instructors working together to push students to explore broader questions.

### Service Learning and Community-Based Learning

This approach integrates service work (often in collaboration with community partners) into curricula or coursework. Students go out into the community to gain "real-world" experience and insights that they can use to help complement and shape the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the classroom. Often these formats include learning outcomes that guide students to gain economic/career insights alongside an appreciation for civic responsibility.

### Capstone/Senior Projects

Students typically enroll in a capstone course during their final year. In it, they are guided to apply and integrate several key learning areas into one culminating project, portfolio, performance, etc.

---

<sup>2</sup> Kuh 14.

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Latiner Raby, Gary M. Rhodes and Albert Biscarra, "Community College Study Abroad: Implications for Student Success," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 38:2-3 (2014): 174-83.

Traditionally, these have been “major” capstones, but some universities have begun using this format to integrate and assess general education learning as well.