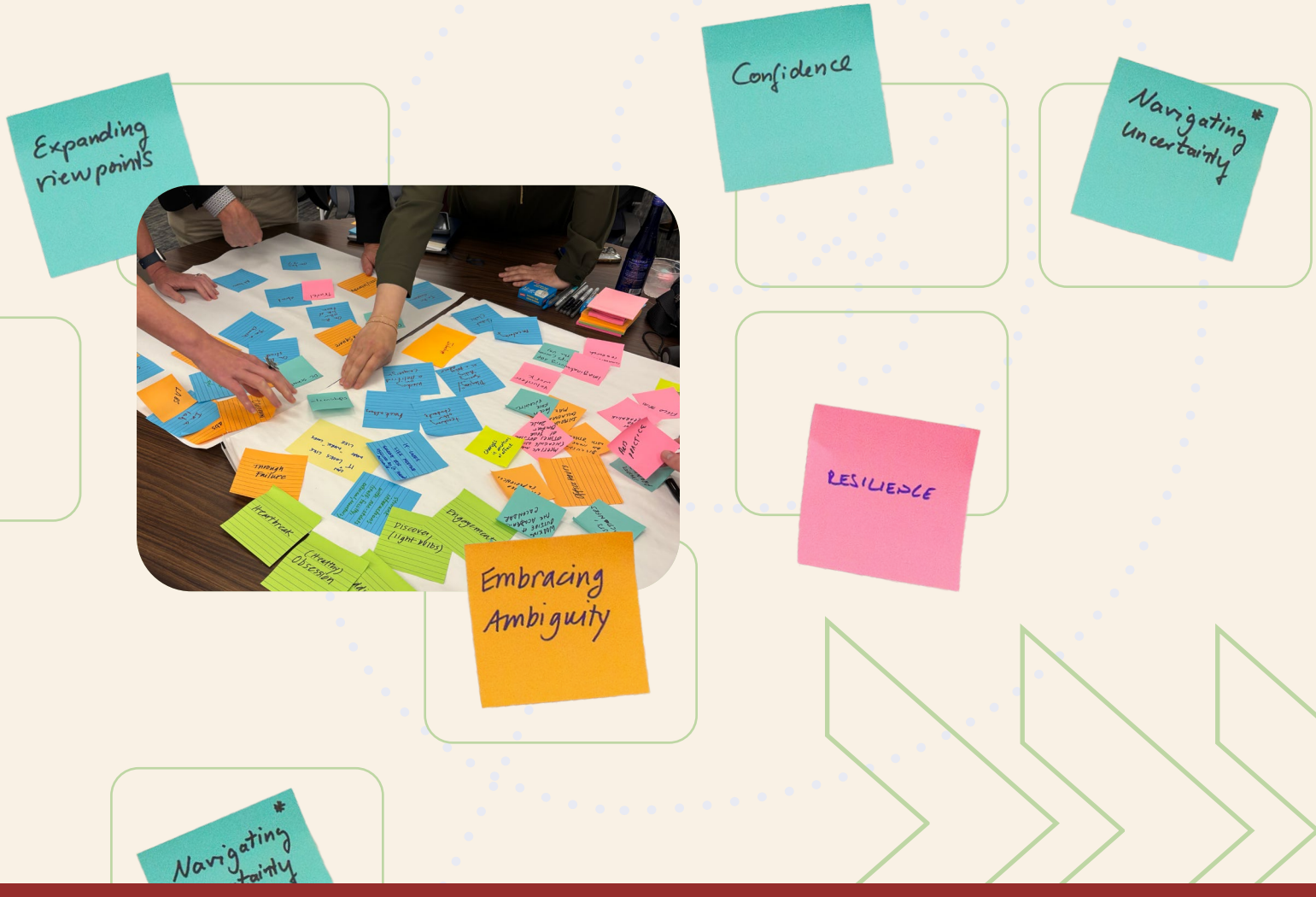
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY | THE RED HOUSE | Academic Innovation Network

(RE)HUMANIZING THE UNIVERSITY

The Future *of* Experiential Learning Conversation Series

Fall 2025 Series Recap

feat. 151 faculty, staff, & student participants
from 30 offices and programs
across the University



About the Series

The experiential learning initiative seeks to place learning through direct engagement with the world at the center of the Georgetown experience.

This is a timely call to understand experiential learning as a holistic, emergent, and relational response to the complexities of our time, from the changing nature of the workplace, the disruptive integration of AI, the deepening of polarization, and the challenges to the cost benefit of higher education. We want to explore the ways that the emerging centrality of experience should support the project of ensuring the (re)humanization of education in the era of accelerating change.

Learn more:

https://redhouse.georgetown.edu/projects/experiential-learning-series/



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Rediscovering the Human in Experiential Learning

Our framing of this conversation series as "(Re) humanizing the University" signals our collective belief in the university's central project: advancing human flourishing. A Georgetown education, rooted in the Ignatian tradition, has long focused on cultivating the best human capacities. Every element of our educational context takes a stand on the kinds of people we are cultivating. The question is how explicit, transparent, and intentional we are across the university in supporting this cultivation.

We ask these questions when our conception of what it means to be human is in unprecedented flux, as three fundamental dimensions of human relationship are changing: the human relationship to technology (how the Internet, smartphones, and AI are reconfiguring the global information ecosystem), to knowledge (how we access, create, and reproduce knowledge), and to other humans (how we relate to others and the planet). What it means to be human within all this change are fundamentally educational questions. Reimagining higher education to adapt to these changes is what we mean by "(Re)humanizing the university."

Experiential learning is central to these questions, as we inquire into practices and pedagogies that can cultivate the capacities we need to adapt to the flux of these human relationships. Whatever these deeply human capacities are—from attention and presence to empathy and ethical judgment—they cannot be cultivated through traditional didactic teaching and learning alone. They are forged in the friction and messiness of authentic life contexts, in reflexive relationship with deep academic learning.



The first "Mapping" phase in October explored the full range of capacities that arise from experience and which we are well and less well set up to nurture. What we do well points to the power of relationships in experiences and learning. The “Envisioning” phase in November explored the following capacities further: navigating uncertainty, learning from failure, and cultivating creativity and connection through designing critical points to place these increasingly needed and distinctive human qualities at the center of our curriculum.

Only through centering experiential learning in our curricula will we be able to support students for the next ten years—if not the next 100.

Series Recap

September

Exploring

feat. 47 faculty, staff, & student participants from ~20 offices and programs

October

Mapping

feat. 53 faculty, staff, & student participants from ~25 offices and programs

November

Envisioning

feat. 51 faculty, staff, & student participants from 18 offices and programs

SEPTEMBER

Exploring the Boundaries of Experiential Learning

In the first conversation of the series, participants surfaced a wide range of diverse experiential learning activities and the capacities such activities cultivate. Common threads included a holistic view of experiential learning as active, affective, and reflective; communicating the purpose and value of experiential learning (to both faculty/administrators as well as students); the integration of "academic" and experiential approaches; and the importance of support & incentives to promote experiential learning and ensure successful outcomes.

What does it mean to learn from experience?

Where does experiential learning happen?

What capacities does experiential learning cultivate?



Experiential Learning is Active, Affective, & Reflective.

OCTOBER

Mapping Experiential Learning Capacities at Georgetown

Participants identified which capacities the University is well equipped to foster, and which it is not. They then prioritized "enabling" practices for faculty and administrators (mentorship, continuity, reciprocity, innovating incentives, alternative assessments, time) as well as for students (inquiry, generative tension and play; reflection; storytelling). Signs that an experience was done well ranged from increased curiosity and confidence to lasting changes in perspective and behavior.

Which experiential learning capacities is the University well-equipped to foster?

Which are we *not* well-equipped for?

What practices might help address these shortcomings?

How do you know when experiential learning is done well?

TOP 5 PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

WELL-EQUIPPED

- **Being in Community**
- **Reflecting**
- **Mentoring**
- **Relationships**
- **Communication**

NOT WELL-EQUIPPED

- **Learning from Failure**
- **Embracing Ambiguity**
- **Humility**
- **Imagination**
- **Playfulness**

NOVEMBER

Envisioning an Experiential Curriculum for 2035

Imagining the world of 2035, participants revealed their concerns about intensifying isolation, economic disparity, and upheaval (technological, climatic, political); impediments to ascertaining what is real; and deteriorating mental health. However, with cautious optimism, they reframed these challenges as opportunities to build new, more equitable systems. They dreamed of curricula that emphasize learning to navigate complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity as communities.



What does the world of 2035 look like?

What would a 'curriculum of experiences' look like for our students in 2035?

What should become a stronger focal point in Spring 2026?

What does the world of 2035 look like?

Gallery of Participant Responses

Collected at the November Sessions

What would a "curriculum of experiences" look like for our students in 2035?

What should become a stronger focal point in Spring 2026?

Map of Curricular Experiences

In November, participants imagined a trajectory of experiences from foundational moments to the experiences that will foster students' transition to post-graduation life.

Foundational

Immersive place- and play-based learning opportunities

Travel abroad / Immersion elsewhere

Experiential-rotational opportunities across sectors in civil society

Expand definition of what is considered a “valuable” experience

Pro-Sem like — small group structure across all disciplines

Problem-solving lab for multi-disciplinary cohorts

A PHIL requirement that can be completed through encounters, convos, problems

Intermediate

Internship, Study Abroad, Impact

Design their own 4-yr or 3-yr experience

Jesuit-style imagining a scene or what-if; being coached or counseled to imagine immersion

Navigating uncertainty with humility — working with community partners building relationships around issues (wicked problems)

Transitional

Mentorship structures: Reconnecting quarterly — leveraging relationships

Ask students to propose final projects and apply for the appropriate amount of credit

Creating a mentor program between students

Projects that rely on conditions in flux, uncertain, speculative, future...

Reflection: "What *could* I be like, the world be like?"

Navigating uncertainty — research project or thesis (wicked problems)

Applied Liberal Arts

Deepening Dialogue in Experiences

What is Core?

Mentored, Challenge-based Labs

Assigning Credit to Experiential Learning

Global Experiences at Capitol Campus

Redesigning the Bachelor's Degree

Rehumanizing Higher Education

Trajectories of Work

The ideas generated in November represent eight trajectories of work anticipated for the coming year.

Georgetown's Emerging Framework of Experiential Learning

Definitions

Experiential learning encompasses intentional and purposeful opportunities for students that provide intellectual formation, direct relevance to authentic contexts, and critical reflection to support students in understanding the skills, knowledge, and interactions gained through such opportunities.

Experiential learning includes professional experiences, research, community-based engagement, cross-cultural learning, and emerging opportunities that connect academic study to the world in which we live. At Georgetown, we also see tremendous value in place-based and problem-centered, credit-bearing experiences that allow students to integrate dispositions, skills, and knowledge in order to deepen their ability to enter a volatile world.

We wish to emphasize the role of intellectual and personal formation, reflection, and the importance of connecting academic study to real world contexts when it comes to experiential learning—in whatever form or modality it is offered. These three elements—**intellectual formation, relevance, and reflection**—should form the core of any experience across the undergraduate trajectory, whether a challenge-based lab to an interdisciplinary core curriculum to support our students.

Capacities

These are the capacities we want to design for to enable our students to think, work, and live beyond Georgetown:

- Navigating Uncertainty
- Embracing Ambiguity
- Imagination
- Creativity
- Learning from Failure

How we used the term "capacities"

"Capacities" encompasses knowledge, skills, habits of mind, dispositions, traits, outlook. The capacities afforded by experiential learning are numerous and the opportunities reflect moments where students need to use all of their capacities within a problem-oriented environment.



Emerging Principles

In order to cultivate these capacities, participants imagined experiences where the following principles emerged as core themes across all of the imagined experiences. These principles contribute to the culture we want to strengthen at Georgetown in order to support students in their preparation for persistent change in the next 10 years:

Building Student Agency

- Navigating uncertainty, learning from failure and conflict, and solving problems creatively contributing to growing student agency and confidence
- Critical reflection on their identity as they develop an awareness of themselves within various contexts.

Integrating Perspectives

- Incorporating multiple perspectives in solving relevant problems with skills, knowledge, and traits

Fostering Community Inside and Outside Georgetown

- Relationship-building through dialogue and shared experiences
- Learning through community enables feedback loops, adaptability, and relevance
- Mentorship structures that include faculty, staff, external partners, and students

Reflecting Critically & Imaginatively

- Iterative opportunities to connect learning to next steps and individual growth
- Reflection as part of integrated, intentional assessment plans

Designing for Relevance

- Planning for application and transfer of (inter)disciplinary outcomes to complex settings

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