

# ***Strengthening Experiential Education: A New Era***

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# **Strengthening Experiential Education:** **A New Era**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**Garry Hesser, General Editor**  
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In preparation for a sabbatical leave in 2010, I began to think about the upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of *Strengthening Experiential Education Within Your Institution* and just how formative and transformative that the book, its authors, and the FIPSE initiative had been, not only for experiential education, but for higher education overall. As the leadership of the National Society for Experiential Education [NSEE] prepared to celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2011, they encouraged me to undertake a revision and recruit colleagues for this important task. Our charge was to update the original as a gift to our members and a resource for the wider K-16 educational community. I am deeply grateful for Augsburg College's support for this project, and for me personally and professionally, both through its sabbatical leave program and its long term support for experiential education which is at the heart of our mission and curriculum.

The NSEE Board made a very generous decision in the gift-giving spirit that has marked NSEE since its beginning. They gave the original as a "40<sup>th</sup> birthday gift" to our members and any others who wanted access to some of the best thinking about experiential education. A pdf copy of the original is posted on NSEE's website. This celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Strengthening* also initiated a year of celebrating NSEE's 40<sup>th</sup> year of existence in 2011.

As for the original, my colleagues and I, along with the Board, continue to believe that *Strengthening Experiential Education Within Your Institution* (Kendall, 1986) stands the test of time as a classic. It remains both valuable and fundamentally valid to this day. We trust that you and others have found this gift useful, along with John Duley's essay that has become a Prologue to this revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. John was one of the original FIPSE consultants and authors of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, as was Sharon Rubin. Both John and Sharon continue to inspire, support, and challenge us in both personal and provocative ways as they add continuity to this updating. Their involvement in this revised edition helps to "bookend" the past with the present.

Our revision captures, we trust, most of the major developments in the field of experiential education and K-16 education over the past 25 plus years. It also includes a new chapter on Assessment by our longtime colleague and former NSEE Board member, Rob Shumer. Our insightful and generous authors include longstanding members, as well as newcomers. We represent a wide range of professional experience, institutions and areas of expertise. David Moore, our NYU colleague, wrote an original chapter entitled "Theoretical

Foundations for Experiential Education”, but it became a central chapter in his new book, *Engaged Learning in the Academy: Challenges and Possibilities*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2013). Unfortunately, that prevented it from being included in this revised edition. However, David’s major thesis is found in the Epilogue where he underscores the critical importance of making experience educative through the sound practices advanced by NSEE and spelled out in this book, as well as in the original version. I recommend David’s book and its theory chapter as a complement to this volume. His book also offers further augmentation of the claim that Jane Kendall, Jane Permaul, Sharon Rubin, Tom Little, John Duley and John Dewey were quite correct about the importance of experience in learning *when done effectively*.

This new edition embraces the original format. Each chapter title identifies a critical aspect of organization development and institution building. Hence, this revision can be seen as a “second edition.” On the other hand, most of the chapters are major revisions, with each building upon ideas from the original. Another basic difference distinguishes these two editions. The original was an ongoing collaboration and the product of many meetings and exchanges among the five authors, with Jane Kendall drafting and integrating the various pieces that her colleagues produced. In this revision, each chapter was written by a separate author(s) who was selected based on a judgment about their expertise and experience in the field. Consequently, the final version of each chapter is the product of a dialogue between the author and editor. As a result each chapter can be used as a “stand-alone” resource if you are addressing any particular issue. However, like the original, this revision also provides you with a collage that systemically and comprehensively addresses institutionalization and strengthening experiential education.

PROLOGUE- John Duley

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EPILOGUE – David Moore

Mary King’s ongoing monitoring of sources and her leadership of NSEE’s Experiential Education Academy has helped me to be even more aware of the never ending stream of new organizations and collaborations. This current abundance further underscores that the National

Society for Internships and Experiential Education [NSIEE], as NSEE was once known, and the authors of the original *Strengthening* were both prophets and contributors to a “sea change” in education. Each of the authors noted above has endeavored to retain and emphasize the strengths of the original chapter that they were charged to rewrite and update. In addition, we have also done our best to introduce you, our readers, to new developments, resources and allies. Each of the authors of this revision has devoted themselves to researching the landscape and sharing their own knowledge and experience with all of us. I trust that you will agree with me that we have been blessed by an insightful and exceptionally gracious collection of NSEE members who have given of their time and deep insights to craft and share their knowledge and wisdom as lifelong experiential learners and educators.

### ***Dewey and NSIEE were right***

The connection between learning and active engagement in society and community was fundamental to John Dewey and the founders of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education [NSIEE], just as it was to Jefferson, Madison, Washington, Locke, Socrates, et al. Consequently, I think that all would be quite intrigued with the emerging consensus in K-16 education that stresses the interdependence between education and democracy. Dewey’s stress on experience was grounded in the dialectic between one’s previous experiences and the situation in which the learner finds herself or himself. This “continuity” and “interaction” underscores the bedrock and centrality of experience in the entire learning process.

NSEE, AAHE, AAC&U, Campus Compact, David Kolb, Peter Ewell, George Kuh, et al have led K-16 education to another Deweyian shift in our thinking about pedagogy, one that changes the emphasis from a teaching focus to learning itself, e.g., the “learning paradigm” (Tagg, 2003). Indeed, it appears that most educational theory and research now affirms John Dewey’s focus on the critical importance of designing experiences that are “educative”, i.e., result in learning. As early as 1916 Dewey insisted that

“we never educate directly, but only indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose, makes a great difference”.

Dewey laid the groundwork for the paradigm shift from teaching to learning, often referred to as “backward design”. Dewey contended that we can call what we do “educative” only when there is evidence that the designed experiences, techniques, programs, or “projects”, as he called them, lead to substantive learning. This involves the integration of past and present experiences which enables the learner to contribute to society and grow as a person. To put it another way, Dewey framed the issue well in *How We Think*, when he insisted that these “projects”, namely, educational techniques and pedagogy, are *educative* when they generate interest, are worthwhile intrinsically, present problems that awaken new curiosity, create a demand for more information, and foster growth and development over time (1933). Similarly, the assessment movement, at its best, asks what John Duley, Urban Whitaker, and our other experiential education pioneers insisted upon when they, too, said: “show me the evidence for the learning if there is to be academic credit”. You will find this discussed in greater detail in the new chapter 8 by Rob Shumer and Mary King’s chapter 4 on quality.

### ***NSIEE's Seminal and Collaborative Role***

David Kolb, Dwight Giles, and Jane Kendall, along with other NSEE leaders and staff, played a seminal role in bringing educators back into a dialogue with Dewey. They, along with NSIEE's founders, contributed to the fundamental changes that have marked the educational enterprise since the early 1970's. *Strengthening Experiential Education* was a critical punctuation mark in the higher education enterprise when it appeared in 1986. As you read the original and this revised edition, try to envision just how far we have come. Experiential education and community-based pedagogy have moved from the margins into the very center of how the educational enterprise and pedagogy are framed today. Perhaps the most obvious evidence for that "movement to the center" is illustrated by the prominence that "high impact practices" and "backward design" have assumed in higher education overall. They have, indeed, taken center stage at AAC&U. NSEE's 2011 and 2012 keynote speakers, George Kuh on "high impact practices" and Peggy Maki on "backward design and assessment", underscored this shift and punctuated NSEE's role in the dominant discourse on effective teaching and learning.

Back in 1986, when *Strengthening Experiential Education* was published, Russ Edgerton and the American Association for Higher Education [AAHE] were the lead catalysts, colleagues and receptive contributors to the new and renewed focus on "effective educational practice" and "rethinking scholarship". Ernest Boyer, Donald Schoen, Helen and Alexander Astin, Parker Palmer, Lee Shulman, and Zee Gamson were other prominent voices and allies. The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education [NSIEE] also became an influential player, thanks to Jane Kendall and the FIPSE Consultants: John Duley, Jane Permaul, Sharon Rubin, and Tom Little. Joan Macala and Robert Sigmon led a very strong Board at that time. It included: William Burke, Barbara Baker, Richard Couto, Nadinne Cruz, Mary Gawlik, Keats Jarmon, Anne Kaplan, Marlyn Lawrentz, Marilynne Moyers, Rob Shumer, Pamela Smith, Louise Stone, and Urban Whitaker. Past Presidents and officers included James Case, John Duley, Tim Stanton, Jane Permaul, Steve Brooks, and David Moore, with Richard Ungerer, Sally Migliore and Michael Goldstein serving as staff and legal counsel for Jane Kendall and the Board. These colleagues and their supportive institutions are the "shoulders" on which all of us associated with NSEE and much of K-16 educational reform stand today.

### ***AAC&U's LEAP Initiative and Kuh's "High Impact Practices"***

More recently, the Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U] has assumed AAHE's torch of pedagogical and educational reform. In January 2005, AAC&U undertook the Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative [LEAP; [www.aacu.org/leap](http://www.aacu.org/leap)] with the aim of making the "aims and intended outcomes of liberal education the preferred framework for all students' college learning, whatever their background, career aspirations, or life circumstances". LEAP's emphasis on "essential learning outcomes", gained through "engagement, practice, active involvement, and demonstrated application", are in close alignment with Dewey and our founders, again underscoring the claims of experiential educators that "Dewey was right" [see chapters 2 and 3 for greater elaboration].

As asserted earlier, the original 1986 edition of *Strengthening* was a forerunner, collaborator, and "seed planter" for this sea change in higher education which also has engaged the entire K-16 educational enterprise. AAC&U's promotion of Kuh's "High Impact Practices" <[www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm)> is further evidence of the wide embrace of experiential education.

Two other initiatives illustrate this shift: 1) “Bringing Theory to Practice” and its offspring [BTtoP; <[http://aacu.org/bringing\\_theory](http://aacu.org/bringing_theory)>]; and 2) the “Symposium on Effective Practice”. The latter was led by Richard Freeland and Clark University. Its proceedings and papers appear in the Fall, 2009, edition of *Liberal Education* and document how fundamental this change has become <[http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-fa09/le-fa09\\_index.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-fa09/le-fa09_index.cfm)>. Again, these developments closely correspond to the themes outlined in the 1986 edition of *Strengthening* and the experiential pedagogies which NSEE has supported and advocated from the beginning.

### ***An Explosion of Attention to Citizenship, Civic Engagement, and Social Responsibility***

In addition to the trends noted previously, Campus Compact has also played a seminal role since its founding in 1985 by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown and Stanford Universities and the president of the Education Commission of the States. Compact now has 1100 university and college presidents as members and 34 state Compact affiliates with a long history of collaboration with NSEE. The *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, under the direction of founding editor, Jeff Howard, approaches its 20<sup>th</sup> year of publication [[www.umich.edu/~mjcsl](http://www.umich.edu/~mjcsl)], as does the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* [[www.jheoe.uga.edu](http://www.jheoe.uga.edu)]. Along with current NSEE professional development through the Experiential Education Academy (EEA; [www.nsee.org](http://www.nsee.org)) and Campus Compact endeavors ([www.campuscompact.org](http://www.campuscompact.org)), the experiential education net spreads ever more widely to embrace what our founding mothers and fathers seeded and tilled.

A few other examples illustrate this shift. In 2012 Merrimack College’s Center for Engaged Democracy, led by Dan Butin, hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Research Institute on Community Engagement. Tufts University, an early beneficiary of NSEE-FIPSE consulting 20 years ago, hosted a 2012 Summer Institute of Civic Studies, and these two institutions will co-host a 2013 conference on “The Future of Community Engagement”. These endeavors, along with AAC&U’s “Bringing Theory to Practice”, further illustrate the current major emphases on civic engagement and community-based learning. As is elaborated in Chapter 3, BTtoP’s mission underscores most of the central visions embraced and emphasized by our NSIEE founders:

*The mission of the BTtoP Project has, for the last decade, been to examine, understand, and encourage the interdependent relationships among engaged forms of higher learning, student well-being, civic development, and the initiating and sustaining of transformational changes in higher education (BTtoP website).*

One final example reveals the “sea change” that NSIEE/NSEE helped to create, offering resources we can and should capitalize upon. On January 10, 2012, the White House hosted a major event focused on civic learning and democratic engagement. It highlighted the American Commonwealth Partnership [ACP], which is hosted by my own institution, Augsburg College, where the Center for Democracy and Citizenship is now located. Similar to NSEE’s founders and the authors of *Strengthening*, ACP’s focus is on the civic purpose of higher education [see chapter 3 and [www.facebook.com/democracyu](https://www.facebook.com/democracyu)]. AAC&U and BTtoP took the lead in producing the *Crucible Moment* document, which was introduced at the White House and is also available on line. AAC&U, BTtoP, and most higher education associations are major players in this American Commonwealth Partnership. All of this activity underscores higher education’s

emphasis on “Civic Learning: Personal and Social Responsibility”. This reality was highlighted in a May 1, 2012, report to AAC&U Presidents and members on civic learning developments:

On January 10, 2012, at a White House gathering, the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) released *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, representing recommendations by educators and civic leaders across many constituencies.....

In brief, *Crucible Moment* call[s] on higher education to reclaim its civic mission and to make civic learning at the college level expected rather than optional in both general education and college majors. (AAC&U website)

### **Conclusion**

In summary, as is elaborated upon in chapters 1 and 3, the thesis and assumption underlying this revised edition is quite simple and straightforward. *There has been a “sea change” in higher education since the 1986 edition was published. NSEE contributed to and has benefitted immensely from those changes. And one corollary or consequence of this profound change is that experiential education professionals will be more effective in institutionalizing experiential education in their respective institutions and K-16 education overall if we exploit the resources and legitimating entities that currently exist and are emerging every day. Very few of us in 1986 were bold enough to predict the prominent place that experiential education would assume throughout the K-16 enterprise. Put simply, high impact learning practices, civic engagement, community-based learning and research, and classroom engagement are the new mantras in K-16 education. **Experiential education has, indeed, moved to center stage. We are certainly in a new era, one requiring competent experiential education professionals “now more than ever”.***

The good news is that everyone seems to be in ‘our’ game now, and we celebrate that reality, along with the involvement of NSEE in these changes. But, *equally important*, this new recognition and emphasis on “high impact”, experiential pedagogy requires curricular design and ongoing formative assessment that consistently makes experience “educative” as Dewey underscored. High impact practices, without grounding in the solid practices long affirmed by NSEE, can be ineffective, if not miseducative. In that spirit we offer the reissue of the original and this updated and revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. My co-authors and I hope that this revised edition adds significantly to the many other NSEE resources you will consult and find useful in your growing collaborations in which you introduce and/or deepen the quality of learning that derives from the sound practices that NSEE has developed and espoused since its beginning.

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