

Making College “Worth It” – Season 2, Episode 3

Exploring the Value of Work-Integrated Learning

Nolan Schultheis (00:07):

Welcome to Making College Worth It, the show that examines engaged learning activities that increase the value of college experiences.

Jessie Moore (00:14):

In each episode, we share research from Elon University Center for Engaged Learning and our international network of scholars. We explore engaged learning activities that recent college graduates associate with their financial and time commitment to college being worthwhile.

Nolan Schultheis (00:28):

I'm Nolan Schultheis, a second year student at Elon University, studying psychology with an interest in law. I'm the Center for Engaged Learnings Podcast producer and a legal professions scholar.

Jessie Moore (00:38):

And I'm Jessie Moore, director of Elon Center for Engaged Learning and a Professor of Professional Writing and Rhetoric.

Nolan Schultheis (00:44):

In this episode, we'll explore new research on work integrated learning.

Jessie Moore (00:48):

Work-integrated learning allows students to obtain work experiences while in college the student and academic mentor and a workplace supervisor collaborate on providing the student an opportunity for purposeful work tasks and enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice relevant to the student's professional development.

Nolan Schultheis (01:05):

We'll talk to Dr. CJ Fleming, an associate professor of Psychology at Elon University in a seminar leader for the 2022 to 2024 research seminar on Work integrated learning. She's joined by Annelise Weaver, a senior psychology major at Elon, who is a 2022 to 2025 CEL Student scholar and a member of the research seminars leadership team.

Annelise Weaver (01:30):

Hey everyone, my name is Annelise Weaver. I'm a senior here at Elon University and I am a 2022-2024 CEL student scholar with our research focusing on work integrated learning. Honestly, before we started the research, I didn't know what work integrated learning was, so I think I was just really curious in learning about a new topic and seeing what it was all about and being able to talk about this topic with people from all over the world and hear what they had to say about it. Yeah, it was awesome.

CJ Fleming (02:17):

Hi everybody. My name is CJ Fleming. I am faculty in psychology here at Elon and by training I am a clinical psychologist and as a part of clinical psychology, you are doing internship type experiences forever. As an undergrad in grad school, even really as you're leaving grad school, it's still really kind of a

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practicum experience. And so for me, work integrated learning has been a critical essential part of my career. And so when I came to Elon, I really wanted to foster that opportunity for my students and that led me here. Just being really excited about internships led me to being the faculty fellow for internships in our College of Arts and Sciences, which led me to being a seminar leader for our seminar on WIL.

Jessie Moore (03:02):

And that's a great lead into my next question for you because you were both part of the leadership team for the Center for Engaged Learning's 20 22, 20 24 research seminar on Work Integrated Learning. Could you briefly share what the research teams in that seminar explored about work integrated learning? In broad terms,

CJ Fleming (03:22):

We had five teams and Jesse very cleverly named them after trees that you can find on Elon's campus, we basically have an arboretum throughout campus. So we had five teams, Oak, maple, Magnolia, Holly, and Dogwood. So just very briefly, team Oak looked at Student Voice in WIL and they really focused on the ways that students develop and the ways that students perceive quality WIL. And then next was Team Maple and they used some really innovative techniques to look at what work means to first generation students. They have somebody on their team who has a background really looking at linguistics and the way that people talk about things and the way that people narrate their identities. And so they did that. Then we had Team Magnolia. Team Magnolia was a group of people that we put together because they were all healthcare professionals and we thought that that was enough to make a team and they let us know that simply being a healthcare professional actually was not necessarily enough to go on to be a team, but they persevered and they really found a way to look at a really meaningful concept, which is the idea of belongingness in work integrated learning.

(04:38):

And so they are studying how different fields like OT, pt, medical nursing, like that sort of thing, how different fields look at belongingness and how students feel and perceive WIL in those fields. And then we have Team Holly, and actually I joined Team Holly so I can speak specifically to them. They're looking at faculty engagement in WIL both through a survey and a qualitative study and just really trying to figure out what are the ways that we get people to be involved in WIL on the university side and what does a good program look like. And then last we have Team Dogwood and they really looked at supervisors, so WIL includes students, faculty, and supervisors. And we have teams that have addressed all three aspects of that. Doug was looking at both really supervisors and students and seeing what students want and how supervisors, what supervisors want, how those two things compare.

Jessie Moore (05:29):

Thank you very much. I'm curious, just before we go on Annalise, you also worked closely with the teams and got to learn about their work. What was one of the most interesting things that you think came out of their research or what most interesting to you personally?

Annelise Weaver (05:47):

Yeah, I think so CJ just talked about, well, all the teams, but I think the team that first of all, all of the research that was done by all the teams was incredible and I was really inspired by all of it, but I was really interested in Team Maple's work, especially Christine's part in which CJ also mentioned she was

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the linguist on that team and the way that she was able to incorporate linguistics into their first generation student research was really cool. We to, she gave us a script at the conference that we had and we got to kind of analyze it the way that she does every day. And that was really interesting. It was really cool. It was a lot of work. I don't know how she does it. Yeah, I think that the incorporation of linguistics and that WIL research was really interesting to me. So yeah,

Jessie Moore (06:51):

I love that as an example of the ways that the cell multi-institutional research seminars invite participants to draw on their disciplinary research methods and the ways that that can enrich what the teams learn about their research questions. So I really am grateful that you brought that up. That's a great example.

Nolan Schultheis (07:12):

What advice would you give to students who are listening to the podcast and who are interested in or currently pursuing internships and other types of work integrated learning?

Annelise Weaver (07:21):

Essentially the work integrated learning experiences really help bridge that gap between academic learning and real life experiences. So for those students who aren't pursuing WIL just yet right now, I would recommend it. I would definitely say to pursue those opportunities. Like I said, I'm a senior here at Elon and I never had an internship during my time here just because, well first of all, it's really dependent on the school that you're a part of here at Elon. So for example, my school, which is the College of Arts and Sciences, doesn't require an internship. So there wasn't necessarily that big push for me to go and do one. But now that I've had that exposure through this research seminar and I got to really learn more about work integrated learning and the benefits that it has, I would highly recommend it. I think that, again, like I said, it just provides you with those real life experiences and gives you that exposure. Now, this isn't to say that you can't do anything like amazing if you don't do a real experience, but it just gives you that foot in the door if you want it before you go out into the real world. Yeah,

CJ Fleming (08:50):

I would say I actually have two thoughts and one of them will surprise you. And the first one is actually if you're thinking of college as a way to get an internship and get a job, I would actually encourage you to slow your role WIL experiences are super important and I'm about to tell you why I think they're so important. And I think it's really important to have a strong academic foundation before you go out and do that. So a lot of times people come in and immediately they're like, how am I going to get an internship? How am I going to get a job? Whoa, whoa, whoa, let's just hold on for a second. Let's learn how to think. Let's learn how to integrate. Let's use our good higher order thinking skills first and then let's go get an internship. So I absolutely of course think that they are important.

(09:39):

And I oftentimes think the conversation about college has become go get an internship. And I actually think that we need to hold on to that for just a second. However, obviously I think that everybody should do an internship basically. Why is that? Two reasons. One is there are things in any curriculum that you simply will not be able to grasp until you see it with your own eyes. I can stand up at the front of the room and tell you about it until I'm blue in the face and until you see it, you simply will not know

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what that is for yourself. You have to sort of get in there and get your hands dirty. And so for me, that's really the value of this is that you get to get out there and see it for yourself and live it instead of just hear about it.

(10:24):

So for me, that's tremendously valuable. And then from the side of career growth and exploration, I really like to use the metaphor of the TV show. Say Yes to the dress, and if you're not familiar with the show, say yes to the dress. It has aired on TLC for a long time, and it is a bridal salon in various states, mostly New York. And the show is about people going there to try on their wedding dress. And you may be thinking, why is this relevant? Well, a lot of times people go into the bridal salon and they're like, I want a dress and I want it to be not white, and I don't want lace and I don't want sleeves. And what do they come out with? A white dress with lace and sleeves. And the point is you have to go try it on. You have to see what the dress looks like on your body before you can be sure what you want or you don't want. And that show is just so fun to watch them go try on the dresses. But I think internships are a lot like that. You have to go try it on because you think you don't want lace, but until you've seen what lace looks like, you're not sure. And so I really think it's important for your academic development and for your development as a future professional to be able to have these kinds of experiences.

Jessie Moore (11:31):

I love that. And it rings so true. My degree program does require an internship, and one of the things that we find is if we can get students in to an internship maybe in their second year, it's an opportunity for them to test whether they're pursuing the direction that is actually the good fit. And I would say seven times out of 10 they discover that what they thought they wanted to do isn't what they wanted to do, and then they do another internship and discover what they love and what they do want to do for their career. So that's a great analogy. Thank you.

CJ Fleming (12:07):

Yeah, related to that, I just think a lot of times I have students who do an internship and they don't like it and they're really disappointed and I understand that. And at the same time, that is tremendously valuable information. If you put on the dress and you didn't like it, good thing we didn't go down a 30 year career of doing it. So an unsuccessful internship is still very successful in my book.

Nolan Schultheis (12:28):

So Dr. Fleming, you wrote a blog post about overlap between undergraduate research and internships. What makes internships distinct from undergraduate research and why are they worth pursuing?

CJ Fleming (12:39):

So that blog post originated for me from actually the work that I did with Team Holly about faculty engagement. And when I interviewed a bunch of different faculty on Elon's campus about do they do work integrated learning at Elon, that's functionally pretty much internship. Do they do internships? What does that look like for students? Several of the hard sciences departments told me that they don't do internships, but they have students do summer research at an outside lab where they work on a project all summer and learn skills and then bring that back to the classroom. And I was like, Hey, wait, that sounds a lot like an internship. And in their very specific use case, I do think there is quite a bit of overlap, just the way that they do research in the way that they do internship. That's not true in every

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field, but in the sense that research is you are mentored, you have a person who is helping you to learn the skill and sort of evaluating your performance and is teaching you a thing that you do in the profession.

(13:42):

I think that undergraduate research really is in its own way an internship. It's just I think we as academics tend to think of internship as work preparation and research as either an academic task or as grad school preparation because a lot of faculty have only ever been in grad school or in an academic setting. And so we think of research as preparing you to go on to grad school or to be in an academic setting. Well, an academic setting is still a workplace, so really it's still internship in a lot of ways. So to me, the lines between the two are honestly a lot fuzzier than we think that they are. Now, there are some differences in that really an internship is about the work experience and you kind of trying out the career, whereas research is really more about the inquiry and about the project and about learning those specific skills.

(14:31):

So certainly they are different. I think functionally honestly, it comes down to are you looking for a job or are you looking for grad school? In a lot of ways, I think that's how students sometimes think about it, and I think about it that way sometimes as well. But I think it really comes down to more are you looking for work and that you're trying to go out into the real world and try to get an experience where, learn how to do a new job or are you testing out research as a career specifically? And if you're testing out research as a career, then of course you're going to want to go do undergraduate research, but there are very much internships that are research based. So there's a lot of blurry lines there.

Nolan Schultheis (15:07):

I would say coming from someone who's had an internship that was strictly work related, I would definitely acknowledge the fact that it was less of a educational kind of inform yourself about the inner workings of the world route. And it was more of a here's the lowdown on what you need to do, do it, and then there'll be no issue. And while I can see the parallels, I definitely do feel like internship almost has this more kind of rigid structure to it where you get educated by the boss, you do what you need to do, you have your checkups, and that's really it. And they're kind of there, but they're not really there, the position of authority. But I feel like the work integrated learning and the undergraduate research definitely has more of a hands-on approach from the teacher as well.

Jessie Moore (16:01):

Yeah.

CJ Fleming (16:02):

Well that's a great point. Thank you.

Jessie Moore (16:03):

I also think Nolan, your experience may not have had, and it had as someone who was guiding your reflection on the experience, but it wasn't as tightly connected to your degree program. It was more just as a general learning experience. And I wonder if that also shapes the way that you would view the experience in relation to research. But it also I think leads into our next question for CJ and Annalise. So

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what would you recommend colleges and their faculty and staff do to improve access to high quality work integrated learning? And you can split that up if you want to think about the access part or the high quality part. But really my underlying question is what do faculty and staff and administrators need to be thinking about as we are thinking about how to support WIL?

Annelise Weaver (17:01):

I wrote a blog post on the risks of work integrated learning, and I'm going to talk about some of them just because I think that we're looking at how mentors can help a student get a high quality WIL experience. I think it's important to take into consideration these risks. What could the student potentially be exposed to, and then how can we go about combating that and actually putting them into a good WIL experience where they're going to get something out of it. So we know that there are a variety of benefits that come from a WIL experience. However, there are some risks. So one being limited support and guidance. So some students in their WIL experience may find that support guidance in workplace education, but from their mentors is not necessarily always prioritized. So the question is how can we go about making sure that mentors are prioritizing the support guidance in workplace education for their mentees?

(18:23):

And if we're finding that this is not being prioritized, this is obviously going to have a negative impact on the student because this can cause for discomfort and confusion to come about because if there isn't that healthy relationship between the student and the mentor, that's just not good news. It's just not going to make for a good experience. And also not having, and I wouldn't say that this is the case for all cases, but not having a good relationship with your mentor might make it so that the student doesn't have a good relationship with the work supervisor at the WIL experience onsite. So this is not to say that students receiving limited guidance can't succeed, it's just going to make it a little bit more difficult because a lot of them need that primary direction and mentoring to be able to feel confident and comfortable in their work. So I think that that is a big one in my personal opinion that faculty and staff and mentors for WIL experiences really need to make sure that they have a healthy communicative conversation, relationship with their mentee, and make sure that they're prioritizing that support, make sure that they're prioritizing guidance. Because if there isn't that good healthy relationship, then it's just going to make it for a very difficult time for the student trying to complete the little experience.

CJ Fleming (20:13):

So having had time to reflect, I have four things that I would suggest that we could do to make internships better for students from the university side. The first is a lot of the research that I have looked at suggests that there's faculty and staff at universities perceive a real difference between the saying and the doing of WIL work and that it's really a buzzword. Everybody's talking about internships and there's a lot of hype about it, but not necessarily a lot of support and actual valuing of it in terms of, for example, faculty evaluation or faculty support. So aligning your resources with your values I think would be just a top meta level one in addition to that, the second one would be really intentional staffing and support. Elon, for example, has a career services center where people are really all about WIL experiences. Not every university has that.

(21:12):

And I've spoken to a lot of faculty who said, God, I just feel like I'm alone out here. I really feel like I need support either from other faculty or from an office, some kind of community there. And what people

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really want. There is a fully staffed career services office and readily available money to support mentorship. Well, that would be great, but what if we don't have that? Because I understand that not every university has that kind of resource for sure. In that case, what about things such as, for example, a community of practice around WIL and really connecting the people who are doing that work so that they can support each other and share ideas and also mentor development. A lot of people have done internships themselves, but that doesn't necessarily mean they know how to effectively mentor them for students. And there is a pedagogy to WIL and to experiential learning, and a lot of people haven't been exposed to that.

(22:07):

They've been exposed to their disciplinary teaching. If anything, lots of academics don't get any training and teaching at all actually. And so specifically to give some programming around that is a relatively low cost way to improve mentor skill sets and then improve that experience for students. And then last, the thing I would say is just to listen to students. One of our groups has really focused in on the student voice and WIL. They're basically finding that what technically officially makes a good internship or WIL experience sort scientifically speaking and what a student says makes a good WIL experience are not the same thing at all. And so we're over here focused on are we integrating theory and the student wants to feel like they belong and that they matter and that they have an important role in the place where they are. And so we're really not talking the same language on that. And so talking to students and really focusing in on what will help them to feel safe and secure in their WIL experiences, I think would be valuable.

Jessie Moore (23:04):

I really appreciate both your responses and the ways that they link to other materials that you've shared on CEL's website. You've both nodded to blog posts you've written that our listeners can find and we'll link to in the episode notes, but it also reinforces many of the points that you've made in the Elon statement on Work integrated learning, which listeners also can find on our website and we'll link to that in the show notes as well.

Nolan Schultheis (23:30):

What elements of a work integrated learning experience could inform classroom practices?

CJ Fleming (23:36):

I spend so much time thinking about what we could take from the classroom to apply to, and it has literally until this moment not occurred to me that we might take something from WIL and put it back in the classroom. And so thank you for asking that question. I would say what I mentioned earlier was that you can't really see it come alive until you go out into the world and sort of see it with your own eyes. But how close can we get to that in the classroom? So for example, I teach adult Psychopathology, which is the artist is formerly known as Abnormal Psychology. If people know that class and we talk about mental health and mental illness and what that looks like, and truly I want people to go do an internship where they work with people who have mental health conditions and see that, but how can we approximate that in the classroom?

(24:28):

I do a lot of case study work and I show a lot of videos because again, I want you to really see it and experience it for yourself. And so I would say the best thing that we can do is to incorporate as much

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real world activity as we can. There's a time and a place for just thinking for the sake of thinking, and there is a time and a place for really trying to apply. And both of those are important. And I think a lot of times we spend so much time in the details of what we're trying to teach that we don't think as much about the applied. I think at Elon we do that more so maybe than other places, but just because we have such a focus on experiential learning, when I came in as a new faculty, they really encouraged me to think about how I could cross that bridge.

(25:11):

But I think a lot of times we just get bogged down in the detail. So a real focus on application I think is really relevant. I also think the other thing that we can do when I am teaching an experiential education or a WIL focused experience, the primary activity academically is reflection. And when I am teaching in the classroom, I give a test and I suppose the test is technically reflection if you really stretch the definition of that word. But I don't ask students to reflect on their experience or to do some of that integration across experiences that I do when I'm teaching a work integrated learning experience. So honestly, the main thing I would say is to take the really great pedagogy that we use in and just bring that back into the classroom in a more meaningful way.

Annelise Weaver (26:00):

I'm going to piggyback off of what CJ said. I'm actually going to go back to what CJ said about the application aspect as a student looking at it from student perspective, I also, I took adult psychopathology, unfortunately not with cj, but my professor also brought in case studies, which I found to be very beneficial because I felt like I was actually getting exposure to real life exposure to the topics that we were talking about. And for anyone who might be interested in pursuing a career in psychopathology, they got that real life exposure. They could see what they might potentially be getting into in the real world. So yeah, that's all I have to add onto that, but I thought that that was a really good point that I wanted to touch on.

Jessie Moore (27:00):

Well, and you both are highlighting two key practices for fostering engaged learning. One that you've both reiterated is the building connections to broader context. And so we can do that through case studies. As you've mentioned in some disciplines, you might also add in some client projects. And each of those then progressively helps students work towards hopefully internship or other type of work integrated learning, if that is something that they're interested in pursuing. I also want to highlight, I love that you both emphasize the role of reflection in learning. And that's something that I think we make more space for WIL than we sometimes make for space in our classroom practices. And so it is interesting to think about how, as you both noted, we can bring those effective practices back into the classroom from what we do well in WIL.

Nolan Schultheis (27:56):

What separates a good WIL compared to a great WIL?

CJ Fleming (28:01):

So your question was what's the difference between good and great? And to that, I would say the sort of theme of my answer is intentionality. Because I think a lot of times, for example, when I go into the classroom at the beginning of the semester to teach a full semester of class, I've got the syllabus ready

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and I've got my plans and I've got my slides and I'm sort of ready to go. And I've sort of sat and thought about that. I think internships, in my case when I'm mentoring them, it sort of comes to me and says, Hey, my cousin's uncle's friend works at this place and they're going to let me do a summer internship there. Can you mentor me? And I'm like, yeah, sure. Sounds good. And it is just such a different mental space for me in a lot of ways in a good way.

(28:50):

But also I just will sort of say, great, tell me a little bit about it. I'll sort of type in a few details on the syllabus. And then we go. And there is a lot of intentional work that has gone into my syllabus and my preparation, and yet I feel like my experiences like a lot of other people that sometimes in these experiential education type experiences, we just, I'm going to say wing it in a lot of ways or kind of develop as we go. And I think that we'll experiences the difference between good and great is are you winging it or have you really sat and thought about this and been intentional with what you're planning and what the student needs and what those assignments are doing? And some of us are doing that and some of us are not. And I will say that I have been guilty of not in the past, before I got into my role as the faculty fellow, I was winging it.

(29:37):

I was just like, I want you to have this experience. Let's do a couple of reflection papers that have been passed down to me from older faculty. And as long as you're getting a good work experience, then I'm happy. It's a really radically different scene for me. Now that I've really dug into the best practices, I am a lot more thoughtful about what the assignments are and how the assignments tie together and what I'm really asking the student to do from the academic side. So intentionality, I have two sort of sub-bullets under intentionality. And one is communication because again, in the past I was a little bit loosey goosey on that, and I am now regularly in contact with the student. I'm regularly in contact with the site supervisor. And as much as that is possible, I'm regularly in contact with our career services center who does the registration.

(30:28):

We are talking all the time, and that is just so helpful. There's a lot less that's falling through the cracks. And I think that communication and clear expectations are also what can make it great. Because for example, when a student tells me that they're going to go to their cousin's, uncle's, friend's practice, I've just again taken that at their word, if that's going to be a good experience for them, great. But that a lot of times can lead to an internship that is getting coffee or working the front desk, those kinds of things. Technically you're getting a work experience, but it's not really the kind of valuable authentic work that we want to see. And so communicating expectations between me and the student and between me and the site supervisor about what a meaningful WIL experience looks like, helps the student to find internships that suit their needs better and also helps the site to understand really what we're looking for.

(31:16):

So that kind of communication for me has been just so essential for the listeners at home, I'm making the hand motion for Chef's Kiss or in Italy when something tastes really good, I'm making that hand motion for when you communicate. That's how good a WIL experience can be. And if you don't communicate, not good. And the other thing that I would say with regard to intentionality is preparing yourself as a mentor to have conversations with the student as needed about the student's identity the student's needs, the student's potential accommodations, the student's sense of belongingness and purpose. When I originally thought of myself as a mentor for WIL experiences, I was thinking really

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about the academics. I'm a clinical psychologist, you're learning about mental health. I am prepared to help you go on that journey. And I didn't think about the ways that my students are navigating their identities in various spaces.

(32:11):

We are sending them out of the higher education bubble into the real world, and things are going to come up. Sexual harassment happens, racism happens, sexism happens. And we have to be prepared to talk about that as mentors. And I think that that's something that's important for us to be intentional about. And I also think it's important that we have those conversations in our communities of practice and that we get training on that from our universities in terms of how do we help students navigate that out in the world. And that's definitely something as a clinical psychologist identity is constantly in the room. And so that's something that I've always been thinking about, but that's not necessarily something that comes natural to you. And I think that that's really important that we facilitate those conversations safely and effectively with our students.

Annelise Weaver (32:54):

Okay. So I looked at this obviously from a student perspective, and there are three things that I just want to touch on. So when thinking about the difference between good and great, I think that the depth of engagement has a really big role in that key difference. So I think that great experiences will engage students in actually meaningful work. CJ just talked about sometimes well, experiences can just be like you having to go get coffee for whoever. That's not meaningful. I think that what you really want in a great WIL experience is something that challenges you, something that allows you to be able to actually contribute to the experience. I think that that's a huge thing and the difference between good and great. The next thing is, we kind of already talked about this, but the reflection aspect of things. So I think those great experiences will help with opportunities for reflection, growth, and professional development.

(34:11):

I think that students should be receiving feedback, but not just surface level feedback, which I think that's what makes a good WIL experience that students are receiving feedback, but it's just surface level. There's not a lot of opportunity for room for improvement on the student's end. So I think that that's another big difference between good and great. And then how relevant is it to what you want to do, what the student wants to do in the future, how relevant is it to their own career path? So I think those great experiences will help with the students' long-term goals, those long-term aspirations, what they want to do with their career. And I think that good experiences could give that exposure, but I think that they would be more focused on just checking off the boxes, just getting the students to complete the task that they want them to complete as opposed to that great experience, which can help them with long-term goals, like what they want to do in the future.

Jessie Moore (35:23):

Anything else you would like our listeners to know about Work integrated learning in higher education?

CJ Fleming (35:29):

I would just say work integrated learning. It's more than an internship, it's more than a work experience. We really, as a country, have gotten into the line of thinking of go to college, do an internship to get

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experience, get a job, and I just really want us to slow down and expand that process and really focus on all that WIL has to offer.

Annelise Weaver (35:52):

I'm going to second that. That's those really good answer. I

CJ Fleming (35:55):

Heard

Jessie Moore (35:55):

It.

CJ Fleming (35:57):

It's

Jessie Moore (35:57):

A great response. Well, thank you very much for taking some time to visit with us today. We appreciate it. Just a quick reminder for our listeners, we will include links to the blog posts that were references as well as to the Elon statement on work integrated learning. But just thanks again, CJ and Annalise for sharing your time this morning. We appreciate it. Thanks

CJ Fleming (36:18):

For

Annelise Weaver (36:18):

Having us. Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having us.

Jessie Moore (36:28):

Nolan, what stood out to you that you think students should think about in terms of work integrated learning?

Nolan Schultheis (36:33):

Honestly, the other aspects that go into it except the learning, it seems that while work integrated learning is obviously designed to teach you something, there are a lot of kind of background processes that aren't really brought to the general attention of most people, and most people don't think about them. I mean, one, for example, is even just the intentionality of what the student wants from it in the relationship they craft between their mentor. I think if you can really apply this to anything in life, if you go into it with an attitude of you just need to get it done or you're doing the bare minimum or you don't really feel like you want to put in effort, you're not going to get the same result out of it that you would've wished you could have. And I think that's really important to remember. I also like the idea of just trying it out. I know a lot of people hear either the word internship or work integrated learning at this point, and they probably assume that they're not going to like it. It's going to be long and tedious

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process. It's going to be difficult. And ultimately, really the only way you can know is to try. So I did enjoy that point as well.

Jessie Moore (37:48):

And I think you're highlighting something that also resonated with me, which is the intentionality piece that to really move from a good to a great work integrated learning experience, there needs to be intentionality for everyone. And so part of that is building that partnership among the student, their site supervisor and their mentor, to think about how are we intentionally working towards goals that the student wants to achieve in relation to their learning and intentionally providing work experiences that are meaningful and intentionally scaffolding, reflection on what is the student learning from that experience? What are the takeaways? And as CJ said, sometimes an experience that we might say is not a good experience because a student discovers that they don't want to continue in that particular aspect of a profession actually is really meaningful because it gives them a chance to redirect and find something that they're more passionate about that can be a sustained career.

(38:52):

So that intentionality throughout the process among all of the partnering participants really stood out to me. One other aspect that this conversation reminded me of is that in our national poll of recent college graduates, we know that internships are the most frequent high impact experience that students pursue in college outside of their classroom experience. And that really emphasizes why we should be paying attention to how to move from a good internship experience to a great work integrated learning experience. And I really appreciate the strategies that Annalise and CJ shared with us, both for students to implement and for faculty and staff and work supervisors to consider. Once again, I'm Jesse Moore.

Nolan Schultheis (39:58):

And I'm Nolan Schultheis. Thank you for joining us for Making College Worth It. From Elon University Center for Engaged Learning.

Jessie Moore (40:05):

To learn more about work and degraded learning, see our show notes at www.do-center-for-engaged-learning.org. Do org subscribe to our show wherever you listen to podcasts for more strategies on making college worth it.