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The National Society for Experiential Education Research Collaborative

National Society for Experiential Education

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The National Society for Experiential Education Research Collaborative

The National Society for Experiential Education is embarking on a new endeavor to advance our understanding of how experiential education impacts learning, teaching, and schooling in various contexts and communities. This endeavor, called the NSEE Research Collaborative, will convene national and local researchers to collaborate on a large-scale, multi-faceted research study that will investigate various issues in experiential education.

The purposes of the NSEE Research Collaborative are:

- to conduct empirical investigations of critical and important issues that will advance our understanding of the process of experiential education and its overall impacts, benefits, and shortcomings;
- to pool the available intellectual resources for experiential education in order to maximize the quality and influence of experiential education research;
- to produce findings about experiential education that will help further legitimize the role of experiential education in formal and informal educational settings;
- to network, systematize, and coordinate research on experiential education; and
- to ensure that all quality research on experiential education is disseminated fully to optimize the use of its findings in practice.

Background

The idea for the Research Collaborative arose from discussions conducted by members of NSEE's Research Committee during the society's 1998 annual conference. The Research Committee members' discussions focused on the need in the field to provide to researchers of experiential education a collegial venue by which they can discuss their research ideas, present their research designs for feedback and critique, connect their individual research studies to a broader research agenda, and share the findings of their studies. Currently, too few venues exist for researchers of experiential education to engage in a collaborative exchange of ideas and advice.

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But beyond the exchange of information, there is also a need to coordinate and systematize the research of experiential education. While there is a growing number of researchers who are investigating various important issues in experiential education, experiential education research continues to remain at the periphery of most institutions. At some institutions, researchers are even discouraged from studying issues in experiential education. Despite decades of research investigations in this field, relatively little experiential education research is well-supported financially. And few large scale studies of experiential education exist. Most studies are smaller scaled investigations which produce findings that often cannot be generalized beyond the programs or settings that were studied.

By pooling individual research efforts into a broad theoretical framework, we can better ensure that each research study on experiential education adds knowledge to a growing database of information and addresses the issues of a broader, overarching research agenda.

As the only national organization that has an active and formalized research committee that focuses exclusively on experiential education, NSEE is the most appropriate organization to sponsor and facilitate the work of this national and potentially international Research Collaborative.

Components of the Collaborative

This section addresses the following questions:

- *What will the Research Collaborative do?*
- *Who can participate?*
- *When will the Research Collaborative be convened?*
- *On what issues in experiential education will the research of the collaborative focus?*

Meetings of the Collaborative

A primary goal of the collaborative is for each member's research activities to meet a need in the broader field of experiential education research. To do this, the members of the Research Collaborative will meet once per year during NSEE's Annual National Conference to discuss their research interests and to determine ways in which various members of the collaborative can join forces to strengthen each other's research efforts. At the very least, NSEE's Research Collaborative will be a venue for researchers of experiential education to share their work with colleagues who can discuss and critique the research.

The Research Collaborative is not meant to be a short-term project with a definite end product; rather, it is intended to be a long-term collaborative that will continue to refine and revise its investigations as the needs of the field change.

Each year, the members of the collaborative will meet during a pre-conference session devoted exclusively to the collaborative. In addition, the members of the collaborative will meet once during the conference. The purpose of these annual meetings will be to define a set of activities for the collaborative's work during the year, to discuss the progress made by individual members of the collaborative, and to establish goals and agenda for the following year's meeting. During the very first meeting of the collaborative, the members will: discuss the goals of the collaborative; set an agenda and timeline for the collaborative's research work (based on members' own research work); design a long-term working conceptual framework for the collaborative; and determine on which pieces each member will agree to focus during the year.

During the year, members of the collaborative will work on their individual or joint research projects and will communicate with other collaborative members via phone, e-mail, or regional meetings as needed. As the collective research work of the collaborative is completed, selected members of the collaborative will be invited to present the findings of the collaborative's research to the broader NSEE membership. This presentation will be a standing research forum at NSEE's the annual conference program. In addition, members of the collaborative will be encouraged to present the work of NSEE's Research Collaborative at other conferences.

Membership

The Research Collaborative will be chaired by the Chair of NSEE's Research Committee (who is appointed by NSEE's Board of Directors) and by a standing member of NSEE's Research Committee.

Membership to the collaborative is open to all NSEE members who are (1) are engaged in investigative, empirical research that is exploring one or more issues related to experiential education; (2) seek to conduct research that can contribute to a greater understanding of experiential education; AND/OR (3) are interested in participating in the work of researchers who are investigating various issues in experiential education.

To be a member of the Research Collaborative, individuals must be an NSEE member in good standing, but they do not have to be a member of NSEE's standing Research Committee. However, all Research Collaborative members (and other NSEE members) are welcome to participate on the Research Committee, if so desired.

In order to form a collegial group whose members can engage in long-term collaborative activities, the members of the collaborative will be asked to agree to the following conditions:

- attend the NSEE Annual Conference and participate in the scheduled Research Collaborative meetings;
- participate in important conference calls or e-mail exchanges with fellow members of the collaborative during the year;
- agree to align any appropriate and relevant research on experiential education to the broader experiential education research framework, whenever possible.
- submit a fully completed application to NSEE's Research Committee according to the criteria and deadlines stated.
- participate in a spirit of collaboration and sharing, as well as participate as a critical friend to colleagues; and
- maintain high academic and scholarly standards in all work conducted through the collaborative.

There is no limit in the number of years an individual may participate as a member of the collaborative. However, it will be assumed that members who fail to attend two consecutive annual are no longer interested in participating in the collaborative and will be removed from the Research Collaborative roster. Individuals who cannot attend the annual meetings for good cause but who wish to remain a member of the collaborative should contact one of the Co-chairs to secure his/her membership.

There will be no financial compensation for members of the collaborative or its co-chairs. However, NSEE will ensure that adequate meeting times and space are secured for the Research Collaborative's meetings. NSEE may be asked to fund any collaborative-wide conference calls the members of collaborative may need to hold during the year. In addition, when appropriate and if opportunities exist, NSEE may seek external funding to support the work of Research Collaborative.

The Research

The work of the Collaborative will focus on utilizing the expertise of the collaborative membership to investigate broader issues on experiential education. The goal is to find ways of pooling the current work of the collaborative's members to maximize the effect the work can have on the broader field. The actual focus of the research and the questions to be investigated by the collaborative will be based on the interests and expertise of the membership. It is possible that the collaborative may be divided into several subgroups that study different aspects of experiential education. And it is likely that over the years, the scope and focus of the collaborative's work will evolve as the membership of the collaborative changes and grows.

It is expected that various members of the collaborative will choose to work on particular issues. For example, the members of the collaborative may determine that the field needs to investigate the impact of experiential education on students at different stages of learning. One or two members, who may be studying stages of learning at their sites, may want to work on formalizing the stages. Other members who are designing instruments to assess student learning may choose to work on developing different levels of their instruments for the different levels of learners. Another member who is developing a new model for analyzing hierarchical data may want to pilot test his/her model in this study. The primary goal is to pool the expertise and current efforts that are occurring among individual researchers in order to maximize their contributions to the broader field of experiential education.

Suggested Timeline

- May 1999 Announce the Research Collaborative and invite NSEE members to join the Collaborative
- July 1999 Hold a planning committee meeting to set the agenda for the first meeting of the Collaborative
- Oct. 1999 Hold first meeting in San Diego; one preconference meeting (4 hrs.) and one 90 minute meeting during the conference. In the future, the 90-minute session will be the collaborative's workshop time to present its annual progress or findings. Agenda: discuss goals, set agenda for research based on members' work; design a working conceptual framework for the collaborative; have each member agree to focus on one piece of the framework during the year.
- Oct. 1999
-Sept. 2000 Members work on their research projects; communicate informally as needed. One general check in by co-chairs during the year.
- Oct. 2000 Reconvene during preconference session and share progress, based on framework. Revise framework. Set goals for following year. Present year one findings at the conference.

THE NSEE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Co-Chairs: ALAN WATERMAN, The College of New Jersey
ANDREW FURCO, University of California, Berkeley

MARY SUE AMMON, University of California, Berkeley

SHELLEY BILLIG, RMC Research Corporation

BERNADETTE CHI, University of California, Berkeley

JILL CONRAD, RMC Research Corporation

KATIE EGART, Antioch College

MARK FALBO, John Carroll University

JOE FERRARI, DePaul University

AILEEN HALE, St. Mary's College

CHRIS KOLIBA, University of Vermont

PAT LINN, Antioch College

JOSEPH MARTINEZ, RMC Research Corporation

DAVID MOORE, New York University

JUDITH MUNTER, University of Central Oklahoma

NICK SANTILLI, John Carroll University

ANGELA SCHMIEDE, Stanford University

TRISHA THORME, Lafayette College

CLAUDETTE WILLIAMS, Clark Atlanta University

National Society for Experiential Education
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

AGENDA

NSEE Annual Conference, San Diego, CA

Wednesday, October 20, 1999

- 1:00 PM Welcome and Introductions
- 1:15 PM Background
- Goals and purpose of the Research Collaborative
 - Meetings during Conference
 - Conference calls during the year
 - Expectations
 - Overview of the Day
- 1:30 PM Members' hopes for the Collaborative: *whole group discussion*
- 1:45 PM Identification of Topics for Study: *brainstorm and group discussion*
- 2:10 PM Identification of Members' Areas of Expertise: *large group discussion*
- 2:20 PM Formation of Research Groups: *small group discussion*
- 3:00 PM Sharing of Research Group goals: *large group discussion*
- 3:15 PM Break
- 3:30 PM Overarching Vision for Experiential Education: Tying together the Research Group themes: *large group discussion*
- 3:45 PM Development of Research Group Action Plans: *small group discussion*
- 4:45 PM Next Steps/Wrap Up

Thursday, October 21, 1999

- 3:00 PM Welcome and Introductions of New Collaborative Members
- 3:10 PM Recap of Wednesday's Session
- 3:15 PM Needs Assessment: Needs of Individual Research Groups
- 3:45 PM Share Research Group' Benchmarks and Timetable
- 4:00 PM What the Collaborative and NSEE Can Offer
- 4:10 PM Overarching Collaborative Goals for 2000 Conference: San Antonio
- 4:20 PM Next Steps/Wrap-up