



# NB-IRDT

New Brunswick Institute for  
Research, Data and Training



Office of  
Experiential Education



**2021 COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK  
RESULTS OF TEFCE TOOLBOX  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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# Message from the Director of Experiential Education

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Dear Readers –

I am thrilled to share with you the first Community Impact Assessment of experiential learning conducted at UNB. Community-engaged learning is a form of experiential learning that engages students in addressing the needs in our community. As you'll see from this report, UNB is engaged in tackling the pressing challenges facing our communities through a variety of experiential learning activities. As part of our new strategic vision, *Towards 2030*, UNB is committed to providing experiential learning to all students, to being a university that is deeply engaged in our community, and to being a leader in our region.

This Community Impact Assessment is the first of its kind in Canada, measuring the impact of experiential learning on our students and communities. Our team has adapted a framework developed by TEFCE (Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education) to articulate UNB's impact on our community through our community-engaged learning activities, in partnership with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data, and Training (NB-IRDT) and especially the Pathways to Professions (P2P) program.

Thank you to the UNB educators and students who shared course information and their experiences with us in the development of this report. Your time is invaluable, and your experiences are central to our success. Thank you especially to our dedicated student research team – Fernando Aguilar, Eilish Keaveney, Hala Nasir, Kyla Scott-Macbeth, and Kelsey Shaw. Each of these students engaged in the Pathways to Professions (P2P) program, an applied research experiential learning summer program, and dove into a challenging and complex project. The results speak for themselves, but I want to thank you personally for your dedication, energy, and enthusiasm.

The data and recommendations included in this report will be used as a benchmark to help inform UNB's progress towards our strategic goals, including increasing experiential learning opportunities for all students and being a university of impact in our communities. The data will also be used to help us share the success of our programs, to recruit new partners, and to address pressing needs in our communities.

I hope that you find this report inspiring and motivating. In particular, I hope the success stories from our students and partners help to illustrate the impact and power of community-engaged learning. Please feel free to contact us at [experiential@unb.ca](mailto:experiential@unb.ca) with any questions or comments about this report.

Sincerely,

Sarah King, Ph.D. Director, Office of Experiential Education, UNB.

# Executive Summary

## How Did We Do It?

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- This report assesses the impact of experiential education opportunities on students and the community.
- Demonstrating UNB's innovation, this community impact assessment is the first of its kind in Canada.
- The analysis was developed based on a modified version of the *Towards a European Framework for Higher Education Community Engagement* (TEFCE) Toolbox a guideline for institutional self-assessment used in multiple European universities<sup>6</sup>.
- To gather the necessary data, the team distributed a survey to the faculty at UNB who instruct courses with an experiential education component.
- Based on a modified version of the TEFCE Toolbox, faculty members were surveyed to rate their community engagement based on four dimensions of engagement with 5 levels each:
  - *Authenticity of Engagement*: measures mutual benefits for both the student and the community partner
  - *Social Needs Addressed*: measures the extent to which courses address pressing local and global issues
  - *Institutional Sustainability*: measures the length of partnerships
  - *Communities Engaged with*: measures the type of partnerships involved in programming at an institution
- From the 360 courses identified as experiential learning, the team received 234 responses that were used for the analysis.
- The team conducted in-depth interviews with 12 students and 2 employers involved in experiential learning opportunities that were high in community engagement.
- These interviews were translated into intriguing success stories, these stories demonstrate the impact that experiential learning opportunities have in the community engagement of students and the benefits it produces to employers.

## What We Found:

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- Institutionally, UNB as a whole ranked at an average level of 2.62 out of 5 for community engagement, which is an average of the four dimensions of engagement (Table A). This implies that UNB has a moderate level of community engagement in all dimensions that were measured.
- Scores for dimensions of engagement:
  - ***Authenticity of Engagement: 2.74***
  - ***Social Needs Addressed: 2.59***
  - ***Institutional Sustainability: 2.64***
  - ***Communities Engaged With: 2.49***
- Through experiential education, students gained valuable skills that can be transferred to their careers and their communities.
- Employers recognize the importance and value of the experiential learning opportunities that they have on the community.

## UNB should...

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- Have more collaboration with community partners, especially lower capacity institutions; UNB should identify courses lacking external partners and work toward increasing partnerships with low to moderate capacity institutions (i.e. schools, NGO's, social enterprises and citizens) to expand its community impact.
- Encourage community partners to have a larger role in course development and delivery.
- Invest in long-term partnerships to create sustainable impact.
- Encourage innovation in experiential learning programs; students should be encouraged to apply the knowledge they gained in the classroom to address the needs of the community partner.
- Develop a formal inventory of experiential learning courses and programs.
- Increase awareness of experiential education; UNB should create educational materials about experiential education and a guide to professors on how to improve experiential education and community impact support the creation of experiential learning opportunities in all faculties/programs.



# UNB's Commitment

The ExperienceNB project is a collaboration between the UNB Office of Experiential Education and the New Brunswick Institute of Research Data and Training (NB-IRDT).

The University of New Brunswick (UNB) has a rich history of providing quality education and contributing greatly to the community. It is the oldest English language university in Canada, with its Fredericton campus established in 1785 and Saint John campus in 1964. Today, UNB is proud to have more than 75 undergraduate and graduate programs housed across its 14 faculties, each having its own experiential learning opportunities. UNB has close to 10,000 students currently enrolled. Empowering those students to address local and global issues through hands-on education is essential to growing the potential of students and the community.

Currently, UNB is a key institution in the growth of the New Brunswick economy as it is influential in addressing population and labour decline. According to the *UNB Economic Impact Assessment*, as of 2020, UNB alumni consist of 39,000 New Brunswickers. Today, thousands of these former students are employed in New Brunswick. The net impact of UNB's former students currently employed in the

provincial workforce amounted to \$1.4 billion in added income in FY 2018-19<sup>1</sup>. Of this impact, \$34.9 million is attributable to former international students working in New Brunswick.

In February of 2020, UNB launched its strategic vision, *UNB Towards 2030*, outlining specific objectives to expand upon its strengths as a university of excellence. Recognizing that students have untapped skills and knowledge, UNB seeks to reinvigorate the university's structures to increase community engagement. One of the ways in which UNB is achieving this objective is by expanding and increasing the quality of its community-engaged learning opportunities. As an institution that prides itself in offering transformative learning experiences, UNB is committed to providing experiential education to all students. As experiential education becomes a buzzword and an increasingly attractive feature to students, stakeholders, and community partners, investing in experiential learning is a key strategy for increasing the university's impact.

## Partnership with The Office of Experiential Education and NB-IRDT

The Office of Experiential Education (OEE) plays an enormous role in the attainment of UNB's experiential learning goals. To work towards the university's objectives, the OEE has created *EngagedUNB* with the mission to "provide opportunities for students to become more effective citizens through engaging in meaningful work within their communities while addressing local, national and global issues, and to facilitate community organizations reaching their greater goals"<sup>2</sup>.

The experiential education opportunities supported by the OEE directly work towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"<sup>3</sup>. Given the community impact of the experiential learning opportunities at UNB, the Office of Experiential Education further supports the development of various other

SDGs through its community partnerships.

To support *EngagedUNB*, the Office of Experiential Education partnered with The New Brunswick Institute of Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) through their Pathways to Professions (P2P) program to launch the ExperienceNB project. The NB-IRDT is a research data centre at UNB and the sole administrative data repository in New Brunswick.

The P2P program provides post-secondary students with meaningful work experience, labour market training, and skill development opportunities, while simultaneously conducting research that is of key interest to New Brunswickers. The program evaluation conducted within the ExperienceNB project is crucial to achieving the university's goal of expanding and improving experiential learning opportunities at UNB.



The most obvious benefit of [my experiential learning experience] was **exposing the disconnect between academia and the real world**. This was an extremely valuable lesson for me because I plan on pursuing clinical psychology and I think that often a lot of university courses will emphasize academia but don't give us enough information on how this could be applied in the real world.

- Natasha Taylor, BSc, Class of 2022

# WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION?

Education is the catalyst of social change—a critical tool for identifying opportunities and challenges in our world. Experiential education takes a step beyond conventional classroom instruction by providing students with rich learning derived from immersion in real-world experience. The National Association of Experiential Education defines experiential education as a philosophy in which **“educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities”**<sup>4</sup>. Experiential learning codifies knowledge through authentic experience, academic engagement, and intentional reflection.

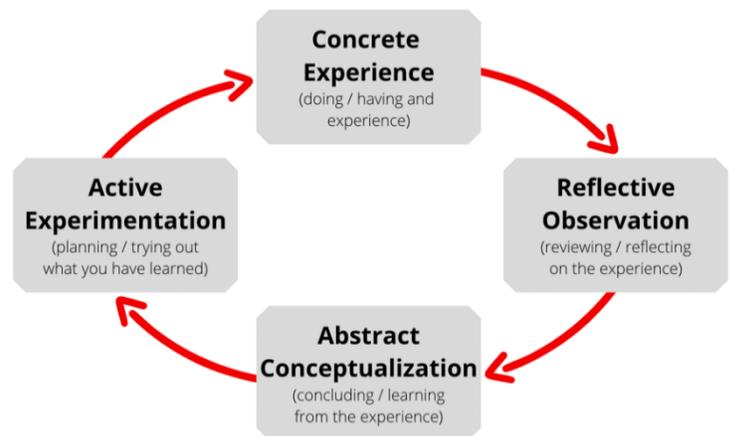
Experiential learning experiences provide students with the opportunity to apply in-class knowledge to hands-on applications. Particularly, it mimics experiences outside of the classroom, allowing students to take initiative, engage intellectually, make mistakes, and reflect on their personal and professional development. A key distinguisher of conventional and experiential learning is focused reflection, as without reflection, learning from experience is not guaranteed. Reflection allows students to establish connections between their experience and the learning derived from it.

To conceptualize the process of experiential education, David Kolb articulated the experiential learning cycle which is widely accepted and

employed in the field. Kolb's cycle (1984) conveys the stages of knowledge creation students engage in through their experiential learning opportunities: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation<sup>5</sup>. Through experiential learning, students are able to develop rich insight and complex learning, connect theory to practice, and identify opportunities and challenges for addressing social problems.

There are many different forms of experiential education that can be enacted in both curricular and co-curricular settings. These include co-ops, internships, practicums and clinicals, project-based learning, simulation/case-based learning, field experience, community-based learning and applied research.

## The Experiential Learning Cycle



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# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Experiential learning is important as it provides dual benefits to both students and the community. Our team recognizes that experiential education offers a unique opportunity to make an impact through community-engaged learning. Students gain tacit skills which allow them to flourish in their careers and increase the capacity of their communities. The University of New Brunswick prides itself in being a university of influence in research and teaching, enabling positive social change across our communities. Through UNB's experiential opportunities, it fosters strong partnerships with the community, encouraging students to make a difference in the world. We acknowledge that community-engaged experiential education is the way of the future; UNB's commitment to the highest standard of experiential learning is vital for creating the opportunities for the New Brunswick of tomorrow.





# MEET THE TEAM



## **Fernando Aguilar – Project Manager**

- BA Joint-Honours in Economics and International Development Studies, Class of 2021
- **Hometown:** Tlayacapan, Mexico
- **Career aspirations:** Social or Economic Policies Consultant/Specialist in the United Nations or the World Bank

## **Hala Nasir – Communications Coordinator**

- Bachelor of Science - Honours Biology, Class of 2023
- **Hometown:** Ottawa, Ontario
- **Career aspirations:** I am interested in pursuing a career in the medical field to make beneficial contributions to the health care system in our community.





# MEET THE TEAM



## **Kelsey Shaw – Researcher**

- Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Leadership, minors in Political Science and Economics
- **Hometown:** Fredericton, New Brunswick
- **Career aspirations:** I am currently interested in becoming a Policy Analyst or social enterprise entrepreneur, but I am open to arising opportunities.

## **Eilish Keaveney – Researcher**

- Bachelor of Business Administration - Honours in Human Resources Management, Class of 2022
- **Hometown:** Truro, Nova Scotia
- **Career Aspirations:** I would love to pursue a career in market research or human resources management for a multinational organization



## **Kyla Scott-Macbeth – Researcher**

- Bachelor of Science - Honours in Psychology
- **Hometown:** St. Stephen, New Brunswick
- **Career Aspirations:** I look forward to working in community development in the not-for-profit sector, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.



# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With UNB's goal to provide experiential education to all students, **ExperienceNB** has developed two major strategies to analyze the impact of experiential education opportunities on both post-secondary students and their communities. The ExperienceNB project has worked towards measuring the quality of the current state of experiential education at UNB, assessing strengths and possible avenues for improvement, and providing actionable recommendations for the university to implement in the coming years.

The **first strategy** was to conduct an evaluation of the current state of experiential learning opportunities at UNB by assessing their level of community engagement. ExperienceNB aimed to measure the community engagement of each course that was identified as having an experiential learning aspect. This was measured using a survey that was distributed to faculty members at UNB to gather information about how they use experiential learning in their courses.

The survey was developed based on a modified version of the institutional self-assessment framework called *Towards a European Framework for Higher Education (TEFCE) Community Engagement Toolbox*<sup>6</sup>. The TEFCE toolbox was utilized as a reference tool as it outlines measurable dimensions of community engagement that can assess UNB's performance. Once the surveys were completed, the data collected was translated into two heatmaps to visually display the ratings of engagement for each faculty and the university as a whole, demonstrating both the areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The **second strategy** of the ExperienceNB project was to develop in-depth case studies on multiple experiential education positions that are currently offered at UNB. Case

studies were conducted to gather insight into the impact of experiential learning on program participants. These case studies can be used to identify the strengths of these programs and their impact on the students and community partners. Furthermore, these case studies can be displayed as success stories for UNB marketing campaigns to attract future students and community partners. This will support UNB's goal to increase both enrollment and the number of experiential education opportunities.



# METHODOLOGY

To implement our two main strategies, we employed two methods to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. First, a Community Engagement Survey was distributed to staff to collect numerical data upon which community engagement levels could be analyzed across faculties. Next, structured interviews with students who have been involved in community-engaged experiential learning opportunities provided anecdotes about the impact of experiential education on student's capacity to engage with the community.

## Community Engagement Survey Methodology

While our team ended up conducting a survey to measure community engagement, our original plan was to evaluate the syllabi of experiential learning courses. Due to concerns of intellectual property rights, our team pivoted to create a survey based on the TEFCE framework to collect data. This option did not require syllabi collection and allowed us to answer questions regarding community-engaged learning that would not be answered in traditional syllabi.

To measure the level of community engagement present in UNB courses, quantitative self-reported survey data was gathered using an electronic survey distributed to UNB faculty members from June 9th to June 30th, 2021. Data was collected on courses at UNB containing elements of experiential learning. Courses that were marked as containing experiential learning were self-identified by each faculty head at UNB through inquiry forms that were distributed by the Office of Experiential Education in the winter of 2021. Courses were deemed as containing experiential learning if the "educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities"<sup>4</sup>.

Faculty members were deemed eligible for this survey if they currently instruct one or more courses on the list compiled by the OEE inquiry forms; these faculty members were instructed to complete a survey entry for each of their experiential courses. Compiling all the experiential learning courses, the total number of courses was 363. At the end of the data collection period, surveys were filled out for 234 courses. Given that the survey is intended to show the levels of community engagement through experiential learning opportunities by faculty and for the university, instructor names were not included in the data gathered by researchers, as individual course evaluation is beyond the scope of the project.



## Adapting the TEFCE Toolbox

To measure community engagement in experiential learning opportunities at UNB, the *TEFCE Toolbox for Institutional Community Engagement in Higher Education* was adapted and used as the main measurement tool within the survey. The original TEFCE toolbox allows users to evaluate programs or institutions based on five main dimensions of engagement to be rated; the first four of which were included in our analysis.

1. *Authenticity of Engagement*: measures whether the benefits derived from programming are authentic; meaning they have tangible gains for both the institution being studied and the surrounding community. A lower score would indicate no evidence of mutual benefits. Several components are measured to determine this level of engagement.
2. *Social Needs Addressed*: measures whether local and global issues (i.e. homelessness and climate change) are being addressed by programming. A low score would be given for programming that simply aids in contributing to the labour market.
3. *Communities Engaged With*: measures the type of partnerships involved in programming at an institution, meaning a higher score would be given to programming with low-resourced partners such as NGOs or shelters, rather than large corporations.
4. *Institutional Sustainability*: measures the length of partnerships between the institution and its community partners.
5. *Institutional Spread*: takes information from across departments at an organization and measures whether the initiatives and impact involve institution-wide efforts. This measure was not included in our survey as we opted for a faculty-specific analysis upon data collection.

Each dimension is rated on a scale from 1-5, based on definitions of low-level, middle-level and high-level engagement. In our survey, definitions of these dimensions of engagement were slightly altered to provide a more accurate description of how community engagement manifests at UNB. Levels 2 and 3, which were not previously defined in the TEFCE toolbox, were defined by the researchers to improve the accuracy of the analysis and provide descriptions for each level in the survey (see Appendix A for the adapted TEFCE toolbox).

### Survey Questions

Using the adapted version of the *TEFCE Toolbox for Institutional Community Engagement in Higher Education*, survey questions were created. Faculty members were asked to identify their faculty and course code and were presented with questions directly derived from the adapted toolbox (see Appendix B for survey questions). Particularly, each question contained five options, each representing a different level of engagement.

### Extracting Data

Following the survey deadline, the data provided by participants was extracted and input into an Excel file. Respective sheets were created for each faculty which listed all courses/survey entries along with their ratings for each dimension of engagement. For all faculties, numbers provided by the survey data were averaged to produce a mean rating for all four dimensions of engagement. For the university as a whole, weighted averages were calculated to account for variation in

representation from each faculty. From these averages, results were analyzed and placed on heatmaps for each faculty and the university as a whole to demonstrate the performance for each dimension of engagement.

## **Limitations**

When using self-reported survey data, there are limitations including faculty member bias, which has the potential to increase course ratings. The level achieved for each faculty is only meant to measure its level of community engagement and impact with respect to the framework used in this report, it is not representative of the overall quality of the education being delivered. Faculty members may misunderstand the survey as a form of evaluation of their classes and experiential education programs. To reduce bias, a disclaimer was included to note that the level of community involvement is not a reflection of course quality but rather a measure of UNB's community impact.

Additionally, an important limitation of the project is the varied perceptions of community-engaged learning among faculty members. A misunderstanding of these definitions may affect their understanding of the survey options and impact their responses. To mitigate this limitation, clear definitions were set for each level to avoid vagueness contributing to higher ratings. Furthermore, to avoid misunderstandings of these concepts, we answered questions from faculty members, either through email or by online meetings. Although measures were taken to mitigate bias, participants may have preconceived definitions which may remain dominant in their understanding of community-engaged learning.

Another limitation is that there is variation in the courses that were included in the evaluation for each faculty. Course lists were internally compiled with little external consultation, meaning faculties did not have an unbiased third party to collect lists of courses deemed experiential. Although a form was given to all faculties outlining the different types of experiential education, certain faculties excluded courses containing experiential learning from their lists. Additionally, some faculties had few total experiential learning courses, meaning that it is difficult to determine the statistical validity of the results for these individual faculties.

## **Case Studies Methodology**

To highlight specific individual experiences of students who completed experiential education programs at UNB, a case study methodology was chosen. This method involved the collection of in-depth qualitative data from interviews with students who participated in UNB's experiential education programs. In addition to student interviews, our case study methodology also involved qualitative data collection from interviews with local employers. The data was used to build informative success stories that highlight the importance and impact that experiential education has on post-secondary students.

The Office of Experiential Education compiled a list of experiential learning programs that were offered in the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 semesters. Brief descriptions of the positions were described in this document and shared with our team. From this list, we selected 22 individual programs

that were assessed as having high community engagement to conduct case studies. Utilizing the TEFCE framework, “a high level of community engagement” was operationalized as programs or courses that have a high level of authenticity of engagement (i.e., courses or programs that build the capacity of community partners and brings equal benefits to the students and community), address pressing global issues or local social problems, and those that have engaged with partners with the least capacity for engagement.

In total, 9 student questions and 8 employer questions were developed (see Appendix C for questions). The primary goal of the case studies was to showcase the successes UNB students have had in their experiential learning programs and highlight organizations that provide a high level of community-engaged learning. Questions were developed by adapting the TEFCE framework for case studies and were aimed at providing students the opportunity to reflect on their experiential learning opportunities, speak on the role they had in their program and describe how their experience impacted themselves and their communities. Along with the interview questions, a short follow-up Google Form was sent to each student and employer regarding the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals that they engaged with through their experience or within their organization.

Using data provided by the Office of Experiential Education, the names of students who participated in the selected experiential learning opportunities and their employers were able to be identified. These students and local employers were contacted via email and were requested to participate in a 45-

minute interview. Students were interviewed on topics regarding their experience at the organization they worked for, how the organization supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals, valuable lessons they learned and how they will be applied in their future careers. On the other hand, local employers were interviewed on topics related to their organization and the services they provide, the benefits of the experiential learning opportunities, how experiential learning increases student marketability in the future workplace, as well as how their company supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Out of the 22 students and 5 employers that were contacted, 12 students and 2 employers agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted virtually and were conducted between June 15th and July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A structured interview process was followed, with each student and employer being asked the same set of questions, to allow data to be collected in a systematic way across all participants. After revising all transcripts, 4 data-rich interviews were chosen to be transformed into “success stories” for the report, while the remaining case studies may be used for marketing purposes and the OEE website. Students and employers who were to be featured in the success stories were reminded they could view the final story prior to it being published or used in any capacity. Additionally, participants were asked if their photos/accompanying visuals could be included in the report and were provided model release forms to sign, permitting UNB to use their image.

# Results

## Community Engagement Survey Results – Figure 1

Using statistical analysis, we determined that we needed 185 survey responses to ensure a representative sample given that the total amount of experiential courses was 363. Since 234 survey responses were received, statistically the data collected from the Community Engagement Survey is representative of the population of experiential education courses and programs offered at UNB.

| Faculty             | Number of Courses | Responses Received | Response Rate |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Arts (Fr)           | 66                | 38                 | 58%           |
| Arts(SJ)            | 9                 | 8                  | 89%           |
| Business (SJ)       | 59                | 54                 | 92%           |
| Computer Science    | 8                 | 2                  | 25%           |
| Education           | 11                | 11                 | 100%          |
| Engineering         | 39                | 39                 | 100%          |
| FOREM               | 41                | 23                 | 56%           |
| Kinesiology         | 43                | 0                  | 0%            |
| Law                 | 15                | 2                  | 13%           |
| Management          | 19                | 10                 | 53%           |
| Nursing             | 17                | 16                 | 94%           |
| Renaissance College | 6                 | 5                  | 83%           |
| SASE                | 3                 | 3                  | 100%          |
| Science             | 32                | 23                 | 72%           |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>363</b>        | <b>234</b>         |               |

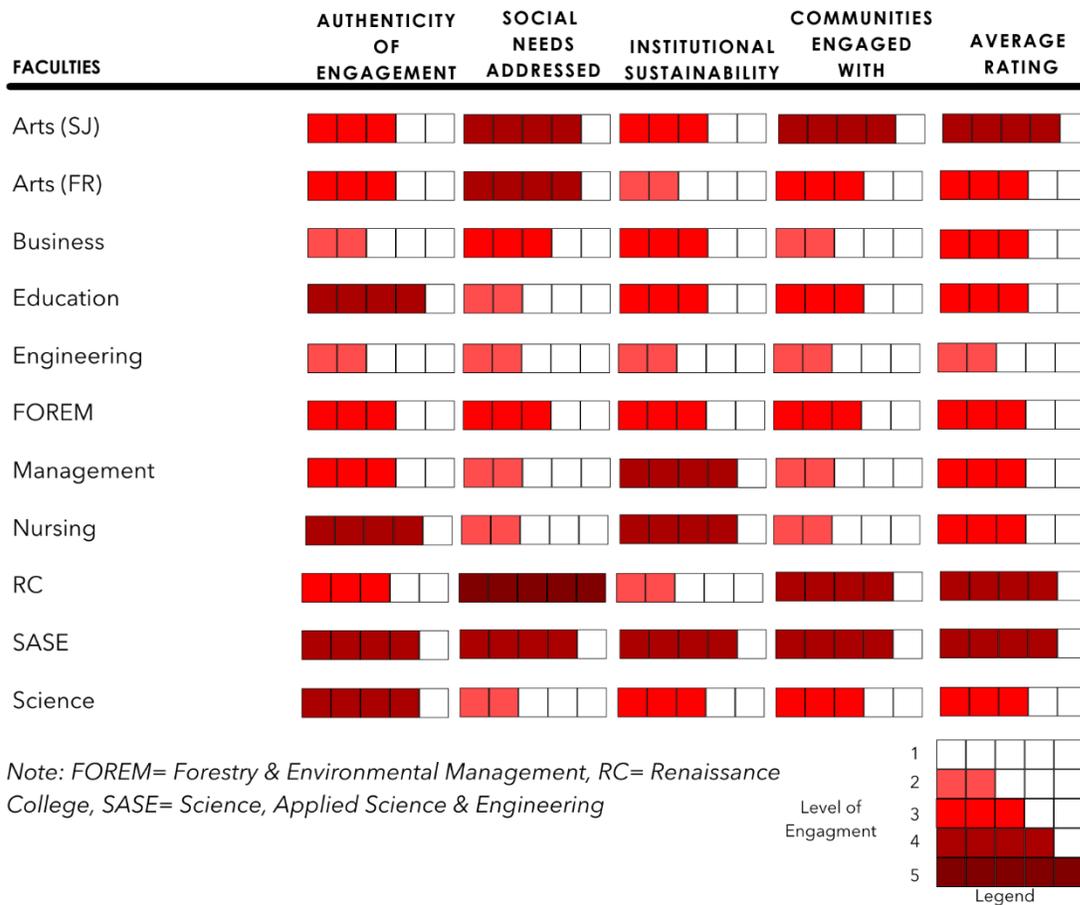
*Note: FOREM= Forestry & Environmental Management, SASE=Science, Applied Science & Engineering*

Figure 1 breaks down the number of experiential education courses identified in each faculty, along with the number of responses that were received, yielding the percentage of survey completion by each faculty at UNB. While all responses are considered for our overall analysis of UNB, faculties falling below 50% survey completion were excluded from individual analyses.

### Data Breakdown by Faculty

Once the data was organized, and exclusion criteria was ensured, we conducted further data analysis. Results were obtained by creating a response database in an Excel file. For each entry, the file records the faculty, the course and the responses to each question representing a different dimension of engagement. For each answer, the response of the participants was automatically coded as a number from 1 to 5, representing the level of engagement chosen by the participant. From these numbers, we calculated the average rating for all dimensions of engagement for each faculty, while weighted averages were calculated for UNB as a whole.

## Data Breakdown by Faculty – Figure 2



For the data breakdown by faculty, ratings with decimals were rounded to the nearest integer reflecting their corresponding level. For the faculties, the results are presented on bars for each dimension, with white representing level 1 (lowest level of engagement) and dark red representing level 5 (highest level of engagement), with gradient shades of red representing levels 2, 3 and 4.

Examining these results, the highest-rated faculties were: Renaissance College, SASE (Science, Applied Science and Engineering) and Arts Saint John, with average community engagement scores of 4. The lowest rated faculty was Engineering with a score of 2. It is important to recognize that although some faculties have lower scores, it is not intended to be a holistic measure of the quality of experiential courses but rather a measure of their community engagement. The remaining faculties scored an average level of 3. When comparing the results, independent sample t-tests were run, and no significant differences were found between campuses. Therefore, it can be assumed that the community engagement relative to the number of experiential learning courses is similar at both UNB locations.

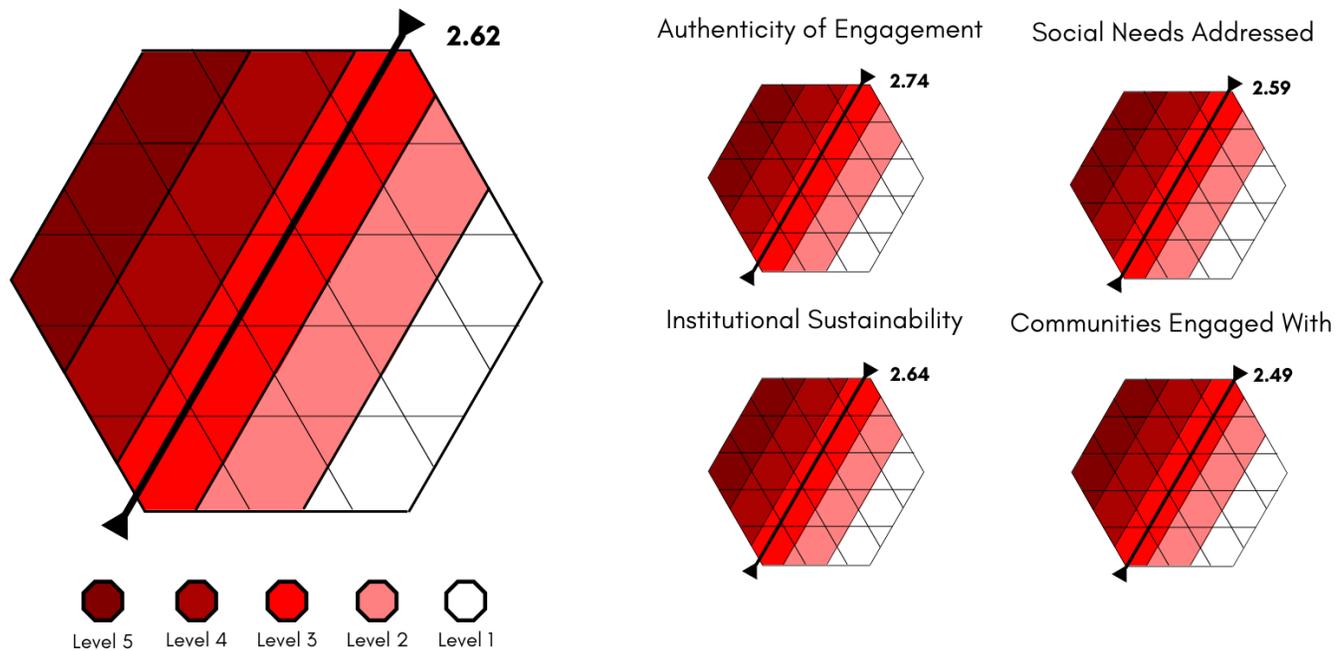
## Data Breakdown for UNB as a Whole

For the university as a whole, levels for each dimension were displayed on a hexagonal heatmap with different shades of red representing the various levels, with the level attained being outlined in black. On the heatmap, white represents level 1 (lowest level of engagement), dark red represents level 5 (highest level of engagement), and gradient shades of red represent levels, 2, 3 and 4.

# OVERALL RESULTS - DATA BREAKDOWN

Data Breakdown for UNB – Figure 3

## UNB Community Impact



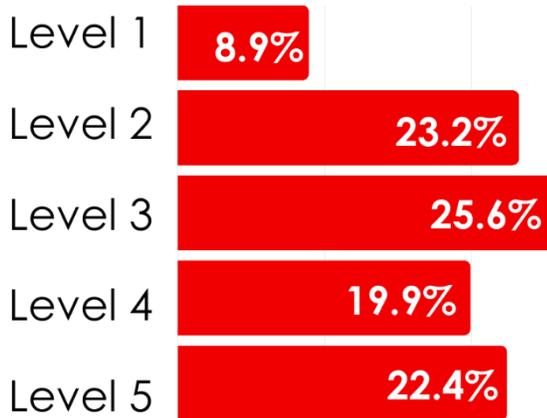
Averaging the scores for each dimension of engagement for all survey responses, UNB as a whole ranked at an average level of 2.62 out of 5 for all four dimensions of engagement. This indicates that UNB has a moderate level of community engagement in all dimensions that were measured. In other words, UNB tackles the grand challenges facing our communities; however, there are opportunities to improve. The results presented in this section demonstrate that UNB is committed to be a university of impact: all dimensions of engagement are at or above 2.49 out of a 5-point scale. Furthermore, the *Authenticity of Engagement* dimension is the highest dimension with 2.74 points; that is to say, the benefits derived from programming have tangible gains for students and are beginning to address community issues by occasionally involving external partners in course development and delivery. With a little over 8 years to reach its goal of providing every student with an experiential learning opportunity, UNB has a solid base for fostering community-engaged learning across all dimensions of engagement.

The *Social Needs Addressed* and the *Institutional Sustainability* dimensions have similar scores of 2.59 and 2.64, respectively. This suggests that while UNB has partnerships with community partners that focus on global and current needs, there is still a need to create lasting and strong relations that address local issues. By doing so, UNB will directly build a diverse, vibrant, and engaged community prepared to lead change and create sustainable growth and development. The *Communities Engaged With* dimension has a score of 2.49 points; thus, it is necessary that the university increase its partnerships with low to moderate capacity organizations, while maintaining its connection with well-established institutions.

# DATA BREAKDOWN BY DIMENSION OF ENGAGEMENT

## Authenticity of Engagement 1:

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 3.0

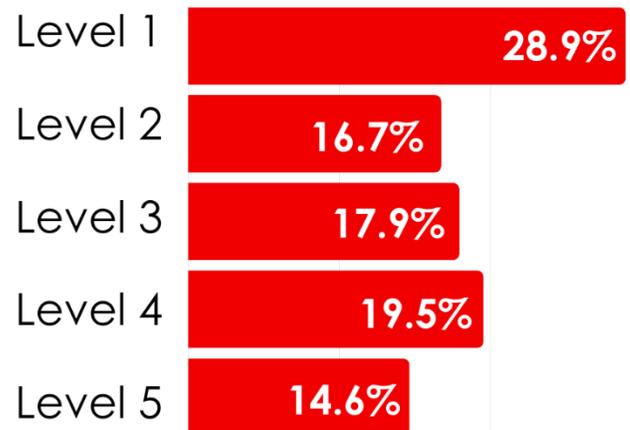


- 8.9% of courses focus solely on theoretical application of topics (level 1)
- 23.2% of courses make general references to their relevance to the societal needs of the university's external communities (level 2)
- **25.6% include specific content or make specific links with the societal needs of the university's community partners (level 3)**
- 19.9% has some aspects develop in cooperation with external communities (level 4)
- 22.4% are developed in cooperation with the university's external communities to address a societal need (level 5)

## Authenticity of Engagement 2:

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 1.0

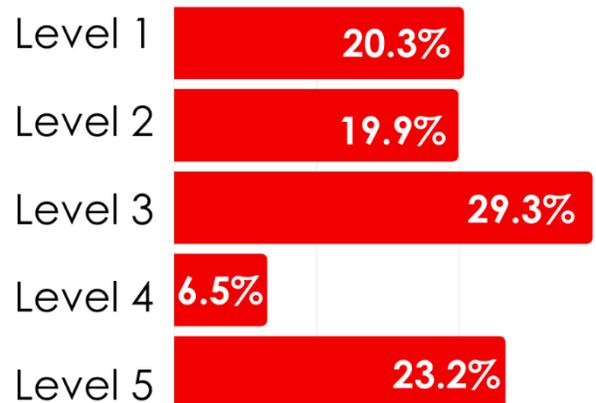
- **28.9% of courses benefit students to develop their knowledge and skills (level 1)**
- 16.7% of courses benefits students and identifies the needs of a community partner(s) (level 2)
- 17.9% of courses benefits students and supports community partner(s) in a short-term connection (level 3)
- 19.5% of courses benefits students and develops a long-term partnership between the university and community partner(s) (level 4)
- 14.6% of courses equally benefits students and the community while continually building capacities of the community partner(s) (level 5)



### **Authenticity of Engagement 3:**

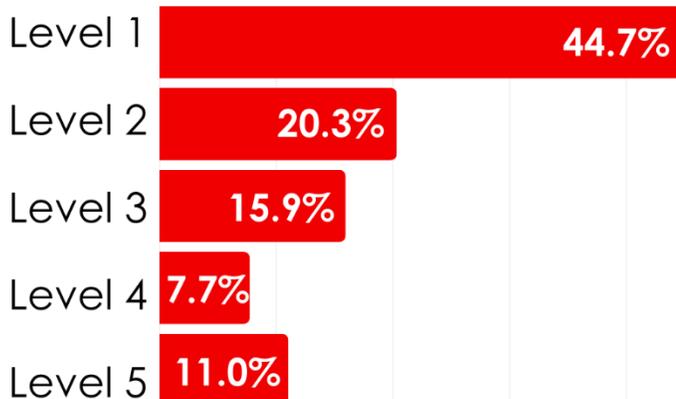
Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 3.0

- 20.3% of courses are solely delivered by the instructor of the course (level 1)
- 19.9% of courses are delivered by the instructor who uses resources from an external community representative (level 2)
- **29.3% of courses occasionally involve an external community representative in the teaching process (level 3)**
- 6.5% of courses often involve community representatives in the teaching processes (level 4)
- 23.2% of courses continually involve external community representatives in the teaching and learning process (level 5)



### **Authenticity of Engagement 4:**

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 1.0

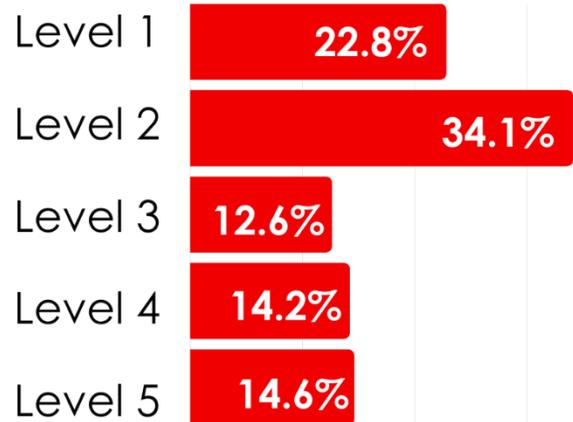


- **44.7% of courses are solely developed by the instructor of the course (level 1)**
- 20.3% of courses are partially modelled after an external community partner (level 2)
- 15.9% of courses formally consult an external community representative regarding the design of one part of the courses (level 3)
- 7.7% of courses formally consult an external community representative regarding multiple areas of the courses (level 4)
- 11.0% of courses involve both the instructor and community representatives as key stakeholders in the development of the courses (level 5)

**Social Needs Addressed:**

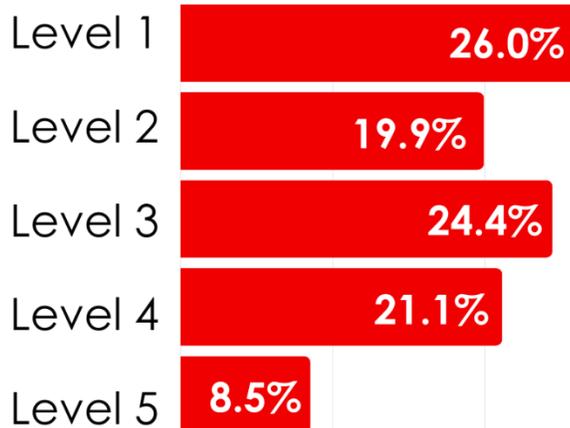
- 22.8% of courses have community partners that are part of well-established industries (administration, industry, medicine) (level 1)
- **34.1% of courses have community partners that are a part of well-established industries, only making reference to local social issues (level 2)**
- 12.6% of courses have community partners that respond to needs such as digitalization, innovation, smart cities, 21st century skills, etc (level 3)
- 14.2% of courses have community partners that respond to pressing global challenges such as climate change or migration (level 4)
- 14.6% of courses have community partners that respond to local social problems such as homelessness or economic development (level 5)

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 2.0



**Institutional Sustainability:**

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 1.0

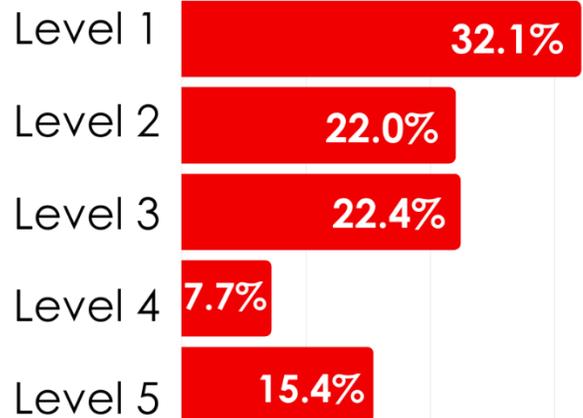


- **N/A 26.0% (level 1)**
- 19.9% of courses are based on a temporary relationship that must be renewed involving outreach from professors to community partners (level 2)
- 24.4% of courses are based on a repeating informal relationship between the university and external community partners (level 3)
- 21.1% of courses are based on an established and formal relationship between the university and an external community partner (level 4)
- 8.5% of courses are based on long term and transformational relationships where external community partners can engage in projects/issues as they come up (level 5)

### Communities Engaged With:

- **32.1% of courses are engaged solely with the university and its instructor (level 1)**
- 22.0% of courses are engaged with large highly structured and well-resourced institutions such as corporations, central government, hospitals (level 2)
- 22.4% of courses are engaged with institutions with less capacity such as local authorities, SMEs, cultural institutions, public bodies (level 3)
- 7.7% of courses are engaged with institutions with moderate capacity as the ones described in level 3, and it is building connections with least capacity partners (level 4)
- 15.4% of courses are engaged with partners with the least capacity for engagement such as schools, NGO's, social enterprises and citizens (level 5)

Median Score: 3.0 Mode Score: 1.0





# CORRELATIONS

To assess the correlations between the survey questions, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted. We chose to conduct correlational analysis to assess the strength and the direction of the relationships between the dimensions measured in our survey. Strong positive correlations indicate that both variables move in tandem, therefore are important for affecting change. As seen in Appendix D, all correlations were found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed). This indicates that there is only a 5% probability that the relationships within survey results occurred by chance. Positive moderate correlations were found between the following:

## 1. Authenticity of Engagement Ratings

All four **Engagement ratings** have high internal reliability ( $\alpha = .86$ ) as they all measure different aspects of community engagement. This was reflected in our survey results as each measure had moderate to strong positive correlations to each other, confirming the reliability of this portion of the survey.

## 2. Institutional Sustainability and Authenticity of Engagement

The survey results for *Institutional Sustainability* and *Authenticity of Engagement* were also positively correlated. Courses without community partners (level 1 of *Institutional Sustainability*) are likely to:

- focus solely on theoretical application of topics;
- benefit students to develop their knowledge and skills;
- be solely designed and delivered by the instructor.

In contrast to this, the relationships between the university and community partners that are long term and transformational (level 5 in *Institutional Sustainability*) are likely to:

- be developed in cooperation with the university's external communities to address a societal need;
- equally benefit the student while continually building capacities of the community partner;
- involve community partners in the design and delivery of the course.

## 3. Communities Engaged With and Authenticity of Engagement, Institutional Sustainability & Social Needs

Next, it was revealed that *Communities Engaged With* was positively correlated with the *Authenticity of Engagement* ratings, *Institutional Sustainability* and *Social Needs*. Courses engaged solely with the university and its instructor (level 1 of *Communities Engaged With*) are likely to:

- focus solely on theoretical application of topics (*Authenticity 1*);
- benefit students to develop their knowledge and skills (*Authenticity 2*);
- be solely designed and delivered by the instructor (*Authenticity 3&4*);

- have no partnership with external community partners (*Institutional Sustainability*);
  - when engaged with partners, they are part of well-established industries, addressing low-level social needs such as administration, industry, and medicine (*Social Needs*).
- Whereas courses that engage with partners of low to moderate capacity (level 5 of *Communities Engaged With*) are likely to:
- continually involve external community representatives in the development and teaching of the courses (*Authenticity 3&4*);
  - have relationships with community partners that are ongoing, long term and transformational (*Institutional Sustainability*);
  - address pressing local and global issues such as homelessness, climate change, etc. (*Social Needs*).

- be developed in cooperation with the university's external communities to address a societal need (*Authenticity 1*);
- equally benefit students and the community while continually building capacities of the community partner(s) (*Authenticity 2*);



# SUCCESS STORIES

As displayed in the results section, UNB has a great start to achieving community engagement through their experiential education programs. It is important however to understand the personal impact these programs have on students and community partners/employers. Therefore, our team conducted virtual interviews with students, and community partners who have programs with high levels of community engaged learning. These interviews allowed us to further analyze experiential learning opportunities and their importance and benefits on the community. 4 out of the 14 interviews that were conducted were translated into intriguing success stories, that highlight the experiences of students and employers who were involved in community engaged experiential education. This report features 2 success stories, Jennifer Lord and Natasha Taylor; and 2 employer success stories, Adam Peabody and Missy Bewick. By showcasing involvement within community engaged learning opportunities, it not only raises visibility on incredible experiential learning opportunities within our community but also provides a better understanding on how UNB connects students with the community.



## Jennifer Lord - *Employed with the Elizabeth Fry Society*



The Elizabeth Fry Society is a non-profit organization that works to change the public's perception of what it means to be a woman who has been involved in the criminal justice system. The organization works to provide access to many necessities such as stable housing and education to criminalized women. Through the Faculty of Arts, Jennifer was able to access this experiential learning opportunity, working as a public relations coordinator with the Elizabeth Fry Society. Jennifer tells us:

*"I worked alongside many dedicated team members, to address social issues, such as poverty, mental health and unstable housing that could lead women to be caught in the criminal justice system."*

Through her experiential learning opportunity, she worked on creating a series of podcasts for the organization. This included research on potential topics as well as working on scripts for each podcast. The podcast acts as an educational platform designed to inform the public on the issues women face both while they are incarcerated and when they are released. This experience provided Jennifer with the opportunity to help women within the criminal justice system and educate the surrounding communities. Jennifer says:

*"While the organization itself works to help women, who are or have previously been involved in the criminal justice system, everyone can benefit from their work. This organization aims to educate others on the struggles women face after being in the justice system."*

During her work term, Jennifer was also tasked with creating an information sheet about the organization so that all members were conveying a cohesive message about the organization.

Jennifer graduated from UNB Saint John in May 2021 with her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Criminal Justice and will be attending UNB Law in the fall. She believes that this internship mirrors what she plans on pursuing in the future. Eventually, she would like to work with the Canadian Innocence Project, which relates very closely to the work she performed with the Elizabeth Fry Society. Her time working with this organization provided her with a better understanding of what it means to work in a position that supports sustainable development and addresses important local issues. She tells us:

*"I would love to one day say that I work in an environment that promotes equitable access to all forms of education as well as works to ensure equitable access to necessities of life."*

This community-engaged learning opportunity with the Elizabeth Fry Society allowed her to be a part of the hands-on duties aiming to educate others on the struggles women face after being in the criminal justice system. The community-engaged learning experience allowed Jennifer to tackle a major challenge within our community, playing a huge role in the hands-on duties aiming to educate others on the struggles women face after being in the criminal justice system and making purposeful impact.

# Adam Peabody

## Director of Planet Hatch

Adam Peabody is the director of Planet Hatch- an award-winning entrepreneurship centre that focuses on developing globally competitive entrepreneurs and start-up companies. Planet Hatch, also a leader in experiential education opportunities, works with partners in academia and the private sector, providing engaged learning experiences to students from all backgrounds.

Internships and co-ops are just some examples of the many experiential learning opportunities that Planet Hatch provides. By providing placements for students with partner companies of Planet Hatch, students gain valuable hands-on-work experience. The organization also offers training alongside these programs, to improve the skills and capabilities of both the student and the employer.

Beyond the direct placements they provide, Planet Hatch is also invested in the education of students. Just over a year ago, Planet Hatch launched its “Future of Work Skills Program. Adam, who has recently become a contract professor for the Faculty of Management teaching entrepreneurship, tells us:

*"This program is designed to future proof the Canadian labour force, while accelerating return on investment for new employers on new hires."*

The Future of Work Skills Program aims to teach the top ten most sought-after skills by employers, with a focus on skills that are at low risk for being disrupted by technology. Through a combination of experiential and self-directed learning, Planet Hatch was able to deliver this training program throughout UNB and St. Thomas University. Additionally, the



program has been delivered across the secondary school system with hopes to scale the program up as they move forward. Planet Hatch has also been able to co-create course-based experiential opportunities with UNB. These opportunities allow students to get course credit for their work while being paired either individually or as a team with start-ups that participate in acceleration program offered by the organization.

As leading community partners in experiential education, Planet Hatch is always looking for partners in academia to help them co-create opportunities for students to engage in work that will tackle the grand challenges within our community and create meaningful change. Planet Hatch acknowledges the value of creating opportunities for students from a variety of disciplines as it allows issues to be tackled from multiple perspectives. Adam explains:

*"Issues require multidisciplinary solutions... climate change is going to be a business problem, an economics problem, an environmental science problem, and a sociology problem... it is going to require a variety of perspectives that are all working in concert together with a similar outcome in mind."*

## Natasha Taylor - Employed with Bee Me Kidz

Bee Me Kidz is a non-profit organization that works at various schools in Saint John and is dedicated to developing social, emotional, and mental health of elementary-aged children and their families. Their mission statement is to inspire, support, and help kids and families be the best Me they can Bee. Currently, they have two locations that provide multiple programs, and it will be expanding to St. Stephen in September. Through the Faculty of Science, Natasha Taylor accessed this experiential learning opportunity, working as a social impact analyst at Bee Me Kidz.

Throughout her time with Bee Me Kidz, Natasha's major duties included creating and administering a survey to discover the most impactful parts of the organization and looking at areas to improve the programs. Natasha analyzed the survey data and translated it into a report, which was later distributed to the board of directors at Bee Me Kidz. Another responsibility she was tasked with was researching the best practices for assessing social-emotional learning in elementary school children and deciding which method would be feasible for Bee Me Kids with the resources they had to offer.

Natasha is in her 4th year of university working towards her Bachelor of Science, majoring in psychology, and minoring in biology and criminal justice. As she plans on pursuing a career in clinical psychology, this experiential learning work provided her with the opportunity to make an impact within her community, which is something she had not had in a university setting. Although Natasha had experience conducting surveys prior to working with Bee Me Kids, it was never in a non-academic setting. She tells us:



*"The most obvious benefit of this experience was kind of exposing the disconnect between academia and the real world and that both sides can teach the other somethings...I think that often a lot of university courses will emphasize academia, but they don't always give us enough information about how this could apply to the real world".*

Natasha leaves this experience having strengthened her ability to express herself concisely, whether that be when communicating with a supervisor or ensuring the terminology that she used in the survey was straightforward. Through her work, she was able to take the project that she was assigned and successfully highlight their program's strengths and areas of improvement.

This community-engaged learning opportunity at Bee Me Kidz has allowed Natasha to be exposed to data analysis and communications, which gave her the chance to make an impact on the children and families in Saint John. As a UNB student, Natasha was able to bring her knowledge and integrate it with her community engaged work. Not only does this opportunity allow Natasha to step into future employment with increased marketability, but also with experience engaging in the community and making meaningful change.

# Missy Bewick

## *Founding Executive Director at Bee Me Kidz*

Missy Bewick is the founder and executive director at Bee Me Kidz, an educational non-profit organization created in Saint John. As described above, Bee Me Kidz works with various schools to develop social and emotional education programs for elementary-aged children and their families.

The goal in developing Bee Me Kidz was to help inspire elementary-age children and their families through teaching world-renowned social-emotional curriculum. During the week, the curriculum is taught to elementary-aged children at four different schools. Bee Me Kidz staff attend these schools once a week to teach the social-emotional curriculum. Missy further explains:

*"It's a changing world and for kids to be able to go to school and learn, they have to be able to understand what's happening on the inside. So, we teach them how to understand their emotions, how to solve problems, how to be a good friend, how to build confidence and have positive mental health and wellness."*

To keep parents involved, Saturdays are dedicated to teaching the whole family. This provides awareness as to what the child is learning, and the multiple ways parents can implement different strategies from the curriculum at home. During the



Saturday program, the organization provides a family brunch that builds a sense of community and that helps to combat food insecurity in Saint John.

Considering the organization is a non-profit, the Bee Me Kidz team only consists of three full-time employees. With the experiential learning opportunities that they have been able to provide, it has allowed them to grow their team, bring new energy, and add new perspectives to the work they produce. Missy says:

*"Having students was really beneficial because they were able to see things in a different way and do things, we wouldn't have been able to do. One of our students concentrated on grant writing, which is awesome because since we don't have marketing, we have very little time to do it, they were able to help us write grants, get new funding, and learn different aspects of business like organizing a parent retreat."*

A 'grant writing' role was one of the many roles that Bee Me Kidz was able to provide UNB students during their time working alongside their team. The organization had an interdisciplinary team of students coming from backgrounds in English, Business, and STEM. Students worked on data collection, data analysis, data visualization, writing and communications, and project management.

*"Natasha was awesome! She found some really good data about how our program improves mental health, how it helps the parents, and many common themes. She put together an amazing report and we use it all the time for grants and different funders. It goes to show the success of the program and we wouldn't have been able to do it without Natasha."*

Bee Me Kidz provides students with valuable skills that will help them excel and prosper in their future careers. Students are also able to play a hands-on role in community-engaged learning opportunities, that strive to provide children and their families the means to develop their social and emotional skills.

As Bee Me Kidz's success continues, they have recognized the importance of experiential education for both the students and its communities. Bee Me Kidz represents a high level of community engagement, and it works to continue building the capacity of community partners and bringing equal benefits to students and the community while addressing local social problems.

*"I think it's all about learning and getting to see as much as possible and trying as many different roles and figuring out what you really like and what you're good at...by also working in a small non-profit with many different personalities, they learn a lot of different experiences...the more opportunities they get, seeing different organizations and trying different roles will help them really find out what they're good at, what kind of role they want in the future or what role they don't want, which is just as important."*

- Missy Bewick, Director at Bee Me Kidz

## Qualitative Data Interview Analysis

The 12 student interviews we conducted through our case studies revealed that all the students who participated in experiential learning opportunities gained valuable skills that can be transferred to their future careers. For example, communication strategies, data analysis, and project management. Through their participation in experiential learning opportunities that are high in community engagement, a common theme we noticed was that working with these organizations enabled students to gain exposure to the hands-on duties aiming to address important local issues and were able to make tangible contributions to the community.

Through their participation in experiential learning, students acquired a competitive advantage over those who have not taken part in those experiences. All students interviewed demonstrated the ability to integrate what they have learned in the classroom into the context of the 'real-world' or their chosen career path as well as transferring the knowledge of the 'real-world' to take back into the classroom.

Additional themes among the student interviews include:

- an increase in confidence in their own skills and knowledge
- an increase in self-awareness
- a better understanding of the New Brunswick job market and social norms in professional settings (particularly for students coming from outside of Canada)
- confirmation/affirmation of what they want to do in the future from their experiences

The 2 employer interviews we conducted through our case studies revealed that local employers and community partners recognize the importance of the experiential learning opportunities that they provide for students. As leading community partners in experiential education, they are looking for partners in academia to help them co-create these opportunities for students to engage in meaningful work and to go one step further in increasing student civic engagement.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The quantitative data and success stories gathered for the Community Engagement Survey demonstrate that UNB experiential learning opportunities have an average community impact. As a whole, UNB rates in the middle level for each dimension of engagement. Looking at the data, it is evident that experiential learning opportunities with elements of community engagement currently exist across all faculties at UNB to varying degrees. UNB is committed to providing experiential learning opportunities to all its students, leading the way for other Canadian universities. One of the ways in which UNB can enrich its experiential education opportunities is by increasing its community impact. Over the next 8 years, as UNB works to implement its strategic vision, it is encouraging that the university is taking steps to evaluate and improve its experiential learning opportunities. Using the results from the Community Engagement Survey and our case studies, we have compiled a list of recommendations, driven by evidence, to guide UNB towards accomplishing its goals.

## **Recommendation 1: UNB should have more collaboration with community partners, especially lower capacity institutions**

As mentioned in the survey results, many experiential courses lack engagement with partners (32.1%), and even fewer courses engage with low-capacity partners (15.4%). **We recommend that UNB identifies courses lacking external partners and work towards increasing partnerships with low to moderate capacity institutions (i.e. schools, NGOs, social enterprises and citizens) to expand its community impact.** Engaging with these institutions takes a step beyond the impact of partnerships with highly structured organizations, as engaging with low-capacity institutions is correlated with equally benefitting the student and building the capacity of the community partner, and the community. As discussed in the interview with Missy Beswick, collaborating with lower-capacity institutions is impactful as it brings new perspectives and allows them to produce work that they otherwise would not be able to accomplish. Our correlations further indicate that by establishing these partnerships, relationships may be enriched to be long-term and transformational, and may increase the amount of pressing local social problems being addressed by experiential education opportunities. UNB's 2030 strategic vision outlines the aspiration to

ensure that programs and courses are responsive to the changing needs of the world, while preparing students for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. To achieve this aspiration, the university must prioritize creating sustainable partnerships with low-capacity partners to broaden social impact and provide students with the tools to be changemakers in their communities.

## **Recommendation 2: UNB's community partners should have a larger role in course development and delivery**

Survey results show that only 11.0% of courses involve community representatives as key stakeholders in the development of the courses, and 29.3% of courses only occasionally involve them in the teaching process. These percentages indicate that courses are lacking collaboration with external partners. **We recommend that UNB emphasize increasing collaboration with partners for course development and delivery.** As UNB strives to be a university that responds to the needs of the changing world, it is crucial that community partners are involved in the student learning as UNB students have valuable skills and knowledge they can bring to their community.

### Recommendation 3: UNB should invest in long-term partnerships to create sustainable impact

Only 8.5% of experiential learning courses at UNB are based on long-term and transformational relationships, indicating a lack of formalization and longevity of community partnerships. This discontinuity of partnerships could be detrimental to the university's ability to consistently offer courses with high community impact. **We recommend that UNB increases its focus towards establishing long-term sustainable partnerships to increase the score of institutional sustainability.** Not only does creating longer-term partnerships increase impact, establishing long-term partnerships may increase *Authenticity of Engagement* as it is positively correlated with Institutional Sustainability. By increasing long-term partnerships, it may enrich the community impact of courses by increasing the benefit to both students and the community. Furthermore, it helps move beyond occasional contributions of community representatives to a continual and holistic collaboration in the teaching and learning process.

### Recommendation 4: Innovation should be encouraged in experiential learning programs

Many courses (28.9%) focus solely on benefiting the students, whereas a small number of courses equally benefit both the student and the community partner (14.6%). With these percentages, there is an opportunity to expand the number of courses and continually build the capacity of their community partner. **We recommend that UNB encourages innovation in every experiential education opportunity, inspiring students to apply the knowledge they gained in the classroom to address the needs of the community partner.** Their positions must be not just a place

to gain experience, but also, an opportunity to bring something new to their employers. As UNB moves towards 2030, seeking to build a reputation as a university of influence, locally, nationally, and globally, encouraging innovative practices among students is a key strategy to achieve that aspiration.

### Recommendation 5: UNB should develop a formal inventory of experiential learning

Throughout our project, one of the major limitations has been the varying response rates, as well as misunderstandings between faculty members about what is deemed experiential learning. For example, some faculties excluded internships as part of their experiential education inventories, while others did not. **We recommend the development of a formalized inventory of courses and programs that contain experiential learning at UNB.** This type of inventory could be beneficial as it would provide students with the opportunity to plan their degrees around completing experiential education, pushing UNB further towards the goal of having all students engaging in experiential education. An inventory would also allow for benchmarking and progress tracking for the goals outlined in our strategic vision.



## Recommendation 6: UNB should increase awareness of experiential education

As stated in Recommendation 5, it is vital to have a comprehensive list of experiential education opportunities available at UNB. This goal cannot be accomplished without the full support of all faculties and the collaboration between educators and administration at the university. To increase the focus on experiential education, **we recommend creating educational materials about experiential education**, to ensure faculties all have the information they need to work collaboratively towards UNB's 2030 goals. In addition to this, UNB should provide a guide to professors with a roadmap to improving their experiential learning and increasing their community engagement. Furthermore, a marketing campaign highlighting experiential education opportunities at UNB could be used to attract potential students and community partners. These methods may help UNB to establish itself as a world-class institution with far-reaching and meaningful impact in the community.

## Recommendation 7: UNB should support the creation of experiential learning opportunities in all faculties/programs.

As shown in table 1, there is variance in the number of experiential learning opportunities across faculties. To make experiential learning more accessible to all students, **we recommend that UNB should support the creation of experiential learning opportunities across all faculties**. Specifically, UNB should encourage diversity in projects, programs and community partners. Efforts should be made to create partnerships that could offer diverse experiences, tailored to students from a variety of disciplines. As revealed through our interview with Adam Peabody, employers recognize the value they provide to students and are looking for more partners in academia to co-create learning opportunities. Additionally, teams consisting of students from different disciplines are highly valuable to external partners as many modern challenges require interdisciplinary solutions. Working towards UNB's goal of ensuring experiential opportunities for all students requires not only an increase in the number of experiential opportunities but also equal access for students in all programs.



# WHERE ARE WE GOING?

As UNB moves forward, fostering rich learning opportunities derived from real-world experience is a top priority. To create high-quality opportunities, it is crucial that they have significant community engagement. In this report, we analyzed levels of community engagement in existing opportunities at UNB with the goal of assessing the universities' strengths and identifying opportunities for improvement. To further contextualize this analysis, we gathered first-hand experiences from those who participated in experiential learning. This report is important as it highlights the benefits of experiential education and identifies actionable recommendations to improve the quality of experiential education in the coming years. These recommendations will not only serve UNB, but they will benefit its students and the broader community.

The University of New Brunswick prides itself in being a university of influence in research and teaching that enables positive social change across our communities. UNB is an essential provincial institution, that provides rich learning and contributes to the betterment of our communities and province. UNB fosters strong partnerships with the community and encourages students to make a difference in the world. Therefore, experiential education is key to enhancing New Brunswick's labour force as it provides students with tacit skills allowing them to flourish in their careers and increase the capacity of their communities.

Moreover, UNB is working towards its goal of increasing enrollment from 10,000 to 15,000 in the next 10 years. With experiential

learning becoming increasingly attractive to students, moving towards measured community engaged experiential learning will enhance UNB as a university of choice. More broadly, UNB seeks to be innovative in research; this assessment of experiential learning allows UNB to become a pioneer in research and measuring experiential education. As of now, no previous project has compiled a list nor measured the quality of experiential learning at UNB. Furthermore, we are one of only two universities in Canada measuring the impact of experiential education on our communities. In addition, programs like Pathways to Professions (P2P) provide valuable applied research opportunities to students, helping them to develop research skills that can support the needs of our communities.

The ExperienceNB project not only lays the groundwork for further evaluation of experiential learning at UNB, it also sets an example for other universities looking to enhance experiential education on their campuses. As UNB continuously improves its experiential learning offerings, students are engaged in meaningful opportunities that directly address challenges faced by our communities. Through experiential learning, students can build expertise in critical thinking and complex problem-solving. Moving beyond the static skillset gained from traditional learning helps to close the gap between subjects taught in the classroom and modern workplace scenarios.

Not only will they have a real-life application of skills, but students will have an increased awareness of current topics, issues within their fields, and local challenges. This can create a deeper understanding of how their skillset can be leveraged in the province, leading to a higher number of UNB students staying in New Brunswick and finding work after graduation. This retention of UNB students is one of how experiential learning has a broader impact on the community. Experiential learning provides community institutions with highly skilled workers who possess experience relevant to their position.

Universities are incredibly important to the communities in which they reside, just as communities are important to the universities they house. The ExperienceNB project helps to close the gap between community and university initiatives, benefiting both parties. Not only does experiential education provide community institutions with skilled workers upon graduation, but it also assists in building their capacity throughout the length of the partnership.

As UNB progresses towards its 2030 goals, the ExperienceNB project is the first step in enhancing experiential learning opportunities. We are excited to see the progress that UNB is going to make in terms of its community impact and the modernization of its approach towards experiential learning.

Throughout the ExperienceNB project, our team is grateful to have been able to work with data encompassing such a vital part of student development. We are excited by the idea of making a profound impact on future generations of students. We commend UNB's commitment to holding the highest standard of experiential education as it is crucial for shaping the New Brunswick of tomorrow.

- ***The ExperienceNB Team***



## Appendix A Adapted TEFCE Framework

| Levels of Engagement |   |  |   |   | Authenticity of Engagement   | Social Need Addressed  | Communities Engaged With   | Institutional Sustainability   |
|----------------------|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|                      | The institution has courses that...   | Community based learning is included in the courses in the institution and...                                    | Delivery of the institution's courses...  | The design / development of the institution's courses...  | -  | The purpose of the course is to engage students with knowledge of community partners that...     | Institutions courses are engaged...  | The courses are based on...  |
| <b>Level 1</b>       | ...focus solely on theoretical application of topics  | ...benefits students to develop their knowledge and skills   | ... are solely done by instructor of the course   | ... are solely done by the instructor of the course   | -  | ... are part of well-established industries (administration, industry, medicine)                 | ... solely with the university and its instructor  | N/A  |
| <b>Level 2</b>       | ...make general references to their relevance to the societal needs of the university's external communities      | ...benefits students and identifies the needs a community partner(s)   | ...are mainly done by the instructor who uses resources from an external community representative | ... model certain parts of the courses after external community partner   | -  | ... are part of well-established industries while making reference to local social issues        | ... with large highly-structured and well-resourced institutions such as corporations, central government, hospitals                               | ... a temporary relationship that must be renewed involving outreach from professors to community partners.                      |
| <b>Level 3</b>       | ...include specific content or make specific links with the societal needs of the university's community partners | ... benefits students and supports community partner(s) in a short-term connection                               | ...occasionally involve an external community representative in the teaching process              | ... formally consult an external community representative regarding the design of one part of the courses           | <b>*Level is assigned based on an average of previous 4 columns*</b> | ... respond to needs such as digitalization, innovation, smart cities, 21st century skills, etc. | ... with institutions with less capacity such as local authorities, SMEs, cultural institutions, public bodies                                     | ... a repeating informal relationship between the university and external community partners                                     |
| <b>Level 4</b>       | ...has some aspects developed in cooperation with external communities  | ...benefits students and develops a long-term partnership between the university and community partner(s)        | ... often involve community representatives in the teaching processes                             | ... formally consult an external community representative regarding multiple areas of the courses                   | -  | ... respond to pressing global challenges (such as climate change or migration)                  | ... with institutions with moderate capacity as the ones described in the past option, and it is building connections with least capacity partners | ... an established and formal relationship between the university and an external community partner                              |
| <b>Level 5</b>       | ...are developed in cooperation with the university's external communities to address a societal need             | ...equally benefits students and the community while continually building capacities of the community partner(s) | ... continually involve external community representatives in the teaching and learning process   | ... involve both the instructor and community representatives as key stakeholders in the development of the courses | -  | ... respond to local social problems (such as homelessness or economic development)              | ... with partners with the least capacity for engagement such as schools, NGO's, social enterprises and citizens                                   | ... long term and transformational relationships where external community partners can engage in projects/issues as they come up |

## **Appendix B**

### **Community Engagement Survey**

1. Please identify your faculty
  - Faculty of Arts
  - Faculty of Business (Saint John)
  - Faculty of Computer Science
  - Faculty of Education
  - Faculty of Engineering
  - Faculty of Forestry & Environmental Management
  - Faculty of Kinesiology
  - Faculty of Law
  - Renaissance College
  - Faculty of Nursing (Fredericton)
  - Faculty of Nursing (Moncton)
  - Humber College
  - Nursing and Health Science
  - Faculty of Science
  - Faculty of Science, Applied Science & Engineering
  - Faculty of Management (Fredericton)
  - Faculty of Arts (Saint John)
  
2. Please identify the course name and code (i.e., RCLP 4028)

#### **Authenticity of Engagement**

*\*Please note, the level of community involvement is not a reflection of course quality but rather a measure of UNB's community impact.*

3. Please answer the following question with regards to the manner in which you instruct the course in question.

*This course...*

- focuses solely on theoretical application of topics
- makes general references to the relevance of the societal needs of the external communities and its partners
- includes specific content or makes specific links with the societal needs of the university's community partners
- has some aspects develop in cooperation with external communities

- are developed in cooperation with the universities external community partners to address a societal needs

4. Please answer the following question acknowledging that community-based learning addresses human and community needs together; it is intentionally designed to promote student learning and development, and typically engages an external partner in the learning process.

*Community based-learning is included in this course and...*

- benefits students to develop their knowledge and skills
- benefits students and identifies the needs of a community partner(s)
- benefits students and supports community partner(s) in a short-term connection
- benefits students and develops a long-term partnership between the university and community partner(s)
- equally benefits students and the community while continually building capacities of the community partner(s)

5. Please answer the following question with regards to the manner in which you instruct the course in question. This question attempts to understand the level of collaboration between instructors and community partners of the university and its influence in the delivery of the course.

*Delivery of the course...*

- is solely done by instructor of the course
- is mainly done by the instructor who uses resources from an external community representative
- occasionally involves an external community representative in the teaching process
- often involves community representatives in the teaching processes
- continually involves external community representatives in the teaching and learning process

### **Community Engagement**

6. Please answer the following question with regards to the manner in which you instruct the course in question. This question attempts to understand the level of collaboration between instructors and community partners

of the university and its influence in the development/creation of the course. In other words, how much does an external community partner/organization influence the content and design of the course?

*The design/development of this course...*

- is solely done by the instructor of the course
- models certain parts of the course after external community partner
- formally consults an external community representative regarding the design of one part of the course
- formally consults an external community representative regarding multiple areas of the course
- involves both the instructor and community representatives as key stakeholders in the development of the course

### **Social Needs Addressed**

7. Please answer the following question with regards to the manner in which you instruct the course in question.

*The purpose of this course is to engage students with specific knowledge of community partners that...*

- are part of well-established industries (Administration, industry, Medicine)
- are part of well-established industries while making reference to local social issues
- respond to needs such as digitalization, innovation, smart cities, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, etc.
- respond to pressing global challenges (such as climate change, or migration)
- respond to local social problems (such as homelessness or economic development)

### **What kind of relationship do you have with community members?**

8. Please indicate the statement which best describes the nature of the relationship between community partners and the University

*This course is based on...*

- N/A
- a temporary relationship that must be renewed involving outreach from professors to community partners.
- a repeating informal relationship between the university and external community partners
- an established and formal relationship between the university and an external community partner
- long term and transformational relationships where external community partners can engage in projects/issues as they come up

9. Please answer the following question with regards to the manner in which you instruct the course in question. This question attempts to understand the level of collaboration between instructors and community partners of the university

*This course is engaged...*

- solely with the university and its instructor
- with large, highly structured and well-resourced institutions such as corporations, central government, hospitals
- with institutions with less capacity such as local authorities, SMEs, cultural institutions, public bodies
- with institutions with moderate capacity as the ones described in the past option; and it is building connections with least capacity partners
- with partners with the least capacity for engagement such as schools, NGO's, social enterprises, and citizens

10. May we contact you to gather further qualitative information about your course as part of the community impact analysis process?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email

## **Appendix C**

### **Case Studies Interview Questions**

#### **Student Interview Questions**

1. Briefly describe the experiential education practice that you were involved in and expand on some of the projects that you worked on throughout this experience?
2. What were your major responsibilities and what role did you take on through this practice?
3. Does this experience mirror what you plan on pursuing in the future and how will you apply the concepts you learned throughout this experience in your future career?
4. Which members of the community/target group were benefiting from your work?
5. What were some valuable lessons that you gained throughout this experience? (Talk about at least 2)
6. What are some new things you learned about our community through this experience?
7. UNB is looking at how our experiential education opportunities support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Would you be able to elaborate on some of the goals that your position aligns with and can you think of specific ways your work may have supported these goals?
8. It looks like your position supports X GOAL(s). Would you agree with that? Can you think of any specific ways your work may have supported these?
9. Is working in a position or environment that supports sustainable development important to you?

#### **Employer Interview Question**

1. Briefly describe your organization and expand on some of the services that you provide.
2. Which members of the community are benefiting from your work?
3. What are the major responsibilities and key duties that your employees take on?
4. UNB is looking at how our experiential education opportunities support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Would you be able to elaborate on some of the goals that your organization aligns with and can you think of specific ways your work may support these goals?
5. Is providing a work environment that supports sustainable development important to you?
6. Could you describe one of the major contributions that a student has provided for your organization?

7. What are the benefits of the experiential learning opportunities that your organization provides to many students in our community?
8. How do you think these experiential learning opportunities benefit students in terms of increasing their marketability in the future workplace and their chance of attaining meaningful work in New Brunswick?

## Appendix D Correlations

*Pearson Correlations between Community Engagement Survey Variables*

| Variable                        | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Engagement 1                 | -      |        |        |        |        |        |   |
| 2. Engagement 2                 | .677** | -      |        |        |        |        |   |
| 3. Engagement 3                 | .709** | .595** | -      |        |        |        |   |
| 4. Engagement 4                 | .544** | .454** | .632** | -      |        |        |   |
| 5. Social Needs Addressed       | .170** | .154*  | .151*  | .044   | -      |        |   |
| 6. Institutional Sustainability | .565** | .607** | .558** | .463** | .199** | -      |   |
| 7. Communities Engaged With     | .463** | .475** | .488** | .359** | .515** | .467** | - |

**Note:** Pearson Product Moment Correlational analysis was conducted to assess the directionality and strength between the relationships of the results from our Community Engagement Survey. Results from a Pearson Product Moment Correlation can range from +1 (perfect positive relationship) to -1 (perfect negative relationship), with 0 indicating no relationship between variables. \*Indicates that results are significant at a 0.05 level (2-tailed), meaning there is less than 5% probability that these results occurred by chance. In the table above, each dimension of engagement is labelled with a number (1-7). To find the correlation between two variables, find the number associated with the first variable along the top row, and go down that column until you reach the row of the second variable. For example, to read the correlation between Social Needs Addressed and Communities Engaged with, go to column 5, row 7 (.515\*\*).

## References

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- 7 Back Cover Photograph by Marta Sobral Garcia

