Virtual Field Experiences and Internships in Social Science, Education, and Humanities

On Tuesday, April 28, 68 instructors from the social sciences, humanities, and education convened to discuss challenges and innovative ideas for virtual field experiences and internships. Ideas and effective practices generated during that discussion are documented here. Contact cei@umn.edu to suggest an addition to this resource.

Recording and Slides
- Session recording
- Session slides
- Breakout room slides

Facilitators and panelists:
- Clare Forstie (CEI), facilitator; David Langley (CEI), co-convener
- Mark Pedelty (Communication Studies, Twin Cities), panelist
- Megan Bell (Communication, Crookston), panelist
- Helen Mongan-Rallis (Education, Duluth), panelist

General resources

A number of units across the UMN System have developed resources to support students and instructors in their shift to remote and online internship and field experiences. In addition, some crowd-sourced resources include a wealth of creative ideas to consider implementing specifically in field experience courses.

- Mark Pedelty's 8-minute video explains and illustrates the "digitally networked field course" model, including specific examples from his experiences teaching such courses.
- Career and Internship Services (supporting CCAPS, CDES, and CFANS) is offering a new resource for virtual internships focusing on micro-internships, as well as general career and internship resources for students navigating internships and job searches in the COVID-19 era.
- The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) in the Twin Cities has developed extensive materials to support internship courses, including minimum standards, best practices, a sample syllabus, and student-facing resources.
- CLA's Career Readiness framework and RATE tool offer opportunities for students to connect their education with career skills.
- "Doing fieldwork in a pandemic" is a well-organized, crowd-sourced compilation of specific ideas, examples, research, and tools to support virtual and remote field work.

Connect students with internships and field experiences

- **Leverage already-existing relationships** - Work with established community partners to identify emerging needs.
- **Use publicly-available spaces** - While practicing appropriate social distancing, students might access public parks or waterways to engage in relevant field experiences.
- **Empower students to search for internships** - Support the development of students' job search skills by modeling the search process through the internships search.
- **Share clear project ideas with partners** - Project ideas that might align with partners' needs include: creating online onboarding support for other interns, developing online content such as research and presentations, developing ideas for future programming, and supporting marketing initiatives.
- **Identify ways to place interns within the UMN System** - Many offices need additional support, and a coordinated effort is needed across the System to place students in internships, even on another campus. The [University COVID Action Network](#) (U-CAN) might be doing some of this work.
- **Replace some field hours with relevant continuing education modules** - The [Minnesota Department of Health's training site](#) is one such resource.

Support students in virtual internships and field experiences

- **Find out what's working** - Connect with students to learn what kinds of internship and field experience arrangements are working for them, given their life and work contexts.
- **Share student-facing resources** - CLA has developed guidelines for [pitching a remote internship](#) given the impact of COVID-19 and [remote internship tips for success](#), for example.
- **Connect students with campus resources** - [Resources are available](#) to support students' health and other basic needs. In addition, campus- or College-based units may be able to provide basic tools like laptops, as well as specialized equipment. Contact your library or [local academic technology office](#) for more information.

Design and teach virtual internships and field experience courses

For all courses:

Keep students' contexts in mind and communicate clearly

- **Meet students where they are** - Be mindful of the kinds of opportunities that will meet students' needs given their individual career goals and contexts.
- **Be clear about expectations** - Provide clear instructions for course communication, consistent and clear frameworks for the course…

- **Provide adequate support for students to learn the tools they'll need** - For example, show them out to use the Learning Management System (LMS) they'll need as student teachers, or the tools you expect them to use in your class.
- **Be intrusive** - Early on in your course, reach out individually to students who are not engaged, and continue to reach out to students who "drop off the radar." Build in adequate time to communicate with students; this work often takes longer in online courses.

Carefully consider your course design

- **Identify the right synchronous/asynchronous balance for your course** - While students report that synchronous course meetings keep them engaged, bear in mind students with limited internet or hardware (e.g., laptop, webcam) access.
- **Meaningfully create community early and often** - Keep students engaged in both synchronous and asynchronous modalities. Helen Mongan-Rallis shared numerous examples of how to create community in online courses, for example: create introductory videos in Canvas, offer authentic responses in discussion forums (and be present in discussion forums more generally), provide introductory forums for students to share a photo and connect it to the course, ask students to use Flipgrid to respond to prompts, provide meaningful and playful activities (like using the whiteboard in Zoom), allow students to use the mic *or* chat, and give students time to craft a response to a prompt before sharing (e.g., in chat).
- **Consider using case studies, or ask students to examine an object and report their findings** - In one example, Elaine Darst noted that in nursing, the Sim Center is sometimes used to develop cases that can allow students to interact with standardized patients. Students do everything from health history to assessment questions, communication skills, medication follow-up, and teaching (a telehealth type of format).
- **Be an active liaison with community partners -** Communicate frequently with partners/clients to monitor how partners' needs and learning outcomes are being met.
- **Keep assessment separate** from partners and clients
- **Consider how your current courses inform your future courses** - With permission, share student work and perspectives from your most recent courses in upcoming courses (the "cascading curriculum" concept noted by Mark Pedelty).
- **More ideas -** Guidelines for Online Teaching and Design and ACUE's Online Teaching Toolkit

For specific types of courses:

- When working with student teachers, consider using **microteaching** frameworks in which teacher candidates might teach each other.
- **Diversify how students learn** - As student teachers, for example, may need to teach remotely themselves. Model good online teaching in your courses.

- **Provide tech mentorship opportunities for student teachers** - For example, cooperating teachers might mentor student teachers in how to use online platforms like Google Classroom and Seesaw.
- For study abroad courses, **make use of current in-country connections** to work toward creating a virtual cultural experience, as Megan Bell has done. For example, students might conduct **interviews with already-existing contacts** and visit virtual exhibits and displays.
- For students producing media through a course, **audio-only projects (like podcasts) work well**, compared to video-based projects. As Mark Pedelty's [digitally networked field courses](#) have shown, audio projects are flexible, creative, and interactive. Tools to support student learning about production tools include: LinkedIn Learning modules on producing podcasts with Garage Band and Audacity, as well as sharing short video models from the field.