



Engaged and Experiential Learning Report

October 13, 2023

Overview

The MBU Experiential Framework represents a comprehensive university experience designed to provide students with a transformative and holistic education preparing them for careers and life. This model aims to cultivate leaders who are actively engaged in their communities and equipped with skills for their future careers. The undergraduate residential framework is made up of several interlocking features (experiential framework, leadership skills, and MBU Everywhere) that pair with the revisions to the academic portfolio, and the vision for building a stronger community on campus through the **Residential College Initiative (RCI)**.

Our approach includes an **experiential framework** for learning that is engineered to grow with our students as they progress through their academic and co-curricular journey. The framework is built on an experiential learning model that ensures a high level of engagement for every student at every step along the way. This journey takes students from the campus classroom to their next destination and provides them with opportunities for real world experience designed through a personalized and progressive model that builds over their time at the university.

Learning at MBU will be powered by a set of **leadership skills** necessary for students to be successful students in the classroom, conscientious citizens in society, and productive working professionals. These skills are not only integrated into our new curriculum, but are reinforced throughout the student journey. Students are given many opportunities to demonstrate these skills both in practice settings and through authentic experiences such as service learning and internship opportunities.

Career preparation and internships will be powered by a new program called **MBU Everywhere** that seeks to expand the university's operation by establishing a select network of regional hubs across Virginia and surrounding states, providing on the ground support for students participating in internships during their junior and senior years.

This cohesive journey for undergraduate residential students will embed cohorts, leadership skills, and internship opportunities throughout students' in and out of classroom experiences.

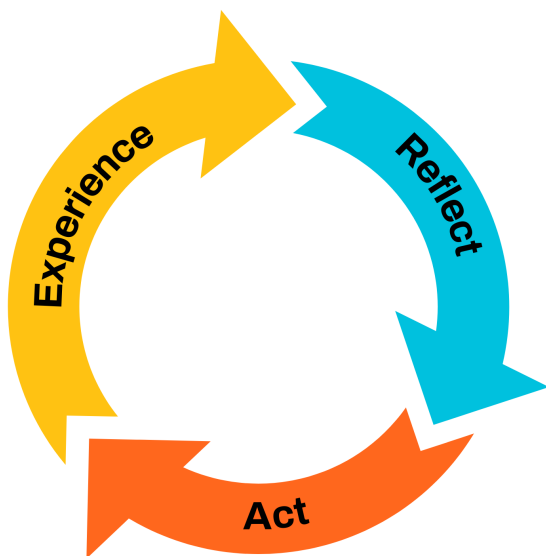
Experiential Framework

An experiential framework encompasses a student's curricular and co-curricular activities. The purpose is to ensure students are prepared for their next destination, whether this be meaningful employment or graduate school (or both).

A quality experiential framework needs to grow with the student. A first-year student will require more structure in their learning. By the time that student progresses to year three or four, they will be able to autonomously tackle problems presented to them in and out of the classroom. When students graduate from MBU, they will be able to apply the skills and knowledge they have gained from coursework, engaged learning experiences, and co-curricular activities to various contexts and situations. Put another way, the university must provide the environment for students to be challenged while also being supported.

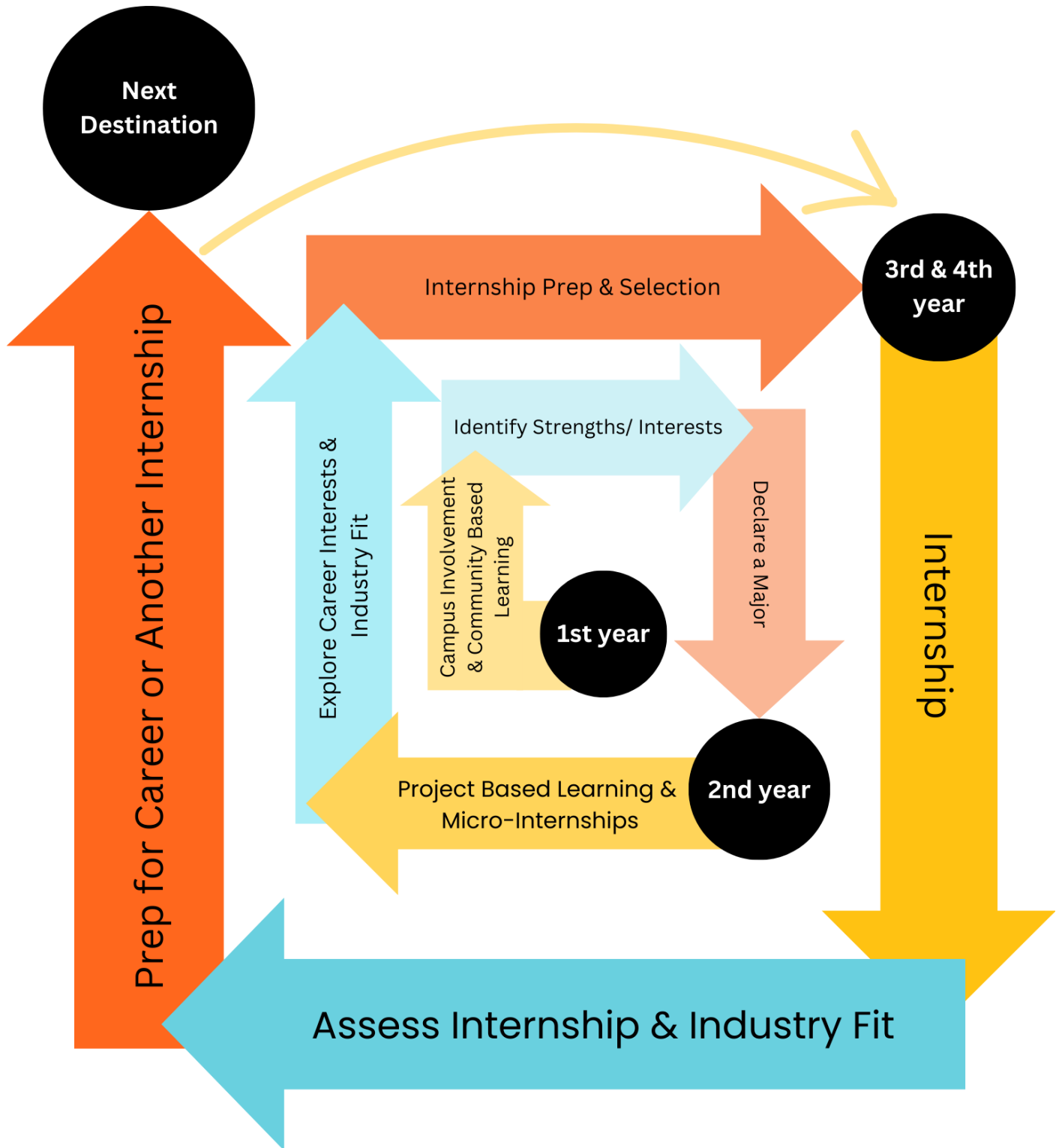
The MBU Experiential Framework

The MBU Experiential Framework is based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. The focus of Kolb's model is around reflection (or preparation), a pivotal experience which leads to further reflection, and finally action based on the decisions and observations made from the experience and the corresponding reflection. A great resource to learn more about this model is produced by [The Experiential Learning Institute](#). A simplified version of this cycle is shown below.



Kolb's cycle can be expanded to create a four year iterative process where students are synthesizing skills and experiences gained in the previous year and applying them to new, more complex, situations. The visual below walks through the MBU Experiential Framework and how students will progress and grow year over year. While it does not include all the experiences available to students throughout their time at MBU, it provides the underlying structure for a scaffolded experiential framework on which we can build many opportunities. As seen below, students start off small with community-based learning activities and end with internships and the connection to their next destination. In each year

students will have opportunities to prepare, experience something new, reflect on that experience, and make decisions that help them progress along their chosen pathway leading to career success.



Residential Campus Initiative (RCI)

The RCI, described in the enclosed RCI report, envisions a first and second-year residential experience that weaves together various facets of campus life (academics, faculty, staff, resources/services, and mentoring) – to bridge living and learning at MBU and support the new academic pathways. Students will **live and learn in residential colleges aligned with each of the new academic pathways** (Health Sciences, Business and Technology, Education and Society, and Creativity and Design) and be able to engage with faculty, staff, leadership and skill development, and programming related to their career interests. These initial cohorts will create belonging, connections, well-being and opportunities for social, personal, and intellectual development. Read more about the RCI model in the enclosed report

Leadership Skills

Throughout a student’s MBU experience, curricular and co-curricular engagement will provide opportunities to introduce, build upon, and master the key skills needed to succeed in life and the workforce. These skills, which we are calling *leadership skills*, will collectively prepare students to lead in a variety of settings including on campus, in the workplace, and in the community. The engaged and experiential learning team identified six skills to be woven throughout the MBU student journey:

1. **Collaboration:** Students will be able to effectively work together to achieve common goals through active listening, negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution.
2. **Communication:** Students will be able to clearly convey and interpret information and arguments in written, verbal, and non-verbal ways.
3. **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to analyze information, evaluate arguments, utilize data, and solve problems in ways that are grounded in ethical and evidence-based decision making practices.
4. **Inclusion, Equity, and Cultural Humility:** Students will be able to reflect on their own identities and privileges, recognize and interrogate systems that maintain inequality, build inclusive spaces, and design equitable policies, practices, and systems.
5. **Emotional Intelligence and Resilience:** Students will be able to process their emotions, navigate interpersonal relationships, and resolve conflict while building empathy, adaptability, and flexibility.
6. **Global and Systems Thinking:** Students will be able to identify, appreciate, and value different cultural norms, beliefs, and practices, and understand the connections between local and global systems that influence global trends, challenges, and opportunities.
7. **Data and Technology Fluency:** Students will be able to utilize, interpret, and synthesize complex data, develop technology skills relevant to career pathways, and make ethical decisions about data use and artificial intelligence.

These skills align with what employers say are most in demand for workers leading to 2025. *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* recent report [*New Pathways from College to Career*](#) focuses on skill development and groups the skills that employers identified as high demand into four areas: problem solving (i.e. critical and analytical thinking, creativity), self-management (i.e. flexibility and resilience), working with people, and technology use and development (Fischer, 2022).

In addition to embedding opportunities for students to practice and develop these skills, every student will have a career advisor. Students will be able to work with Career Design Advisors in the McCree Center for Life Success to learn how to clearly convey their acquired skills to potential employers through cover letters, resumes, and interviews.

MBU Everywhere and Regional Hubs

MBU Everywhere engages students in learning on campus, through micro-internships, and during study and work away and internship programs off-campus. The concept helps students to connect classroom learning with practice and work in the field. One aspect of MBU everywhere is establishing core regional hubs in Virginia and other areas to connect students to experiential opportunities in the form of internships and co-ops. Internships are vital to preparing students for workforce success. Internships give students the opportunity to explore career interests, build professional skills, and develop networks. With internships, students are much better equipped to make informed career decisions and be competitive candidates for high quality positions upon graduation. MBU Everywhere is designed to increase opportunities and reduce barriers for high quality internships for all MBU students.

Regional Hub Concept

Regional hubs are strategically located in areas with high growth potential for internships, jobs, and study away opportunities. These hubs also connect MBU to critical sectors and build the MBU brand in emerging markets. The Hub concept distinguishes MBU from other universities and offers locations and opportunities for overlapping admissions activities, alumni engagement, professional development, advancement opportunities, faculty development, and reputation building. Focused on skill development, networking, and local job market access, a regional hub reinforces MBU's relevance within a region and plays a pivotal role in nurturing graduates prepared to contribute to regional economic development. Inherent in the hub concept is the need to increase enrollment and admissions footprint in strategic locations, better serve students and alumni with professional development, further engage alumni in programming, advance fundraising opportunities, create corporate partnerships for internship opportunities, and provide on-site support for student interns and employers.

Proposed Hub Locations

Variables to consider for a hub location include the availability of jobs, internships, and employers, proximity to additional higher education partners, and housing access. Areas with existing alumni networks (and alumni ready to share connections and physical locations) provide built-in connections to start building relationships. Physical requirements for the hub include flexible space for corporate engagement meetings, programming, and potential classes. Hubs can be staffed by a regional hub director (and/or faculty member) as the central point person with day-to-day responsibilities for student support and employer relations. While hubs bring people and learning together in off-campus locations, they do not require building or renting entire buildings. Shared or collaborative work environments can be extremely efficient and effective. The following three locations are initial candidates for consideration.

Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro, VA (potentially starting 2024-2025)

The Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro area is MBU's homebase and the McCree Center for Life Success's engagement with the Staunton Innovation Hub (SIH) is the prototype for the concept. The Shenandoah Valley presents the type of growth opportunities regional hubs are designed to leverage, such as light and advanced manufacturing, life sciences, agriculture, transportation/logistics and IT/emerging technologies. MBU provides numerous opportunities for students to access programs, entrepreneurs and regional contacts in a shared workplace environment at SIH. The Staunton iHub (serving Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro), focusing on local area partners in the regions who are looking for interns, would serve as a prototype for building regionally located hubs.

Richmond, VA (potentially starting 2025-2027)

Richmond, VA has a lot to offer for a regional hub. Industries such as manufacturing, transportation and transportation present opportunities for student internships. Access to other higher education institutions benefit further partnerships and employer recruitment. Additionally its lower cost of living and lower expense for office space make it desirable. Mary Baldwin's alumni presence in Richmond and relatively short drive (under two hours) are also important considerations for establishing Richmond as the second hub location.

Charlotte, NC (potentially starting 2026-2028)

Fast growing and emerging cities also present opportunities for a regional hub location. Charlotte, North Carolina is one of the fastest growing cities in the country and is an example of a metro area with a variety of industry, corporate or regional headquarters. Similar to Richmond, Charlotte also has a number of higher education institutions and is within driving distance from Staunton.

Hub Resources and Budget

Fundraising would be required to cover the development of regional hubs and the costs of housing for students, staffing, travel, rental space, and programming. A number of cost saving measures have already been considered for hub locations. For example, Mary Baldwin already has a strong presence in the SIH.

Leveraging partnerships, available space at regional colleges and universities, and resource sharing with existing programs in the area (such as that with SIH) will be important in maximizing investment.

Infrastructure

Support for Teaching and Learning

In order to support high-impact, engaged and experiential learning opportunities for students, Mary Baldwin will need an expanded teaching and learning infrastructure in the form of a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). A CTL will increase professional learning opportunities for faculty and, in turn, improve classroom experiences and outcomes for students (Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020, p. 70-71). As MBU's reimagined academic portfolio is being developed and deployed, a CTL, designed and led by a faculty director, will be crucial to ensuring that new courses and programs are intentionally designed, from the outset, to include high-impact practices. To do this work, the faculty director will engage faculty in discussions, workshops, and training to facilitate embedding high-impact practices across our programs and campuses. The CTL will showcase the excellent teaching already happening at MBU, promote a university-wide culture of teaching and learning, and foster continued innovation to benefit students.

For Credit Internship Model

Offering for credit internships aligns with Mary Baldwin's commitment to experiential learning. By offering academic credit for internships that are embedded into majors, MBU can build a program that focuses upon career exploration, provides hands-on experience, and is a part of degree requirements. Ensuring a high quality of program will require the following:

- Stringent criteria for employer eligibility, including formal agreements outlining the internship and the allocation of liability between the university and the employer
- An internship preparation course to develop student readiness in certain programs
- A structured and measurable evaluation process that includes:
 - Student evaluation of the experience
 - Supervisors evaluating student performance
 - A final project or presentation by the student to showcase acquired skills and knowledge and reinforce the educational value of the internship

The MBU Experiential Framework – consisting of residential colleges aligned with academic pathways, the infusion of leadership skill development in and out of the classroom, and a robust MBU Everywhere internship and study and work away model – will increase student success and better prepare students to build lives and careers of purpose.

References

Eynon, B., & Iuzzini, J. (2020). *ATD teaching and learning toolkit: A research-based guide to building a culture of teaching and learning excellence*. Silver Spring, MD: Achieving the Dream.

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Mary Baldwin Residential College Initiative

Introduction

The Residential College Initiative (RCI) at Mary Baldwin University envisions a first and second-year experience that seeks to weave together various facets of campus life – to bridge living and learning at MBU and support the new academic pathways. At the heart of this initiative is the seamless integration of living on campus with all other aspects of university life, including academics, faculty, staff, resources/services, and mentoring.

Our primary goal is to position the RCI as a dynamic platform for delivering transformative learning experiences and realizing key campus objectives. We are dedicated to fostering a sense of belonging, enabling students to thrive, improving retention rates, and ensuring successful graduation for all community members. In other words, residential colleges will serve as the platform for delivering campus values, including equity, citizenship and service, career development, and mentoring, which lie at the core of our endeavors.

We are committed to two critical and multi-directional elements: first, bringing the rich tapestry of campus programs and initiatives to our residential students, and second, delivering these programs directly to our students through the residential colleges. This dynamic interaction between residential colleges and broader campus values and initiatives is central to our vision.

As we embark on this journey, the following key questions guide us:

1. **What are we doing?** We are pioneering the development of residential colleges that serve as vibrant hubs of learning, mentorship, and personal growth, seamlessly integrated with the broader campus ecosystem and initiatives.
2. **How are we doing it?** We are leveraging the power of the RCI platform to connect and empower our students, faculty, and staff, ensuring that residential colleges become focal points for academic and personal development and support student success.
3. **What do we need from campus?** The support and collaboration of the entire campus community will be needed to make this vision a reality. We seek partnerships, resources, and a shared commitment to the values and goals that underpin the RCI.
4. **What will it look like?** When we envision the future of Mary Baldwin University, we see residential colleges that are vibrant, inclusive, at the forefront of academic excellence, and aligned with MBU's new academic pathways. They will be places where students not only live but thrive and where the boundaries between living and learning are blurred in the most enriching ways.

Goals

1. Integrate academic and residential experiences to further students' intellectual, personal, and community development.
2. Create a space where students learn about themselves, their peers, and their communities while developing a commitment to life-long learning and service.
3. Help students learn and accept responsibility for self and personal actions.
4. Prepare students for the changing professional landscape.

Mary Baldwin University Mission and Vision Statements

Mission statement: Mary Baldwin University empowers inclusive leaders to create lives of purpose and professional success in our changing world.

Vision statement: Mary Baldwin University will be an innovative national model for transforming inclusive leaders to create value and meaningful change.

The RCI embodies the university's mission and vision by boldly creating and investing in communities that enhance student learning and engagement. Students will interact with faculty, staff, and fellow students in residential colleges designed to extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom for an intentional engagement in planned and informal interactions. Students encounter new ideas and perspectives, debate the more significant questions of life, and practice active citizenship in a shared community.

Theory, Research, and Outcomes

More than five decades of research demonstrates that a well-designed residential experience significantly enhances students' thriving and overall educational experience, including increased academic performance, better relationships, higher graduation rates, and stronger institutional affinity. Students who live on campus are more frequently exposed to cultural differences and learn lessons of citizenship that prepare them for success in life. Additionally, intellectual campus climate and overall student satisfaction are improved by a strong residential experience.

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Intended outcomes of the RCI include:

1. Students will use knowledge gained from classroom and co-curricular experiences and apply it to their residence hall community living
 1. Help students understand their behavior and its impact on their community; learn the important aspects of communal living, including respect, humanitarianism, awareness, and relationships.
 2. Engage students in programmatic and co-curricular activities, opportunities, and experiences to assist their academic achievement, personal growth, and professional development.
2. Students in our community will learn about their own identities and differences, the concepts of inclusion and equity, and the importance of overall well-being.
 1. Encourage students to cultivate meaningful relationships, communicate with myriad populations, and participate in a community.
 2. Help students develop their civility amongst and within a culturally, ethnically, and socially diverse community.
3. Students will learn the role that residential living and the integrated prioritization of academics is central to a liberal arts education.
 1. Provide opportunities for students to develop independence, self-advocacy, competence, coping skills, and well-being practice.

Pillars of the Residential College Initiative

The RCI plan is organized around 5 number of central concepts or pillars:

1. **Academic Achievement:** In partnership with faculty and first-year advising, students will receive guidance and resources for academic, professional, and personal success, including study skills, career development, goal setting, and time management.
2. **Diversity and Civility:** In partnership with the Spencer Center, Office for Inclusive Excellence, and the University Chaplain, students will understand their impact on the Mary Baldwin community, embrace community standards, and develop strategies for harmonious living. They will also connect with the broader community beyond their residence hall, including regular engagement with at least one local community organization that works to alleviate the root causes of community issues.
3. **Engagement and Discovery:** Students will explore diverse experiences beyond the classroom, guided by faculty, staff, advisors, and mentors. They will learn social participation, community service, social responsibility, campus culture, and engagement beyond campus life.

4. **Personal Development:** Staff will support students living with roommates and in residential communities, fostering self-responsibility, self-management, wellness, and balancing academics and extracurriculars.
5. **Career Readiness:** In partnership with the McCree Center for Life Success, students will gain job search skills, professional communication, and workplace ethics knowledge, preparing them for long-term career success.

Structures and Staffing

A residential college's structure and staffing should be carefully designed to create a supportive and enriching student living and learning environment. Best practices in this context involve several key elements:

1. **Residential Community System:** Create residential communities within the college, each with a dedicated resident head and faculty member.
2. **Faculty Involvement:** Provide faculty development and support to enable faculty to become mentors for specific communities, fostering student-faculty relationships outside the classroom.
3. **Residential Life Staff:** Employ trained residential life staff like Resident Directors (RDs and RAs) to ensure a safe and inclusive environment.
4. **Layered Student Leadership:** Empower students to take leadership roles, promoting responsibility and involvement in university leadership and throughout the residential colleges.
5. **Programming and Activities:** In collaboration with existing campus programming and offices across campus, develop a diverse calendar of academic, social, career, and cultural events for personal growth and community building.
6. **Mental Health and Counseling Services:** Provide accessible mental health and counseling services within the residential college.
7. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts through cultural competency training, inclusive programming, and open dialogue.
8. **Communication Channels:** Establish effective communication channels among students, staff, and faculty, possibly through creating residential college planning groups, newsletters, social media, and such.
9. **Assessment and Improvement:** Continuously assess and improve the residential college structure and staffing based on feedback and data.

Incorporating these best practices can create a residential college environment that supports students' academic success and enhances their personal development, well-being, and sense of community.

Facility Needs

- Classroom/instructional space
- Open community space
- Study space
- Computer lab space
- Apartments on the first floor

Staffing Needs

- Resident Assistants
- Professional Residence Life staff
- Affiliated faculty and staff dedicated to individual Residential Colleges
- Partnerships with campus offices and departments

Next Steps

- Finalize initial Residential College plan
- Engage campus faculty and staff in discussions to gather feedback and refine the plan
- Engage students in discussions to gather feedback and refine the plan
- Identify campus champions
- Begin development of implementation plan and phases