



## How You Build Experience @ UF

### What Does “Build Experience” Mean?

Building experience is an important part of your college experience and essential to preparing for your next steps. The Career Connections Center helps you learn about ways to build experience, search and secure opportunities and understand how those experiences help you prepare for success. Building experience can take place in a variety of forms such as part-time work, internships, job shadowing, and more. As you take classes, you may hear similar terms like, “experiential education” and “get involved”; at the Career Connections Center, when we say build experience we mean anything that helps you:

- Engage in real-world experiences
- Connect classroom learning with experiences
- Learn about yourself
- Develop transferable skills
- Explore potential career paths
- Prepare for your next steps
- Discover Student/Professional Associations or Community Involvement

### How is Building Experience Beneficial to YOU?

When you **build experience** you gain exposure to a work environment and develop competencies that may help you prepare for industries and job functions of interests. Through these experience, you have the opportunity to **learn about yourself**, **develop professionally** and **prepare for your next steps**.

			
<p><b>Learn About Yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Test and affirm assumptions about who you are and your career options.</li> <li>-Gain insight into your Values, Interests, Personalities, Skills, &amp; Strengths (VIPSS)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop Professionally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learn and develop competencies related to your interests and world of work.</li> <li>-Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Sense of Self, and Teamwork</li> </ul>	<p><b>Build Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learn industry lingo</li> <li>-Expand your network</li> <li>-Gain a sense of Self-confidence</li> <li>-Cultivate Reflective Practice</li> </ul>	<p><b>Prepare for Your Next Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ability to confidently recognize and communicate your interests, values, skills, experiences and goals.</li> </ul>

### When Should You Start Building Experience?

It’s never too early to start building experience. Consider which type(s) of experiences you will complete before graduation and use the Career Connection Center’s services to help you along the way. Engaging with the UF Career Connections Center early will help you **learn** about the ways to build experience, **search** for the experiences beneficial to your future, **secure** experiences, and **reflect** on those experiences to ensure growth in confidence and knowledge of self that lead you towards career readiness.

As a UF student there are additional resources available that can help you find ways to start building experience immediately. These resources help you identify student organizations and opportunities to get involved including:

- GatorConnect
- Gator Times’ Opportunities Section
- Student Organizations’ Social Media Accounts

Continue reading to learn more about the types of learning experiences and the Center’s resources and services available to help you build experience at UF.



## Types of Experiences

**Academic Research** – Beginning your first year as an undergraduate, you have the opportunity to work on research alongside world-renowned faculty members to solve some of the toughest problems and participate in groundbreaking research that leads to history-making discoveries.

**Cooperative Education (Co-op)** – An academic program that involves multiple terms of alternating full-time course work and full-time work with increasing tasks as you move through your work experience. Allows you to obtain in-depth work experience.

**Informational Interview** – An opportunity to gather information and expand your understanding about a career field, industry, job, or employer in which you are interested.

**International Education** – A way for you to study, work and travel abroad, these opportunities will help you become globally competent.

**Internship** - Integrates classroom theory with practical application and skills development in a professional environment. Allows you to gain experience and make connections in professional fields you are considering for career paths.

**Job Shadowing** – A way for you to explore career paths while also gaining exposure to professionals currently working in the field of interest.

**Mentorship** – An opportunity to connect and interact with professionals to gain valuable industry knowledge and develop connections that enhance your career preparations.

**Part-time Work** – A form of employment that requires fewer hours than full-time work, usually 10-20 hours per week. Even if a part-time job is not directly related to your career objectives, these opportunities allow you to develop essential transferable skills.

**Service-learning** - A course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience where you (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and (c) an enhanced sense of civic responsibility

**Volunteering** – Affords you the opportunity to make valuable contributions to the community and its members while developing your Values, Interests, Personalities, Skills, and Strengths (VIPSS).

## Career Connection Center Services to Help You Build Experience

### **Learn:**

- Career Planning
  - Appointments
  - Workshops
  - Career Conversations
- Gator Professional Series (GPS)
  - *Entering Your Coordinates*
- Informational Interviews
- Gator Career Link (GCL)
- Career Communities
- CHOMP
- Career Roadmaps

### **Search:**

- Gator CareerLink (GCL)
- Information Sessions
- Career Fairs
- Career Community Resources

### **Secure:**

- Express Drop in
  - Resume, Cover Letter, CV & LinkedIn Review:
- On-campus Interviews
- Career Fairs

### **Reflect:**

- Career Conversations
- Locating Part-time Work
- Competency Labs
- Gator Professional Series (GPS)
  - *Discovering Professional You*



## Reflection

Reflection is a fundamental part of building experience, connecting the learning to the experience. To reflect on your learning experiences outside of the classroom means to think critically about how the experience impacts your academic, personal and professional growth. Reflection develops your understanding and ability to assess your own values, goals and progress. Reflection should take place before, during and after you engage in a learning experience outside of the classroom. The key to reflection is to go deep and really think about the impact of the experience.

There are many ways you can reflect on the experiences you engage in including:

- Journal writing
- Conversation with a professor, UF staff member, friend, family, etc.
- Discussion prompt
- Report
- Evaluation of the Learning Experience

### *Types of Reflection*

Below are 3 types of reflection and questions associated that can assist you in connecting the learning with the experience?

**Cognitive Reflection** examines the new knowledge and skills gained from the experience. Examples of questions related to cognitive reflection include:

- Were the goals and objectives of the learning experience accomplished? Describe the learning experiences relating the description to the goals and objectives.
- How is your learning experience related to course readings, discussions or lectures? Provide specific examples of related course concepts and describe the context in which the concepts related to your learning experience?
- What new skills did you learn/develop during the learning experience?

**Affective Reflection** examines your emotions associated with the learning experience, what and how you felt as a result of engaging in the learning experience. This type of reflection examines the change in your attitude, opinions, values, etc. Examples of questions related to affective reflection include:

- Would you engage in this type of learning experience again? Why?
- Has this learning experience changed you? If yes, how?
- Has this learning experience changed your values, previously held beliefs and/or opinions?
- Describe what you learned about yourself as a result of the learning experience?

**Process Reflection** examines what you learned from the process of the learning experience? This includes examining your throughout the experience, the benefits of engaging in this learning experience and your impact on the organization. Examples of questions relate to process reflection include:

- What expectations did you have prior to engaging in the learning experience? Do you have a different understanding of your experience than you had before you started?
- What would you like to change about your learning experience?
- What were the benefits from participating in this learning experience?
- What were the most difficult parts of the learning experience?
- If you worked in a team, identify and describe your approach as a team member. Was it effective? Why?
- What do you think was your most valuable contribution during the learning experience?
- How does your experience relate to your short-term goals? Long-term goals?