

Scaling High-Impact Practices in Undergraduate Education

Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU)
In partnership with Podium Education

By Julia Michaels

Background and Context

Students pursue higher education principally to achieve long-term career success and a life of worth and purpose. Research universities provide top quality education that prepares students for a career and more – what the Boyer 2030 Commission calls *world readiness*.¹ Yet the benefits of such excellent education are still distributed unevenly. Not every student achieves the same learning outcomes, nor do they graduate on time (or at all). Universities have been working hard to address this persistent challenge for decades.

A promising strategy for delivering equitable student success is implementation of **high-impact practices (HIPs)** at scale. HIPs include learning communities, collaborative projects, undergraduate research, service learning, internships, study abroad, writing-intensive courses, and capstone experiences, and as a group they are positively associated with student learning outcomes and graduation success.² Researchers have found HIPs impactful because these practices require students to engage in purposeful efforts with frequent feedback, afford students extended interaction with faculty and peers, place students in diverse and novel circumstances, and encourage students to apply their learning in new settings outside the classroom.²

Unfortunately, not every college student can access HIPs, especially those that require a large investment of resources or depend on employer commitments. For example, in 2023 there were

¹ See p. 11 in: Boyer 2030 Commission. (2022). The equity and excellence imperative: A 2030 blueprint for undergraduate education at U.S. research universities. *Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities*. <https://wacclearinghouse.org/docs/books/boyer2030/report.pdf>.

² Kuh, G.D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Association of American Colleges and Universities*. Accessed November 7, 2025, from <https://navigate.utah.edu/resources/documents/hips-kuh-2008.pdf>.

an estimated 8.2 million learners who wanted an internship, but only 3.6 million internships available, of which only 2.5 million were considered *quality* internships.³ Similarly, only about 1% of all U.S. students enrolled in higher education study abroad during the 2022-2023 academic year.⁴ This lack of accessibility perpetuates inequity, especially since HIPs have a disproportionately positive impact on low-income, minoritized, and first-generation students.⁵

“High-impact practices are the closest thing we have to a silver bullet...but one thing we recognize is that, by and large, they are difficult to scale.”

– **Chris Parrish**, Podium Education

Universities have been wrestling with the question of how to reach more students with HIPs for many years. Research on scaling practices in higher education shows that professionals engaging in mutual adaptation and contributing to social change movements through networks are more effective than top-down approaches led by executives.⁶ The Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU) is an example of a change-oriented network that fosters mutual adaptation among peers. External partnerships also provide campus stakeholders with valuable expertise and technology resources that can help universities reach more students with HIPs.

Podium Education is the leading experiential education company designing scalable HIPs in partnership with universities and employers to embed real-world, career-connected experiences for credit into the undergraduate degree. Podium has developed relationships with employers and created structured programs to connect students with work-based learning experiences at a scale rarely seen in higher education. Universities that have partnered with Podium are expanding career-oriented HIPs beyond boutique programs, using technology to make these high-quality opportunities available to every student on campus.

In 2025, Podium Education partnered with UERU to explore how research universities might better prepare students for world readiness through integration of work-based learning experiences into the curriculum. Following this exploration, UERU will launch two communities of practice (anticipated early 2026) to support its members on World Readiness

³ See p. 5 in: Williams, C., Thornton, J., Hughes, E., and Fox, K. (September 2024). Expanding internships: Harnessing employer insights to boost opportunity and enhance learning. Business Higher Education Forum. https://www.bhef.com/sites/default/files/BHEF_Expanding_Internships.pdf.

⁴ NAFSA: Association of International Educators. (2025). <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/trends-us-study-abroad>. Accessed November 7, 2025.

⁵ Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing underserved students' engagement in high-impact practices* [Report]. Association of American Colleges & Universities. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582014.pdf>

⁶ Kezar, A. (2011). What is the best way to achieve broader reach of improved practices in higher education? *Innovative Higher Education*, 36, 235-247. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-011-9174-z>

and Undergraduate Research-High Impact Practices (UR-HIP). As part of the design process for these two communities, UERU and Podium convened a roundtable of 10 Vice Provosts for Undergraduate Education (UVPs) or equivalent leaders to discuss the challenges around scaling HIPs and identify possible solutions.

During the roundtable conversation, UVPs shared common challenges they are facing around democratizing access to HIPs. Participants also discussed diverse strategies for addressing these challenges aligned with their own institutional contexts and capacity. The programs they described have reached thousands of students on their campuses with potential for many more as they continue to invest in scaling. Key themes from the roundtable conversation include:

1. Design for inclusion through mandatory participation, group experiences, flexible/virtual offerings, and targeted student financial support
2. Embed HIPs directly into general education requirements
3. Message accessibility over prestige when communicating with students
4. Engage faculty in learning from employers through Professor of Practice roles and industry sabbaticals
5. Reward and recognize faculty who incorporate HIPs into their courses
6. Include funding for HIPs in advancement appeals to sustain revenue long-term
7. Assess HIPs using multiple sources of data

A Roadmap for Scaling

Through the roundtable conversation, UERU and Podium explored how institutions are broadening access to HIPs through intentional design, communications, and faculty engagement. The leaders participating in the roundtable have all undertaken years of careful preparation to lay the groundwork for expansion. The result is a roadmap that other institutions can follow, with the goal of making HIPs an expectation for every undergraduate student.

1

Design for inclusion through mandatory participation, group experiences, and targeted student financial support

Since HIPs have a disproportionately positive impact on learning outcomes for low-income, minoritized, and first-generation students, the return on investment is higher when HIPs are made broadly accessible. Disadvantaged students are less likely to experience a HIP during their college journey, particularly if they lack the social capital to obtain a competitive opportunity.⁵ One way to expand access is by using inclusion as a core design principle that guides decision making from beginning to end. The following are several examples of this principle in action:

Mandatory Participation

“UF Quest was established as an egalitarian program because it is required for all students with no advanced credit or substitutions allowed.” – Angela Lindner, University of Florida

The University of Florida’s UF Quest program is an example of a program that is mandatory for all students. The UF Quest program began with a one-course requirement (“The Good Life”), which expanded to three programs in sequence: 1) humanities in the student’s first semester, 2) a natural or social science course in the second semester, and 3) experiential learning in the third semester. UF is planning to implement a final capstone course (which also qualifies as a HIP) in the fourth semester as the program develops.

Group Experiences

University of California, Riverside developed industry-integrated experiences to help expand access to more students without overtaxing employer capacity, in partnership with Podium Education’s Global Career Accelerator. Nearly 90% of those who registered for the experience in the first term completed it (284 students out of 320), a very low rate of attrition. Similarly, The Ohio State University created a variety of group-based undergraduate research experiences designed to complement paid internships or jobs.

Targeted Financial Support

“Our Board of Trustees established an endowed fund specifically to deal with the summer question. And it pays for students' housing for the entire program and gives them a research stipend as well.” – Brad Petitfils, Chapman University

Others are directing financial support to reduce barriers to student participation. Chapman University’s Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program offers students a \$4,000 stipend and free on-campus housing while they engage in eight weeks of faculty-guided research experience. Boston University increased hourly wages paid to students who engaged in on-campus internships during the summer to offset the high cost of living in Boston. Binghamton University secured funding to help 700 of their 3,000 incoming students participate in research immersion. As Don Loewen, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Education at Binghamton University said during the roundtable, “Undergraduate research is great, but if those students have to forfeit an off-campus job to work in a lab, they can't afford to do it, literally.”

2

Embed HIPs directly into general education requirements

Many of the challenges associated with scaling HIPs are structural in nature: the process of getting credit approved for students' experiences and making sure those credits *count* toward the student's program of study or progress toward graduation. Embedding HIPs directly into the curriculum for general education requirements is one way to overcome these hurdles. Doing so also ensures all students experience a HIP at some point in their academic careers.

"We built several HIPs into our Gen Ed program here at Boston University... things like collaborative assignments, global engagement, ePortfolios, writing-intensive courses, all of those get captured." – **Amie Grills**, Boston University

Though some HIPs, like writing-intensive courses, have clear alignment with the general education curriculum, others such as internships and undergraduate research may require more effort to place into the general education program. A focus on institutional learning outcomes and drawing a throughline between the HIP and the learning outcome can help with finding alignment. The process of embedding HIPs into the curriculum itself can aid with engaging faculty and providing them with recognition – a recommendation that appears later in this roadmap.

3

Message accessibility over prestige when communicating with students

UVPs might be tempted to market a program as prestigious to convey its value to students. The roundtable participants agreed, however, that it was more important to message program accessibility to students. The risk of students failing to pursue a prestigious HIP out of lack of confidence or belonging is more significant than its potential devaluation by students and future employers.

"To the extent that sometimes these programs are represented as honors, or honorific, or prestigious...that can be a disincentive or an implicit message that it's not for you if you're not the elite student. And I think those are often the very students who will benefit the most, particularly from research experiences."

– **William Cohen**, University of Maryland-College Park

Leaders suggested that programs be clearly marketed as being available to any student. To reach as many students as possible, leaders can market HIPs through residence life, learning communities, student resource centers, and in partnership with student organizations. The overarching goal is to be intentional about connecting with students who need HIPs the most.

4

Engage faculty in learning from employers through Professor of Practice roles and industry sabbaticals

One of the barriers to faculty adoption of HIPs is lack of experience in industry. Faculty may feel more comfortable contributing to an undergraduate research program, which benefits from their deep expertise in academia, than an internship program designed to equip students with workforce-readiness skills. A solution: creating intentional faculty learning experiences in partnership with outside employers.

“One of the programs we’re just starting this year is a faculty career fellows program, a collaboration between our career services and our teaching center to work with faculty on incorporating career competencies into their courses.”

– **Carolyn Moehling**, Rutgers-New Brunswick

For example, Rutgers-New Brunswick developed a faculty career fellows’ program to help faculty embed high-demand competencies into their courses. The University of Florida has hired faculty directly from industry, who take a sabbatical from their jobs to teach a course. These Professors of Practice are paired with experienced faculty who help them learn how to teach. Such a clearly defined and mutually beneficial exchange can play a role in strengthening university-employer partnerships. As William Cohen, Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Maryland-College Park put it, “the partnerships that have worked really well have been where the outside entity is truly a hand-in-glove partner in building the program.”

5

Reward and recognize faculty who incorporate HIPs into their courses

Roundtable participants agreed that maintaining quality and integrity is the biggest challenge for scaling. Strong faculty engagement from the beginning is critical to success. Yet faculty are rarely compensated for the extra effort required to implement HIPs in their courses; the movement relies heavily on volunteers.⁷

⁷ Kuh, G. D., O’Donnell, K., & Reed, S. (2013). *Ensuring Quality and Taking High Impact Practices to Scale*. Association of American Colleges & Universities. <https://navigate.utah.edu/resources/documents/quality-hips-scale-kuh-odonnell-2013.pdf>

“We’ve also piloted a seed-grant program for faculty to incentivize them to create more – and more accessible – undergraduate research opportunities. My office has given out well over half a million dollars in seed grants over the last couple of years.”

– **Norman Jones**, The Ohio State University

Universities can strengthen their scaling efforts by providing incentives, awards, and recognition to faculty who incorporate HIPs into their courses. Discipline-specific knowledge is essential for crafting a highly impactful experience, and faculty need time, space, and support to do this work. Universities can also offer training and professional development that bridge departmental silos and bring faculty in collaboration with each other. The participants acknowledged that this wasn’t easy and could be resource-intensive; the efficiency gains from new technology platforms may help universities redirect scarce funds toward faculty support.

6

Include funding for HIPs in advancement appeals to sustain revenue long-term

Even those institutions that have managed to scale their HIPs struggle from a lack of resources and funding uncertainties. Universities need significant financial resources to support course redesign and for students to participate in HIPs themselves. With the recent decline in government funding for undergraduate research programs – for example, the National Science Foundation’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program which provides stipends, housing, and travel support for undergraduate researchers – universities have had to lean more heavily on their donors.

“Advancement is now really interested in turning this into a fundraising opportunity, because it’s really a great story about students essentially getting paid to do the research that’s going to set them apart” – **Don Loewen**, Binghamton University

To ensure long-term funding sustainability, UVPs suggested incorporating HIPs intentionally into fundraising appeals from university advancement. Ample evidence ties HIPs with student success, making scaling an attractive proposition for donors and foundations. Corporate supporters may also see value in investing in HIPs as a mechanism for cultivating their future talent.

7

Assess HIPs using multiple sources of data

Employers want to know that students are graduating with the core competencies and skills they need for success in the workplace. UVPs also need solid data on HIPs to make a case for provosts and other senior leaders to invest in scaling. Roundtable participants discussed some of the strategies and data sources they are using to measure impact both in terms of students' academic outcomes and the career competencies they are developing.

For example, the University of Georgia has recently launched a comprehensive learner record system that was developed with input from employers and faculty. The competencies included in students' records include broadly applicable skills like critical thinking, social awareness, communication skills, and leadership. More than 1,000 courses have been tagged with competencies. Students will leave with a digital credential that helps them tell their story to employers.

“When students take those courses, they're tagged with the competencies, so they'll have a digital credential like a transcript, except it's called a comprehensive learner record.”

— **Marisa Pagnattaro**, University of Georgia

Others stressed the importance of looking at qualitative measures, and disaggregating data by student demographics to find hidden inequities. Existing surveys like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) are one source of student satisfaction and perception data. Universities might also consider incorporating reflective activities into HIPs and review student reflections for themes.

“We collected final quarter reflections from every student as part of their final assignment. Ninety-nine percent of them were overwhelmingly positive. Students enjoyed the experience, they enjoyed AI, they enjoyed being exposed to coding, they appreciated working in groups, they talked about conflict management and giving each other feedback.”

– **Louie Rodriguez**, University of California, Riverside

The group acknowledged that some desired metrics were still missing. For example, senior university leaders, governing boards, and state legislatures are still driven by performance on state and national student success measures. UVPs need to be able to show that work-integrated learning experiences, internships, and other HIPs that are not created and delivered in house by faculty members do not increase time-to-degree. UVPs also wanted to see better data connecting HIPs with graduates' employment rates, especially in high-demand sectors, and with increased student well-being during and after college.

Conclusion: Progress through Partnership

The roundtable conversation re-affirmed the value of HIPs for students and institutions and the role of networks like UERU in scaling HIPs across the undergraduate population. UVPs recommended starting small and engaging in continuous improvement as they work toward scale. If the university has a vision and is committed to access, it can make progress.

Partnerships are key: both to achieve economies of scale with scarce resources and facilitate connections with employers.

Podium Education’s work-integrated learning experiences are credit-bearing, interdisciplinary, and designed for scale. Podium works directly with industry partners to provide students with real-world projects and datasets. Weekly live experiences help students build their professional networks and establish direct connections with companies that may become future employers. More than 100 universities have adopted Podium to date to facilitate students’ career-ready skills development. Partnership with Podium Education has helped UERU work with its members to explore world readiness strategies including high-impact practices, and engage in the deliberative, mutual adaptation process required to scale a higher education practice.⁶

HIPs are and will likely remain a core strategy for universities to deliver equitable student success outcomes. Scaling HIPs requires intentional design, institutional commitment (of people and resources), and close partnerships with industry, particularly as those partnerships help prepare faculty to embed competencies in their curriculum. By following this roadmap, research universities can advance toward the “equity/excellence imperative,”¹ preparing students for world readiness and a lifetime of professional success.

Roundtable Participants

- **William Cohen**, Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Maryland-College Park
- **Amie Grills**, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, Boston University
- **Matt Jacobs**, Interim Associate Provost for Student Success, University of Florida
- **Norman Jones**, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, The Ohio State University
- **Angela Lindner**, Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, University of Florida
- **Donald Loewen**, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Education, Binghamton University
- **Carolyn Moehling**, Senior Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
- **Marisa Pagnattaro**, Vice President for Instruction and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning, University of Georgia
- **Brad Petitfils**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Student Success, Chapman University
- **Louie Rodriguez**, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, University of California, Riverside

Resource Links

- [Projects for New Undergraduate Researchers](#) (Binghamton University)
- [Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship \(SURE\)](#) (Chapman University)
- [High-Impact Practices: Enhancing the Student Experience](#) (Ohio State University)
- [Faculty Career Fellows](#) (Rutgers-New Brunswick)
- [UC Riverside Global Career Accelerator](#) (University of California, Riverside)
- [UF Quest](#) (University of Florida)
- [Comprehensive Learner Record](#) (University of Georgia)
- [First-Year Innovation and Research Experience \(FIRE\) program](#) (University of Maryland-College Park)

About UERU

The Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU, pronounced “*You-Roo*”) is dedicated to excellence and access in undergraduate education by sharing and developing expertise across member institutions and other higher education organizations. The UERU membership is comprised of 138 research universities across the U.S., which collectively serve nearly 3 million undergraduate students. UERU helps its members stay current and forward-thinking, fosters connections across academic units, and enlists leaders in common projects to meet the challenges and opportunities facing undergraduate programs. Learn more at ueru.org.

About Podium Education

Podium Education is the leading experiential education company partnering with universities and industry to embed scalable, real-world, career-connected experiences directly into the undergraduate degree for credit. Podium works with 100+ universities, including ASU, Harvard, and UT Austin, and 50+ leading employers like L’Oréal, Coinbase, OpenAI, and Wells Fargo.

Podium’s experiences deliver fully digital, for-credit learning that strengthens student retention, confidence, and career readiness. Students from all backgrounds gain early career experience, explore potential pathways, and build the skills and competencies employers expect—through hands-on, work-based learning experiences that align with workforce needs.

For more information, visit [Podium Education](https://podiumeducation.com) and follow us on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/podium-education).