

 Experiential Learning Connector

# IMPACT REPORT

Academic Year 2023 – 2024

Empowering students to  
discover the real-world  
applications of their  
Arts & Sciences degree





# The EL Connector is the hub for experiential learning at Boston University's College of Arts & Sciences

## **DEFINITION**

Experiential learning is the process of learning by doing. It happens when students apply knowledge and skills from the classroom to the world outside it — and reflect on the boundless possibilities of their liberal arts education.

## **VISION**

At Boston University's College of Arts & Sciences, we believe in the transformative power of experiential learning for our students and for the broader world. We are committed to ensuring that every CAS undergraduate student engages meaningfully in high-quality experiential learning during their time in the college.

## **MISSION**

The Experiential Learning (EL) Connector is a resource for CAS undergraduate students to navigate and access experiential learning at BU and beyond. Our programming empowers students to discover the real-world applications of their Arts & Sciences degree.



# Table of Contents

Letter from the Director	3
People	6
Core Programming	9
Outreach & Student Engagement	18
Assessment	20
Challenges & Next Steps	25
Campus Partners	27
Major Contributors	27



## Letter from the Director

Thanks to the generous support of funders (listed on **page 26**), the EL Connector has much to celebrate. Fiscal year 2023–2024 marked our first full year of programming, and it was a period of rapid growth and expansion for every sector of our operations. I am honored to present this report on our progress over the past 12 months.

The accomplishments listed in my letter and the pages that follow are the work of a truly special group of colleagues, student employees, and partners whom I feel so fortunate to collaborate with — and learn from — every day.



## New People

At the start of the 2023–2024 academic year, our full-time staff doubled in size when we welcomed Grace Hymel as the EL Connector's first program manager. Grace comes to BU from the University of Utah, where she led community engagement programming for undergraduate students. In her new role at the EL Connector, Grace draws upon a deep knowledge of leadership development in higher education to create and run programming that helps students navigate the process of learning by doing.

One of Grace's first and most important responsibilities was to recruit, hire, and train a team of student employees — all CAS undergraduates — who worked tirelessly during the academic year to support the EL Connector's mission while building valuable transferable skills in their own right. What these student employees have achieved with Grace's guidance is truly remarkable, and I hope you enjoy reading about their many successes.

This past year also saw the establishment of the EL Connector's inaugural Faculty Advisory Board, which is comprised of seasoned experiential educators representing every division of the college. EL Connector staff have been meeting regularly with the board since October, and our programming has already benefitted from their counsel. Learn more about the board members and their charge on **page 6**.



## New Website and Branding

Following extensive development work last summer, the EL Connector launched a new and significantly improved website just as classes were starting in the fall. CAS students, faculty, and staff can now search for experiential learning activities at BU across multiple categories of interest (e.g., type of skill to build, related academic discipline, BU Hub unit) and find relevant information about off-campus internships and funding support. The site also debuted our new branding, a design concept created by EL Connector Communications Specialist and current undergraduate student Tejas Kaur (CAS'25). Drawing upon her academic work in graphing systems, Tejas chose arrows pointing in multiple directions to suggest the limitless possibilities of experiential learning. Elements of her design also appear throughout this report.

## New Space

In January 2024, the EL Connector moved from temporary office space to a permanent location on the first floor of the CAS building — a main artery of the college. The new space enables us to host small events and, most importantly, welcome students for one-on-one and small group consultations. While significant renovations are needed to transform the space into the hub for experiential learning that has been envisioned, we are thrilled to be in our permanent home and celebrated with a college-wide Open House at the start of the spring semester.

## New (and Expanded) Programming

As you'll read in the "Core Programming" section, we were fortunate to have the funding, team members, and space to launch or significantly expand our four main programs. Both EL Ambassadors and the CAS Internship Program were piloted in the spring semester; the 2024 Summer Internship Support Program — which provides free housing and dining to students with unpaid or low-paid internships in the Boston area — awarded twice as many scholarships for the summer 2024 term compared to the previous summer; and the EL Mentorship program expanded by 72%. With these developments, our programs are reaching more students than ever, building awareness about and increasing access to experiential learning through the college.



## New assessment plan

In partnership with BU's Office of Continuous Improvement and Data Analytics (CIDA), the EL Connector initiated a comprehensive assessment plan of experiential learning in the college. Our aim is to understand which students are engaging in experiential learning, which students are not, and how to improve access. I invite you to review the plan and some early data on **page 20**.

As you can see, it has been a year of remarkable expansion, and we do not plan to stop any time soon. The energy of the CAS community and the support of our funders are unmatched. That is what drives our whole team — as do the stories of students who experienced the transformative possibilities of experiential learning.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Erin Salius", with a stylized, flowing script.

Erin Salius

## People

### Full-time Staff

The EL Connector is staffed by two full-time employees, a director and a program manager. The program manager position was added at the start of the 2023–2024 academic year and the responsibilities include hiring, training, and supervising the EL Connector’s growing student staff. As our programming continues to expand, we hope to add more full-time staff positions.



**Erin Salius**  
DIRECTOR



**Grace Hymel**  
PROGRAM MANAGER

### Faculty Advisory Board

Composed of full-time instructors from each academic division in the college, the Faculty Advisory Board is charged with providing guidance on the development and strategic priorities of the EL Connector. Over the past year, the board has advised on: the way the college defines “experiential learning”; the learning outcomes associated with experiential learning; improving awareness and accessibility of experiential learning, especially to students from underrepresented groups; and how to bring more experiential learning activities into the classroom.



**Liliane Dusewoir**  
ROMANCE STUDIES



**Stacey Gelsheimer**  
ECONOMICS



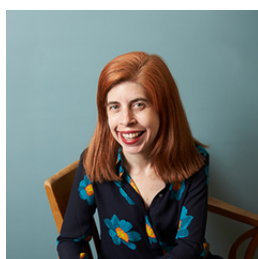
**Kyna Hamill**  
CORE CURRICULUM



**Joseph Harris**  
SOCIOLOGY



**Manher Jariwala**  
PHYSICS



**Erin Murphy**  
ENGLISH



**Nathan Philips**  
EARTH & ENVIRONMENT



A team of CAS undergraduate student employees worked with the full-time staff of the EL Connector over the past 12 months to plan, develop, and deliver programming and information about experiential learning to their peers.

## Communications Specialist

*An 8- to 10-hour per week position that is responsible for planning and executing our social media strategy, designing marketing materials, and developing the EL Connector's brand.*



**Tejas Kaur (CAS'25, Economics and Mathematics)**

**An achievement she is especially proud of:** conceptualizing and designing a mural for our office that represents the limitless career paths and experiential learning opportunities available to CAS students.

**In her own words:**

"As a Communications Specialist, I played a role in expanding the reach and accessibility of experiential learning opportunities by enhancing our brand's visibility and appeal. I spearheaded a digital marketing campaign that successfully highlighted the practical applications of a liberal arts education. This campaign not only increased student engagement but also broadened our outreach to a more diverse group of undergraduates."

## EL Ambassadors

*An 8- to 10-hour per week position that is responsible for building awareness about experiential learning throughout the college. Ambassadors offer one-on-one consultations to their peers as well as group workshops on a variety of topics that help students find, reflect on, and communicate the value of experiential learning opportunities.*



**Vansh Dora (CAS '26, Computer Science; QST '26, Business Administration)**

**An achievement he is especially proud of:** Developing and offering an event for student leaders on time management and mental health.

**In his own words:**

"The reflection I did after running the event for student leaders truly changed the way I go about public speaking. After the reflection, I felt truly confident and could present without as much stage fright."



### Nicole Hill (CAS'24, Political Science)

**An achievement she is especially proud of:** Developing and offering a workshop that teaches peers how to represent the transferable skills they gained through work in the service industries.

**In her own words:**

"In my every day life, I loved telling people about this new office on campus because I know the value the EL Connector has for students, particularly when it comes to access to experiential learning."



### Duoduo Luo (CAS'25, Neuroscience and Psychology)

**An achievement she is especially proud of:** Her work in one-on-one consultations with peers.

**In her own words:**

"At the end of a consultation, one student told me, 'I'm so happy that I came here, it helped me a lot and at the same time I had such a good time.' [...] I think this is the meaning of being an Ambassador at the Connector: not only connecting students with opportunities on campus in a professional way, but also forging meaningful connections with others as friends."



### Ren Walden (CAS'26, English)

**An achievement they are especially proud of:** Planning and running the Connector's Open House event in our new space.

**In their own words:**

"The Open House was definitely a signifier of all our hard work at the Connector. It was, I'd say, very successful and we reached a lot of students and expanded their knowledge of experiential learning."

## Lead EL Ambassador

*A 10- to 12-hour per week position that, in addition to filling the standard Ambassador duties, is also responsible for scheduling and supporting the other Ambassadors.*



### Aly Lam (CAS'25, Political Science)

**An achievement she is especially proud of:** Working with Grace to recruit, interview, and train the other EL Ambassadors

**In her own words:**

"Through helping out with marketing, giving consultations, and creating new events to cater to specific student populations, I believe that I have furthered the EL Connector's mission."

## Core Programming

The EL Connector administers four unique programs for CAS undergraduate students, each of which furthers our mission to help students navigate and access experiential learning at BU and beyond.

### The CAS Internship Program \*New in spring 2024!

Developed to grant students — including international students — access to professional internships that they would not have access to otherwise, the CAS Internship Program provides course credit and a BU Hub unit to undergraduate students interning at qualified organizations. Alongside their internship, participants take CAS IN 299, a course taught by staff of the EL Connector that develops career readiness competencies with a focus on teamwork. IN 299 was offered for the first time in Spring 2024, with 13 students enrolled. The positions they held and the impact of their experience in the internship and the course are detailed below.

The EL Connector will run this program every semester during the academic year. Starting in fall 2024, students will have the option of interning at on-campus sites as well as off-campus sites.

STUDENT	INTERNSHIP SITE	INTERNSHIP TITLE
Nahomi Brea Rivera (CAS'25, Political Science)	Town of Brookline	Intern for DEI and Community Relations
Tatiana Carrido (CAS'26, Environmental Analysis & Policy)	Manomet	U360 Business Sustainability Intern

### TATIANA CARRIDO

CAS'26, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY & ANALYSIS

“The program allowed me to achieve and surpass my SMART goals, broaden my professional network, and apply theoretical concepts to practical scenarios. It provided me with essential skills and insights that will guide my future career in the business world, particularly in the realm of sustainability. As I continue my undergraduate studies, I am grateful for the growth and knowledge I gained during this internship and look forward to applying these lessons in my future professional endeavors.”





STUDENT	INTERNSHIP SITE	INTERNSHIP TITLE
Jerry Chen (CAS'26, Political Science)	Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination	Housing Intern
Mike Dupre (CAS'24, Sociology)	Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University	Communications Assistant - Intern
Georgia Fanthrope (CAS'25, Archaeological & Environmental Science)	East Coast Divers	Store intern
Abigail Hassan (CAS'25, Political Science)	Massachusetts Attorney General's Office	AG Office Spring Intern
Agnes Jonsson (CAS'26, English)	Volunteer Lawyers Project	Spring Intern



## MIKE DUPRE

CAS'24, SOCIOLOGY

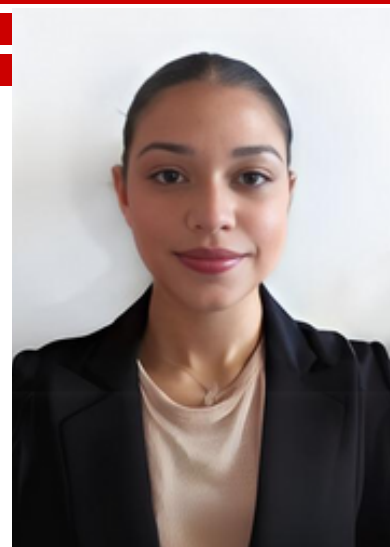
“Overall, my internship at the Belfer Center was a transformative experience that allowed me to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world practice. By integrating insights from my CAS coursework with hands-on experience in international affairs, I gained a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in global issues. Moving forward, I am confident that the skills and knowledge I acquired during my internship will continue to guide me in my academic and professional endeavors, empowering me to make meaningful contributions to the field of international relations.”

STUDENT	INTERNSHIP SITE	INTERNSHIP TITLE
Yiyan Lin (CAS'24, Psychological & Brain Sciences)	Center for Translational Cognitive Neuroscience	Research Assistant Intern
Blake Martinez (CAS'25, Political Science)	Office of Massachusetts Senate President Karen E. Spilka	District Intern
Nayeli Quiles (CAS'26, Political Science)	Executive Office of Veterans' Services	Executive Intern
Francis Vu (CAS'24, Biology)	Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory	Forensics Operations Intern
Xinjin Wu (CAS'24, Mathematics)	Timbuktu Capital Management	Financial Analyst Intern
Weiyu Zong (CAS'24, Biology, Computer Science, and Mathematics)	Harvard University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences	Visiting Undergraduate Research Intern

## NAYELI QUILES

CAS'26, POLITICAL SCIENCE

"This course has taught me new ways to navigate professional spaces, and how I can get the most out of the internship experience, which I have greatly appreciated. This semester really pushed me to think about how I am using my internship to build a path toward my career in a meaningful way, and the importance of networking as I go through this process."



## The EL Ambassador Program

**\*New in spring 2024!**

In this program, current undergraduate students with extensive experiential learning experience are recruited, hired, and trained to assist their peers in finding, reflecting on, and communicating the value of experiential learning activities that match their interests. The pilot began in February 2024, shortly after the EL Connector was established in its new location.

Four EL Ambassadors and one Lead EL Ambassador (whose profiles are listed on **pages 7-8**) offered individual 45-minute consultations on the topics listed below.



TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
<b>Building Awareness of Experiential Learning</b>	Students receive an overview of experiential learning, learn about the types of opportunities that are available at BU, and explore ways to find and choose an experiential learning experience that meets their goals and interests. If interested, they may also assess their career readiness competencies and set SMART goals.
<b>Identifying Experiential Learning Goals and Making a Plan</b>	Students identify their individual experiential learning goals by first clarifying their strengths, needs, and interests. With an ambassador, they make a plan for finding and accessing opportunities to pursue.
<b>Reflecting and Wayfinding After Experiential Learning</b>	Students are led through a guided reflection that helps them process and verbalize what they learned from a recent experiential learning experience and the skills they built along the way. Then, they work with an ambassador to identify key takeaways and plan next steps for future opportunities.
<b>Communicating the Value of an Experiential Learning Experience</b>	Students briefly reflect about the transferable skills they grew in a recent experiential learning activity. Afterwards, they practice communicating the value of the experience as they would at an interview or while networking.



Small group workshops on similar topics were also offered by ambassadors throughout the spring 2024 semester at the request of classroom instructors or leaders of student organizations. **In three short months, nearly 200 CAS undergraduate students attended either a consultation or workshop, and countless others were reached by various experiential learning awareness activities organized by the ambassadors.** Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of consultation attendees strongly agreeing and 95% of workshop attendees either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the ambassadors deepened their knowledge about experiential learning.

Building on the success of the pilot session of the EL Ambassador Program, the EL Connector has already recruited and hired ambassadors for the 2024–2025 academic year and we are planning significantly increase the number of students served.

**“I didn’t know what to expect going into my consultation...The consultation definitely met my expectations! It was incredibly helpful. I left feeling supported, with a plan for next steps and a better idea of the process ahead.”**

**Consultation Attendee (Spring 2024)**



## The EL Mentorship Program

The EL Mentorship Program matches first-year CAS undergraduate students with upper class mentors for guidance navigating experiential learning at BU. Participants meet independently in their mentor/mentee pairs as well as collectively for monthly workshops. The program was piloted in spring 2023, during the first semester of EL Connector programming. Academic year 2023–24 marked the second time the program was offered and a shift from a one-semester to a two-semester format. **There was a 72% increase in program participation compared to the pilot session**, with 26 students participating as mentors and 24 students participating as mentees.

A comparison of pre- and post- program assessments of participants shows that participation in the EL Mentorship program increased students' understanding of experiential learning and helped them identify experiential learning opportunities available at BU. Additionally, participants indicated that the program deepened their ability to reflect on their experiential learning experiences and articulate the value of those experiences to others.



**“My mentor was amazing in providing me feedback! I talk to her a lot about the things that I want to be doing or will be doing and she talks me through everything. The feedback loop is incredibly helpful. The presentations every month [were] very helpful as well in learning new information!”**

**Mentee (23–24 session)**

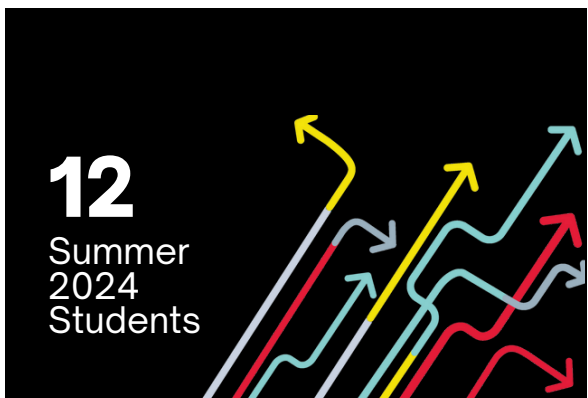
## The Summer Internship Support Program

Piloted in summer 2023 with six students, the Summer Internship Support Program provides housing and dining on BU's campus to CAS undergraduate students with demonstrated need who are interning for no pay or low pay at Boston-area organizations. Post-program evaluations from the 2023 cohort revealed the enormous impact the awards had on recipients — as well as the benefits of the programming that complemented it. This direct feedback from participants along with continued outreach from students who were not selected for the pilot session of the program fortified our attempts to raise additional funds for summer 2024.

With thanks to gifts from generous funders, the EL Connector was able to double the size of the program for summer 2024. This year's cohort and their internship placements are listed below. The students moved into their campus residences in May and will meet bi-weekly with program staff over the subsequent twelve weeks. Cohort meetings focus on navigating the internship experience, self-reflection, and the development of career readiness competencies. The curriculum also covers wellness, work/life balance, and the practical concerns of the transition from college to the professional space. Additionally, for the first time, participants have an option to join for some or all of the co-curricular activities that constitute BU's new EL Living-Learning Community: a group of more than 100 undergraduates engaged in different types of experiential learning this summer.

**“This has been an amazing experience and has honestly changed my sense of perceived support from Boston University. I feel more supported by the university community in my career journey.”**

**Program Participant (Summer 2023)**





## Summer 2024 Cohort

<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>INTERNSHIP SITE</b>	<b>INTERNSHIP TITLE</b>
<b>Tsion Abza (CAS'26, Neurobiology)</b>	Mass General Research Institute - Brain Tumor Lab	Research Lab Intern
<b>Sylvie Adams (CAS'25, Biology)</b>	Sleep Disorders Clinical Research Program, Mass General Hospital	Student Intern
<b>Tatiana Carrido (CAS'26, Environmental Analysis &amp; Policy)</b>	House of Culture Boston	Fashion Merchandising Intern
<b>Tejas Kaur (CAS'25, Economics and Mathematics)</b>	Women's Foundation of Boston	Summer Intern
<b>Sarah Malik (CAS'26, Computer Science)</b>	Eyethena (through Foster Pride)	Summer Intern
<b>Hawa Ndiaye (CAS'26, Biochemistry &amp; Molecular Biology)</b>	Mass General Hospital - Sumaya Das Lab	Summer Research Intern
<b>Binh-Minh Nguyen (CAS'25, Neuroscience and Biochemistry &amp; Molecular Biology)</b>	Massachusetts General Hospital-Brain Injury Laboratory	Summer Intern
<b>Tegan Retzer (CAS'25, Political Science)</b>	Concord Prison Outreach	Operations and Program Intern
<b>Nathaniel Shalett (CAS'27, Environmental Analysis and Policy)</b>	New England Aquarium	Big Ocean Tank Internship
<b>Lyla Thomson (CAS'26, Chemistry)</b>	Victory Programs	Harm Reduction Intern
<b>Lakshya Venkatesh (CAS'26, Economics and Mathematics)</b>	ABT Associates	Operational Compliance Intern
<b>Jennavieve Zilic (CAS'25, Biochemistry &amp; Molecular Biology)</b>	Boston Children's Hospital - Zhou lab	Undergraduate Student Intern

## EL Living-Learning Community Summer 2024

SUMMER COMMUNITY EVENTS	DATE
Summer Kick-Off BBQ	June 4, 5–6:30 pm
Weekly Yoga	Mondays through the summer, 7:30–8:30 am
Resources for the Center for Career Development	June 20, 6–7 pm
Scholarships & Fellowships – Info Session	June 26, Noon–12:30 pm
Pizza Social	July 11, 5–6:30 pm
Break with BU’s Therapy Dogs	July 19
Translating Your Experience – Info Session	July 29, 6–7 pm
End of Summer Social	August 6, 5–6:30 pm



**“I felt very supported through the program, not only financially but emotionally and socially, as having the cohort meetings and seeing familiar faces in the living space made me feel like I had a good community this summer.”**

**Program Participant (Summer 2023)**

## Outreach & Student Engagement

Over the past year, in addition to the sessions offered by EL ambassadors, the EL Connector sponsored a number of events and customized workshops for the CAS undergraduate student population. From an Open House celebration that welcomed the community into our new space to information sessions designed to bring awareness about our programs to students historically less likely to engage in experiential learning, our staff worked consistently over the past year to broaden the reach of our office.

Over 150 students attended the following workshops, events, and information sessions developed and delivered by staff of the EL Connector to highlight the value of experiential learning.

<b>Alumni Career Panel: Careers in Innovation &amp; Entrepreneurship</b>	September 2023
<b>3 Information Sessions on CAS Internship Program</b>	October 2023
<b>What to Do with Your Summer</b> (In collaboration with CAS Student Government)	November 2024
<b>Lunch &amp; Learn with CEO and Co-Founder of Saxby's</b>	January 2024
<b>How to Find and Fund an Internship</b> (Special Workshop for First-Generation College Students)	January 2024
<b>Information Session on the Summer Internship Support Program</b>	February 2024
<b>Open House</b>	February 2024
<b>3 Information Sessions on CAS Internship Program</b>	March 2024
<b>Leading Minds: Navigating Time, Leadership, and Mental Health as Student Leaders</b>	April 2024
<b>Connecting Customer Service Experience to Experiential Learning</b>	April 2024

Over  
**150**  
students attended  
these events.

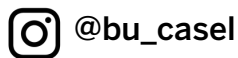


EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING  
CONNECT



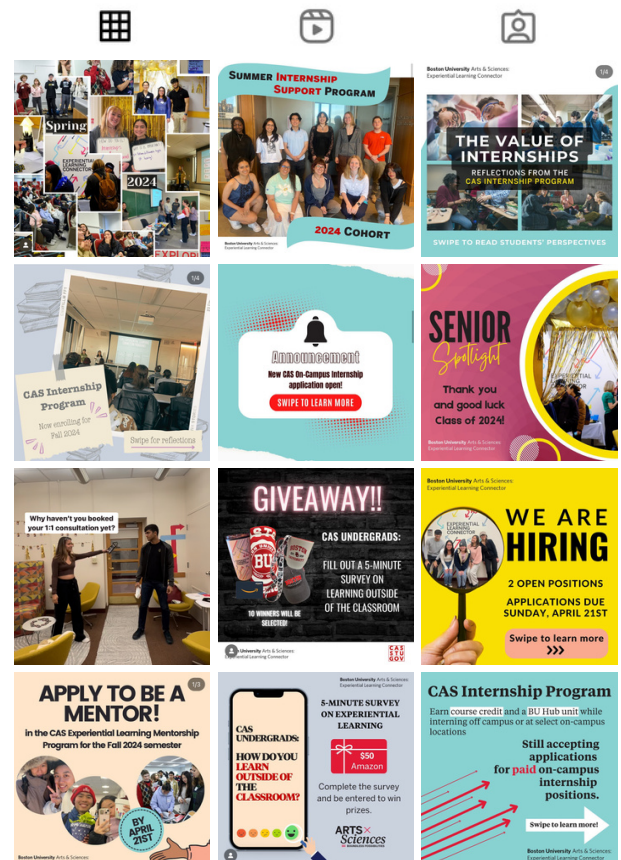


Staff from the EL Connector promoted our programming at an admitted students' fair; at five orientation events for first-year and transfer students; at a mixer for students interested in Pre-Health coursework; and at various other outreach activities throughout the college. **Over 4,000 students attended the events where the EL Connector was represented.** While awareness data suggests that much more work needs to be done to familiarize students with the resources available through the office (see next section of this report), we view this outreach as valuable ways to connect with prospective and current students.



## Experiential Learning Connector on Instagram

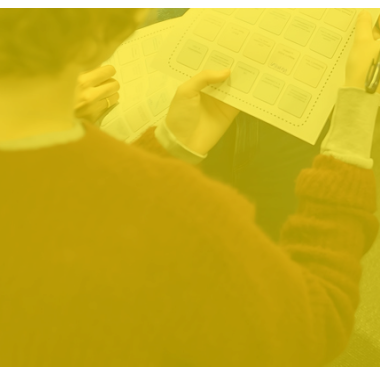
With the help of our Communications Specialist, the EL Connector worked to increase our social media presence. We established our own channel on Instagram in January 2024 and quickly grew our followers by posting relevant stories about experiential learning multiple times per week during the semester. **Our posts and stories reached over 3500 accounts,** successfully getting out important information about upcoming experiential learning opportunities.





## Assessment

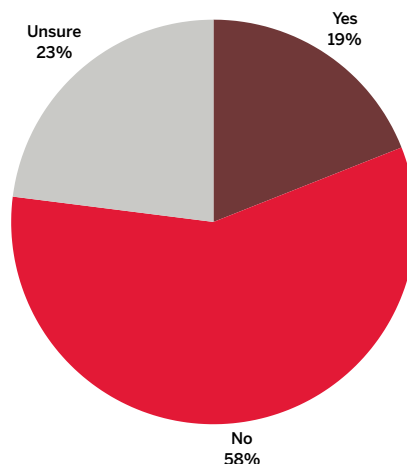
At the start of the spring 2024 semester, the EL Connector formally entered into a partnership with BU's Office of Continued Improvement and Data Analytics (CIDA) to develop a comprehensive plan for assessing CAS students' awareness of and engagement with experiential learning. The first major effort involved conducting a baseline assessment to see how our undergraduates are presently engaging with experiential learning. We surveyed the entire undergraduate population beginning in early April 2024, and our goal was a 10% response rate or higher. By the time classes ended in the first week of May, we met that goal and closed the survey. Preliminary data from that baseline assessment is shared on the following pages, and a full report is forthcoming.



## Awareness

In order to gauge their familiarity with the term “experiential learning,” students were asked twice whether they have participated in any experiential learning activities while at BU. The first time they were asked, no definition of experiential learning or examples of experiential learning activities were provided; the second time they were asked, a full description was included.

**Have you participated in any experiential learning (EL) while at BU?**

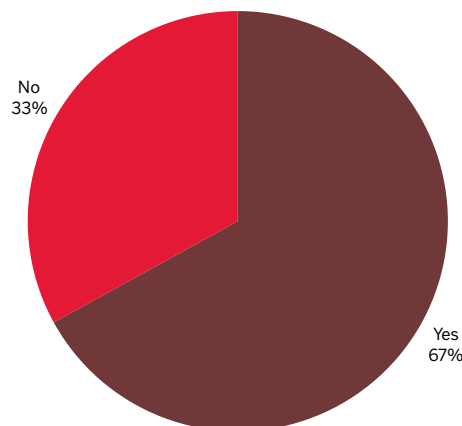


**Experiential learning (EL) is learning by doing. It happens when you apply knowledge and information from the classroom to a real-world situation. When engaging in EL, you build transferrable skills (like teamwork and communication) that will be valuable in future professional environments.**

**The opportunities to engage in EL at BU include:**

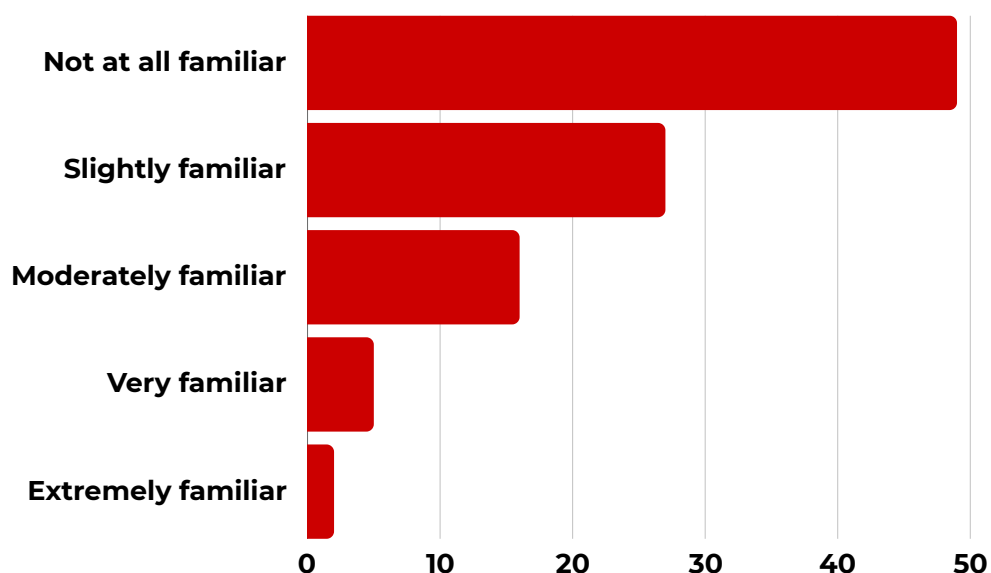
Fieldwork	Internships
Leadership in student Orgs	Mentored research
Service learning	Study away/abroad
Community Engagement	Team-based projects

**Based on this definition, have you participated in any experiential learning?**



The discrepancy in responses to these two questions by the same students suggests that a significant number of CAS undergraduates are engaging in experiential learning activities without being aware of what “experiential learning” is. This lack of awareness undeniably prevents them from reflecting on — and communicating — the full value of their experience.

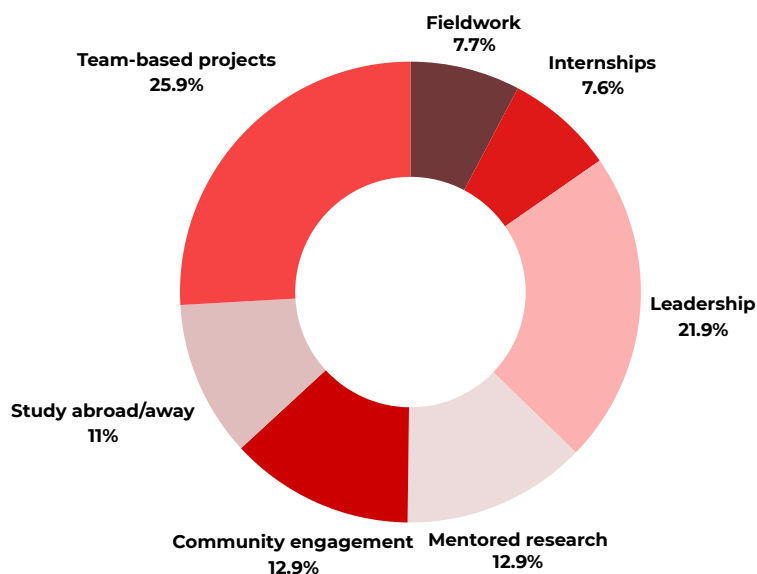
Students were next asked about their awareness of the EL Connector. Their responses reflect a significant lack of familiarity with the office and the resources we provide.



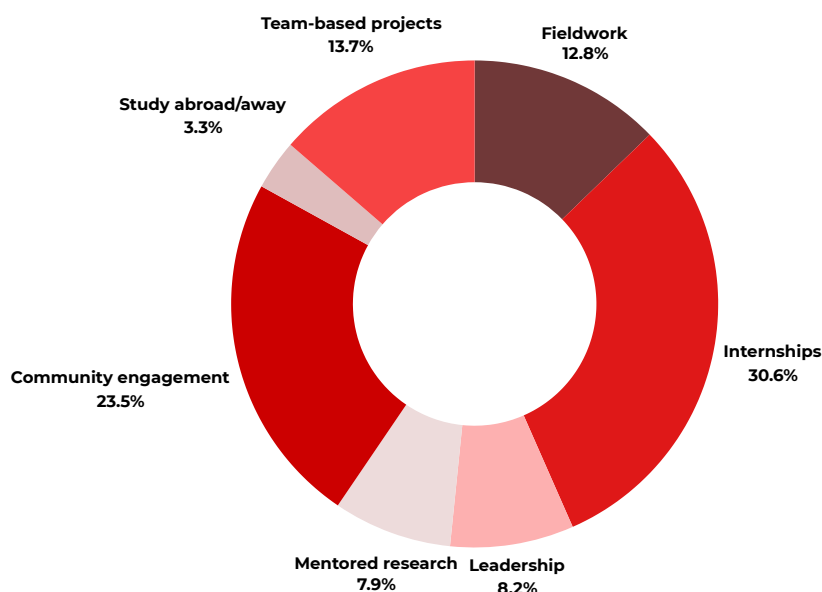
## Engagement

When asked about specific experiential learning activities that they participated in during their time at BU — both at the University and through off-campus opportunities — the breakdown is as follows.

**Which types of experiential learning opportunities have you personally participated in during your time at BU (through Boston University)?**



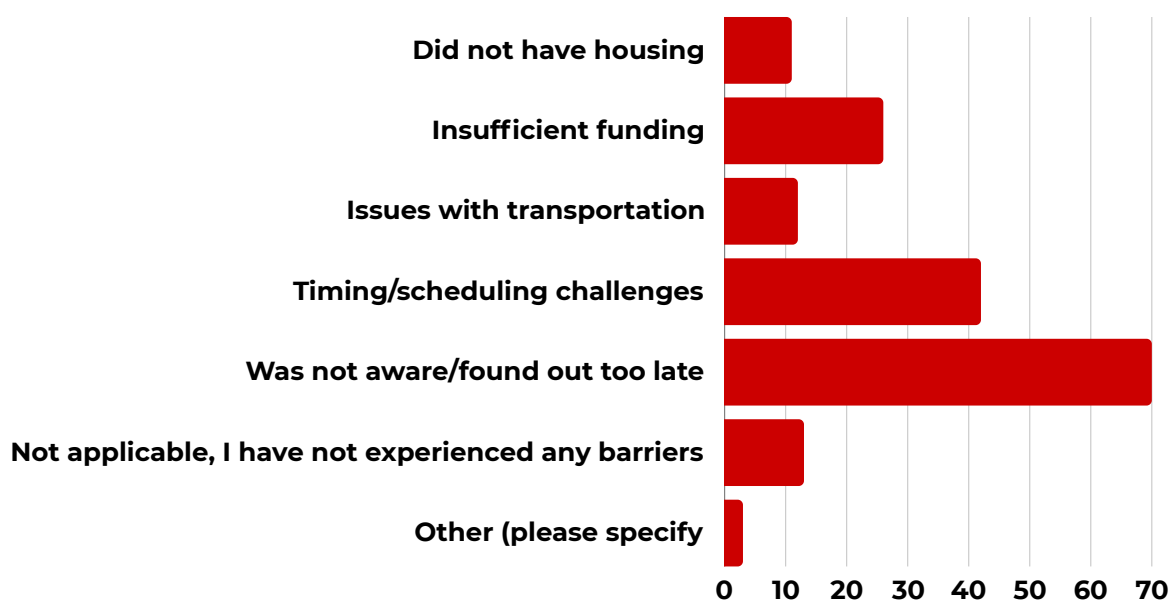
**Which types of experiential learning opportunities have you personally participated in during your time at BU (outside of Boston University)?**



## Access

While the baseline assessment shows that the majority of CAS undergraduate students (67%) are actively engaging in experiential learning, there are many who are not. The reasons those students cited for not participating in experiential learning activities as much as they would have liked to are listed below.

**If you haven't engaged in experiential learning as much as you wished, what barriers prevented you? (Select all that apply.)**





## Impact

For students who engage in experiential learning, the impact is significant. When asked “In what ways has experiential learning shaped your educational journey?” their open responses highlighted the following themes:

### Growing transferable skills

Example response: Engaging in experiential learning "provided me with a different way of approaching tasks and problems."

### Applying coursework to real-world situations

Example response: "Actually getting to be hands on made it much easier to grasp concepts."

### Exploring career options

Example response: Engaging in experiential learning "gave realistic views on pathways out of school and gave me a chance to learn things i wouldn't have during school."

### Gaining experience and building resumes

Example response: "I've had so many incredible opportunities that I definitely would not have otherwise been able to afford or had access to without BU's [assistance]. I have padded my resume with leadership roles and internships from my time here, as well as having gone abroad with university funded support."

### Making social connections, especially with other students

Example response: Engaging in experiential learning "introduced me to many wonderful individuals that I can now call my friends. These opportunities allow me to make so many connections and lovely friendships."

## Ongoing Assessment

Going forward, the EL Connector will work with CIDA to perform yearly assessments of CAS undergraduate students' awareness of and engagement with experiential learning. We will use the results to make data-driven decisions that improve access. Comparing survey results year over year and tracking student participation in various experiential learning activities offered by our university partners will provide vital success metrics for that programming and prompt necessary adjustments as we continue to develop new initiatives.

## Challenges & Next Steps

As data from the baseline assessment clearly demonstrates, the single greatest challenge the EL Connector faces is awareness. CAS undergraduate students do not yet display an understanding of what experiential learning means, nor how to find and access experiential learning activities that are relevant for them. In addition, students are not aware of the resources available at the EL Connector and are thus not adequately engaging in our services. In light of this data, our office has developed a full-year awareness campaign, which will begin in September 2024. The campaign involves targeted outreach designed to meet students where they are as well as a deadline-driven social media display that communicates information about experiential learning opportunities in a timely manner. Next year's EL ambassadors and communication specialists will be central to this effort, as we know that students are most receptive to outreach from their peers.

In parallel to our awareness campaign, the EL Connector will promote growth in each of our four programs. **Our specific goals are as follows:**

01.

Increasing the number of students receiving funds for housing and dining through the Summer Internship Program by at least two, and potentially more, depending on the results of our annual fundraising.

02.

Reaching at least 400 students through workshops and consultations offered by the EL Ambassador Program — an increase of more than 100%.

03.

Doubling the size of the CAS Internship Program and offering more sections of the course.

04.

Doubling the size of the EL Mentorship Program and returning to the one-semester structure to accommodate mid-year transfer students and those studying abroad in either the fall or spring.



Additionally, we aim to provide direct-to-student scholarships for engaging in experiential learning activities that would otherwise be inaccessible to our CAS undergraduates. The terms of those scholarships are currently being discussed with internal and external funders, but we plan to announce the opportunity in spring 2025.

As we move into the 2024–2025 academic year, another goal we have is to increase our support for CAS faculty who are seeking to add experiential learning activities to their courses. By supporting faculty in this way, the EL Connector will continue to reach more students and to grow awareness about the transformative potential of experiential learning. Faculty members can apply for funding to pilot new activities and also to participate in a trial of new software that brings real-world projects into the classroom.

With each passing year, we move ever closer to realizing the vision of the EL Connector: ensuring that every CAS undergraduate engages meaningfully in high quality experiential learning during their time in the college. This is an enormous effort with even bigger rewards, and we are committed to making it happen. Your support is taking us there!



## Campus Partners

**BU Center for the Humanities**  
**BU Hub**  
**BU Spark!**  
**CAS Academic Advising**  
**CAS Communications Office**  
**CAS Student Programs & Leadership**  
**Center for Career Development**  
**Center for Innovation in Social Science**  
**Center for Teaching & Learning**  
**Community Service Center**  
**Howard Thurman Center**  
**Innovate@BU**  
**Initiative on Cities**  
**International Students & Scholars Office**  
**Learning Assistants Program**  
**Newbury Center**  
**Software & Application Innovation Lab (SAIL)**  
**Study Abroad**  
**University Research Opportunity Program (UROP)**




## Major Contributors

**4CASGE Fund for Experiential Learning**  
**Norma Alvarez**  
**American Endowment Foundation**  
**Anonymous Donor**  
**Carol Ann Bischoff, Esq. (COM'82) and Mr. Robert M. Regan, Jr.**  
**Mrs. Michelle Feinberg (CAS'91) and Mr. Andrew Feinberg**  
**Evan S. Hirsch (CAS'03) and Ms. Michelle Stein Hirsch**  
**Mr. Clint Holder and Ms. Hilary Holder**  
**Mr. Mitsuru Igarashi and Mrs. Lucinda T. Igarashi**  
**Steven Karbank (CAS'79)**  
**Mr. John D. Nachmann (CAS'89) and Mrs. Catherine M. Nachmann**  
**National Philanthropic Trust**  
**Stanley E. Sclaroff**  
**Paul R. Rothman (CAS'68)**





# Thank You!

 [casel@bu.edu](mailto:casel@bu.edu)  
 [bu.edu/cas-connector/](https://bu.edu/cas-connector/)  
 [@bu\\_casel](https://www.instagram.com/bu_casel)