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End of Summer Report
FURSCA, summer

The primary aim of this project was to make sure all marginalized groups at Albion College have access to Experiential Learning (EL), since it will be a requirement for the upcoming class. The goal was to establish more efficient and strategic policies, resources, and support systems for those groups. By enhancing these key points, the project aimed to create more equal opportunities for experiential learning, thereby enriching student education and contributing positively to community development.

I conducted interviews with 25 individuals throughout the summer, including both Albion College faculty/staff and students, which provided valuable insights. The three groups I focused on was International, neurodivergent, and disabled students. These populations of students often face barriers to participation in EL related to issues of: (in)accessibility, culture, and institutional systems. This research aims to look closely at these challenges and suggest a more inclusive way of implementing experiential learning so that all students have an equal chance to take part.

Focusing on international students, the most common concerns were transportation and employment. Transportation is a significant issue, as Albion lacks a public bus system, and most international students do not own cars. While Campus Safety offers rides, their availability is unreliable and often delayed.

Employment presents another challenge. The students described difficulties in finding suitable internships and research projects, citing a lack of guidance and limited opportunities. Many departmental job and internship listings require international students to manually check whether they are eligible, often to find that 95% of opportunities are not accessible to them. The Center for International Education (CIE) is knowledgeable about work authorization processes like CPT (Curricular Practical Training) and OPT (Optional Practical Training), but lacks

resources on how students can actually find eligible opportunities. On the other hand, the Career and Internship Center (CIC) can help with job searches, but is unfamiliar with the regulations governing CPT and OPT. This results in a gap that international students must navigate alone.

While the transportation issue is a long-term challenge requiring substantial funding and coordination across departments, the employment issue could be addressed more immediately. The students suggested that Albion College should improve support for international students by designating a clear point of contact, fostering connections with alumni, and providing a list of successful international student experiences. They also highlight the need for better awareness among faculty and staff about these barriers. One potential solution is for CIE and CIC to jointly maintain a document listing companies that have previously hired Albion International alumni, including the alumni's names, majors, and job titles. CIE could also host more workshops and retreats focused on employment topics—covering CPT, OPT, internship strategies, resume writing, and more. These events could include Q&A sessions, alumni panels, guest speakers, and other career-focused activities.

Recognizing this need, I identified a potential summer employment opportunity. Since CIE and CIC are both occupied with other projects during the summer—and I'm seeking employment after FURSCA ends—I proposed that I take on the task of developing this resource document. As a rising junior, I would also personally benefit from this information.

Some effective strategies identified include securing on-campus employment and building strong relationships with faculty members. However, cultural and language barriers continue to pose challenges for many students. Albion College has taken steps toward addressing these issues through efforts centered on transparency, faculty development, and inclusive programming. Additionally, expanding financial support and simplifying the funding application process were highlighted as essential steps to increase equitable access to experiential learning opportunities.

From the perspective of neurodivergent students, several key challenges emerged. One of the most prominent issues is a lack of understanding and empathy from some professors, which can make the learning environment feel unwelcoming or isolating. Financial barriers also play a role—particularly the high costs associated with obtaining official documentation needed for academic accommodations. Many students expressed feeling out of place or overwhelmed by the academic pressure and the perceived intellectual competitiveness of their peers. To address these concerns, students recommended that Albion College work to reduce the stigma around accommodations such as extended testing time and separate exam rooms, and consider hiring additional accessibility coordinators. Improving accessibility could also include expanding resources for students with dyslexia and ensuring that professors clearly outline available support services in their syllabi.

Disabled students face a distinct set of challenges, with physical accessibility on campus being one of the most pressing concerns. Several buildings lack elevators or have elevators that only function with locked gates, which can create significant barriers. Additionally, the absence of ramps—or poor access to existing ones—further limits mobility. Like international students, disabled students also struggle with transportation. Many shared frustrations about the unreliability of Campus Safety rides, noting that even with visible disabilities, it can be difficult to secure timely assistance. Finding paid internships is another hurdle, often compounded by these transportation issues. Finally, students pointed out that inadequate winter maintenance, such as uncleared walkways and icy conditions, poses serious safety risks and has led to slips and falls around campus.

In conclusion, this project highlights the pressing need for more inclusive and accessible experiential learning at Albion College, particularly for international, neurodivergent, and disabled students. While these three groups face distinct challenges, a common thread connects their experiences: systemic barriers that prevent full participation in the college's academic and professional opportunities. Whether it is navigating complex employment

eligibility rules, lacking reliable transportation, facing stigma around accommodations, or encountering physical inaccessibility on campus, these students are often left to advocate for themselves in environments not designed with their needs in mind.

Through the insights gathered in 25 interviews, it became clear that meaningful change is possible—and necessary. Solutions do not always require massive overhauls but rather intentional collaboration, better communication, and targeted support. For example, creating a shared employment resource between CIE and CIC could drastically ease job searches for international students. Increasing faculty training and reducing stigma around accommodations would make a significant difference for neurodivergent students. And prioritizing accessibility upgrades and transportation support would improve the daily experience of disabled students, especially during harsh winters.

This research serves as a call to action. As experiential learning becomes a graduation requirement, Albion College must ensure that no student is left behind. Equity must be embedded in every policy and support structure. With continued student input, interdepartmental cooperation, and investment in inclusive practices, the college can build an environment where experiential learning is not a privilege, but a right for all. This project is only the beginning—and with commitment and care, Albion can become a national example of how to make experiential education truly accessible.

These insights, gathered from staff/faculty and students across the institution, will be shared with the Academic Visioning Committee to inform strategic planning and curriculum development. Looking ahead to the rest of the summer and next academic year the plan is to keep helping making Albion a safe place to everyone, by helping the college as best as I can to ensure all the students are being heard and supported. Finally, also prepare a presentation on Elkin Issac's symposium.

As an international student, this project has held a deeply personal significance for me. Arriving in Albion brought a wave of excitement, but also challenges, navigating a new culture,

language, and system far from home. Through this research, I was able to transform those initial struggles into purpose, channeling my experiences into something that could benefit others like me. Listening to the stories not only of fellow international, but also neurodivergent, and disabled students made me feel seen and less alone, and it strengthened my commitment to making Albion College a more inclusive place. This work allowed me not only to advocate for equity, but also to grow closer to a campus and community that have gradually become my second home. I am proud to have contributed to a project that not only reflects my own journey, but also uplifts the voices of students whose challenges are too often overlooked.