**Experiential Learning**

**Education Outside of the Classroom**

Sara Ramirez, SEEDS Scholar, San Diego Mesa College, California

---

**Abstract**

The SEEDS Scholars Program at San Diego Mesa College works to guide students, particularly those from underrepresented communities, toward coursework and career development related to the SEEDS themes of sustainability, hunger, and food security. One method the program uses to address these themes is through experiential learning, which has been exceedingly successful. It provides students with the opportunity to interact within the community through experience and observation. Students are able to visit places like urban farms that follow sustainable practices and others that are devoted to providing services for those that are in need. They are also able to visit the local national forest where students learn about career paths, internships, and volunteer opportunities. Experiential learning has helped develop skills in these students that are not taught in lecture classes. They are able to engage in conversations with professionals and connect with their curiosity. Students can see first-hand how what they have learned in classrooms can be applied to the real world. Through experiential learning students become equipped with the essential skills that aid them in their college journey and their future careers. The Program continues to develop these students as scholars and leaders.

---

**Introduction**

Learning styles vary based on individuals and there are many learning styles that work differently for certain people, specifically students. One method founded by psychologist David Kolb is known to connect experience to the way an individual develops intellectually. The cycle is said to begin with experience, or an engaging event that will lead to personal reflecting. Reflecting about an experience pushes and individual to think and later apply these embedded concepts in future scenarios. This type of learning is referred to as experiential learning. It is not taught but rather experienced through the five senses. The diagram below shows the fundamentals of experiential learning.

![Experiential learning cycle](image)

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” - David Kolb, 1984

---

**Regional Conferences**

Students are prepared for engaging conferences that are aimed to help them develop as leaders. The students selected to attend the conferences learn how to network and how to meet people in the real world. They are able to meet with agency leaders and meet with dozens of other students that share the same interest and ambitions as they do. Experiencing events like these can be life changing for many students that normally don’t have these type of interactions.

---

**Urban Farms**

Students enjoy some of the field days visiting urban farms throughout the city of San Diego. They were able to see farms like Coastal Roots, a farm that followed Jewish practices. As well as an aquaponics farm and the students responded: “I really liked the opportunity to visit these two farms. I did not know before how an aquaponics system worked. I learned new things that we can apply to our garden on campus”.

They were able to see how farms operated and that many were not as traditional as they would have anticipated. They established connections with the farm operators and where able to ask questions directly to those that were working in the field. Having this type of exposure allowed students to truly reflect and express themselves in these surrounding.

---

**National Forest**

I really enjoyed being able to ask questions and get hands-on interaction with the Forest Service staff. – Mesa College Student after attending a trip to the Cleveland National Forest

---

**Contact**

Sara Ramirez
SEEDS Scholar
Environmental Studies/Economics Major
sramirez001@sdccd.edu
(619) 634-5513

---

**Students attended a 4-day conference in San Antonio, Texas.**

---

**“Working for the Great Outdoors” Field Trip.**