

Experiential Learning at College of Athens

All students at College of Athens will engage in multiple forms of the experiential learning opportunities described above. As a culminating part of their program, all students will engage in apprenticeship experiences, which will be described more fully below. However, in addition to the capstone apprenticeship experiences, students will encounter various types of experiential learning in all of their CoA courses. Some examples from current CoA courses are listed below. Additionally, students have the opportunity of receiving course credit through missional opportunities conducted either through CoA or one of its mission partners like Adventures in Missions (AIM). For example, students participating in AIM's 11-month long Word Race, have the opportunity of earning a full year of college credit (30 hours) while participating in the program. All of these aspects of experiential learning demonstrate CoA's commitment to learning through doing. As a Christian institution of higher learning, we recognize that transformation of the mind is essential to the task of becoming more Christlike (Romans 12:2), but we also know that the sacrifice of the whole self (12:1) requires actively leveraging our gifts and talents to accomplish Christ's work in the world (Romans 12:3–8). Through these learning experiences at CoA, we hope to see students learn to put into practice in the real world what they are learning in the classroom, so that they can learn resilience through adversity and become lifelong learners and doers of God's Word.

Experiential learning is also at the heart of CoA's campus development project. Built into the CoA campus experience will be opportunities for students to participate in hands-on ministry when they leave the classroom. These opportunities include:

- An open-air amphitheater where Worship Arts students can hold community concerts and worship events. Students learning to preach can also deliver powerful messages from this platform.
- The houses of hope and joy will offer transitional housing for students of all sorts, such as 18-year-olds who have timed out of foster care. In these spaces, our Care & Counseling students will have the opportunity to minister wholeness to individuals residing there.
- Students preparing for the international mission field will learn how to incorporate agriculture as a missional strategy by learning to care for plants and small animals on the CoA farm.
- Students preparing for children or youth ministry will lead retreats and summer camps with young people.
- All CoA students will help facilitate community-wide events and welcome guests from the public to the Athens Prayer Garden.

Examples of Experiential Learning in CoA classes:

While the required apprenticeship experience is the culmination of experiential learning, every class at CoA also incorporates aspects of experiential learning in a variety of ways both inside and outside of the classroom. From the syllabus development process through the course review process, instructors are guided and evaluated on implementation of these activities as a way of fulfilling CoA's larger program objectives of Ministry Application and Servant Leadership. Students are not only taught how something may theoretically apply to ministry or about the characteristics of servant leadership but are also required to put those elements into practice using course content. CoA programs include a range of practical ministry courses, but even those that are primarily theoretical or cognitive in nature require students to put that material into practice with hands-on experiences. Below are a few examples of what that may look like in a CoA classroom.

Inductive Bible Study

As part of the Inductive Bible Study course, students are taught how to study the biblical text on their own and with other available resources. As a final project, the students are required to teach the basic method to another person or group of people outside of the classroom and then to go through the process with those people in a specific biblical book. The audience members do a short feedback form and students are also asked to reflect on the process as a whole and what they learned from the experience.

His Creation: Identity in Christ

Students in this course are required to coach another individual outside of the class through the process of identifying and developing their unique talent themes and spiritual gifts. Students begin by going through the process themselves as part of the course curriculum, and then they use the tools they've learned to guide another person through the same process. Students are equipped with tools for assessment and coaching to help their coachee identify these gifts and talents and then to help them develop a plan for strengthening and leveraging those traits as a means of growth in Christ and influencing others.

Great Commission: Discipleship

In this course students are tasked with creating a discipleship group with at least 2 people outside of class that they meet with weekly throughout the course of the semester. The students utilize material from the course (lectures, readings, etc.) to lead the group through the discipleship process based on what they are learning each week. They are not only learning what discipleship is but also how to live it out in their lives and communities.

Apologetics

The apologetics course is structured in a way that evenly splits time spent in the classroom with time spent in the community putting into practice what has been learned. As students learn theoretical arguments and theological concepts, they are then given the opportunity to practice those arguments and to engage skeptical people in the community in conversation in a variety of different forums, for example through on-campus surveys and whiteboard theology at a local university, as well as developing reflective practice to align theory and practice for the students.

Apprenticeship (Faith-in-Action) Program

Program Objectives

The objective of the Faith-in-Action (FIA) Apprenticeship program requirement is to prepare students to be successful in ministry by providing a mentored, hands-on, applied learning opportunity for them to:

1. Effectively serve in Christ's Kingdom.
2. Apply classroom knowledge to practical ministry or leadership situations.
3. Grow in experience and maturity in their chosen major area of study.

All College of Athens programs require apprenticeship experiences as part of the curriculum. Students begin the process by first completing the Christian Ethics course, where they will engage in a variety of case studies of difficult issues encountered inside and outside of the church and learn models of biblical decision making to help guide their choices through those issues as a way of allowing students to grapple with difficult decisions in a safe, classroom environment before they are placed in situations where they may need to apply these skills in real-life situations.

All apprenticeship experiences are approved in advance and coordinated by the school in conjunction with an on-site mentor who will guide the student through the experience. A CoA faculty member, the student, and the on-site apprenticeship mentor meet in person (or virtually if needed) to co-develop the objectives specific to the student's ministry preparation curriculum. In conjunction with the tasks and responsibilities completed on-site, the student meets regularly with the on-site mentor, and with the faculty advisor to discuss required readings, journaling and reflections and other academic assignments that correspond to the experience. Each syllabus is individually crafted to fit the student's unique learning experience.

Examples

Locations:

Local churches

Children's ministry

Youth ministry

Pastoral ministry

Worship ministry

Pastoral Care ministry

Assisting/shadowing teachers in a local school

Local Ministries

S.W.A.T. Student Ministries

Sparrow's Nest shelter

New Heart Thrift Store

Fresh Wind Recovery [Substance Abuse Treatment - Fresh Wind Recovery Ministry](#)

CoA Prayer Ministry Center

Study Abroad through Adventures in Missions (AIM)