

SPARTAN EXPERIENCE BASICS HANDBOOK

UNC Greensboro – Division of Student Affairs



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Spartan Experience

1

Overview:

The [Spartan Experience](#) is UNC Greensboro's co-curricular framework designed to intentionally support student learning and development beyond the classroom. Spartan Experience programs are structured to build skill-based competencies across progressive levels, allowing students to move from foundational understanding to advanced application. This framework enables students to articulate how their co-curricular involvement contributes to their personal, academic, and professional growth. Developed by the Division of Student Affairs and implemented with numerous campus partners, the Spartan Experience provides a shared, mission-aligned framework for coordinating co-curricular learning and supporting students' development as engaged citizens.

Students can track their progress in [Spartan Connect](#) through their co-curricular transcript, which records learning beyond the classroom and can be helpful for students to reflect on and articulate their campus engagement. These experiences are organized into five skill-based Competencies, as seen in Figure 1:

LEADERSHIP

Leadership starts with understanding and committing to one's core values. Combined with knowledge and skills, these values guide responsible choices that benefit the common good. Through practice, students develop a framework to actively contribute to the global community.

WELL-BEING

Well-Being is a shared campus responsibility to support student growth and foster a community that prioritizes wellness. Spartan Well-Being promotes development across eight dimensions: physical, emotional, social, environmental, spiritual, financial, occupational, and intellectual. This competency helps students build lifelong skills to care for themselves and contribute to a healthier community.

INCLUSION

Inclusion begins with the exploration of personal values and the ability to interact with and appreciate others' perspectives. Building positive relationships takes ongoing effort to develop knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with everyone.

CONNECTIONS

Connections involves self-discovery and building meaningful relationships on campus and in the wider community. By understanding themselves and their values, students can better engage with others, respect differences, and recognize the impact of their actions.

CAREER

Career exploration helps students identify goals, understand their strengths, and plan for the future. It involves building self-awareness, using resources, expanding networks, and developing skills to pursue further opportunities.

Figure 1. The Five Spartan Experience Competencies

Students are evaluated through their reflection/participation in a variety of engagements, including events, activities, programs, or other opportunities outlined in the Spartan Experience curriculum. Competency achievement is measured using a variety of methods tailored to each student learning outcome, ensuring comprehensive evaluation of student progress.

By participating in the Spartan Experience, students will be introduced to campus resources available to support their UNCG journey. As they learn more about the campus, their sense of belonging and understanding of available resources will be enhanced. Additionally, students will gain experience in/with:

- Developing leadership skills, influenced by their core values and knowledge of strategies how to be a changemaker within their community for the common good
- Understanding and planning well-being, centered on the eight dimensions of wellness that include physical, emotional, social, environmental, cultural, financial, career, and intellectual
- Exploring skills, support, and experiences for career, professional, and financial development
- Connecting with peers to share common experiences and develop meaningful relationships
- Increasing understanding of others through exploration of personal values and development of interpersonal skills
- Creating supplemental materials to document experiences for scholarships, resumes, graduate school applications, etc.

Students will also be eligible for points of recognition that include UNCG merchandise, a presence at the annual Spartans of Excellence Banquet, a medallion to wear at graduation, and more!

Spartan Experience Curriculum 3

Overview & Framework:

The Spartan Experience curriculum was developed by the Division of Student Affairs between 2019 and 2023 as part of a broader effort to clarify departmental goals, structures, and shared expectations for student learning. Through ongoing conversations about long-range priorities, the Division recognized the need to be more intentional and outcomes-focused in supporting students' co-curricular experiences.

The Student Affairs Team sought a cohesive, division-wide approach that clearly supported student learning and career readiness. While most curricular models at the time existed only within residential life, The Spartan Experience emerged as an early example of a division-wide framework, designed to align our work with learning outcomes and help students build skills that extend beyond campus. Below are the frameworks that continue to guide division programming.

Division Mission: The Mission and Goals of Student Affairs builds on the University's Mission regarding engaged citizenship, life-long learning, leadership, and intercultural competencies. Student Affairs provides intentional co-curricular experiences to support academic learning.

Educational Priority: As a result of the UNCG Spartan Experience, students will become engaged citizens who are prepared for meaningful careers and lives.

Theoretical Framework:

- Foundational theories that guide the Spartan Experience Curriculum: Tinto's (1975) Integration Framework undergirded by Astin's (1984) Theory of Involvement.
- Our curricular approach model incorporates several key tenets of adult education including encouraging the students to direct their own learning, valuing the accumulated life experiences of our students, and lifting the iterative nature of our model (Knowles, 1984). Furthermore, our Educational Priority is grounded in transformational learning and learning's power to shift one's consciousness (King, 2000). This theory-to-practice application honors our students' contributions and how our campus fosters a space where they develop a deeper, more critical sense of who they are and their role within society. As students see greater connections between their academic and co-curricular experiences, they are more likely to be retained (Astin, 1984).
 - Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.
 - King, K. (2000). The adult ESL experience: Facilitating perspective transformation in the classroom. *Adult Basic Education*, 10(2), 69-89.
 - Knowles, M. (1984). *Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
 - Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Co-Curricular Approach at the Department Level:

A Curricular Approach is a paradigm shift from traditional educational approaches to an intentional, developmentally sequenced one, defined by institutional mission and purpose. Student Affairs Educators using a Curricular Approach first identify clear learning goals and outcomes grounded in the history, culture, mission, and purpose of our institution. Then staff members identify student engagement strategies that can provide opportunities for students to achieve these learning goals and outcomes. Goals are sequenced, pedagogy is rooted in scholarship of teaching and learning, and campus partners are integrated throughout the institution. A Curricular Approach uses assessment to measure student learning and inform a process of continuous improvement.

THE CURRICULAR APPROACH TO STUDENT AFFAIRS AT UNCG

CURRICULAR APPROACH TO STUDENT AFFAIRS

- Aligns with the University and Division mission, goals, outcomes, and practices.
- Facilitate intentional student learning experiences with clear learning goals and developmentally sequenced instructional strategies.
- Situates student learning with aspirations, inputs, process, and outputs that are visible, explicit, and available for improvement.
- Includes deeper thinking strategies, that will improve learning and student success.

TEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR A CURRICULAR APPROACH*



- The curricular approach is directly connected to the institution mission, context, and student populations served.
- The learning aims, educational priority, learning goals, and learning outcomes are derived from the institutional context.



- Learning aims and strategies are rooted in scholarship.
- Learning outcomes drive the development of educational strategies.
- The curricular approach utilizes a variety of educational strategies to facilitate student learning.



- Educators who have expertise, in terms of both content and pedagogy, are utilized to design and implement the desired learning.
- The curricular approach developmentally sequences learning.
- Campus and community partners are identified and integrated into plans.



- A curricular approach is developed through a review process.
- A curricular approach includes a cycle of assessment to improve student learning.

**Source: Kerr, Edwards, Tweedy, Lichterman, & Knerr (2020). The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs. Routledge.*

Parts of the Spartan Experience 6

Spartan Connect:

The Spartan Experience program and its many Events and Experiences live on the Spartan Connect Platform. Spartan Connect is UNCG's student engagement platform, managed through the Division of Student Affairs. Click [here](#) to view the Spartan Connect guidebook.

Competencies, Skills, & Points:

The Spartan Experience is built around five core competencies with which students actively engage. Each competency includes three to four skills for students to develop, as displayed below in Figure 2. Each skill is structured across three levels: Foundational, Intermediate, and Advanced. When a student completes a skill at any level, they earn one Spartan Experience Point. These points accumulate toward the three achievement levels, each offering its own form of recognition (see Figure 3).

The screenshot displays the Spartan Connect web application. At the top is a dark blue navigation bar with the 'SPARTAN CONNECT' logo on the left and links for 'Organizations', 'Events', 'Forms', 'Opportunities', and 'Resources' on the right, along with a user profile icon. The main content area is divided into three sections. On the left, under the heading 'Competencies', is a card for the 'Connections' competency, which includes a description and a list of '4 Skills'. In the center, under the heading 'Well-being', is a table of skills. On the right, under the heading 'Levels', are three boxes representing the achievement levels: '1. Foundational', '2. Intermediate', and '3. Advanced'.

Competencies	Skills	Levels													
Connections Through the Connections competency, you will learn more about yourself and those in your community. The skills and experiences in this competency will help you engage with the campus and create meaningful relationships while honoring and respecting others', and your own, identity and values. 4 Skills	Well-being <table><tr><th>Skills</th><th></th></tr><tr><td>Engage Campus Resources</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Healthy Strategies</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Informed Decisions</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Healthy Community Relationships</td><td>✓</td></tr></table>	Skills		Engage Campus Resources	✓	Healthy Strategies	✓	Informed Decisions	✓	Healthy Community Relationships	✓	<table><tr><td>1. Foundational</td></tr><tr><td>2. Intermediate</td></tr><tr><td>3. Advanced</td></tr></table>	1. Foundational	2. Intermediate	3. Advanced
Skills															
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Healthy Strategies	✓														
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Healthy Community Relationships	✓														
1. Foundational															
2. Intermediate															
3. Advanced															

Figure 2. Sample Competency & Skills/Skills Level from Spartan Connect

Spartan Experience Point Levels:

At each point level, students are contacted by the Division Office so they can collect their prize.

- 20 points = Spartan Swag Bag
- 45 points = Spartan Bento Box
- 55+ points = Spartan Experience Medallion, recognized at the Spartans of Excellence Banquet



Figure 3. Student facing advertisement showcasing Spartan Experience Point Levels

Events & Experiences:

The Spartan Experience initiative structures student engagement activities hosted by campus departments and offices to foster learning beyond the classroom. The vast majority of these activities take the form of Events and Experiences. In addition, some reflections are presented as forms students complete on Spartan Connect.

- Events: single points of contact with a set time/place
 - *These are added to Spartan Connect by individual departments*
- Experiences: longer term/continuous or on their own engagement via online platforms, organizations, certification processes, Leadership Challenge, workshop/workshop series, etc.
 - *These are uploaded by the Division Office Staff via rosters that are shared from individual departments or units.*

Campus partners interested in having students receive Spartan Experience credit for programs outside of Student Affairs are encouraged to email saf@uncg.edu.

Student View:

Spartan Experience activities are visible in the **Opportunities** section of Spartan Connect.

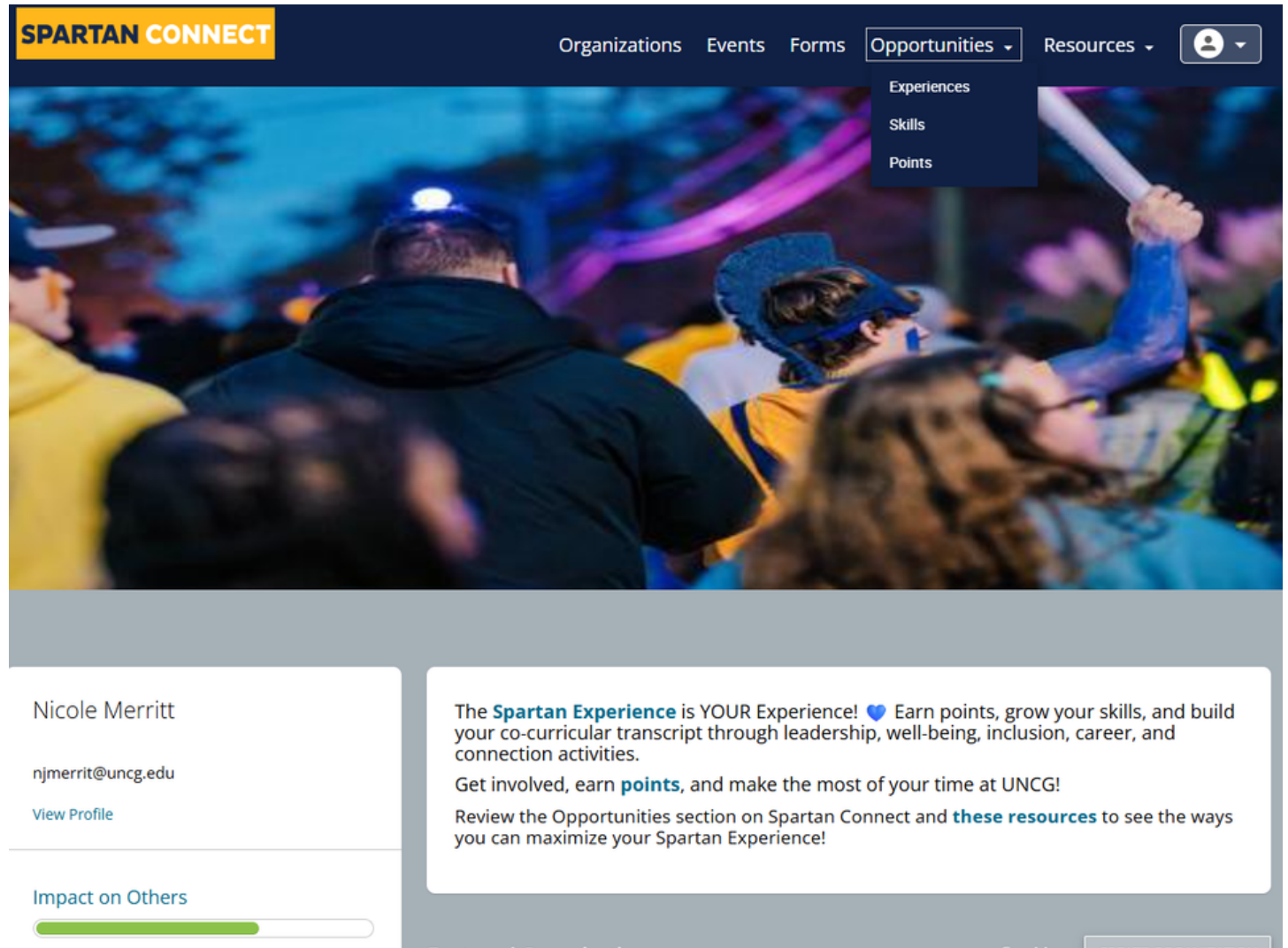


Figure 4. Spartan Connect student home screen with navigational tabs at top of page

Students can track their campus involvement and Spartan Experience points, which appear on their co-curricular transcript. The co-curricular transcript is a living document that students can download from their profile section on Spartan Connect and use to build content for a resume, scholarship application, and other opportunities documenting leadership and career-related competency development.

Co-Curricular Transcript

2023 - 2024 Overview

SPARTAN CONNECT

Sparty Spartan

8
Organization
Memberships

4
Experiences Earned

Competencies

Connections

25%

Sense of Self



Impact on Others



Career

16%

Marketing Your Brand



Set Career Goals



Well-Being

75%

Engage Campus Resources



Healthy Strategies



Informed Decisions



Healthy Community Relationships



FOUNDATIONAL

INTERMEDIATE

ADVANCED

Experiences

2023

Connections

- Connections Workshop
- Spartans' First or T2T Mentorship Program Mentor
- Spartans' First or T2T Mentorship Program Mentee

2024

Career

- Mock Interview
- Student Employee

Well-being

- ItMatters

Memberships

UNCG Tour Guide

Member
August 2023 - Current

National Association of Campus Mascots (NACM)

Member
August 2023 - Current

Japanese Bonsai Club

Member
August 2023 - Current

UNCG Costume Design Association

Vice President
January 2024 - Current

UNCG Marketing Association

Member
August 2023 - Current

Fencing Club

Vice President
January 2024 - Current

Figure 5. Example co-curricular transcript students access in Spartan Connect.

Student Spartan Experience resources can be found [here](#).