Memorandum

DATE: November 6, 2025

TO: Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee, Caucus Chairs, and Faculty Senate Executive
              Committee

CC: Academic Leadership Council

FROM: University Steering Committee for Applied Learning Experiences (USCALE) co-chairs Craig
              Schroeder and Mary Tolar; Jesse Perez Mendez, Provost and Executive Vice President

SUBJECT: Progress update on the Applied Learning Experience (ALE) Initiative

We want to thank the Academic Affairs committee and Faculty Senate caucus chairs for engaging with us in the critical foundational work of developing the policies and practices that will drive the measurable achievement of the university's applied learning goals forward. Your engagement is valuable to us, as being able to measure our goals also means being able to recognize all of the faculty and staff who lift up and support applied learning across the institution.

USCALE received and carefully considered your collective feedback regarding the proposed Applied Learning Experience (ALE) graduation requirement. This feedback came to us in many ways across the university, including letters submitted by the caucus chairs of Architecture, Planning and Design, Engineering, and Arts and Sciences. Your feedback was substantive and incredibly valuable to ensure we adjust and level-set accordingly.

We listened closely to concerns about administrative burden and prescriptiveness and the need for curricular flexibility. In response, USCALE and its committees moved quickly to advance a model that achieves greater flexibility for faculty and departments, ensuring we can collectively offer opportunities that meet the required elements of applied learning. Additionally, your input helped us recognize that we needed to clarify specifically how 0-credit-hour course development can leverage the support of the ALE team to minimize any potential additional workload that could detract from SCH production, and how co-curricular activities can and will be designated as applied learning experiences under the graduation requirement.

Key Changes Enhancing Faculty Flexibility
Based on your input, USCALE significantly adjusted the course designation requirements to:

- **Enhance outcomes-based flexibility:**
    o Faculty/programs now have the option to use their own existing discipline-specific assessments and documentation to meet the required measurable learning outcomes for three of the four core assessment elements:
        ▪ ALE Formative Reflections
        ▪ ALE Summative Reflection
        ▪ ALE Activity and Mentor Log

    o The one assessment element that remains as originally presented without modification is the ALE Student Planning Form. This tool addresses the intentionality of the experience and provides the critical basis for evaluation and continuous improvement for applied learning at the institutional level.

- **Enhance grading flexibility:** The requirement for a "C" or better has been removed from the proposed graduation requirement. The ALE can be fulfilled through any course structure, including traditional letter grades, A/pass/fail, or credit/no-credit.

- **Clearly designate the ready-made Canvas tools as an optional resource:** These tools are available to assist in developing new or revising existing courses, but it is not required that faculty utilize them (with the exception of the ALE Student Planning Form noted above). We simply encourage their application when it is useful and efficient, both for faculty and for students.

  - An example of their application could be in ensuring a co-curricular activity can seamlessly achieve ALE designation for a student wishing to leverage that experience for their graduation requirement – more on that below.

Clarifications on Scope and Support

We would like to take the opportunity to clarify three additional areas of note within the feedback we received to ensure a clear understanding of the graduation requirement's scope:

- **Co-curricular experiences:** We want to clarify that the graduation requirement is not limited to traditional courses. Co-curricular applied learning experiences (e.g., academic teams, clubs, internships, work-study) can receive credit by utilizing designated independent study, undergraduate research, or internship courses with variable credit, **including 0-credit**. These courses (new or existing) can use, if desired, the ready-made Canvas tools to scaffold and support these experiences for students, ensuring they meet the ALE requirements.

- **Equity and cost:** The ALE framework is an equity model designed to ensure every student has access to these high-quality, high-impact experiences regardless of their major or college. The Student Government Association (SGA), with sponsorship from the Salina campus, has adopted a resolution supporting the graduation requirement. The SGA recognized that this framework allows students to get credit for valuable applied learning they are already doing, which could reduce their time and overall cost to graduate.

- **Workload and resources**: The ALE team was formed not just to oversee the applied learning initiative as it relates to the Next-Gen K-State strategic plan, but also to serve as a resource to our faculty and departments. The ready-made Canvas tools are one example of this support. The ALE incentive grants are perhaps an even more tangible example. The creation of the graduation requirement itself is also an example, as it creates the mechanism to recognize both existing and new efforts to build and sustain applied learning experiences for students. Bottom line — if there is a barrier that the ALE team can help mitigate to help our faculty and departments do what you do best in applied learning, we are here to help.

Timeline for Implementation

Advancing these foundational policies and procedures for applied learning is critical to our Next-Gen K-State goals, as it provides the infrastructure to record and measure the incredible applied learning opportunities we offer our students. By developing and articulating these experiences at scale, we are not only demonstrably supporting the development of our students across the entirety of the institution, but we are also creating undeniable opportunity to secure new forms of funding and bolster student enrollment. We are motivated by these compelling prospects — and we are grateful to have your partnership on this journey.

Please take note of these important upcoming milestones and dates driving us forward:

- **Shared Governance Review:** The final graduation requirement proposal is currently in shared governance with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

- **Course Submission Window:** For those ready to submit courses, departments can begin the submission process for ALE course designations starting November 19, 2025.

- **Course Designation Process:** Each dean has been asked to nominate a representative for inclusion on a team, charged by the Provost, who will meet monthly and review courses proposed for ALE designation. The nomination process is currently in progress, and the team is expected to be formed and begin reviews by December.

- **Effective Date:** The proposed ALE graduation requirement would then take effect for all incoming students beginning fall 2026.

Again, we want to thank you for your critical input in this process. We welcome your continued partnership as we work together to ensure the success and quality of applied learning for all students.