

Communicating the Bridge Experience Program to Students/Parents

What is the Bridge Experience Program?

The Bridge Experience Program is a university-level initiative that connects students' academic experiences to their career goals through experiential learning. To graduate, students in participating majors must complete an approved bridge experience, defined as an internship, undergraduate research, service learning, study abroad, or another form of experiential learning. These experiences are pre-approved by faculty, meet specific learning outcomes, and appear on a student's transcript.

Does every student need a bridge experience to graduate?

No. Only select academic majors currently require a bridge experience. As of the 2025 fall semester, about half of the university's majors are part of the program.

Is a "bridge experience" the same thing as experiential learning?

Not exactly. Experiential learning is an essential part of the initiative, but not all experiential learning qualifies as a bridge experience. What makes bridge experiences distinct is their focus on career-related outcomes and their status as a graduation requirement for students in participating majors.

Can students choose their bridge experience?

Yes. Bridge experiences are customized to meet students' individual goals. Each student identifies an experience, works with a mentor, and reflects on their growth throughout the process.

Does the bridge program add to the cost of a Virginia Tech education?

No. Participating departments offer sections of 3900—a zero-credit, no-cost course integrated into major requirements. This design creates space in a student's four-year academic plan without increasing tuition or extending time to graduation.

Why is the bridge program valuable for students?

Employers value the practical skills developed through bridge experiences. A survey by the American Association of Colleges and Universities found that employers are more likely to hire graduates who have completed internships, global experiences (such as study abroad), or research with faculty. The program also requires reflective writing, helping students articulate their learning and skills during job interviews.

Where can students do research? Is it limited to certain majors with campus laboratory space?

Undergraduate research opportunities exist in every college at Virginia Tech. While STEM labs are well-known globally, research also thrives in the humanities, social sciences, design fields, and business disciplines.

Can a summer internship qualify?

Yes. Approved summer internships, research projects, or study abroad programs can count toward the bridge experience requirement.

Is there any financial support for students with internships outside Blacksburg?

Yes. The Ut Prosim Internship Support Fund provides grants of up to \$5,000 for internships in Virginia that serve the public good. Funds may cover tuition, transportation, housing, moving expenses, or required equipment.

How do I get started with the Bridge Experience Program?

Each department administers the bridge program differently, but students should begin by speaking with an advisor or faculty member. Many students learn about the program in their First-Year Experiences course.

Where can I get more information?

More details about the Bridge Experience Program can be found on the [[Academy for Experiential Learning website](https://experience.vt.edu)](https://experience.vt.edu).