Fostering Academic and Course Success with SAIL

Northeastern University
Self-Authored Integrated Learning

What is SAIL?

SAIL is an approach to learning at Northeastern in which students extract meaning from courses, co-ops, study abroad, and also from everyday experiences. It's grounded in decades of research about how people learn, and it can help you develop skills that employers say they want and need in survey after survey. SAIL stands for **Self-Authored Integrated Learning:**

Self-Authorship – Proactively and intentionally writing your own life story in a way that is in line with your values and goals

Integrated Learning – Seeing the connections between the learning you experience in all areas of your life, then successfully applying what you've learned in new, unfamiliar situations

The SAIL framework consists of **five dimensions** of human learning and growth:

Intellectual Agility
Developing the ability to use knowledge, behaviors, skills, and experiences flexibly in new and unique situations to innovatively contribute to your field.

Well-Being
Developing the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to live a balanced and fulfilling life.

Personal & Professional Effectiveness
Developing the confidence, skills, behaviors and values to effectively discern life goals, form relationships and shape your personal and professional identities to achieve fulfillment.

Global Mindset
Developing knowledge, skills and behaviors to live, work and communicate with people whose background, experience and perspectives are different from your own, as well as considering the global impact of your decisions.

Social Consciousness & Commitment
Developing the confidence, skills and values to effectively recognize the needs of individuals, communities, and societies and make a commitment to constructively engage in social action.

Each of these five dimensions has associated skills, along with masteries that are foundational to all of the five dimensions. You can find those skills, and other information, at **sail.northeastern.edu/about**

How can I use SAIL?

Think back to an important experience in your life. It might be a class, trip, club, conversation, leadership opportunity, or anything else you found to be significant. **How did the five dimensions play out in that experience?** Some may have been central, while others might not have factored in at all. Now, going a step further, **which skills did you use and develop during this experience?** These may be skills associated with the five dimensions or those that are listed as foundational masteries.
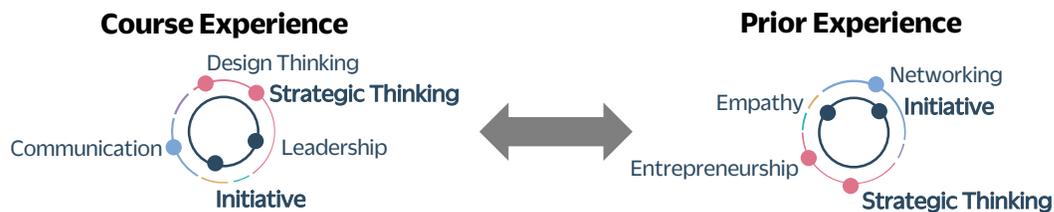

Reflecting through the SAIL framework in this way can help you pull out the **deeper learning** you achieved from experiences in a language that you can use to **communicate** to your peers, professors, advisors, or future employers. In addition, applying this set of dimensions, skills, and masteries to lots of your experiences can help you identify **themes and connections** that wouldn't have otherwise been apparent.

This is a process that you could complete with pen and paper, or any way that works best for you. You might also find it helpful to use the "Northeastern SAIL" app, available in the iTunes and Google Play stores.

How can SAIL help me succeed in my courses?

Finding Familiar Ground

Even if you're taking a course in a subject you've never formally studied before, you probably have plenty of skills and knowledge that will be useful. Perhaps you bring valuable teamwork skills from playing field hockey that will be useful to the collaborative final project. Maybe you love analyzing movies to find their plot holes, and can apply that critical thinking skill to the arguments presented in the course readings. Consider the skills the course will use, and identify which ones you already have, and where you learned them. This process will make you more confident when exploring new academic territory, and can also help you focus in on specific new skills to master.

Course Experience

Design Thinking
Strategic Thinking
Communication
Leadership
Initiative

Prior Experience

Networking
Empathy
Initiative
Entrepreneurship
Strategic Thinking

Developing Needed Skills

We all have skills we're more adept at than others. Once you've identified a few skills you'll need to succeed in a course, but in which you don't yet consider yourself an expert, seek out other learning opportunities through the SAIL app or web platform (https://integrate.sail.northeastern.edu). Search for opportunities such as events, workshops, and clubs that feature the skills you want to focus on. Honing your skills in other spaces will leave you better prepared to succeed in your courses, as well as future co-ops and jobs.

Making Learning Stick

How well new learning sticks depends in large part on how well you relate that content to things you already know and that matter to you. After each class, take a moment to identify main takeaways, and try to connect them to something else in your life. Can you draw an analogy between a process you learned about and another that you use somewhere else in your life? Did you hear something on the news that connects with what the class topic? Enter a moment (brief reflection) in SAIL, or in your course notebook, to remind yourself later on of all the connections you've identified—whether you're studying, preparing for an interview, or setting future goals.

news
sports
course content
movies
co-op
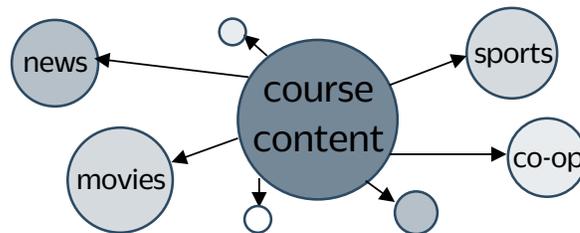
Plot Your Own Path

As you reflect on the dimensions and skills that your professors have identified in your courses, also consider your own learning goals. Use the SAIL framework to identify a few skills and dimensions you want to develop, and look for opportunities to do so throughout the semester. For example, if you want to develop your Global Mindset dimension, challenge yourself to consider the international ramifications of the theories you're learning, bring intentionality and awareness to how you interact with your classmates, or consider the ways in which culture shapes the understanding of a specific discipline. By finding ways to incorporate additional skills and dimensions of interest to you, you're likely to stay more engaged in the course overall, and be more successful as a result.

www.SAIL.northeastern.edu