

The Farm at SOU: An Outdoor Classroom

At Southern Oregon University, the classroom doesn't end at a lecture hall. Just beyond Siskiyou Boulevard, The Farm at SOU is teeming with growth for the crops, and for learning minds. Over the past year, over 10 courses across multiple departments have incorporated an experiential learning model with The Farm as a base. In the span of a year, more than 160 students have experienced what it means to take part in educational hub that is The Farm.

The diversity of these collaborations speaks to just how versatile the space is. The Health and Exercise Science department returned with HE 362: Community Health class for the second year in a row, citing The Farm as an ideal setting for exploring real-world community health concepts. Two sections of ES102: Intro to Environmental Science to conduct ecological field work, collected data on species richness and abundance across the farm's planted fields, fallow areas, and wetland zones. Students who learn on The Farm contribute to its' processes by participating in brief service learning, demonstrating sustainable practices in action, with guidance from farm staff along the way.

Not only do university students benefit from the cross-disciplinary approach built into The Farm's design, but so does the valley's K-12 population. Students from Eagle Point School District, Ashland School District, The Siskiyou School, and beyond explore The Farm in meaningful ways where they learn to connect themselves to the natural world and their ecological systems. From elementary education, high school education, to university: The Farm is a place where students engage with their community at large, and learn stewardship through active engagement.