MTN Ep 23 Transcript

01;00;00;14 - 01;00;26;21
Scott Riley
Welcome to Moving the Needle. Casual conversations about ways big and small to impact student learning. Brought to you by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. I'm Scott Riley, too. Let's move the needle. Hello, everyone, and welcome back to Moving the Needle. As educators, when we think about creating content for our students, we have a lot to consider.

01;00;27;00 - 01;00;52;20
Scott Riley
We want to ensure we communicate, are learning objectives, utilizing different strategies to connect ideas and engage the students. To do this, we often employ different pedagogical approaches to convey the content we created. Each strategy we use acts like a unique tool that can come with several pros and cons. This can lead us down a rabbit hole trying to find the perfect pedagogical strategy to use and even inspire us to create new ones.

01;00;53;12 - 01;01;21;01
Scott Riley
I'm excited to discuss a hybrid approach using experience, learning and social innovation with our guest. Jim Kutcher. Jim Kutcher serves as the program director of the and Health and Social Innovation at UMD. He's an award winning teacher and internationally recognized as a leader in social entrepreneurship. He cultivates strong entrepreneurial skill development for his students. Research and professionals through experiential learning courses and workshops.

01;01;21;23 - 01;01;36;17
Scott Riley
He's the lead author of Social Entrepreneurship, a practice based approach to social innovation. And he's also the host of Profiles and Social Innovation, the podcast. It's my great pleasure to welcome Jim to the show. Jim welcome.

01;01;37;05 - 01;01;38;25
Jim Kucher
Scott Thanks for having me. Really appreciate it.

01;01;38;26 - 01;01;58;18
Scott Riley
Yeah, no problem. I like to start the interview with kind of a setting the groundwork, setting the baseline for everyone listening. I want to talk about what experiential learning is and what social innovation are, because that's the those are the topics of the show. Can you tell me what you what your definition of those two things are?

01;01;58;24 - 01;02;20;25
Jim Kucher
Absolutely. The first one is really as experiential learning is just a fancy academic term for learning by doing. Right. I mean, you know, we all took experiential classes in high school, right? We took shop or we took Home EC and we took something like that. And you you built something. You made something in the class. And by doing that, you learn how to do it.

01;02;20;25 - 01;02;37;05
Jim Kucher
So, you know, the high school shop class is notorious for being littered with boards that weren't quite the right length. So you learn how to measure, you learn how to cut exactly. And eventually you produce something. I actually still have it. It's called a pilgrim footstool and it still sits in my living room to this day. I made it in shop class.

01;02;37;05 - 01;03;02;26
Jim Kucher
I think I was. I don't know, sophomore in high school. So that's the easy one. Social innovation is both very simple and quite frankly, maddeningly complex. And I think the differences between sort of the theory and the execution. So the theory is simply that you're trying to take an entrepot nurse mentality and apply it to a deeply entrenched social problem.

01;03;03;14 - 01;03;24;02
Jim Kucher
So fundamentally, an entrepreneur looks at a problem and says, What's wrong with this? What could I do better? What isn't working? How is the problem not being solved? And we're all familiar with that from the commercial world. You know, famous examples like the iPhone and those kinds of things. You know, the technology we're using today was invented by somebody who said, hey, you know, we could do this thing.

01;03;24;02 - 01;04;02;01
Jim Kucher
And podcasts have taken off. So that's sort of the entrepreneur perspective. But then you apply it to deeply entrenched social problems like diabetes and hunger, poverty, homelessness, those kinds of things. So it gets very, very complicated very quickly in practice. But what we do at the University of Maryland, Baltimore Graduate School and the program that I run in social innovation is we help folks figure out step by step and move by move how to try to identify those problems and come up with solutions for them.

01;04;02;01 - 01;04;10;24
Jim Kucher
So it's a long journey. It's an arduous journey, but we happily have a few folks, a few folks who have come out the other side and are doing some really interesting work.

01;04;11;19 - 01;04;32;22
Scott Riley
Yeah, I believe it. And it really sounds like this is kind of a double edged sword in the fact that social innovation is a great space for using experiential learning. There's a lot of hands on stuff you can do, but like you mentioned, it can catch you just as quick because it's really complicated to get into these ideas and do something practical like in person, right?

01;04;32;25 - 01;04;59;00
Jim Kucher
Yeah, Yeah. I mean, it's not quite like, you know, woodshop. We don't need to keep a lot of Band-Aids around in the physical sense, but but I do spend a lot of time with my students talking them through things where there's frustration and there's ambiguity and all that sort of stuff. So, yeah, it's it's an interesting journey. But, you know, the experiential learning piece, the way I sort of help people get their heads around that is to think of art class, right?

01;04;59;00 - 01;05;31;15
Jim Kucher

So most of us have taken a class somewhere along the line in painting or pottery or even a writing class, you know, poetry or whatever. And in all of those experiences, what happens at some point in time is you get to what they call studio, which is where let's take painting for example. You bring in a painting and it's half finished and you put it up on an easel and all of your classmates look at it and they say, Scott, you know, I really love what you did with the way that you pictured that flower.

01;05;31;15 - 01;05;50;27
Jim Kucher
I can really see the flower. I can almost smell it. But the dog sitting next to the flower looks kind of funny. You know, dogs don't usually have three ears. And what happened to the tail? And gosh, the fur looks like it's kind of matted or something. Did you really mean that? So you have that sort of feedback as you're creating the work, right?

01;05;50;27 - 01;06;18;02
Jim Kucher
So that happens. That's very, very common in art. And it's also very, very common in entrepreneurship education, which is essentially what we do. We're training social entrepreneurs to try to attack deeply entrenched social problems, and they're building what we hope will be sustainable business models that can generate revenue while creating this social change. That takes a lot of work.

01;06;18;02 - 01;06;40;24
Jim Kucher
It takes a lot of what we call iteration, which is trial and error. So you present the business model in a class one day and the instructor and the students all sort of look at it together and say, Scott, you know, I really like how you're addressing the problem of chronic homelessness in terms of how you're going to help people recover from that.

01;06;41;17 - 01;06;56;02
Jim Kucher
But gosh, you know, the way you're paying for it doesn't quite make sense to me. So then you go, Ah, okay, thank you. And we even work on it together to say, How can we do that better? And then you go back and do another week's homework and come back and sort of lather, rinse, repeat at that point.

01;06;56;16 - 01;07;12;24
Scott Riley
So then when you're in the classroom, is your role more of like a facilitator? So you kind of just ask, okay, that's my curiosity because because it sounds like you can just let your students go, and if they have a little bit of drive in them, they'll just take the class and run with it.

01;07;12;24 - 01;07;39;07
Jim Kucher
Absolutely. And actually, it's funny, the hardest part, I think, for folks who teach in this kind of environment is learning that many times the best thing that the faculty member can do is be quiet. And because we've got a lot of folks that teach in this program who've got a lot of great expertise and and want to impart that expertise, it's very hard.

01;07;39;12 - 01;08;03;24
Jim Kucher
And I'm basically talking to myself when I say this and then even, you know, the other folks that teach in our program are much better at it than I am, quite frankly. But, you know, it's very hard to say, okay, they're going to figure this out in another ten, 15 seconds. And you just kind of got to give

them that space to get there as opposed to the sort of faculty slash parental reflex that wants to jump in.

01;08;03;24 - 01;08;25;16
Jim Kucher
You know, if you've raised kids, you know, you want to jump in and give them the answer. And that's not always what's best. It's often better to let them figure out the answer. So, yes, absolutely. The faculty member is very much a facilitator, and often the quieter, the better, which is totally opposite from what most people who have been teaching for a living are used to doing.

01;08;26;02 - 01;08;43;05
Scott Riley
I can 100% commiserate with you there. I have that reflex is strong in me and when my students are close, I just want to help them get there. But you're right, it's so much more enriching for them if they come to it by themselves and they can turn around and look at you and be like, Hey, we did it.

01;08;43;15 - 01;08;51;28
Scott Riley
You know that. I guess that sense of accomplishment is almost as important as the content that they learn, too, because it encourages them to keep doing the process.

01;08;51;28 - 01;09;20;23
Jim Kucher
Absolutely. And the other really tricky point is when they get to an answer and the reality is that their answer is accurate but not complete. So there's that kind of yes and moment. And it's very challenging there because you have to be careful to deliver that. Yes. And so it doesn't come across as a yes, but. Right. Because.

01;09;20;24 - 01;09;44;20
Jim Kucher
Yes. But will will discourage further participation. Yes. And will encourage them to continue to move forward. And it's it's language. It's very challenging. And then we teach in what we call a high flex mode. So we've got classes that are held live on a video conferencing platform. We have classes that are held asynchronously on Blackboard. We've got classes and recorded.

01;09;44;20 - 01;10;01;18
Jim Kucher
So you're communicating across multiple modes. So you also have to be, you know, really conscious of how is this coming across when I'm typing it into Blackboard as feedback versus how this is coming across. When I'm speaking to a student live on a video conference, it's it's, it's a lot of fun.

01;10;02;00 - 01;10;17;06
Scott Riley
And it sounds like communication is one of the the challenges are being intentional with your communication, knowing what you're trying to say and the tone and everything. Are there other challenges that you you have found that make this particular approach difficult to implement?

01;10;17;20 - 01;10;43;06
Jim Kucher
Oh, gosh, yeah. One that comes to mind, which is more relative to the sort of entrepreneurial aspect of it than it is necessarily directly to the experiential learning, although I do think that you kind of can't

have one without the other is is what we call a pivot. So a student is working on a particular concept, a particular idea for a way to solve a problem.

01;10;44;00 - 01;11;15;01
Jim Kucher
And they realize that for various reasons, usually environmental, there's some sort of circumstance in the community, for example, that prevents them from executing on the idea that they had, and they have to go back and rethink it and sometimes even come up with a totally different idea or even a totally different community to help. Right. And that can be very frustrating because they've spent weeks, months, in some cases years working on this.

01;11;15;01 - 01;11;44;27
Jim Kucher
It's very analogous to, you know, our colleagues in the medical school where they're doing substantial scientific experiments, right. Where you could try five, eight, six, 20, 100 ways to try and solve a scientific problem. And in that world, that experimental mindset is a little more established, a little more accepted. It's sometimes a little more challenging when you're in the social sciences world that I said to sort of get your head around that.

01;11;44;27 - 01;12;11;04
Jim Kucher
But it's a very present reality. And for the student it can be very frustrating because they're like, Darn it, I was working on this thing. The other thing is they get very passionate about their solution, right? Because this is my idea. And to have to set that passion down or set it aside when they realize that this isn't going to work the way I thought it was going to work is it's an interesting moment.

01;12;11;04 - 01;12;20;26
Jim Kucher
So you're you're you're part facilitator, you're part mentor, you're part psychotherapist. You know, you're a lot of different things. But again, it makes it a lot of fun.

01;12;21;06 - 01;12;45;25
Scott Riley
And they never said it would be easy being a teacher, right on this topic of challenges. And I love that you made the analogy between this iterative, you know, experimentation in your projects versus science. As a scientist, I am sadly like anchored to the idea of quantitative metrics, and I'm so curious for this experience of learning and social innovation.

01;12;46;10 - 01;12;55;22
Scott Riley
You know, you talk about the setbacks that the students have in their project. How do you how do you measure success in the class? How do you say the students on track do you have tests.

01;12;56;03 - 01;13;18;00
Jim Kucher
Projects? They have projects that they have to do all the time. But it's very interesting because at the end of the day, what you're talking about is strategic decisions, right? You're talking about a strategy for developing an organization that's going to try to tackle a problem. Right. So in the science world, you know, and I'm speaking way out of my element here, so you had to forgive me.

01;13;18;00 - 01;13;37;12
Jim Kucher
But basically, you know, the science world, the question is, did we kill the virus or didn't we? You

know, in my world, the solutions are much more nuanced. And quite frankly, you can't really tell if it was the right strategy until you implement it, because quite frankly, if it worked, it was the right strategy. And if it didn't work, it was the wrong strategy.

01;13;37;25 - 01;14;02;11
Jim Kucher
So the only thing we can do as educators is evaluate the thought process. So we look at it and we say, okay, does this make sense? Does it seem like they've addressed it from all the appropriate perspectives when it gets to the sort of financial modeling and building the, quote unquote, business side? You know, do the numbers add up to do the financial projections make sense?

01;14;02;11 - 01;14;25;12
Jim Kucher
Right. So it's really evaluating the the logic patterns and the thought process that went into the work more than it is, is this going to work or not? There is some is this going to work or not in there? Because, you know, I just graded some work for a student who defined their market is the United States of America.

01;14;25;12 - 01;14;43;28
Jim Kucher
And I said, well, you know, that's a little broad, especially for a startup, right? I mean, you're not going to start Countrywide. Maybe you get the Countrywide in 20 years, but you know, as a startup, you're not going to get there. So, you know, there are some things where you go and not exactly, but most of the time it's the thought pattern.

01;14;43;28 - 01;15;10;26
Scott Riley
So talking about your approach to to assessing these students, it sounds like there's a it sounds to me a little bit holistic, like you approach it and you have your method of doing it. But I'm curious when it comes to consistency between multiple faculty assessing the student's work, what's what's the plan or their rubrics? Is there a set of rigid guidelines or is it individual faculty based, like how they approach assessment?

01;15;11;11 - 01;15;34;01
Jim Kucher
That's a great question. There's there's a couple of factors there. One is that those assessments are made within a context of a particular subject matter. Okay. So one of the classes that I teach is the finance class, which is the penultimate class that comes in right before they hit their capstone experience. And in that class, it's all about how are you going to pay for this?

01;15;34;20 - 01;16;06;04
Jim Kucher
Right? So those strategies are around funding strategies for social purpose organizations. We have a colleague that teaches the marketing class, so his perspective is around marketing. Another colleague of mine teaches a class on community engagement, right? So it's all about, okay, so what are your strategies for community engagement? So so some of that comes within context of the course material for the material, for the specific course.

01;16;06;24 - 01;16;26;27
Jim Kucher
We also are blessed with a wonderful group of folks that help us with the learning design and or the course management, and they do a great job of sort of keeping us honest about, okay, well, that's

nice, but what is the rubric look like and how do you know? So there are you know, there are assessments of learning that happen in the background.

01;16;27;22 - 01;16;59;28
Jim Kucher
And then the last thing and this is really interesting for the students is kind of right up there with the the pivot thing we were talking about a minute ago. One of things that happens as the students get to their capstone is they've had multiple experiences with multiple instructors, and sometimes they've gotten conflicting information. Right. Because, you know, I mean, if you play a sport and one coach, you know, you play baseball and one coach says to choke up on the bat and the other coach says to hold the bat all the way down to the bottom, you're going to go, what do I do now?

01;16;59;28 - 01;17;25;08
Jim Kucher
Right. So so part of it is also that experience of of of them resolving the ambiguity. I'll give you a great example. I had a student the other day who was considering changing their concept completely, going to a whole different idea of working with a whole different community and there were pluses and minuses to sticking with what the student was working on versus changing to this other concept.

01;17;26;08 - 01;17;42;26
Jim Kucher
And we talked through the pluses and minuses. Okay? If you do this one, you got to think about this, this and that. If you do the other, you got to think about the other, you know, the other. And the student says, Well, what do you think I should do? And I said, I'm sorry, but that's like asking, what kind of mustard do you want on your sandwich?

01;17;43;14 - 01;18;05;24
Jim Kucher
You know, Do you like spicy? Then go here, Do you, like not spicy, you know? And so one of the things I think that we try to teach above everything else, and this is not intentional. I don't mean that the faculty do this on purpose, but there is a certain level of any entrepreneurial experience where you have to understand dealing with ambiguity.

01;18;06;12 - 01;18;40;09
Jim Kucher
You have to understand dealing with conflicting information, dealing with incomplete information, dealing with lack of information. There's a great, great rule, seem a great, great definition of what it means to be an entrepreneur. I was involved by a guy named Howard Stevens at Harvard years ago, and he said that an entrepreneur is someone who undertakes an attempt to build an organization without complete knowledge of all the materials necessary to complete the task.

01;18;41;11 - 01;18;58;01
Jim Kucher
Right. So if you think about somebody who builds a house, they've got blueprints, they've got the boards, they've got the shingles, they've got the pipe. Bah bah bah bah bah bah. And they build a house, which is great because you've got a house. Right? But all of that is known ahead of time now. Yeah, sure. You might hit a rock when you're digging the foundation, but you know that that's a that's a minor issue.

01;18;58;16 - 01;19;19;08
Jim Kucher
You know, an entrepreneur looks at looks at a field on a hill and says, I'm going to put a house here.

And you say, how? Well I don't know. Well, you do realize there's no road. Yeah, there's no road. Okay. Do you realize that's all right? Yeah. You know, and so that's it's a very different mindset. So that part of that kind of sneaks in through having multiple faculty, if that makes any sense at all.

01;19;19;26 - 01;19;45;21
Scott Riley
Oh, it does. And for me, it also makes a lot of sense too, that I think the the conflicting information is good in a way, because if you're going to be an entrepreneur, like you said, you're going to get incomplete information, conflicting information. How good are you at self-direction? Can you make these choices, these independent choices, when people who have more experience than you are telling you different things, how do you decide what is right?

01;19;45;21 - 01;19;53;11
Scott Riley
And I would assume that's a natural part of their projects that they eventually have to decide, Do I choke up on the bad or do I do?

01;19;53;11 - 01;20;18;26
Jim Kucher
I mean, they've got to make they've got to make the call that we can't make. And even if we could make the call, it's not the right thing for us to do as facilitators, because, again, the learning is is the piece. Now, I there's one of the thing I have to say about this whole experience that I'm extremely proud of that you and be does that is different from most entrepreneurship educations whether it's social entrepreneurship or commercial entrepreneurship?

01;20;20;06 - 01;20;51;11
Jim Kucher
Just about every program has a culminating experience that involves in a presentation of some sort, an entrepreneurship language. We call it the pitch. And just about every campus that has these kinds of programs has their pitches in a competition. And there's actually really good research that says that pitch competitions are not particularly good as a learning experience, because what happens is the student that comes in first is just the only thing they learn is they're pretty, you know, the only thing they learn is just, Oh man, I nailed it.

01;20;51;11 - 01;21;08;29
Jim Kucher
Right? And the one that comes in last is like and, you know, I was kind of faking my way through it anyway. But the ones who come in second and third, it's really damaging because we all know at any given day you're a better presenter, you're not as good a presenter or you connect with one particular judge or you don't connect with one particular judge.

01;21;09;07 - 01;21;31;04
Jim Kucher
You're wearing the wrong colored tie or the right color shirt. You know, you're the right pair of glasses. I mean, there's so many variables. And when you ask people about judging those kind of competitions and you say, what separated the first and second, you often get a very intense, tangible answer. I don't know. Scott just had something about him that I just you know, Scott just really grabbed me.

01;21;32;04 - 01;21;54;15
Jim Kucher
So we intentionally have our pitch as a showcase, not a competition. So everybody's on an even playing field. And the other thing is, if one of our students stands up in that activity and says, Look,

I've been working this on this idea for three years, here's why it won't work. And here's all the things that I tried to do to make it work.

01;21;54;15 - 01;22;20;25
Jim Kucher
And here's why. None of them work either. So at the end of the day, I'm going to go get a job somewhere. I tell all of our students that that's the fastest way to get an A, if you're honest about it, and you show all your research and you say, Here's all the things I tried to do, this is a problem that I can't solve for these reasons, you'll get an A quicker than the student that stands up and says, Here's my really cool idea.

01;22;20;25 - 01;22;38;05
Jim Kucher
Here's how I'm really going to make it happen, and here's how I'm going to pay for it. And, you know, it just has the slickest presentation in the world. So we're we're real proud of the fact that failure is just failure will get you as good a grade as success, maybe better.

01;22;39;12 - 01;22;59;00
Scott Riley
Well, that's the real world, right? If you if you go through the process and you explain it. Yeah, I, I wholeheartedly agree with that. If, if you've been working on it and you show the work, that's it doesn't always work out in the real world. And that's okay. As long as you can show that what you did had a logical train of thought behind it and you gave it a good try.

01;22;59;01 - 01;23;21;06
Jim Kucher
I'm about and again, in the science world that's much more except it and understood right. This is this is something that I just could fix in the world of entrepreneurship, even in social entrepreneurship, you know, it's a little bit it takes a little more time to get folks comfortable with that. I think some of that, quite frankly, is just the, you know, the culture in the United States and, you know, the sort of go, go, go.

01;23;21;22 - 01;23;31;17
Jim Kucher
And even what it means, what the phrase entrepreneur means and in the US context, I think has something to do with that. But we're we're fighting that battle the best we can.

01;23;31;29 - 01;23;39;21
Scott Riley
Yeah, because yeah, because you're right. In the science world, you know, the experiment can fail 600 times and that that happens.

01;23;39;21 - 01;23;40;07
Jim Kucher
Is everybody.

01;23;40;09 - 01;24;02;10
Scott Riley
Saying it? Yeah. Because you showed that it doesn't work. And I always love talking to people from different fields of specialty outside of like, quantitative, you know, metric based hard core, not hard core science, but, you know, science because we're all doing hard core science. But it's always interesting to hear the difference of culture, the difference of perspective from other fields like that.

01;24;02;20 - 01;24;20;18
Scott Riley
And so on that note, I'm curious, I think I know the answer now since we've been talking about it for 27 minutes. But why choose this experience learning approach over something more traditional like vertical, top down lecturing? I feel like it has to be done experientially. That does. You've convinced me.

01;24;21;01 - 01;24;53;29
Jim Kucher
Well, how are you? How do they put your hand on the microphone and say, Hey, man, I'm now it absolutely has to be this way. And it's it's fascinating to me because, you know, social entrepreneurship is in many ways a subset of entrepreneurship in the larger context, Certainly from an educational standpoint, social entrepreneurship is a subset of entrepreneurship, education, and and there are folks that are a lot smarter than me that have been at it a lot longer than I have that have done a lot of research around this.

01;24;53;29 - 01;25;16;07
Jim Kucher
But yeah, it's it's just it's just not something you can do in theory. It's just not, you know, you can't you can't write an essay about baking a pie. Well, I mean you could and I'm sure somebody has and probably some of these are maybe thinking of one of the great literary books about pie baking of my mind immediately went to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance for some weird reason.

01;25;16;07 - 01;25;26;21
Jim Kucher
But, you know, it's just you can't I guess you can't eat it, is what I would say. You can't eat the pie. There's only an essay.

01;25;26;21 - 01;25;52;24
Scott Riley
Gotcha. Gotcha. So so on that note, because this, you know, it feels like this has to be an experiential learning approach. Has that strategy that you mentioned before, kind of the students get together and critically assess and provide iterative, constructive feedback on each other's project? Has that strategy evolved since you first started to utilize? Actually, I guess I should ask, how long have you been using that strategy?

01;25;53;02 - 01;26;00;03
Scott Riley
And then has it changed over time, or is the formula perfect and doesn't need to change the formulas?

01;26;00;03 - 01;26;27;02
Jim Kucher
Never perfect. It always seems to change, you know, I mean, that's that's that's the fun of teaching, right? You're always you know, the reality of teaching is you learn more than the students do. Right. But so I've been doing this for, gosh, 16 years now. And yes, it changes. I would say the biggest change, quite frankly, has been since I've come to UMBC is working with graduate students where it's in a different context.

01;26;27;18 - 01;26;46;12
Jim Kucher
Whereas when I've done this with undergraduate students, it's a little bit different. The other thing,

and this is just kind of human nature, I think, is it's often hard early on to get the students past the point of simply patting each other on the back. Mm hmm.

01;26;46;13 - 01;26;47;27
Scott Riley
Yeah, I agree with some.

01;26;47;27 - 01;27;04;29
Jim Kucher
So the students give the feedback and say, Scott, this is really great that I did. I love what you're doing here. And I'm like, okay, that's nice. But you know, be constructive. And one of the things I think that we do in in our program in the Masters of Science and Health social innovation is to say, look, you're a cohort.

01;27;04;29 - 01;27;29;29
Jim Kucher
So they work together for a time, typically at least a year. And then the cohorts kind of mix and merge over the summer each year. So there's an amount of time where they can develop a relationship with each other, where there's a level of trust. And then the other thing is because they're all adult learners, there's a little bit more willingness to to be a little bit more candid with each other.

01;27;29;29 - 01;27;48;16
Jim Kucher
But even there, you still often see, you know, that first sort of gentle, pacifying phase of this is a really good idea. I'm just wondering if you had thought about this. The da da da. It's very, very rare. Happily. And I do pull students back. If this happens, it's very, very rare where you see students trash each other.

01;27;48;20 - 01;28;03;03
Jim Kucher
I in 15, 16 years of doing this, I can't think of two or three times where I've had to pull somebody back and say, Hey, wait a minute, you know, you really just flamed at that person. So, you know, you need to apologize. It doesn't happen very often. So they're generally very positive.

01;28;03;08 - 01;28;07;15
Scott Riley
Yeah. Having students be more cautious with their feedback is definitely better than the other end.

01;28;07;24 - 01;28;30;07
Jim Kucher
Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. And they get too generous. No, it happens. It happens that way very, very consistently. So it's and it's good and it's healthy. And again, you know, I mean, if you go out into the world and try to launch an enterprise, you know, the world is going to be far less generous in how they give you feedback.

01;28;30;19 - 01;28;55;05
Scott Riley
So true, so true. But speaking of feedback, I'm curious, do you do you get feedback from the students on this approach? Because I'm I don't know about their program is in its entirety, but I would consider this a unique class if I were taking it as part of a curriculum. So do you get feedback on this unique approach or is this common like in every class for this degree?

01;28;55;05 - 01;28;56;06
Scott Riley
This is how it's done.

01;28;57;00 - 01;29;28;07
Jim Kucher
It is consistent throughout the courses that we teach. They also have specialization courses that they take that are taught in other parts of the institution. But yeah, it's it's consistent in the courses that we teach. Interestingly enough, we also have a couple of agreements on campus with other schools at UMD where some of their students can come in and take one or two classes with us, and that's actually where the adjustment is more severe to get to what I think your question was where students are like, Hey, wait a minute, what's going on here?

01;29;28;07 - 01;29;47;10
Jim Kucher
Right where they've been sitting in a more lecture oriented mode and all of the sudden they're they're brought into this crazy world where they got to start thinking about stuff and putting stuff up on on the easel, so to speak, into that Ira. And there we get a lot of positive feedback that they find it very freeing and very open and very refreshing.

01;29;47;10 - 01;29;58;04
Jim Kucher
So it's you know, and I mean, people like to show off their work, right? I mean, that's a fundamental trait of human nature. You know, I spend the last half hour showing off my work with you and I'm having a ball, right.

01;29;58;14 - 01;30;02;22
Scott Riley
Saying this is I love this conversation. I'm learning so much.

01;30;04;03 - 01;30;04;26
Jim Kucher
And I'm not.

01;30;05;20 - 01;30;38;14
Scott Riley
Things I want to switch or kind of move the conversation over to. Since we've now that we've talked about experiential learning, apply to a social innovation setting, what how would you advise somebody who wants to take this strategy and apply it to their class? Like so I'm I'm thinking about teaching a data analytics course, and I really like this approach of including experiential learning, this conversation based or this feedback based experience learning strategy.

01;30;38;18 - 01;30;42;08
Scott Riley
What's advice that you could give to somebody who wants to implement this in their class?

01;30;42;21 - 01;30;44;04
Jim Kucher
Fasten your seatbelt.

01;30;47;13 - 01;31;06;27
Jim Kucher
Happily, I do what I do because I'm not sure I could do this any other way. I mean, you know, I've

taught in more lecture based situations. I often say, you know, when I when I do speaking in seminars outside of the classroom with with various groups that I'll talk with, you know, they don't know me, they don't remember before.

01;31;06;27 - 01;31;25;01
Jim Kucher
And I stand up. And one of things I say is they say, I really want this to be conversational because unlike most faculty, I actually get tired of hearing myself talk. And and so when that first question comes out of the room, I profusely thank that individual, and that tends to break the ice. So I think it's getting comfortable with that.

01;31;25;01 - 01;31;45;02
Jim Kucher
I also think it's getting comfortable with knowing what you don't know and being okay with that, right. Because you know, students are going to point things out. You're going to have to say, you know, I'm not really sure. Mm hmm. You know, let's talk that through together or. Yeah, I know. Let me get back to you on that.

01;31;45;02 - 01;31;54;05
Jim Kucher
Right. And that's that's not easy for those of us that have been trained in, you know, pedagogical standards and all of that sort of thing.

01;31;54;23 - 01;32;12;25
Scott Riley
Yeah, I agree. Do you have expectations when you come into the class that as long as they hit these points, I'm satisfied or is it much more free rein is like, you know, as long as they have a good conversation and they touch on some of the things that are important.

01;32;12;25 - 01;32;14;18
Jim Kucher
You know, we've got learning objectives.

01;32;14;19 - 01;32;15;09
Scott Riley
Okay. So that's.

01;32;15;09 - 01;32;41;14
Jim Kucher
Yeah, I guess so. Yeah. Oh, no, no. We've got we've got very, very strong learning objectives. And again and the folks that, that help us too with the courses I work with, they've done a fantastic job of keeping us honest in that regard. So there are very definitely things that we want them to learn. And I think the difference, Scott, is that it's not that you don't have objectives, it's that you're flexible in the path to those objectives.

01;32;41;24 - 01;32;59;16
Jim Kucher
I think that's the big difference. The big difference is we want you to get somewhere, but if you go, you know, south and then west and then north or you go north and then east and then south, you know, if you get there, we're fine.

01;32;59;20 - 01;33;12;06
Scott Riley

And then that's where being the facilitator of the conversation really comes into play, right? When you see them just continuously going south and they eventually need to go north, maybe like tip their ship 45 degrees and say, well, what about this? Let's go look over here.

01;33;12;08 - 01;33;30;09
Jim Kucher
Right, Exactly. Okay. Right. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, well said. Very well said. Thank you. Yeah, that's exactly. It's. It's okay. You know, and it's also and this is something that only comes with time, quite frankly, is being instructive in how you help them turn direction.

01;33;30;20 - 01;33;51;03
Scott Riley
Right. Because like you said, you don't want to go back to just giving them the answer. You want them to come to it naturally. So it's a it's a gentle hand that has to turn the direction of the conversation. And that, like you said, I think the advice for people who want to implement this in their classes experience is the best teacher you're going to experience to learn to write.

01;33;51;18 - 01;34;10;29
Jim Kucher
You're going to want to. I have to say there's also there's a lot of good material. This is this is a technique has been around long enough that there's a lot of good material. I had the benefit of going through a week long experiential education workshop when I was very, very first in academia and geared specifically towards entrepreneurship education.

01;34;11;10 - 01;34;31;11
Jim Kucher
And this is a trite phrase, but it really did change my life. It really just changed how I looked at the whole thing. And so and there's there's, there's lots of good material out there now in that. So, you know, physician heal myself I think would be the other advice there and study up a little bit on the technique and the tools before you start to dive into to make it happen.

01;34;31;23 - 01;34;50;05
Scott Riley
Great. That sounds like really strong advice. I want to finish off the interview with one last question. It's one of my favorite questions to ask all of our guests, and it's what do you think is moving the needle in education? What is changing the landscape of teaching as we come out post-COVID?

01;34;50;07 - 01;34;51;10
Jim Kucher
We've got another half an hour.

01;34;51;17 - 01;34;59;22
Scott Riley
That's what I guess. Yeah, we could start a whole nother discussion, man.

01;35;00;10 - 01;35;23;15
Jim Kucher
You know, the one thing that I think is working for us, and when I say us, I mean very specifically my program and my division of the institution and sort of how we approach this whole thing is this notion of what they're labeling as Hi flex. So when we have a class, we have multiple ways that a student can access the content.

01;35;23;23 - 01;35;45;08
Jim Kucher
They can come to it live every live session we have, we record so they can go back and listen to the recording later. We have asynchronous modes. You know, there's a lot of different ways for the student to come into that. And the other thing I think is we need to have a greater recognition of the humanity of the students.

01;35;45;15 - 01;36;06;14
Jim Kucher
I remember when was teaching undergrads awhile back, you know, it was sort of like you're late for class and I hope that those days are ending, You know, I hope we're like, okay, good to see you. You know, and if you've got somebody that's got a chronic attendance problem, you take them aside and just have a conversation and you say, okay, now, so how's things?

01;36;06;14 - 01;36;15;15
Jim Kucher
You know, is everything okay? And, you know, I think the humanity of the student is the other place where we're doing good work, but we've got room to grow the formula.

01;36;15;15 - 01;36;25;02
Scott Riley
Never perfect. We got to keep advancing it right now. Well, Jim, I really appreciate you coming on the show today. Thank you so much for being a guest. On moving the needle.

01;36;25;02 - 01;36;29;01
Jim Kucher
Thank you. Out of all.

01;36;29;01 - 01;36;50;16
Scott Riley
Thank you for joining us today on moving the needle. Visit us at U Maryland dot edu slash fc t l to hear additional episodes, leave us feedback or suggest future topics. We'd love to hear from you.