

Rooted in Compassion: Learning Lab Ethics of Care



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About the Learning Lab Internship Program

The Learning Lab at the University of Kentucky Libraries is an inquiry-based, paid internship program that provides undergraduates opportunities to learn core principles about archives, process an archival collection, and conduct primary source research based on a collection. The internship spans the full academic year and can also be taken for up to six credits under EXP396. To successfully fulfill the requirements of the program, students will need to process an archival collection, create a finding aid, create a research question regarding their selected collection, conduct research, and disseminate their research in the form of a conference presentation (poster or oral) or published paper. The cohort of 10-12 students meet once a week to discuss weekly learning objectives, such as archival theory, provenance, security, arrangement and description, and primary source research methods. The fall semester is dedicated to preparing interns for the archival and primary source literacy skills they will need when they embark on their own research project.

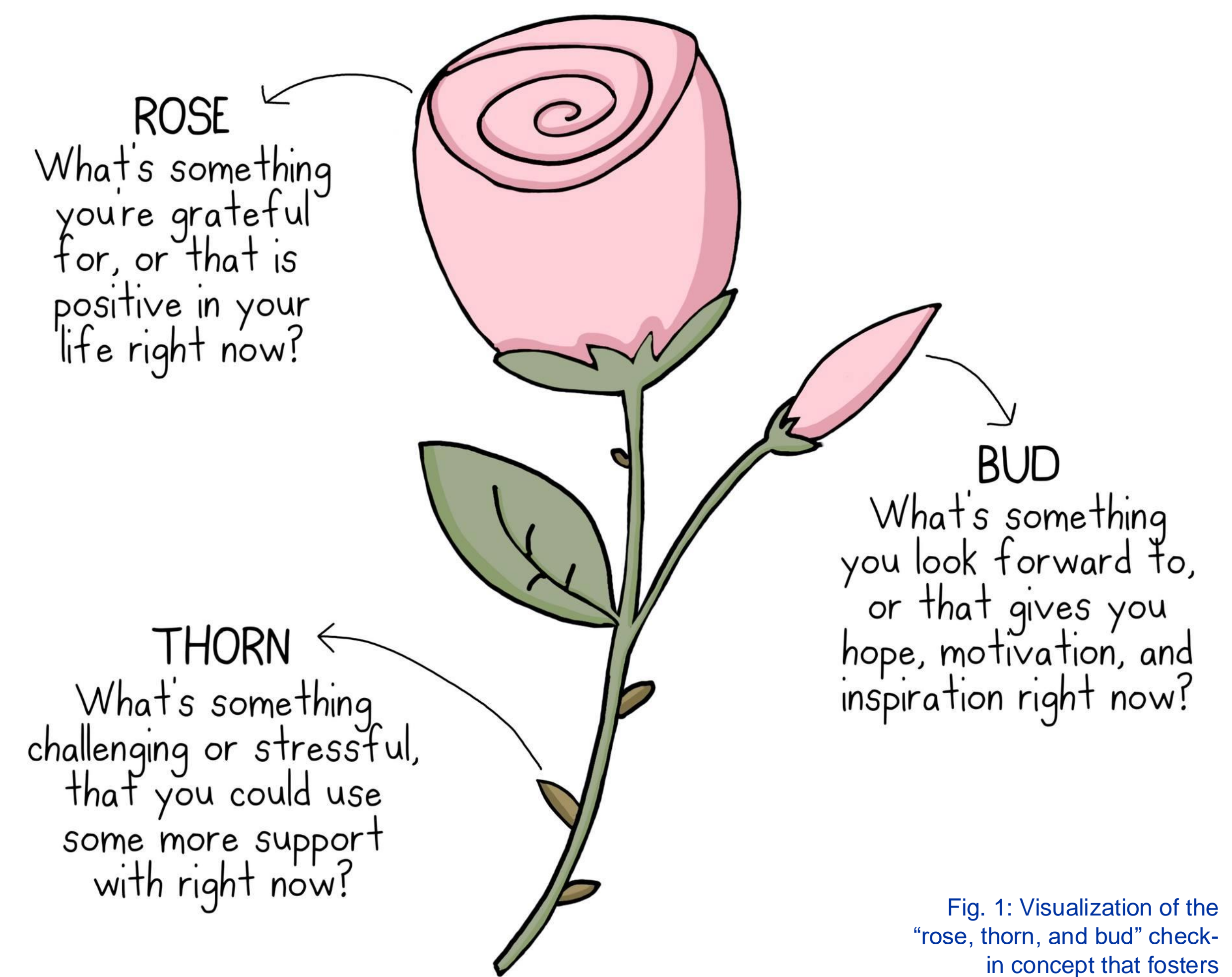
In a word, what makes the Learning Lab special is community. The typical Learning Lab intern graduates in four years with multiple majors and maintains an active extracurricular schedule, whether that is in music/art, Greek life, or volunteering. Adding the Learning Lab to an already full academic year requires significant time investment for weekly readings, independent research, and conference travel. Administrators understand the internship is challenging, especially when students' academic pursuits, social lives, and mental health are considered. We want students to not just complete the internship but enjoy their time as a Learning Lab intern and support their experiences throughout. Building in care elements allows each cohort opportunities to create connections with each other, with their mentor, and with other cohorts. One element used to build community and care is called the "rose, thorn, and bud" check in. Students and their mentor check in with each other by expressing their rose (something positive that happened to them that week), thorn (something challenging), and their bud (something they're looking forward to). Students share as much or as little as they would like without any expectations.

What makes it special?

Using the rose, thorn, and bud check-in began during the pandemic 2020-2021 academic year to check in on student physical and mental health while conducting classes over the Zoom video platform. The cohort met exclusively online for the entire year. Prior to the pandemic, students easily connected in person and with their mentor during class sessions. This was difficult in a strictly online environment, and the mentor wanted to provide a compassionate space within the class to enhance connections and see if students needed help or resources to assist them in their new normal. The mentor introduced rose, thorn, and bud towards the end of the fall 2020 semester and has been using it ever since.

Rose, thorn, and bud (hereafter referred to as RTB) allows students the opportunity to reflect on their week to identify what they consider the positive and challenging elements of their lives. It also gamifies the process of reflecting and sharing, which makes it an enjoyable experience.

ROSE, THORN & BUD CHECK-IN



WholeHearted School Counseling

Fig. 1: Visualization of the "rose, thorn, and bud" check-in concept that fosters student-to-student and mentor-student connections. Image courtesy of WholeHearted School Counseling.

Student Outcomes

Employing RTB has proven to be very beneficial in the Learning Lab internship classroom. Students immediately embraced the concept, and the cohort started to form connections and come together as a team much more easily and quickly than they had previously. It was such a success it has been used for every Learning Lab cohort since the pandemic, even though the group began meeting in person in fall 2021. During that first year, students shared experiences as mundane as worrying about a test or as profound as worrying about their grandmother being in the hospital with covid. Interns connected over their shared experiences and worked to help each other through difficulties. The mentor was able to discreetly identify campus services that could benefit their situations. When students had covid, the mentor made sure they had support and everything they needed to get well.

Post-pandemic, internship cohort sizes are larger and RTB is now just "rose and thorn" because the activity can often take too much class time. Students enjoy connecting over shared experiences (teachers, assignments, roommates) and helping each other. The cohort forms into a cohesive team that works well together much faster than without it. Students will often say they have been looking forward to rose and thorn all week because they are excited to share a follow-up from the previous week or are simply excited to share a new development in their lives. The activity gets everyone talking at the beginning, which encourages them to contribute to the following discussion. Rose and thorn has become an integral part of the Learning Lab experience.

Why Rose, Thorn, and Bud?

