**Integrating Career Development into a Course Curriculum**

**Abstract**

This PDW explores the extent to which college professors have a responsibility for integrating career preparation into course curriculum. Employers have high expectations for entry-level employees, and career development centers can’t serve all students. Should professors help with career skills such as developing career focus, resume preparation and interview practice? If so, what are some effective ways of integrating this work into the curriculum. Participants will engage in these discussions and learn about a career focus activity that the authors have used effectively.

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According to a recent survey by McGraw-Hill, only 44% of college seniors feel “very prepared” for their career (McGraw-Hill, 2017). College costs are now at an all-time high, and the average student loan debt is more than $37,000 (Student Loan Hero, 2018); college gradates can’t afford to flounder for months after graduation without a professional job. Given all this, it is worth asking: What is the responsibility of professors to address career preparedness very directly in the classroom?

In this PDW, we will explore this question from several angles and have participants engage in an activity that helps students gain clarity about what they want to do after graduation. Options for further career development in the classroom such as networking, resume and LinkedIn development, and interview practice will also be discussed.

We argue that changes to contemporary career structures demand that college coursework incorporate more career development. Careers are now “self-managed” and our own career development is something we no longer separate out from “the rest of our lives” (Grey, 1994). We network, collaborate, gain skills, etc., all during our “time off.” Career development in college helps undergraduate students learn and hone a skill they will need throughout their entire career. Furthermore, integrating career development into course curriculum can help undergraduate students begin to make direct connections between their coursework and future careers.

In this PDW we will teach participants how to lead an activity that helps college student develop greater career focus. By the time they are seniors, most, if not all, college students should have some level of clarity about their next steps. Students who spend months after graduation trying to figure out what they want to do can easily end up demoralized and further in debt. The McGraw-Hill study cited above shows, in fact, that students who know what they want to do next are twice as likely to feel very prepared for their career.

Professors of management should note that studies indicate that students majoring in general Business/Management are less likely to know what they want to do after graduation than students with more career-specific majors (Marketing, Accounting, etc.) (Wilcoxson & Wyndor, 2010). This activity may be particularly suited for students in general management classes as it will help them narrow down their fields of interest and give them a structure for forming an action plan to do more research on possible careers.

**Outline of PDW**

1. Introduction: Summary of why integrating career development into the classroom is important. (15 min.)
2. We will lead an open discussion on what the current practices of participants are – help with resume, send them to career development center, opening up your network, nothing, etc. (20 min.)
3. Present what we did in our classrooms in 2017-2018 (10 min.)
4. Activity – Creating Career Focus (25 min.)
   1. The purpose of this activity is to transition undergraduate students from “I don’t know what I want to do after graduation” to “I have career ideas that I’m excited about researching further.” We will have participants engage in an abbreviated (fun!) version of the activity so that they understand the components.
   2. Part 1: Create a “Wandering Map” (Brooks, 2010)
   3. Part 2: Create “Career Buckets”
   4. Part 3: Develop a new script (they aren’t allowed to say “I don’t know” when people ask them what they are doing next - ever again.)
   5. Part 4: Action plan.
5. Brainstorm/Discussion (20 min.)
   1. Which courses are best for this type of activity?
   2. Could students benefit from doing this type of activity more than once throughout their coursework?
   3. How can this activity be modified for different courses?
   4. What outside, on campus resources (e.g. career development offices) can be drawn in to strengthen this activity?
   5. Other?

**Time Requirement**: Approximately 90 min

**Learning Outcomes**: Participants will be able to articulate why it’s important to include career development activities into management course curriculums, and will have an activity they can use with their students that students will find of immediate value.

We will also collaborate to discuss strengthening this activity so that it meets the needs of the most students, and discuss how to tailor this activity to various courses.

**Equipment Needed**: Projector and screen.

**Works Cited**

Brooks, K. 2010. You Majored in What?: Designing Your Path from College to Career. Plume, New York.

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