

**THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP: A CAREERS COURSE TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS
OF SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS**

A Synthesis Project Presented

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ABSTRACT

THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP: A CAREERS COURSE TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS

The experience of attending college can take on a plethora of different shades. For thousands of students, their undergraduate years are viewed as the most exciting times in their life. For others, though, it can be an extremely stressful time. Students have to make many difficult decisions that can have an impact on the rest of their life. Making academic and career decisions without accessing the necessary support, the appropriate tools and resources could result in students choosing a major or career path that is not the right fit. According to research gathered from the University of Massachusetts Boston Office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies, it is evident that although a student's first year in college is critical in terms of their potential success throughout their undergraduate experience, it is also extremely critical in terms of the overall retention rate for the institution. Retention has been an issue that higher education institutions have been struggling with for decades. There is no one solution to combat this dilemma but with so much concern for student's first-year experience, there is cause for concern for the lack of attention being provided to sophomores. It is essential that higher education institutions continue the same level of support for students beyond their first-year, creating programs designed to address the issues of second-year students. A holistic approach must be applied which would provide students the option to enroll in a course. This alone, however will not eradicate the issue of student retention but it will serve as one form of remedy. Students would not be mandated to register for the course

but being that students have different needs which must be addressed in a variety ways, having a careers course that focuses on developing decision-making skills in order to make well-informed choices in terms of the students' major and career is an attractive option.

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen is a typical UMass Boston undergraduate student. He is a first-time, full-time student and began as a declared biology major. When I had the chance to make his acquaintance, a couple years had passed and in that time he had changed his major from biology to political science. Stephen is now in his last semester of college. He said he is very content with his transition into the College of Liberal Arts but with having made his decision so late into his academic career, he has had no time to devote to career exploration so although happy with being a political science major he has very little idea as to what he plans to do when he graduates. He wishes he would have figured things out earlier in terms of his major and wishes he would have known of the appropriate steps and options to take for career exploration such as internships.

Serving as a Career and Employer Relations Specialist at University of Massachusetts Boston since March 2008, I have counseled a countless number of students like Stephen who have no clear direction in regards to selecting a major, options for a future career, or knowledge of the necessary steps that will ensure they make a well-informed decision. Getting on the right track is critical to a student's academic success and, as I have witnessed, choosing the right major plays a big part in this process.

Further to this, a large majority of UMass Boston students are not aware of the resources to guide them in the process; therefore, they struggle with staying on academic track due to their lack in direction. Additionally, for those who select a major seamlessly, many, as did Stephen, do so with misguided information or with little to no time

dedicated to major exploration, which can affect them in the long-term.

Because of the needs demonstrated by students like Stephen, I propose to develop a credit-bearing careers course to be offered at UMass Boston. The course will provide students with the opportunity to meet weekly with career specialists and to begin the process of career and major exploration. My target population will be sophomores, preferably students who have completed two full semesters at UMass Boston. The sophomore students will be defined as those who are first-time, full-time students who have persisted into their second year of academic work, or a stage coined by Gahagan and Hunter as a student's second-year experience (2006, 18).

Chapter one explains retention and its relevance to sophomores and the importance of retention for UMass Boston including why sophomores should be on the University's agenda. The term "sophomore slump," will be discussed in detail, incorporating literature from various sources including the *Visible Solutions for Invisible Students: Helping Sophomores Succeed* (Monograph Series No. 31) edited by Laurie Schreiner and Jerry Pattengale with the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and "The Second-Year Experience: Turning the Attention to the Academy's Middle Children" written by Jimmie Gahagan and Mary Stuart Hunter to illustrate that the focus on sophomores is not a recent concern.

Chapter two will provide a detailed student example that illustrates the major impact and influence student one-on-one appointments have had on my decision to create and implement a course specifically designed for sophomore students.

Chapter three will start with a short discussion on the history of career courses, further highlighting that career courses are not a new concept. I will discuss the history of

courses at some peer institutions, how they have been implemented and what positive outcomes have been achieved. In order to accomplish this I purport a specific analysis of the course at University of Nevada, Reno.

Chapter four will be dedicated to the course design and process. The chapter will discuss its development and the utilization of *Understanding by Design* co-authored by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, a framework for designing curriculum, assessments, and instruction. This text explores questions like: What is teaching for understanding? How can you unpack content standards to identify the important big ideas that you want students to understand? How do you know that students truly understand and can apply their understanding in a meaningful way? How can you design courses and units to emphasize understanding rather than coverage? What instructional practices are both engaging and effective for developing student understanding? I will highlight some of the core principles from *Understanding by Design* used in the development of the course, progress to the course design, and conclude with next steps that will ensure implementation at UMass Boston.

The paper will conclude with a personal reflection. It will demonstrate how my interest in sophomores developed organically, taking shape over the last few years through my progression of coursework and my ongoing interactions with students both in a professional and non-professional capacity. This course design process was a culmination of events and experiences including my own personal path throughout my graduate studies.

CHAPTER 1

RETENTION AS AN ISSUE

Three decades of research and practice have demonstrated the power and importance of the experience of students who are making the transition from high school to college. Student persistence to the sophomore year and, ultimately persistence to graduation are at stake. This recognition of the critical nature of the first year has motivated thousands of institutions around the world to provide a wide range of programs and services for new college students and fueled the movement to improve the quality for the first-year experience. Less well understood is the experience of students in their second year: a different and, at times, even more challenging period than the initial transition to college. (Gahagan and Hunter 2006, 17)

According to “An Assessment of Undergraduate Retention, Persistence, and Graduation Rates at UMass Boston”, a report published by the Office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies, “as a campus, we have been concerned about our graduation rates for many years” (Murphy 2010, 2). Retention and persistence patterns are linked to graduation patterns (retention refers to returning for the second year and persistence refers to returning in subsequent years). Retention has been a major issue at UMass Boston and there are many factors that can play a role including students’ own decision-making skills. As explained by Reese and Miller, “The majority of college students lack the knowledge and experience required to make an informed decision about which major to choose and career path to take yet 82% of 220,000 entering freshmen reported the number one reason in deciding to attend college was to be able to get a better job” (2010). Meeting the needs of the significant proportion of college students who are undecided about their future career path is a major challenge for higher education. Students who do not make a confident decision about their career goals are more likely to

drop out of school, have lower grades, and more difficulty with adjusting to college. This is why it is so incredibly vital that students who attend career development courses learn to effectively make good decisions about their future.

Decision-making skills are valuable for students' academic success and career development education is one way for students to acquire them, leading to greater retention. Thus, career development education is a win-win allowing students to acquire valuable skills and the University to keep money in their pockets.

The substantial amount of research that has been conducted on students' first year experience shows that this year is the most critical of them all. When I first began thinking about the possibilities of my research, I knew it would definitely be student-focused. With so much hype around the student's first-year experience and after further reflection on my research completed in Critical and Creative Thinking (CRCRTH) 692 and a follow-up interview with one of the peer institutions, my attention and interest deteriorated. For months, I focused on developing a course for first-year students; but following extensive research, I turned to second-year students. I had devoted my research to first-year students but hadn't stopped to think about the other students. What about beyond first-year? What happens to sophomores? Since one of the institution's goals is helping students get on track and stay on track through to graduation, then it is not only important to provide extensive amounts of support to students during their first year but also throughout their college experience. Due to the aforementioned reasons, I changed my focus to creating an academic and career decision-making course to address the needs of sophomore students. This group of students are prone to adopting the unfortunate

sophomore slump which is a condition defined by a lack motivation, feelings of disconnection, and floundering academically (Gahagan and Hunter 2006, 18).

Mervin Freedman first mentioned a sophomore slump in a 1956 article describing the stages of the college experience. Through his research at Vassar College, he found that student energy in the sophomore year centers on academic work and peer interactions. In addition, selecting a major plays a central role in the student's sophomore year. Freedman found that the sophomore slump is defined by a "lack of inertia or disorganization". Susan Furr and Linda Gannaway's work reinforced this idea; they defined the sophomore slump as a period of "confusion and uncertainty" (Gahagan and Hunter 2006, 18).

There is less empirical evidence about the range and severity of issues facing sophomores than that for first-year students; nevertheless, a heightening interest in sophomores at conferences, in publications, and on electronic discussion boards, strongly suggests that an increased number of educators are turning their attention to this middle child population (Gahagan and Hunter 2006, 17). As stated by Gahagan, there has been a heightened interest on sophomores for about the last 7-10 years (2006, 17).

He further explicates via Gardner, Pattengale, & Schreiner:

For many years college administrators have used the phrase "sophomore slump" to describe the period of transition into and through students' second year of college along with the challenges they face during this experience. Since the 1970's researchers have been connecting student development theory to the sophomore-year experience in an attempt to explore the transitions second-year students make. Kohlberg and Kramer (1969), Perry (1970), Furr and Gannaway (1982), Schaller (2006), and many others have all made significant connections between student development theory and the sophomore-year experience. Many of the symptoms of the sophomore slump can be traced back to students' development including, prolonged indecisiveness about selecting a major, inappropriate decision making about academic course selection and major or minor fields of study, low levels of academic engagement, low levels of

commitment, dysfunctional behavior which interferes with academic success (such as excess drinking), disappointment and frustration with the academic experience, increased time to degree completion rates, absenteeism, lack of co-curricular involvement, and lack of social and academic integration. (Gahagan 2009, 1)

There are many reasons that led me to want to develop a careers course for sophomores but it wasn't until after conducting some research on the subject that I became more confident about my decision. In an article written by Graunke and Woosley, they reference a longitudinal study and in summary conclude that the issues of commitment to an academic major and meaningful interactions with faculty and staff as being significant predictors of academic success in the sophomore year and key factors affecting retention. Throughout this paper, I will further expand on the issues students encounter when confirming an academic major and the benefits to positive interactions with faculty from both an institutional standpoint as well as the individual student. There is significant evidence that supports the development and implementation of a careers course to address the growing concern of sophomores and the "sophomore slump".

Further support for the positive impacts of career education can be found in the monograph, *Visible Solutions for Invisible Students: Helping Sophomores Succeed*. This work synthesizes earlier research and discusses aspects of the sophomore year that are in need of particular attention including career decisions. It is clear that no one reason can be identified for why sophomores struggle but after review of the monograph findings, it is apparent that several of the issues faced by sophomores overwhelmingly revolve around uncertainties in regards to choice of major and what they plan to do with their major when they graduate. As you will see in later chapters, the course I designed will allow students to overcome these common uncertainties.

Beyond my research findings some additional reasons for wanting to create and eventually facilitate a careers course stems from my daily interactions with students. In the following chapter, I will provide an inside view of how my work with students has influenced me.

CHAPTER 2

MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR FOR CAREERS COURSE

The primary basis for my research project stemmed from my professional experiences working with students at UMass Boston as well as my experiences as a student in the Master of Education: Learning, Teaching, and Educational Transformation Non-Licensure Program. Over the course of the last four years at UMass Boston, I have met with numerous students who are in the process of choosing a major or career in a very haphazard manner. However, what is most alarming is that their decisions are based on faulty information gathered from unreliable sources. In the following example, I will make reference to a student appointment that illustrates the pitfalls made by relying on inaccurate information.

Valerie is a second semester freshman. She began at UMass Boston in the Transitions Program. Transitions is a program designed for students who demonstrate they have the potential to flourish at UMass Boston with small classes and ongoing, one-on-one academic advising. This is an invite-only program, open to just 50 students. Valerie initially made an appointment with the Office of Career Services and Internships to discuss her choice of major. She was scheduled to register for classes soon and was under the assumption that she needed to have her major declared prior to this date.

It was at this point in our conversation that I made sure Valerie understood that this was false information; although not specifically stated within my job responsibilities

as a career specialist, I have found that part of my job involves dispelling common misconceptions. I made it very clear to Valerie that although she needed to remain focused and declare her major in a timely fashion the most important thing to remember was to follow the appropriate steps to ensure she made a well-informed decision. At this juncture in the appointment, I discussed pressures she might have been feeling from family as well as her own internal pressures. I made sure to announce at the beginning of our conversation that it was not my responsibility to tell her what to do but instead to provide her with the necessary tools and strategies to ensure she made well-informed academic and career decisions. Additionally, I made it brutally clear that all decisions would require time so to try and be patient. I reminded her that this was just our first out of many appointments and that she would want to be sure to schedule future follow-up appointments.

Valerie said that she would like to pursue a career in advertising, therefore, planned to get a degree in management. With no apparent hesitation, she was ready to declare her major despite the fact she hadn't done any research within the College of Management. Recently, though, she tested into a very low math class, so was very concerned about her future academic success within College of Management being that there would be required math courses. She mentioned that she really struggles with math so was very concerned about the required math courses. She hadn't given much thought beyond College of Management so had no idea what to do so made an appointment to meet with a career specialist to discuss her options.

What was significant to highlight at this point was that if it weren't for Valerie receiving a low test score on her math placement test she would've most likely followed

her assumption and enrolled into the College of Management. It is more common than not that I meet with students during the “close to crisis” stage instead of earlier on when it would be possible to circumvent these situations.

When meeting with students, everyone is at a different phase of the academic and career planning process therefore each student must be assessed on an individual basis to ascertain the best course of action as well as to determine the specific advice that will be provided. In Valerie’s case, she came to the office for assistance with choice of major. I had no idea where she was at in the process, which was why I started with a series of questions. The way a student answers my questions provides me a better understanding as to where they are at in the process including the amount of time dedicated to research. Some of the questions I asked Valerie included; why do you feel College of Management is your only option for pursuing a career in advertising? Have you done any research of the advertising industry? Are you familiar with the career opportunities within advertising and the education requirements?

It became very clear through our conversation and the responses she provided that she had done no research within the advertising industry but just assumed that she would need to pursue a degree in business to qualify for any future position. It was at this point in our conversation that I told Valerie that to make a well-formed decision in terms of a career path such as advertising it was essential for her to do industry research. I began by introducing her to Mullen’s website (a Boston-based full service integrated advertising agency) as well as some of their current job opportunities. After reviewing numerous job descriptions and the list of qualifications, it became very evident to Valerie that the

positions didn't require any specific degree but instead the first bullet within the list of qualifications read, "A four-year degree is required."

What subject areas can you confidently say you've enjoyed based on previous and current classroom experiences?

In terms of subject areas, she had enjoyed history, English, art and sociology, which she had been introduced to at UMass Boston. Why doesn't she see the obvious? She really enjoyed her history courses and English courses. She was currently enrolled in an English course that she said was extremely engaging. Is she not aware of how enthusiastic she becomes when talking about history, art, sociology, and English?

It is important to ask a student about the courses they have already taken and enjoyed thus far; this includes courses taken in high school as well as at UMass Boston. This is a critical phase in the conversation because students must understand that their interest in a subject material can influence how well they do academically. I also emphasize the value in maintaining a high-level grade point average. During the earlier phases of college, it is common for students not to have a clear vision of the multitude of opportunities that await them. For this reason, students need to understand that maintaining a student status of high caliber has both academic and career advantages. I told Valerie that when making any decisions in life it was critical that she conduct thorough research, utilizing reliable resources. I also told Valerie the value of conducting job searches early on in her college career. It was important that Valerie understood that to prepare for the job market it would require her to go beyond the perimeters of the classroom and the attainment of an undergraduate degree. When meeting with students, I stress the importance of participating in experiential learning such as internships and

volunteer work. Further, I highlight the importance of maintaining awareness of the labor market including a close watch on industries and positions of interest and most importantly the job qualifications.

This was an eye-opening experience for her. She left the office with what appeared a seemingly strong feeling of hopefulness as well as enthusiasm knowing that it was ok to consider the option of majoring in a subject area that she had already experienced and done well in academically. For the first time she had clarity since arriving at UMass Boston and now began to understand that she could explore various majors and that there was no one specific major that would dictate her future career path nor any one major that she had to select in order to pursue a career in advertising.

The issues faced by Valerie are more common than not. In any given week, I speak with countless students from those who assumed they would be accepted into the College of Nursing or the College of Management, were not, and now have no idea what to do to the student who strongly desires to write and be an English major but knows if they take that road their parents will be deeply disappointed. Unfortunately, many of the students I meet with have depleted all their elective courses and general education requirements and are unable to devote time to major and career exploration. If only I could connect with these students earlier, I could provide them the tools to make effective academic and career decisions. With thirty-minute appointments, it is not sufficient time to work through such complex matters. Therefore creating a course where students could meet weekly to talk through these issues is a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER 3

COURSE DESIGN

Career courses have a long and robust history dating back to the first half of the twentieth century. More recently, career courses are surfacing at many of our peer institutions (academic institutions used as benchmarks in the UMass President's Office Performance Management System). One such course that served as my inspiration was through the University of Reno, Nevada (Appendix B). My discussions with a staff member here helped to supplement both my research and personal interactions regarding the importance of waiting until sophomore year to present this information.

Moving forward from my research, my personal interactions, and my professional exchanges, the seed of my idea has grown into the framework of what I believe will be a functional course. The course will serve as a forum to address some of the uncertainty associated with the middle years of college by encouraging students to examine where they are and where they are headed in terms of career and professional growth in a structured, supportive environment. Students will develop a sense of self, exploring how their interests, values, skills, and abilities relate to their emerging professional life. Some of the course topics include major/minor exploration; understanding how one's major translates to various industries; and examining how academic knowledge interconnects with employer expectations. The course will allow sophomores to examine their options fully, engage thoroughly in focused exploration, and make decisions based on internal

connections to the exploration period; this will provide students the opportunity of having their choices be more aligned to personal values, therefore, helping the students to remain more committed to their studies.

To build my course curriculum, I decided to not reinvent the wheel but instead tap into the already existing programming that is being used at some of the peer institutions. As recommended by Gahagan and Hunter, retooling initiatives and developing new programs are two solid strategies for improving the experience of second-year students. Offerings in career services can all be organized to promote student engagement and learning during the sophomore year (2006, 19). I have provided a sample course syllabus (Appendix B) that I will use as my guide in developing the syllabus for UMass Boston.

In developing the course, I utilized *Understanding by Design*, a framework for designing curriculum, assessments, and instruction. Through this curriculum, I have learned the proper framework to create a greater understanding for students. Well thought-out goals and objectives are vital to the success of a course. Chickering and Reisser explain that clear and consistent objectives, stated in terms of desired outcomes for learning and personal development, are critically important in creating an educationally powerful institution. These should not have to be deduced from course descriptions. They should be explicit and compelling. They should be defined by the members of the college community, taken to heart by campus leaders, and invoked as guides to decision-making (1993, 287).

The following is a list of goals and objectives that have been selected for the course. Please note the listed objectives are gleaned largely from a course entitled *Academic and Career Decision-Making* being taught at University of Reno, Nevada.

- Develop and enhance students' abilities to make informed, successful, effective decisions related to academic and career choice.
- Evaluate students' current status specific to academic and career decision-making.
- Strengthen the students' awareness and understanding of self by assessing their interests, skills, values, and personality and the impact these characteristics have on academic/career satisfaction and success.
- Examine family, social, community, and cultural influences on academic and career choice.
- Use and apply appropriate resources and various methods of research to develop and act on a plan to pursue academic program(s) and continue career exploration.
- Learn how to perform and conduct faculty and/or professional/employer informational interviews.

To develop the curriculum, I followed the three stages of backward design which include:

- Stage 1: Identify desired results
 - What should students know, understand, and be able to do?
 - What content is worthy of understanding?
 - What enduring understandings are desired?
- Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence
 - How will we know if students have achieved the desired results?
 - What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?
- Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction

- What enabling knowledge (facts, concepts, principles) and skills (processes, procedures, strategies) will students need in order to perform effectively and achieve desired results?
- What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills?
- What will need to be taught and coached, and how should it best be taught, in light of performance goals?
- What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals?

I feel I am uniquely suited to serve as course presenter at UMass Boston being that I have developed the necessary skills in curriculum development and in addition have expertise from my years of working with students. I believe this combination of factors will allow me to create a positive and effective learning environment.

The course has been divided into ten class sessions running for one hour and forty-five minutes each. The format of the course will consist of daily activities and classroom discussions as well as daily homework assignments. (See Appendix A for further details) The activities will vary to include some in-class work as well as various interactive activities that require students to engage with alumni and faculty.

I look forward to taking the next steps to making this vision a reality. The following section will go into further detail.

CHAPTER 4

ACTION STEPS

My current plan is to soft launch a non-credit bearing pilot course in fall 2012 with a select group of sophomores. It will be a five-week course. Class will meet for 1 hour and 45 minutes two times a week. In order to ensure that this course begins in the fall the following items need to be resolved.

- Work together with staff and faculty to recruit 15 student participants. Work together with my staff, academic advisors, the Advising Collaborative and faculty who could assist in identifying potential candidates for the program. Some additional possibilities to further investigate include;
 - Sophomore learning community currently being developed within the College of Science and Mathematics (Connect with Lori Dameron and the Dean)
 - Former CLA First participants (Connect with Joyce Morgan)
 - Transitions Program (Connect with Professor Maryann Brink)
- The Dream Project (to call and reserve for day one of course)
- Work together with staff to discuss creative marketing techniques and student incentives

- Course time needs to be established and classroom space needs to be reserved for all class sessions
 - To reserve the Testing Center for the days when students will need access to computers
- Arrange individual work schedule as well as other staff schedules who will be assisting with classroom instruction
- Gather course material
 - Need to schedule a follow-up phone call with University of Reno, Nevada
- Develop a pre/post assessment (Meet with Dr. Pat Neilson)
- Develop a student survey to distribute at the conclusion of course to demonstrate that the course had a positive effect on students as well as to gather additional information in terms of specific needs that will need to be addressed in careers course as well as feedback that can be incorporated into future courses
- Professional Development
 - Shadow professors and take notes on their teaching styles
 - Attend the CIT Conference

CHAPTER FIVE

PROGRAM REFLECTION

I am currently in the Master of Education: Learning, Teaching & Educational Transformation Non Licensure Program (LTET). I have known for a long time that I wanted to work in higher education specifically with students in some one-on-one capacity, preferably career development. When I was initially perusing my graduate program options at the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2008, I immediately gravitated towards the Masters in Education programs and without hesitation chose the non-licensure track. It provided for a lot of flexibility, which I was looking for. Being that my plan is to remain in the student career development arena of higher education, I was seeking a graduate program that would allow me the flexibility to take courses in a variety of different disciplines, a program that would serve as a platform for both my professional and personal development. Now, when I look back at the wide array of courses I've taken over the last four years including; Asian American Studies 420: *Students of Color in Higher Education*, Critical and Creative Thinking 618: *Collaborative and Organizational Change*, American Studies 687: *United States in the 21st Century*, EDC G 606: *Sociocultural Foundations*, EDC G 644: *Developmental Stages: Infancy to Adolescence*, Critical and Creative Thinking 692: *Research and Engagement Process*, Spanish 432: *Don Quijote*, Critical and Creative Thinking 694:

Synthesis Theory and Practice Seminar, and EDC G 660: *Data-based Planning*, I can't help but smile with the grandiose and very eclectic mix. It is a true example of an interdisciplinary program. From an outside perspective, one would probably look at my completed list of courses and just think it's a random concoction of courses but that is not even close to the truth. Each course selected was chosen very carefully and very intentionally, reviewing the graduate course offerings each semester and critically thinking through which course would benefit me either professionally or personally. It is very different from the approach I took when planning my undergraduate studies. I emphasize the fact that I steered away from the teaching and the fact that I didn't even give the various teaching tracks a second thought and even grappled with the fact that in the LTET track there are a few required courses that have a very strong teaching focus. As I became more grounded in the program, especially the teaching focused courses such as *Sociocultural Foundations and Developmental Stages: Infancy to Adolescence*, my perspective changed dramatically. I was forever telling myself that there was no need for me to take the identified core courses and the only reason they were required courses was because the department had not allocated time to fully develop the LTET program, therefore, they just lumped in some of the teacher-licensure track courses. Although I don't serve in a traditional teacher role, with a set roster of students that are my responsibility that I facilitate lecture to on specific days and times, I am an educator. The more I integrated myself into the program and became engaged in classroom discussion, I realized the connection between the work I do with students and my graduate coursework.

Now, that I am at the end of the program and close to completion with *Synthesis Theory and Practice Seminar*, my capstone project is focused on developing a careers course with the ultimate goal of serving as the primary facilitator of the course. I was adamantly against teaching at the start of my graduate program, yet here I am four years later focusing on developing a careers curriculum for sophomore students. I have experienced and continue to experience what I tell my students all the time. I am in the process of transitioning through my own career development. What you thought you would do or thought you would like to do can change over time. I may never have arrived to where I am now and my strong interest and goal of implementing a credit-bearing course if it weren't through this process. As has been stated numerous times throughout my Critical and Creative Thinking (CRCRTH) experience, the work that we do will continue to take new form; as educators, we will continuously come back to our work to reflect, review and revise. The student population will continue to take new form, which means the services we provide and the manner in which we deliver our information to students will have to have to be adapted to continue to meet the needs of the students. What we think is the final product could be the very beginning to a new idea. I will also continue to apply the skills I have learned throughout my experience within the Learning, Teaching, and Educational Transformation (LTET) program both in my personal and professional life. These are skills that can be useful in all settings as well as critical skills that I can impart on my current and future students.

One of my many reasons for wanting to create a careers course was to provide a much needed resource for students; a course that students could elect to enroll into to further explore potential major and career options. This idea evolved over a period of

time while serving as Career Specialist at UMass Boston; but, it was through the various conversations I had with classmates as a graduate student that I was reminded of the struggles students have in terms of choosing a major and knowing their career options. Although I played student role to the best of my ability, any conversation I had weaved itself into my professional world. Each class I took, the fact that I am a Career Specialist always became a part of the classroom conversation. From my work life, to school life and into my personal life, I am constantly encountering individuals who either struggled with choosing a major during their undergraduate years or struggled with what to do as a career. Recently, I had a conversation with a young woman in one of my current graduate courses who had no concrete idea as to what do following completion of her undergraduate studies therefore enrolled into a few graduate courses. She told me that she wished she would have met me sooner and been connected to Career Services. This is just one of many examples of students I have met through my graduate studies. This is also another example of why I want to develop a course. I want to take my conversation beyond the hallway, expanding my brief on-the-go conversations to a classroom. I am always thinking if only we had more time. Whenever I have these informal career chats with students, it is always made quite clear to the student that I am speaking with that career development and career planning is a long, arduous process. In my opinion, it is never too early to start.

Academic and Career Decision-Making

Who are our students?

UMass Boston sophomores who are first -time, full -time students who:

- ¶ Have persisted into their second year of academic work.
- ¶ Have agreed to comply to the expectations and policies of the course.

Course Goals

- ¶ Develop and enhance a students' abilities to make informed, successful, effective decisions related to academic and career choice.
 - Evaluate a students' current status specific to academic and career decision -making.
 - Strengthen the students' awareness and understanding of self by assessing their interests, skills, values, and personality the impact these characteristics have on their academic/career satisfaction and success.
 - Examine family, social, community, and cultural influences on academic and career choice.

More Course Goals

- ‡ Use and apply appropriate resources and various methods of research and act on plan to pursue academic program(s) and continue career exploration.
- ‡ Learn how to perform and conduct faculty and/or professional/employer informational interviews.

Enduring Understandings

- ‡ An academic major can prepare you for a wide range of jobs. Some majors are directly related to a job (nursing, accounting, engineering), but the majority of college degrees can prepare you for many career paths.
- ‡ Your education/foundation of knowledge can open the door to many opportunities in a variety of industries.

More Enduring Understandings

- ‡ There are a variety of opportunities in various fields because of the transferable skills you will develop as a result of your major.
- ‡ It is the culmination of experiences, education, skills, and interests that will make one the right candidate for a position.

More Enduring Understandings

- Your college education is critical but to be competitive in the job market or graduate school you will need to complement your education with experience through participation in clubs and organizations, internships, volunteering, work and research.

Essential Questions

- ? How does your passion play a role in the selection of a career?
- ? How do you discover your passion?
- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How does your major connect to careers?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day One

Essential Questions:

- ? How does your passion play a role in the selection of a career?
- ? How do you discover your passion?

Day One Activities

Students will meet in the Campus Center, 1st Floor, Room 1110. They will be introduced to the Career Services' staff and view *The Dream Share Project*, a documentary film that explores how successful people have pursued their dreams and found careers they love.

More Day One Activities

Following viewing of the film, students will take part in the "Chase your Dream!" workshop facilitated by Chip Hiden and Alexis Irvin, creators of *The Dream Share Project*.

Day One Homework

- ‡ Students to complete one journal entry, reflecting on the documentary and what the word *passion* means to them in terms of their academic and career aspirations.
- ‡ Students to complete the "Questions to ask yourself" worksheet.

Questions to ask yourself

What are your interests and skills?
Which subjects have you enjoyed the most in high school? The least?
What do you view as being your academic strengths? Weaknesses?
Do you think you will enjoy the courses you will be required to take to complete the major(s) you are considering?
Are there any specific requirements a student must meet/complete before they can declare this major (for example, completion of specific courses, a GPA requirement, etc.)?
Are there opportunities for internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, etc. associated with this major?
What kinds of jobs do students who graduate with this major typically pursue?
Is this major designed to prepare students for advanced study (for example, medical school, dental school, law school, etc.) or a particular career?

Day Two

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How do we begin to discover our strengths ?

Day Two Activities

- ? Students will participate in an icebreaker activity to help establish a positive environment and provide an opportunity for students to get to know one another and the instructor.
- ? Students to review and discuss the course syllabus, course expectations and the homework assignment.

Day Two Homework

- Students will complete FOCUS2 (an online career assessment that helps to identify interests, values, academic strengths and skills).
- Students will select 3 occupations and 3 majors from FOCUS2 and print their career portfolio.

Day Three

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How does your major connect to careers?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day Three Activities

Career Specialists will divide students into groups to discuss FOCUS2 results. Students will be provided a worksheet to complete during class time.

Day Three Homework

- Students will complete a journal entry reflecting on today's FOCUS2 workshop. They will write any new ideas that may have surfaced and/or discuss how this activity reaffirmed their decisions to choose a particular major or career.

Day Four

Essential Question:

- ‡ How does your major connect to careers?

Day Four Activities

Students meet in the Testing Center and are introduced to various online resources to assist them in their major and career decision-making process including the following:

- ‡ "What Can I Do With a Major in..." link
- ‡ Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- ‡ UMass Boston Course Catalog and Course Wizard

Day Four Homework

- Students to complete 3 Majors Comparison. These are majors that were previously selected from their FOCUS2 results that are offered at UMass Boston.

Day Five

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How does your major connect to careers?

Day Five Activities

Students are introduced to informational interviews.

Students use class time to explore academic department websites to identify 2-3 professors they are interested in conducting an informational interview with to learn more about majors. The academic departments selected should be in alignment with the majors from their FOCUS2 results.

Day Five Homework

- Students to compose a list of 5 -7 questions that they will ask during their informational interview.
- Students to compose and send emails to selected faculty requesting an informational interview.

Day 6

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day 6 Activities

There will be a class discussion focused on good/bad questions. What makes a good question? What makes for a bad question?

Students will have the opportunity to share their list of questions pertaining to their selected academic departments and faculty.

Day Six Homework

- Students to review a video to prepare them for informational interviewing.

Day Seven

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day Seven Activities

Students to conduct informational interviews.

Day Seven Homework

- Students to submit a 1-2 page reaction paper to discuss their individual experience and what they learned and what they found interesting.
- Students will compose, address, and mail thank you notes to the faculty who participated in the informational interviews.

Day Eight

Essential Questions:

- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day Eight Activities

Students will share highlights on their informational interviews including something they learned, something they valued from the experience and something they were told that could influence them in their career and major decision-making process.

Day Eight Homework

- Students to review their FOCUS2 results and FOCUS2 worksheet and select 3 skills they would like to strengthen.
- Students to review "Job Outlook: The Candidate Skills/Qualities Employers Want" at http://www.naceweb.org/s10262011/candidate_skills_employer_qualities/.
- Students to log onto [MyCareerOnline](#) and conduct a mini job search.

Day Nine

Essential Questions:

- ? How does your passion play a role in the selection of a career?
- ? How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- ? How does your major connect to careers?
- ? How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day Nine Activities

Students will be introduced to the Career Symposium.

Students will participate in the "Networking Your Way to Success" workshop in preparation for the event.

Day Ten

Essential Questions:

- How does your passion play a role in the selection of a career?
- How do you discover your passion?
- How do your interests, values, personality, and skills link to majors?
- How does your major connect to careers?
- How do we begin to develop our skills?

Day Ten Activities

Students to meet individually with the instructor to complete a Career and Academics Action Plan implementing the usage of their newly adopted decision-making skills. The Plan is designed to be a working document that maximizes student achievement by having the student cite specific academic goals that will lead to career readiness.

While students are meeting one-on-one with the instructor, a career specialist will oversee the Career Symposium student presentations.

Action Plan Models

? <http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skills/actionplanning.htm#MODEL>

? Career Action Plan Worksheet

http://careerplanning.about.com/od/careeractionplan/a/actionplan_wksh.htm



ACADEMIC AND CAREER DECISION-MAKING

ACE 210

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Course Overview

This one credit, letter graded course is designed for sophomore (or second year students) students who are deciding on their academic major and/or career options. The focus will include an examination and evaluation of the student's academic options, choice of major, minor, and/or certificate programs. Career options are also explored based on formal self-assessment inventories and career-related resources. A decision-based action plan will be developed to guide the student in attaining desired educational and career goals.

Course Resources and Materials:

University of Nevada, Reno Catalog
 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)
 Strong Interest Inventory®/ Combined Report
 Values Inventory
 National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
 NCIS (Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation)
 Web based resources

Assessments Inventory Fee: \$30.00

Note: Last day to drop this class and receive \$100% refund is 9/16/10. The last day to completely withdraw from the course with no refund is 9/28/10.

Course Goals and Objectives:

How did these goals get established?

- Develop and enhance students' abilities to make informed, successful, effective decisions related to academic and career choice.
- Evaluate students' current status specific to academic and career decision-making.
- Strengthen the students' awareness and understanding of self by assessing their interests, skills, values, personality and decision-making styles and the impact these characteristics have on academic/career satisfaction and success.
- Examine family, social, community, and cultural influences on academic and career choice.
- Use and apply appropriate resources and various methods of research to develop and act on a plan to pursue academic program(s) and continue career exploration.
- Learn how to perform and conduct faculty and/or professional/employer informational interviews.

Course Grading System:

Letter Grades based on a 200 total points scale:

180 to 200 points	A
160 to 179 points	B
140 to 159 points	C
120 to 139 points	D
0 to 119 points	F

Note: Academic credit cannot be earned in both ACE 100 and 210.

Assignments: See separate documents distributed in class on 9/14

Instructor's Expectations:

Since the purpose of this course is to help in your academic and career planning, act as if the classroom is a professional work setting. Your work, participation, attitude, and demeanor should reflect the level of professionalism expected in a work setting.

ACE 210 Course Calendar		
Week 1	Tuesday 9/14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductions/Get to Know All ▪ Syllabus/ Course Expectations ▪ Academic and Career Decision-Making Process ▪ Assign Reading/Journal (due 9/16) ▪ \$30 for assessment (due 9/16) 	Thursday 9/16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion from Reading/Journal ▪ Assessment Inventories (lab) ▪ Online Catalog/DARS (lab) ▪ Turn in assignment from 9/14 and fee payment ▪ Assign 3 Majors Comparison (due 9/21)
Week 2	Tuesday 9/21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results from Myers Briggs Type Indicator® ▪ Turn in 3 Majors Comparison assignment from 9/16 ▪ Assign Personality Preference Observation Journal (due 9/28) 	Thursday 9/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results from Strong Interest Inventory® College Profile ▪ Assign Myers Briggs Type Indicator® and Strong Interest Inventory® College Profile results comparison (due 9/30)
Week 3	Tuesday 9/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compare Interest and Personality results ▪ Decision-making styles ▪ What can I do with a major in ____? ▪ Four Generations in Workplace ▪ Turn in assignment from 9/21 ▪ Assign Network Interview and Final Paper/Presentation (due 10/14) 	Thursday 9/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work-related values (in class score) ▪ Values line-up ▪ Turn in assignment from 9/23 ▪ Assign Definitions of Success, etc. (due 10/5) ▪ Assign Nevada Career Information Systems/Strong Interest Inventory results (due 10/7)
Week 4	Tuesday 10/3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Major-Neutral" Skills and Competencies ▪ Experience and Networking ▪ Turn in assignment from 9/30 	Thursday 10/7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nevada Computer Info Systems (lab) ▪ Turn in assignment from 9/30
Week 5	Tuesday 10/12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan of Action ▪ Presentations 	Thursday 10/14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentations ▪ Turn in Network Interview and Final Paper

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