**Bridge to Careers:**

**Designing a Career Development Program**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper encapsulates the efforts and insights of the faculty and administration at a small, Midwestern, AACSB-accredited business school to improve business students’ career readiness. Over the course of four years, the school has moved through several distinctive phases in developing and launching a robust career development program serving undergraduates studying accounting, economics, finance, international business, marketing, and management. Each phase had significantly different levels of institutional support and this school’s experiences and analyses speak to best practices across a variety of contexts.*

**Introduction**

Many institutions of higher education are attempting to address the issue of integrating career preparation into their programs of study given their varying level of resources, faculty commitment, and characteristics of the student body. This paper provides business educators with a sense of what is possible given different contexts and varied levels of resources in developing systematic career-readiness programs and then increasing student engagement with these programs. Although the courses and activities developed at our institution are unique, they are models from which other universities can and should benefit. In a recent survey of employers and students, employers described one third of their applicants for entry level positions as unqualified and more than 60% of employers found student applicants unprepared for the job search process (Gee, 2017). Several years ago, the Brennan School of Business decided to take concrete steps to address this deficiency and through a multi-year process, has created a curriculum-based career development program that addresses student needs. After reviewing the current labor market context facing graduates and the literature on career development, the paper describes the three distinct phases our school has moved through in developing a comprehensive career development program. We describe and analyze the initiatives, the institutional supports and resources required, and the successes and challenges experienced in each of the three phases.

**Labor Market Context**

The U.S. labor market has seen recent increases in job numbers as employers have continued their steady hiring and the job outlook for the class of 2017 is even more positive. College graduates are entering one of the strongest job markets in several years, and one in which salaries are anticipated to be at the highest levels in a decade (Gee, 2017). Companies are expected to hire 5% more new graduates in 2017 than a year earlier (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017). Yet despite this good news, feelings of pessimism and angst about the country’s long term prospects have also increased, in spite of the improved labor market conditions and other indicators of economic recovery (Pew, 2016; O’Connor, 2014).

Pessimism about the country’s long term prospects is certainly shared by this millennial generation of college students. Historically, college graduates generally require some time to transition into the labor market, but the percentage of college graduates who are unemployed or under-employed has risen significantly in recent years (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014). Indeed, the number of college graduates who are unemployed or working in positions that do not actually require a college degree have remained “much higher than during any other recovery since the 1970s” (Kolesnikova & Liu, 2011). Recent graduates still face elevated unemployment rates and stagnant wages (Kroeger, Cooke, & Gould, 2016). Despite sustained growth in economic activity, this “jobless recovery” seems to be longer and more painful than those which preceded it. These findings confirm what so many media stories describe: recent college graduates are increasingly working in low-wage jobs or working part time, whether as baristas, waiters or hotel receptionists.

The restructuring of the labor markets, and consequently, job opportunities in all the Western economies due to globalization, technology advances, and competitive pressures has created an increased demand for adaptable and mobile knowledge workers who will be able move effectively between part-time employment, self-employment and full-time employment. Bridgstock described this as a “slimming down and speeding up” process; she also notes that that careers for today’s college graduates will not be characterized by hierarchical advancement within one or two organizations, but by horizontal shifts requiring them to develop new competencies and skills that they will use across employment settings (Bridgstock, 2009).

Educators need to prepare today’s students to competently navigate this changing world of work by going beyond helping students acquire knowledge and skills in their fields and also teaching them how to establish and build their careers over a lifetime. It does not appear that higher education is fulfilling this charge. According to business leaders and the American public, colleges and universities are not given students the skills they need; only 11 % of business leaders and 14% of public respondents strongly agreed that today’s graduates have the skills and competencies that business needs (Keierleber, 2014). In sharp contrast, however, 96% of university and college chief academic officers reported that they were extremely or somewhat confident in their institution’s ability to prepare students for workforce success. Lower-income Americans seem to be less cynical about higher education; 24% of lower-income Americans compared to only 7% of the higher income respondents agreed that college graduates have the skills necessary to get a good job (Keierleber, 2014). As an institution serving a high percentage of first generation students (approximately 60% of the 2016 entering class), the Brennan School of Business is very much aware that its students and their families are expecting the business program to provide sufficient career-readiness preparation.

**Career Development Perspectives**

In the mid- to late-1990s, career guidance experts began calling for a shift from a “matching” mentality to “developmental” one (Watts, 1996; Watts 1999). Many career centers shifted their focus from helping students secure initial full-time positions to developing students’ capacities for career building while assisting them in the transition from full-time education to employment. This new conceptualization recognized that very few students would have linear careers within single hierarchical organization like many of their parents’ generation had and so, experts called for career development that emphasized proactive, ongoing effective management of one’s career (Watts, 1996; Watts, 1999).

In spite of this paradigm shift more than two decades ago, a chorus of career guidance experts conclude that universities are failing in this responsibility and that career management skills among undergraduates are woefully inadequate (Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012; Bridgstock, 2009; Watts, 2004). They argue that graduates do not just need first jobs; they need to be helped by their universities to develop lifelong career management skills, to be able to navigate myriad employment options, to know how learn continually and attain greater breadth of qualifications, and how to create value from their varied employment experiences, if they are to foster successful careers in today’s economy (Azevedo et al., 2012; Bridgstock, 2009).

The literature also includes case studies which illustrate how universities and colleges have actually been working to better develop career management competencies. The studies come from all academic fields, including the arts and sciences (Roberts, Curtis & Sehlke, 2014; Thomas & McDaniel, 2004), engineering (Hadley, Bates-Parker, Jordan, Kelly-Foster, & Montier-Ball, 2010), business (Walker, Tsarenko, Wagstaff, Powell, Steel & Brace-Govan, 2009), and accounting (Lawson, Blocher, Brewer, Cokins, Sorensen, Stout, Sundem, Walcott, & Wouters, 2014). They include descriptions of for-credit courses (May, 2005; Kelley, 2005; Taylor, 2003) and non-credit courses (Hopkins, Raymond, & Carlson, 2011) as well as examples of co-curricular career programming, some required for graduation but not course-based (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & Kling, 2003). Some describe how their institutions couple disciplined-based knowledge and co-curricular professional skill development to prepare career-ready students (Waldman & Korbar, 2004; Berman, Ritchie, 2006; Hopkins, Raymond & Carlson, 2011). In some cases, programs are targeted at entering freshmen (Smith, Pettinga, & Bowman, 2012) and others span multiple years (Updyke, 2013).

Three of these articles are particularly instructive due to their specific information about developing programs to enhance students’ career understanding, self-awareness and industry knowledge and then integrate this knowledge through selected experiential learning activities; they are examined in detail below. These programs offer evidence that carefully selected content, experiences, and activities make it possible for students to understand and then apply a wide range of lifelong employability skills and career competencies, which will likely help them navigate future work transitions in this quickly evolving economy.

Butler University’s business school has spent the past two decades developing a four year program to foster career development skills and professional competencies (Updyke, 2013). The program was designed around a “business spine” which included required credit and noncredit courses during the freshman, sophomore, and junior years to equip students with the tools and knowledge for effective business decision making. This program culminated with the completion of two required internships during the junior and senior years to give students meaningful practical experience. In recent years the program has been expanded to offer additional experiential activities through workshops, job shadowing and individual mentoring by “executives-in-residence.” These all combined to increase students’ knowledge of career planning, job search, professional etiquette, self-awareness, and understanding of their career goals and interests. The effectiveness of this career development program has been widely acclaimed, attracting local, regional and national attention (Updyke, 2013).

The business faculty at Oakland University in Michigan were perplexed about how to best prepare their students for success in the workforce as the student body composition shifted from Generation Y to Generation Z in the mid-2000s (Majeske & Serocki, 2009). After some deliberation, the faculty made a commitment to supplement their traditional business curriculum with a broad-based career and professional development program to help prepare students for employment at graduation. Oakland’s program was designed to augment the University’s regular career services activities, and consisted of a series of four zero-credit, required courses completed over a four year academic program (Majeske & Serocki, 2009).

In the School of Business at the University of Indianapolis, a required “introduction to business” course for freshmen was redesigned to equip students to better prepare themselves for meaningful careers (Smith et al., 2012). The revised curriculum was delivered as a one-credit, eight week course which met fifty minutes twice per week. At the start of the course, students completed the *CareerLeader,* an online assessment program developed by Harvard Business School and administered at more than 400 business schools nationally. With increased self-awareness gained by completion of the profile, students were next asked to prepare a job and industry research project to gain a better understanding of the nature of specific job functions and the general work environment. In successive weeks, students acquired a better understanding of the varied academic majors within the business school, recognized the importance of developing leadership skills through engagement in campus organizations, and learned the process for developing a resume and seeking an internship. To conclude the course and to integrate their learning, students were required to conduct an informational interview with a professional in their chosen field. The faculty plans to offer an additional Career Strategies course in the junior year to review the topics introduced in the freshman year at the moment when students begin to seek out internships.

These cases formed a detailed repository of ideas from which our faculty drew when designing our curriculum. The faculty felt strongly that the business school needed to develop required courses which addressed students where they were. The goal was to provide progressive experiences which recognized the primary concerns and motivations of students as they moved from freshman year toward graduation day. In a *New York Times* Op Ed, Ben Carpenter called for colleges “to create, and require for graduation, a course in career training that would begin in freshman year and end in senior year” (Carpenter, 2014). But while many experts and academicians have advocated for ongoing career development, it has frequently been attempted only through voluntary programs and so creating a required course sequence, as proposed by Carpenter, appealed strongly to our administration and faculty. Although the University’s Career Development Office was available to work with business students, many undergraduates neglected to take advantage of the programs and workshops that were offered and large numbers of students reported on their exit surveys that they actually graduated without having ever stopped by the Career Development Center. The lack of engagement in career preparation activities found among our students was mirrored by Blau, et al.’s (2015) survey of the efficacy of “available but not mandatory” campus career and professional development activities: such a large number of students selected the ‘did not use’ response, that the researchers indicated that this needed to be taken into account when interpreting their findings. More work clearly needs to be done to engage students in career preparation and the faculty recognized that our students needed more than just programs; they needed a shift in their core understandings about work. It seemed urgent to change the undergraduate culture of the business school so that every student would be actively engaged with their own professional development. To do this ultimately required establishing a progressive series of required courses and experiential opportunities.

**Overview of Brennan’s Context & Experience**

Dominican University is a private Catholic institution, founded by the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters in 1901. It is located ten miles west of Chicago and enrolls approximately 2,300 undergraduates and 1,200 graduate students. The Brennan School of Business is one of four schools in university with approximately 350 undergraduates and 250 graduate students and is accredited by AACSB. Undergraduate majors are offered in accounting, economics, finance, international business, management, and marketing. As noted earlier, the majority (~60%) of our undergraduates are the first in their families to attend college and in recent years, the university has become a Hispanic-serving institution (>50%).

Within the Brennan School of Business, efforts to equip students with lifelong career management skills have always been made, but not until Fall 2014 did the school begin a concerted, systematic, multi-pronged approach to increase career-readiness among our students. In January 2013, a University-wide task force had been assembled and their subsequent report clearly elucidated major gaps in all students’ career preparation during their four years in college. During the next academic year 2014-15, the business school was asked to pilot a “Bridge to Career” initiative which is referred to as Phase I. This phase involved hiring a part-time external consultant, offering a single two-credit hour career course, and increasing the number of career building opportunities. In Phase II, during the 2015-16 academic year, the faculty increased their own involvement adding integrated career-readiness assignments and activities (e.g., guest speakers, informational interviews, etc.) across the curriculum. For the 2016-17 academic year, the business school reallocated funding that allowed the hiring of a full time career development professional and four “Executives-in-Residence” to support and mentor student engagement by offering practical career counseling. A revamped curriculum was developed which included four one-credit courses scheduled from freshman to senior year with a required internship during the junior year. This effort required a redesign of all undergraduate majors, something that was not feasible during Phase I or II due to accreditation efforts and leadership transitions. This final phase, Phase III, continues many practices from Phase I and II, but importantly the required four course career development sequence and the required internship make career-readiness development an integral part of every business student’s undergraduate curriculum.

**Career Development Framework**

When initially asked in the Spring of 2013 to consider the introduction of a career development program for Brennan undergraduates, the faculty response was remarkably enthusiastic given their unwavering commitment to teaching business fundamentals. They recognized that undergraduate students were frequently choosing their majors with only a limited understanding of the distinct differences in these disciplines and with almost no understanding of divergent career paths which would subsequently be open to them. Faculty members were further concerned about the students’ general lack of knowledge of labor markets as well as their limited skills in career planning and job search.

Faculty from different business disciplines volunteered to serve on a committee to consider what should be included in a comprehensive career development program and how the program should be implemented. The Venn diagram, Figure 1, depicts the framework we developed based on those ongoing conversations. This framework was consistently used to help focus the types of knowledge, competencies and skills to be incorporated in each Phase.

*Figure 1: Career Management Curricular Component*



***Self-Awareness.*** An individual's personality traits (e.g., sociability, conscientiousness, self-confidence, and flexibility), values, attitudes, and strengths all influence a person’s fit with any given career. Opportunities for students to increase their self-awareness can help them discern their interests and preferences. Self-awareness can further help students find congruence between who they think they are and what types of careers might work for them. Self-awareness includes developing the emotional intelligence necessary to build the strategic and personal relationships that may lead to future opportunities.

***Employability competencies.*** Employability competencies include such fundamental understandings as appropriate language and dress but also more nuanced capacities such as learning how to navigate and advance in a politically charged work environment or understanding how long to stay in a given position. Workplace competencies such as recognizing the importance of mentorship, learning how to prepare for and participate in meetings, and understanding how to negotiate a pay increase or additional benefits are all competencies that can be taught and learned.

***Career Search Skills.*** Not only learning but then executing the multiple tasks and processes involved in identifying, applying for and securing employment is essential if students are to develop confidence in their career development abilities. This is the stage when students finally differentiate their search from the standard advice they have received and this requires them to integrate all the other skills that have been acquired such as awareness of values, information about labor markets, understanding of job preferences, and awareness of their specific expertise. Solid search skills enable students to more effectively identify employment opportunities, successfully network, prepare solid and unique resumes, interview confidently, and even balance multiple internship or job offers.

***Industry Knowledge.*** Students need to gain an understanding of both the functional opportunities in their field and the types of industries and organizations that they might find of interest. Through this understanding, students are able then to envision themselves in some roles, and just as importantly, not in others. Students must develop a general understanding of job demand and industry outlook and a more specific recognition of job tasks, potential salaries and divergent work environments.

***Discipline Mastery.*** As students progress in their academic majors, they need to gain an increased understanding of how their preferred areas of expertise influence their interest in certain types of work and better estimate their suitability for different types of employment. Discipline mastery also includes having the confidence and language to effectively convey their pertinent knowledge, concrete aptitudes, and job-specific skills to potential employers.

The faculty believed that, in combination, mastering these five distinct but thoroughly interrelated competencies would enable students to develop the capacities needed to become “career-ready.” The faculty recognized that developing these lifelong career management skills was a fundamental goal which could not be learned during a single semester, and a progressive multi-year program developed as the school moved through the Phases described below.

**Phase I: Career Development Elective Course & Outreach Job Development Consultant**

As the start of the academic year 2014-15 approached, it quickly became clear that it was not feasible to implement all the varied experiential learning activities, co-curricular projects and topical areas that the faculty were proposing but it was agreed that there were several steps which could be taken immediately. The first steps were to bring on a part-time consultant, reallocate resources to allow a current staff member to devote 25% of her time to career-related initiatives, to create a faculty career liaison position, and to schedule a credit-based elective course for the Spring semester as a pilot. A series of workshops and programs on all aspects of career development was scheduled and alumni and business professionals were recruited to help facilitate these programs. Despite the strong support of the faculty who encouraged and rewarded participation, student attendance was much less than expected since students did not have any sense of urgency or even seem to recognize the importance of beginning their career preparation. Efforts were made to develop and post additional internship and job opportunities especially for business students through outreach to alumni and the School’s Business Advisory Council but again, student response was not particularly strong. This was especially true for those students who lacked sufficient social capital and could not yet understand the value of learning job search skills or of gaining practical work experience in their field since they felt they “were not yet graduating.” A small number of excellent students who already knew the importance of career preparation did benefit from these extra efforts Brennan was making but these were students who would have most likely been successful on their own. It quickly became clear that a culture change was needed among the Brennan business students before they would begin to believe that they needed to take advantage of voluntary career programming, complete paid or unpaid internships and begin thinking about their life after college while they were still underclassmen.

As the pilot career development course for spring was being planned, faculty emphasized that this class, though not required for the major, should be considered just as important as any other course in the core curriculum and they wanted to be sure that its quality and rigor was consistent with other business classes. They also articulated that the course needed to teach career management skills that would last across students’ professional careers so that they would be educated on how to navigate the many transitions that they would face in their working lives. Finally, the faculty were determined that the course should help students understand their own individual values and attitudes so that they would not be unduly influenced by external factors such as salary considerations or pressures from peers or families in distinguishing which career path would bring them long term satisfaction.

This phase required limited structural and curricular change since the two credit hour course did not require university-wide approval. The main cost was the instructor’s salary and the time devoted to the course design. During this phase, the administration had dedicated 25% of a staff member’s time to work together with the course instructor and the faculty liaison on career-related initiatives. This staff member ended up spending far more than 10 hours per week on this work and her efforts laid a solid foundation for the work in Phase II.

The initiatives implemented Phase I were of value to students but even more importantly, they illustrated what more needed to be done to have an effective career development program. It became immediately clear that a fifteen-week, single semester course was not sufficient time to impart the knowledge, skills and aptitudes essential to help students develop career-ready graduates. Too much was being undertaken in too short a time. It also became obvious that whatever programs or opportunities were designed and offered needed to be required for all students. As noted earlier, many business students reported on their exit surveys that they graduated without ever having stopped by the Office of Career Development. Many students also reported that they could not take advantage of the voluntary career development programs and workshops because they were working a large number of hours, sometimes at two different jobs to help pay tuition. It seemed that the activities and programs offered were not meeting the needs of these first generation students who were more likely to be working significant hours and simply too busy to take advantage of elective and co-curricular opportunities. First generation family members are less likely to hold professional jobs and as a consequence, these students typically had more to gain from learning about careers and professional job searches but less time to commit to this. In addition, while the career course was a success for the twenty students enrolled, this elective course only fit into a limited number of students’ schedules. Indeed, no transfer students enrolled in this course due to their focus on completing their major course requirements. It became clear that an elective courses and voluntary career development programs did increase the cultural capital and social capital gap between students with high and low economic capital simply because they did not become involved in these offerings. For a progressive Catholic university, social justice is a core value and this was not acceptable to the faculty or administration.

**Phase II: Curriculum Embedded and Co-Curricular Initiatives**

The faculty quickly developed a new option: inserting career development content and activities into the many required classes in the business curriculum. This approach would help students to recognize how important these skills were and how committed their faculty were to enhancing students’ career development skills. It would also enable students to gain career competencies progressively through their four years of study, so that the learning and understanding could be internalized, integrated, and reinforced from semester to semester as they matured and developed an increased understanding of their strengths and interests.

The process of developing this cross-curriculum career initiative was a joint effort of faculty, administrators and students. The first step was to invite a tenured professor who had already been heavily engaged in helping to develop the career course to serve as the Faculty Coordinator. She and the administrative staff member who handled Career Development efforts in the business school worked together to recruit and organize faculty involvement in the project. Within several months, faculty teaching twelve different required courses had agreed to expand their classes to include career development content, assignments and activities.

Faculty were also encouraged to establish closer connections with recent graduates, established alumni or business professionals, drawing from their industry connections. The goal was to have more guest lecturers and more opportunities for students to hear first-hand testimonials about the process of establishing successful careers. In actuality, two or three faculty members were already doing this on a regular basis and so the school was able to capitalize on their work and invite all students to attend those sessions. Career development reports were made a regular part of every faculty meeting so that all faculty members remained informed and aware of the program and the positive results being generated. Finally, faculty redesigned a 200-level Human Resources Management class (renamed Human Resources and Career Development) to include significantly more time on career development. This course was required for all management majors and occasionally taken by students in other majors. This adaptation meant that many more business school students benefited from earlier exposure to career management activities.

Several faculty also recognized that it was essential to involve students in the planning and execution of any proposed career development programs, and they were invited to work with faculty and administrators in planning a C-Suite Speakers’ series, alumni career panels and alumni and student networking events. The officers of the “Young Professionals” club and the honor society, Beta Gamma Sigma, helped to promote attendance at events and encouraged students to sign up for internship newsletters that were distributed digitally. A small Student Career Advisory Board was created and these students met with representatives from the business school’s Advisory Council to discuss strategies for ongoing programs to support students’ career development such as job shadowing and informational interviews. Every effort was made to work with staff from the offices of Alumni Affairs and Career Services and both were tremendously helpful in co-sponsoring programs as well as suggesting speakers.

As a result of strong faculty interest, commitment and collaboration, these career-readiness concepts and activities were woven across the curriculum through assignments and activities strategically placed within courses required for all majors. These assignments were designed to support students’ long term career success throughout their four years of study as part of the curriculum. This Phase II approach turned out to be highly effective because unlike the original career course, students were benefitting from the perspectives and approaches of many different faculty members as they each presented different career preparation information and assignments. Combined, all the learning activities supported the five elements of career learning that faculty had originally identified.

***Self-Awareness.*** Beginning in freshman year, efforts were made to help students better understand their values and motivations so they could develop a greater degree of self-knowledge. An early assignment in the first year Accounting class required students to conduct an informational interview with an alumnus and write a short paper that reflected what they learned about the complex notion of a “successful career.” In their sophomore year, students were required to take the Strong Interest Inventory and the *CareerLeader College* Assessment to get objective feedback on their preferences and interests. During their junior year, in Business Ethics, they completed a Life Values Inventory before preparing a “Values and Vocation” report describing three entry level positions that were consistent with their values. In their senior year, in the Leadership course, they completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and then used the results in classroom exercises. As seniors, while completing the capstone class, Business Policies, students were asked to report on their career goals with the aim of having them recognize and accept their personal responsibility for managing their careers.

***Industry Knowledge.*** Although students who selected a major in the business disciplines usually had some understanding of career possibilities, they rarely had specific knowledge of industries, job functions and likely career progression. During their freshman Economics classes, students were asked to participate in a Career Readiness Workshop sponsored by the Office of Career Development and attend an Alumni Panel Discussion where recent alumni described their own career journeys. They then submitted reflective essays on the workshop and on the panel. In Business Law, students were expected to prepare a research report on a lawsuit in their chosen industry. In the sophomore level statistics course, they submitted a research report, using library resources such as the government’s *Occupational Outlook Handbook* to report descriptive statistics that described their chosen industry. Additionally in statistics, they were expected to prepare an Excel spreadsheet analyzing variables of salary, demand, growth projections, etc. for certain types of employment. In the Management course, usually completed during the junior year, students were required to turn in weekly current business event analyses using top business newspapers and periodicals as their resources so that they gained more familiarity with specific companies and current business activities. In the senior year Leadership course, student were required to write up critiques of each of the six alumni guest lectures presented in class, commenting on the alumni’s industry, job function and professional development strategies.

***Career Search Skills.***During the informational interview completed in their first year, students in the Accounting class were expected to gain not only industry knowledge but an awareness of how they needed to present themselves as prospective professionals. They were introduced to LinkedIn during their sophomore Marketing class and assisted in developing a credible online profile. They were also asked to formulate a personal brand statement and develop an “elevator speech” which they presented in class to practice their public speaking skills and to encourage peer-to-peer learning. Requiring students in Human Resources & Career Development course to attend the Etiquette Banquet during their sophomore year enabled them to gain concrete understanding professional demeanor in terms of appearance, language and etiquette, and its importance. During their third year in Management, students were given close supervision and direction as they prepared a draft and then a final resume and cover letter. This process required the integration of their self-knowledge and information about careers and labor markets so they could actually begin the hard task of locating and securing professional work through a student internship. During the junior year, students in Finance were expected to attend the C-Suite Lectures, Career Workshops and fall and spring Career Fairs and write an assessment of what they had learned. The importance of learning how to interview effectively also became much more tangible to students when they felt challenged to respond effectively during a job fair. In their senior year, the students were required to update their LinkedIn profile and include a professional headshot, which students were able to get free of charge at a networking event.

***Discipline Mastery.*** During their junior and senior years, students needed to forge a connection between the theoretical concepts that they have learned in their academic program and their practical application to the world of work. This was begun when they were required to prepare a resume and cover letter that showed the relevance of their curricular and co-curricular experiences. It also happened when they attended Career Fairs and tried to create a distinctive image of professional competence that was attractive to employers and distinguished them from their peers. In the Leadership class, during their senior year, students were invited to select someone from the Alumni Career Network and then arrange, schedule, conduct and report to class on their second informational interview. In this presentation, students were required to demonstrate how they effectively conveyed both their knowledge of their discipline and their strong potential as a prospective employee. This assignment challenged students to assess how best to present their “book knowledge” and show its relevance to the alumni with whom they were interviewing.

***Employability Competencies.*** In their freshman year, students were asked to complete a mock interview discussing hiring and promotion practices and throughout the next three years, they were given abundant opportunities to practice their public speaking skills, developing an “elevator speech, presenting their preferred career choice to their classmates, attending a career fair and conducting informational interviews. They were exposed to potential role models during the C-Suite Lecture Series and the alumni panels and better understood the importance of projecting a professional image by developing a LinkedIn profile, resume, and cover letter, as well as, attending an Etiquette banquet.

The embedded curriculum model seemed to work fairly well. A significant upside to this type of approach was the ability for the faculty to implement these changes with few additional resources and limited institutional support. Having just 25% of a business school staff member was efficient (as well as effective) because of her familiarity with recent alumni, the curriculum, and the faculty.

The most important upside was that students began to see that their professors, across disciplines and at every level, were intent on having them improve their career development skills. The students also started to understand that while completing their academic preparation and earning a degree were essential priorities, one of their ultimate goals should be securing a satisfying professional position in the field of their choice, and that college was the time to develop the skills and abilities that would enable them to achieve that goal. The Brennan faculty also perceived that gradually, they were beginning to change students’ own expectations for themselves and facilitate the development of a more future-focused student culture.

Although this course-embedded and co-curricular career development model was successful in some ways, it was not achieving all the goals that the faculty had. Since multiple sections of business classes were taught by both part time and adjunct faculty, the emphasis on career development assignments was uneven. Some faculty did not feel that they had enough room in their courses to include the supplemental career assignments and others did not attach meaningful credit for the assignments so student effort and hence, achievement was limited. It also became clear that the transfer students were not gaining the benefit of the early assignments, activities and programs expected of the four year students and so the effectiveness of the career programs they were exposed to as juniors and seniors seemed somewhat limited. Faculty also recognized that some students were not getting the degree of career guidance and direction that they needed, but which most felt was beyond their own degree of expertise. Further, the administrative staff member assisting with career development activities and programs was challenged to keep up with and support this level of work. Everyone agreed that more was needed if Brennan were to achieve its ambitious goal of graduating career-ready students.

**Phase III: An Integrated Career Development Program**

A small Career Task Force was established which included the Faculty Coordinator, the Administrative staff member and an Adjunct Faculty member working with the support of the dean. They first evaluated what had been accomplished and then documented what else was needed, taking the time to examine career development programs at several peer and aspirant business schools. After much discussion and careful consideration of budgetary resources, they developed a proposal that was first presented to the dean and then to the entire faculty.

Like Brennan’s earlier initiatives, the proposal called for both curricular and co-curricular programs to educate and prepare students for careers across their four year college experience. The approved curricular program includes a series of required, credit based courses to be offered each year. Each year included opportunities to improve public speaking and interview skills. The focus of the freshman course would be on how to manage one’s college career and build knowledge of potential careers. The sophomore course would center on strengthening students’ presentation of self – both written and in person – and learning how to actively find and apply for internships. The junior year course would focus on improving one’s job search skills as well as how to make the most of an internship, which is required as part of the third year core curriculum. The senior year would focus on transitioning from being a student to being a professional; content ranges from dealing with difficult co-workers, seeking feedback, to understanding one’s salary and benefits. These classes were to be designed and taught by full time and adjunct faculty with the support of administrative staff.

The co-curricular programming would remain comprehensive, calling for students to complete non-credit based activities and programs during each of their four years, but these were now required rather than optional. A key aspect of the co-curricular programming was the idea of assigning every student a career advisor, not just a faculty academic advisor, who would serve as a mentor throughout the student's college years. To implement this broad-based mentoring program, the proposal called for increased staffing, including the recruitment of one full time career development professional, the hiring of four “Executives-in-Residence” (EIRs) who would serve as mentors and career advisors. The EIRs would also serve as the primary pool of adjunct faculty to teach the four career development courses.

The faculty unanimously approved this proposal and the next academic year was spent refining and developing the academic and co-curricular programs, allocating needed budgetary resources, hiring the additional personnel and securing the internal university approvals required for the addition of the four one credit hour courses and the required internship to the curriculum. Some of the activities and programs that were included in required courses (e.g., informational interviewing, resume writing) in Phase II were relocated into the one credit hour career development courses; others, particularly those focused on industry and disciplinary knowledge, remain within the broader curriculum.

***Gaining Self Awareness.*** The one credit career development course required for freshman is only offered in the Spring to allow students to first acclimate to college. That curriculum requires students to use the results from the Gallup’s Clifton Strengths Finder assessment in an effort to gain increased self-knowledge. Their strengths profile is also used in the sophomore year to help craft students’ resumes, cover letters and LinkedIn profiles. They practice answering interview questions in ways that emphasize their specific strengths, experiences, and accomplishments.

The majority of Brennan students have considerable work experience. During the freshman and sophomore year courses, students are encouraged to capitalize on their existing employer relationships and ask that a percentage of their work hours be assigned in another functional area (e.g., inventory, billing, HR, or purchasing) so that they gain additional exposure to the business functions and broader experience. All students, employed or not, are asked to reflect on ways they can take advantage of new opportunities and experience new roles. The model presented to students is one of “prototyping” their careers by trying out many possible “designs.” The required junior year internship allows them to see themselves in a professional setting well before their graduation date and, most importantly for many first generation students, to raise their aspirations.

Students are also expected to become involved in student clubs and organizations and participate in either community service programs or other volunteer activities with the goal of understanding where their strengths and interests lie. Throughout the courses, students are asked to write and reflect on these co-curricular experiences to analyze their attitudes and values, their ability to interact with others and to assume responsibility for projects and activities. During their senior year course, time is spent on improving cultural competency and helping students learn to prepare for cross-cultural experiences.

***Industry Knowledge.*** During the first year career course, students are required to complete an informational interview selecting a business professional from among Brennan’s alumni or Business Advisory Council members. Students are still given a number of industry research assignments in their business courses which expand their industry knowledge and understanding. During the third year course, students’ knowledge of different job functions and industries is also further developed by completing the *CareerLeader College* assessment which identifies not only students own interests and preferences but provides abundant information about the nature of different employment opportunities. Attendance at the C-Suite Lecture Series and the annual Leadership and Ethics Lecture is now required of all students, with the goal of exposing students to a variety of business professionals who have all successfully pursued different career paths, ranging from entrepreneurs to corporate executives.

***Career Search Skills.*** In the second year, the career development course concentrates on helping students develop the ability to conduct a successful internship search. They begin by updating their resume, preparing a cover letter, and creating a LinkedIn Profile resume, specifically designed for a specific position that interests them. The co-curricular events assist students in developing networking skills and exploiting those networks to conduct a comprehensive internship search. They are individually coached on career possibilities, gaps in their resume, and how best to present their academic qualifications. Each course includes an opportunity to improve public speaking and interview skills. In the freshman and sophomore year courses, the basics of interviewing and appropriate dress are covered. During junior and senior year courses students have many in-class opportunities to refine their public speaking and improve how they interview. During their junior year, students are required to attend an etiquette dinner to help understand the expectations of social engagements in a professional setting.

***Discipline Mastery.*** While completing the coursework for their academic major, students develop progressive knowledge of and understanding of their chosen field but are given additional help in translating that knowledge into practical terms to support their internship and full time job searches. During their junior and senior years, students are required to participate in a job fair to interact with hiring professionals while explaining the types of skills and abilities they have developed. Students are also given explicit guidance on transitioning to the workplace during their fourth year course, so they can begin to see the connections between their academic work and their future employment options.

***Employability Competencies.*** Each of the four required career courses pay great attention to developing students’ professional writing abilities and public presentation skills. During the second year, they participate in a series of specific exercises designed to strengthen their business writing skills and are required to give class presentations in each one of the career courses. Students are also taught about negotiations and decision making strategies during the third year course, as well as personal finances during the fourth year as they get ready for their transition to their first professional roles. During the fourth year career course, students are also eligible to participate in a small business consulting project, working directly with a business owner to provide support in a specified area of the business. The fourth year course will also include readings and activities designed to prepare students to successfully negotiate their roles, responsibilities, and compensation packages.

 A major challenge for this type of comprehensive program is the commitment of resources. The faculty and administration worked together to revamp the curriculum, get it through the approval process, hire a full-time career development director as well as four Executives in Residence. Additionally, the scheduling and staffing of the four one credit hour courses required considerable administrative juggling and coordinating. Consequently, Phase III required more resources than either of the earlier phases. This phase also allowed for the teaching of career development to be primarily located in the four one credit hour courses and the modified Human Resources & Career Development course was renamed and refocused on HR strategy, policy and planning. Because of the comprehensive design of the Phase III model, those students who can most benefit from career development preparation now receive the same opportunities and benefits as those who come to college with strong networks, high socioeconomic status, and a solid understanding of the professional labor market and career management.

**Conclusion**

With the decision to introduce career development content and activities across the curriculum, the faculty recognized that higher education must respond to today’s constantly evolving, demanding and competitive workplace for college graduates. While our business majors teach the fundamental knowledge and concepts needed for our students to succeed as professionals, prior to launching this three-phase program, the faculty have worked idiosyncratically and unsystematically to prepare students with the lifelong skills needed for successful employment, having placed responsibility for that task on the University-wide Career Development staff. It is becoming more and widely recognized by many in higher education however, that this approach is not sufficient. In their paper calling for the transformation of the “college to career” experience, Chan and Derry (2013) argue that the “career services” model is antiquated and that we may fail in preparing students for life if we do not quickly change our approaches to career development. In another study that looked at the career development experiences of both current students as well as recent alumni at Harvard and Stanford, the authors described similar concerns, concluding that the campuses’ “career funneling” paradigm influencing students choices was not in either the universities’ or society’s best interests (Binder, Davis, & Bloom, 2016).

Clearly, as twenty-first century employment models have changed, so to must the long-time “matching” process that has helped transition college graduates from student to employee. The matching model is not only flawed but “a hundred years out of date” (United Kingdom Skills Commission’s 2008 Report, quoted in Bassot, 2012: 32). Rather than having students merely consider what they will do after they graduate, Bassot argues that they need consider instead “What will I do next?” as they construct multifaceted careers over their life course (Bassot, 2012). The intent of this encompassing four year, curriculum-based program is to prepare students for a lifetime of employability, not just for their first job. It teaches long-lasting skills in career management, not just job search techniques. Learning and mastering these skills will enable students to become comfortable with this new employment paradigm in which their careers will constantly shift and change over time.

The “jobless recovery” has made preparing for professional employment opportunities an even more important educational outcome for students and their parents (Christensen & Van Bever, 2014; Kolesnikova et al., 2011). Introducing a comprehensive program (i.e., Phase III) at the outset of their studies and while students can still do something to strengthen their skills and competencies will certainly help improve their long term employment potential. This approach is particularly important for those first generation students who typically do not come to campus with professional networks as strong as other students; however, the Phase II efforts to integrate career-related assignments across the curriculum was also effective in reaching students regardless of economic or social capital. The important point here is that universities are finally recognizing that this type of knowledge needs to be in the curriculum, not just left to optional programs and workshops offered by Career Development offices. When career readiness skills are not only taught but learned and practiced over time, students will graduate with the essential skills needed to navigate the many career changes they will likely experience throughout their professional lives.

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