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# Assessing Career Planning Courses without using test scores: another neglected issue?

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## Recommended Citation

**Assessing Career Planning Courses without using test scores: another neglected issue?**

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*Abstract*

*Twenty years ago, in an article entitled "Assigning Grades in Career Planning Courses: A Neglected issue"[1], Rex Filer posed several important questions in terms of the practicalities of how we design and grade career planning courses. The challenge, he suggested, is that while teaching pedagogy often relies on Bloom's traditional taxonomy where information and understanding act as an 'anchor' while synthesis and evaluation are goals achieved later, career course activities are naturally geared to the top of the pyramid – regardless of when the class is taught. This, he argues, poses particular issues in terms of career course objectives and outcomes.*

*Even a cursory examination of the literature on career course assessment may offer some insight as to why Filer's individual instructor/student level concerns have been 'neglected': most of the mainstream work in this area is based on various types of exams or pre and post test scores. One of the most common tools, the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) based on Cognitive Information Processing Theory, helps researchers determine 'dysfunctional thinking' in career problems and identify issues for specific populations as well as general 'progress' made in the course.*

*While such tools are invaluable and have provided many crucial insights in terms of the value and impact of career courses, the suggestion here is that, for smaller schools and programs, there is a largely unmet need to discuss grading systems used for career courses and the assessment of career education at any given institution.*

*This paper will examine the course design and assessment process, including specific rubrics and tools, used by an interdisciplinary program at our small liberal arts school in a remote, rural California campus of Humboldt State University (HSU). The goal, with Filer, will be to address (another) neglected issue of how we go about creating career development interventions, design specific courses, and assess career education at the level of the individual student, instructor/course and program.*

**Introduction**

While much of the scholarly research on career courses focuses on academic, credit bearing (often three unit) courses, for many universities and most faculty, these specialized courses do not exist. Career education is generally left to the campus career, service learning or internship office(s) - if the campus has them - and the faculty willing to incorporate basic career tools into their classrooms or programs, with or without the involvement of the career staff. However, as student populations change and request more support in this area, and as state and national policy makers begin to question the 'value' of higher education as determined by the 'employability' of the students it produces, campuses are beginning to reexamine their career education offering and to explore different models of intervention.

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[1] Filer, Rex (1986) "Assigning Grades in Career Planning Courses: A Neglected issue". *The Career Development Quarterly*. December. Vol 35. pp. 141-147.

HSU, the northernmost campus of the California State system, has been undergoing this process over the past five years and expects to continue this work in various forms for the foreseeable future. HSU's Academic and Career Advising Center effectively began the process with an inventory of existing activities and an examination of the various models of career intervention currently in use with a view to finding which of those were suited to the HSU campus and developing new tools. While the common 'user activated' services were effectively a given, we also began to explore other ways to involve faculty and to more effectively use majors and programs as a means to help students connect academic content with career planning. Thus, while scholars such as Bertoch, Lenz, Reardon and Peterson define career education as a specific course or "a comprehensive college course taken for regular academic credit with learning objectives, criterion-reference mastery performances, a textbook and letter grades (A-F) connoting level of attainment"[2] this seemed too limited for our purposes. HSU embraces a more holistic approach that places career development within a framework that includes self-awareness as part of critical thinking and a commitment to lifelong learning. While we recognize that career courses are generally deemed to be the 'best' type of intervention (Spokane and Oliver, 1983; Johnson and Smouse, 1993; Reed, Reardon, Lenz and Leierer; 2001 and Folsom and Reardon, 2003) and concur with the general assertion and that "career guidance classes produced the largest effect size with regard to client gains resulting from the assortment of career interventions considered,"[3] these courses often only reach student who select them as an elective and a the large scale shift of priorities and funding required for these types of initiatives did not seem feasible on the HSU campus for some time. Although it is hoped that, following these authors[4], HSU may be able to consider career education and planning in the context of a new First Year Experience - currently under consideration on campus - and that this new model would add also discipline-specific curriculum and the benefits we believe that would bring.

Over the past five years, we have developed what we see as a pyramid of career intervention that includes five levels of engagement from students and faculty. The hope is that by scaffolding our efforts this way, we will enable everyone to avail themselves of different services and support. The pyramid also broadly aligns with the levels of cognitive information processing (CIP) theory often used in this field.
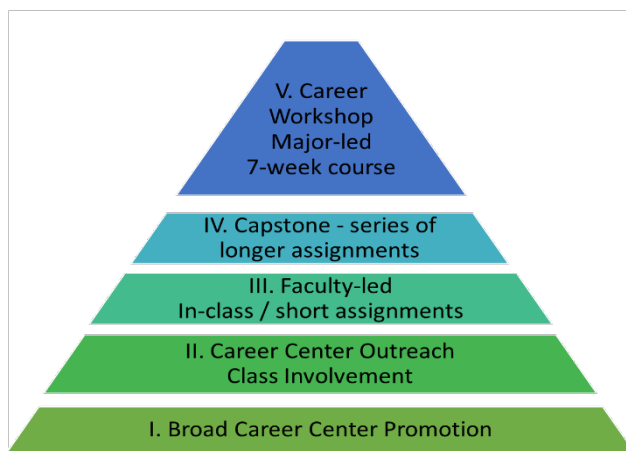


**HSU's Five-Level Pyramid of Career Intervention = Scaffolding**

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[2] Bertoch, Sara C., Janet G Lenz, Robert C Reardon and Gary W Peterson (2014) "Goal Instability in Relation to Career Thoughts, Decisions State and Performance in a Career Course". *Journal of Career Development.* Vol 41 (20). p. 108.

[3] Folsom, Byron and Robert Reardon (2003) "College Career Courses: Design and Accountability". *Journal of Career Assessment*. November. Vol 11 (4). pp. 425-426.

[4] Folsom, Byron, Gary Peterson, Robert Reardon, Barbara Mann (2004-2005) "Impact of a Career Planning Course on Academic Performance and Graduation Rate" *Journal of College Student Retention.* Vol 6 (4). pp. 462.

Looking at the CIP pyramid, the base or two bottom levels represent what is known as the knowledge domain which, in the case of career education, includes a sense of self-knowledge as well as occupational information.[5] For HSU, these two levels focus on the broadest promotion of career services as a basic student resource and, ideally, some inclusion of career questions in the classroom context. At the foundational level, materials and resources are provided in the career office and online. Anyone on campus can access drop-in sessions, one-to-one advising, resume assistance, and mock interview practice.  The second level involves more 'outreach' in that career staff go out into classrooms or the library to offer basic skill sessions both in terms of materials and opportunities that are available on campus and beyond, but still focusing on basic knowledge and information/search skills.

The middle levels of the CIP pyramid focus on the decision-making domain which includes "generic information processing skills essential in gathering and using information to solve problems and to make decisions" and includes five phases for recognizing any gap that might occur "between one's current situation and one's desired situation".[6] The five phase are: "Communication (receiving internal or external signals of a gap between one's current and desired situations); Analysis (interrelating problem components); Synthesis (generating alternatives); Valuing (prioritizing options or alternatives); and Execution (forming an action plan to close the gap)."[7]

These also roughly correspond to HSU's pyramid in that the third and fourth levels of our career intervention effort require more faculty input and more class time/ lesson planning based on major/disciplinary content as well as more work on the part of the student to make the necessary connections. Indeed, the fourth level includes the relatively common way to include career education in many majors and programs through a senior capstone or senior seminar type environment – despite this being far too late for most students. However, these levels do help students identify the gap that exists between their current situation and their desired goals, often by using exercises that work them through these five phases.

The top of the CIP pyramid is the "executive processing domain which related to metacognition, such as self-talk, self-awareness, and control and monitoring that govern the choosing and sequencing of cognitive strategies used to make career decisions"[8] and correlates to HSU's concept of the specific career course. This one-unit, credit-bearing course is still, unfortunately, generally an elective and only offered in a very limited number of majors.

In many ways, HSU provides a clear example of what Reed, Reardon, Lenz and Leierer have rightly recognized, "Some interventions are unstructured, and some are highly controlled; some are based on a single integrating theory and other are atheoretical; and output and outcome measures are sometimes not clearly linked to the treatment interventions."[9] HSU recognizes that our activities cover this entire range and no doubt confuses outputs with outcomes from time to time. However, we do not believe we are unusual in this regard in that few campuses could claim to be single minded about any single initiative or entirely consistent in the pursuit of every aspiration. We have therefore sought to make a virtue of necessity by continuing to pursue the specialized career course option, while at the same time attempting to 'scaffold' career education across the university and offering as many types of

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[5] Reed, Corey A, Robert Reardon, Janet G Lenz, Stephen J Leierer (2001) "A Cognitive Career Course: From Theory to Practice". *The Career Development Quarterly*. December. Vol 50. pp. 159-160.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] *Ibid.*

intervention as possible in the expectation that this will be done with more intention and therefore be more productive in terms of addressing student needs.

Therefore, to extend the usefulness of this initial work, the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) at HSU has created a Career Curriculum Committee. This committee, in turn, created a working website as a repository of beginning, intermediate and advanced 'modules' of career exercises and tools for faculty wishing to include this material in their classroom.[10] Finally, and given this is an organic process, we have made this a place where others can contribute their own ideas and best practice so we can continue to build on our pyramid of skills and offerings.

**Outputs and Outcomes: change one student at a time**
Following the categories defined by Peterson and Burck (1982), authors Folsom, Peterson, Reardon and Mann (2004-2005) structure the diversity of career education and career planning courses available into two categories: outputs and outcomes. They define these categories very simply, but they help to create and support a frame for career interventions that is both instructive and practical in terms of planning at the institutional level. "Outputs allude to the immediate effects of taking a course related to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes."[11] Thus, examples of the outputs from any type of career planning course may include: a) self-knowledge that comes from clarifying interests, abilities and values; b) being able to use a library to acquire educational or occupational information; c) the gaining of what these authors call "career problem-solving skills;" and finally, d) the development of greater overall self-confidence and the sense that a chosen life or career goal is attainable. These are relatively straightforward in that they form a baseline of traits and skills needed for career planning. As such, outputs are the core of any career planning course. Conversely, what the authors identify as "outcomes" are "the more distal or indirect effects on career choice and career planning such as shorter time to graduation, higher levels of academic performance, higher rates of retention, the increased use of career-related internships to acquire job skills, and fewer credit hours taken to earn a degree."[12]

Many scholarly studies focus on the outcomes side of the equation and the fact that graduation rates, fewer credit hours, etc. are significantly improved when students take such courses (Folsom, Reardon, Mann 2002) - and for good reason. These are the metrics by which universities are assessed and the milestones by which the progress of courses and programs are measured. However, for the average faculty member, or even a department chair or program leader, outputs are the fundamental building blocks for the basic reason that outputs are within their power to control and change.

Outcomes, on the other hand, are generally tracked at the college and even the university level. Of course, retention rates will be affected by the conversation a faculty member has with a student in their office when the student is faced with the heart wrenching decision to go home and support their family vs stay in school, or when dealing with a student who has real terror in their eyes as they consider life after college without prospects. However, outcomes are effectively the long-term unit of analysis while outputs are the practical assignments you can put in every class, the foundation of the design and implementation of a career planning course, and the road map by which students will find a way to change their lives. Therefore, rather than recount the findings of the higher level/outcomes oriented studies, drawing out key facts about planning career courses provides a basis for discussions going on at the level of programs and majors – or even colleges and entire universities. Four points stand out as

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[10] HSU Academic and Career Advising Center. http://www2.humboldt.edu/acac/curriculum
[11] Folsom, Byron, Gary Peterson, Robert Reardon, Barbara Mann (2004-2005) "Impact of a Career Planning Course on Academic Performance and Graduation Rate" *Journal of College Student Retention.* Vol 6 (4). p. 463.
[12] *Ibid.*

crucial observations for any interested staff or faculty member who wants to support departmental/staff efforts in this area:

1) Career courses improve outputs *significantly* (as well as positively influence outcomes) almost regardless of the variability found in such courses in terms of structure (Folsom, Peterson, Reardon & Mann, 2004-2005 and Folsom & Reardon, 2003);
2) Career courses are more effective than any other intervention including: individual or group counseling, short workshops, group test interpretation, computer interventions, or exploration without career counseling (Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff, 1998);
3) The 6-week/1-unit career course (not just the longer courses with 3 units attached) does have a positive effect on 'dysfunctional career thinking' or a view of oneself that "inhibits career problem solving and decision making" (Osborn, Howard, Leierer, 2007);
4) Career courses have the most impact on freshmen, but outputs are improved across the board *irrespective of a student's gender, race or ethnicity* (Osborn, Howard, Leierer, 2007);

The conclusions from a range of research show that a variety of interventions can support students throughout their time in college and should therefore be considered as the core offering, but the career planning course has a significant value. A clear and consciously designed career planning course can help set students on a positive path – not only after college but during their time on campus. We have the ability, even without the benefit of pre and post testing, to design and to create output that not only paves the road to positive outcomes, but that serve to connect a student to their college experience in an entirely different way and one that will benefit them in both the short and the long term.

**Class Design**
For faculty and staff seeking to focus on the classroom level, a meta-analysis conducted by Brown and Krane (2000) is useful as a starting point in that it concluded that the "demonstrably effective career interventions" have five key elements and further that, every course should include at least three of these elements. Courses should:

1) Allow students to work on clarifying their own career – and life – goals in writing;
2) Offer individual feedback and comment;
3) Provide up to date information on the costs/benefits as well as risks and prerequisites of any job or field;
4) Include the study of individuals already in the field as models and mentors;
5) Assist in developing support and networks that will help them pursue any given career.[13]

From the broadest to the most to the most specific, Rex Filer, mentioned at the outset, discusses the very practical issues involved in designing a career course. As he points out, the grading system for any course needs to be planned carefully as it can be perceived negatively by the students and even a pass-no pass system is not without challenges (Filer, 1986).

Given the point that career courses often focus on the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy, Filer poses the basic question of "What then does an "A" in a career planning course communicate: does it indicate that the person is an expert in choosing a career? Does it mean that the student has chosen a major?"[14]

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[13] Folsom, Byron and Robert Reardon (2003) "College Career Courses: Design and Accountability". *Journal of Career Assessment*. November. Vol 11 (4). p. 426.

[14] Filer, Rex (1986) "Assigning Grades in Career Planning Courses: A Neglected issue". The Career Development Quarterly. December. Vol 35. p 141.

Filer's answer is simply that, compared to other academic courses, the career course is unique in that 'grading' self-exploration or information about career options seems untenable – but how then should we build such classes and how do we determine grades or offer credit?

The variety of understandings as to the basic objectives of career counseling are helpful in this context as they can usefully guide discussion as to what is the desired outcome for such a course as well as offer options in terms of the possible range of activities or outputs. Many of the goals identified in career courses focus on helping the individual "learn how to make a series of career related choices wisely and confidently."[15] Alternatively, a more psychological approach based more on the pre- post-test methodology looks at the way such a course can help an individual "develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture" of their "role in the world of work." Generally, most of the objectives used for career planning courses fall into two broad categories, whatever their theoretical orientation. They either seek to "aid individuals in determining special personal and life goals" (Powell & Kirts 1980) or, as Haney and Howland (1978) found, "84% of the courses offered for credit emphasize their role in 'assisting students as they develop a self-awareness in terms of their abilities, interests, needs and lifestyle.'"[16]

Thus, the literature seems to confirm that, when looking at actual courses, the emphasis is on the development of life goals and self-knowledge gained by applying evaluative standards to interests and aspirations. Returning to the pyramid, such courses are clearly focused on Bloom's highest level of evaluation and judgement. From the planning perspective, outputs are at the center of attention while outcomes become the consequence of the activity, not the goal in itself. HSU's faculty and staff primarily share this attitude in terms of what career planning courses are and should be about, but also concur with Filer that linking grades to values and self-assessment is difficult.

Filer offers some methods that have been tried and tested including a point system for completing a resume, an autobiography and some short papers as well as giving points for attendance. Alternatively, instructors have found it useful to create 'contracts' with students based on a long list of activities provided by the instructor which the students choose on the basis of their own interests and needs and then agrees to complete.

Filer emphasizes the need for a non-judgmental atmosphere and also encourages instructors to approach grading as a learning opportunity and one that reflects the 'real world' work environment in that it requires self-management and reflects the duties of the job itself and suggests this might be a 40/60 split between things like attendance and assignments completed – including the opportunity to repeat work if needed – as in the workplace.

At HSU, there are no three-unit career courses and, we have no formal first year experience/career connection – though this is currently under review. In the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, while a number of majors included career planning in their senior capstone or senior seminar and a two have an internship option that also includes some career preparation, only three have a specific career workshop. These were all designed by faculty with career staff support and are being taught and maintained by individual departments. They are all seven-week, one-unit courses in Sociology (required as part of their internship requirement), History (and optional class and part of a number of 1 unit classes available in the major) and International Studies (started as an optional class

[15] Kinnier, R.T. and Krumboltz, J.D. (1984) "Procedures for Successful Career Counseling." In N. Gysbers (Ed.) Designing Careers: Counseling to Enhance Education, Work and Leisure. p. 307.

[16] Filer, Rex (1986) "Assigning Grades in Career Planning Courses: A Neglected issue". *The Career Development Quarterly*. December. Vol 35. p 142.

but as of 2017 will become a required core course). These are all taught credit/no credit and focus primarily on career outputs. Using International Studies as the example here, the trajectory of the course is relatively straightforward and the objectives of the course closely follow those already outlined in terms of self-exploration, research of the field and specific jobs, and preparation for the search process. This is presented as four discrete areas and each area has a range of exercises to support them. Although Vernick, Reardon and Sampson suggest there is some evidence to support the idea that such courses might be even more effective if they met more than once a week (2004), there is something to be said for the flexibility of this working agenda in that it can and has been shortened and lengthened to accommodate different time scales and thus perhaps accommodate a range of programs. Currently, HSU has experimented not only with doing this as a typical 7-week course meeting once a week for one hour and fifty minutes, but we have also compressed this agenda into a three hour workshop, combined with class time and a two hour networking event. The four components include:

1) 'Wandering is not the same as being lost': self-exploration and seeing the connections;
2) Telling the Story of *Me* – connecting to the job market: building the resume, knowing the common questions and making the elevator pitch;
3) Understanding the Story of *THEM* (it's not really about you, you just think it is): reading the job description correctly, writing the cover letter to the job, researching the field, places they want to live and relevant people;
4) Connecting *Me* to the world: making and tracking contacts, doing the research to anticipate the questions, practicing the interview.

The class is currently graded on credit/no credit with the 'real world' model being used to the extent that your boss won't give you an A or an F, but they do assess you overall and expect work to be completed on time and to instruction. Thus, students are not allowed to be late, but they can correct/repeat their work as they would if they were giving their boss a report or piece of work. There are also a variety of short, in-class assignments that, as in real life, cannot be excused or made up if a student is absent.  Both punctuality and attendance are expected therefore notice must be given for an absence for any reason. You don't come to work you don't get paid.

There are a total number of points available and students can determine how they want to reach the passing grade i.e. just as at work they can decide to not be 'employee of the month' and skip or not perform well in various aspects of their job but there is still clarity as to what the minimum requirements of their job are so they are not in any doubt as to what they need to do. Among the various projects and assignments there are essentially four primary outputs: resume, cover letter, mock interview and two short essays. The first two are officially handed in twice and receive feedback each time, but students may repeat them as many times as they would like and will receive feedback each time. The mock interview requires students to choose a job they would like to apply for and to dress as appropriate for that position.

Over time, the mock interviews have been conducted in a variety of ways i.e. the class participates by asking questions, the class helps the interviewee answer the questions, the instructor and a student jointly interview the student.  The typical format is that the student submits the job description to the instructor in advance so they can prepare a related set of interview questions. The interview is conducted in front of the class and videotaped and then made available for students to view via the learning management system. Clearly the instructor is not likely to be familiar with all the companies and organizations that are selected, so the questions are generally based on standard interview questions and slightly tailored for the position being sought. For example, one or two questions will ask a student to present themselves and why they want the job, 1-2 will be character questions, one or two

questions will be about future plans and one or two will be behavioral. They will, of course, also be asked if they have any questions or anything else they would like to say. The interview generally lasts 10 minutes, as the goal is not to conduct an entire interview, but to get them to perform under pressure and practice answers they have prepared for any situation. The experience clearly shows how well they can handle themselves and the depth of their preparation.

The essays serve two functions. First, they are essentially a final project for the class. They allow students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned about themselves and about the job market in their own fields of interest. Second, they form the basis for an assessment of the course/career planning as a whole, more below. In terms of this assignment, students are asked to complete two parts with each part requiring 800-1000 words. Part I asks them to lay out their plans for the next 3/6/9/12 months regarding their work toward their career options. These must be specific and they are given ideas and suggestions in terms of their choice of classes (or major), doing more research into jobs or graduate programs, talking to faculty about references, finding relevant paid or volunteer work on campus or talking to people back home during term breaks. Of course, their own list is related to their career options so their responses vary widely. The second part, also 800-1000 words, asks them to reflect on two questions:

> 1) What have you have learned about your career interests - and about your strengths and weaknesses in pursuing those options; and
> 2) How (and whether) this workshop has helped you feel more prepared for job/career/after college challenges?

The detailed research described above supports career planning courses for improving outputs as well as support longer term outcomes. HSU approaches career education as an opportunity to help students connect their college coursework to their chosen career path and guide them in their post college choices, rather than seeing these efforts as an end in themselves or as reducing the college experience to some kind of pre-professional/vocational option. We are a small, rural school and the employment opportunities are limited both while students are in college and in the area after they have graduated. As part of our holistic idea of career planning as a form of self-awareness that is key to critical thinking and lifelong learning, we have chosen not to utilize pre- and post-testing as an assessment tool for these courses and fundamentally refute the idea that employment statistics in the three or six months after college can be used as an indicator of student success and even more strongly resist the notion they can be used as a statement as to the value of higher education. The wider economy is not in the gift of HSU or any other university but, if the desired learning outcome is better preparation and more confidence in our students, it is our view that this tool should reflect that goal by asking students if they have a clearer plan and feel ready to take those next steps.

**International Studies: Career Course Assessment**
Stepping back from the specific course design, the question of how to assess the course overall was the next challenge. In 2013, the International Studies (INTL) Program embarked on career education via a pilot workshop: a seven-week, 1-unit, credit/no credit course first offered as a co-listed course (with Sociology). The initial pilot made two things quite clear: despite the fact most of the students taking the class were seniors, most were ill prepared in terms of even the most basic career materials in terms of resume, cover letter, etc. and none had well developed occupational research or networking skills. Clearly, a senior/spring semester course was useful, but it was far too late to fill and gaps or consider options that were no longer viable and therefore career education had to be integrated earlier in the curriculum. Given the fact that well over half of the INTL students receive financial aid, this approach would also support students searching for jobs while still in college as well as helping them locate and

land volunteer or internship opportunities that could lead to more professional development. Over the following four years, various approaches have been used throughout the program as part of our effort to find the best combination of career interventions for our students.

*INTL 210: Introduction to International Studies – Basic Skills*
This course is designed to introduce students to the major and covers 5 disciplines, 5 regions of the world and three current debates that highlight the issues of interdisciplinarity. The course involves a major research project, a policy paper and various other exercises such as map quizzes, locating articles on current affairs and writing response papers to guest lectures. This range of activities meant it was not overly difficult to incorporate career exploration and some basic job-relevant research skills. The assignment, placed relatively early in the semester so that it might spark interest in an organization or issue that might be useful for their research and policy assignments as well, students were required to create a 'wandering map' in class to explore their passions and interests. This open-ended/creative session was followed with one on the basics of resumes/cover letters (templates of these were also provided on the INTL Library Research Guide page).

They were then asked to create a 'RIP' file – so called for the low tech version of literally tearing job ads from newspapers or magazines – of 5 jobs that interested them. These could be 'now' jobs or 'later' jobs, or even graduate school options, but they could not use Craigslist or simple 'Google' jobs and each source could only be used once. They then had to create a summary sheet including the basic information for each job (requirements, location, title, etc.), a tailored resume and a cover letter for one of the jobs listed. This was handed in for review by the instructor. At some point in this process, the Academic and Career Advising Center was usually asked to lead a class session on resumes, but also on good ways to find job postings, but their presence in the class was mainly to give students a face in career services and enable them to feel more comfortable seeking those resources. RIP files were returned and discussed in class. Students then revised their resume and cover letter and handed it in a second time, together with 5 more jobs. The work does not take much time in class, but in course evaluations and in later classes, many students have reported that this exercise, and its repetition, helped them improve their materials. More importantly, they reported that it made them think about types of jobs to apply for, volunteering opportunities on and off campus and course planning options.

*INTL 210: Introduction to International Studies – Short workshop*
*with Academic and Career Advising Center Collaboration*
In addition to the RIP file, INTL has experimented with a longer career session, but still attached to the introductory course. This exercise has been done both as a requirement for the course (with an alternative assignment for those who could not make the session outside class time) and as an option for extra credit. These sessions were also valuable in that they were run in conjunction with an introductory course in the Political Science Department and therefore students could see how careers and majors interacted in terms of the skills gained in their coursework. This arrangement also meant that faculty and staff could cover two departments with a single workshop.

The name, 'clip-on', is intended to suggest that this kind of assignment/workshop could be incorporated into many different types of classes in a range of departments as much of the work took place outside regular class time. That said, it was clear from the feedback that the overall usefulness to students was enhanced by discussing the activities in the regular classroom setting and by connecting two majors that have related employment areas. The first clip-on workshop was offered in Spring 2013 with the goal of adding more career tools without taking any more time from class content. Preparation for both classes began with a discussion about the purpose of the career assignment on the first day of class as part of the overall discussion of the course structure and this continued to be raised throughout the semester.

The career exercise has two options (Option A being the workshop and Option B for those who could not attend an outside session), but both had the common initial assignment of a basic resume and 3 job descriptions. This first assignment was discussed a week prior to its due date, the career page was reviewed again and more attention brought to the templates and guides as well and pointing out the links to the Academic and Career Advising Center where they could get extra help outside class.

These materials were handed in the day before the workshop so clean copies could made, the materials could be reviewed by the instructor and a career adviser, and the types of careers students were interested in could be gauged so as to tailor the conversation to their interests. Despite being a 200-level class, the group was predominantly juniors, as many seniors as sophomores, and very few freshmen.

At the first class session after the workshop, we spent time discussing the experience and any overall questions and comments. They were also asked at that point if they would like comments on their initial resume, or if they would like to create a revised version of their resume. Both classes voted to revise their resumes. They were given approximately 1 week to hand in a revised resume which would then be returned to them 1 week later (the timing was slightly different between the two classes as they both had intervening mid-terms). The feedback/evaluation form was given to them when their revised resumes and RIP files were handed back. These revised documents were the basis of another class discussion pertaining to general points and questions.

There are a number of general conclusions or observations as to the workshop's usefulness and effectiveness and three of these observations stood out as important to the process of scaffolding in the Program.

1. The staff/faulty combination added significantly to student confidence that they had not only 'first hand' knowledge of what was useful in their field of choice, but there was professional support on campus in terms of other tools, databases, guides and templates they could call on.
2. The embedded nature of the workshop within a specific class meant that there was the opportunity for both pre- and post- workshop activities that extended the life of the workshop and required them to think about their materials before the event and enabled further discussion of any questions that arose as a result of the event.
3. There are benefits and challenges in attempting to cover this much ground in a single session, but if it is to be 'clipped on' to a course, the benefits seemed to outweigh the problems. Getting students to commit to a single afternoon seems less of a logistical nightmare than many other options and it could not really be any shorter and still hope to achieve its goals.

A year later, the possibility of repeating the INTL/PSCI 'clip-on' workshop presented itself so in Fall of 2014 a slightly revised version was rolled out. Perhaps the biggest difference was that, in this instance, the workshop was not 'required,' but made entirely optional. This saved some organizational time and yet the sign-up remained positive (30 of a possible 49 – 4 students were in both classes) and even though the actual attendance on the day was lower (23), it was encouraging to see how many from both classes took a Friday afternoon to be present at an entirely optional event and how many completed the feedback form (19). Other than becoming optional, we did try to hold the essentials of the assignments to be the same, though there was no employer panel as funding was scarce and it was decided that a panel in the spring in conjunction with the full career workshop would be sufficient.

The breakdown of attendees by major was: 12 International Studies, 10 Political Science and 1 foreign exchange student for a total of 23 while the respondents were 10 IS, 8 PSCI and 1 foreign exchange for a

total of 19.  The class standing was more spread with only 2 seniors, 7 juniors, 6 sophomores and still only a few freshmen. In terms of conclusions from this second experience there were no new observations, only additions to those made last year (added in italics to last year's conclusion):

1. The staff/faulty combination added significantly to student confidence – *though we would add that, since that last workshop it has been the experience that this 'face time' with the Career Center has a noticeable impact on student willingness to take advantages of services they might not otherwise know about or pursue.*
2. The embedded nature of the workshop within a specific class meant that there was the opportunity for both pre- and post- workshop activity that extended the life of the workshop - *we would add that the optional vs required nature of the workshop may have dropped the numbers by a marginal number, but the benefits of this approach seem to remain.*
3. There are benefits and challenges to attempting to cover this much ground in a single session - *time was again a challenge this year, but there seems to be limited alternatives.*

*INTL 480 then INTL 320 –Special Topics then Career Workshop*
*Intermediate to Advanced Level: 1 unit workshop*
In terms of the goals of a 1-unit workshop, it's clear that it enables more in-depth student support/faculty partnership and can be built directly into a student's major plan. Students are also able to choose when to take such a workshop, which, particularly for INTL students who are required to go abroad, can be very useful in the sense they can do it before they go away if they are interested in pursuing career options in that other country, or upon their return when they often feel more ready to plan for life after college. Some students have taken it twice; once to prepare for going away and again when they are on the verge of graduating.

Despite being nearly at the point of graduation, many students had had very little guidance as to basic job search skills; neither had many reviewed their resume and cover letter with any of the available professionals on campus. They also seemed unfamiliar with, and unable to navigate, issues of professional etiquette and were unaware of various professional networking avenues open to them as current students or even the most basic requirements of the positions they claimed they had 'always' wanted to pursue. Perhaps the best example of this is the number of INTL students interested in the Peace Corps (INTL is a large feeder major into the Peace Corps – in fact, for our size, HSU is regularly in the top ten school for Peace Corps recruits, if not top five such schools with INTL providing a significant number to that group), but had little or no relevant volunteer experience – a basic requirement for consideration.

The 1-unit workshop is also a good way to make the materials and exercises directly relevant to the major and those of interest to the student. International Studies students tend to divide fairly evenly into thirds in terms of; 1) students interested in the Peace Corps, USAID, teaching English overseas, or NGO work, 2) those wanting to pursue graduate school, or 3) those who wish to look into more traditional government work (State Department) or private sector employment. This means the workshop gives us time to explore all three (and some end up changing their direction as a result of learning more/discovering misconceptions/ redirecting their aspirations higher) including time consuming activities such as mock interviews for every student or individual editing of letters and statements.

*INTL 490 – Capstone, Advanced Level*
Generally speaking, the capstone would be a logical place for many aspects of career education. In terms of being a way to have a final check on student readiness, support for actual application planning and processing, and relevant professional networking. For majors with a high unit count or no other space in the program for an additional unit, this may be ideal. However, given the needs of various student constituencies and the overall perspective of millennials generally, this may be far too late.

For the International Studies Program, the capstone class is designed to be the course where majors bring all the elements of the program together. They do a career portfolio, an academic portfolio and explore theories of leadership so they can devise their own 'leadership pledge' for the future. The core of the class is a project they design themselves that either consolidates work they have already done or positions them in relation to their post college plans. When the career workshop was only a pilot or just an elective, this was the only way to ensure that all majors had a resume, cover letter, some job research skills and the opportunity to do a mock interview.  In practice, it meant that students who had not done the workshop were effectively rushed through the career aspects of the class given that their portfolio is not intended to be the main focus of the class, but rather a stock-taking of work already done. Evaluations from the workshop and steady enrollment suggested that the workshop was becoming an important part of the program. Therefore, in 2016, the faculty decided to put the 1 unit workshop into the core where it will be required as of 2017.

**Process and Rubrics**
Without the benefit of standard rubrics and templates for career output assessment, the program had to effectively start from scratch. The goal was to decide a process that would determine the usefulness of career education and the ability or success of this scaffolding of career education. Given the SLO was premised on 'skills' we primarily focused on career outputs or the direct products of the course activities and, as indicated above, these included a resume, cover letter and mock interview. Further, because we sought to see how career education worked across the program we used resumes from INTL 210 as well as 320 and 490 and all three outputs from INTL 320 and 490 (INTL 210 doesn't do mock interviews). However, as these do not speak to student confidence or sense of preparedness, proxies here for career course outcomes (the indirect benefits of career education such as GPA and retention), a short essay assignment was added to the INTL 320 class and INTL 490 Career Portfolios.

The next step was to create a rubric for each of these three outputs as well as a revised rubric, for the outcome proxy. Using various rubrics as a starting point, three basic rubrics were developed using five characteristics and a scale of unacceptable, acceptable, and exemplary for a total possible of 25 points. The exception was the outcome rubric though the five characteristics were retained, clearly the three levels didn't apply. The hope was to create a standard assessment process that could be applied across all INTL courses so as to track improvement as well as to mark them at the point of graduation. These are attached.

The specific results are not as relevant here perhaps as the process and the resulting rubrics, but for the program they were interesting in that the career staff member was 'kinder' to lower division students by a consistent 1-2 points and on cover letters by approximately 4-5 points (i.e. 1 point per category). Similarly, on capstone resumes, the instructor and the career staff were within 1-2 points, while the instructor was more generous on Capstone cover letters by 2-4 points. It is interesting to note that the ratings for the INTL 320 career work were closer on both outputs, often giving the same score and rarely even 2 points apart. A special note on the mock interviews is warranted given the instructor tended to be slightly, but consistently, more generous by 1-2 points for both the Career workshop and the Capstone class – though this may be attributable to the fact she conducted the interviews (vs only

watching them on video) and therefore felt some responsibility for whether or not they performed well and more empathy for them when they did not. One could speculate as to the reasons for the discrepancies, but as there seemed to consistent pattern across the classes, they were attributed to two factors: 1) knowing different groups of students; and, 2) a different sense as Program Leader and Career Adviser as to what is 'expected' from students at a particular level.

**Conclusion**

The point here is not the specifics of the final spread of points in an individual classroom, but whether the scaffolding of career interventions across a single academic program made a difference in terms of the quality of student outputs. Our objective was not to create cookie-cutter job seekers, but to determine whether students felt better able, not only to connect their college activities to their desired career goals, and were demonstrably better prepared and more confident as to their ability to manage that process.

HSU is still in relatively early days in this development and this is the first time a review of this kind has been conducted as part of the university's evaluation process. We also fully understand that these are the results of a single program at a small university. That said, the feedback from both students and the administration regarding these efforts has affirmed their value and contribution to student success. The International Studies Program has become a model in CAHSS as the college responds to changing student need and all our students have felt the benefit of this new direction. Our hope is that this initial effort at qualitative assessment may provide, if not a potential model for others, at least the springboard for new ideas for interested career staff and faculty in a variety of disciplines. For now, an overall assessment of the more long-term outcomes of: retention, GPA, credits, and time to graduation will have to wait until such time that we have more data to determine the impact of these efforts.

If universities continue to come under pressure to demonstrate value through results, we may eventually be required to track student success as a function of their status 3-6 months after graduation. However, and until such time, HSU will continue to work towards a model of career education that brings discipline-specific skills and resources to all our students in their own majors and programs. For those of us seeking to help students in our offices and our classrooms, the creation of this practical tool box for how we design and assess career courses has hopefully become a less 'neglected' issue.

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**Standard Career Course Agenda**

1 - 'Wandering is not the same as being lost'
    a. Wandering Map – what's important and how it connects
    b. Island parable - life choices and responsibility
    c. Possible lives - a journey of a 1,000 miles begins with the single step
    d. Autobiography & Obituary – how we tell our story and what we leave behind

2 – The Story of *Me* – connecting me to the job market
    a. Elevator pitch
    b. Resume first draft / 30 second test/ SWAP
    c. Common Interview Questions

3 – Story of *THEM* (it's not really about you, you just think it is)
    a. Reading a Job Description
    b. Researching the employer (social media, forums, LinkedIn, news, industry publications)
    c. Researching the place you want to be (online, real time)
    d. Creating a tracking system
    e. Cover Letter Draft – how you fit their hole – SWAP

4 – Connecting *Me* to the world
    a. Working the room – even from a distance (networking/informational interviews)
    b. Getting their number – keeping track of contacts
    c. Following up on the application by phone and email
    d. Anticipating interview questions
    e. Look the part – MOCK INTERVIEW
    f. After the first date – who calls who?

**RESUME Scoring Rubric**                                                                 Name: _____

| Elements | Not Acceptable = 1 pt | Acceptable = 3 pts | Exemplary = 5 pts | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aesthetics** | Confusing layout; inconsistent formatting; mistakes in spelling, grammar etc; too much or too little space | Generally able to be understood; information and descriptions generally clear but raises some new questions or not fully explained | Good use of space; appropriate use of graphics and fonts; key information easily located | |
| **Composition** | Too many/not enough/unclear headings; Spelling and grammar errors; no form or reason to statements or bullet points | Generally able to follow organization and flow; very few mistakes in spelling and grammar; some use of resume statements or bullets but not well developed | Clear organization; clean and consistent layout; free of grammar, spelling errors; effective use of "resume" sentence/ phrasing | |
| **Content** | No flow of narrative; not enough/too much information in key areas; background, education and experience not fully explained; more questions raised than answered | There is some sense of narrative but not consistent; statements or bullets not fully explained; some flow but not always clear how or why one thing relates to others in the same area | Clear narrative; outlines background, education and experience fully and with specifics; fully developed statements or bullets; logical flow | |
| **Education** | Education not showcased; important skills (eg language, study abroad or social media) left out or not specified; non-academic or community work not clearly explained for non HSU audience | Education listed but not well used to highlight skills or significant/relevant areas; Activities 'undersold' by virtue of bad layout or explanation | Degrees/grades etc clear and well laid out; relevant skills gained clearly highlighted; coursework – if listed - explained succinctly; extra-curricular and community activity set out for non HSU audience; | |
| **Experience** | Experience jumbled by too many categories or not enough information; descriptions begin with the menial vs the most relevant/important skills so key aspects are lost; too little or too much information; written in first person | Positions laid out but not fully supporting the overall narrative; inconsistency in information provided leaving a 'patchy' flow; preoccupied with paid employment and not enough focus on skills and abilities; over or under selling particular aspects and lack of balance | Relevance to the position made clear; includes specifics with details and/or accomplishments; clear delineation for categories of experience; demonstrates progression of responsibility/title; supports the overall narrative of the resume and cover letter combined | |
| **Overall Possible: 25 points** | | | | |

**COVER LETTER Scoring Rubric**                                          Name: _____

| Elements | Not Acceptable = 1 pt | Acceptable = 3 pts | Exemplary = 5 pts | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aesthetics** | Not professional in appearance (crumpled, stained, odd margins); No clear contact or addressee information; poor formatting; too much or too little space | Letter generally looks clear and professional; contact and organization information clear and correct | Professional appearance; clear placement of contact and addressee information; clean fonts and formatting | |
| **Composition** | No flow or order to the way things are discussed; spelling and grammar errors; confusing sentences or main points and little connection between the person and the position | Generally able to follow organization and flow; very few mistakes in spelling and grammar; some connection between the narrative and the position, but not maximized | Clear organization; clean and consistent layout; free of grammar, spelling errors; overall narrative that clearly connects the resume/person to the positon | |
| **Introduction/Opening Paragraph** | May or may not cover basic information and only a tenuous or weak way into the body of the letter and establishes no link between the person and the position | Covers basic information but only a lackluster way of getting into the core content of the letter | Covers basic information but offers an engaging and gripping way into the body of the letter and clearly connects the person to the position | |
| **Letter Body/ Content** | No flow of narrative; not enough/too much information in key areas; background, education and experience not fully explained; more questions raised than answered; all assertions without foundation or specifics to support them | There is some sense of narrative but not consistent; background, education and experience laid out but not connected to the position; some unsupported assertions but also some good examples of the connections between the person and the position | Clear narrative; outlines background, education and experience fully and with specifics that connect directly to the position; is less about them per se but focused on how they fit the job and will be effective members of the organization | |
| **Closing** | Not a strong closing statement; repetitive or wandering; no clear 'final message' to the reader and how they fit the job as outlined | Has a sense of a closing statement but unenthusiastic or unconvincing; too many messages that get cluttered; no succinct final message for the organization | Strong closing statement of purpose; clearly outlines how their background, education and experience have prepared them for this specific position (without being repetitive) | |
| **Overall Possible: 25 points** | | | | |

| Key Element | Not Acceptable = 1pt | Acceptable = 3 pts | Exemplary = 5 pts | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Greeting/ First Impressions** | Turns up late; not dressed appropriately; does not shake hands and/or greet interviewer(s); does not bring a copy of resume or is otherwise unprepared; lackluster and distracted | Turns up on time; dressed appropriately for the position; has resume/other relevant materials ready; and to hand; greeting acceptable, but not engaged or engaging | Turns up on time/early; appropriately/ professionally dressed; has resume/other material ready; Clear enthusiastic greeting and maintains direct, respectful eye contact and relaxed body language | |
| **Poise/Voice** | Posture slumped or shifting; fidgeting with feet or hands; looks at the floor or ceiling when speaking and makes no eye contact; grammar and language are not appropriate (eg "um" or "like"); voice too soft or loud/ too fast or slow | Posture generally acceptable with relatively little fidgeting; adequate eye contact that is clear on important points; language and grammar acceptable with relatively few verbal ticks; voice usually clear and consistent | Posture calm and confident; no fidgeting and excellent eye contact without staring; language, grammar and voice clear and fluid without verbal ticks and use of appropriate humor | |
| **Interview Techniques/ Preparation** | Not paying attention to what is being asked and didn't answer questions directly or completely; had not thought about how they wanted to answer key and obvious questions about themselves or what they had to offer the organization; not prepared or knowledgeable about the organization/ position; could not clearly articulate why they were suited or their own background/ education/ or experience | Didn't answer important questions clearly or completely; had prepared some answers in advance to the point they sounded false or rehearsed; had done only basic research into the organization/position; had thought about how their background/ education/experience but were not fluid in their answers as to how that connected to the organization | Listened carefully to what was being asked and answered each question clearly and completely; had prepared answers to some questions without sounding stilted or rehearsed; Knowledgeable about organization/ position; able to promote themselves and explain their background/ education/ experience without sounding gushy, arrogant or pushy | |
| **Self-Promoting/ General Attitude** | Answers questions in generalities with no reference to personal strengths, skills and abilities; lack of interest and enthusiasm passive and indifferent; or overly enthusiastic | Answers a few questions with some reference to personal strengths, skills and abilities; seems interested but could be better prepared or informed on certain topics | Answers questions with reference to strengths, skills and abilities and how they contribute to the position; interested and enthusiastic about the interview, people interviewing, organization and process | |
| **Closing** | Has no closing statement or questions (or only obvious/inappropriate questions); shows no interest in the position or next steps; does not shake hands or thank the interviewer | Has a weak closing statement and only relatively weak questions; shows only lukewarm interest in the position or the process; unenthusiastically thanked the interviewer and/or shook hands | Strong, enthusiastic closing/summary of their interest in the position; has a number of engaging and relevant questions that have been prepared in advance and come from the interview; engaged with the process going forward | |
| **OVERALL possible: 25 points** | | | | |

**REFLECTION ESSAY Assessment**                                   Name: _____

| Elements | Y | N | Student Comments/Observations | Assessor Comments/Observations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Short term plan for 3- 6 months** | | | | |
| **Medium term plan for 6-9 months** | | | | |
| **Long term plan for 9-12 months/post college** | | | | |
| **Feel Better prepared for remaining time at HSU** | | | | |
| **Feel Better prepared for career search after HSU** | | | | |
| **Final Reflections** | | | | |