Why You Should Be Putting Skills on Your Syllabus

Virginia (Ginger) Wickline, Kayla Capeles, Abigail Warden, & Hannah Morris (Georgia Southern University); Karen Appleby (ISU), Drew C. Appleby (IUPUI)

In the 21st Century, attaining a college degree simply for the sake of becoming educated is a luxury most of our students simply cannot afford. Their motivation is multifaceted - they want to learn, but they also want to get hired. To help students be marketable, professors must emphasize skill development as well as content knowledge, starting with day one on the syllabus. Utilizing a small sample from two institutions (one in the Midwest, one in the Southeast), we provide evidence of students' perceptions of the benefits of putting skills on the syllabus in both psychology and sport science courses.

The following excerpt was developed by Dr. Drew Appleby, utilized with permission in a specific course by the first author (Wickline, 2019), and subsequently modified for publication in Appleby et al. (2019).

Career-Related Skills: Acquisition and Marketing

What career-related skills can you acquire in this class, and how do you market these skills during the hiring process? The Georgia Southern University Psychology Department (Statesboro, Armstrong, and Liberty Campuses) provides our majors with abundant opportunities to acquire and strengthen the five following broad categories of skills that potential employers value in college graduates, which are published by the American Psychological Association.

1. Cognitive Skills
2. Communication Skills
3. Personal Skills
4. Social Skills
5. Technological Skills

Each psychology class provides a unique set of opportunities to acquire several of these skills, and the following sections provide the five skills you can develop in PSYC 2231, PSYC 3141, PSYC 4131, and PSYC 4132 if you take full advantage of (1) the statistical decision making/analysis and research methods skills emphasized in these courses, (2) the collaborative and leadership roles you can take when working with peers in class and/or on projects, (3) the research posters, projects, and papers you will perform in PSYC 2231, 3141, and PSYC 4132, and (4) the Student Scholars Symposium or Southeastern Psychological Association Conference, where you and your research team could present the results of your independent projects.

To help you understand the nature and importance of these skills, you will want to include them in the cover letters and résumés you will create when you begin the job search process. This information can also help you create, organize, and practice convincing answers that you can give to challenging interview questions such as "How did you use your college education to develop the skills you will need to succeed in the job to which you are applying?" Please see *The Skillful Psychology Student: Prepared for Success in the 21st Century* (Naufel et al., 2018) for more detailed examples of these five skill categories and ways to describe them effectively.

Please be aware that the skills listed above are very similar to those skills that psychology graduate schools value in their applicants. So, if you are planning to apply to graduate school immediately after graduation—rather than entering the workforce—you can increase your chances of being accepted by (1) including these skills in your application materials (e.g., your personal statement) and (2) choosing letter of recommendation authors who can provide strong and credible evidence that you possess them.

Caveat: Be aware that simply passing this class and having it appear on your transcript does not certify that you have developed the skills identified above in a manner that will impress potential employers. Two ways to persuade employers that you have

developed sufficient competence in these skills are to (1) earn a high grade in this class, which will reflect your ability to meet your instructor's expectations of excellence, and (2) be prepared to describe or provide specific examples of the work you created in this class that will convince employers that you possess these skills at the levels you will need to succeed at the job for which you are applying. For example, you could create an electronic portfolio that contains a video of the presentation you make during the Georgia Southern Student Scholars Symposium, a copy of the paper summarizing the project your research team produced, and a letter of support or recommendation from your instructor that verifies your attainment of these skills.

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