

THE ROLE OF ECAREER READINESS PORTFOLIOS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN EXPERIENTIAL PROCESS WITH A GENUINE OUTCOME

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Extended Abstract

Innovations and Future Directions in Education Track

ABSTRACT

This presentation describes a three-course professional development sequence culminating in an electronic career readiness portfolio developed by undergraduate business students preparing for their careers. During the process, students initiate career planning through self-discovery and determining a vision for their future by systematically assessing their competencies, soft skills, and interests. In subsequent modules, they are asked to tell their story, recognize opportunities, learn how to leverage and negotiate, build a personal brand, develop a social network, and cultivate professional relationships. Further, they explore contemporary issues, including financial literacy, values, inclusivity, forward-thinking business behaviors, and societal impact factors. In the final module, the students consider major life decisions, entrepreneurial behavior, financial considerations, leadership, and their grand plan. Resumes, cover letters, interviews, and job search plans culminate the experience.

The hallmark of this professional development experience is the student's electronic career readiness portfolio. Throughout the process, students build an online career portfolio accompanied by a web link that they can share with anyone, especially prospective employers. The portfolio requires the students to provide a site menu with the following minimum items: about me, resume, career plan, personal plan, academic plan, community service, and contact information. The topics covered during the professional development process provide the raw material to build the electronic portfolio.

*During this process, faculty act as facilitators, advisors, and mentors. Students take responsibility for their experience by engaging as individuals in a series of web-based modules from the program entitled *Exploring Your Potential*[™]. The students use the results of the web-based modules to build their electronic portfolios systematically. Each eCareer Readiness Portfolio is unique to the individual according to their academic emphasis area. As the student's portfolio matures, faculty specializing in the relevant academic area guide the student to ensure the portfolio is relevant to their professional future.*

The three courses occur at the sophomore, junior, and senior levels, respectively, so the portfolio development process can be as long as two years. During this time, the portfolios are assessed and mature into products that students are proud to show prospective employers. Even more importantly, the experience provides evidence to show that students have systematically and thoroughly thought through and prepared for their prospective careers. The professional development process is thoroughly and systematically assessed through learning goals, including self-awareness, problem-solving, informed decision-making, career orientation, strategic planning, and execution. The College of Business uses the program to assess whether its graduates are ready to succeed in their careers and make a positive societal impact. The authors will show actual student eCareer Readiness Portfolios during this presentation.