



# Career in Courses



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Student Involvement and Careers



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# Overview

## An Overview of Career in Courses

The pursuit of a degree is a meaningful experience for students, ripe with moments to learn about who they are, what matters to them, and how they want to contribute to the world. In the 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index study, over 30,000 graduates reported that their academic success contributed to the likelihood of their career success.

**Students were more likely to have long term career success if they reported having a mentor who supported their goals and dreams, at least one professor who made them excited about learning, and believed that their professors cared about them as people.**

The Centre for Student Involvement and Careers has been collaborating with faculty members who are interested in drawing connections between teaching topics and students in order to make explicit some of the personal and professional learning that is taking place in the classroom.

### What do we mean by career?

Some of us hear the word career and think job, title, or role. When we say career, we mean an intentional and purposeful life that aligns with a student's values, strengths, and aspirations.



The literature in career development describes four domains that, when supported, enhance a student's personal and professional growth in:

- identity development
- life experiences
- people or networks
- tools or tactics

However, most commonly, students associate a campus career centre with support solely on the tools and tactics of job search like resumes, interviews or LinkedIn.

Partnerships with faculty help to highlight the personal and professional learning that exists in the academic discipline. It also serves to expand the places and ways in which students are asked to think about themselves, their work, and the impact their discipline has on the way they see the world.



# Points of Intersection

## What are the points of intersection?

Career development is already happening in the classroom for many students when professors assign presentations or group projects, integrate real-world problems or community partnerships, or ask students to draw from their degree experience in capstone courses.



There are four ways that career learning might intersect with academic disciplines:

1

### **Course-embedded Professional Learning.**

Student is developing personal and professional skills where the explicit focus is career and personal learning (e.g. awareness of strengths, career self management tools (resumes, labour market info), personal philosophy statements, etc).

2

### **Disciplinary-Linked Experiential Learning.**

Student participates in credit-bearing experiential learning activities that are linked to their academic study (e.g. research project, community-based experiential learning, internship, practicum, co-op, field study, international study, etc).

3

### **Pedagogical Approaches.**

The pedagogical design of the course or program incorporates tools and techniques that have been shown to support the development of career-related learning (e.g. ePortfolio, team assignments, presentations, etc).

4

### **Integrative and Applied Learning.**

The course or program requires the student to integrate learning from multiple sources or experiences, and/or apply theoretical learning to real-world problems (e.g. capstones, applied research projects, signature work).



# Examples

The Centre for Student Involvement and Careers partners with professors to help deepen the career learning that is embedded within the discipline and focus of a class or subject.

## **BIOC 301**

### **What is the focus of the course?**

BIOC 301 is intended to introduce 150 third-year students to the basics of biochemistry and molecular biology laboratory techniques and protocols. The course consists of two main components; an ongoing molecular biology project and a small number of stand-alone experiments in more classical biochemistry.



### **How do you integrate personal and professional learning into this discipline?**

One class in the first term is dedicated to a practice presentation followed by a debrief of the Gallup StrengthsFinder personal inventory (Lopez, 2009). Students take turns within small groups to present a primary research paper and receive feedback from their peers who are guided by a behavioural-based matrix. Following this, students complete independent reflections that ask them to connect their individual behaviour to themes that were identified by the assessment. These behaviours could be examples from their past lab work, personal lives, or other areas that students felt comfortable drawing from and sharing. Finally, students are asked to complete a brief reflection in the term two when they have completed a second presentation assignment.

### **What has been the impact of this work?**

A preliminary assessment of the written reflections determined that students can articulate a connection between their strengths and their approach to the practice presentation. They were able to identify specific communication skills that needed improvement (i.e. eye contact, tone of voice, organization) and had an increased knowledge of self. In addition, they saw the link between their strengths and academic choices or leadership choices.



# Examples

## **SOCI 102**

### **What is the focus of the course?**

The key learning objective for the course is to develop students 'sociological imagination', the ability to understand the relationship between the individual and society, and how this relates to social inequality, social institutions and social change.

The course is designed to assist students unpack their own position within and relationship with society, unpacking the privileges and prejudices they may have experienced as a result of their family, education, work and so forth. Shifting from a perspective where society exists outside the classroom, the course was designed to use the campus and alumni as an active resource and case for students to explore and develop their sociological imagination.

### **How do you integrate personal and professional learning into this discipline?**

Over the course of nine weeks, students completed three group-based activities that aligned with the structure and delivery of the course material. Each activity involved students conducting research and analyzing data while using concepts from the course to answer a set research question. In the first activity, students were tasked to answer 'What does your network say about you, your biography and your aspirations?' Here, students followed a work sheet and employed social network analysis to unpack their socialization and demonstrate their understanding of the sociological imagination.

In the second activity, students were tasked to answer 'Are there equal opportunities on campus to get involved?' where in groups, using an intersectional lens to understand social inequality, students analyzed and presented on extra and co-curricular activities at UBC. Finally, in collaboration with Arts Alumni engagement, student groups designed and conducted interviews from a pool of Arts Alumni to explore the career trajectories and transitions from education to work.

### **What has been the impact of this work?**

This work had a significant positive impact on students approach to learning and student life. The suite of activities enabled both the career development in terms of research and critical thinking skills, and career exploration in terms of how these skills are applied in the workforce.

The first activity got students to clearly reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their network, and their position in society. The second activity raised their awareness on the experiential learning opportunities at UBC to develop their skills and network. Finally, through interviewing an Arts Alumni students were made aware of significance of taking advantage of these experiential learning opportunities at UBC, which were so evidently central to the career trajectories of the arts alumni interviewed. Further, this engagement with alumni placed students' anxieties about the value of a university education at rest, to place less emphasis on grades, and consider all the opportunities to learn on UBC's campus.



# Examples

## Land, Food and Community Core Series

### What is the focus of the course?

The Land, Food and Community (LFC) series (LFS 100, 150, 250, 350, and 450) contributes to the academic core of all programs in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems (LFS). The objective of the LFC series is to create learning opportunities that encourage students to become citizens, professionals, and leaders who understand the opportunities and obstacles to creating regional, national and global food systems that are ecologically, socially and economically sustainable.



### How do you integrate personal and professional learning into this discipline?

Developing awareness of one's values, beliefs and interests and being an effective collaborator in diverse contexts are central components of an emerging signature pedagogy in sustainable food system education programs<sup>1</sup>. We structure our courses in a manner that focuses on complex issues that require integration of knowledge, skills and perspectives from academic and non-academic actors, such as food security and food system sustainability. Across our four-year degree program, we scaffold personal development activities, such as StrengthsFinder assessment with effective collaboration competencies. Students apply theoretical knowledge and develop competencies through community-based experiential learning projects with regional organizations that have food-related mandates (e.g. City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health, Greater Vancouver Food Bank, BC Association of Farmers Markets). Our goal is to have graduates that are systems thinkers, able to work collaboratively in multicultural, inter- and

trans-disciplinary teams to develop solutions for complex, multi-stakeholder issues related to food, health and the environment.

### What has been the impact of this work?

The LFC series learning objectives align closely with the goals of the AACU Leap Challenge, which seeks to promote education for a world of unscripted problems. We are confident that our successful graduates are capable of critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applying knowledge in real-world settings. Increasingly, we are seeing our students integrate their community-based project work in their CVs, job applications, and as evidence of achievement in interviews. In this way, they are able to highlight the knowledge and skills they have developed in our courses to separate themselves from other potential candidates with similar degrees. In April of 2018, one of our third-year students was offered a co-op position with the BC Ministry of Agriculture. She leveraged her community-based work experiences to out-compete graduate student applicants.

<sup>1</sup> Valley, W., Wittman, H., Jordan, N., Ahmed, S., & Galt, R. (2017). An emerging signature pedagogy for sustainable food systems education. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 1-14.



# Why Explore the Intersections between Academic Disciplines and Career Development?

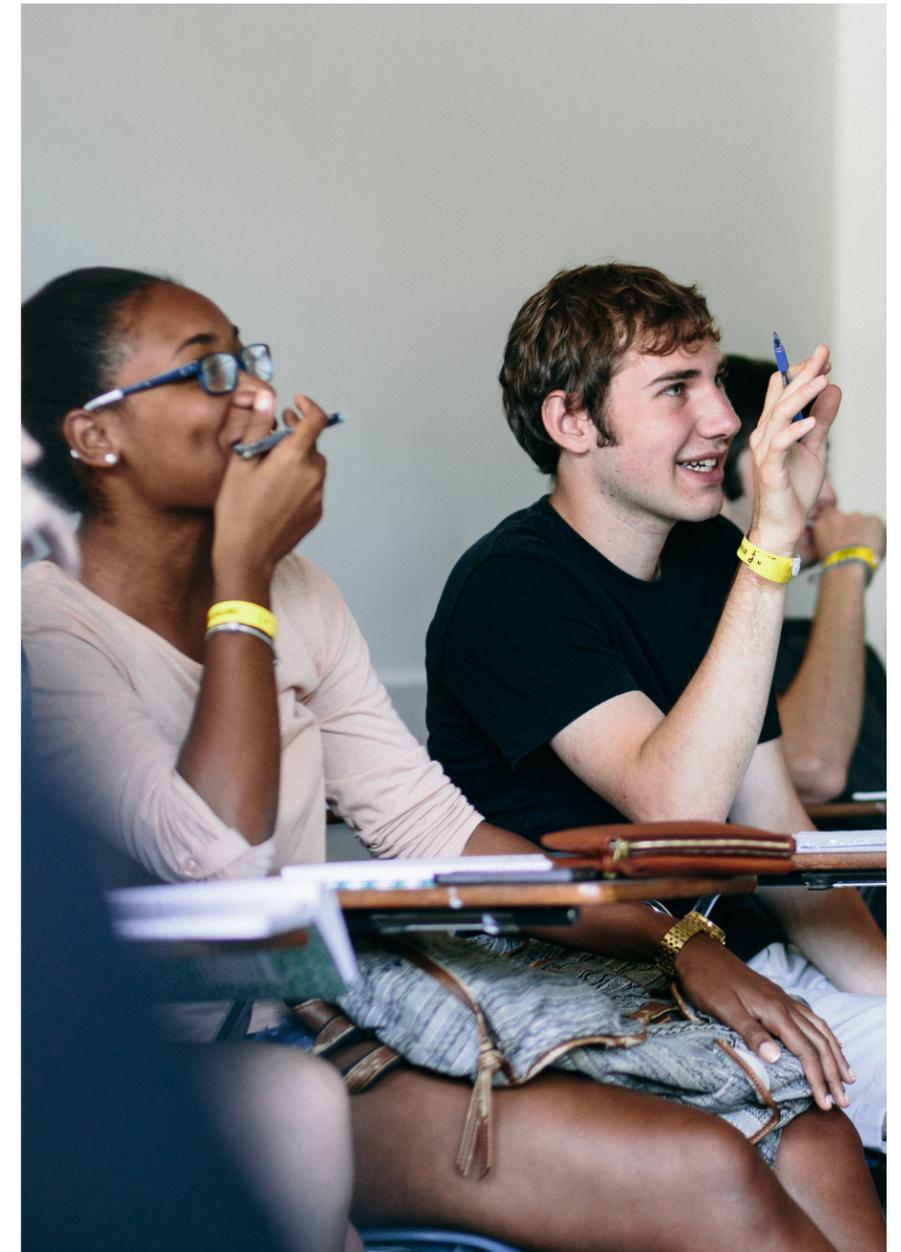
Students take on an extraordinary amount of work to be here at UBC. Feelings of stress and overwhelm are already very high for many students. Career learning in courses makes the most of the moments that exist and the learning students already encounter within their discipline.

Naturally, because there are lots of ambitions with what can happen in courses, we do not often identify those moments for students to learn about themselves.



Students will see it as completing a particular lab or completing a particular course, and might not identify that they learned about themselves or how they function in a team. They might overlook the practice of formulating a good experimental design as a valuable skill outside the lab when we know it can be helpful later in how you formulate a logical argument or how to test a hypothesis.

By making these moments explicit for students and highlighting the practice of reflection, students can draw connections between their experiences and the topic within the course. This can help to further the links students see between their discipline and their future purpose as well as support the growth of their personal and professional development.



# Who is Involved?

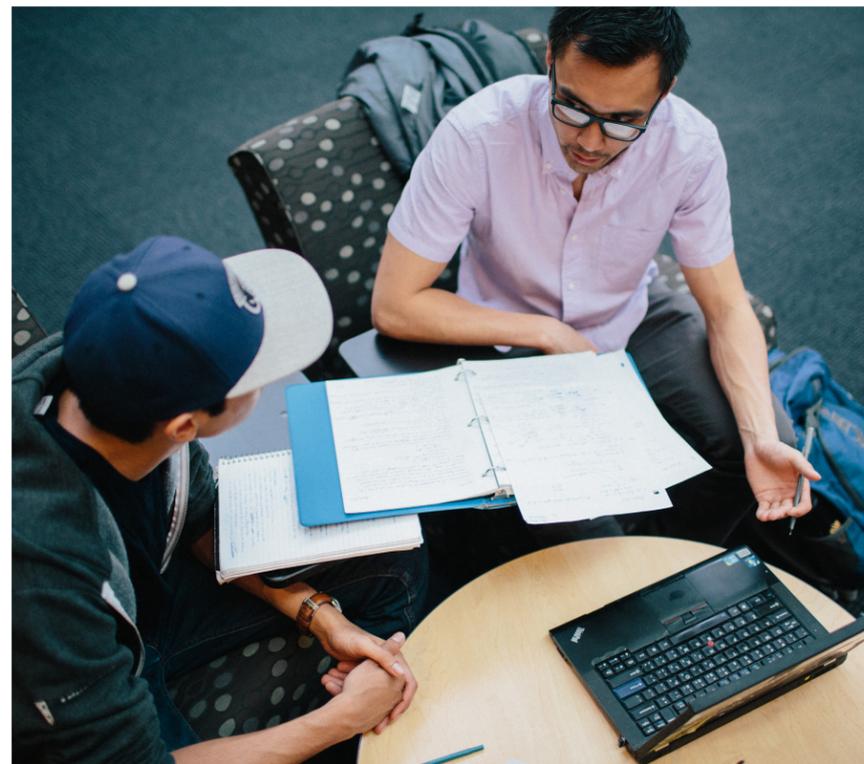
## Faculty

Instructors are instrumental in accomplishing this work. As experts in their discipline, they set the parameters for the course including the range of topics, format to explore, and attitudes towards learning. They place value on specific types of work as well as the approach students must take to accomplish exceptional performance. Selecting assignments and the proportion of marks can signal to students how important key components of learning are to the professor, institution, and discipline.

Professors initiate potential partnership with the Centre for Student Involvement and Careers by asking general questions or sharing specific project and vision for professional development in current or future courses.

## Students

Students are active participants in the learning process and can help to determine the need for this work. While often not directly involved in the planning, students are directly impacted by the paradigm that each and every instructor brings to their discipline and the classroom setting.



## Career Educators

Enhance the classroom learning by surfacing and illustrating the existing career potential that students encounter within their coursework. Career Educators offer expertise in career development theories, methodologies, and tools with grounded in evidence-based practice, and they can support the design of lesson plans, activities and assignments in order to achieve outcomes set out by the faculty member. Staff can dedicate time to deliver and assess as determined by the faculty member.



# How to Get Started

## 1. Talk to a professor doing this work:

- a. Jason Read, Senior Instructor  
Faculty of Medicine, Department of  
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- b. Pete Ostafichuk, Professor of Teaching  
Faculty of Applied Science, Department of  
Mechanical Engineering
- c. Verena Griess, Assistant Professor  
Faculty of Forestry, Forest Management

## 2. Talk to a career educator:

- a. Kimberley Rawes, Career Educator
- b. Shagufta Pasta, Career & Experiential  
Learning Educator (Faculty of Arts)  
Centre for Student Involvement and Careers

## Additional Reading

Evans, K., Guile, D. & Harris, J. (2011). Rethinking work-based learning: for education professionals and professionals who educate. In M. Malloch L. Cairns & K. Evans *The SAGE handbook of workplace learning* (pp. 149-162). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lopez, S. J., & Louis, M. C. (2009). The principles of strengths-based education. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4).

Ostafichuk, P., Hodgson, A., Bartek, S., & Naylor, C. (2010, June). Teaching Team Dynamics: Experiences in Second Year Mechanical Engineering Design. In *Proc. CDIO Conference (Montreal, QC, 14-17 June, 2010)*.

Ostafichuk, P. M., Sibley, J., & Van Der Loos, H. M. (2012). Peer-to-peer assessment in large classes: A study of several techniques used in design courses. In *American Society for Engineering Education*. American Society for Engineering Education.

Sibley, J., & Ostafichuk, P. (2015). *Getting started with team-based learning*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Valley, W., Wittman, H., Jordan, N., Ahmed, S., & Galt, R. (2017). An emerging signature pedagogy for sustainable food systems education. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 1-14.

## Practical Tools:

- Icebreakers - facilitate effective introductions, networking, and class expectations.
- Overview of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT) - provides useful background information.
- 50 CATs by Angelo and Cross - ideas and instructions for in-class activities.
- Most Significant Change - technique for monitoring and evaluating learning.
- Team Based Learning - resources, videos, and book for developing teams in class.

