

Strategies for Developing, Managing, and Evaluating a Successful Career Course for 45 Years

By

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Introduction

If you teach a college career course and want to improve it, if you have thought about developing a career course, or if you want to evaluate your course and obtain more resources for it, this paper focuses on five learning outcomes for you:

1. strategies for developing a credit career course bridging academic and student affairs;
2. staffing a course with professional staff and graduate students;
3. using academic unit terms for course support, e.g., student credit hours, lab fees, performance contracts;
4. incorporating course research projects for faculty and graduate student activity; and
5. institutionalizing the course to promote college goals, e.g., increased graduation rates, reducing student uncertainty about academic and career plans.

This paper begins with the (a) history and description of our course, and then focuses on the topics of (b) designing and developing a career course, (c) staffing and managing a career course, and (d) evaluating the course and institutionalizing it as a career intervention.

The career course (<http://career.fsu.edu/students/plan-your-career/sds-3340-introduction-to-career-development>) at our university has been in continuous operation since 1972, now 45 years. We are aware of nothing like this elsewhere. Along the way we have learned many things about career courses and want to share them with others because career courses are highly effective interventions, students pay for them, they are cost-effective, and they represent an institutional commitment to career services for students. Here are some of our ideas.

Course History and Description

History

Florida State University's career planning course was initially developed by two business management professors in the late 1960s. They developed a series of career seminars which led to BSA 415 Career Planning and Occupational Choice. During the summer of 1972,

these professors were recipients of an FSU Council for Instruction grant to revise BSA 415, and in the process they consulted with staff in the university counseling center and the career planning and placement office. Lee and Anthony (1974) described this work in the *Journal of College Placement*.

In 1973, the Vice President for Student Affairs directed the Career Planning and Placement Center to assume the prime responsibility for the course beginning in 1974 with continuing support provided by the School of Business. Along the way, a further revision of the course was undertaken by student affairs staff in conjunction with staff in the University's newly created Academic and Career Advising Services program. Working for about three months, the revised course was offered for the first time in the Winter Quarter 1975. The course, cross-listed through Counseling and Human Systems in the College of Education, was offered as BSA 319/PCB 319: Career Planning. Subsequent revisions of the course were undertaken in 1977 and 1980. Reardon and Regan (1981) reported very positive student evaluations of the course, especially the course organization and the level of student-instructor interaction.

Another revision of the course was undertaken in late 1984 and continued through 1986. The purpose was to enrich class activities and broaden the course's conceptual base with regard to individual, career, and family systems. At the invitation of Catalyst, the national not-for-profit organization that worked to develop career and family options, materials from the Catalyst Campus Resource were incorporated into what was now MAN 3935 Career Planning (Gerken, Reardon, & Bash, 1988).

In 1987, the course was expanded to seven sections offered through the Colleges of Business, Education, Social Science, and Arts and Sciences. The Department of Human Services and Studies in Education was the academic home for the course, and offered two sections primarily for rehabilitation services and undecided majors. One section (management) was available to any major, three sections were primarily for political science, social science, and economic majors, and one section was for arts and sciences students. Because the course was supported by the College of Education and required in an undergraduate major, the course prefix, number, and title were changed in fall 1989 to EGC 3000 Introduction to Career Development. In the fall of 1993, the course prefix and number were changed to SDS 3340 to comply with Florida university system common course numbering requirements.

The most recent revision of the course, begun in 1993 and completed in 1999, involved the development of the first edition of the text (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2000) edition of the text, followed by the second (2006), third (2009), fourth (2012), and fifth (Reardon, Lenz, Peterson, & Sampson, 2017) editions. This work featured the application of CIP theory (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004) in career problem solving and decision making and was developed by a team of researchers at FSU.

Description

Career courses are important tools for ensuring student success and documenting learning outcomes and can address a variety of goals and objectives (Osborn, 2016). Our course bridges academic and student affairs; is theory-based, supported by research, managed and staffed by the career center; and enrolls 375 students annually in 12 sections. SDS 3340 Introduction to Career Development is based on cognitive information processing (CIP; Sampson et al., 2004) theory and RIASEC theory (Holland, 1997; Reardon & Lenz, 2015). The course is a jointly funded venture of FSU's College of Education and the Career Center (CC). The CC Library and other resources function as a course laboratory.

The course outcomes include

- learning the importance of being purposefully responsible and active in the life/career planning process;
- understanding how personal characteristics, e.g., interests, skills, influence career development;
- becoming aware of the changing global economy and how it impacts individual and family career systems; and
- learning about and using job search strategies and skills.

Course activities include self-directed study, completion of written assignments and assessments, reading current literature on career planning, and participation in class and small-group discussions. Individual consultations with course instructors and career center personnel are encouraged.

Students completing all three course units and activities experience more than 50 career interventions. The course credit hour costs are \$648 (FL) or \$2,163 (not FL) for the full three-credit course, something fairly unique among career interventions in that students pay for it at the outset. The course is team-taught by several instructors with training in career development

theory and practice. One team member serves as the instructor-of-record (“lead instructor”), and one is identified as the primary contact for each student. During the first week of class, all students complete a performance contract in consultation with an instructor (See Figure 1). Credits of 1-3 hours covering units I, II, and/or III are selected depending on student interests and instructor consent.

Insert Figure 1 Performance Contract about here

Designing and Developing a Career Course

Career courses are quite varied in design, scope, and function (Reardon & Fiore, 2014). Some are offered for credit, others are not; credit courses range from 1 to 3 hours, and some are variable credit. Some are designed for entering first year students and others are designed for upper division students already in their majors. Some courses are elective and others are required in a major. Some courses are highly structured and others are more open-ended in format. Some courses focus on self-assessment and career planning, and others include knowledge about labor markets, employing organizations, and employment. Some courses are offered in a more stand-alone format, and others are fully integrated into ongoing career services programs available on the campus. Some courses are taught by career advising and counseling staff and others are taught by regular faculty.

A recent syllabus for our career course includes a detailed description and is posted at http://www.career.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu746/files/Spring2017_SDS3340_TR_Final_0.pdf. Many questions about our course are answered in this syllabus which is designed to provide information for both students and professionals. A review of the syllabus reveals how an institutional commitment to this career intervention was made over a period of 40 years, how the course reflects a systems approach involving both academic and student affairs at FSU, and how faculty and students have used the course to document course management and evaluation reported in professional journals and other publications.

Table 1 provides a detailed list of considerations in developing a career course, and we believe it serves as an essential checklist in planning for such a course. We highlight several key questions and considerations in the paragraphs below.

1. Are top administrators, in both academic affairs and student affairs, supportive of a career course in terms of funding, staffing, and administration? What is the source of initial course funding? How will revenue generated by the course be used and who will decide?
2. Will both student and academic affairs offices support the course in terms of space, staff resources, funding, and support personnel?
3. What career courses already exist at the institution and what is the nature or purpose of such courses, e.g., Careers in Criminology, Careers in Psychology? What is the history of career courses on the campus? How will a new course impact those courses practically and politically?
4. Is there a need for a specialized course, e.g., students in a particular major, class level, or a comprehensive course?
5. Are there targeted student groups for a career course intervention, e.g., first generation college students, athletes, undecided majors?
6. What type of data (both internal and external to the institution) can inform course design and development, e.g., student, employer, parent surveys, legislative priorities?
7. What person or persons will provide sustained leadership for the course, manage it, evaluate it, and revise it as needed?
8. Will the career course be large enrollment, face-to-face, team-taught, offered each academic term, available for distance learners?
9. Are there faculty on campus interested in the vocational behavior and development of college students? Could the course support their research or instructional assignments?

Answers to these questions and others can inform the design and development of a career course at the college level. In our experience, responses to these questions and considerations may take many months to be forthcoming, but all nine topics have implications for the long term development, management, and evaluation of a career course.

 Insert Table 1 Considerations in Developing a Career Course about here

Staffing and Managing a Career Course

We have encountered a number of course issues over the years that required attention. In this section, we identify some of those challenges and describe some of our solutions for them.

Staffing. In our experience, many students in a career course often require individual attention because of the nature of their career problems and decisions. With an enrollment of 28-35 students in a typical class, this can be overwhelming for a single instructor and result in burnout. This is magnified if multiple sections of the course are taught over the course of a year by the same instructor. Our strategy for dealing with this problem has been to team-teach the course with a variety of staff, including graduate students pursuing careers in counseling and higher education, and professional staff in academic and career services. In some instances, the graduate students obtained course credit for supervised teaching or internship provided by the lead instructor, a professional staff member, or a doctoral student with course experience. In our course, co-instructors work most intensely with 7-8 students with rotating responsibilities for full class presentations. In any semester, then, up to 20 different instructors are involved in staffing 5 course sections. In this way, no single person had total responsibility for addressing the needs of students in the class.

A recent development in our center is the creation of a teaching line that will have responsibility for covering 1-3 sections as the lead instructor, but these sections will still include co-instructors. This person will be supervised by the Career Center program director who has primary oversight for the course.

Instructor manual. This team-taught teaching arrangement necessitated providing instructors with a detailed course manual (available in both print and electronic formats from the text publishers), and access to PPTs and other materials used in the course, which are maintained on a shared computer drive. We learned it was important for each course section to follow the standard syllabus regarding attendance, grading, tests, and such. Sometimes issues arose when a team member deviated from teaching procedures in a class or across classes. While some creativity was curtailed for instructors teaching the class, it was more important to standardize the course procedures across sections and across terms, especially with regard to course research activities, which are discussed in more detail in a later section of this paper.

Variable credit. Our career course is comprehensive in scope, but some lower division students interested in career and self-exploration may be less ready for instruction related to job

hunting and employment. In order to accommodate these diverse needs, our solution was to make the course repeatable and variable credit in nature, with the three units each having one credit hour. Students could take Unit I for self and career exploration in the freshman year and the other two units later as upper division students. Or, if students wanted, they could take all three units for three credits at one time. Most students choose this option.

Performance contract. Figure 1 shows the performance contract that is explained when students come to the initial class. This contract shows students what learning activities are included in each course unit, how many points are assigned to each completed activity, and the topics covered in each unit. The performance contract allows students to see what activities and points are available for different course activities, and how completion of these relate to final course grades.

Cost recovery. The instructional costs for SDS3340 include stipends for graduate students teaching the course and other expenses. Graduate students serving as lead instructors receive a \$1,500 stipend and co-instructors receive a stipend of \$750. Career center staff teach the course as part of their assigned duties and are not given a salary supplement. Funds for graduate students teaching the class over the past nine semesters have ranged from a low of \$2,350 during the summer semester, when there are only two sections, to a high of \$9,750 during fall and spring semesters when there are five sections. Total costs for stipends have ranged from \$17,300 to \$21,000 annually for 12 sections over the past three years. Funding for course instructors is provided primarily by an arrangement with the College of Education (see section on Cost Recovery later in this article). The Career Center makes “in-kind contributions” to support costs for printing course handouts and tests and computer system and assessment report printouts. It also arranges for classroom space and responds to public queries about the course.

The course generates income from registration and laboratory fees paid by students that contribute to university funding. As noted earlier, this three-credit course costs Florida students \$648 and non-Florida students \$2,163. Students also pay a university-approved laboratory fee of \$20 at the time of registration which is used to cover some class assessments (e.g., Self-Directed Search, Career Thoughts Inventory). Assuming 70% of the 375 students enrolled annually are Florida residents, this means that the course generates \$170,100 from in-state enrollees and \$243,337 from out-of-state students, a total of \$413,437 annually, or \$420,937 including the lab fee. In addition, graduate students registering for supervised teaching or internship credit pay a

course fee that adds to the course generated income. This money is absorbed into the university budget and administrative decisions are then made about returning some portion of these funds to reimburse course instruction expenses. The economic resources generated by a career course like ours can be significant and the challenge is to direct these resources back into the instructional costs.

Textbook. After 28 years teaching our career course, we published the first edition of our textbook in 2000. We had assembled a working textbook for the course by using articles and other documents reproduced and bound by local copy service vendors. However, this became more difficult because of problems obtaining permission to use copyrighted materials and we had concepts and ideas that we wanted to include in the text in a more formal and regular way. The most recent editions of the text and instructor's manual have been custom-published by Kendall-Hunt (Reardon et al., 2017; <https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/career-development-planning-comprehensive-approach>), and copies of the text and instructor's manual are provided free to all instructors. This 5th edition also includes an e-text for half the price of the printed text (we estimate that 85% of students chose the printed book during the first semester of use).

Research

Ten research articles by 19 authors have appeared in refereed journals describing successful course outcomes. In addition, Table 2 shows a list of 24 studies conducted by 30 different researchers using data from our career course. In order to better manage research related to our course, we worked with the FSU Institutional Research Board (IRB) and created an archival research data source that can be used to document the course's impact. This allows course staff to regularly collect data each semester for further analysis and use in studies of college student vocational behavior.

Insert Table 2 about here

In summary, we have found that many issues related to a career center using a career course to provide career services can be novel and unfamiliar to staff in student affairs, although they may be familiar to those in academic affairs. We will examine some of these more fully in the next section of this paper.

Evaluation and Institutionalization

This section examines reports on the evaluation of career courses in general and our career course more specifically. These reports are categorized in terms of outputs and outcomes. This section concludes with a review of career course outcomes that might positively affect the long term institutionalization of the course in a higher education setting.

Evaluation

A review of the impact of college career courses can be framed in terms of accountability, or the outputs and outcomes of this career intervention. *Outputs* refer to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes acquired by participants as the result of an intervention (Peterson & Burck, 1982; Sampson, 2008). Specific examples include more positive career thoughts, increased career decidedness and career decision self-efficacy, vocational identity, internal locus-of-control, and career maturity. In contrast, *outcomes* refer to the resultant effects occurring at some later point in time. Examples of potential career planning course outcomes are job performance ratings, course satisfaction, level of personal adjustment, deciding on a major, timely graduation from college, and cumulative GPA. In a study that compared career course participants to non-course participants over an eight-year span, Hansen (2015) found that career course students graduated with higher GPAs than the comparison group.

In spite of the variability in career course design and operation, there is overwhelming evidence that career courses have a positive impact on the cognitive functioning of students, and these courses also appear to have a positive impact on student outcomes, including satisfaction with career courses, increased retention in college, and improved graduation rate. Reardon and Fiore (2014) reported that out of 64 findings involving career course outputs only 6 failed to show a positive impact of a career course, while 91% showed positive gains in vocational identity, career decision making, or other output variables. Similarly, 23, or 92%, of the 25 findings involving outcomes showed positive results.

To learn more about the output of our career course, Reardon, Leierer, and Lee (2012) analyzed student grades over a 26-year period in order to measure the class impact on student learning. The results revealed that 74% of the 6,176 students completing the course met the learning objectives of the course with a grade of B+ or higher. However, grades were lower toward the end of the 26-year period following the introduction of a career theory to the course and coinciding with the increasing use of the Internet in occupational research, and also varied

by semester. This study showed how grades could be used as a measure of career course learner outcomes and demonstrated a logical and practical method for studying a career course.

Reed, Reardon, Lenz, and Leierer (2001) evaluated the impact of our career development course on negative or dysfunctional career thoughts with a pretest, midterm, and posttest administration of the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI). Results indicated that students completing this course reduced their negative thinking relative to career planning. Indeed, the largest decreases in negative career thoughts occurred with students scoring highest on the pretest (most negative career thoughts). Researchers concluded that this career course appeared to have a positive effect on reducing negative career thinking, which should lead to more effective educational/career problem solving and decision making.

To learn more about the academic credibility of our career course, Reardon and Regan (1981) compared scores from a standardized instrument in terms of (1) level of instructor involvement, (2) level of student interest, (3) amount of student-instructor interaction, (4) extent of course demands, and (5) level of course organization. No significant differences in mean scores were found between the university wide courses and the career planning course with regard to levels of instructor involvement, student interest, and course demands; however, the career course received higher ratings in amount of student-instructor interaction and level of course organization.

Why are career courses effective? Current best practices identify characteristics that career classes should follow: (a) structured approaches to the course appear to be more effective than unstructured approaches (Smith, 1981); (b) individual career exploration should be a cornerstone of the course (Blustein, 1989); and (c) five components (written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, in-session occupational exploration, modeling, and building support for choices within one's social network) are critical to the success of any career counseling intervention including a career course (Brown et al., 2003; Whiston & James, 2013).

However, this area of research is not without weaknesses. Spokane and Oliver (1983) examined research literature on career interventions and noted some of the problems that are also relevant to the evaluation of career courses: (1) the course content and duration are sometimes not clearly specified in the reports and vary widely across studies; (2) courses include multiple interventions, ranging from as few as 12 to more than 50; (3) course treatments are not all equally potent or effective, e.g., some are unstructured and some are highly controlled, some are

based on a single integrating theory and others are atheoretical; (4) output and outcome measures are not clearly linked to the treatment interventions; (5) student motivation to enroll in the course is not assessed; (6) possible differences among instructors are not investigated; and (7) investigators may have bias regarding preferred treatment outcomes.

Institutionalization

After a career course has been developed and operational, what strategies might be employed to make it a more permanent part of the institutional fabric, and ongoing program of the university? In this section we discuss some outcomes based on our experience that might support this process.

Commonness. Career courses are not uncommon in postsecondary institutions, particularly research universities. A NACE (2017) survey was sent to member schools in September 2016 and 705 members responded. NACE found that 35.5% ($n = 215$) of respondents offered a career class for credit, almost the same percent as in the 2014 survey. The mean and median numbers of classes offered were 7 and 3, respectively, and the mean and median numbers of students attending were 250 and 79, respectively. These courses were most frequently offered at doctorate-granting universities, 51.1 (Carnegie Classification).

Retention to graduation. Of special interest to many postsecondary institutions, career courses may have an important impact on increasing student retention to graduation (Lepre, 2007). Researchers estimate that between 20% and 50% of students enter their freshman year undecided about their major and future career and that between 50% and 70% of all undergraduates will change their major and future career plans at least once during college (Gordon & Steele, 2003). These “drop out” prone students may benefit from a career development course intervention that can reduce this dropout risk. State and federal initiatives to increase education and training of the workforce should be mindful of the importance of career interventions in achieving educational attainment.

Folsom, Peterson, Reardon and Mann (2004-2005) examined five-year outcomes for 544 students enrolled in our career course between 1989-90 and 1993-94 at our university. A comparison, matched sample of non-course students was drawn in terms of gender, race, high school GPA, class year, SAT score, and initial year of matriculation. Folsom et al. found no differences in academic data between the two groups with respect to graduation rate, time taken to graduate, cumulative GPA, or number of credit hours accumulated at graduation, but career

course students did have significantly fewer course withdrawals. Folsom et al. reported that career course participants graduated at a rate of 81% compared to 69% for students in general at FSU, and course participants graduated with markedly fewer credit hours than the general population of students (an average of 110 for course participants and 132 for the general population). This indication of higher rates of graduation and less credit hours taken to graduate by career course participants may have potential implications relative to institutional objectives for student retention and credit hour efficiency.

Reardon, Melvin, McCain, Peterson, and Bowman (2015) replicated and enhanced the study by Folsom et al. (2004-2005) using archival data obtained from the university registrar to examine how engagement in our credit-bearing undergraduate career course related to college graduation. Results suggested the course was one of four factors predicting graduation rates, including GPA, changes in major, and withdrawals. The study also found that traditional measures, SAT scores and high school grades, did not effectively predict graduation rates. Graduation rate in the career course cohort was higher than for the matched university cohort, despite the fact that course participants were lower on traditional indicators (e.g., GPA, SAT score) and represented a more diverse group. Reardon et al. (2015) concluded that offering career courses at the university level may be one factor to enhance graduation and to facilitate educational and career exploration. Similarly, academic and student affairs administrators should consider providing a credit career course such as the one described in this study.

Enrollment. Our course enrolled 386 students in the 2016-2017 academic year. Given the variable credit course feature, 277 (72%) enrolled for 3 credits, 56 (21%) for 2 credits, and 53 (19%) for one. Altogether, the course generated 996 student credit hours (SCH) for the year. If we assume that a full-time equivalent (FTE) instructor at the undergraduate level is expected to generate 250 student credit hours per year, this means that our career course could support the creation of 4.0 FTE instructor positions. [Readers can check to see if a similar FTE/SCH number is available at their institution.] Academic administrators realize that SCH are the financial “coin of the realm” in higher education, a means of converting student course credits to the equivalent of salary dollars. A career course generates financial resources for the institution, in addition to the fees that students pay when registering for the course.

Mission. A university's mission is sometimes described in terms of (a) teaching, (b) research, and (c) service. We believe that our career course is consistent with all three of these functions.

- (a) SDS 3340 provides instruction to over 350 students annually. In addition, graduate students can obtain supervised teaching or internship credit by serving as co-instructors for the course.
- (b) The course creates opportunities for faculty, staff, and graduate students to engage in research related to the vocational behavior of college students with more than 20 articles published.
- (c) Our course serves the university community by helping students clarify their educational goals and graduate in a timely fashion, linking academic and student affairs in a collaborative effort, and providing a career planning resource for at-risk students.

Many college students are under pressure to make career choices and find employment after graduation, but this can be a challenge for those with limited self-knowledge, and knowledge about occupations, fields of study, jobs, or decision-making skills. The comprehensive, theory-based career course described in this article helps all students learn a more positive, informed approach to career decision making, graduation, and the labor market. This evidence-based program intervention (Brown, 2015) could be adapted for use in many other postsecondary institutions, especially in research universities.

Summary

This article described the development, operation, and evaluation of a 45-year old career course intervention at a university. With administrative support from both student and academic affairs, a course such as this can lead to positive and important outcomes:

1. Increase knowledge about vocational behavior, labor market realities, and employability skills for hundreds of students annually;
2. Provide teaching opportunities for enhanced professional development of graduate students and the institution's academic/career advising staff;
3. Create a system to support scholarly research of vocational behavior by faculty and graduate students in the university;
4. Positively impact graduation and retention rates of an institution's undergraduates;

5. Generate institutional funding from registration fees and student credit hour production to recover costs of the course intervention at the university;
6. Support at-risk or other student populations in their educational and career planning; and
7. Institutionalize a career intervention for over four decades.

This career course program may merit replication in other colleges and universities with similar characteristics and needs. Such an event would be based on leadership from key university administrators and a commitment from career services staff.

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Table 1. Considerations for Developing a Career Course*

Initial Assessment

- Are there upcoming academic transitions that would necessitate or open the door for a career course?
- Would top university or personal goals be fulfilled through the addition of a career course?
- Would a career course help meet federal/state/regional institutional initiatives for career services?
- Is there a need for specialized or additional career support for specific student populations?
- Is there a need to supplement current career development offerings or services?
- What are the learning outcomes for the course?
- Can data from surveys or focus groups be used for institutional support?
- Are there existing career courses on campus that could serve as a model and/or duplication of effort?
- What is a potential timeline for implementing a course?
- Is a pilot version of a career course a possibility?
- To whom would a proposal for the course be distributed?
- What is the level of support for the career course relative to other courses?
- Is instructional consultation and support available on campus?
- Does the course academic “home” make a difference in course approval, marketing, or funding?
- What is the disposition of career services for such a course?

Potential Stakeholders & Resources

- Academic units/faculty?
- Academic advisors/Enrollment management staff?
- Student organizations? (e.g., student government association)
- Top institutional personnel? (President, Deans, Department Chairs, etc.)
- Parent/family organizations?
- Graduate students? (e.g., teaching assistants)
- Career services personnel?
- “First Year Experience” teachers?
- Local employers for internships, panels, and guest speakers?
- Resources (books, journal articles) on teaching career courses?
- Other career services professionals with experience teaching career courses?

Course Schedule

- How many times a year will the course be offered? How many sections?
- How many times will the class meet per week and for how long?
- What are the best times for students?
- What are the best times for instructors?
- What are the best times for facility use (e.g., classrooms, career center)?

Funding and Budget

- What institutional policies affect the collection and distribution of student fees?
- How will the course be funded? Internal or external? One source? Multiple sources?
- Could course costs be reduced through ties with existing programs (e.g., teaching assistants)?
- Are there “outside” grants or funding for career initiatives or special populations available?
- Are there rules regarding the distribution of funds generated by noninstructional staff?
- What plans are in place for course growth and future funding?

Course Structure

- Who is the class for? Entering or enrolled students? Open registration or targeted for groups of students? Who has priority? How is this determined?
- Will the course be an elective or a required course? Required in one or more majors?
- Will the class be offered for credit or noncredit? Variable credit?
- Is the course available through continuing education or for distance students?
- Is the class focused or comprehensive? (e.g., career exploration or just employability skills)
- Will the course be offered as an online option? Hybrid? Self-paced?
- Does the course meet general education requirements?
- Will the course be “a service” course (e.g., to supplement existing career counseling) or more focused on content (e.g., knowledge-based)?
- How large will the class(es) be?
- Will the class have an experiential learning component? (e.g., required internship)
- Who will teach the class? Regular faculty? Professional staff in counseling, career services, or advising? Graduate students? Adjuncts? Team-taught? Subject experts or guest lecturers?
- How do the institutional accreditation requirements impact who teaches the course, e.g., must have demonstrated content knowledge or years of experience?
- How will the course be marketed? To students? Academic advisors and professional student services staff? Faculty and academic departments? Orientation and new student programs? Web sites and links? Parents?

Theory & Assessment

- Will career theory be incorporated in the course?
- What theory/theories will be used? (e.g., single, nonexplicit, eclectic)
- What role will career assessments play in the course?
- Who will pay for assessments (e.g., students, department, etc.)?
- How will assessments be administered (e.g., print, online)? Who will administer and interpret them?
- Is there a group rate available for assessments through the publisher?
- How will be the student’s assimilation of theory be assessed? (e.g., journal, outcome assessment, research)

Career Center Connections

- To what extent will the career center serve as a “laboratory” for the course?
- To what extent will employers be connected? (e.g., recruiters used as guest presenters)
- How will the course be used to market career services and programs? (e.g., career fairs, workshops)
- Who will communicate with the career center regarding class needs?
- What career center events might affect usage or access to career center resources?

Course Materials, Activities, & Text

- Will the course materials be instructor developed vs. published materials?
- Will extra credit options be offered through the course? (e.g., complete a career portfolio)
- Will the majority of the completed assignments be in-class or out-of-class?
- Do course activities provide opportunities for a variety of learning styles?
- What types of learning activities are best for the population?
- How is the “buy-in” of students assured?
- What is the role of technology in the course?
- What is the use of library materials in the main college library or career center?
- What are the grading procedures (e.g., performance contracts, classroom tests)?
- Are the course materials validated in independent, refereed research reports?

- Do the course materials include products and activities with established validity and reliability?
- How is the campus course management system (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas) integrated into the course?

Course Evaluation

- Will there be student ratings of satisfaction and quality of instruction?
- Will the course have independent evaluators?
- Will the course use standardized instruments to assess outputs? (e.g., Career Thoughts Inventory)
- Will the course managers analyze retention/graduation rates over short and long term periods to assess course outcomes?
- Will there be a strategic review of course? How, when, and by who?
- How will research data be collected? To whom will it be distributed?
- How will course success and value be conveyed to stakeholders?

*Adapted from Ledwith, K., Freeman, V., Fiore, E., Lenz, J., & Reardon, R. (2014). A course for student success: Strategies for designing and delivering effective career classes. National Career Development Association, Long Beach, CA.

Table 2. Twenty-four Research Studies Using Data from the FSU Career Course, 2017-1981

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Figure 1

Performance Contract Summary

This course may be taken for variable credit (1, 2, or 3 hours) and it may be repeated for up to 3 hours maximum credit. The three credit/unit options are described below. This contract is to be negotiated between a course instructor and student during the first 4 weeks of the course. The learning activities listed under each unit below will complete objectives for the unit. An asterisk (*) indicates that the learning activity was also assigned in a previous unit and does not have to be repeated. Plus/minus letter grades are assigned on the basis of the percentage of points earned for the course units contracted, e.g., A = 90-100% of 653 total possible points for 3 units (see Table below).

Unit I: Career Concepts and Applications, 1 hour (251 points)

- ___ Class Participation (10)
- ___ Attendance (26)
- ___ Chapter 1 Quiz (10)
- ___ Career Field Analysis (100)
- ___ Autobiography (20)
- ___ Self-Directed Search Interpretive Report (10)
- ___ FSU Career Portfolio Skills Activity (10)
- ___ SIGI₃ Computer Feedback Form (10)
- ___ FOCUS 2 Computer Feedback Form (10)
- ___ Career Thoughts Inventory (10)
- ___ Individual Action Plan (10)
- ___ Unit I Performance Test (25)

Unit II: Social Conditions Affecting Career Development, 1 hour (187 points)

- ___ Class Participation (10)
- ___ Attendance (12)
- ___ *Career Field Analysis (100)
- ___ *Autobiography (20)
- ___ 2 Information Interviews (20)
- ___ Unit II Performance Test (25)

Unit III: Implementing a Strategic Career Plan, 1 hour (215 points)

- ___ Class Participation (10)
- ___ Attendance (20)
- ___ *Autobiography (20)
- ___ Strategic Academic/Career Plan Project (100)
- ___ Resume (15) and Cover Letter (5) [Final copies]
- ___ *2 Information Interviews (20)
- ___ Unit III Performance Test (25)

Optional Course Activities

- ___ Research Participation (variable points depending on activities)
- ___ FSU Portfolio Skills Extra Credit Activity (a maximum of 15 points per extra credit option)
- ___ Extra credit career learning activity (5 points)

SDS 3340 B C D

Plus/Minus Grade

Distribution Range

Table A

Letter +	-----	568-587	503-521	438-456
Letter Only	607-653	542-567	477-502	411-437
Letter -	588-606	522-541	457-476	392-410