

## TEACHING STUDENTS TO PACK THEIR OWN CHUTES

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult tasks facing most of our students is the choice of an aviation career path and the best approach in pursuing their goals. Too often, at many schools, students are more or less left to "scramble" for themselves in conjunction with the campus placement office in order to obtain whatever information may be available. There is usually a considerable amount of wasted time and effort; students who are improperly prepared for the process of job and career choice often make many mistakes and experience a great deal of frustration in their efforts to make the transition from the campus to the world of work.

At Broward Community College, this has been a problem which has been approached in various ways over the years, usually on a rather informal and generally disorganized basis. Up until a couple of years ago, the approach was to have one or two Career days in which students were invited to attend career discussion panels made up of industry representatives. During the spring term recruiters were invited to visit the campus and students signed up to be interviewed at selected times. Occasionally, one or more guest speakers were invited to our aviation classes or to an Alpha Eta Rho meeting to talk about career opportunities in various aviation fields. However, this was largely on an ad hoc basis, typically at the initiative of a professor or someone in the career center. Attempts at facilitating the process of orienting students for campus recruiters and alternative career choices were at best only marginally satisfactory because the approach had been consistently on a more or less unplanned basis.

Recognizing this, the director of the career center, working with a number of department chairs representing various career fields, developed two elective

courses designed to assist students in making career choice decisions. Since the fall of 1980, these courses have been offered on a regular basis during the fall and winter terms.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the principle features of these courses and to suggest how they might serve as a "model" for similar types of courses at other schools.

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

Under the sponsorship of the Career Center, Broward Community College offers two courses designed to assist students in making career choice decisions. The course titles and descriptions are as follows:

##### SLS 1321 Career Planning Workshop - 2 semester hours

A course designed for students who desire help in choosing a career. Students will learn the on-going process of life/career planning through self-exploration and exploration of the world of work.

##### SLS 1341 Employability Skills - 1 semester hour

A course designed to teach the process of locating, applying for, and keeping a job.

The Career Planning Workshop course includes 30 class hours and is normally scheduled in three-hour blocks (meeting once a week) over the first ten weeks of the term. Employability Skills includes 15 class hours during the last five weeks of the term.

Both courses are conducted on a modified seminar basis combining lecture and discussion in order to encourage the maximum sharing of opinions, knowledge and

experience. Since the interchange of ideas is essential in career planning and developing employability skills, lectures are minimized and emphasis is placed on the seminar approach supplemented by facilitative exercises. The lecture portion serves to provide students with a conceptual framework for the subjects to be covered.

#### REQUIRED LEARNING AIDS

The Complete Job-Search Handbook by Howard Figler  
Holt, Rinehart and Winston - New York

The Self-Directed Search by John L. Holland  
Consulting Psychologist Press  
577 College Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94306

Helping You Explore Options  
American College Testing Program

#### REFERENCE MATERIAL

What Color is Your Parachute? by Richard N. Bolles  
Ten Speed Press  
Box 7123  
Berkeley, California 94707

The Quick Job-Hunting Map by Richard N. Bolles  
Ten Speed Press

Where Do I Go From Here With My Life? by John C. Crystal  
and Richard N. Bolles  
Ten Speed Press

Who's Hiring Who by Richard Lathop  
Ten Speed Press

Take Hold of Your Future - A Career Planning Guide by  
JoAnn Harris-Bowlsby, James D. Spivack and Ruth S.  
Lisansky - American College Testing Program

Choice or Chance by Harold N. Garner and Sandra L. Stark  
Gregg Division - McGraw-Hill Book Company

The following outline has been utilized as the courses have developed over the past several years:

### SLS 1321 CAREER PLANNING WORKSHOP

#### UNIT I - COURSE OVERVIEW (one session)

##### Unit Goal:

The student will understand the concept of Life/Career Planning.

##### Unit Objectives:

1. The student will be able to define career/life planning and apply this concept to his/her personal life.
2. The student will be able to describe the step-by-step process of rational career decision-making.
3. The student will be able to define "job," "occupation" and "career" and discuss the differences between these terms.
4. The student will be able to describe at least two theories of career/vocational development and be able to relate this to his/her personal development.

This session provides a broad overview of the course and the steps which students will take over the next ten weeks in mapping their career plans. Terminology is stressed. For example, a job is a group of similar, paid positions, needing some of the same qualities, in a single organization. Jobs are defined by an organization. Occupations on the other hand are a group of similar jobs found in different organizations. An aircraft pilot or mechanic are occupations. Of course, different pilots and mechanics in different companies in different industries do different things from day to day. A career is a sequence of major positions held by a person throughout his or

her pre-occupational, occupational, and post-occupational life. A position is defined as a group of tasks to be done by one person; in industry, these tasks are done for pay. A position is defined by which tasks are done, rather than by who does them. In this way, employers advertise for someone to fill the position of reservations clerk or cargo sales representative.

The lecture stresses attitudes and positive thinking. The theme is that students individually must make the primary effort to choose a career path. (They must pack their own chutes.)

## UNIT II - SELF-ASSESSMENT (three sessions)

### Unit Goal:

The student will become aware of his/her personal characteristics and self-concept.

### Unit Objectives:

1. The student will have acquired the ability to:
  - a. define the concepts of values and identify his/her top five (5) values in each category - personal, career and lifestyle ranked in priority order.
  - b. define the concept of interests and identify a minimum of five (5) interests ranked in priority order.
  - c. define the concept of skills and identify a minimum of five (5) skills ranked in priority order.
2. The student will be able to explain how his/her self-concept affects career choice.
3. The student will be able to integrate the identification of occupations by interests, skills and abilities and develop a list of occupations for personal exploration.

Self-assessment is one of the most important aspects in the career planning process. Students must evaluate who they are and what they have to offer - much the same as a company would do in marketing a new product. Included in this process is the identification and clarification of values, feelings, skills and creativity. The emphasis here is being honest with oneself in evaluating strengths and weaknesses and deciding what factors may become the key to success. Self-assessment is largely a process of clarifying and articulating ideas students may have already had, but hold in a fuzzy or ambiguous form.

Finally, as part of these personal analysis sessions, the student begins to focus in on occupations which are consistent with his/her self-assessment inventory and worthy of career exploration.

#### Unit Requirements:

Students are required to write a comprehensive report following the self-assessment unit in which they prepare an inventory of themselves. In the report they must identify and clarify the highest priority rewards and satisfactions they hope to obtain in their career, discriminating among competing opportunities. Additionally, they must identify and label their most prominent strengths or abilities and choose the ones they most enjoy using in work situations. Finally, they must translate their self-assessment into an action plan by focusing in on occupations to set the stage for first hand exploration.

### UNIT III - CAREER EXPLORATION (four sessions)

#### Unit Goal:

The student will learn the strategies used in career exploration and the options available in the world of work.

Unit Objectives:

1. The student will learn the process of occupational research, including the utilization of written sources and the information interview.
2. The student will be able to identify a minimum of ten (10) sources of career information.
3. The student will be able to use the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the Dictionary of Occupational Titles to compile at least three (3) career research reports.
4. The student will be able to explain the concept of career families or clusters.

This is the detective stage in which students develop their research skills in acquiring:

- (a) printed material sources - selecting readily available published materials to obtain data about a target employer, an industry, or a given individual they hope to meet. Aviation students frequently utilize such sources as the World Aviation Directory, company annual reports, ARCO guides to careers in transportation, and other career guides found in the library in preparing their reports.
- (b) prospect lists - students learn the techniques of creating contacts by establishing relationships with people who can refer them to other people in building a comprehensive list of people, organizations, and situations that seem most likely to offer the kind of work they desire.

In our area, students have contacted and attended meetings of such organizations as the Greater Miami Aviation Association and the Aviation Task force of the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce.

(c) interviews and observing employees at work - obtaining information and insight directly from people in careers the student desires to enter; gathering data about an occupational field or a specific employer; and learning what questions to ask and how to conduct the entire exchange. Because of the variety of aviation sources in our area - the airlines (all levels), manufacturing, general aviation (including corporate aircraft operators), aviation insurance and banking, airport authorities as well as federal and state aviation careers - our students have had little difficulty in setting up interviews with various individuals.

Unit Requirements:

Students are required to write a report on each of the three aforementioned areas which must include their plan of action and the results of their career exploration into the real world. Each report is reviewed and critiqued in class towards the end of this unit.

UNIT IV - THE DECISION-MAKING AND GOAL-SETTING PROCESS (two sessions)

Unit Goal:

The student will understand the processes of decision-making and goal-setting and develop a Personal Career Action Plan.

Unit Objectives:

1. The student will be able to list and explain the steps in the decision-making process.
2. The student will be able to define the term 'goal,' explain the procedures used in setting goals, and list the characteristics goals should possess.

3. The student will develop his/her own Personal Career Action Plan, including making a tentative career decision and setting short-term and long-term goals for him/herself.
4. The student will be able to describe the specific action steps necessary to reach his/her goals.

Students have clarified their occupational objectives following the self-assessment and career exploration units. Now it is time to set goals to reach their objectives. Short-term goals include those steps which the student expects to take within a time frame to get his/her first job. Long-term goals include those steps necessary to reach longer-term objectives - perhaps in five or ten years in the career/life planning process.

Unit Requirements:

Students are required to prepare a Personal Career Action Plan including short-term and long-term goals necessary to reach his/her short-term and longer-term objectives.

SLS 1341 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

UNIT I - COURSE OVERVIEW (one session)

Unit Goal:

The student will understand the concept of employability skills.

Unit Objectives:

1. The student will be able to describe the nature of the job market and explain the concept of the "hidden job market."
2. The student will be able to describe the steps in the hiring process.

The first session of this follow-on course is devoted to strategies in locating the first job and steps involved in the hiring process.

## UNIT II - THE HIRING PROCESS (three sessions)

### Unit Goal:

The student will learn the skills necessary to become a successful job seeker.

### Unit Objectives:

1. The student will be able to explain the purposes of a resume, compare and contrast the chronological and functional resume, and compose a personal resume for a specific job.
2. The student will be able to explain the purposes of a cover letter and compose a cover letter for a specific job.
3. The student will thoroughly and properly complete a job application and be able to identify three errors commonly made on applications.
4. The student will be able to describe the interview process, explain interviewing tips, and demonstrate successful interviewing skills in class during mock interviews.
5. The student will arrange one mock interview with a prospective employer.

The three sessions included in the hiring process are extremely important. The first, and part of the second session, is devoted to the preparation of resumes, cover letters and applications. The cover letter is, in some ways, more difficult to write than the resume. It must be persuasive, professional, and interesting. Ideally, it should set the individual above and apart from the other candidates for the position. The remaining two sessions are devoted to the interviewing process in preparation for a mock interview with a prospective employer.

### Unit Requirements:

Students are required to prepare a resume, cover letter and application for a

position. In addition, they must write a report covering their mock interview with a prospective employer. Included in the report is an evaluation form completed by the employer. Students must objectively analyze the interview with regard to the questions asked, the answers given, their overall presentation, and the interviewer's response (interest, boredom, etc.) to specific points.

### UNIT III - JOB MAINTENANCE SKILLS (one session)

#### Unit Goal:

The student will learn the skills necessary to be a successful employee on the job.

#### Unit Objectives:

1. The student will be able to identify the characteristics of a satisfied and dissatisfied employee.
2. The student will be able to list and explain at least ten ideas for the career advancement process.

The final session in this course is devoted to working effectively as an employee and exploring opportunities for advancement. Generally, one or two recent graduates from one of the technical programs are invited to this session to share with students their experiences on their first job and how they made the transition from school to the world of work. Their presentations are well received by the students since they are able to identify very closely with the students' current apprehensions as they approach the job market.

This final session also includes a brief summary lecture which emphasizes again that students themselves must approach their first job and their long-term careers in a professional manner.

## COURSE EVALUATION

The response from our aviation students who have taken these courses has been overwhelmingly favorable. Virtually every student who evaluated the courses thought they were of great benefit to him/her personally. A number of students commented to the effect that the courses should be required for all students in our aviation programs. Although we do not contemplate making these courses required, there seems to be little doubt that a considerable number of our students will sign up for them on an elective basis in the future, particularly if they are planning to enter the job market upon completion of their Associate Degree.

We will continue to encourage our aviation students to consider taking these courses on an elective basis because we feel that a systematic approach to career exploration and job hunting greatly improves their chances of finding a rewarding career opportunity in these competitive times.