

New Course Proposal

UNIV 422, Developing Your Professional Edge

University Career Services

9/25/2014

Description of Proposed Course

UNIV 422: Developing Your Professional Edge is a course that would simulate a professional work environment and provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate the desired workplace competencies outlined by the National Association of Colleges & Employers (NACE) and University Career Services' Employer Advisory Board. Our current UNIV 420: College to Career course provides students with information about how to find, pursue, and obtain positions aligning with their skills and interests, however there is not enough course time to focus on the skills students need to be successful *in* the position. Our proposed course would be a logical progression from our current career development courses and it would bridge the professionalism gap by helping students identify and practice the competencies necessary to excel in their first employment position after Mason.

To simulate the work environment, course participants will serve as student consultants to a University Life office and complete their assignments during the class period. The "client" (University Life office) will present students with a problem currently faced by staff members within the office and, over the course of the semester, students will meet with the client, analyze the presented problem, develop a solution, and deliver a presentation providing an overview of their solution. Examples of problems students might address with the client include increasing student engagement with client's office, attracting a specific student population to the client's office (e.g. freshmen, transfer students, etc.), or successfully marketing new programs/services to students.

The first hour of every class period will be dedicated to instruction on a professionalism topic such as aligning performance goals to organizational goals, communicating effectively with stakeholders, or delivering on project goals in a timely manner. Students will use the remaining class period to practice the concepts discussed through case studies, group discussions and written assignments which are due at the end of the class period. Below you will find a chart that outlines the differences between the learning outcomes for our current UNIV 420 and the proposed course.

Current UNIV 420: College To Career Learning Outcomes	UNIV 422:Developing Your Professional Edge Learning Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To identify and translate personal interests, values, and skills into meaningful career options2. To identify and effectively articulate your skills, experiences and strengths related to your career choice3. To research and commit to potential career choices and/or academic fields4. To develop a compelling professional resume5. To create a career search strategy that can/will be used upon completion of this course6. To present yourself effectively in an interview or conversation with a potential employer7. To develop a practical knowledge of independent living topics in anticipation of graduation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Apply basic consultation skills to diagnose and propose innovative solutions to a problem2. Develop a work-related informative/persuasive group presentation using presentation technology3. Improve communication skills through application of conflict management framework4. Identify and analyze the impact of group dynamics on successful completion of a task5. Demonstrate an ability to give, receive, and address constructive feedback6. Create appropriate business communication for the work environment7. Identify differences in workplace communication style and work style preferences8. Create and manage professional online image through appropriate use of social media9. Identify and engage in appropriate email, dining, networking, and phone behavior

Rationale for Proposed Course

As the cost of higher education rises, so does the focus on return on investment (ROI) for students. Positive career outcomes is one of the ways students evaluate the ROI of their college experience and because of this, the university's strategic plan has a major focus on Experiential Learning (Goal 1) and Career Readiness (Goal 2). This course supports the university's strategic vision by educating students about how to develop and demonstrate professionalism in the workplace.

Merriam-Webster defines professionalism as, "The skill, good judgment, and polite behavior that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well" and national surveys as well as research conducted by University Career Services (UCS) reveal many

students struggle to demonstrate the professionalism skills necessary to advance in the workplace. A recent survey of UCS's Employer Advisory Board (EAB) found the level of professionalism displayed by intern/entry level hires was a topic of conversation within the last 6 months in 93% of EAB member's companies and a 2013 study from Hart Research Associates found that only 44% of employers think recent college graduates have the skills necessary for advancement and promotion to higher levels within their company

Target Population

Our target population for this course is graduating seniors, especially seniors who have not participated in an internship related to their career interests. We believe the topics covered in the course as well as the consulting project will provide students with valuable information about the unspoken rules of the world of work and provide a unique experience they can highlight in a resume or during an interview.

Future Direction

In the future we would like the course to be more industry-focused and co-facilitated with employers from those industries in order to further simulate the work environment students will experience in the future.

In our research for this course we identified a similar course (NCLC 420: Skills for the Workplace). Although some content from our proposed course overlaps with NCLC 420, the courses differ in the following ways: asking students to serve as consultants to a university life office, focusing on graduating seniors as a target population, modules on creating and maintaining a professional online image, and a focus on professional dress and dining protocol for the workplace. We believe our course will provide an additional course option for students outside of New Century College and it is a logical progression for our current UNIV 320 and UNIV 420 course offerings. Attached you will find a copy of our supporting research as well as a copy of the syllabus.

We are committed to raising the baseline of student professionalism at George Mason University, and we believe this course will be a step in the right direction. Thank you for your time and attention to our proposal.