CAREER EXPLORATION AND PREPARATION FOR

COMMUNICATION STUDIES STUDENTS

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Career Exploration and Preparation for Communication Studies Students

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A degree in Communication Studies prepares students to successfully enter a wide variety of careers. However, the generalizability of this degree and wide breadth of potential careers can be overwhelming for students which may lead to a lack of career focus in Communication Studies students. This program was developed to ensure Communication Studies students are given the opportunity to seriously explore their personality and career interests while learning how to prepare for success post-graduation. Students will participate in a series of four workshops: Self-Exploration, Career-Exploration, Creating a Plan, and Career Preparation. Throughout these workshops students will engage in self and career exploration through assessments and class activities while also learning about campus resources available to aid in their career preparation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Students are attending institutions of higher education with the goal of increasing their earning potential post-graduation (Levine & Dean, 2012). Consequently, many college students today are practical and career minded. Many jobs and careers now require college degrees and students turn to college to prepare them to successfully launch a career upon graduation. Students believe in the power of a college degree to the extent that they are willing to take out thousands of dollars in student loan debt. They take out this debt planning to be able to pay it back with the salary they will earn once they graduate. Students make a major investment of time, money, and energy to obtain a college degree; unemployment after graduation is out of the question.

As this focus on employment among college students increases, so does the value put on vocational degrees. Consequently, non-vocational degrees, such as Communication Studies, are often looked down upon as impractical. Yet employers are looking to hire employees with strong communication skills (Adams, 2014). In fact, Communication Studies is incredibly broad and can be adapted to fit a wide variety of vocational interests. This broadness and adaptability can lead to confusion and lack of career focus among students. Students become overwhelmed by the wide array of options available to pursue and never focus in on a career interest. These students go through college and graduate without a clear career goal. This leaves them with a diploma and no clear career direction. Incorporating a career exploration and preparation program into the experience of Communication Studies students would merge the students' desire for a career focus with employers' desire for employees with strong communication skills.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create a program to ensure students in a Communication Studies academic program are provided the opportunity to explore career options and develop skills and experiences to be successful in beginning a career post-graduation.

Significance of the Project

This program was created to ensure students in a Communication Studies program were provided the opportunity to explore career options and develop skills and experiences to be successful in beginning a career post-graduation. Communication Studies programs do not have a specific career path tied to them and, consequently, are perceived as less valuable than vocationally based programs. In fact, Communication Studies programs are of extreme value. They teach students skills in communication, interpersonal relationships, and group dynamics. All of these skills are highly sought after in the workforce. Yet, recent graduates with a Communication Studies degree are facing high rates of unemployment and underemployment. A professional readiness program for Communication Studies students would equip them to successfully identify their desired career and take the necessary steps to obtain it.

Through this program students will explore their own personalities in relation to career interests. They will take personality assessments that allow them to match their personality traits to compatible careers. To gain exposure to different career paths, they will conduct research and job shadows on careers of interest. Once students identify their intended career path they will develop a plan for pursuing their chosen career. This plan will include lessons on constructing a resume and a cover letter, the importance of networking, internships and part time jobs, and on

campus involvement.   Overall, students will gain the ability to identify appropriate career paths for themselves and plan the steps necessary to reach their career goals.

Scope and Limitations

This program is intentionally designed to be taken in a progression. In order to gain the most benefit students should attend each workshop in sequential order. If students are unable to attend every session they would miss out on important components of the career exploration and preperation program. Further, the program would not be a requirement for Communication Studies students and students may choose not to participate based on other commitments or lack of interest. As a result, this program may experience low participation and completion rates. Low completion rates would create difficulty with assessment.

Definition

Communication Studies - An academic program focused on the study and application of human communication theories (Ball State University, 2015).

Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into four chapters. Chapter one will introduce the project, identify the purpose of the study, explain the significance, scope and limitations, offer definitions, and detail the organization of the paper. The second chapter includes the review of related literature that includes an overview of college students and careers, exploration of vocational development theory, a discussion on the role of career centers on college campuses, definition of Communication Studies as an academic program, and an overview of careers in Communication Studies. In chapter three the methodology and design of the professional readiness program will be outlined. Finally, chapter four will explain the implementation of the program at Ball State University.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Summary of the Project

Communication Studies is an academic program focused on the study and application of human communication theories (Ball State University, 2015). Students pursuing degrees in Communication Studies gain essential skills in group and interpersonal communication. The primary focuses of communication programs, and four of the top ten skills sought by employers are: ability to work in a team structure, ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside the organization, ability to obtain and process information, and ability to influence others (Adams, 2014). Communication skills are sought by virtually all employers, and the generalizability of the degree is often promoted as a selling point for a Communications Studies program. However, many programs lack career focus and exploration for their students (Cahn, 1978), resulting in low placement rates for Communication Studies graduates. Career centers on college campuses were created to help students gain the skills to successfully navigate their career paths (Schaub, 2012). Communication Studies students would benefit from a career exploration and preparation program sponsored by the Career Center.

A career preparation program is proposed in this project. The program consists of a series of workshops in which Communication Studies students participate during their undergraduate careers. The workshops are designed to help students identify compatible work environments, learn to research job opportunities and industries, build a professional network, create effective application documents, and develop interview skills.

College Students and Careers

Today's generation of college students is a practical, career-focused generation (Levine & Dean, 2012). Their main reason for attending college is to obtain a job and earn money. Sixty-seven percent of students reported the chief benefit of college to be an increase in one's potential earning power. Students also reported they expected college to provide them with career skills and knowledge; they are more interested in career obtainment than learning for learning's sake. Students are investing time, money, and energy into college with the expectation to obtain a career upon graduation.

In a 2013 survey, students indicated the top four things they desire in a job are opportunity for growth, friendly co-workers, job security, and a good benefits package (National Association for Colleges and Employers, 2013). Students indicated they want to enter their careers in places that offer advancement opportunities and job security. The majority of students surveyed desired a stable job to support their lifestyle more than they desired a job they are passionate about (Adecco, 2015). According to the same survey, 79% of students' main concern was to find a job and they felt confident they would have one within five months of graduation.

For many recent college graduates these expectations are not being met (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014). A study done for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found consistently higher unemployment and underemployment rates for recent college graduates (i.e., individuals with a Bachelor's degree between the ages of 22 and 27) compared to their past counterparts. Underemployment in this study was defined as employment in a job which normally does not require a bachelor's degree.

The traditional model of career services offered at institutions of higher education involves an understaffed office of career counselors meeting with students one-on-one to discuss

their careers or go over resumes and cover letters (Grassgreen, 2013). The students they meet with are primarily senior students who waited until their last year to think about their career path and job search. A survey conducted by the National Association of College and Employers (2014) found college seniors were more likely to seek help from the Career Center multiple times during their senior year. This model of career services does not provide services early enough in a student's college career to lead to success in today's challenging economy (Levine & Dean, 2012). For this generation of college students, career services should be integrated into their experience from day one of their college experience (Grassgreen, 2013). This approach requires the partnership of faculty and staff across campus to maintain a focus on career development throughout a student's entire college experience.

Vocational Development Theory

John Holland (1997) developed a career developmental theory based on application to an individual's life. Holland's theory answered three fundamental questions of career planning: what personal and environmental attributes result in successful career decisions and which do not, what personal and environmental attributes result in stability or change in the type and level of work a person does over his/her lifetime, and what methods are useful in addressing career uncertainty and problems? The answers to these questions can guide how college career centers provide career guidance to college students.

The theory identified six personality types people are characterized by: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). People exhibit personality traits and behaviors associated to the personality type most similar to themselves. Each personality type selects and processes information in different ways and possesses specific attitudes and skills for coping with environmental problems and tasks. An individual's attitudes

are compared with each of the six personality types to identify which type he/she most closely resembles. A personality pattern is then created by listing, in descending order, the degree to which he/she resembles each type. There are several methods for identifying a person's personality pattern, including scores on interest and personality inventories, choice of vocation, work history, history of pre-employment dreams, or a combination thereof.

The environments people live and work in can be characterized by the same six characteristics listed above for human personality types (Holland, 1997). Each environment is dominated by the corresponding personality type and characterized by physical settings resulting in special problems and opportunities. For example, a social environment is dominated by social personality types. An environment's model is determined by the percentage of each personality type represented within it. For example, an environment made up of primarily enterprising people is considered an enterprising environment. Similar to the personality types, every environment exists on a spectrum in which each model environment is represented to a certain degree.

Environments are created by people. People congregate with people of similar personality types and are drawn to problems aligned with their interests, competencies, and outlooks (Holland, 1997). People search for environments where they can utilize their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on compatible problems and roles. Individuals working in environments similar to their personality type have higher success and satisfaction in their vocation. For example, investigative people are more likely to be successful and satisfied in an investigative work environment. The search for an environment occurs both consciously and subconsciously over a period of time. The personality type demonstrates the way personal development mediates a person's goals and vocational choices.

Finally, Holland (1997) combined his findings to conclude that personality and environment interact to determine behavior. Personality types and environmental models can be used to predict outcomes. If a person's personality pattern and environmental pattern are known, predications can be made about the outcome of the pairing. These outcomes are vocation choice, job changes, vocational achievement, personal competence, and educational and social behavior.

The Role of the Career Center

College career centers provide support to students as they choose a major, learn about different career fields, and obtain internships and jobs (Schaub, 2012). Career centers provide a diverse array of services to meet the needs of students. They help students identify career options, research companies and industries, search for job opportunities, prepare documents, develop interview skills, and evaluate job offers. Most career centers meet these needs through four core services: career advising, instructional sessions and workshops, job and internship opportunities, and networking sessions. All of this is done to help students obtain career related opportunities post-graduation.

Student career development is an important factor in students' college success and career readiness (Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012). Academic major stability, time to degree attainment, and career readiness are dependent on students making informed career decisions. Many students are unaware of all options available to them and do not have adequate information regarding potential careers. They lack the skills, knowledge, and preparation necessary for successful career exploration and development. The large number of occupational options available to students today necessitates structured career exploration.

A typical career center is focused on job-search skill development to equip students with the ability to plan their careers purposefully (Collins 1998). Career interventions aid students in

developing realistic career plans aligned with the student's interests, values, abilities, and reflects the current job market (Habley et al., 2012). Such career plans have been shown to be equally as important as the academic major choice in a student's career preparation.

Career interventions are an effective way to help students choose careers (Brown et al., 2003). The effectiveness of the interventions depends on the inclusion of written exercises comparing occupations and planning for the future, individualized interpretation and feedback, world-of-work information, methods and models for occupations and decision making exploration, and activities designed to increase understanding of career choices and plans. Accuracy of self-knowledge, career-related knowledge, career exploration behaviors, decision-making skills, transferable career skills, and confidence in implementing career plans increases as a result of the interventions. Interventions including individual meetings with counselors or advisors and exploration of occupational information using information systems had a positive effect on a students' career planning.

Modeling and networking are also helpful tools in a student's career development (Gore & Hunter 2010). Modeling exposes students to individuals with experiences they can share to advance the student's career development. Service learning opportunities, internships, externships, and academic clubs are likely to increase the amount of adult role models in student's life. Opportunities to include models in career guidance should be sought out and implemented. Campus involvement, employment, and interaction with the resources of a career services office contribute to the development of students' networks. These networks will provide support and guidance through students' transition into their major and the workforce after graduation.

The purpose of career planning is to promote the ability to succeed in a changing world (Habley et al., 2012). It achieves this objective by expanding students' range of career aspirations, increasing his/her sense of direction and purpose, showing him/her the relevance of academics to the real world, and increasing his/her engagement in school and the opportunities he/she is offered.

Communication Studies as an Academic Program

The National Communication Association (2015) defined communication as the study of the process humans use to generate meaning from messages across a number of contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Social scientists, humanists, and critical and cultural studies scholars have all contributed research to the diverse discipline of communication. Studies regarding all forms of human communication make up the body of scholarship and theory presented in textbooks, electronic publications, and academic journals to contribute to the ever growing understanding of how people communicate. The discipline of communication is as broad as it is diverse; the National Communication Association listed 22 different topic areas within communication. Communication education scholars focus specifically on best practices to teach students to increase their communication knowledge and skills (Morreale, Backlund, & Sparks, 2014).

Communication education has existed since the beginning of human existence (Morreale et al., 2014). The teachings of rhetoric from the classical traditions of the Greeks and Romans provided the first examples of communication education. Writings that date back to ancient Greece clearly indicate the importance of instruction in rhetoric; the importance of this teaching continues to be emphasized by modern scholars. The development of society, the exchange of

ideas, and creation of law would not have been possible without communication. These attributes were dependent on the people's ability to communicate.

Formal instruction in oral rhetoric, or speech, appeared in American Higher Education with the creation of land grant institutions (Eadie, 2009). Speech education focused on teaching students to develop and support their ideals as they trained to be leaders in society. Speech programs were initially a part of English departments, however, tensions between English professors and Speech professors eventually lead to a divide between Speech and English departments. In 1914 Speech professors founded the National Communication Association and Communication Studies was formed as an academic study.

The U.S. federal government through the National Center for Education, categorized the programs of study taught to undergraduates with a system called the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The CIP identified four major sections within the field of Communication Studies. The first section, "Communication and Media Studies," described the liberal arts programs in the Communication Studies discipline. This section studied knowledge originating from theory development rather than from research on professional practice. The second section, titled "Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication," concentrated on professional application of Communication Studies in an occupation. The third section, "Journalism" also had an emphasis of professional education in journalism. Finally, the "Radio, Television, and Digital Communication" section is focused, from a technical standpoint, on the production of media content. These four sections come together to create the broad and diverse programs of study associated with Communication Studies programs taught in institutions of Higher Education.

Cultures and disciplines across the world have recognized the value and importance of communication education and have determined it to be a critical area of study (Morreale et al., 2014). A national study found communication education played a central role in the well-rounded development of students as people who engage socially and responsibly in the world (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). Communication education was also found to contribute to personal and career success.

Communication Studies encompasses a wide range of potential career paths (Cyphert, 2009). Consequently, preparation for professional careers in Communication Studies is not possible to define. In fact, virtually all professions require a certain degree of communication education. However, communication skills alone may not be enough to begin a career. Despite this, there are a few common patterns of professional preparation in Communication Studies.

Developing expertise is one pattern (Cyphert, 2009). This pattern consists of combining expertise from two different areas. For example, a degree in interpersonal communication matched with experience as a resident assistant could lead to a career in student affairs. Another professional pattern utilizes professional programs. It is possible to study communication relative to specific careers. Communication Studies degrees can be obtained in journalism, broadcast, public relations, photography, graphic arts, etc. These degrees have a more direct tie to specific careers. Extra-curricular activities and on the job training allow professional communicators to build content expertise. A third professional pattern in Communication Studies involves integrating communication into the disciplines. This includes offering career specific communication courses as a part of curriculum for other disciplines or participating in professional development opportunities provided by professional organizations to enhance

communication skills. Ultimately, no matter the path taken the ability to communicate well is essential to success in any career.

Underemployment and Unemployment among Communication Studies Graduates

Unemployment and underemployment rates are higher for those holding a degree in Communication Studies in comparison to all other recent college graduates (Abel et al., 2014). A study conducted to determine unemployment and underemployment rates for current college graduates from 2009-2011 found 60% of recent college graduates with a Communication Studies degree were unemployed or underemployed. The study found graduates with majors focused on general training over technical training were less likely to fare well after graduation than their peers in technical training majors. A clear link between academic major and post-graduation career success was found.

These findings may reflect a difference in the individuals who pursue different academic programs (Abel et al., 2014). It is possible students with higher innate skills and abilities select majors with better employment outcomes. Whatever the reason, better outcomes for Communication Studies students can be fostered. Career exploration activities and information regarding potential job fields should be provided to students early and often during their college career. This information may include common salaries and career paths for individual jobs. Fostering and expanding relationships between institutions of higher education and businesses would allow colleges and universities to better obtain this information and understand the needs and expectations of employers. Providing this information to students will aid them in choosing a major and focusing on skills to develop while in school.

Summary

Students enter colleges today expecting to gain skills and knowledge to begin careers upon graduation (Levine & Dean, 2012). Communication Studies programs provide valuable and relevant skills to their students. Despite this, students graduating with a degree in Communication Studies are struggling to start careers post-graduation (Abel et al., 2014). This is attributed to a general lack of career focus and support among Communication Studies departments. This lack of focus in the department can be compensated for by career centers. College career centers were created to provide support to students as they explore careers and prepare for life post-graduation (Schaub, 2012). Career exploration and preparation programs have proven to increase student placement. A program sponsored by the Career Center to help Communication Studies students become career focused will be beneficial in decreasing the unemployment and underemployment rates of Communication Studies graduates.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create a program to ensure students in a Communication Studies academic program are provided the opportunity to explore career options and develop skills and experiences to be successful in beginning a career post-graduation.

Methodology

Before developing the career exploration program for Communication Studies students, a review of the literature was conducted to understand the challenges students face in determining a career path and beginning a career post-graduation. The literature review explored college students and careers, vocational development theory, the role of the Career Center, Communication Studies as an academic program, and Communication Studies and careers. This information was collected from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reference handbooks, current student affairs online magazines, and professional organizations in the fields of career services and Communication Studies. This comprehensive review of the related literature provided a foundation for the rest of the program to be built upon.

The review of the literature was preceded by an examination of career exploration and preparation programs provided by other institutions of higher education. It was difficult to find career exploration programs for Communication Studies students, however, there were quite a few programs tailored towards business students. For example, the College of Business at the University of Northern Iowa provides their students with a professional readiness program designed to help students explore career options within the business industry and develop skills to successfully begin a career post-graduation (UNI Business, 2016). This program is separated

into four stages beginning with career exploration and ending with in depth job search and professional etiquette training. Business students at the University of Northern Iowa are required to complete two of the four stages in order to graduate (UNI Business, 2016). Ball State University offers an online career exploration module for undeclared freshman students called KEY Careers (Ball State University, 2016). This module focuses on career exploration and career path development. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in this module their freshman year, but not required. These are two different approaches to providing a career exploration and preparation program, but both focus on empowering students to prepare for success post-graduation.

The final step in the process was to determine what offices would be responsible for the implementation of this program. Two key stakeholders were identified, the Career Center and the Department of Communication Studies. The Career Center will create and facilitate this program. It is most logical for the Career Center to take charge because of the similar programs they already have in place. With the support of the faculty and staff in the Department of Communication Studies, the Career Center will modify the KEY Careers program to be relevant to Communication Studies students and presented in a workshop form rather than online.

Design of the Program

The career exploration and preparation program will be provided in a workshop format. The program is divided into four workshops provided to students over the first two years they are at the university. The workshops are designed to be taken in a sequential order. The first two should be taken during a student's first year and the second two during his/her second year. Each session will be provided multiple times per semester to insure accessibility by all students. The sessions will last no more than two hours and be facilitated by a professional from the

Career Center. The first session will focus on self-exploration. Students will complete a personality assessment to determine appropriate career matches. Session two will expand upon session one by providing more in depth career exploration. Students will learn how to research careers and identify potential jobs of interest. In the third workshop students will learn how to develop a plan for reaching their career goals. In the fourth and final workshop, students will gain basic knowledge about the job search, including resume building, cover letter writing, and interviewing.

Workshop One: Self-Exploration

Communication Studies students will attend the self-exploration workshop during their first semester of classes. This workshop will serve as an introduction to the workshops and inform students of the relevance and importance of career exploration and preparation throughout their entire college career. Students will also learn about the resources available to them at Ball State University. Students will be introduced to the career coaches and academic advisors who work directly with students in the Communication Studies program. The primary focus of this workshop will be on assessing students' interests. The workshop will be held in a computer lab to allow access to the *Interest Profiler* interest inventory.

During this workshop students will complete the *Interest Profiler* Short Form (Rounds, Su, Lewis, & Rivkin, 2010) interest inventory available at www.onetcenter.org/IPSF.html. This assessment is designed to measure each of the six Holland themes (discussed in Chapter 2) with ten items per scale. From this assessment students will gain valuable self-knowledge about their career interests, greater career awareness, and exposure to over 800 jobs within O*NET Online (National Center for O*NET Development, 2016). The *Interest Profiler* serves as a starting point for students to explore vocations of interest. It consists of 60 questions related to activities

people perform at work. Students will be asked to share how they feel about each activity on a five-point scale ranging from strongly dislike to strongly like. Students should only answer based on if they would like or dislike a certain activity. They should not consider their knowledge, skill level, or the earning potential for each activity. The workshop facilitator will encourage students to take their time as they complete the assessment. The *Interest Profiler* was designed to be brief and will only take students 10-15 minutes to complete.

After completing the interest inventory, students will receive a score for each Holland theme (My Next Move, 2015). High theme scores indicate a high interest in that theme. Students should focus on exploring their top three Holland themes. The facilitator will briefly discuss the six themes and encourage students to explore their top three themes via the links provided online with their results. To facilitate a student's self-exploration, the student will be asked to complete a worksheet requiring them to reflect on their top three Holland themes. Students will use the rest of the time to explore careers related to their interest themes via O*Net online. They will be required to submit a list of potential career interests before leaving the workshop.

Students who are interested in further self-exploration will be encouraged take the more extensive180 item *Interest Profiler* available in paper and pencil or a computerized format and schedule an appointment with their career coach to discuss their results.

Workshop 2: Career-Exploration

The Career-Exploration workshop will be attended during a student's first or second semester of classes. When they attend, they will be given back the list of potential careers they turned in at the end of the first workshop. This list will serve as a basis for the second workshop. Students will be asked to narrow the list down to their top three career interests. The facilitator

will discuss methods for learning more about career fields. Specifically, they will discuss the importance of networking and teach students how to effectively network with current contacts and use LinkedIn to expand their network. This workshop will also be held in a computer lab so students can create or update their LinkedIn Profiles. The facilitator will show students how to find people in their career fields of interest using the search tool on LinkedIn.

The facilitator will then introduce students to the concept of informational interviews. Informational interviews of people currently working in a student's area of interest are an excellent way for a student to gain relevant and helpful information on potential career paths (Burtnett, 2010). Students will identify potential contacts for their top three careers. These contacts could be people the student knows or professionals found via LinkedIn.   The student will be required to complete one informational interview for their top three career interests. These interviews would ideally be done in person, but can be done over the phone or via email. This activity will give students first hand insight into their career fields of interest. Students will submit a final report outlining KEY points from each interview and identifying their top career interest.

Workshop 3: Creating a Plan

Students will attend the third workshop during their second year of classes. This workshop will be a goal setting workshop. The reports students submitted after the second workshop will be given back. Students will reassess their reports and decide if they are still interested in the career path they identified after the informational interviews. If they are not, they will be encouraged to reevaluate their interests and have a discussion with their academic advisor or career coach. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym used for effective goal setting and stands for specific, measureable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely (Drucker, 1954). In this workshop,

students will also be introduced to S.M.A.R.T goals and asked to create short term and long term career goals.

Students will utilize information gained during the informational interviews to create specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, and time bound goals. This will allow students to reflect on where they are currently and the steps they must take to achieve their desired career. Students should focus on gaining relevant experience, networking within their desired field, and obtaining the necessary education. Students will create specific objectives to insure the implementation and success of these goals.

Workshop 4: Career Preparation

Finally, students will take the fourth workshop during their second year of classes. This workshop will equip students with basic job search knowledge including resume and cover letter construction and interviewing tips. The facilitator will present on each of those three topics and then students will put what they learned to work. Students will be asked to bring a description of a job in their interested career field to class. They will create a resume and cover letter for this job. Their final assignment will be to schedule an appointment with their career coach in the Career Center to review their resume, cover letter, and provide them with a mock interview for the selected job. Students will be encouraged to complete the appointment with their career coach by the end of their second year of classes. This workshop and activity will provide students with the confidence and ability to represent themselves to potential employers on a resume, in a cover letter, and in an interview.

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Summary

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This program is meant to assist students in the Communication Studies program in discovering their interests as they relate to potential career paths and gaining the tools to

effectively create and achieve career goals.   By attending these workshops Communication

Studies students will be exposed to resources available to them on campus and necessary steps

for creating and implementing a career plan. Students will be encouraged to utilize the Career

Center and the Counseling Center as they explore career interests and options and prepare for a

successful job search.

CHAPTER FOUR: CAREER EXPLORATION AND PREPARATION FOR

COMMUNICATION STUDIES STUDENTS

Summary of the Project

Communication Studies is an academic program focused on the study and application of human communication theories (Ball State University, 2015). Students pursuing degrees in Communication Studies gain essential skills in group and interpersonal communication. Four of the top 10 skills sought by employers are primary focuses of communication programs: ability to work in a team structure, ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside the organization, ability to obtain and process information, and ability to influence others (Adams, 2014). Communication skills are sought by virtually all employers and the generalizability of the degree is often promoted as a selling point for a Communications Studies program. However, many programs lack career focus and exploration for their students (Cahn, 1978) resulting in low placement rates for Communication Studies graduates. Career centers on college campuses were created to help students gain the skills to successfully navigate their career paths (Schaub, 2012). Communication Studies students would benefit from a career exploration and preparation program sponsored by the Career Center.

A career exploration and preparation program is proposed in this project. The program consists of a series of workshops in which Communication Studies students participate during their undergraduate careers. The workshops are designed to help students identify compatible work environments, learn to research job opportunities and industries, build a professional network, create effective application documents, and develop interview skills.

This project contains detailed presentation outline for four career exploration and preparation workshops:

- Workshop One: Self-Exploration, page 28.

- Workshop Two: Career Exploration, page 34.

- Workshop Three: Creating a Plan, page 37.

- Workshop Four: Career Preparation, page 39.

Workshop One: Self-Exploration

Purpose

The purpose of the self-exploration workshop is to provide guidance to Communication Studies students to identify their skills and interests as they relate to potential careers. This workshop will also introduce students to the importance of having an ongoing career focus throughout college and beyond and expose them to resources available to them on campus for identifying and planning for their careers.

Resources

My Next Move. (2015). *O*NET Interest Profiler.* Retrieved from http://www.mynextmove.org/
explore/ip

National Center for O*NET Development (n.d.). Interest Profiler (IP) Short Form.*O*NET Resource Center*. Retrieved from http://www.onetcenter.org/IPSF.html

Rounds, J. B., Su, R., Lewis P., & Rivkin, D. (2010) *O*Net interest profiler short form psychometric characteristics: Summary.* Retrieved from
http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/IPSF_Psychometric.pdf

Learning Outcomes

From this session students will learn:

- the relevance and importance of career exploration and preparation throughout their entire college career,
- about Ball State University offices and the resources they provide to assist in career exploration and preparation,
- about career coaches and academic advisors who can assist them during their collegiate experience while at Ball State,

- more about their interests by completing the *Interest Profiler*, and

- how to assess their skills, interests, and values in order to determine potential career path.

Presentation Outline

1) Introduction and overview

    a. Presenters introduce themselves and share the plan and purpose for the workshop.

    b. Allow students to introduce themselves, their major, and what they hope to gain from this workshop.

2) Ball State Resources

    a. Academic Advising

        i. Location and hours

            - North Quad (NQ), Room 339.

            - Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

        ii. What services do they provide for students?

            - The academic advising office assists student with planning their academic schedules, creating a four-year plan for graduation, and course registration.

    b. Career Center

        i. Location and hours

            - Lucina Hall (LU), Room 220.

            - Monday- Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

        ii. What services do they provide for students?

            - The Career Center assists students with exploring various career opportunities, provides advice on networking and gaining

experience, resources for internships, and guidance for graduate

school and job searches.

    iii. Resources available at the Career Center:

- career advising,

- resume review,

- mock interviews,

- referrals for on-campus employment, and

- career interests tests.

c. Counseling Center

    i. Location and hours

- Lucina Hall (LU), Room 320.

- Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

    ii. How they can assist you throughout your time here?

- Career assessment and exploration.

- Career counseling.

3) Career Exploration and Preparation

    a. Career Exploration

        i. Your career will play a major role in your life from graduation until

retirement. It is important to have a good understanding of what kinds of

careers you are interested in and would do well in. Once you identify

potential career fields it is important to begin building experiences and

skills that will prepare you to successfully enter the career field of your

choice post-graduation.

b. Career Preparation

    i. Once you identify potential career fields, it is important to begin building experiences and skills that will prepare you to successfully enter the career field of your choice post-graduation.

4) Interest Assessment

    a. The Importance of Interest Assessments

        i. Assessments allow you to gain more knowledge about yourself and identify areas of work you may excel in.

- Focus on things such as:
    a. abilities and aptitudes,
    b. achievements,
    c. interests,
    d. personality traits, and
    e. values and lifestyle preferences.

    b. Activity 1 *Interest Profiler*. Have students follow this link and complete the *Interest Profiler*- https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip

        i. Remind students to answer questions solely based on their level of interest. At this point, they should not consider their knowledge, skill, or the earning potential of each activity.

        ii. Encourage students to take their time on this assessment. They should thoughtfully answer each question.

5) Information about the *Interest Profiler*

    a. This assessment serves as a starting point for students to explore potential vocations of interest. Students will be given their results and access to browse potential career matches on O*Net.

    b. Students are scored on six themes identified by theorist, John Holland. The facilitator should discuss each theme briefly.

        i.   Realistic: values practical things that can be seen and touched; sees self as practical, mechanical, and realistic; skilled at working with tools, machines, plans, and animals.

        ii.   Investigative: Excels at understanding math and science problems; values science; sees self as precise, scientific, and intellectual.

        iii.   Artistic: Has good artistic ability; values the creative arts like drama, music, art, or creative writing; sees self as expressive, original, and independent.

        iv.   Social: Enjoys helping people; is good at teaching, counseling, nursing, or giving information; values solving social problems, sees self as helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.

        v.   Enterprising: Likes to lead and persuade people; enjoys selling things and ideas; values success in politics, leadership, or business; sees self as energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

        vi.   Conventional: Likes to work with numbers, records, or machines in a set and orderly way; excels at working with written records and numbers in a

systematic and orderly way; values success in business; sees self as orderly and good at following a set plan.

6) Closing Remarks and Questions.

   a. If students are interested in further exploration they can take the more extensive 180 item *Interest Profiler* available in paper and pencil or a computerized format. They should make an appointment with their career coach to gain access to this more in depth assessment.

   b. Assignment:

      i. Complete the worksheet on their Holland themes (see Appendix A) submit before leaving the workshop.

      ii. Compile a list of potential career interests and submit before leaving the workshop (see Appendix B).

Workshop Two: Career-Exploration

Purpose

The purpose of the career exploration workshop is to give students the tools and knowledge to create a plan to lead to successful career establishment. Students will learn the importance of networking and how to successfully network.

Resources

Burtnett, F. (2010). *Bound-for-career guidebook: A student guide to career exploration, decision making, and the job search*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Learning Outcomes

From this session Communication Studies students will learn:

- more about particular career paths they identified in the first workshop,

- how to gather more information on careers of interest,

- how to successfully network utilizing LinkedIn,

- how to conduct an informational interview, and

- the steps necessary for them to successfully start a career upon graduation.

Presentation Outline

1. Introduction and Overview

    a. Presenters introduce themselves and share the plan and purpose for the workshop.

2. Career Exploration

    a. Narrow down identified career choices

        i. Return the list of top five career paths each student turned in at the end of the first workshop.

      ii. Ask students to narrow this list down to three. They should take into account factors such as, average salary, working conditions, and future job projections. This information can be found on O*Net.

b. Career Research Techniques and Networking

      i. LinkedIn- Students should be encouraged to create and keep their LinkedIn profile up-to-date.

          1. Show students how they can search based on geographical location, industry, company, and connections.

          2. Show students how they can see connections they have at individual companies and in different cities and states.

          3. Assignment: Students must identify connections currently in their top three career fields of choice.

      ii. Informational Interview

          1. What is an informational interview? It is an opportunity to network with someone currently working in your field of interest and learn more about the field. It is an opportunity to seek advice on gaining entrance into the field, learn more about the culture and day to day tasks of people in that field, and network with a potential employer or colleague.

          2. Discuss good questions to ask in an informational interview. Provide examples (What does your day to day look like at work? What advice do you have for someone like me who is in college and interested in pursuing this career path? What is the most

rewarding part of your job? Most challenging?), and ask for ideas from the class. Based on this discussion, students should fill out their five questions for each informational interview (see Appendix C).

3. Assignment: Complete an informational interview with each of the connections identified from the LinkedIn assignment. If the connection from LinkedIn is unavailable for an interview, try and find someone else from your own personal network (i.e. friends, family, etc.). Students will submit a final report outlining key points from each interview and identifying their top career choice (see Appendix D).

3. Closing Remarks and Questions.

Workshop Three: Creating a Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to introduce students to the importance of goal setting and

provide practical tools for creating and obtaining career related goals.

Resources

Drucker, P. F. (1954). *The practice of management.* Ney York: Harper & Row.

Learning Outcomes

From this session Communication Studies students will learn:

- how to create specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, and time bound career goals,

   Presentation Outline

1. Introduction and Overview

   a. Presenters introduce themselves and share the plan and purpose for the workshop.

   b. Return the reports the students completed in the last workshop.

2. Discuss Informational Interviews Assignment

   a. Ask students to share who they interviewed and what they learned.

   b. Ask students how this activity impacted their career goals.

   c. Based on the informational interviews and research collected in the previous

      workshops, ask students to narrow down their career path to one.

3. The Importance of Gaining Experience

   a. Explain the importance of gaining relevant experiences and skills for the careers

      students want to pursue.

b. Discuss different ways students can gain relevant skills and experiences. Ask students what they think. Make sure internships, clubs and organizations, and part time jobs are all discussed.

c. Explain transferable skills. Transferable skills are skills students may already be gaining in their jobs and involvement that could be relevant to their career goals. For example, team work, communication, leadership, problem solving, etc.

d. Ask students what transferable skills they believe they have and why. Ask them what skills they don't have yet and how they could get them.

4. S.M.A.R.T. Goals

a. S.M.A.R.T Goals are specific, measureable, action oriented, realistic, and time bound (Drucker, 1954).

b. Hand out the S.M.A.R.T Goals worksheet (see Appendix E) and have students create one short term and one long term goal as it relates to their chosen career path.

5. Closing Remarks and Questions.

Workshop Four: Career Preparation

Purpose

The purpose of the Career Preparation workshop is to equip students with the tools and knowledge to construct a functional resume, write an effective cover letter, and interview well.

Learning Outcomes

From this session students will learn:

- about resume construction and bullet point writing,

- how to write an effective cover letter, and

- how to represent themselves well in an interview.

Presentation Outline

1. Introduction and Overview

    a. Presenters introduce themselves and share the plan and purpose for the workshop.

2. Resumes

    a. The instructor will hand out the sample template (see Appendix F) and explain the formatting of the resume.

    b. Bullet Point Writing Activity

        i. On the board the instructor will draw a chart with three columns. The first column is labeled skills, the second is labeled experiences, and the third is labeled bullet points.

        ii. Ask the class to define a transferable skills (a term they learned in the last workshop) and share examples. All of the examples will be written in the first column.

      iii. In the second column the instructor will write down experiences (i.e. involvement, jobs, internships, etc.) the students have had or currently are having.

      iv. The instructor will ask for a student volunteer to share a skill from the first column they have gained from one of their experiences. The instructor and student will then create a bullet point together in the third column. The bullet point should start with an action verb, be as specific as possible, and communicate in a concise manner the skill gained. Repeat this exercise with four-eight more students.

3. Cover Letters

    a. Share template (see Appendix G).

    b. Explain that the purpose of a cover letter is to go more in depth than a resume. Share specific examples related directly to the job description and qualifications.

    c. Cover letters should be catered specifically to the job a student is applying to.

4. Interview Tips

    a. PAR Method

      i. Tell students they should answer as many questions as possible with an example.

      ii. They should organize their answer using PAR (Problem, Action, Result)

        1. Problem: explain the situation.

        2. Action: Share what you specifically did to address the problem.

        3. Result: How did it end up?

      iii. The "tell me about yourself" question

1. Students should always be prepared to answer the "tell me about yourself" question. Employers do not want to know your life story; they want to know why you will be a good fit for this position.

2. One way to answer this question is to tell them where you have been, where you are, and where you are going in relation to this specific position. The instructor should share an example.

iv. Practice: Have students pair up and go back and forth asking each other the following practice questions.

1. Tell me about yourself

2. Share a time you had to work with someone you did not get along with, how did you handle this situation?

3. Tell me about a time you solved a problem.

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APPENDIX A

Holland Themes Reflection Worksheet

1. Please list your top three Holland themes and their scores.

    a. _____

    b. _____

    c. _____

2. Do you agree with the top themes you were given? Does it align with the interests and

    values you believe you hold? Why or why not?

3. What theme do you identify with most strongly? Why do you think this is?

4. How does knowing these top themes help you in your career exploration?

APPENDIX B

Potential Career Interests based on the *Interest Profiler*

Please use the space below to list at least 5 potential career interests.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

APPENDIX C

Informational Interview

Name of Interviewee:

Job Title:

Relationship to you:

Question One:

Answer:

Question Two:

Answer:

Question Three:

Answer:

Question Four:

Answer:

Question Five:

Answer:

APPENDIX D

Informational Interview Reflection

After completing all three interviews what is your top career field interest? Why?

List one thing from each interview that surprised you.

What piece of advice will you implement from these interviews?

Send a handwritten Thank You note to each person you interviewed!

APPENDIX E

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Worksheet

S	Specific	What do you want to accomplish?
M	Measurable	How will you know when you have accomplished your goal?
A	Action Oriented	What actions will you take to accomplish the goal?
R	Realistic	Is this goal realistic for you? How?
T	Timely	Create a time line for completing this goal and the actions associated with is.

Adapted from Peter Drucker's *The Practice of Management* (1954).

APPENDIX F

Resume Template

Your Name

name@bsu.edu ● 765-285-5048 ● 1525 N. McKinley Ave. Muncie, IN 47306

Education

Ball State University, *Muncie, IN*   May 2016 (expected)
Bachelor of Arts Telecommunications
Minor: Leadership Studies
GPA: 3.3/4.0

Related Experience

Company name, *City, State*   Start date-end date
Job Title
- Achievement statements
- Begin with a power verb and highlight skills and achievements gained at current position
- Focus on transferable skills relevant to the position you are applying for
- Do not use "I, me, or my"
- Complete sentences are not necessary

Company name, *City, State*   Start date-end date
Job Title
- 2-5 achievement statements
- Use more bullet points to highlight the most relevant positions

Other Experience

Company name, *City, State*   Start date-end date
Job Title
- Achievement statements
- Achievement statement

Extracurricular Involvement

Role   Organization   Dates
Volunteer   Student Leadership Volunteer Days   January 2015-Present

Honors and Awards

Member   Dean's List (3 Semesters)   May 2014-May 2015
Recipient   Outstanding Service

APPENDIX G

Cover Letter Template

Tip: Cover Letter should be one page and use the same heading and font as your resume.

Your Name

name@bsu.edu ● 765-285-5048 ● 1525 N. McKinley Ave. Muncie, IN 47306

Date of Application
Recruiter Name/Contact
Recruiter Contact Title/Department
Organization name
Mailing address

Dear recruiter first and last name:

Intro Paragraph (2-5 sentences)
- Reference the employer and opportunity and how you learned about the position
- Discuss your University, major, year of study/graduation date, and/or relevant coursework
- Discuss your interest and motivation for applying for this position
- For an internship, write about your learning outcomes

Middle Paragraph(s) (3-5 sentences)
(Tip: write 2-3 paragraphs, each focusing on a specific skill and/or experience; include a statement that connects your skills/experiences back to the position/employer)
- Highlight your skills and experiences that are most applicable to this position and employer
- Provide specific and detailed examples of your experiences and skills
- Focus on your qualifications and the transferability of your skills

Concluding Paragraph (3-4 sentences)
- Restate your interest in the position (ex. "I am excited about…")
- Include your contact information
- End with a thank you statement

Sincerely,

Your Name

Adapted from: *The Ball State University Career Guide Book* (2015).