



Professional Development capstone course:

Bridging success in the classroom to success in the workplace

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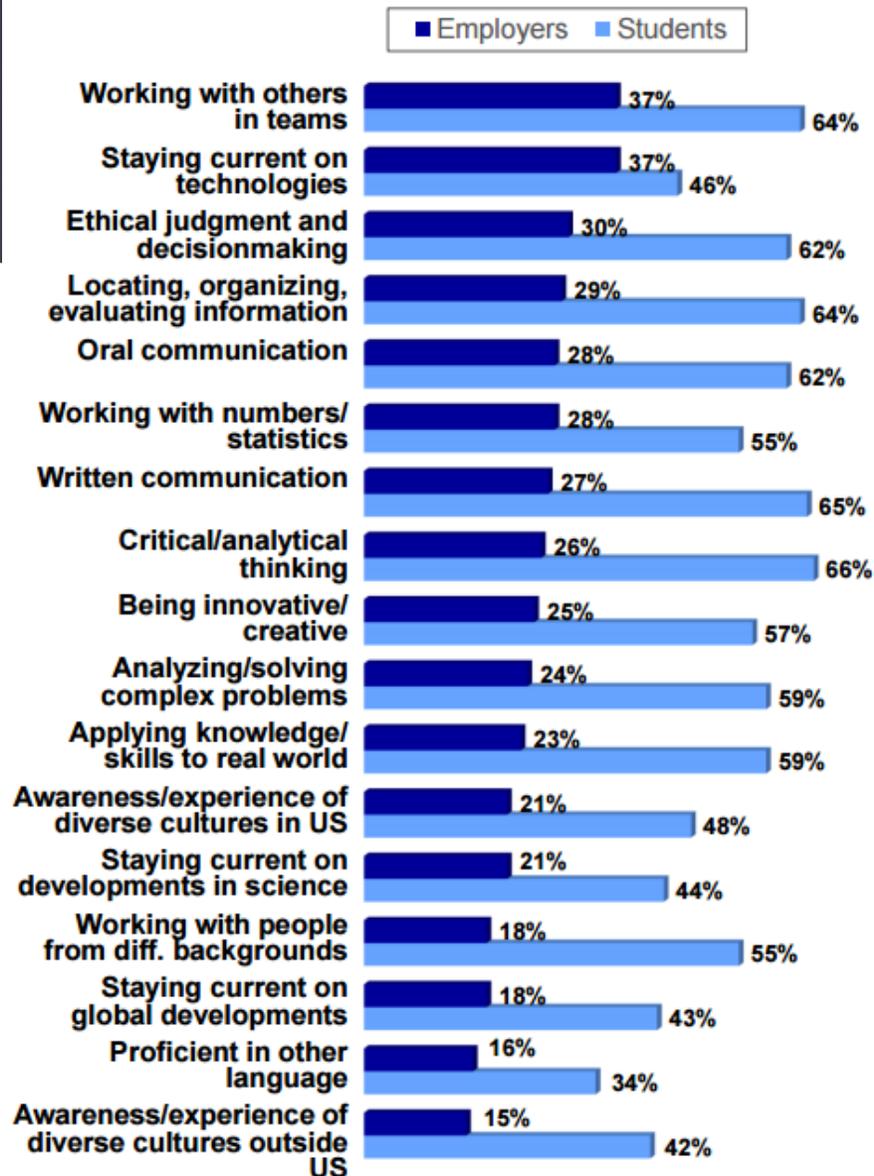
Google: Are college grads ready for the workforce?

- ▶ [Time.com \(Money\)](#) "2015 college grads may not be as ready for the workplace as they think they are" (May 2015)
- ▶ [Forbes](#) "Students think they're ready for the real world; employers, not so much" (Sept 2015)
- ▶ [Gallup](#) "Many college graduates not equipped for workplace success" (Sept 2015)
- ▶ [CBSmoneywatch](#) "Employers: new college grads aren't ready for the workplace" / [CNBC](#) "Hiring managers say many grads not job ready" (May 2016)
- ▶ [LinkedIn](#) "Colleges aren't preparing students for the workforce: what this means for recruiters" (July 15)

17 Measures of learning outcomes

- ▶ Working with others in teams
- ▶ Staying current on technologies
- ▶ Ethical judgement and decision-making
- ▶ Locating, organizing, evaluating info
- ▶ Oral communication
- ▶ Working with numbers/statistics
- ▶ Written communication
- ▶ Critical/analytical thinking
- ▶ Being innovative/creative
- ▶ Analyzing/solving complex problems
- ▶ Applying knowledge/skills to the real world
- ▶ Awareness/experience of diverse cultures in US
- ▶ Staying current on developments in science
- ▶ Working with people from different backgrounds
- ▶ Staying current on global developments
- ▶ Proficient in other language
- ▶ Awareness/experience of diverse cultures outside US

Proportions saying they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area*



*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale

- In 11 of the 17 dimensions, a majority of students felt well-prepared (rating 8, 9, or 10 in a ten-point scale)
- But employers give low grades to students in all learning outcomes
- In 15 dimensions, the percentage of students who feel they are prepared is at least double the percentage of employers who feel the same way

Why the discrepancy?

- ▶ College Graduate Employment Survey: polls soon-to-be 2015 graduates and older 2013, 2014 graduates

Expectations of the Working World Class of 2015

80% 
believe their education prepared them well

77% 
expect their first employer to provide
formal training

Realities of the Working World 2013 and 2014 Grads

64% 
felt their education prepared them well

53% 
received training from their first employer

Whose responsibility is it to provide training?

- ▶ Moral question: is it the college's or university's job to prepare students for both the technical and non-technical aspects required for success in the employers' eyes?
- ▶ Perhaps there is room for a hybrid course
 - ▶ Develop professional skills in a non-academic setting
 - ▶ Practice applying technical skills learned in the classroom in a non-academic setting
 - ▶ Develop new technical skills that cannot be taught in the classroom
 - ▶ Gain professional work experience and networking opportunities

Professional development course

- ▶ Capstones represent the final step before graduation: blends technical skills with professional skills necessary in the workplace
- ▶ Offered to students entering their final year of study
- ▶ Earn 1 course credit that can be used towards graduation requirement
- ▶ Small classes:
 - ▶ 2012/13: 6 students
 - ▶ 2013/14: 11 students
 - ▶ 2014/15: 14 students
 - ▶ 2015/16: 10 students
 - ▶ 2016/17: 17 students

Students' responsibility

- ▶ Application, statement about intended career goals, interview with instructor
- ▶ Provide 200 hours of unpaid work over 1-2 semesters
- ▶ Attend, participate in all professional development class sessions
- ▶ Complete 5 writing assignments (paired with class sessions) and a final report
- ▶ Poster session at the end of the year
- ▶ Maintain a work log, documenting tasks, responsibilities
- ▶ Meet with instructor for monthly one-on-one meeting

Instructor's responsibility

- ▶ Find suitable placements for students
- ▶ Set the learning objectives: general areas for improvement
 - ▶ Professional writing
 - ▶ Professional soft skills
 - ▶ Identify, highlight their skills, educ, experience
- ▶ Develop course content to achieve learning objectives
 - ▶ Assignments (5 short papers): 20%
 - ▶ Participation/attendance in class sessions; work logs; individual meetings: 10%
 - ▶ Final written report: 30%
 - ▶ Poster: 15%
 - ▶ Employer assessment: 25%

Internship placements

- ▶ City of Mississauga
 - ▶ Strategic Planning
 - ▶ Planning and Building
 - ▶ Human Resources
 - ▶ Economic Development
- ▶ Impact Infrastructure
- ▶ Gowlings, Lafleur & Henderson LLP
- ▶ Toronto Stock Exchange
- ▶ National Bank, Wealth Management
- ▶ Ministry of Social Services
- ▶ NATO Atlantic Council of Canada
- ▶ Edward Jones
- ▶ Nigel Capital
- ▶ Bank of Canada, Economic Analysis Dept
- ▶ Bell Canada, Intelligence Team
- ▶ Environment Canada
- ▶ City of Brampton, Economic Dev
- ▶ Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Agawa Fund Management Inc
- ▶ Town of Oakville
 - ▶ Development Financing and Investments
 - ▶ Econ Development
- ▶ Cosmos Sports
- ▶ Ontario Financing Authority
- ▶ Social Planning Council of Peel Region
- ▶ Industry Canada
 - ▶ Strategic Policy Sector
 - ▶ Innovation, Science & Economic Development
- ▶ Canadian Urban Institute
- ▶ Yellow Bear Studios
- ▶ Canadian International Council
- ▶ Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis
- ▶ Progress Capital
- ▶ SEED Sustainable Investments
- ▶ Wellesley Institute
- ▶ Mississauga Board of Trade
- ▶ Integral Wealth
- ▶ Research, Innovation, Commercialization (RIC) Centre

Learning objectives

- ▶ Partners: academic skills centre, Career centre
- ▶ Create practical, professional skills sessions that meets objectives
- ▶ Professional writing
 - ▶ Basics of professional writing
 - ▶ Non-academic writing rubric
 - ▶ Peer review of assignments
- ▶ Professional soft skills
 - ▶ Stand out and succeed workshop
 - ▶ Networking workshop and networking event
 - ▶ Project management
 - ▶ Presentation skills: oral presentation, poster session
- ▶ Highlighting their skills, educ, exp
 - ▶ Career planning: setting internship goals, identifying skills needed for career goal
 - ▶ Resume critique: incorporating new internship skills, projects, experience onto resume
 - ▶ Cover letter workshop

Written assignment, final report

- ▶ Classes serve as the Basis for reflective writing assignments
 - ▶ Assignment 1: Background and context
 - ▶ Assignment 2: setting internship goals
 - ▶ Assignment 3: application of Project management towards internship project
 - ▶ Assignment 4: Poster planning
 - ▶ Assignment 5: updated resume, cover letter
- ▶ Each of the 5 writing assignments represents components of their final reflective written report

Challenges, rewards

- ▶ Working with difficult supervisors/colleagues
- ▶ Managing multiple deadlines, obligations
- ▶ Working with little/no guidance
- ▶ Learning new technical skills on the job
- ▶ “This isn’t what I thought the job would be like”
- ▶ Realizing the difference between theory and application

What if teaching a capstone course isn't for me?

- ▶ Review your syllabus, ask what relevant skills are being taught here
- ▶ Work with your career centre
 - ▶ Help identify employer-valued skills
 - ▶ Offer a resume session
 - ▶ Inform students of services
- ▶ Encourage problem-based learning environments