WHITE PAPER ON "EXPLORING YOUR POTENTIAL"

Abstract

I introduce and outline step-wise framework of three constructs – (1) Self-Development – Career Readiness, (2) On-campus Development – Networking, and (3) Applied Development; relate them to 2013 AACSB International Standards.

Natalya Delcoure, DBA
Natalya.Delcoure@tamuk.edu

Background

In April 2013, AACSB International's Accreditation Council approved revised business and accounting accreditation standards which became effective July 1, 2013. The transition period for business schools and accounting programs to adopt 2013 standards was extended through 2015-2016.

Standard 13 "Student Academic and Professional Engagement" is one of the standards in the section under the same title. This standard is supported by applicable Standard 1 "Mission, Impact, Innovation," Standard 4 "Participants – Students, Faculty and Professional Staff," Standard 7 "Professional Staff Sufficiency and Deployment."

Standard 13 states the following:
Curricula facilitate student academic and professional engagement appropriate to the degree program type and learning goals. [STUDENT ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The "Basis for Judgement" states the following:
For any teaching and learning model employed, the school provides a portfolio of experiential learning opportunities for business students, through either formal coursework or extracurricular activities, which allow them to engage with faculty and active business leaders. These experiential learning activities provide exposure to business and management in both local and diverse global contexts.

While all curricula should facilitate both academic and professional engagement, the amount and balance depend on a variety of factors, including degree program type, expected outcomes, and experience levels of incoming students.

Students are able to connect their academic and professional experiences in meaningful ways consistent with the degree program type and learning goals.

The "Guidance for Documentation" states the following:
Document experiential learning activities that provide business students with knowledge of and experience in the local and global practice of business and management across program types and teaching/learning models employed.

These experiential learning activities may include field trips, internships, consulting projects, field research, interdisciplinary projects, extracurricular activities, etc.

Demonstrate that approaches to academic and professional engagement are sufficient for and consistent with the degree program type and learning goals

Standard 1 states the following:
The school articulates a clear and distinctive mission, the expected outcomes this mission implies, and strategies outlining how these outcomes will be achieved. The school has a history of achievement and improvement and specifies future actions for continuous improvement and innovation consistent with this mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. [MISSION, IMPACT, AND INNOVATION]

The "Basis for Judgement" states the following:
The mission, expected outcomes, and strategies are appropriate to a collegiate school of business and consonant with the mission of any institution of which the school is a part. Accordingly, the mission, expected outcomes, and strategies address the level of education the school is targeting; the positive and significant impact the school intends to make on business and society; the stakeholders to whom the school is accountable; and the ways in which the school intends to advance the business education industry.

The "Guidance for Documentation" states the following:

Describe the appropriateness of the mission for the school's constituencies, including students, employers, and other stakeholders; and discuss how the mission positively contributes to society, business education, the diversity of people and ideas, and the success of graduates.

Students are the heart of the school; however, faculty and professional staff are critical to the achievement of a school's mission. Students who are matched to the expectations of degree programs — as well as prepared and supported to achieve those expectations — are essential for successful educational programs.

Standard 4 states the following:
Standard 4: Policies and procedures for student admissions, as well as those that ensure academic progression toward degree completion, and supporting career development, are clear, effective, consistently applied, and aligned with the school's mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. [STUDENT ADMISSIONS, PROGRESSION, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT]

The "Basis for Judgement" states the following:
The school provides effective career development support for students and graduates consistent with degree program expectations and the school' s mission, expected outcomes, and strategies.

The "Guidance for Documentation" states the following:
Document processes and demonstrate the effectiveness of career development support that is consistent with degree program expectations and the mission of the school. Examples of evidence may include job acceptance rates for graduates over the most recent five - year period as well as case examples of successful graduates
.
Standard 7 states the following:
The school maintains and deploys professional staff and/or services sufficient to ensure quality outcomes across the range of degree programs it offers and to achieve other components of its mission. [PROFESSIONAL STAFF SUFFICIENCY AND DEPLOYMENT]

The "Basis for Judgement" states the following:
Professional staff must also be sufficient to provide for intellectual contributions and their impact, student academic assistance and advising, career advising and placement, alumni relations, public relations, fundraising, student admissions, and executive education, as well as other mission related activities.

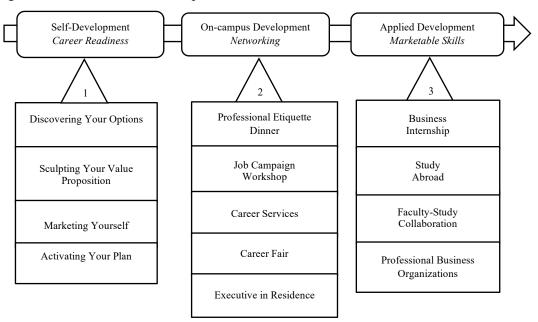The "Guidance for Documentation" states the following:
Show that professional staff and services are sufficient to provide for intellectual contributions and their impact, student academic assistance and advising, career advising and placement, alumni relations, public relations, fundraising, student admissions, and executive education, as well as other mission related activities, depending on the organization.

Implications:

Formally acquired knowledge in a collegiate education is not very effective unless business students learn how to apply it and practice it through integration and experience in a professional setting. Classroom practice affords only a learning primer of how to combine innate intelligence, resourcefulness, a command of analytical tools, imagination, and unbiased judgement in solving diverse business problems.

To better equip business students for success in the workforce, professional schools are successful in building a framework around a step-wise professional development process that includes soft skills and marketable skills (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Framework Process Map

Note: Phase 1 Construct: Self-Development – Career Readiness is built learning of Exploring Your Potential (ExploringYourPotential.com).

Figure 1 presents the framework of constructs (Self-Development, On-campus Development, and Applied Development) and step-wise process map of undergraduate student professional development as antecedent to applied development. Process numbers (in triangles) indicate the order in which students complete each developmental construct.
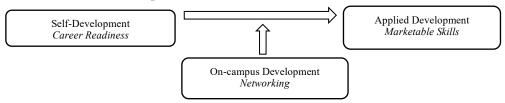
Phase 1 Construct: Self-Development – Career Readiness. This construct and phase centers on helping students with self-discovery, and through that, build a foundation and professional profile which they can carry forward throughout their professional lives, beyond their academic experience. These four modules should be taken in sequence (Figure 1). They are both reflective and formative in nature, helping students discover their strengths and interests, learn how they will add idiosyncratic organizational value, and articulate how to better sell themselves. "*Activating Your Plan*" module has capstone characteristics in that it leads students through an integration process and provides methodology for formalizing and activating their plan, in accordance with individualized goals.

Phase 2 Construct: On-campus Development – Networking. This construct and phase builds upon the foundation laid in Phase 1, through provision of specific on-campus interactive and networking opportunities/experiences with industry leaders, discipline-specific managers, and recruiters. In addition, students participate in practical workshops centered on building professional profiles, professional etiquette, job campaigning, and branding themselves via networking opportunities.

Phase 3 Construct: Applied Development. This construct and phase helps students realize the fruits of their program efforts thus far, in practical application. *Applied Development* is the culmination of the entire program and thus should serve as model criterion construct.

Figure 2 models relationships of the three framework constructs introduced in Figure 1. "On Campus Development" positively moderates the relationship between "Self Development" and "Applied Development."

Figure 2: Construct Relationship Model

Anticipated outcomes:

Having a designated College representative (e.g. faculty, staff) assigned to this initiative (development, implementation and maintenance) helps streamline and facilitate communication between companies and the College. It also helps reinforce the initiative framework and step-wise completion process in that the faculty and staff coordinators set clear expectations of all participants, ensure proper reporting, keep lines of communication and feedback channels open, and assist with managing employers' opportunity costs (i.e., offsetting costs by improving business intern skill-sets).

Students have a clearer line of sight between phased constructs and better understand how framework sequencing directly supports and facilitates their professional development, and increases their internship opportunities (i.e., internship selection and successful completion).

Students are better prepared for networking opportunities. They are more confident in communicating their strengths, value proposition, and in selling themselves – which ultimately leads to a more successful internship experience (i.e., landing an internship and successfully completing it).

Colleges further may find that additional value is created in the internship program for all parties, by pre-screening students after their junior year, implementing a well-structured internship project (individual) mentored by a dedicated company representative, and having clear goals and deliverables for all parties. Specific to internship success, the evolution of the initiative could reveal a core prerequisite need, namely that student success and overall program success hinges on following a specified framework and process as antecedent to the internship itself. Stepwise individual student preparation (i.e. following the framework process) better prepares students to secure and successfully complete an internship, and in so doing represent both themselves and their university to the best of their ability.

Reference

"Business internship: a practical framework," N. Delcoure, R. Karst and C. Longoria, *Business Education and Accreditation*, 10(1), 2018.

AACSB Business Accreditation
https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/journey/business