Guiding Students from Matriculation to Graduation: Analysis of a Four Year Professional Development Seminars Program for Undergraduates
Astin (1993) states that the primary purpose of attending college is to prepare for a career.

Super (1990) believes that success in coping with the demands of the ever-changing world of work depends on the readiness of the individual, or one’s career maturity.
Crites (1978) indicates five mechanisms for good career decision making: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making future plans, and problem-solving.

These mechanisms can be successfully supported if one:
(1) possesses attitudes and competencies critical for realistic decision-making
(2) performs a variety of career exploration activities
Research Question?

- Relationship between student participation in a career development program and career growth

- Assessing the career maturity and career search self-efficacy of participants
Purpose of the Study

(1) Many college students appear to lack the knowledge of self-awareness and how this knowledge influences career decision-making.
(2) Many college students appear to lack the ability to make informed career decisions, and to successfully engage in the career planning and job search processes.
(3) Many college students appear to lack the personal skills and attributes employers are searching for in new employees.
(4) Many college students appear unaware of the value in participating in comprehensive career planning.
This research investigated career development in early adulthood within the theoretical framework of life-span development and social learning, both of which contribute to individuals’ growth and development.

- Super’s Life-Span/Life-Space Theory
- Krumboltz’s Theory of Social Learning
Nichols PDS program

Professional Development Seminars

- Mandatory
- 4-year series of 1-credit courses
- Textbooks & supplemental materials
- Faculty and staff as instructors
- Built into the culture of the campus
- Each course builds on the next
Goal: connect students to the college and develop a relationship with a faculty member and teaching assistant.

- Teaching Topics: College Transition & Goal Setting; Time Management; Academic Success; Library/Academic Resources; Academic Advising; Campus Awareness; Portfolios; Professionalism; Career Development; Presentations
Goal: build a foundation of career skills to aid in more in-depth work in the junior and senior years.

- Teaching Topics: Portfolios; Self Exploration; Majors/Minors Exploration; Resumes; Cover Letters; Internships; Intro to Interviewing; Presentations
Year 3: Refinement

- **Goal:** learn and refine interviewing and job skills; begin crafting career plan through exploration and analysis.

- **Teaching Topics:** Portfolios; Resumes; Communication; Interviewing; Professional Organizations; Industry Research; Targeted Career Exploration; Post Graduate Options
Goal: enhance skills developed in previous years and implement a job search plan.

Teaching Topics: Portfolios; Recruiting; Salary Negotiations; Student Choice; Assessment; Business Etiquette/Ethics; Networking/Social Media; First Year on the Job; Presentations
1. What is the relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the...

- career maturity of college graduates?
- career search self-efficacy of college graduates?
Research Design

- Quantitative Research
- Ex-Post Facto Design
- Cross-Functional Survey Research
Those surveyed were 2007 & 2008 college graduates (N=242) who participated in the Professional Development Seminar (PDS) program during the four years of undergraduate study.
Variables/Measures

- **Dependant Variables:**
  - Career Maturity
  - Career Search Self-Efficacy

- **Independent Variable:**
  - Participation in Career Development Program
Instrumentation

Career Maturity Inventory-R Attitude Scale

- The CMI-R Attitude Scale contains 25 questions, and will be used to measure individual’s attitudes towards careers and career choice.

- The CMI-R Attitude Scale measures five behaviors and attitudes of career and career choice maturity: (1) greater decisiveness in making a career choice, (2) more active involvement in the process, (3) independence in decision-making, (4) realistic orientation towards work, and (5) the ability to compromise.
Career Search Efficacy Scale

- The Career Search Efficacy Scale (CSES) is an instrument designed to measure career search self-efficacy, or the confidence a person has for performing various career search tasks.

- The CSES yields four factors: Job Search, Interviewing, Networking, and Personal Exploration Efficacy.
Instrumentation

- Individual Data Sheet
  - Gather descriptive data on the sample
  - Identify respondents’ degree of participation in the PDS program: overall engagement, class attendance, October (Student Choice) programs, group participation, course assignments, frequency of participation in class discussion
Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics

- Pearson’s correlations and regression analyses were used to test the null hypotheses to determine whether there was a relationship between participation in PDS (independent variable) and career maturity and career search self-efficacy (dependant variables) of participants.
Respondents (N=76)

- 46.1% male
- 92.1% between 22-24 years old
- 51% 2007 graduates
- 98.7% Bachelor’s degree
- 64.5% 3.1-4.0 GPA
- 93.4% currently employed (64.5% within field of study)
## Results - PDS Participation Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No Participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Engagement</td>
<td>-- 2.6%</td>
<td>1.3% 10.5% 21.1% 31.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>-- 1.3% 2.6% 5.3%</td>
<td>9.2% 26.3% 19.7% 23.7%</td>
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<td>-- -- 3.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Participation</td>
<td>-- 1.3%</td>
<td>6.6% 3.9% 5.3% 18.4% 34.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>October Programs</td>
<td>-- 7.9% 1.3%</td>
<td>6.6% 6.6% 7.9% 19.7% 22.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>-- -- 1.3%</td>
<td>1.3% 1.3% 3.9% 14.5% 26.3%</td>
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## Results - Descriptive Stats - PDS Participation Variables

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## Results - Descriptive Stats - Career Maturity

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## Results - Descriptive Stats - Career Search Self-Efficacy

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Null Hypothesis #1 - Correlation

- There was no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career maturity of college graduates.
  - Rejected

  CM
  - Frequency .23*
  - Attendance .08
  - Group Participation .05
  - October Programs - .02
  - Assignments .22*
  - Overall Engagement .17

Note. CM, Career Maturity; *p < .05, **p < .01 (one-tailed)
There was no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career search self-efficacy of college graduates.

- Rejected CSSE
- Frequency \( .51^{**} \)
- Attendance \( .23^{*} \)
- Group Participation \( .40^{**} \)
- October Programs \( .03 \)
- Assignments \( .37^{**} \)
- Overall Engagement \( .40^{**} \)

*Note.* CSE, Career Search Self-Efficacy; \(*p < .05, **p < .01\) (one-tailed)
Null Hypothesis # 1 & 2 - Regression

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*p < .05, **p < .01 (one-tailed)
Overall, credit bearing career development programs are most beneficial to participants

- The majority of respondents (64.5%) indicated being extremely or very participatory in the PDS program overall
- 43.4% of respondents were extremely or very participatory in class discussions
- The majority of respondents (84.3%) reported high levels of class attendance
The majority of respondents (64.5%) reported high levels of participation in group projects.

50% of respondents were extremely or very participatory in October (Student Choice) Programming.

The majority of respondents (77.6%) reported being extremely or very participatory in course assignments.
There is no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career maturity of college graduates. - Rejected
Discussion - Key Findings - Hypothesis #2

- There is no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career search self-efficacy of college graduates. - Rejected
Preparation Myths

Goal of Higher Education - Dressel (1968) states the goal of higher education is to graduate students who are self-aware, who “know how to acquire knowledge, and how to use it” (p. 210), and who can contribute positively to society.
Implications

- Program Implementation
  - Look to smaller offerings
  - Seek support from the top
  - Redefine the mission
  - Meet generational needs
  - Cross-campus initiatives
  - Employer need
Recommendations for Further Research

- Longitudinal tracking of the students who have completed the PDS program
- Replication of this study with a similar population and at another university
- Similar study correlating the PDS program with career maturity and career search self-efficacy using a control or treatment group from a comparable population
- Qualitative study of career course participants involving personal interviews and/or focus groups may also prove to be beneficial to this body of research
- Similar study might be conducted using the same or similar evaluation tools in a pre and post-test format
Examining the issue of student underpreparedness for the college-to-career transition can:

- (1) provide educators, researchers, administrators and policy-makers with valuable knowledge to help with the implementation of successful career development programs
- (2) present information on students’ decisiveness, involvement, independence, and compromise by examining levels of career maturity
- (3) Assess the impact of self-efficacy on the outcome of the career search process
Results of this, as well as past research indicate the need for structured career development programs and initiatives for undergraduate students, particularly mandatory career development programs spanning the entire undergraduate curriculum.