EDLF 6030: Final Project ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Proposed Project Title: Life Design Course for Students in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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Project Lead Title: Assistant Director, Career Development

Please provide a brief description of the institution and how this project aligns with the mission of the institution and student affairs division.

Kent State University (KSU) is a broad access public R1 university with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 21,000 students at its main campus in Kent, Ohio. The student body is 62% female and 29% of all students are Pell eligible, many of whom represent traditionally underserved groups throughout Ohio and the greater region. KSU has a robust offering of outreach and community-based programs for prospective and current students, including services for children in foster care and for prisoners. KSU's mission statement highlights the commitment of the university to promote experiential learning and to propel students to overcome limits.

The Life Design Course offers an opportunity for experiential learning and career exploration while empowering students with tools and knowledge to identify and develop their unique skills and professional interests. This course will provide students with a dynamic learning environment in which they will explore a variety of careers, industries, and professional paths in addition to learning how to leverage and showcase the skills they are acquiring in their chosen academic majors as well through their outside life experiences

Please identify the area/unit/office/department to lead this project and how the project aligns with the area/unit/office/department mission.

The Life Design Course will operate as a partnership between the office of Career Exploration and Development and the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities ("The School"). The mission of the School is to support students in the pursuit of knowledge and exploration as they ask complex questions about the world around them. The principles of life design theory complement this mission with coursework and activities that encourage students to ask probing questions about themselves, their places in the world, and their roles within the organizations of which they are a part. By building self-awareness and developing a sense of purpose through a thorough examination of their values, students will apply principles of design thinking to experiment with interests and career pursuits.

A life design course is particularly important for students in the social sciences and humanities who often struggle more than their peers in STEM-related and professional majors to identify a path from their academic majors to a career choice. This course will help students explore connections between their academic disciplines and various career paths, while also developing an inventory of skills that they have acquired throughout their course of study, and which can be applied to their future goals.

Please select from the list below the areas your proposed project intends to address

- ☐ Knowledge Acquisition, Construction, Integration and Application
- ☐ Cognitive Complexity
- ☐ Intrapersonal Development
- ☐ Interpersonal Competence
- ☐ Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
- ☐ Practical Competence

What theories and frameworks will be utilized to guide your thinking on program implementation?

The Life Design Course is centered around the following frameworks and theories:

Realistic Self-Appraisal (FALDO) - Using Baxter-Magolda's theory of self-authorship, students will explore their core beliefs and develop a sense of self that is independent from the influence of their families and social groups. Students will identify and assess their personal strengths and weaknesses, while considering their interpersonal skills and capacity for group collaboration.

Career Choices (FALDO) - Participants in the course will be encouraged and required to explore a range of careers and industries through hands-on experiences and one-on-one interactions with alumni and practitioners. Students will not merely read about job opportunities or career pursuits, but they will discover new career paths after reflecting and answering questions about the kinds of problems they want to solve within their communities or in the broader world. Using Holland and Lutz's theory of vocational choice, students will connect their personality profiles and animating passions to possible careers.

Identity Development theory (Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser, Seven Vectors) - Through iteration and experimentation, students will employ multiple approaches and methods to solving problems. The curriculum will use the results of these experiments to guide the students in reflections about their personal identity, while assessing the results to determine areas of competence and deficiency. The ultimate goal is to empower students to develop a sense of purpose and to learn how to integrate their whole selves into their future careers.

What are the intended goals and outcomes of your proposed project?

Reflective thinking - To apply knowledge acquired from course assessments and inventories to the career exploration process. Collect and apply previous interpersonal and classroom experiences to the career search.

Creativity - Use design thinking principles to create experiments, to iterate, and to apply new methods to solve problems. To create thoughtful affinity diagrams, posters, and projects that reflect thought processes, breakthroughs, and changes of direction/opinion.

Realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect - To inventory current strengths and weaknesses, and to articulate reasoning for one's chosen major. To evaluate career choices

and assumptions before and after the course. To apply identity development theory to align strengths and interests with career-related goals.

Managing career readiness - To inventory and market one's skills and strengths acquired over the course of the academic career to prospective jobs and employment materials. To develop confidence in one's strengths and to prioritize improving weaknesses that are relevant to a chosen career path. At the end of the program, students will be matched with a member of the Career Exploration and Development team who will guide them in reaching out to three alumni and to apply to 4 summer internships.

Program Description: Please describe the relevant program elements, activities, and timeline for your proposed project.

The Career Exploration and Development office will work with the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities in the spring to identify 18 current first-year students for the Life Design Course offered in the following fall semester. The teams will meet again in October to identify current second-year candidates for the spring course once the instructor and colleagues begin to assess the course. Students in the pilot program will be recommended by School faculty and by housing staff, and we will seek a strong representative sample, including former foster care students, adult students, and first-generation students. The goal is to work with these undergraduates at the beginning of their second year before and during the application season for summer internships. The program will also give them tools to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as they commit to their majors and begin to take the core courses within their programs. The Life Design course will offer 1 elective credit and will meet for one hour over dinner every two weeks at 6:00 PM (a total of 7 sessions). We will provide dinner at each session and meet in an interactive classroom in the main University Library. Students will be given practical homework assignments such as career inventories, personality assessments, and journal entry reflections that must be completed before each class. These assignments will inform the-in class projects and allow for more time for creative and hands-on design work. The students will be expected to meet with alumni and professionals as the semester progresses, but this should be arranged on their own time.

In addition to free readings and engaging online videos on the topic of design thinking, we will use the book, *Designing Your Life,* as a companion reader to the course. Students will be encouraged to read the book before the semester begins, but they will also be able to read relevant sections of the book before each class meeting. In the first two sessions, students will focus on identity exploration, narratives and reflections, and self-appraisal. Students will reflect on their backgrounds and past experiences, and summarize their thoughts in a narrative-form reflection that encapsulates their values, identities, pivotal life experiences, and the decision process that led them to choose their current major.

In sessions 3-5, students will begin to implement design thinking principles by exploring new career paths, using problem solving techniques to address problems, identifying their core values and passions, and honing their experimentation and adaptation skills. Students will engage in affinity diagramming to visualize and categorize their thought processes and to facilitate brainstorming. Students will be given challenges to solve within a small group, and they will be introduced to ideation and iteration, as well as principles of design thinking and experimentation.

In the final two class meetings, students will continue to use the iterative process to consider solutions to problems they want to address and to reflect on methods that can be used to apply their acquired classroom knowledge to address those issues. Students will begin working with career services professionals to explore summer internships, volunteer opportunities, and postgraduate careers. Additionally, students will learn to identify alumni and community members within their target fields, while developing career maps to identify areas of overlap between their passions and academic interests with desirable career paths. Students will further explore ways to apply their strengths in professional settings and they will use their career maps to identify areas of weakness or deficiency that can be bolstered by additional education, professional training, or practice.

Beginning the following semester, the course instructor and the career services professionals will follow up with each student every 2-3 weeks to answer questions and to offer encouragement. Student outcomes will not merely be assessed by a student's commitment to a particular career or industry. Rather, students will be assessed by their ability to reflect seriously and deeply on their personal motivations and career objectives. Students should be able to apply principles of design thinking to new problems and challenges, while confidently using their strengths to brainstorm and devise solutions.

Who is the audience that your proposed project will serve?

We seek to serve a cross-section of students in the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities, with a particular focus on first-generation students and students from traditionally underserved communities. In addition to teaching life design philosophies, the course is designed to teach critical life and career-related skills, while helping students to develop social capital.

How and with whom will you leverage campus collaborations for this project?

Our primary relationship is with the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities, but we focus especially on students in the humanities. We seek to provide these students with clear pathways from their academic disciplines to a career, and we desire to attract more students to the humanities by extolling the unique skills that can be acquired in these disciplines. We will partner with Professor Andrew Barnes, the undergraduate coordinator, to enhance the curriculum and to incorporate key concepts that are relevant to students in the humanities. We will partner with the University Outreach and Engagement office to identify former foster care students as well as individuals in the prison re-entry program to assess the impact of this course across student groups.

How will you know that your project is successful? Please briefly describe your approach to assessment.

We will assess the curriculum by measuring student comprehension and progress throughout the semester. Career services staff and alumni mentors will offer feedback on their interactions with students and they will assess the quality of the hands-on projects and job search assignments that the students complete. Students will be asked to complete assessments for course curriculum and for the instructor at the end of the semester. We will assess student rates of transfer and withdrawal in the two semesters following the course, and we will measure graduation rates for students who took the courses compared to their peers within the same majors and within the School who did not.

Please provide a brief budget narrative to describe how you will utilize requested funds

Most of the expenses related to the course are for food and supplies. The design thinking process requires a number of tangible materials, including large adhesive pads, hundreds of Post-it notes, and white boards for brainstorming and iteration. Students will be required to sketch ideas in dotted design notebooks and to use Figma software and prototyping kits for in-class assignments. The assistant director will receive a stipend for developing the course and for teaching it in the evening, and career services consultants will work with students in the course during regular business hours. We will provide dinner at each class meeting so that the class is available at a time that does not conflict with regular academic courses and to ensure full participation by the cohort.