

The Career Readiness Across the Curriculum (CRxC) Approach

Key steps for faculty and career services to create coherent program-specific pathways for skills- and career-development learning opportunities

It's time for a new approach to skills and career readiness in higher education. Why?

Because the dominant "soft skills" and career readiness discourses do not adequately address the types of skills, instruction, and guidance our students need to thrive in their careers.

Problem #1

Career readiness is too often reduced to the possession of the "right" generic soft skills but research shows that employability is far more complex and requires a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as the ability to navigate a complex, disruptive labor market. But lists of "soft skills" oversimplify these aptitudes, diminish the disciplinary nature of skills, and inaccurately suggest that complex human competencies like critical thinking or oral communication are easy to teach and learn.

Problem #2

Since **barely 30% of students can pursue work-based learning** experiences like internships, and less than 50% of students visit their career services offices, **training faculty**

in skills-focused work-integrated learning (WIL) in the classroom is key.

This is an equity and accessibility issue, as too many "high-impact practices" are simply out of reach for under-represented students.

Problem #3

Unfortunately, most faculty are not taught how to teach, much less how to emphasize skills, careers, and WIL methods. Thus, institutions should prioritize faculty development efforts. But with an exhausted professoriate resistant to change, **working with existing syllabi and respecting autonomy will be key to career readiness reforms.**

Problem #4

Higher education tends to present students with an **uncoordinated and dizzying array of courses, co- and extra-curriculars** that can overwhelm students. Career-related learning opportunities similarly tend to be **silo-ed across departments and career services**, which risks duplication of efforts or gaps in services. A **joint**

departmental-career services inventory of current (and missing) courses and programs for sharpening skills and advancing their careers can **reveal duplicated efforts, gaps in programming, and opportunities for collaboration.**

To develop this approach we have drawn on insights from the Guided Pathways and Communication (Cx) and Writing (Wx) across the Curriculum movements, and “middle-out” and culture-focused change efforts in postsecondary institutions.

The Career Readiness across the Curriculum (CRxC) framework is **not** a prescriptive approach to change, as local conditions, personnel, politics, and initiatives will require adaptation of the following 7 steps.

Faculty engagement phase:

- 1 Specify desired skills:** identify which skills are desired for professionals in the discipline or field (see Skills as Cultural Scripts approach)
- 2 Identify existing skills/career foci:** review current syllabi for existing emphasis on key skills and/or career-related information
- 3 Fill gaps:** if few courses or activities address skills/careers, provide professional development for faculty on skills-focused instruction and/or WIL
- 4 Document opportunities across program:** create inventory of course-based and other (e.g., internships) learning opportunities within program from matriculation to graduation

Cross-unit planning phase:

- 5 Document opportunities across campus:** work w/career services to expand inventory to include additional skill- or career-related learning opportunities appropriate for students in program
- 6 Fill gaps and synergize:** identify gaps and either network across campus to tap into existing programming or create new opportunities
- 7 Create roadmaps for students:** develop user-friendly roadmaps for students to consult as they select courses and pursue career development experiences

References and Resources:

Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). What we know about guided pathways. Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Dannels, D. P. (2001). Time to speak up: A theoretical framework of situated pedagogy and practice for communication across the curriculum. *Communication Education*, 50(2), 144-158.

Fischer H., Preston, K., Staus, N., & Storksdieck, M. (2022) Course assessment for skill transfer: A framework for evaluating skill transfer in online courses. *Frontiers in Education*. 7:960430. 1-11.

Hora, M.T., Benbow, R.J., & Lee, C. (2021). A sociocultural approach to communication instruction: How insights from communication teaching practices can inform faculty development programs, 30 (4-5), 747-796. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 30 (4-5), 747-796.

Kezar, A. (2018). *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change.* Routledge.