Career Readiness Challenge:
Development of an online platform to support the translation of professional competencies learned through athletic participation to career readiness

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National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) identified eight critical competencies:

- Career Preparation
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Digital Technology
- Global Fluency
- Leadership
- Professionalism

“The ability to translate competencies learned through athletic participation into real-world applications outside of the athletics context is a **high-impact practice**” (Bell, 2018)

17% of employers perceived new hires to have **competency identifying and articulating one's skills, strengths, knowledge** to the position desired and career goals (NACE, 2018a)

**Athletic and academic responsibilities** may limit the student-athlete’s ability to engage in career service activities (Buzzetta, Lenz, and Kennelly, 2017; Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000)
**Objective:** to develop a career readiness program that will enhance attitudes towards career planning and support the translation of athletic competencies into career contexts.

**RQ1.** How do perceptions of career readiness competency relate to student-athlete identities?

**RQ2.** How do student-athletes engage in the CRC?

**RQ3.** How does participation in the CRC affect career planning attitudes?

**Pilot Implementation**

- 6 teams (3M/3W)
- 116 Student-Athletes
- 53 Days (~7 weeks)
- Embedded within LMS
Career Readiness Challenge was designed using principles of gamification to drive motivation.

- Progress Bar
- Leaderboard
- Competition
- Challenges
- Levels
- Onboarding
- Random Rewards
- Incentives
Student-Athletes perceive ability to effectively demonstrate:

- Professionalism
- Communication

Participation in athletics had a large positive contribution towards:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Collaboration

Pre-CRC Data Collection; Control + Experimental  Career Futures Inventory N = 116
16 baseline one-on-one interviews
13 women; Three (3) men
Nine (9) White; Five (5) Black
Two (2) multi-racial, one (1) Hispanic
Five (5) AeroEng, five (5) MechEng, three (3) CivilEng, two (2) HumFact, one (1) SoftEng

https://commons.erau.edu/publication/1339/
High perceptions of Support, Career Agency, and Work-Life Balance

- **Female** student-athletes had significantly lower perceptions of **Occupational Awareness** than male peers $F(1,25)=5.783, p=.019$

- **International** student-athletes had significantly **higher** perceptions of **Work-Life Balance** $F(1,25)=5.784, p=.019$

- Interaction effect exists for **Sex*Race*Academic Level** with respect to Support $F(2,25)=3.399, p=.038$
- 22% of participants were active users by points
- 44% of participants visited the site at least 40% of days
- Female student-athletes earned on average twice as many points as male students, $F(1,32)=5.926, p=.021$
- More points earned the closer a participant was to graduation, $F(4,32)=4.688, p=.004$
- Interaction effect between Race*Academic Level was observed in points earned, $F(3,32)=3.249, p=.035$
Post-CRC participation resulted in statistically higher scores for Career Agency \((p=.014)\) and Work-Life Balance \((p=.010)\)

- Gains in **Occupational Awareness** were predicted by number of **points** earned
  \(F(1,21)=5.781, p=.022\)

- Gains in **Work-Life Balance** were predicted by **Academic Level**
  \(F(4,21)=3.380, p=.020\)

- Interaction effect observed between **Race*****Academic Level** for gains in **Work-Life Balance**
  \(F(3,21)=3.633, p=.023\)
Insights for Implementation

Direct integration into the Canvas LMS makes the course more accessible to student-athletes but may require IT support.

Timing of when the CRC is offered is important to participation. Holiday breaks and high testing times may limit participation.

Coaches and team culture can have a strong influence on participation by showing interest in career readiness.
Recommendations for Career Competency

Provide student-athletes (across diverse demographic groups) with paid leadership positions in career service centers

Ensure student-athletes are connected to student chapters of professional organizations

Pair student-athletes with faculty/staff for career mentoring

Pair student-athletes with experienced peers for career mentoring
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