

Find Your Next Professional Job: Cooperative Education for Community College Students

Faculty Professional Development Sabbatical Final Report

Tamara Pinkas, Sabbatical Fall term, 2009

Abstract

My sabbatical time was used to co-author a full-length textbook for community college cooperative education students. Although textbooks exist for cooperative education, they were written by university faculty for the typical university student. Because the needs and experiences of community college students are often different from those of university students, it seemed appropriate to write a text book specifically for community college students. The working title of the book is *Find Your Next Professional Job: Cooperative Education for Community College Students*. The ultimate goal is publication by Mosaic Eye Publishing, my co-author Scott Weighart's publishing company. The manuscript's first draft is 90% complete and will be edited during summer 2010 for publication in January, 2011.

Book Development and Activities

Prior to applying for my sabbatical I made presentations to the Northwest Career Educators and Employers Association (NCEEA) and at the national conference for the Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA) to determine if faculty would be interested in using a text book with their community college cooperative education students. At both events there was enthusiastic support for the idea. At each I gathered business cards of faculty who offered to assist me with the book should my sabbatical be granted. My plan was to have these individuals provide resume samples, quotes and connections to employers. Interestingly, several faculty members asked during these sessions that Scott and I consider publishing the book electronically rather than as a hard copy to control costs and improve accessibility.

Once my sabbatical was granted, my first step was to meet with Scott to organize our work. I traveled to Boston, MA where he teaches at Northeastern University and we spent a couple of days working on our joint project. During our time together we developed strategies for revising content, systems for working electronically and discussed how to resolve potential disagreements. Scott, an experienced journalist and writer, gave me pointers on good interviewing practices and insight into how he had successfully written several books. We also explored the idea of publishing electronically. I agreed to research e-publishing and we put off a



final decision until the research about it was complete and the book was finished. With this foundation established I returned to Eugene and spent most of my time writing new material and editing prior work of Scott's to make it more appropriate for community college students.



Scott in his office

Some of the new material I added surprised Scott. For example, when writing about dressing for a job interview, Scott had written only one paragraph which primarily told students, both men and women, to wear suits. It is understandable why Scott took this position because his students tend to be applying for white collar professional jobs in marketing and finance where suits are appropriate interview attire. In addition his students primarily come from middle class and privileged families (Northeastern University is a private institution with tuition about \$35K a year) where knowing how to dress appropriately is frequently part of their upbringing. During my 20 years at Lane I have had many opportunities to hear from local employers, especially in career technical areas, about the amazing ways students choose to dress for job interviews from black leather rebel hats and Snoopy t-shirts to bandana headbands and the ever popular white athletic socks. I have found that community college students benefit from highly detailed information to understand proper interview attire down to the smallest detail such as avoiding

black nail polish unless you are interviewing at a tattoo parlor.

One of my significant contributions to the book was to make sure that gender issues related to internships and employment were identified and discussed. Here is an example of gender material I added to the discussion of salary negotiations:

"Unfortunately, gender also plays a role in determining compensation. Men tend to expect and set a higher salary goal and ask for it when offered a job while women are generally more likely to accept the initial offer. A valuable resource to help women overcome wage inequity is a book written in 2003 by Linda Babcock and Sara Lascherver entitled 'Women Don't Ask' (Princeton University Press). Babcock and Lascherver provide evidence that one of the major reasons women often do not achieve the same level of income as men in the same job, is due to their inability or unwillingness to even ask for a higher wage when a job offer is extended."



Working at Scott's office

An important part of the textbook is a series of quotes from employers, cooperative education professionals and students. To gather appropriate quotes I used two strategies: personal interviews and electronic communication via email. I found the process of creating quotes from

personal interviews challenging. First of all, the quotes are intended to illustrate points in the text so I prepared a series of questions for each person I interviewed designed to focus the conversation on the topics. Sometimes this worked very well and sometimes I discovered that the individual had nothing to offer on a topic so I found I needed to do more interviews than I had anticipated. The other strategy was to send the individual a set of questions and have them respond in writing. This didn't work as well as doing face to face interviews even though the individuals requested this method rather than an interview.



Interviewing Margaret

During the interviews I took extensive notes recording the individual's exact words as much as possible. My goal was to have the quotes be more conversational and less formal in tone and language usage. Once the quote was extracted from the total interview, I sent it electronically to the individual for revision and approval reminding them of my goal. In many cases the person, especially the faculty, would re-write the quote making it more didactic and eliminating many, if not most, of the conversational aspects of it. Several times the quote would go back and forth between us four or five times while I negotiated with the person to retain some of the language that gave it color and energy.

To gather resume samples for the book I sent e-mail solicitations to all the individuals I had connected with during my initial presentations. I also posted requests for sample resumes on the list serves of both NCCEA and CEIA. The results were disappointing; only two individuals followed through and sent me material. I then solicited samples from my Lane colleagues. As of this writing several faculty have generously shared their student's resume (student data such as name, phone, email, etc. has been changed to ensure privacy.) Part of the final 10 percent of the book that needs finishing is the selection and polishing of sample student resumes. My goal is to have a reasonable variety of careers represented so that students using the book might find one that is similar to their course of study or that reflects the kind of work history that is typical of the range of students attending community colleges.

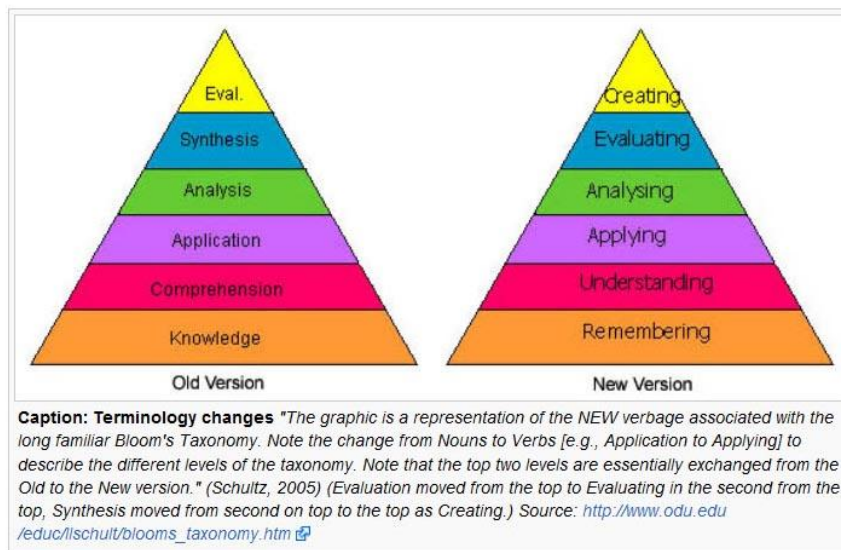
Another part of the final 10 percent of the text that needs to be completed is material on behavioral based interviewing. Both Scott and I agree that students are best prepared for interviews when they have written out stories from their life, especially from prior employment, that features them at their best. The text for how to write stories is complete. What is yet to be added are examples from community college students rather than university students. During spring term of 2010 I plan to have my students write stories to use in interviews as an assignment for my co-op seminar. I will select among them (with the student's permission) for inclusion in that part of the book.

One aspect of my original sabbatical plan was to go to Berkeley and use the university library for researching topics. I did go to Berkeley, however I did not end up doing much research at the library. Much of the material I thought I might need was accessible via the internet. Never the less, my time in Berkeley proved to be valuable because I made one particular connection I might not have otherwise made. While in Berkeley I read the New York Times each day (which I normally don't do) and came upon an article about e-publishing. I went to the web site of the person who was interviewed for the article, Steve Jordan (stevej@stevejordanbooks.com, "The book of the 21st century IS digital,") and discovered an amazing wealth of information about e-publishing. In fact, the site contained extensive material and detailed information geared for absolute beginners like me. Although the site was very informative, I still had many questions. I began an e-mail conversation with Steve who was generous with his knowledge and willing to make recommendations for our book. Scott and I plan to make our decision about e-publishing in the near future based on Steve's suggestions.



Writing in Berkeley

As with many text books, Scott and I will have end of chapter questions. While writing these for the book I decided to revisit Bloom's Taxonomy with the objective of using it as a guide for



preparing more interesting and perhaps more challenging questions and activities. Through my research I discovered that the taxonomy had been revised since I learned it many years ago as an undergraduate. I was very pleased to see that "synthesis" was changed to "creating" and is now considered the highest level. I referred to this graphic while working on the chapter questions to push myself to prepare questions

for several levels, especially those above "understanding." Given that the book is being created for faculty and students in many disciplines and institutions, I wondered as I worked if faculty would use the questions and if they would notice that care had been taken to have students do more than just remember.

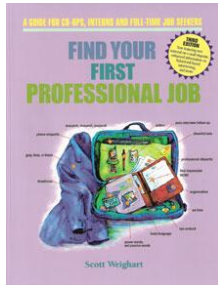
Conclusion

I was warned by several people prior to beginning this project that I might have a hard time keeping myself on task. They were worried, based on their own writing experience, that I would have difficulty sitting down to do research and to write every day. I was delighted to find that I was so motivated to work on the book that I began writing each day with energy and enthusiasm. I was amazed at the end of the sabbatical to discover I had actually accomplished more writing than I originally expected. I wasn't sure that three months was sufficient time to complete a draft, and although I do have more material to prepare for the first draft to be complete, I am very close to reaching my goal. The book's table of contents can be found as Attachment A.

I found my sabbatical professionally rewarding on many levels. It was gratifying to have the opportunity to organize and present the knowledge I have gained over my career to the benefit of Lane students and possibly community college students around the nation. Having the opportunity to do research and work collaboratively with a colleague on a book increased my knowledge and strengthened my commitment to experiential education. And finally, because writing is a creative process, I very much enjoyed the process of crafting the book. I know that writing is a solitary process but who says you have to be in a garret?



Writing at the Glenwood



Attachment A

**Find Your Next Professional Job:
Cooperative Education for
Community College Students**

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APPENDIX C – Writing Effective cover Letters

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