

For my practicum, I am co-facilitating one section of INTS 4498 and two sections of KSU 4401. INTS 4498 is the Capstone course for all students in the Integrative Studies major at Kennesaw State University. This course is required for all Integrative Studies majors. KSU 4401 is a Senior Seminar course, and university elective, offered to all seniors at Kennesaw State University. It can also be taken by Integrative Studies majors in lieu of INTS 4498. My mentor is the instructor of the course, Dr. Joan E. Dominick. She has been teaching these courses for many years, and has a passion for helping students and future graduates succeed. The primary artifact of these courses is an end-of-course, best-of-show portfolio that all students must produce throughout the tenure of the semester.

As part of the course, we enlist “guest networkers” to present to the students about their area of expertise. For example, we have someone from Career Services speak about resume writing, someone from IT speak about creating an online, web-based portfolio, someone from the National Guard to discuss post-graduate careers in the military, and other such guest networkers. There are about 20 students enrolled in each section of the course. These students must be within three semesters of graduating in order to enroll in the course.

In the past two years, I have been a guest networker in Dr. Dominick’s course, discussing graduate admissions. In order to orient myself to the students, I created a blog and introduction website that was disseminated among the students. This blog discusses my own personal experiences with each of the tasks they are currently facing, such as networking, creating a LinkedIn profile, creating a portfolio, and writing a resume. I have also linked my portfolio-in-progress for my graduate program as an example for the students to review. In order to orient myself with the guest networkers, I have corresponded with them via email before and after their presentations, as well as met with them in person. In order to orient myself with Dr. Dominick, I

met with her prior to the course starting on numerous occasions for coffee, lunch, and even an off-campus cultural event that we attended with our families.

Thus far in my practicum, my experience has been a 5 out of 5. Dr. Dominick has done so much to aid in my experience, and she allows me much freedom in my classroom role. She tells me every day that this class is as much my class as it is hers. I have led one seminar regarding platforms for online portfolios, and am scheduled to lead others on topics such as going to graduate school. I have reviewed assignments that the students turn in, as well as participate in their online discussions. Additionally, many students have begun, through Dr. Dominick's aid, to see me as a true mentor, and are asking for my assistance in their portfolios and assignments. Dr. Dominick and I have also submitted a proposal to present at the Southeastern Conference for the Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence Based Learning. The proposal is a roundtable discussion including Dr. Dominick, an instructor who bases her courses around a portfolio; Amanda Long, a Career Services professional who helps students create portfolios which aid in the career search process; and myself, a graduate student who is both helping students to create an effective portfolio while also creating a portfolio for my graduate program. Working with Dr. Dominick has given me much more opportunity than I expected, and I am very grateful for this experience.

Creating a portfolio has been very useful in my practicum. In fact, it can be argued that my entire portfolio is applicable to my practicum experience, as I am working with students to help create their portfolios. The most helpful part for me has been my experimentation with different portfolio platforms. In fact, I have presented a seminar to the students on using Weebly and Wix and other online platforms for portfolios. I am also using my portfolio as an example.

Another useful component of my portfolio is choosing what to include and what to leave out. It is important to determine what employers and graduate schools need to see, and what will just seem like extra filler or fluff. Lastly, I also discuss the importance of reflections. You cannot include any personal experiences or details on a resume; however, you can include reflections on your work in a portfolio. This can be vital to potential employers and graduate schools.

So far, I have been most surprised by the willingness for each guest networker to work with Dr. Dominick to come and speak with the students. In my experience as a staff member, it can often be difficult to successfully coordinate between departments. Many members of the academe are reluctant to work with others on projects that are not specifically their own. For example, I have worked in admissions in three different institutions, both on the undergraduate level and the graduate level. We have attempted to put on successful open houses at each institution, and other members of the academy have thwarted every attempt. Faculty did not want to recruit, as that was why they had an admissions office. Staff members from other departments, such as student life and career services, could never find time in their schedules that appealed everyone, regardless of how early we planned.

I have come to expect this unwillingness to cooperate as commonplace in higher education, because this is all I have experienced. However, in this course, we have had members of Career Services, Information Technology, Student Services, Graduate Admissions, Human Resources, and many other departments gladly give of their time and talent to our students. I have been very impressed at their willingness to work with us to help the graduating students. So often, I have seen higher education strictly through an admissions lens, which has colored my view of other departments. Working on the academic side of the institution with Dr. Dominick has certainly opened my eyes to a new side of the academe.

Dr. Dominick and I share a majority of our administrative philosophy. First, we believe in the true necessity of senior seminar courses that prepare our students for life after graduation. Often we comment on the fact that if anyone needed this course as a senior in college, it was us. We believe that this course is one of the most important courses in college, because it teaches students how to use their college education after graduation. Similarly, we believe that the students come first. Everything we do in and out of this course is for the students benefit. Both Dr. Dominick and I hold class with important information, but we also spend many hours outside of class meeting with students one-on-one to discuss, in detail, their goals and next steps. I have seen a large increase in students coming to my office just to discuss graduate school. Lastly, we believe that one of the most important tools any professional can have is the ability and talent to network. In fact, networking with Dr. Dominick as a guest networker in her course is how I found my current practicum. We try to connect our students to as many helpful contacts as possible, whether they are within the KSU community or someone we know in our personal lives. I greatly respect Dr. Dominick's tireless efforts to help these students succeed after they graduate.

There are few differences between the philosophy of Dr. Dominick and myself. The one that stands out the most is that she makes class attendance optional. The course is a hybrid, so the discussions and assignments can be completed entirely online. However, the guest networkers, who present in class, give students so many valuable resources. She believes that, at this point in their educational career, students are capable of making adult decisions. They can decide, without influence, whether to attend class. She sends out emails to the students each week to tell them who is speaking and what we will be discussing. While I do understand her reasoning behind her attendance-optional policy, I believe that the students would get more value out of the

course if they were required to attend the once weekly class session. We typically see about one-third of the registered students each week. I believe that the students who do not come to class are the ones who would benefit the most from the in-class lessons.

I wish I had more content knowledge, rather than just personal experience, with both resume writing and web-based teaching. One of the biggest hurdles our students are facing is writing a resume. Many students ask me specific questions regarding their resume, and I often I do not know the answer. Together, we find the solution, usually by calling Career Services. However, I wish I had tried to work with Career Services before co-facilitating the course to get more detailed and specific information regarding resume writing.

Secondly, this course is taught primarily online, while we dedicate in-class time to guest networkers. The course I took, ITEC 7530, was a fantastic introduction to teaching online. However, I struggle with certain aspects of the online classroom because I have no experience on the instructor side of an online class. I wish I had more experience and detail specific knowledge of teaching online, such as troubleshooting with D2L. Students will come to me with issues and I will not be able to help them. Similarly, I will experience issues that are common and must reach out for help rather than have the technical knowledge to fix them.