



Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A

Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A



Valencia College, a public college with campuses in Orlando and other parts of central Florida, is a subscriber of *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center*. We recently had the pleasure to speak with Lianna McGowan, Faculty, New Student Experience, and librarians Courtney Moore and Chris Wettstein about how they use *Ferguson's*—specifically in their New Student Experience (NSE) course. NSE students are just launching their college career, and the use of *Ferguson's* helps them think in terms of how their college experience will ultimately lead toward a career path. We were intrigued to learn more about their unique and innovative course and how they leverage this award-winning career database for student success.



To begin, what exactly is the New Student Experience course?

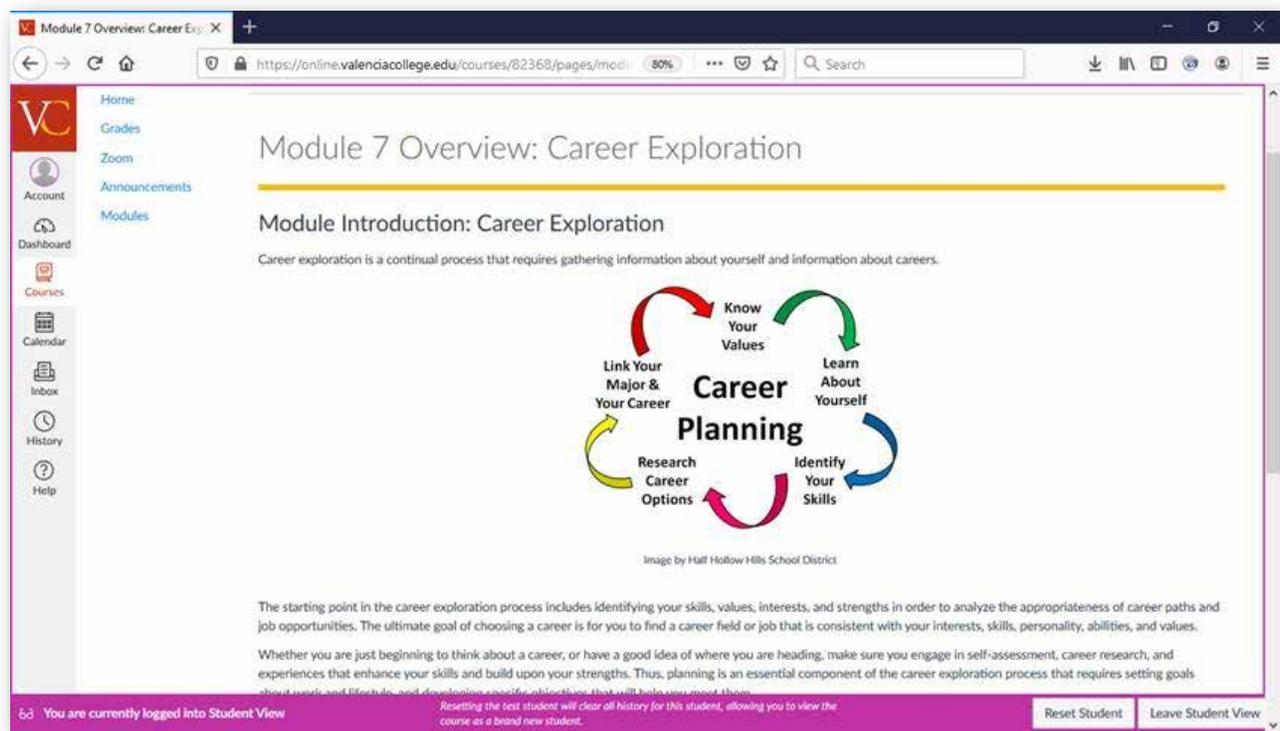
The New Student Experience is a required credit-earning course at Valencia College. It boasts the highest enrollment at the college—as of the summer of 2020, 90,000 students have taken the course. Students do a lot of research about their strengths, their interests in life, their personal values, and how those align with their educational and career goals. We find that, as students enter college, they're still trying to find themselves and are not necessarily sure what they want as their major or what they want to do after they graduate. With the New Student Experience Course, we help to acclimate them to college life and beyond.

The NSE course covers major topics such as college study skills and college success skills—those are really important—including how to take tests, how to read for assignments, how to interact with professors. We also cover financial literacy and go over educational planning. Students have the opportunity to map out the courses they're going to take at Valencia and that they'll take after they transfer to their four-year university or after they get their associate's degree. We have them map out their entire educational process.

Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A

And of course, there's the career exploration component, and that is a major focus of the course. We have students research their careers and do assessments that will identify which careers might be best for them. There's typically a library visit where we go over the *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* database with them.

In addition, *purpose* is really big. We try to tie purpose into students' goals for life, their goals for their education, and their goals for their career. Everything is intertwined together. At the end of the semester, we have what is called the final story project, which brings together all of the major topics we covered over the semester. It's a presentation where students envision themselves 8–10 years from now—when they're already in their dream job and they've already graduated—and they take us through their life once they've achieved their education and career goals.



What is the history of the NSE course? How did Valencia decide to make this a mandatory course for first-years?

The NSE course began in 2014 as an initiative for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). It was a response to wanting to help students be successful—to encourage retention, persistence, parity, and success in front door courses.

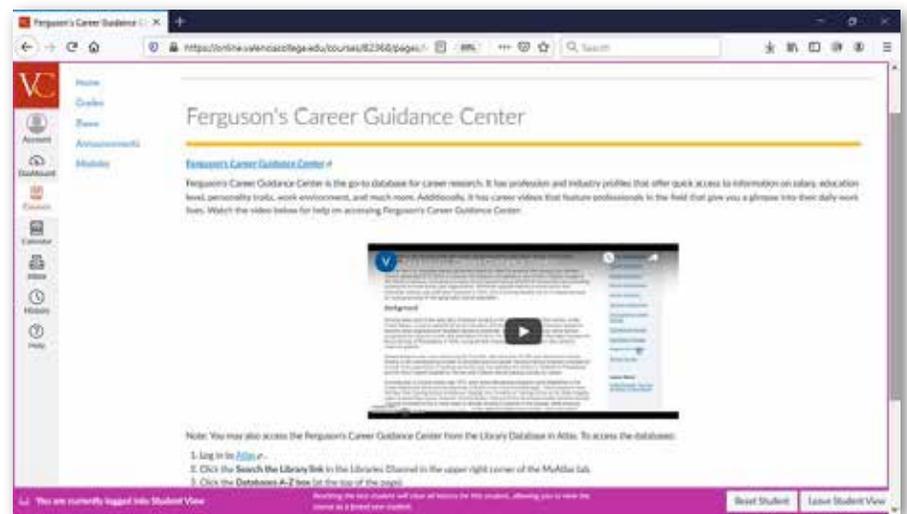
This course is rather unique to universities and colleges. The goal was to have students take the course within the first semester or the first 12 credits. It included an orientation to college, student success skills, program introduction, and career and academic advising. The QEP came to an end in 2018, and now the course has been institutionalized.

Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A



NSE is a required course for all students, both those in the Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) programs. (AA students, the equivalent of freshmen and sophomores, are preparing to be juniors at a transferring institution, and AS students are planning to go directly into the workforce.) AS students often have a flavored version of the course, tailored to their program or degree and their eventual work.

The career exploration component is a huge part of both programs. In the AS version, the focus is a little more specific because the students are already thinking about a degree—but both involve a similar curriculum, which includes *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center*.



Can you speak in general terms about how you approach the topic of career readiness?

There are two parts that we address in the NSE class. The first is career exploration, and that is what *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* is particularly valuable for. The students in the course are learning about different careers—starting with purpose and their ideas of values, interests, and strengths—and that segues into planning for their education, which is focused around their career choice.

Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A



The other important focus is career readiness, which is threaded throughout the entire course through the soft skills we teach, primarily, and also interviewing, group projects, and other assignments.

How does the NSE course touch on information literacy with a career focus?

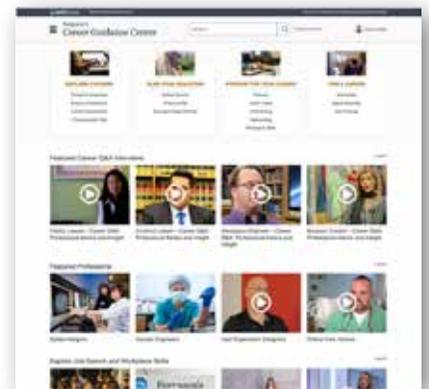
Generally, the New Student Experience classes will visit the library once per semester for an introduction with a career focus. We've done a few types of workshops for them, but the main one is a website evaluation in combination with *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center*. The purpose is to give students the opportunity to research their careers using the Internet as well as one of the library's resources.

Within the visit, we have students research a specific career on the Internet and then tell us whether or not the sources are credible. We then transition to *Ferguson's*, where students research a career of their choice and answer certain guided questions that invite them to explore the database more.

Another type of workshop we've done with the New Student Experience course is a scavenger hunt. It's one of our favorite things to do! With the scavenger hunt, we spotlight materials that the library has on some of the major topics in the course, such as purpose, career exploration, financial literacy, and setting goals. Students are asked to find those resources within the library. We also have them reflect on their careers, so there's a career component to this assignment as well.

Do you use other career-focused resources in the NSE?

Our two primary resources are *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Valencia College Leverages *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* to Empower Students in Their New Student Experience Course: Q&A

Let's discuss *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* specifically. Why *Ferguson's*? What part of the database do you find most effective to use?

In particular, the profession profiles and industry overviews provide a nice snapshot of information, and the content is easy to read and easy to navigate. Plus, we love that the career videos are integrated in the profiles.

The Career Q&A videos that give a "day in the life" perspective are super valuable. For instance, students in the NSE class have an assignment that involves interviewing someone in the profession they'd like to go into. Getting an insider's perspective of the day-to-day like this is eye-opening for them. Likewise, the Q&A videos provide the same kind of nice little nugget for them—and they get good use in the students' final project at the end of the semester when they have to present their chosen job and what they would be doing day to day.

Here is our main assignment involving *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center*:

Research Career #1: Using *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center*

Directions: Use *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* (from Valencia's library database) available in the module to **respond to questions 1-7**. If you cannot find your exact career, [click here to Ask a Librarian to chat, text or email your question](#).

- 1. Provide the name (or title) of the article you selected in *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* and the link to the article:** (If you cannot find an article with the same title as your career, select one that is closely related.)

- **Name or title of the article:** [Click here to enter text](#).

- 2. What is the salary range for this career (position)?**

[Click here to enter text](#).

We also have a framework in Canvas that all of our faculty members use. One of the assignments there is career exploration or guided research, and the questions are mostly geared toward the profession profiles in *Ferguson's*. Students are really finding the profiles helpful.

We have a dedicated career center at the college and work with the career counselors there. Sometimes they come in for presentations—they also use *Ferguson's* and help support that part of the curriculum.

Contact us today to learn how *Ferguson's Career Guidance Center* can empower your students: (800) 322-8755 or CollegeOnline@Infobase.com. For a free trial, go to: www.Infobase.com/Trial