

First Year Experience in Business – Seamless Mobile Learning Blueprint

Overview

Topic

This first year seminar lesson is about exploring majors and careers at Penn State's Smeal College of Business. Throughout the semester, students are supposed to engage in various career-focused events sponsored by different organizations within and affiliated with the college. Part of the seminar is also centered around helping students become self-advocates, knowledge seekers, and goal setters. Students have their choice of events to attend to fulfill this requirement in the course, but one of the events is specifically geared toward first year students and it is called "Explore Smeal." This Explore Smeal event will be the focus of this blueprint.

Context

Students meet once a week for 50 minutes with the instructor and are expected to spend their independent time attending events in the college, reflecting on their experiences, and completing projects centered around learning to navigate Penn State and Smeal, and ultimately decide if a business major is the right fit for them. The course aims to expose students to the culture and climate of the college early in their academic career to help them determine if a business major is what they want to pursue.

Explore Smeal is an event that is designed specifically for first year students to learn about the different majors through information sessions with faculty and the student-lead organizations dedicated to each major within the college. In addition, the event also hosts sessions about career services, preparing for the career fairs, resume writing and review, professional conduct and networking, and other business-focused topics. The event spans an entire day and is located throughout the business building on campus.

Learners

The learners in first year seminar are typically high school graduates who are entering their first semester of college at Penn State. Occasionally they are in their second semester, and sometimes they are also transfer students from a different institution. Regardless of their exact status as a "first year" student, these students don't have more than 15-18 college credits from Penn State. About 50% of the time, students generally believe they want to study a major within the college. Sometimes they know what major they want to study, but most of the time they are still deciding between two or three options. The other 50% are deciding between a Smeal major or a major outside the college. The Smeal first year seminar is a requirement for all Smeal students. The goal of the course is to help students determine 1) whether they want to be a Smeal student, 2) and what major they want to pursue.

Design Components

Learning Goals

- Demonstrate goal-setting abilities
- Recognize your personal “best fit” major/career
- Experience opportunities to network
- Reflect on how your choices serve your goals for college and beyond

Theory

This blueprint is based on the theory of seamless mobile learning and uses concepts from this theory to incorporate metacognitive strategies into the learning experience for students. In this blueprint, students prepare for a planned out-of-class experience that is relatively unstructured in terms of formal learning. Incorporating seamless mobile learning elements into the event attendance could possibly help facilitate conversations that could contribute to learning by making the actual learning visible and available for conversation, a.k.a., a shared external representation of their experience at the event in the form of reflections (Sharples & Pea, 2014).

This blueprint incorporates several of the characteristics of mobile-assisted seamless learning identified in the chapter:

- Encompassing formal and informal learning
- Across time
- Across locations
- Combined use of multiple device types
- Seamless switching between multiple learning tasks

(Wong & Looi, 2011, in Sharples & Pea, 2014).

The Lesson/Activity

Part 1: In-Class

During the class meeting leading up to the Explore Smeal event, we discuss goal setting. At this point in the semester we have usually already talked about networking and professional conduct as topics embedded in other lessons, so these opportunities are supposed to be embedded in their goals.

The goal setting lesson is structured so that students learn about different types of goal setting strategies – SMART goals, long term goals, short term goals, goals for college vs. career vs. life, etc. First, students fill out a “Values Inventory” worksheet that asks them to rank how important various things are. The sheet includes such options as “seeing my family regularly” and “making six-figure salary.”

Once students have completed their own Values Inventory, they are given two job descriptions for open positions in fields related to business. After reading each job description, they work

with a partner to explain which job would be a better fit for them based on the values they identified as top priorities on the Values Inventory.

After this activity, I typically give a quick lecture with slides that explain the different types of goals and goal-setting strategies. The rest of the 50 minutes is used to help students think about the Explore Smeal event, what they hope to learn or experience, and set goals around what sessions they want to attend and why.

At the end of class, students would sign up for alerts to a device of their choosing that they plan to take with them to the Explore Smeal event.

Part 2: Out of Class

On the day of the Explore Smeal event, students would receive text-based “nudges” to their mobile device. In the morning, the first nudge would be a reminder to attend the event. Prior to the first session of the day, students would receive another nudge that asks them to respond to a prompt:

Text Nudge Example – Pre-Event:

“How do you feel about Explore Smeal right now? What session are you planning on attending? What do you hope to learn from this session?”

Students can text their answer back, and ideally responses would be stored in some kind of survey for the instructor to reference later.

Throughout the day, students would be asked reflection questions that prompt them to connect their experiences with their goals and values from the prior week’s class. Ideally students would respond to one prompt after every session.

Text Nudge Examples – During Event:

“Did the last session meet your expectations? Why or why not?”

“What is something new that you learned from this session?”

“How are you feeling about the Explore Smeal event right now?”

“What goals have you not achieved yet during this event?”

After the event, students would be prompted one more time to submit a reflection about the day’s sessions and their experience. The reflection would be based in Canvas and the text nudge would contain a link to the Canvas assignment page, and a link to view all their survey responses from the day on one page.

The final reflection prompt:

Think about your experience at the Explore Smeal event today. Write a 1-2 page single spaced reflection. Look at your goal setting sheet from last week’s class and your survey responses to help you respond to the following questions:

- Were you able to achieve all your goals for the Explore Smeal event? Why or why not?

- Write about the most valuable part of your experience at Explore Smeal. What made this part of the day so valuable to you? Did you plan to have this experience?
- How did the Explore Smeal event help you move closer to achieving your goals for the semester?
- Describe your experience networking at the Explore Smeal event.
- Identify 2-3 things you did not know before you attended Explore Smeal.
- What major(s) are you considering at Smeal? What major(s) are you no longer considering? Why? How did you make this decision?

The instructor would provide their feedback based on the student's reflection submission. The feedback process would offer the space for the conversation to take place around what was learned at the event and how those insights could be applied to post-college endeavors. In the next class, a debrief session would take place where students were paired up to discuss their takeaways and share their findings from the event.

[My Reflection](#)

One way to make this a really neat integration for seamless mobile learning is if the instructor could respond to students' responses, particularly if there was anything alarming or off-course about what they write. For instance, if a student responds that they are feeling anxious, an instructor could offer encouragement and remind the student that they are working on achieving their goals. Or, if a student provides a response that indicates they had a valuable takeaway from a session, the instructor could send a message back that asks the student how that takeaway relates to their identified goals and encourage deeper thinking.

This idea was somewhat based on a COVID 19 study I participated in recently where I was asked to respond to questions via a survey from a text message for a period of time. The questions gauged my mindset and anxiety levels during the time when we were in the red/yellow phases. While nothing like this exists currently for the first year seminar, I think it would be a valuable addition to the event attendance requirements for the students to really practice the metacognitive strategies we try to teach them about in class. Ideally some kind of "conference app" could be developed that students would download and use to choose their sessions for all of the events they are required to go to, and the nudge questions could be tailored to specific topics. They could also see if anyone else in their class was attending the same session and possibly connect afterward to discuss the session, and the app could help facilitate that conversation. I think this would be an interesting way to engage students in a course requirement that often feels like checking off a box and doesn't require much active thinking.

Additional Resources

Values Inventory

Rank (1-5)	Value
	Steady employment/job security
	Inexpensive health insurance plan
	High salary
	Helping other people
	Paid vacation time
	Helping the environment/world
	Possibility of promotion and advancement
	Friends and family respect the work I do
	Paid family and/or sick leave time
	Work that keeps me busy
	Work that improves my community
	Use my degree
	Use my skills and abilities
	Supervisors who train their employees well
	Flexible work schedule
	Supervisors who treat me with respect
	Work that supports my lifestyle
	The company fits with my own morals and beliefs
	Favorable retirement plan
	Good working conditions and work environment
	Challenging and satisfying work
	Enjoy what I do at work
	Pre-tax money plan for elder care or child care
	Being my own boss/in charge of my own work
	Feeling accomplishment through my work
	Co-workers who are easy to get along with
	Have status and authority at work
	Knowing what to expect each day at work
	A lifestyle that allows me to do work I enjoy
	Working in a location near my family and friends
	Feel good about the work that I do
	Work with many other people in a friendly/social atmosphere
	Supervisors who provide guidance and support
	Ability to work independently
	Working abroad
	Opportunities to learn and develop new skills

	Work that involves traveling to new places
	Ability to pursue personal interests
	Spending time with family, friends
	Participation in leisure activities outside work
	Home ownership
	Pursue further education
	Work that makes me feel like I'm making a difference
	Working in a competitive industry/environment
	Opportunity to earn bonuses based on work performance

Job Description 1

Entry Level Staff Accountant

KWC Certified Public Accountants - Alexandria, VA 22312

\$66,000 a year

Public accounting firm is looking to add high-quality entry level (recent and upcoming accounting graduates) accountants to our staff.

Entry Level accountants can assist in all areas of our practice, including accounting and auditing, tax, and management advisory services. The positions are professionally challenging and have excellent growth potential, while still offering a proper work-life balance. Strong performers are recognized and rewarded for excellence. We offer an excellent salary and benefits package that is competitive with the Big 4 firms.

For entry-level candidates, relevant experience is valued but not necessary. We offer a formal training program that runs concordant with on-the-job training.

We are a growing public accounting firm (top 25 in Virginia, as measured by the number of CPAs on staff) with a great reputation in the business community, diversified practice and a high-tech work environment. We have received the 'Best Places to Work' designation from both Virginia Business magazine and Accounting Today and have been named a Top Workplace by the Washington Post. We are an independent alliance member of BDO, a national accounting firm. Our Richmond, Virginia office is located at 5911 West Broad Street. Our headquarters is located in Alexandria, Virginia, close to the 395 / Edsall Road West Exit.

Job requirements include the following:

- Bachelors or Master's degree in accounting, with a desire to obtain CPA license
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Must be extremely detail-oriented, thorough and organized
- Professional image and positive attitude
- Team player that wants their voice heard and is receptive to constructive feedback
- Ability to work in paperless environment

Job responsibilities include the following:

- Preparation of financial statement audits, reviews and compilations
- Client fieldwork, meetings and correspondence
- Individual, partnership and corporate income tax return preparation and planning
- Other tax return preparation as needed, including sales tax, business license, personal property, estate and gift returns, payroll tax returns and business registration forms

Benefits:

- Flexible summer hours
- Paid time off starting at 15 days per year
- Some ability to work remotely
- Meals, snacks and other perks during the tax busy season
- “Dress for your day” – business attire chosen by staff based on daily schedule
- Free parking
- Company-paid continuing professional education courses (online, live seminars, etc.) and memberships/licensing fees
- Bonus for obtaining your CPA license and reimbursement of examination and application fees
- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Vision insurance
- Retirement plan
- Paid time off

Job Description 2

Associate Tax Accountant - Boston, MA

Liberty Mutual Insurance

\$64,000 a year

A career in finance at Liberty Mutual is more than just balancing assets and liabilities. You'll be using innovative tools and problem-solving skills to fuel your growth and success—and ours. We're dedicated to helping industry-leading finance talent realize their dreams—straight out of college. Sound like you? Read on!

The Details

Searching for a career in accounting that lands you a close-knit group of professionals who are well versed in tax issues across state, federal, and international tax functions?

Look no further! As an Associate Tax Accountant with Liberty Mutual, you'll receive extensive mentoring and training from the experts and leaders in our Corporate Taxation department.

Your responsibilities will span a wide array of projects and duties, including the timely filing of tax returns and other compliance assignments, the analysis of financial data to support tax accounting records, assisting in the research of tax implications of transactions, and helping quantify impact of changes to tax law for the organization.

If you check the boxes of being a team player who is open to continuous improvement and wants to learn all about corporate taxation at a global Fortune 100 company, we'd like to hear from you!

What you've got

- You have 0-2 years of professional experience.
- You are working towards a bachelor's degree in Finance or Accounting with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.
- You must have permanent work authorization in the United States.
- You are detail-oriented and thrive in a fast-paced work environment.

- You possess strong interpersonal, communication, organizational, and leadership skills.
- You have experience with technical programs, including a strong working knowledge of Excel.

What we offer

- Competitive compensation package
- Pension and 401(k) savings plans
- Comprehensive health and wellness plans
- Dental, Vision, and Disability insurance
- Flexible work arrangements
- Individualized career mobility and development plans
- Tuition reimbursement
- Employee Resource Groups
- Paid leave; maternity and paternity leaves
- Commuter benefits, employee discounts, and more

Learn more about benefits at www.benefitsatliberty.com.

A Little About Us

As one of the leading property and casualty insurers in the country, Liberty Mutual is helping people embrace today and confidently pursue tomorrow.

We were recognized as a ‘2018 Great Place to Work’ by Great Place to Work US, and were named by Forbes as one of the best employers in the country for new graduates and women—as well as for diversity.

Liberty Mutual is an equal opportunity employer. We will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, veteran’s status, pregnancy, genetic information, or on any basis prohibited by federal, state, or local law.