Embedding employability in discipline-based curricula- Integrating career development practice and research in a STEM faculty

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Biography:
Serene Lin-Stephens is a researcher on career development and a consultant for over 20 university courses across disciplines. Her experience and qualifications span across Higher Education E-learning and Career Development. She is currently a career development consultant for the Faculty of Science and Engineering and a PhD student at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science at the University of Sydney. Her days are filled with experimenting best interventions to improve students' employability, discussing and negotiating with academics on ways to prepare their students for career transitions, and consulting employers and industry representatives on their talent acquisition needs. She had integrated these key stakeholders' inputs in half a dozen publications. When she doesn't busy herself with any of these, she can be found chasing snow, skiing in seasonal natural wonders.

Integrating career and employability development with discipline-based curricula presents many challenges but also wonderful opportunities for universities. This session reports on an endeavour in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) contexts at the Faculty of Science and Engineering, Macquarie University. Over 5 years, a number of academics and professional staff have collaborated to explore ways of embedding career and employability development in a discipline-based learning environment. These experiences and outcomes will be shared.

The grass-root level initiative began with securing funding to establish a conceptual framework incorporating relevant work from different areas of the university to support employability building within the curriculum. This led to the creation of a career information literacy learning approach, structuring partner areas' contribution to a course, in generic, discipline-based, and transformative aspects. Whilst trialing this approach, a series of research based on the framework was conducted to gather data from academics, students and employers. The mixed-method studies in capstone units identified similarity in career needs between students from different STEM disciplines, as well as significant gaps between students' and employers' focuses on career and employability development. The theory and research informed practices led to success in further value propositions to involve more areas of the university in digital resource and technology development, student-industry engagement initiatives, studies examining effects of minimum viable interventions, and a Teaching Excellence award.

A list of published results, outcomes of the collaboration, and implications for those interested in in-curricular career education designs will be shared with participants of this sessions.