# Career Education in the Age of Engagement:
# An Analysis of Initiatives at Simon Fraser University

by

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# Abstract

This thesis examines how concepts of career development and student engagement are reflected at a comprehensive Canadian university.  This is done through a review of the research literature on career development and student engagement and retention, and through the application of a critical policy lens to analyze specific initiatives at Simon Fraser University (SFU).  Given that issues related to work and future careers are the primary reasons for individuals pursuing higher education, the specific focus of this thesis is on the possible intersection between career education and student engagement and how this might contribute to developing students who are more engaged while at SFU and better prepared for life after SFU.

**Keywords**:    career education; student engagement, student retention

# Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father Antonio.  I think this would have pleased him.

# Acknowledgements

A very special thank you to all the members of my thesis committee for your generous sharing of time, knowledge, and unofficial therapy.

A special thank you as well to my colleagues in Career Services, Volunteer Services, and Co-operative Education (the WIL family), for your ideas and insights around professional practice.

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# 1: Introduction to the Thesis

## 1.1  Introduction

For two-thirds of first-year students in Canada, employment and career-related issues are the single most important reason for going to university (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010, p.ii).  This view of university as a key step towards job or career success suggests that career education should play a central and significant role within core university programming, particularly given the renewed emphasis on improving the student experience and better engaging students at Canadian universities (Marshall, 2011).  Simon Fraser University (SFU) recently branded itself as the "Engaged University", with student engagement as a core element (Simon Fraser University, 2012).  While this position is laudable, how does an emphasis on student engagement address students' primary concerns regarding future career and employment prospects?

The specific focus of this thesis is on the possible intersection between career education and student engagement, given that issues related to work and future careers are the primary reasons for individuals pursuing higher education (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt, 2010).  This thesis examines how concepts of career development and student engagement are reflected at a comprehensive Canadian university through a review of the research literature on career development and student engagement and retention and the application of a critical policy lens to analyze

specific initiatives at Simon Fraser University.  The initiatives reviewed were chosen because they have been initiated within the past decade, focus on the preparation of undergraduate students and generally extend to the entire student body.  Though they are not university policies in the strictest sense, the scope of their influence suggests they are appropriately considered within a critical policy framework (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997).  This foray into the world of policy is supported by Borges and Savickas (2001) who have called for career development specialists to become more active in influencing and shaping public policy.

Though the term "career" is generally associated with the world of paid work (Figler & Bolles, 1999), the author agrees with Amundson (1998) that issues related to career or personal life are intimately linked and thus a broader conception of career is preferred.  Within this perspective, career development is thus seen as "a quest to acquire and hone the competencies needed to construct a purposeful and fulfilling life, rather than a point-in-time choice of "the right career"" (Jarvis, 2010, p.9).  The author's views are aligned with those of Watts (n.d.):

> career development is the lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work.  The quality of this process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the person they become, the sense of purpose they have and the income at their disposal.  It also determines the social and economic contribution they make to the

communities and societies of which they are part (as cited in Hooley et al., 2011, p.5).

This view of work and life as both intertwined and emergent is supported by contemporary approaches to career development that emphasize the importance of understanding the inherently complex and interconnected nature of the world (Pryor & Bright, 2011).  The concept of "paid work" not couched in this larger conception of work and life is referred to as "employment" or "employment programming" within this thesis.  Given Simon Fraser University's stated goal of "equipping SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2), there appears to be a role for contemporary career development theories and frameworks to inform institutional direction.

This chapter begins with an overview of the background and context that has informed this work, and a general introduction to student retention and engagement, including the relationship with career education.  It is followed by the thesis purpose and questions and concludes with a discussion on the significance of the work to the Canadian university system.

## 1.2  Background

In 2011, Simon Fraser University launched a comprehensive community consultation process known as Envision SFU.  Three core University strengths were identified within this process: Student-Centred, Research-Driven, and Community-Engaged.  Upon completion of the consultation period, a new vision

of an "Engaged University" was unveiled with three goals that parallel the original three strengths: Engaging Students, Engaging Research, and Engaging Communities.  While all three goals are worthy of study, this thesis focuses on what it means to engage students with respect to student career development.

It is noteworthy that a research-intensive university such as SFU listed "Engaging Students" as the first goal, and that in the consultation process "student-centred" was consistently listed as the first strength.  This suggests a new or renewed commitment to students that is increasingly commonplace within Canadian universities.  This new emphasis is particularly interesting because critiques of the Canadian undergraduate experience have existed for at least two decades and this "criticism has been either ignored or discounted by most universities" (Marshall, 2011, p.65).  In fact, some blame the emphasis on research for the poor state of Canadian undergraduate education (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011; Marshall, 2011).

So why has this changed?  According to Marshall (2011), changes are occurring because:

1. The monopoly of traditional universities is weakening.

2. Governments continue to look for more cost-effective degree delivery models.

3. Quality assurance is on the agenda of national educational bodies.

4. The greater public demands student experiences that will lead to the highest levels of student learning (p.66).

Post-secondary educational institutions are changing because in some cases they are required to change by the government bodies that fund them and because they are no longer in the privileged positions they once were. Within the province of British Columbia, there was further pressure put on the traditional research universities when five institutions were given university status in 2008 (Charbonneau, 2008a). These new realities suggest that there may be a renewed openness to new and different ways of supporting students, as long as these approaches are consistent with institutional priorities and can be reasonably undertaken within current resource realities.

## 1.3 Student Engagement and Retention

Student engagement refers to measurable "constructs such as quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities" (Kuh, 2009, p.6) and emphasizes the role "institutions have in inducing students to take part in educationally purposeful activities" (Kuh, 2009, p.7). It is now common for universities and colleges across North America to measure their students' level of engagement and the tool most commonly used by universities for this kind of measurement is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Kuh, 2009; Marshall, 2011). A more detailed review of the literature on student engagement and of NSSE occurs in Chapter 2.

Part of the interest in having a more engaged student body has to do with the problems that arise when students are not engaged. Disengaged students are more likely to drop out or otherwise leave their institution prior to obtaining their desired designation or credential (Braxton, Brier, & Steele, 2007; Kuh,

Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2003; Tinto, 2006). Whereas this may have been previously seen as a natural consequence of an academically rigorous environment, the changing post-secondary landscape and the current demographic realities have forced institutions to more thoroughly reflect on how their own practices impact student persistence (BC Stats, 2010; Marshall, 2011).

The issue of student retention, is not new, nor is it unique to Canadian institutions. It has been an on-going, significant challenge for universities across North America, with approximately one in four students leaving their institution after just one year. Even more unsettling, despite efforts to address the situation, this figure has changed little over the past 25 years and the numbers are even greater for identified "at risk" populations (Braxton et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2008; Tinto, 2006). Though there are many possible reasons for this, unintended consequences related to the lack of career related programming are worthy of further exploration.

## 1.4 A Role for Career Education

There is considerable research linking career education to academic persistence (Bean, 1981; Bell & Bezanson, 2006; Boyd, Hunt, Hunt, Magoon, & VanBrunt, 1997; Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003; Monks, Conway, & Shuigneain, 2006; Nora, 1987; Perry, Cabrera, & Vogt, 1999; Peterson, 1993; Peterson & delMas, 1998), yet the retention and student engagement literature make minimal explicit references to career related

activities if mentioned at all.  This may lead to a reluctance to include career education elements within specific retention initiatives.

One exception to the above can be found in the work of Braxton et al. (2007).  In their review of both empirical studies and campus-based activities, they developed a set of seven guidelines for improved student retention that placed career-focused activities at the forefront.  Their first guideline is: "Individuals who advise or teach undergraduate college students should embrace an abiding concern for the *career development* [italics added] of the students they serve" (Braxton et al, 2007, p.379).  By identifying individuals who both "teach" and "advise" students, Braxton et al. (2007) are, in essence, imploring staff and faculty to consider the career concerns of their students within their mandates.  This is beyond simply listening empathically when career questions arise, but necessitates a more nuanced understanding of how to support students with their post-degree aspirations.  It also necessitates an understanding that current education is part of a student's career development, not separate from it.

The type of career understanding that Braxton et al. (2007) call for is often the sole purview of the university's career centre.  However, even career centres have not always argued for a more central role within their institutions nor always appreciated how their work can support other core institutional objectives.  In too many cases, the focus has not been on the larger career and life questions that align well with universities' academic and philosophical mandates but on more immediate employment-related activities (Austin, 2011).  Though important to

deliver and monitor employment programming, a singular emphasis on these activities can also serve to "reinforce professors' worst beliefs about career advising: that it distracts and detracts from the educational process" (Brooks, 2009, p.3). In an environment where faculty members are clearly in power roles, these types of perceptions are divisive and can seriously impede any attempts at developing comprehensive and integrated career programming, let alone creating a campus culture where career needs are seen as central to the student experience.

It is thus imperative that campus career professionals become familiar with student engagement and the related literature, so that they can ensure that their work impacts student learning and the overall student experience. It is also important that these same individuals are aware of the latest developments in career development theory so they can fulfil their rightful role as their campus' experts in this area.

A more detailed review of student engagement and retention literature and the connection to career education occurs in Chapter 2.

## 1.5 Thesis Purpose and Questions

Though Canadian universities are taking the undergraduate student experience more seriously and that the need to better engage students is seen as a priority (Marshall, 2011), there are few examples where career education plays a central role in these efforts. Despite the studies and reports highlighting students' career and employment-related desires (Canadian University Survey

Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt, 2010), career-related programming or initiatives are rarely highlighted by universities as evidence of their commitment to students. The *UR Guarantee* at the University of Regina and the centrality of co-operative education at the University of Waterloo are exceptions. Colleges and technical institutions proudly tout their employment orientations, yet there appears to be something about university culture that downplays any elements that have a perceived practical focus, particularly if that focus is linked to employment or career issues (Brooks, 2009; Emberley, 1996, as cited in Carson, 1999). Even within schools with well-established co-op programs, there is not necessarily consensus on the value of this form of experiential learning. The primary exception to these kinds of sentiments can be found in professional schools and in business schools. This is perhaps due to these schools' direct links to more traditional or established "professions" and to the corporate community.

Within this context, the purpose of this thesis is to explore how career education is represented within Simon Fraser University policy and practice, with a particular interest in practices that purport to engage students or positively impact the student experience. Specific questions that are addressed include:

1. How are the career development needs of students reflected in recent broad-based initiatives at SFU? What assumptions exist and how do they affirm or counter existing research?

2. What is significant about these broad-based initiatives with respect to the career development of students? What contextual factors influenced their development?

3. How can career theory inform SFU strategic direction around student engagement and what changes or developments are required to ensure the impact is meaningful?

## 1.6 Research Approach

To answer the research questions, the researcher was guided by critical policy analysis in developing his approach and informing his analysis. Within this approach, official policy texts on their own are seen to offer limited analytical value as they may not highlight the negotiation and possible conflict that may have been part of the policy development process (Taylor et al., 1997). Therefore, a range of initiatives and guiding documents that shed light on dominant assumptions, relationships to external imperatives, and possible patterns were chosen.

With regards to the first research question, a selection of recent SFU broad-based initiatives and guiding documents that explicitly referenced student learning or the student experience were identified and reviewed. Each line of each document was reviewed to extract explicit employment or career references as well as to identify possible alignment with career theories and frameworks.

To help answer the second research question, critiques of the Canadian post-secondary system were reviewed. These included journal articles and

reports from bodies that were directly or indirectly connected to post-secondary institutions. This served to shed some light on the context within which initiatives were proposed or developed. In addition, key figures in the development and possible passing of initiatives were identified.

For the final research question, the literature on student retention and engagement was reviewed for possible intersections with career theories and frameworks. Gaps between institutional aspirations and actual practice were also identified.

## 1.7 About the Researcher

This section provides additional information on the thesis author and his motivation for undertaking this work. The explicit acknowledgement of perspective and bias is an important element of critical policy analysis (Ozga, 2000; Taylor et al., 1997).

The thesis author is currently the Manager of Career Services and Volunteer Services at Simon Fraser University and has been in this role for close to four years. Prior to this position, the author worked for nine years in the field of co-operative education, eight of those in a management role. This experience is relevant as the author has developed considerable insights from his role as both service provider and manager. This work was undertaken in the spirit of Ozga's (2000) explicit call for education practitioners to become more actively involved in policy research, analysis, and critique.

The author's interest in this work comes from a deeply held belief that many university students struggle with questions about what their life will be like when their studies are complete and that this may impact the types of academic and related choices they make while at school. The author further believes that these struggles contribute to the high rates of stress and anxiety witnessed on campus (American College Health Association, 2010). While the author does not claim that career education is the single most important element in the student experience, it is definitely a critical element and one that has been historically undervalued by research universities. However, there are signs that this could be changing. In a recent article, Kuh (2010), one of the major contributors to the literature on student engagement, explicitly called for activities that encouraged students to make connections between their course work and possible occupations. This is particularly important to this thesis given the lack of reference to employment or career matters in much of Kuh's earlier work (Chickering & Kuh, 2005; Kuh, 2005; Kuh et al., 2008).

## 1.8  Significance of the Study

The perceived need to improve the student experience may be tied to the increased accountability expectations on Canadian universities from government and the public (Marshall, 2011). Given the high levels of public funding that universities receive, this should not be surprising. The rationale for this funding relationship has historically been tied to the societal benefits associated with an educated populace (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011; Sattler, Wiggers, & Arnold, 2011). While these benefits are not in dispute, questions remain as to

whether universities are doing enough to prepare students for life after university, including those aspects related to life and work, and thus to deliver the expected socio-economic benefits to individuals and society at large.

Jarvis (2010) is blunt in his assessment, asserting "Canadian taxpayers are not getting the return on their enormous annual investment they have a right to expect" (p.3). The investment is truly enormous, with Canada currently ranking second amongst OECD nations on post-secondary education spending per capita (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011). Despite these levels of spending, many students are unable to make the connections between their academic learning and work/life opportunities. Some will continue their schooling simply because they do not know what else to do and many will graduate with significant debt while still being unsure how to successfully engage in life after university (Jarvis, 2010). This is not what society expects of its investment in post-secondary education and adds credence to the argument that career education needs to play a more central in the university student experience.

According to a 2010 Statistics Canada report (Luong, 2010), both the proportion of post-secondary graduates on student loans and the average amount of those loans rose significantly between 1995 and 2005 and there's little to suggest these trends are changing. The *average* student debt in 2005 was $18,800. More than one in four graduates (27%) had student debt of over $25,000 and a full 6% had student debt of over $50,000. On average, it is expected that graduates will pay back their loans in 7.4 years, though for 20% of this group it is expected to take over ten years. This is a serious issue that has

consequences for both the individuals carrying the debt and for society at large. Some of the documented effects of student debt include reduced savings and investment, and decreased likelihood of home ownership (Luong, 2010); effects that will likely impact individuals' ability to fully participate in their respective communities.

Given these documented increases in student debt and given that this debt is attributable to rising tuition costs and the opportunity costs associated with bypassing other employment opportunities, it follows that universities should be invested in supporting students in developing the financial capacity to address any debt they may incur.  For if universities become increasingly associated for the debt burdens they create, it could have a direct impact on both student applications and public support.  It could also affect the credibility of activities designed to engage current students.  While it is true that education levels strongly correlate with employment and income (Luong, 2010) and that jobs of the future will increasingly require some level of post-secondary education (BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, 2010), it does not follow that a university degree is necessary for all those employment opportunities nor that a degree guarantees employment success.  As evidence, 18.5% of Canadian university graduates currently earn less than half of the country's median income of $37,002 (Bradshaw, September 2011, ¶ 7).

The reality of debt and poor earnings is sobering especially because "individuals spend time and money on their education to increase the chances of obtaining meaningful, higher-paid employment" (Keeley as cited in Luong, 2010,

p.5).  However, for too many students simply having a degree is not enough to increase their chances of securing the types of employment opportunities they are counting on, particularly since post-degree jobs are both harder to find and do not pay as well during difficult economic times (Godofsky, Zukin, & Van Horn, 2011).   The employment landscape in 2012 is complex and changing quickly. Additional career related skills and understanding are needed to help students successfully transition to life after university and thus reap the financial benefits of the significant time and money they have invested.

Economic imperatives are one reason why institutions should be concerned with the career related skills of their students and future graduates. The moral imperative is arguably equally significant.

Issues related to work and life satisfaction are intimately tied (Amundson, 1998).  Frustration or happiness in one area of one's life will inevitably impact another.  Individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or unhappy in work are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours, including those that may cause them serious harm (Jarvis, 2010).  In one survey, one in six adults (17%) had considered suicide as a result of stress, with work (43%) and finances (39%) reported as the greatest factors in this stress (cited in Jarvis, 2010, p.4).

Similar stressors can be found in current students.  In the 2011 TD Canada Trust Student Finances Survey, 58% of current students reported feeling either "anxious" or "stressed" about how they would pay for their schooling.  In a survey of SFU students, 32% reported that stress had had an impact on their academic performance, 84% reported being "overwhelmed by all they had to do"

and 51% reported "things are hopeless" (American College Health Association, 2010, pp.13-14). Though timely career education may not be the panacea for all these students, it could support that half of the student body who report feeling hopeless by helping them feel more confident about their future possibilities and their current program of study (Monks, Conway, & Dhuigneain, 2006; Peterson, 1993; Peterson & delMas, 1998). This is because career education is inherently optimistic and provides students with greater insights as to how careers or work lives emerge. The emphasis on optimistic and positive outlooks is not just about making students feel better, it is based in work that has identified optimism as "the only consistent and significant predictor" for job satisfaction and career success (Neault, 2000, p.115). Career education also helps students understand the role that they play in influencing their future contributions to society and how their learning and experiences can be mobilized and leveraged to different settings.

Given this, it is no longer acceptable for universities to discount or minimize their responsibility in supporting students' future work lives, even if institutional focus is in engaging students in the present. Students pay a large financial cost to attend university, and many leave with significant student debt, as a result of the expectation and unofficial promise that economic prospects will be greater for them once they have their degree. When post-degree career opportunities appear limited or are unsatisfying, there are very real economic and social costs. An U.S. survey, 69% of respondents reported "that if they were starting their careers over they would try to get more information about job and

career options than they got when they began their working lives" (National Career Development Association & The Gallup Organization, 1999, p.3). In a more recent study, "three-quarters of college graduates said they would do something different if they could start college over again" (Godofsky et al., 2011, p.17). For public institutions responsible for preparing students for the next stages of their lives, these statistics should not be ignored. It is not enough to talk about preparing future leaders and citizens; universities should acknowledge that times have changed and, as a result, the institutional direction and the types of supports available to students need to change as well.

If the moral argument fails to completely convince, perhaps the legislative and accreditation requirements of governments and other bodies, will again motivate universities to revisit their practices. For example, SFU recently applied for accreditation through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Though the Evaluation Committee had many positive things to say about Simon Fraser University, it did identify a need for SFU to do more around developing student learning outcomes (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2011). This call for explicit learning outcomes is not new nor is it simply a requirement of the accreditation process. It is part of a growing international trend to "demonstrate the value derived from public and personal investment in higher education, using rigorous methods that would convince a skeptic" (Weingarten, 2011, p.1). In Canada, universities in Ontario are now required to articulate learning outcomes and degree level expectations under a new Quality Assurance Framework (Council of Ontario Universities, 2011). Part

of the rationale for developing this Framework is that "university graduates

expect their degrees to prepare them for careers, or for further graduate or

professional studies …" (Council of Ontario Universities, 2011, p.6).  For career

practitioners in post-secondary settings, the trend to learning outcomes should

be welcomed news as part of their rationale explicitly references students' career

motivations.

The recent reference to career motivation in developing learning outcomes

is noteworthy because career related goals have typically be overlooked in the

student engagement literature.  While students are definitely interested in

attending university in order to gain academic knowledge, they are more

interested in using this knowledge to prepare for future careers (Canadian

University Survey Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt,

2010).  For any institution seeking to better engage its students understanding

the career imperative has direct implications for an institution's academic

mandate, since "attending class may not be a priority if students do not see a

direct link between course content and their career goals" (Schultz & Higbee,

2007, p.5).  This is consistent with social learning theory which claims that one's

goals can influence one's motivation to perform (Bandura, 1977).  In short, a truly

engaged university should embrace and support a student's desire for career and

life preparation, and the variety of learning opportunities this may entail, as this is

what students want and expect.  This should, in turn, lead to better academic

performance, better mental health, and improved prospects after graduation.

Such a holistic approach to the student is advocated by student affairs professionals who see post-secondary as a necessarily "transformative" experience that "places the student at the center of the learning experience" (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA] & American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 2004). They recognize that learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom and that professionals in student affairs or student services, including those who focus on career education, have an important role to play in student learning (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). This suggests that student affairs professionals would be particularly interested in the possible intersection of career development and student engagement explored in this study.

## 1.9 Upcoming Chapters

The literature review for this thesis occurs in Chapter Two. The review highlights the interconnection between career education and student engagement and provides insight as to what is meant by policy in this analytical framework.

Chapter Three describes the methods used in this thesis to review select Simon Fraser University initiatives and guiding documents and provides the rationale for both the method and for the initiatives chosen.

Chapter Four contains analyses of the identified SFU initiatives and guiding documents. The analyses attempt to identify explicit career and employment references as well as evidence of where the initiatives may align

with career theories and frameworks.  Collectively the documents are reviewed to identify possible patterns in the University's views and practices.

The fifth and final chapter presents key insights gained from the analysis and the resultant recommendations.

# 2: Reviewing the Literature: Policy, Career Education, and Student Engagement in the University Context

## 2.1 Introduction

Career and employment focussed programming has been a formal part of the Canadian university landscape since the end of the Second World War (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employer, n.d.(b); Shea, 2010), however its development, as reflected in practice and policy, and its relationship to the emergent concept of student engagement has yet to be fully explored. This literature review highlights the interconnection between career education and student engagement and supports the work undertaken in this thesis' analysis of the presence of career education in selected Simon Fraser University policy documents. In order to situate the analysis and provide some insight as to what is meant by policy in this analytical framework, a brief introduction to policy is provided.

## 2.2 Policy in Educational Settings

The term policy is used in a variety of settings and within numerous contexts, yet finding a definition for policy that satisfies all parties is challenging (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). One definition is put forth by Harman (1984):

> the implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action
>
> being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognized problem

or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy also can be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective (as cited in Taylor et al., 1997, p.24).

In this sense, policy is seen as an institutional reaction to some problem or concern that either contains particular required actions or sets out the institution's official desired position. An example might be the development of an anti-bullying policy at an educational institution. In some cases the policy might include some specific programming or activities and in other cases the emphasis might be on communicating expectations and possible consequences for acting counter to policy.

The above definition and the subsequent example are an illustration of what is referred to as "policy as text". In describing "policy as text", Ball (1994) argues that "policies are textual interventions into practice" (p.18) that will definitely impact some aspects of practice but cannot impact all aspects. This is because policies generally focus on identifying a limited number of desired options or outcomes, while still leaving room for interpretation. Individuals tasked with enacting these policies still need the tools and resources to carry them out, as well as a certain amount of commitment and motivation to do so. These final points are critical to remember because as products of negotiation and compromise, policies are never perfect nor necessarily clear (Ball, 1994).

Taylor et al. (1997) reject the definition provided by Harman (1984), arguing that it denies the political nature of policy and suggests their implementation are stable and straightforward.  They similarly reject traditional approaches to policy that present policy development as a linear process broken up into distinct steps.  They view the relationships involved in the process of policy development as part of the "policy cycle".  Within this cycle are interrelated contexts:

1.  The context of policy text production;

2.  The context of practice;

3.  The context of influence

4.  The context of outcomes, measured against articulated goals and in terms of social justice goals;

5.  The context of political strategy (evaluation of above outcomes) (Taylor et al., 1997, p.25).

Given this emphasis on context, Taylor et al. (1997) view policy as both process and product and "involves the production of the text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice" (Taylor et al, 1997, p.25).  Similarly, Ozga (2000) views "policy as a *process* rather than a product, involving negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups…" (p.2).

With regards to the university environment, policy as product typically refers to official institutional positions passed by either the Board of Governors or

Senate. Evidence of policy as process, and the inevitable negotiation and struggle between different interests noted by Ozga (2000), can be witnessed in the work of university committees and task forces and their resultant reports and position papers. Changes in wording between drafts of a document provide concrete examples of negotiation between policy writers and relevant stakeholders.

Vision and mission statements also play a significant role in the formation of formal policy and in the negotiation process that influences it (Ozdem, 2011). Beyond highlighting aspirations, "a good vision statement should emphasize the unique characteristic of the organization that differentiates it from others, and take all future activities planned for the internal and external environment of the organization into consideration" (Ozdem, 2011, p.1889). Given this emphasis on both "unique characteristics" and "all future activities", a vision document should shed much light on the university's context and on what it considers important enough to highlight and thus is another example of policy as product.

The reference to policy as both product and process allows for a better and more complete analysis of an institution's position than if a more traditional notion of policy as text were employed exclusively. This is partly due to what can be learned from outside of official policy positions and is particularly relevant in situations where institutional policies regarding specific topics may be scarce or non-existent.

A more thorough discussion of policy and policy analysis is provided in Chapter Three.

In the following sections the literature review focuses on the career development field, which has been in existence for just over one hundred years. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to review all the milestone developments in the field over the past century, a brief review of some key perspective is presented, beginning with a brief history of the incorporation of employment and career programming at Canadian universities.

## 2.3  Career and Employment Services in Canadian Universities

The modern Canadian university career centre owes its existence to the federal government's *Veterans Rehabilitation Act* of 1945 (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employer, n.d.(b); Shea, 2010; Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 2004).  As part of the Act, the Department of Veteran Affairs partnered with universities across the country to support returning veterans in their pursuit of additional education and with transition to employment.  In addition to receiving support from campus career advisors, eligible veterans were provided living allowances, had their tuition fees covered, and had access to additional loans.  Participating universities received payments to support the expansion required for the over 50,000 veterans who went on to pursue university study in Canada.  Thus, not only were veterans supported, institutions were provided significant infrastructure support through this government policy that would allow them to grow and expand in the upcoming decades (Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 2004).

In order to better meet the needs of the growing number of returning veterans, university career personnel began to increasingly communicate and

share strategies with one another.  In 1946, a group of university career service counsellors met in Vancouver and held the first meeting of the University Advisory Services, the precursor to today's Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employer, n.d.(b); Shea, 2010).

In the 1970s, post-secondary institutions began to become more involved in the operation of career and employment services, with the University of Toronto's Career Centre recognized as an early leader in this realm (Shea, 2010).  The number of institutionally-run career and employment centres increased significantly in the 1990s when federal funding for campus-based placement services was eliminated and universities had the opportunity to take over their operation.  During this period of transition the national association, then known as ACCIS – The Graduate Workforce Professionals, simultaneously supported its members with transitional issues and held nation-wide consultations on the future of the association.  In 1995, CACEE's modern name (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers) was adopted and the role of employers was officially recognized in the organization's name and mandate (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers, n.d.(b); Shea, 2010).

Within this post-war period, the birth and rise of co-operative education in Canadian post-secondary institutions was also occurring.  In 1957 the first co-op program was developed in Canada at the then new University of Waterloo.  Co-operative education programs continued to emerge in campuses across Canada

throughout the 1960s and in 1973 the Canadian Association for Co-operative

Education (CAFCE) was formed (Crichton, 2009).

Over the years, the role of campus career professionals has changed and

evolved and practitioners continue to seek ways to improve their service to

students.  The models and theories that have guided practice in the recent past

are being questioned and new approaches are being sought.  Workshops and

individual advising sessions on topics such as resume development and

navigating the world of work are still central to many career centres (Shea, 2010),

but many in the field are reviewing the content and delivery of these services and

considering other curricular options.  In response to these calls, CACEE has

recently developed a new five-part webinar series called *Career Educator 101*

that provides an introduction to the career educator role within the Canadian

post-secondary context (Canadian Association of Career Educators and

Employer, n.d.(a)).

Just as practitioners reflect on how they serve students, it is worthwhile to

reflect on the role of career education within the university context more

generally.  The existence of campus career and employment centres and the rise

of co-operative education is recognition of the value that campus career

professionals provide.  It also highlights a change in university views, particularly

in comparison to the days before World War II.  However, the career

development field has evolved dramatically since World War II and it would be

worthwhile to note how the field is represented in a contemporary Canadian

university beyond career centres and co-op offices. This point has influenced the formation of this thesis research project.

To highlight its evolution, a brief history of the general career development field is provided in the next section. The focus is on approaches that have most influenced campus career professionals historically as well as some of the most compelling voices of the current day.

## 2.4  Career Development Theories and Frameworks

The career development field has been in existence for over a century and just as notions of work and career have changed to reflect the realities of the day, so too have approaches to employment and career development. This section presents some of the key theoretical approaches beginning with an overview of the trait-and-factor approach associated with Parsons and Holland. The shift to developmental conceptions of career proposed by Donald Super will follow and the section will conclude with a review of emergent career theories, with a focus on the work of Krumboltz (2009) and Pryor and Bright (2011).

### 2.4.1  Trait-and-Factor Theory

What is now known as the career development field is widely considered to have begun with the vocational guidance work of one man: Frank Parsons (Brown, 2002; Figler & Bolles, 1999; Pryor & Bright, 2011). In his *Choosing a Vocation*, Parsons (1909) identified three factors in the choice of a vocation:

1. A clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and knowledge of their causes;

2. A knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work;

3. True reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (as cited in Brown, 2002, p.3).

Though not a theory in the strictest sense, this straightforward approach to vocational development was widely used and became the foundation for what became known as trait-and-factor theory. At the core of this approach is Parsons' belief that if people actively participated in their choice of vocation they would be more satisfied with it. This would lead to benefits to workers and the employers who hired them (Brown, 2002). Trait-and-factor theory was so widely adopted that it was synonymous with the field for much of the twentieth century (Pryor & Bright, 2011).

The evolution of trait-and-factor took a significant leap through the work of John Holland. His initial theory emphasized the role that one's personality had on the types of environments in which one might choose to participate. Though he refined his theory multiple times over his life, at its core he aimed to explain how the interplay of personality and environment affected the types of choices an individual made while also trying to identify the possible impacts of those choices (Shoffner, 2006).

Four primary assumptions guided Holland's (1973) work:

1. In our culture, most persons can be categorized as one of six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional;

2. There are six kinds of environments:  Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional;

3. People search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles; and

4. A person's behaviour is determined by an interaction between personality and the characteristics of the environment (as cited in Shoffner, 2006, p.42).

The six primary personality classes identified by Holland could be further divided into up 16 subclasses that acknowledged the presence of other lesser personality types within an individual (e.g. Realistic-Investigative-Social – RIS) (Holland, Viernstein, Kuo, Karweit, & Blum, 1970).  To support the practical application of this work, Holland et al. (1970) classified over 400 common occupations in the United States according to their appropriate subclass.  The resultant two or three-letter subclass descriptors are commonly referred to as RIASEC or Holland codes (Figler & Bolles, 1999; Holland et al., 1970; Reardon & Lenz, 1999).  A hexagonal model was developed to provide a visual representation of his work that emphasized the relative similarity or difference of the different personality types.  In other words, personality types that are adjacent on the hexagon are considered relatively similar, while those at other extreme are considered the most different (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.  Holland's Hexagon
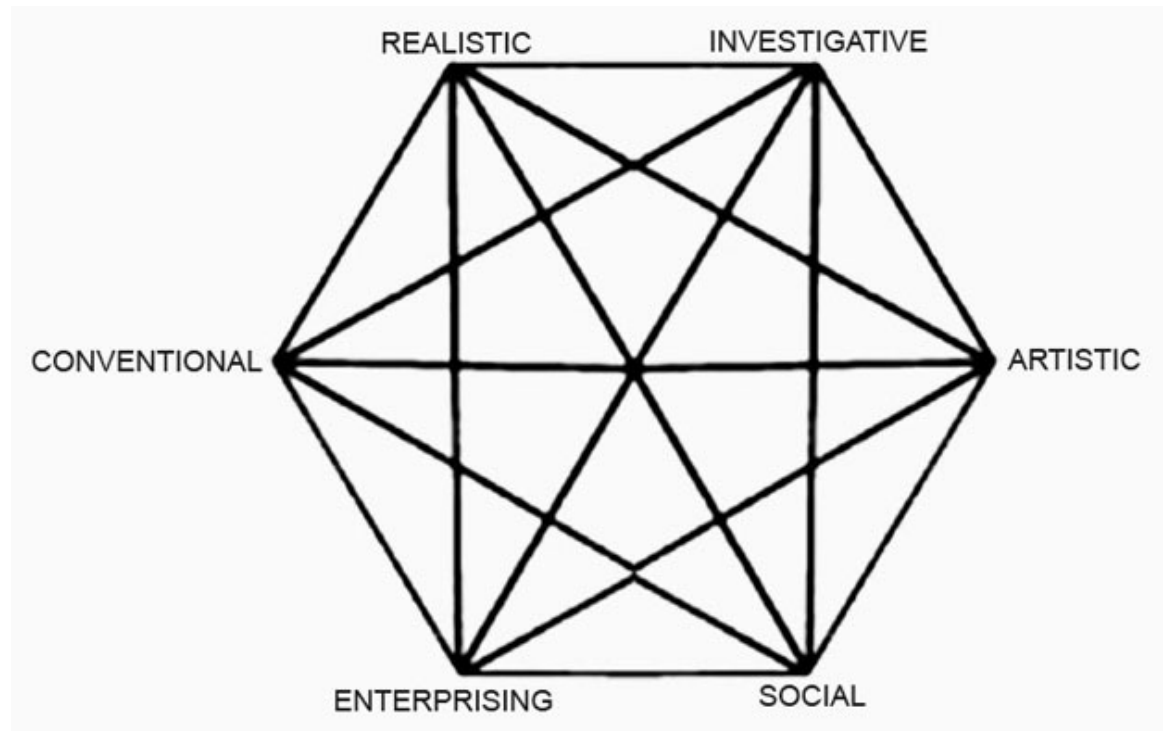


(Source:  http://careerpatri.com/holland_theory.aspx)

Given Holland's belief that people's behaviour was influenced by the interplay of their personalities and the environments they were in, he would expect people to seek to work with others who are most like themselves and to choose work environments that most align with their personality (Shoffner, 2006). Thus an important part of working within this theory is to identify an individual's personality type, typically through the use of an assessment instrument that would identify their RIASEC code.   The next step would be to explore occupations with a similar code and then to proceed with some form of action plan in support of the match.  Successful matching was a critical element due to the emphasis that Holland placed on congruence or the degree to which an

individual's Holland code matched their particular work environment (Reardon &
Lenz, 1999; Shoffner, 2006).

Other important constructs of the RIASEC model relate to consistency and
differentiation. Consistency refers to the similarity of an individual's top two types
in their three-letter code. Simply put, if the top two personality types of an
individual's typology were adjacent on the RIASEC hexagon, they would be
deemed to have a consistent profile. If the top two types were at opposite points,
their profile would be considered to be not consistent. Higher consistency is
typically correlated with stability in working life (Reardon & Lenz, 1999; Shoffner,
2006).

Differentiation refers to the degree to which the individual elements of
someone's typology differ. If the levels of all three elements were relatively
similar, differentiation would be minimal. If the score on the first element was
significantly higher than the remaining two, that person would be seen to be
highly differentiated. Codes that are highly differentiated are considered to be
the most reliable (Reardon & Lenz, 1999; Shoffner, 2006).

Holland's work has been extremely popular in campus environments and
in the general community and the RIASEC classification model continues to be
"the single most influential representation of occupational interests in
contemporary career development practice" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.16).
However, given the rapid change in occupations prompted by technology and
other contemporary factors, the limits of any model based on a static
classification system need to be acknowledged. This is not to say there is not

value in incorporating aspects of Holland's work in contemporary practice. It is more of an acknowledgement that models that were suitable for one era may not be sufficient for another. In the relative stability of post-war Canada one would expect that university-based employment centres would be strongly influenced by trait-and-factor theories and that the emphasis would be on supporting individuals in making point-in-time occupational choices. However, complexity and change are the reality of $21^{st}$ century careers (Miner, 2010) and the emphasis on a singular occupational choice is questionable at best. The stability assumed in trait-and-factor approaches is inherently limited in today's context. Practice and policy in the contemporary Canadian university must reflect the environmental realities faced by its graduates and this study will, in part, serve to examine how views of employment preparation and career development are reflected in recent SFU initiatives.

### 2.4.2 Developmental Views

Unlike Parsons and Holland whose work emphasized the choice process, Donald Super's work focused on the developmental process of vocational behaviour. Super (1985) viewed the choice of vocation as a way of implementing one's self-concept and further posited that one's self-concept would change and evolve as one progressed through life's stages. He also believed that the closer one's occupation aligned with one's self-concept, the greater the personal and professional satisfaction (Pryor & Bright, 2011; Super, 1985). Like the trait-and-factor theorists, Super recognized the importance of abilities and interests but he

further emphasized the key role that an individual's values played in making work meaningful (Shoffner, 2006).

Super's (1985) theory focuses on describing the various stages that individuals go through as part of their development. These stages are associated with specific ages and the types of developmental milestones that would typically occur within each. Initially they were seen to be linear and predictable, but the theory evolved to incorporate cyclical aspects of change (Pryor & Bright, 2011). They can be viewed as follows:

1. Growth (birth to 14): Initial development of self-concept and development of a basic understanding of the world of work;

2. Exploration (14 to 25): Period of transition where tentative choices are considered based on academic and life experiences;

3. Establishment (25 to 45): Entry level skill building period that may lead to advancement or frustration;

4. Maintenance (45 to 60): Period of upgrading, innovation or stagnation;

5. Decline (60 to death): Period associated with disengagement, retirement, or specialization (Super, 1985).

Super's work continued to evolve and become more complex and led to his work on Life-Space, a framework incorporating many of what he considered to be the key concepts of work and life (Shoffner, 2006). Within the Life-Space, he articulated the concept of Lifestyle, which refers to the interplay of nine core

Life Roles (child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner) across four primary Arenas (home, school, work, and community). At any given time an individual can be involved in multiple life roles across multiple arenas and these respective roles will inevitably impact each other. The sequence of key Life Roles is referred to as the Life Cycle and is the underlying structure of the Life Space (Shoffner, 2006).

It is important to note that each individual's personal and situational factors will differ and thus Life Spaces will differ between individuals. In addition, the relative importance that an individual puts on a particular Life Role at a particular time will also change depending on these factors and their respective arenas. The relative importance of a role is referred to as Life Role Salience and was central for Super in understanding an individual's motivation to engage in a particular role (Shoffner, 2006).

Returning to the university context, programming influenced by the work of Super (1985) would acknowledge that the traditional university years often coincide with the "exploration stage". Within this stage, students would be expected to make tentative choices related to possible majors and preferred careers. One would expect to see opportunities for students to participate in a variety of academic and non-academic experiences in support of their developing self-concept. It would also be expected that the clarity in self-concept that these opportunities provided would help students identify a preferred occupation or field by the time they graduated. Such evidence of developmental theory underlying

or embedded in specific initiatives will be considered in this study and discussed further in the analysis in Chapter 4.

Super's work has done much to change perceptions of career from a one-time decision to that of a life-long developmental process. However, even though Super's theory focuses on developmental aspects, the matching of self-concept to specific occupations is similar in practice to the work of the trait-and-factor theorists. Towards the end of his career he acknowledged the shortcomings of his work and noted that aspects of his theory were not fully integrated and that the work of creating a truly comprehensive model of career development would be left to a future generation of theorists (Brown, 2002).

In the upcoming section, the work of theorists who have taken up Super's challenge to create newer models of career development are explored. Their theories build on the work of the trait-and-factor and developmental theory but place a greater emphasis on the role of chance events and the inherent complexity of the world. Given their beliefs that careers emerge and are not planned, their theories are often referred to as emergent career theories.

### 2.4.3 Emergent Career Theories

The popularity of trait-and-factor and developmental career theories are largely a result of their practicality and simplicity for practical application. However, in our increasingly complex world, one could argue that they are perhaps too simple. While the idea of being able to identify an ideal occupation and then identifying the steps needed to secure that occupation seems

reasonable enough, it does not account for the fact that many people will base their decisions on limited experiences or potentially flawed information. It similarly does not account for the myriad unexpected and unplanned events that will invariably impact on every individual's life. It was this recognition that inspired John Krumboltz (1994) to further explore the role of career beliefs and unplanned events.

According to Krumboltz (1994), people's experiences and the assumptions they have developed affect the way they behave and the decisions they make. "If people believe something is true, they act as if it is true…. If their beliefs are inaccurate and self-defeating, they will act in a way that makes sense to them but may not help them achieve their goals" (Krumboltz, 1994, p.424). His further work on the role of chance events recognizes the inherent uncertainty of people's lives and careers and the limitations that any career professional will have when working with a client:

> Making a career decision used to be the goal. It should no longer be the goal. We have no way of recommending what anyone's future occupation should be. The world is changing too fast for us even to be sure what occupations will exist tomorrow (Krumboltz, 2011, p.156).

Krumboltz (2009) is unequivocal in his view of traditional career planning: "What-you-should-be-when-you-grow-up need not and should not be planned in advance" (p.135). His Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT) provides insights in

to why individuals follow the paths they do and how career professionals can best support their clients. The theory:

> posits that human behaviour is the product of countless numbers of learning experiences made available by both planned and unplanned situations in which individuals find themselves. The learning outcomes include skills, interests, knowledge, beliefs, preferences, sensitivities, emotions, and future actions (Krumboltz, 2009, p.135).

At the core of his theory are four propositions:

1. The goal of career counselling is to help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives – not to make a single career decision.

2. Assessments are used to stimulate learning, not to match personal characteristics with occupational characteristics.

3. Clients learn to engage in exploratory actions as a way of generating beneficial unplanned events.

4. The success of counselling is assessed by what the client accomplishes in the real world outside the counselling session (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135).

On the surface Krumboltz's emphasis on unplanned events may appear fatalistic, as if there is little an individual can do to change their lot in life. This is not the case. Krumboltz (2011) believes individuals "have a great deal of control because the actions we take can generate outcomes on which we can capitalize"

(p.156).  In other words, it is better to acknowledge the existence of unplanned events and adjust your behaviours accordingly, as opposed to assuming a false sense of control over external factors.

In order to ensure that clients were able benefit from positive chance events, or happenstance, career professionals are encourage to support the development of five key traits:

1. Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities

2. Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks

3. Flexibility: changing attitudes and circumstances

4. Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable

5. Risk Taking: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999).

Not only are the above helpful in being able to capitalize on chance events, one could argue that they are central to a successful university experience.

Krumboltz's (2011) recommendation for professionals working with clients is "to help them improve their feelings about work and life – not achieve perfection" (p.156).  This highlights the importance of clarifying client expectations from day one, including clarifying that the client is ultimately responsible for undertaking any agreed-to actions (Krumboltz, 2009).  Explicit in this work is the acknowledgement that when it comes to career and life there are no guarantees.

Like Krumboltz (2009), Pryor and Bright (2011) are critical of traditional career development theories and models that emphasize person-environment fit because "they fail to capture adequately the complexities, uncertainties and dynamic aspects of modern work" (p.11). However this critique should not be considered a rejection of past work. Rather, they argue that the understanding of an inherently complex career context "can only be successfully achieved by using the multiple perspectives of both traditional theories and recent conceptual contributions in the field of career development" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.13). For them it is not a matter of either/or but of both/and.

Influenced by the work of chaos theorists in science and other disciplines, the core of the Chaos Theory of Careers is "understanding reality in terms of systems that are characterized by complexity, interconnection and susceptibility to change" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.31). Instead of viewing client interactions as focusing on solving a problem, the initial focus is on client education and shifting mindsets. It is also critical that practitioners appreciate that:

> individuals developing their careers and experiencing life transitions
> are complex and dynamical systems acting within a matrix of other
> complex dynamical systems such as particular employing
> organizations, community groups, the labour market, the national and
> global economies, and so on (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.31).

This is in direct contrast to models that focus almost exclusively on the individual and their fit within a chosen field and that emphasize control and predictability. In addition, the term "dynamical" is used in the Chaos of Theory of Careers to

emphasize that there are many reasons why systems change after encounters with external influences.  Sometimes the change is for adaptive reasons but other times it is merely incidental (Pryor & Bright, 2011).

Within chaos theory, complex dynamical systems are categorized based on their patterns of attraction.  Where "attraction can be understood as the process by which a system self-organizes into coherence and adapts to maintain, sustain or recreate such order when subject to change from either internal functioning or external influence" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.36).  The typical or recognizable pattern of this attraction is referred to as an attractor.  The four fundamental types of attractors are: Point Attractors, Pendulum Attractors, Torus Attractors, and Strange Attractors.

The point attractor is "structured to move toward a fixed or single point, place or outcome" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.42).  It can be witnessed by the effect that a low drain has on running water and its parallel in the career world are those individuals who believe in the notion of the one "right" career.  The notion of "tunnel vision" is also appropriate here.

The pendulum attractor "functions by regular swings between two points, places or outcomes" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.42).   The obvious reference is to a pendulum.  In the career world, this can be seen in people who see only two, often diametrically opposed, options for themselves.  For these individuals, the choice of one option can only be made at the expense of the other and further alternatives are almost unconceivable.

The torus attractor "functions in a complex and yet predictable way. Such a system repeats itself either exactly or approximately over time" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.43). A maze serves as a useful image here in that mazes can be extremely complex, yet are finite and ultimately predictable in their design. For individuals within the torus attractor, there is an understanding of the complexity of the world but the response is to try to control and organize it. This strategy might work for a lot of people a lot of the time, however when unplanned events inevitably occur, particularly negative ones, the illusion of control is quickly dispelled and a crisis situation is seldom far off (Bright & Pryor, 2008; Pryor & Bright, 2011).

The strange attractor is "complex in the sense of being potentially susceptible to a wide range of influences and having the capacity for complicated internal relationships among its components to develop" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.45). They are like the torus attractors in many ways but "the principal difference is that strange attractors exhibit a defining characteristic of chaos: sensitivity to change in initial conditions" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.45). This is because though strange attractors may appear to repeat, they never exactly repeat and they are open to external influences. The classic comparison is to weather. Where precise weather prediction may be next to impossible in most parts of the world, definable, relatively consistent patterns related to seasons do emerge. For individuals,

> the strange attractor is the "edge of chaos" where the human potential
> to adapt, develop and grow is manifested along with human limitations

of knowledge and influence. The edge of chaos is where change and chance are not seen as opposing forces to order and stability but rather as integrated realities of the fabric of existence. (Pryor & Bright, 2011, pp.45-46)

For those in the strange attractor, imagination and creativity are matched with rational thinking in order to make the best of situations (good or bad) in an inherently uncertain world.

As a final point on attractors, it is important to note that the first three attractors - point, pendulum, and torus – are all examples of closed systems thinking, whereas the strange attractor is an example of open systems thinking. This is significant in that "the Chaos Theory of Careers contends that virtually all significant career development counselling problems can be understood in terms of individuals trying to impose closed systems thinking on an open systems reality" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p.46). Therefore, the career professional's job under Chaos Theory is not about finding someone the right occupation but facilitating the shift from closed systems thinking to open systems thinking, or what Bright and Pryor (2008) refer to as shiftwork. To support professionals in this work, 11 key paradigm shifts have been identified:

1. From Prediction to Prediction and Pattern Making

2. From Plans to Plans and Planning

3. From Narrowing Down to Being Focused on Openness

4. From Control to Controlled Flexibility

5. From Risk as Failure to Risk as Endeavour

6. From Probabilities to Probable Possibilities

7. From Goals, Roles and Routines to Meaning, Mattering and Black Swans

8. From Informing to Informing and Transforming

9. From Normative Thinking to Normative and Scalable Thinking

10. From Knowing in Advance to Living with Emergence

11. From Trust as Control to Trust as Faith (Pryor & Bright, 2011).

In reviewing the 11 paradigm shifts, one could argue that these shifts are not only necessary to better support career development but can also contribute to a richer and more engaged life generally. Supporting students through these paradigm shifts can also be seen as a way to support students in moving away from passive views of education towards empowering them in taking greater control of their learning (Chickering & Kuh, 2005). This is consistent within a view of education where the goals are to produce "*intentional learners* who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources and continue learning throughout their lives" (AAC&U, 2002, p.xi as cited in NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

From an emergent perspective, the goal of university programming is not about supporting students in making a point-in-time career decision but about supporting students in gaining clarity with regards to possible future directions. It would acknowledge that some students have strong views of their future while

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others are highly uncertain and that a one-size-fits-all approach to career support is thus inappropriate. The role of change and chance would be emphasized and the development of traits and competencies that will allow someone to thrive in an inherently complex and rapidly changing world would be a central component. Significant reflection would be encouraged as would an optimistic approach to future possibilities. Again, the emphasis would be on gaining clarity with regards to priority interest areas and on developing the competencies to allow students to be more intentional in their actions. Evidence of this world view will be sought in this analysis.

Though the above theories and approaches provide useful insights into the nature of how careers emerge and how individuals can be supported, they are less explicit on the specific competencies required to succeed in modern society. Given that this thesis focuses on the Canadian research university context, it follows that an understanding of the key competencies that might be acquired in a students' time at university would be helpful. Example of core competencies from a Canadian perspective can be found within the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché, Redekopp, & Jarvis, 2006) and the *Essential Skills* initiative (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada [HRSDC], n.d.) to be discussed next.

### 2.4.4 Blueprint for Life/Work Designs and Essential Skills

The primary aim of the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* "is to have users work with a national framework of competencies to create comprehensive, effective and measurable life/work development programming and products to

help Canadians better manage their lives and work" (Haché et al., 2006, p.19).

The initiative had its roots in the 1990s when provincial and territorial advisory committees were set up to guide its development. The first draft was released in 1998 and was implemented in pilot and demo sites across the country. Revisions have been made to the framework based on feedback and evaluation results and in 2006 the current *Blueprint* framework was released (Haché et al., 2006).

The three main areas of competence identified within the *Blueprint* are: *Personal management; learning and work exploration*; and *life/work building*. These are further broken down into the following 11 competencies:

AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

1. Build and maintain a positive self-image

2. Interact positively and effectively with others

3. Change and grow throughout one's life

AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION

4. Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals

5. Locate and effectively use life/work information

6. Understand the relationship between work and society/economy

AREA C: LIFE/WORK BUILDING

7. Secure/create and maintain work

8. Make life/work enhancing decisions

9. Maintain balanced life and work roles

10. Understand the changing nature of life/work roles

11. Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work
    building process

The 11 competencies are further defined along four levels that describe the

knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to master each competency, with level

four being most applicable for university students (Haché et al., 2006). These

can be found in Appendix A.

The *Blueprint* is of further relevance to this thesis due to its emphasis on

the social justice elements associated with career development. They highlight

the findings of Hoyt and Lester (1995) including:

- A high priority should be placed on meeting the career development
  needs of persons who drop out of colleges or universities prior to
  graduation.

- The career development needs of persons aged 18-25 are not
  being adequately met.

- The need to bring equity of career development opportunities to
  minority persons remains strong and must continue as a high
  priority.

- There remains a need for the career development movement to focus on ensuring gender equity in career opportunities (as cited in Haché et al., 2006).

These points serve to emphasize that career development is relevant for all people and just not about preparing individuals for prestigious occupations (though it may be an element). They also highlight the benefits to society when all its members are intentionally engaging in the development of their future selves.

Finally, the emphasis on self-image as the *Blueprint's* first competency is particularly relevant to the current university environment given the rise of mental health issues amongst students (American College Health Association, 2010). The holistic notion of "life/work design" that emphasizes the integration of life and occupational roles as opposed to treating paid work as an artificially separate entity is also consistent with the view of career development within this thesis.

At particular points in time, it is necessary for individuals to identify necessary skill sets and this is recognized within the *Blueprint's* competencies. Specifically, the link between skills and specific occupations is central to Competency 4 (*participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals*) and Competency 7 (*secure/create and maintain work*) (Haché et al., 2006). Arguably, the connection to skills can be said to be a part of all 11 competencies but it is most explicit in Competencies 4 and 7.

To further support clients in the identification and development of their skills, the *Blueprint* can be used in concert with the *Essential Skills* framework

developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)

(n.d.).  Whereas the *Blueprint* focuses on broader competencies, essential skills

are defined as "the skills that people need for learning, work and life" (HRSDC,

n.d., p.1).  Like the *Blueprint*, the *Essential Skills* framework acknowledges the

interplay of work, life, and learning.

There are nine essential skills identified, with the first four sometimes

consumed under the larger category of literacy:

1. Reading

2. Document Use

3. Numeracy

4. Writing

5. Oral Communication

6. Working with Others

7. Thinking

8. Computer Use

9. Continuous Learning

Definitions for all the essential skills can be found in Appendix B.

At a time when campus career educators are increasingly asked to justify

their existence and show outcomes of their work (Shea, 2010), the *Blueprint for*

*Life/Work Designs* and the *Essential Skills* framework provide ready-made and

well researched outcome statements in accessible language.  They are flexible

enough to fit in a university context and their explicit acknowledgement of the interplay between work and other aspects of life further aligns with university views of developing citizens and life-long learners. This reference to skills and competencies for both work and life is similar to Super's (1985) work on Life Roles, but the enhanced complexity of this relationship and their greater emphasis on the need for continuous learning in a rapidly changing world suggests a greater connection to the emergent career theories.

### 2.4.5  Reflections – Career Development Theories and Frameworks

The 11 competencies identified within the *Blueprint* and the nine skills identified within *Essential Skills* provide a compelling foundation for which to design educational programming that support students' work and life goals. Combined with the 11 paradigm shifts proposed by Bright and Pryor (2008) and the five traits identified by Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999) an innovative and holistic view of how to engage students in the design of their preferred future emerges.

One of SFU's stated goals is "to equip SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experience that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2). The reference to preparing students for "an ever-changing and challenging world" is precisely why the *Blueprint* and *Essential Skills* was developed and what the Chaos Theory of Careers refers to as the "edge of chaos" – "where change and chance are not seen as opposing forces to order and stability but rather as integrated realities of the fabric of existence" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, pp.45-46). Similarly, within

Happenstance Learning Theory, the main function of career-based support: "to help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives – not to make a single career decision" (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135), is again directly applicable to the notion of preparing someone for "an ever-changing and challenging world." This not only suggests that these theories align well with the University's new vision, but it also represents an opportunity to redefine what is meant by career and life development in the university context and what a university can do to support this development.

However, even though these contemporary career theories fit well within the university context, it is important that any related programming or support services be developed and delivered appropriately. The career field is filled with a variety of resources and interventions but if they are not transmitted appropriately their impact is negligible (Savard & Michaud, 2005). As with any other program or service, it is critical that career related practices are reviewed and evaluated for their effectiveness. According to Lalande and Magnusson (2007) the efficacy of career development services needs to be demonstrated in order that funders and policy makers understand the value of these services. They further call for a culture of evaluation to support these endeavours. "Such a culture would be characterized by the belief that the identification of outcomes is an integral part of the provision of services" (Lalande & Magnusson, 2007, p.144). The need for outcomes in the career field parallels similar calls in the university system generally (Council of Ontario Universities, 2011) and provides further credence to the value of the indicators identified within the *Blueprints* and

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*Essential Skills* framework, along with the traits and paradigm shifts identified within the emergent career theories. Thus, the identification of learning outcomes and the general culture of evaluation called for "will enable career development service providers to demonstrate the value of their work to all stakeholders and thereby increase the likelihood of receiving support for ongoing practice" (Lalande & Magnusson, 2007, p.144). It should also allow for clearer connections to curricular learning outcomes, helping faculty, staff and students more readily appreciate the interconnection between academic and career-oriented learning. This is particularly important in the university environment where career education has seldom held an esteemed position nor been well integrated into the curriculum.

## 2.5  Student Engagement and Retention

Like campus career educators, those who work in areas related to student engagement and retention have not always had their work viewed as central to their institution's mission (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). Yet like the theories that ground the work of campus career professionals, the emergent and growing work in student engagement and retention has developed considerably over the past few decades. Though beyond the scope of this thesis to review the entire student engagement and retention field, key theorists and initiatives will be highlighted with particular attention paid to points of intersection to the career theories and frameworks presented earlier.

The section begins with what is arguably the most concrete and widely referenced tool in the student engagement field, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

## 2.5.1  The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

In 2009, as evidence of a renewed commitment to the student experience, SFU began participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as a means of measuring student engagement.  In so doing, it has become part of some 1500 institutions (2.7 million students) across North America that have participated in the NSSE since 2000 (NSSE, n.d.).

The NSSE is a survey tool that generates engagement data that helps post-secondary institutions improve the undergraduate experience by identifying key areas for institutional improvements.  It was developed and continues to operate according to three core principles: Institutional improvement; documentation of good practice; and public advocacy.  The most important of these principles, institutional improvement, refers to the NSSE's ability to "provide high quality, actionable data that institutions can use to improve the undergraduate experience" (Kuh, 2009, p.9).  Given the challenge related to measuring actual student learning, the engagement data, influenced by the earlier work of Chickering and Gamson (1987), serves as proxies for expected learning outcomes (Kuh, 2009).

Documentation of good practice refers to the desire of NSSE creators to "discover more about and document effective educational practice in

postsecondary settings" (Kuh, 2009, p.10). This is done by analysis of NSSE

results and by the work of the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice,

which was created with the primary goal of using research to develop practical

solutions for interested institutions 2000 (NSSE Institute for Effective Educational

Practice, n.d.). The final purpose related to public advocacy refers to work done

to "advocate for public acceptance and use of empirically derived conceptions of

collegiate quality" (Kuh, 2009, p.10). In essence, this goal is meant to counter

subjective measures of institutional quality, such as reputation and status.

The survey instrument itself collects information in five categories: Student

behaviours; institutional requirements; reactions to the institution; student

background; and self-reported growth. *Student behaviours* refer specifically to

participation in numerous educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, 2009). These

include such activities as making a class presentation, working with other

students inside or outside the class, communicating with instructors, talking

about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, and so on (Kuh, 2008).

*Institutional requirements* refer to both the volume and nature of the work that

students are required to do.

*Reactions to the institution* measures students' perceptions of the quality

of relationships and supports available to them, while *student background*

information includes general demographic questions as well questions on factors

that may impact academic experience (e.g. living situation, degree program, etc).

Finally, *self-reported growth* refers to students' own assessments of their

intellectual, social, and ethical development, as well as career related preparation (Kuh, 2009).

Once the NSSE has been completed and results tabulated, institutional benchmarks are then developed based on responses to 42 key questions. Though tempting, use of these results to rank institutions against one another is officially discouraged by NSSE.  Instead, institutions are encouraged to use this information to "identify areas where improvements in teaching and learning will increase the chances that their students attain their educational and personal goals" (Kuh, 2009, p.14).

SFU has participated in NSSE since 2009. The rapid and widespread adoption of NSSE across North America provides evidence of the current value placed on the undergraduate student experience and the recognition that institutional practices may need to change.  Though the NSSE is grounded in much of the best research of the student engagement field, elements relating to students' career goals or aspirations appear to be understated.  This is surprising given the importance that students place on the career preparation aspects of their studies (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt, 2010) and given the connection between motivation and learning (Bandura, 1977).

For a fuller discussion on the student engagement and retention literature, a selected review of some of the key contributors follows.

### 2.5.2  Kuh and Chickering – Good Educational Practices

As the founding director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University where the NSSE is housed, George Kuh is intimately linked with the NSSE and the field of undergraduate student success generally.  He has written numerous books and articles on the topic and is an in-demand speaker.  Though there is much in his body of work to reflect on, his 2005 article, co-authored with Arthur Chickering, *Promoting Student Success: Creating Conditions So Every Student Can Learn* summarizes many of his key views.  The six key conditions outlined in the article are summarized below.

1. *Teach students through the recruitment and admission process how to take control of their own learning.*  Questions relating to how and what students learn should be raised at the earliest stages of their relationship with the institution.  The expectation is not that students have a sophisticated understanding at this point, but that they start thinking in this manner from day one.

2. *Use orientation programs and first-year seminars to help students discover their preferred learning approaches and abilities.*  Consider the use of self-assessment tools to help students better understand themselves and their learning styles.  This is not meant to label or constrain students, but to further support self-reflection.

3. *Help faculty members to become more familiar with different learning styles and to adapt their pedagogical approaches accordingly.*  This

principle is particularly important for those teaching first-year or introductory courses.

4. *Assess students' prior learning from work and life experiences as well as from formal an informal educational activities.* All people have learned things from outside of classroom settings and this knowledge can be used to deepen subsequent learning. Unlike focussing on academic limitations, it also has the effect of boosting self-esteem.

5. *Strengthen support for individualized major and independent studies or learning contracts.* Given the importance that motivation plays in retention and substantive learning, helping students identify their key learning purposes is paramount. Learning contracts or other forms of support can then be created to help students explore these purposes more deeply.

6. *Provide prompt, detailed, and personalized feedback.* This speaks to the need for students to receive specific feedback in a timely manner.

It is noteworthy that the above article was co-written with Arthur Chickering given the obvious influence Chickering's work has had on Kuh. Kuh (2009) explicitly referenced Chickering and Gamson's (1997) article, *Seven Principles for Good Practices in Undergraduate Education,* in articulating the value of collecting NSSE engagement data. These seven principles are:

1. *Encourage contacts between students and faculty.*  This type of contact, both in and out of the classroom, will have the greatest impact on student motivation and involvement.

2. *Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students.*  Learning is best when it is collaborative and social.

3. *Use active learning techniques.*  Learning is enhanced when students reflect and apply what they have learned; this can also happen outside the classroom with independent study and supported work environments.

4. *Give prompt feedback.*  This helps focus learning which is particularly important for students beginning their post-secondary studies.

5. *Emphasize time on task.*  Time management is a critical skill for students and future professionals, but it is also important that realistic amounts of time are provided for assignments.

6. *Communicate high expectations.*  Expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

7. *Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.*  Recognition that in an increasingly diverse world, educators need to better understand the ways their students learn and demonstrate that learning.

It is not surprising that there is significant overlap between Chickering and Kuh's (2005) "Six Conditions" and Chickering and Gamson's (1997) "Seven Principles."  Both emphasize the importance of keeping students motivated in

their learning and highlight the important role that faculty members play in this. There is a common reference to the value of respecting differing learning styles and providing prompt feedback and a consistent call for more dynamic forms of learning, whether this is through active learning techniques or the creation of learning contracts. In particular, the recognition of the learning that occurs in work settings and its integration with course-based learning is not only viewed as beneficial, it is considered *critical* for typical college-age students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The recognition of learning that occurs outside the classroom is also consistent with emergent career theories and their emphasis on the importance of individual actions as an important part of learning (Krumboltz, 2009; Krumboltz, 2011; Pryor & Bright, 2011). In addition, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) view that development involves the change that occurs in students as they "encounter increasing complexity in ideas, values, and other people" (cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p.21) can be seen as an example of the strange attractor of Chaos Theory.

In order to develop and foster these kinds non-classroom learning opportunities, relationships with external stakeholders are required:

> We need collaborative relationships not only with the world of business, but with community organizations and volunteer programs. Such integration will help students develop knowledge, competence, and personal characteristics that will persist for a lifetime. It will also strengthen our direct institutional contributions to local, regional, and national needs (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.472).

Though these words were published almost 20 years ago, their spirit is very much alive in contemporary university environments; a point that is addressed in more depth in Chapter 4. The call for more collaborative relationships can also be seen as an extension of the value placed on the quality and nature of interactions students have in their post-secondary years and the role these interactions have in one's personal development. It also suggests a view of development during the university years that is remarkably close to Super's (1985) Exploration stage.

For further insight into the value of the types of student interactions or involvement that Chickering and his various co-authors argued for, it is useful to explore the work of Alexander Astin presented in the upcoming section. However, before doing so it is important to recognize the critiques of Chickering's work. One of the main criticisms is that much of his work reflected a much more homogeneous student body than is the norm today and that his work emphasized an artificial distinction between learning and development (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA] & American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 2004). This artificial distinction between learning and development has parallels with artificial distinctions between work and other parts of life.

### 2.5.3 Astin – Theory of Involvement

Astin is perhaps best known for two major contributions to the field of student development. The first, his input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model, has been used for decades as a way to conceptualize how individuals develop

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during their post-secondary years.  Inputs refer to the wide range of traits and characteristics that students have prior to beginning their post-secondary lives; environment refers to everything the student is exposed to as part of their post-secondary experience, including courses/programs, faculty and peer interaction, the nature of the institution and its policies, etc; and outcomes refers to the individual's traits and characteristics after exposure to the environment (Astin, 1993b).

However, it is Astin's (1993) work related to student involvement, specifically his Theory of Involvement, that is most relevant to this thesis as it links directly to the current concept of student engagement.  Astin (1993) asserts that student involvement has tremendous potential "for enhancing most aspects of the undergraduate student's cognitive and affective development.  Learning, academic performance, and retention are positively associated with academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups" (p.394).  In short, students learn and succeed by being involved.

The five basic postulates of his Theory of Involvement are:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects (both highly generalized and highly specific).

2. Involvement occurs along a continuum – varies from student to student and varies with different objects at different times.

3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.

4. The amount of learning or development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement.

5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to its capacity to induce student involvement (Astin, 1999).

Though all involvement is important, interactions with peers and faculty members have the most impact on development (Astin, 1993b). He urges institutional support in favour of increasing peer interactions, both inside and outside the classroom, even when specific outcomes for these interactions may not always be clear. In his words, "if we create opportunities for students to interact and learn together in an academic environment, some good things will happen…. While it is not always possible to know beforehand just what these good things will be, the students seldom disappoint us" (Astin, 1993a, p.15). This comfort with serendipity is at the core of Astin's (1993a) work and is also at the heart of Krumboltz's (2009) notion of happenstance. The emphasis within Happenstance Learning Theory for engaging in exploratory actions also has many parallels with Astin's (1993a) emphasis on involvement.

For institutions that traditionally rely on formal evaluation processes and definable metrics, Astin's trust in the serendipity of involvement may not be enough to sway a university administrator. The motivation for an institution to fully support practices that enhance student involvement, or what is more commonly now referred to as engagement, would likely require an additional incentive. Specifically, universities would want to know the concrete benefits of undertaking these approaches before adopting them. In the current climate,

evidence that these practices encourage students to persist in their studies could make for a compelling case.  In this way, Vincent Tinto's work in the area of student retention is worthy of exploration.

### 2.5.4  Tinto – Student Retention: Theory and Practice

Though much work has been done in the area of student retention, the work of Tinto holds a unique place.  He was amongst the first to argue that a student's success at university was not simply a factor of their skills and personality, but that institutional and environmental factors also had a very significant role to play (Tinto, 2005).  From this early work, he developed a theory on college student departure that now "enjoys near-paradigmatic status" (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000, p. 569) within the field.  His theory focuses on the level of integration and types of interactions students have with members of the academic institution, particularly in their first year.  The theory suggests that the greater the integration, the greater the student's commitment to both their personal goals and to the institution that will help them reach these goals (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2006).   In this way, it reflects Super's (1990, as cited in Shoffner, 2006) work in Life Role Salience where he posited that the relative importance of a Life Role would impact an individual's motivation to engage in that role.

In recent years, Tinto has begun to put more energy into moving the field of student retention forward in more practical areas.  He bemoans the fact that much of the work that he and others have done has not directly translated into more effective practice (Tinto, 2006).  In an attempt to address this shortcoming,

he identifies three key lessons learned over the past decades of retention work and possible areas for future work.

The first of these lessons relates to institutional action: "It is one thing to understand why students leave; it is another to know what institutions can do to help students stay and succeed" (Tinto, 2006, p. 6). He calls for the development of models that would effectively guide institutions in their policy and program development so that all students can succeed. This would not only require more research on effective practices, but also on the impact of specific policies and practices (Tinto, 2006).

The second lesson deals with program implementation and the challenge associated with implementing activities that not only meet their desired objectives, but continue to do so over time. Tinto (2006) argues that

> while many institutions tout the importance of increasing student retention, not enough have taken student retention seriously…. They are willing to append retention efforts to their ongoing activities, but much less willing to alter those activities in ways that address the deeper roots of student attrition. (p.9)

In short, seriously addressing student retention may require novel ways of thinking about student programming and services. This suggests that if retention issues become urgent enough, universities may become increasingly open to practices and programming that might have not have been considered previously.

The final lesson comes from the experience of low-income students in the United States. Specifically, Tinto (2006) notes:

> Though the access to higher education for low-income students has increased and the gaps in access between high- and low-income students decreased, the gap between well-to-do and poor students in four-year degree completion remains. Indeed it appears to have increased somewhat over time. (pp.10-11)

There are undoubtedly factors unique to lower-income students that impact their levels of persistence and it is imperative that we better understand these factors if their educational experience is to be enhanced. Though the understanding of these factors is complex and beyond the scope of this thesis, it is interesting to the author in that it directly relates to a matter of social justice. Tinto's (2006) interest in low-income students is similar to Hoyt and Lester's (1995) priorities for the career development field (as cited in Haché et al., 2006) and it is surprising that Tinto has not discussed career issues as at least a possible factor for this discrepancy. Given that career or employment concerns are a priority for the majority of new students (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt, 2010), it would be reasonable to assume that career and employment issues would be at least as important to lower-income students – at minimum. Given his frustration with the lack of impact that retention research and programming have had on retention rates generally, one would think that the motivating impact of career connections would be worthy of more serious consideration.

Though his work lacks specific consideration of the career aspects of the university experience, Tinto's contribution to the field of student retention is undeniable.  His highlighting of the importance of a student's first year and the need for an institutional response to retention issues is particularly compelling and in the upcoming section the exploration of these two key areas is continued.

### 2.5.5  The Importance of Year One and Campus-Wide Responsibilities

As highlighted in Chapter One, the rate of year one dropouts by otherwise capable students is alarming and should be considered unacceptable.  In 2000 the University Presidents' Council of British Columbia commissioned a study called the *BC Early Leavers Survey* to better understand why so many students leave after their first year.  This study identified seven distinct groupings within the overall umbrella of early leavers:

1. *Stopouts*: those leavers who indicated a high likelihood of returning to university soon.

2. *Pre-planned transfers*: those who from the outset of their studies planned to transfer to another institution and hence, not complete a degree at their home university.

3. *Students preparing for a graduate program*: those whose preparation for a graduate program involved non-degree undergraduate study.

4. *Students pursuing professional upgrading studies*:

those who were enrolled in specific courses, but not degree-focused study, for professional accreditation or upgrading reasons.

5. *Students pursuing other non-degree study*: those remaining non-degree students who indicated no intention to pursue degree study but who were not preparing for a graduate program or pursuing professionally oriented studies.

6. *Short stay students:* students who departed within a very short time of their arrival and who attended classes only briefly or not at all.

7. *True leavers*: all degree-focused students who did not initially plan to withdraw from university or transfer to another institution, and who had no expectation of returning to their university (Conway, 2001, pp.5-6).

The "true leavers" are of most interest to this thesis as they are by far the largest group, at nearly 60% of the total (Conway, 2001, p.17). Also, this is the group for whom specific interventions or changes in programming will likely have the greatest impact on persistence, as the students in the other six groups either had pre-formed intentions to leave the institution or had identified a high likelihood to return. In other words, the benefits of engagement, particularly engagement with career education programming, will have the greatest positive impact on the true leavers. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to

measure the possible impact of career programming on the "true leavers" they are worthy of emphasis given the priority assigned to them by Hoyt and Lester (1995, as cited in Haché et al., 2006).

In reviewing the academic performance of true leavers, the survey noted that 22.5% had a cumulative grade point of average of "D" or less and 20% were required to withdraw; thus the remaining 57.5% left for non-academic reasons (Conway, 2001).  However, before dismissing these students as simply being academically unfit, it is important to remember that all these students had initially met their university's admission requirements.  In fact, 45% of them earned admission with "A" averages and another 40% earned admission with "B" averages (p.35).  This suggests that academic preparedness is not the sole reason for the university struggles and that other factors including personal motivations should be considered.

In one study that aimed to better understand the forces that influence first year success, Reason, Terenzini and Domingo (2006) surveyed over 6500 first year students and over 5000 faculty members.  The authors believed that the first year is particularly important because of the foundation it sets for future success.

Of the factors considered, students' perception of a supportive environment in which faculty and university staff provided academic and non-academic support was the greatest indicator of academic competence.   This was followed by reported level of cognitive or academic engagement (Reason et al, 2006).  It was noted that, "the vast majority of the explained variance in academic competence is attributable to what happened to students during their

first year and not to the characteristics they brought with them to college"
(Reason et al., 2006, p.164).  This final point is worth highlighting as it supports
views of retention that emphasize institutional opportunities as opposed to
focusing on individual student attributes.  The importance of perception is also
worth highlighting as it parallels Krumboltz's (1994) view of the role of past
experiences on future actions.  In other words, just as Krumboltz (1994) posits
that an individual's interpretation of different experiences will influences the types
of decisions they will make and they types of behaviours they will engage in, so
too do the findings of Reason et al. (2006) suggest that how one perceives their
campus environment will influence how they engage with it.

In a related study of over 6000 university students, Kuh et al. (2008) found
that "student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively
related to academic outcomes as represented by first-year student grades and by
persistence between the first and second of year of college" (p.555).  Within the
list of 19 *educationally purposefully activities*, only one – "talked about career
plans with a faculty member or advisor" - explicitly refers to a career related
activity (Kuh et al., 2008, p.559).  However, when career is viewed in terms of the
*Blueprint* competencies or the HRSDC's *Essential Skills* a different picture
emerges.  Specifically, 14 of the 19 *educationally purposeful activities* relate to a
*Blueprint* competency (Haché et al., 2006) and 17 of the 19 relate to at least one
of the essential skills (HRSDC, n.d.) (see Table 1).

Despite the fact that the *Essential Skills* are well represented within Kuh's
(2008) list of *educationally purposefully activities* and that the majority of these

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activities also relate to the *Blueprint* competencies, it is notable that none of the activities relate to competencies within the Blueprint's *life/work building* competency area (within this analysis).  This is perhaps because the *life/work building* competency area deals more explicitly with work/employment issues and these are not evident in Kuh's (2005) work.  This is surprising given that Kuh has been influenced by Chickering in many areas and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) work placed a high value on the integration of work and learning and other areas that link to the *life/work building* competency area.

Career and employment goals related to *life/work building* are of undeniable importance to students, particularly those at the beginning of their academic careers.  "Entering freshmen have always cited "to get a better job" as an important reason to go to college, and the percentage of students who hold this view is on the increase" (Astin, 1993b, p. 245).  In the 2010 Canadian University Survey Consortium's First-Year Student Survey, 84% of students rated "get a good job" and 75% rated "prepare for specific job or career" as "very important reasons" for attending university.  Furthermore, two-thirds of students identified "preparing for a specific job or career" (43%) or "getting a good job" (24%) as the single most important reason for going to university" (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010, pp. 27-28).  These results are consistent with numerous other studies done in this area (Dey and Astin, 1993; Donald, 2009; Galt, 2010; Schultz & Higbee, 2007).

Table 1.  Comparison of Kuh's Educationally Purposeful Activities to *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* competencies and *Essential Skills*

| Educationally Purposeful Activities (Kuh et al., 2008) | Related Competency from *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché et al., 2006) | Related Skill from *Essential Skills* (HRSDC, n.d.) |
|---|---|---|
| Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions | | • Oral Communication<br>• Thinking |
| Made a class presentation | | • Oral Communication<br>• Thinking |
| Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment | | • Writing<br>• Thinking |
| Come to class without completing readings or assignments | | • |
| Worked with other students on projects during class | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Working with Others |
| Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Working with Others |
| Tutored or taught other students | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Working with Others<br>• Oral Communication |
| Participated in a community-based project | • Interact positively and effectively with others<br>• Understand the relationship between work and society/economy | • Working with Others<br>• plus multiple |
| Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Computer Use<br>• Thinking |
| Used email to communicate with an instructor | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Computer Use<br>• Thinking |
| Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Oral Communication |
| Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor | • Locate and effectively use life/work information | • Oral Communication<br>• Thinking |
| Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Working with Others<br>• Oral Communication |
| Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance | | |
| Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's expectations | • Change and grow throughout one's life | • Continuous Learning<br>• Thinking |
| Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework | • Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals | • Continuous Learning<br>• Working with Others |
| Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class | • Interact positively and effectively with others | • Working with Others<br>• Thinking |
| Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own | • Interact positively and effectively with others<br>• Change and grow throughout one's life | • Working with Others |
| Had serious conversations with students who differ from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values | • Interact positively and effectively with others<br>• Change and grow throughout one's life | • Working with Others |

The goals and motivations students have for attending university are important considerations because according to the tenets of social learning theory, one's goals can influence one's motivation to perform (Bandura, 1977). This is not to suggest that universities need to redefine themselves as simply training grounds for future workers, but how learning is approached needs to be reconsidered (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). Universities are still primarily "about encouraging the student to grapple with some of life's most fundamental questions" (Astin, 1993b, p. 437), however the inclusion of career education is not a contradiction to this. Within this view, questions like What do I want my life to look like?; What do I want do?; and What options are available to me? are not contradictory to questions related to the meaning of life, love, and engaged citizenry. They are part of the same continuum. Zwerling (1992, as cited in Austin, 2011) states, "the best liberal education may come to be seen as career education; the best career education may be seen to be liberal education" (p.4). This final point suggests that views towards university learning need to be reviewed and that new possibilities with regards to both what is learned and who is responsible for student education should be open for consideration.

It was in this spirit of campus renewal that in 2004, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) jointly produced a document that in some ways officially marked a new way of understanding and articulating student learning. Their *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student*

*Experience* (2004) is grounded in much of the engagement literature reviewed in this chapter, but its emphasis on campus-wide responsibility for student learning sets it apart from much of the literature.  In their own words:

> Learning Reconsidered is an argument for the integrated use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student.  It is also an introduction to new ways of understanding and supporting learning and development as intertwined, inseparable elements of the student experience. It advocates for transformative education – a holistic process of learning that places the student at the centre of the learning experience (NASPA & ACPA, 2004, p.1).

Given the nature of the two associations responsible for *Learning Reconsidered*, it is not surprising that the document calls for a greater role for student affairs professionals in students' lives.  What may surprise some is that the greater role focuses on learning and on not the types of events and services historically associated with student service areas.  Within this paradigm, the transformative potential of the university experience is emphasized and the goal is the development of "intentional learners" (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

*Learning Reconsidered* recognizes that a "truly transformative education repeatedly exposes students to multiple opportunities for intentional learning through the formal academic curriculum, student life, collaborative co-curricular programming, community-based, and global experiences" (NASPA & ACPA, 2004, p.3).  This requires that student affairs personnel are central to the learning process given the types of learning opportunities they are able to provide

students.  This is not to suggest that these learning opportunities are superior to classroom-based learning, but a recognition that the education of a whole person is the mutual responsibility of both academic faculty and student affairs educators (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

In order to better articulate this shared responsibility for student learning, *Learning Reconsidered* strongly advocates for the development of learning goals and outcomes at all institutes of higher learning.  Acknowledging that each institution's goals and outcomes will reflect its unique context, the document nonetheless provides a list of goals for consideration.  These are:

- Engaged citizenship; community service, social justice, and participatory involvement

- Career planning

- Ethical approaches to business, relationships; problem-solving; and conflict

- Practical leadership

- Emotional intelligence

- Critical thinking; evaluating sources of information

- Informed decision-making

- Working in teams and groups; conflict resolution

- Cultural competency and cross-cultural understanding

- Tolerance of ambiguity (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

The initial reference to learning goals that identify *engaged citizenship* and *social justice* align well with the author's personal perspective, however, there are also several similarities to the *Blueprint* competencies.  Specifically, *career planning* is

comparable to the *Blueprint's learning and work exploration* competency area,

and the goals of *evaluating sources of information* and *informed decision-making*

relate to the competency of *make life/work enhancing decisions. Cultural*

*competency and cross-cultural understanding* relate to the *Blueprint's interact*

*positively and effectively with others* and *tolerance of ambiguity* fits well with

*understand the changing nature of life/work roles* (Haché et al., 2006). Comfort

with ambiguity is also central to the Chaos Theory of Careers (Pryor & Bright,

2011).

  The document closes with specific recommendations to support

institutional commitment to student learning. Though not all 15

recommendations will be listed, a selection of the recommendations most central

to this thesis are provided below:

  1. Colleges and universities of every type should commit to the

    intentional review and strengthening of every institutional structure

    and resource that can support transformative learning.

  2. Every post-secondary institution should determine and specify its

    intended learning outcomes and should commit resources to

    measuring, assessing, and documenting students' achievement of

    those outcomes.

  3. Student affairs professionals and faculty must commit to assessing

    the campus environment for specific learning experiences in each

    of the overall student learning outcomes.

4. Academic leaders and senior student affairs officers should commit to rewarding the development of experiences that combine knowledge acquisition and experiential learning, and should support faculty members and student affairs professionals in redesigning learning opportunities so that they include both cognitive and affective components.

5. Faculty members, student affairs professionals, and academic advisors in all settings should establish plans to create resources that help students find clear and flexible pathways to the learning outcomes they seek to develop.

6. All campus educators should commit to identifying and integrating community-based learning experiences so commuters, adult learners, graduate students, and part-time students can create a holistic experience by learning from their total environment.

7. All campus educators should ensure the establishment of reflection and other meaning making opportunities for students to examine the breadth of their learning.

8. Faculty members, student affairs professionals, academic administrators, and representative graduate students should work together to define strategies and resources that will support the comprehensive, holistic learning of graduate students.

9. Each institution should provide ongoing professional development that address the changing nature of the student experience and student learning so that all campus educators can continuously assess and improve their efforts in enhancing the learning process (NASPA & ACPA, 2004, pp.33-34).

As someone who has worked in a variety of student service areas within two post-secondary institutions over the past 20 years, the idea of student affairs professionals as co-educators in the university context is one that resonates with the author and is consistent with his own professional identity and experience. Though it would have been ideal if the recommendations were more explicit in recognizing a role for career education, career-oriented interests could be interpreted in several of the recommendations. Specifically, references to "experiential learning" and "community-based learning" as well as helping "students find clear and flexible pathways to the learning outcomes they seek to develop" (NASPA & ACPA, 2004, pp.33-34) are all consistent with the goals of career-oriented programming.

The benefits of experiential and community-based learning identified in *Learning Rediscovered* have also been explored by Kuh (2010). In referencing ideas that could help support undergraduate success, he states, "few promise to deliver as much bang for the buck as making work more relevant to learning, and vice versa" (Kuh, 2010, p.3). He adds, "it's high time we look for ways to use [the] work experience to enrich rather than detract from learning and college completion" (Kuh, 2010, p.1). Kuh's (2010) comments also serve to highlight that

career and employment programming do not detract from a university's mission to create engaged citizens but may actually increase its efficacy in this regard.

In the upcoming section, research that has already identified a link between career education and student engagement and retention is examined. The section begins with an extensive review of the retention literature that not only references the career development needs of students, it puts career at the forefront.

## 2.6  The Career and Retention Connection

In response to calls from Tinto (2006) and others to assist institutions in making use of the vast and varied research related to persistence, Braxton et al. (2007) identified seven guidelines for the shaping of best practice in retention that institutions can interpret and adapt to their respective contexts.  This was done by reviewing empirical studies of campus-based interventions as well as the recommendations for policy and practice advanced in the retention literature. The specific guidelines are:

1. Individuals who advise or teach undergraduate college students should embrace an abiding concern for the career development of the students they serve.

2. Demonstrate respect for students as individuals by being appropriately sensitive to their needs and concerns.

3. Develop and foster a culture of enforced student success.

4.  Involve faculty members in programs and activities designed to reduce student departure.

5.  Practice institutional integrity by assuring the congruence of institutional actions with the goals and values espoused by the institution.

6.  Foster the development of student affinity groups and student friendships.

7.  Select and implement, as appropriate, retention interventions described in the literature.

Within these guidelines, the teaching and learning aspect of university (including greater interaction with faculty), the need to provide appropriate supports, and encouraging students to become involved with their institution are cornerstones of good retention practice; they are also consistent with much of the work cited earlier in this chapter.  In contrast to these works, career development stands on its own as an independent and vital element of the retention equation.  In this way, the work of Braxton et al. (2007) explicitly acknowledges that understanding and supporting students' primary goals and motivations for attending university directly impact institutional goals.

Yet Braxton et al. (2007) are not alone in their observations.  In his doctoral dissertation, Austin (2011) not only identified increased retention rates as an outcome of institutional career development courses but also identified an additional 15 positive outcomes.  Some of these include: Increased credit hour

efficiency; improved chances for selecting a major; greater course satisfaction; decreased time to graduation; improved GPAs; helped in making decisions about graduate school and careers; provided mentors; and helped develop support networks.

In reviewing the list, it is difficult to imagine any university administrator not desiring these outcomes. Items such as increased retention rates, greater course satisfaction, decreased time to graduation, and improved GPAs are all hallmarks of institutions that place a premium on the academic preparedness of their students. Furthermore, outcomes relating to provided mentors and helped develop support networks would find much support in the works of Astin (1999) and Kuh (2005) referenced earlier.

Based on these positive outcomes, Austin (2011) advocates for comprehensive career courses (for credit) that are "integrated throughout the *entirety* of a student's higher education" (p.33), and that these courses be mandatory. He references the work of Kolb in the area of experiential learning to argue that integrating such a program throughout a student's course of study is necessary for them to appropriately reflect on their experiences. The suggestion to make these courses mandatory is supported by studies that have found that students who are in most need of additional support are the least likely to take advantage of the supports that already exist (Wiggers & Arnold, 2011).

Austin (2011) is but the latest in a line of researchers that has been calling for career programming to play a more central role in the post-secondary experience. For example, Bean (1981) has long encouraged faculty members to

make explicit linkages between course materials and possible careers. In his study of over 1900 first year students, he found that "students who believe that their education will be of practical value, that is, of use in getting a job, are less likely to drop out of school" (Bean, 1981, p.31).

In her work with underprepared students, Peterson (1993) found similar results and advocates for career planning and decision making components to be integrated directly within programs, and not as add-ons. Nora (1987) goes one step further by arguing "courses relating directly to career and academic goals should be offered by counsellors and required in the curriculum for all students. Students would be assigned these courses in their first semester of their freshman year" (Nora, 1987, p.55). The call to have such programming within a student's first semester is consistent with Reason et al.'s (2006) comment about the importance of laying a solid foundation in year one. Furthermore, the need for it to be mandatory will ensure that those students most in need of this programming will be exposed to it. This is particularly important since these students are unlikely to take advantage of supports otherwise (Wiggers and Arnold, 2011).

In one of the few studies that isolate the impact of a specific career education intervention, University of Maryland researchers aimed to examine the effects of career testing on the retention of first-year college students (Boyd, Hunt, Hunt, Magoon, & VanBrunt, 1997). In their study, students enrolled in a University orientation course completed the Strong Interest Inventory, a personality assessment tool used to help individuals identify career options, while

also receiving in-class feedback.  A comparison group of students in different sections of the same course did not have access to the Strong nor the subsequent support.  The study reported that the group exposed to the Strong (with feedback) had better retention rates than the comparison group, even four semesters after treatment.

In a study of individuals who dropped out of high school, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Bruke (2006) found that 81% of respondents felt that if school "had provided more opportunities for real-world and work-related learning it would have improved their chances of graduating" (as cited in Hooley et al., 2011, p.11).  Granted, this is a different audience from typical university students, however the lessons are applicable.

In viewing these positive relationships between career programming and student retention and engagement, it is important to note that the field of career education has evolved since the time of many of these studies.  Whereas trait-and-factor and developmental approaches focused primarily on helping individuals identify the "right" occupation, "career theorists are increasingly interested in approaches that characterize the individual and environment in much more complex and dynamic terms" (Bright & Pryor, 2005, p.53).  Therefore, understanding the complexities of the world of work and developing the competencies necessary to succeed in this ever-shifting landscape, have trumped the identification of a preferred occupation as the primary objectives of career education.  Similarly, encouraging students to regularly engage in exploratory actions and then reflecting upon those actions would also be a

priority.  Though is beyond the scope of this thesis to design a study that measures the impact on retention of career programming grounded in emergent career theories and contemporary frameworks, it is nonetheless interesting to speculate on what this might look like and what results might be observed.

## 2.7  Chapter Summary

Within this chapter key literature within the career development and student engagement and retention fields were reviewed in order to identify potential areas of intersection.  A definition of policy within the post-secondary education context was also presented as the place within which career development and employment preparation references would be analyzed.  The relationship between contemporary career development theories and frameworks and the student engagement and retention field was emphasized as this has yet to be fully explored and there is considerable benefit for both fields to gain a deeper understanding of the other.  Evidence of this subject matter within policy and practice is important as this is where one can understand the institutional value placed on career education and student engagement.

As noted, there is much overlap between the student engagement and retention literature and career development theories and frameworks.  Chickering and Reisser's (1993) view of an individual's development in the university years has much in common with Super's (1985) view of the "Exploration" stage.   The work of Chickering and Kuh (2005) similarly shares much of the same emphasis on individual responsibility for learning as Krumboltz (2011).  Astin's (1993) encouragement of student involvement parallels the emphasis on exploratory

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actions that are found in the emergent career theories of both Krumboltz (2009) and Pryor and Bright (2011).

The work of *Learning Reconsidered* also has much in common with the *Blueprint* framework and contains other elements of direct relevance to this thesis. Student services professionals are considered jointly responsible for the learning and development of students and the concept of a legitimate learning experience is greatly expanded. Within this paradigm it is not hard to imagine an increased acceptance of work-based learning specifically and career education generally, particularly given the overlap with the *Blueprint* competencies. It also provides a broader reference lens through which this analysis can occur as any references to student learning and development beyond the traditional curriculum will be considered and reviewed with respect to possible links to career and employment.

While the overlap of the career development and student engagement and retention fields is noteworthy, it is insufficient in itself to claim that this reflects an institutional view towards career education. This overlap of fields is rendered somewhat meaningless if career education is not recognized within institutional policy and practice.

Thus, in the next chapter, ideas around policy will explored more fully and the methods used in the analysis will also be detailed. Guiding this analysis is the belief that universities serve a greater purpose than simply providing educational services. University experiences can have a transformational effect on students and can greatly impact the types of opportunities available to them in

the future (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).  Thus, it is important that this broader notion

of university education be reflected in institutional policy and practice.

# 3: Research Methods

## 3.1 Introduction

In reviewing the student engagement and retention literature, there was a call for appropriate institutional policies in order for new practices to have a meaningful impact (Astin 1999; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Chickering & Kuh, 2005; Tinto, 2006). Within the career development field, Borges and Savickas (2001) have similarly challenged career development specialists to become more actively involved in the influencing and shaping of public policy. Before embarking upon a process of policy renewal, an understanding of an institution's current policy position as it relates to career development and student engagement and retention is required.

The challenge with conducting an analysis of university policy with respect to career education is that, unlike their college and technical school counterparts, Canadian research universities seldom view career or employment related programming as part of their core mission (Bradshaw, 2011; Galt, 2010; Marcus, 2011). As a result, identifying official institutional policy that sheds light on the university's perspective on career or employment programming can be difficult. Even in situations where official policy does exist, it may be difficult to determine whether the policy is representative of the overall culture of the institution or a reaction to a point-in-time stimulus. This situation is similar with respect to student engagement and retention.

Given the above, this thesis considers policy in the context of both product and process (Taylor et al., 1997). The representation of career education and student engagement and retention within Simon Fraser University policy and practice will be examined, and specific institutional documents that have been guiding campus-wide initiatives will be reviewed. These documents are viewed as policy in that they inform and frame institutional positions (Ozga, 2000).

This chapter identifies the methods used in this thesis to review specific Simon Fraser University guiding institutional documents. The research purpose and questions are provided, as are the specific documents and initiatives reviewed. To provide some context for this study, an overview of factors that may have influenced policy and practice at Simon Fraser University over the past decade are first presented.

## 3.2  Context of Study

In early 2012, Simon Fraser University completed a comprehensive visioning exercise referred to as "Envision SFU". Within the newly developed *Strategic Vision*, the concept of the "Engaged University" has been promoted, with the notion of "engagement" referring to the University's relationship with students, with research, and with the greater community. This emphasis on engagement, particularly student engagement, has directly influenced the focus of this thesis.

Though the creation of the vision is new, the concept of engagement at Simon Fraser University is not. As discussed in Chapter Two, SFU has been

using the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) for a number of years and has an extensive history of student-centred activities.  This is partially in response to expectations from government and the general public (Marshall, 2011) but also due to an institutional culture around innovation that has existed since SFU's founding (Johnston, 2005).

In recent years, the University has also been proactive in addressing new demographic realities.  Specifically, the number of  traditional applicants (e.g., 18 to 24-year-olds) across Canada are in decline, and in British Columbia this decline is expected to continue to 2023 (BC Stats, 2010).  Consequently, SFU, like other Canadian post-secondary institutions, can no longer assume traditional applicant levels will continue along historical patterns and increased importance has been placed on retaining current students.  Layer into this the increasing diversification of student populations (e.g., females, non-traditional students (older than 25), new immigrants, part-time and distance students, and others) has required institutions to address a wider scope of society. Institutions have increased efforts around international student recruitment and retention as one strategy for addressing enrolment concerns, however this may also lead to increased demands for other campus services.

Demographic realities are also at the centre of a looming crisis that "has the potential to shake the very foundations of our society and economy … [and] arises from the intersection of two mega-trends: an aging population and an emerging knowledge economy" (Miner, 2010, p.1).  Within the context of the current economic recession, the pending mass retirement of members of the

"baby-boomer" generation is expected to lead to a mass labour shortage in Canada. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that a much higher skill set will be required for the jobs of tomorrow; skill sets that not enough Canadians currently possess (Jarvis, 2010; Miner, 2010). Without immediate changes to how education, training, and career development is viewed in Canada, the country could face a situation where there is simultaneously high unemployment and a high number of unfilled positions (Miner, 2010). This issue speaks directly to the types of social justice concerns that education should be concerned with (Ozga, 2000; Taylor et al., 1997), as it is those who are already disadvantaged who are most likely to be affected by this crisis.

Given the role that Canadian universities have historically played in developing the nation's skilled workforce and the specific nature of this potential crisis, universities will be expected to play a vital and leading role in addressing this issue. There are many parallels with this potential crisis and the conditions that prompted the writing of the *Veterans Rehabilitation Act* of 1945 (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employer, n.d.(b); Shea, 2010; Veteran Affairs Canada – Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 2004). In both scenarios large of numbers of Canadians hope(d) to leverage their university knowledge towards future opportunities. Within the current scenario it is also fair to assume that expectations from government and the general public and the need to provide evidence of success, will be greater in light of the costs and debt loads increasingly associated with Canadian university education (Jarvis, 2010; Luong, 2010). Pressure on universities to be "career relevant" is also influenced by the

traditional career-focused institutions such as colleges and technical institutes who have been actively promoting their successes in transitioning their students towards the world of paid work (Bradshaw, 2011; Galt, 2010; Marcus, 2011).

It is within this context of change and increasing external demands that this study has taken place. The specific research methods used in the study and key considerations are presented in the upcoming sections.

## 3.3  Research Considerations

In their discussion of the epistemological considerations for educational policy research, Bridges and Watts (2008) focus on the "kind(s) of knowledge that might or ought to inform educational policy and about the way(s) in which educational policy may or may not be derived from the very diverse sorts of knowledge generated by the educational research community" (p.42). They acknowledge the policy-makers' complaints that researchers do not provide them with the types of research they require, and the parallel critiques of researchers who claim that policy-makers seldom take their work into account. Bridges and Watts (2008) further acknowledge that this has left unanswered "questions about what sorts of research really are (or ought to be regarded as) relevant to policy and that have a contribution to make to its development" (p.42).

One potential solution to the apparent gulf between policy development and research is to present research in more accessible language. There is evidence "that research better translates into policy if it is put to policy-makers without all the qualifications, if it is couched in non-technical language, [and] if it

can be summarized…" (Bridges & Watts, 2008, p.43).  This still does not guide

the researcher regarding what to communicate nor does it recognize the interplay

of policy, politics, and power that will inevitably shape how research and policy is

viewed and administered.  The realities of power place an additional moral

responsibility on researchers, as the opportunity exists for those in power

positions to manipulate both the research and the eventual policy position for

personal benefit.  It is therefore critical for researchers, whether they view

themselves as being in power positions or not, to appropriately define their role in

policy formation and to also be clear about their own beliefs.   For "where the

beliefs we hold have consequences for the welfare of other people, ensuring that

these beliefs are well founded… is not just a functional requirement of a utilitarian

character or an *epistemological* condition for claiming true belief: it is a moral

duty" (Bridges & Watts, 2008, p.44).  Central to this thesis is the premise

university policies and practices by their nature "impact the welfare of other

people" (Bridges & Watts, 2008).

The moral imperative for researchers to be reflective and aware of their

own biases resonates throughout the work of Ozga (2000).  She argues that the

orientation of a policy researcher toward a given issue will invariably affect the

treatment given.  This is supported by Taylor et al. (1997) who note,

"observations are inevitably formed by our theories and values in ways which

make any absolute distinction between policy analysis and policy advocacy hard

to sustain" (p.18).  Additionally, "if values cannot be avoided in policy analysis

then … they ought to be declared and argued for up front" (Taylor et al., 1997, p.19).

It is fair to conclude that this study would not have been initiated if the researcher did not already have strong opinions on the value of career education and its potential role in supporting students as they transition out of university. These opinions have been formed in part due to the researcher's role as a career practitioner at Simon Fraser University Career Services. The researcher's observation of how students have responded to career education in both one-to-one advising sessions and in workshops designed for students who have struggled academically, has provided an extrinsic motivation to conduct this study. The choice of research method was influenced by the researcher's experience of the power differential that exists in research universities between those who work in student affairs units and those who work in academic areas, with faculty members and academic administrators holding the balance of power. The potential power and influence of external employers was also a factor.

The perspectives of Ozga (2000) and Taylor et al. (1997) are informed by critical theory, a theory which "does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing" (Cox, 1980, as cited in Ozga, 2000, pp.45-46). Ozga argues that "working within a critical frame places requirements on the researcher to pursue ethical research principles and to assess research activity in relation to what might be broadly referred to as social justice concerns" (p.46). This is of central importance to

Ozga, as she sees "the potential that education offers both as a vehicle for improving life chances and opportunities, and as a means of enriching and enhancing the business of living" (p.8). Similarly, for Taylor et al. (1997) policy analysis "conceptualizes education as a moral idea linked to the concerns of social justice" (p.19). They note that "education has both individual and social purposes" and that "these two purposes converge around the idea of active and informed citizenship" (Taylor et al., 1997, p.19). The final point is particularly relevant since a key aspect of Simon Fraser University's new *Strategic Vision* is that the University "will provide students with diverse and transformative learning opportunities that enable them to gain the knowledge, critical capacities, research skills and civic understanding required to become engaged global citizens…" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2). If one of the goals of the institution is to develop citizens, a lens that "converges around the idea of engaged citizenship" (Taylor et al., 1997, p.19) is a logical choice to use for an analysis of institutional policy and practice.

The above perspectives are consistent with Prunty's (1985) views of critical policy analysis:

> The personal values and political commitment of the critical policy analyst would be anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality and individual freedom are uncompromised by the avarice of a few. The critical analyst would endorse political, social and economic arrangements where persons are never treated as a

means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right (as cited in

Ball, 1994, p.2).

Using a critical theory lens and a commitment to treating people (students) as an "end in their own right" (Prunty, 1985, as cited in Ball, 1994, p.2), critical policy research and researchers can contribute in one or more of the following ways:

1. Can draw attention to and challenge the taken for granted or dominant assumptions informing policy.

2. Can set out to explore how injustices and inequalities are produced, reproduced and sustained, in order that we better understand how such processes can be challenged.

3. Can provide an illumination of injustice and inequity that may assist educationalists in working for change.  (Ozga, 2000, pp.46-47)

For the purposes of this thesis, challenging dominant assumptions and illuminating injustice are the main contributions of the research.  The general lack of emphasis placed on career-related programming at Canadian research universities (Bradshaw, 2011; Galt, 2010; Marcus, 2011) is possibly due to "dominant assumptions" and the sense that career education was similarly under-represented in SFU policy and practice was a motivation for conducting this study.  This sense of a policy void exists despite the fact that key programs and service areas are increasingly valuing the role of career education as

evidenced by the increasing number of programming and partnership requests received by Career Services at SFU.

Even if relevant policy were to exist, it is important to acknowledge that policies by their very nature will exclude certain key issues. This may then lead to unintended consequences that can be further perceived as injustices (Taylor et al., 1997). The exclusion of issues is likely related to the nature of policy researchers and developers (Ozga, 2000). For example, if the researchers and creators of policy are significantly disconnected from those for whom the policy is intended, it follows that the potential for unintended consequences will increase. Ozga (2000) calls for a broader view of who is considered a researcher. She sees "practitioners as well as policy makers as potential makers of policy, and not just the passive receptacles of policy" (Ozga, 2000, p.7). By inviting practitioners to actively participate in policy research and formation she hopes to encourage them:

> to develop a critical and reflexive approach to policy as part of their professional development and responsibility, so that education professionals at whatever level feel not just informed about policy, but capable of independent analysis of it, and of subjecting it to informed criticism (Ozga, 2000, p.8).

This final point is of particular relevance to this thesis as the author is an experienced professional who is interested in drawing attention to dominant assumptions around the relevance and applicability of career education at Simon Fraser University. The concern is that assumptions made by those in power

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positions may cause career education to be excluded from relevant activities or to be developed according to models that are not reflective of current realities. This in turn might lead to unexpected negative consequences for students.

Bridges and Watts (2008) provide an additional consideration for policy analysis. They claim that "all educational propositions and policies have some normative – some might say ideological – framing or foundation" and that "this normative framing may be discovered in the intentions of whoever promotes the policy" or "it may be discovered in the various readings of the policy that different stakeholders can provide" (Bridges & Watts, 2008, p.55). As part of a policy critique, they are concerned with whether the normative principles are explicit, justified, and consistent (Bridges & Watts, 2008). They also caution that these are necessary but not sufficient conditions for sound educational policy. In other words, even if normative principles are satisfactorily addressed, it does not guarantee that the policy is right. Therefore, these questions form an aspect of policy analysis and not the substance of the entire work.

## 3.4  Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how career education is represented within Simon Fraser University policy and practice, with a particular focus on practices that purport to positively affect the student experience or improve life prospects. The researcher's interest lies in a belief that there are both short-term (academic) and longer-term (work and life) benefits to students in exposure to career education programming that is grounded in contemporary

career theory and frameworks.  These benefits are arguably even greater for those students who are most at risk of struggling with their studies.

In support of this greater purpose, the following research questions were developed:

1. How are the career development needs of students reflected in recent broad-based initiatives at SFU?  What assumptions exist and how do they affirm or counter existing research?

2. What is significant about these broad-based initiatives with respect to the career development of students?  What contextual factors influenced their development?

3. How can career theory inform SFU strategic direction around student engagement and what changes or developments are required to ensure the impact is meaningful?

## 3.5  Method of Analysis and Initiatives Reviewed

In identifying particular methods for policy analysis, Ozga (2000) contends, "discussion and analysis of text is a useful method in policy research" (p.94).  In his work on policy analysis, Ball (1994) separates policy into categories of "text" or "discourse", though also adds that "policy is not one or the other, but both: they are 'implicit in each other'" (p.15).  He emphasizes the inherent limitations of any policy text due to the finite points that can be addressed and in the resultant interpretation.  Ball (1994) further acknowledges the role of compromise and negotiation on text and the impact this may have on

document clarity.  From this perspective, any analysis focusing solely on one policy text may be of limited value.

Furthermore, policy analysis does not need to be limited to official policy texts.  According to Taylor et al. (1997), "policy is both process and product" (p.25), with development and implementation being as relevant as the final policy text.  Ozga (2000) similarly emphasizes the negotiation inherently involved in policy development.  When reviewing specific policies she seeks clarity on the following:

1.  The source of the policy: whose interest it serves; its relationship to global, national and local imperatives.

2.  The scope of the policy: what it is assumed it is able to do; how it frames the issues.

3.  The pattern of the policy: what it builds on or alters in terms of relationships, what organizational and institutional changes or developments it requires (Ozga, 2000, p.95).

Thus in addition to the research questions outlined earlier, this analysis considers issues of source, scope, and pattern.  This was an important factor in the identification of appropriate documents and initiatives for review, as items were considered if source and scope could be reasonably identified and if collectively there was the potential to shed light on patterns or trends with regards to University positions.

There was considerable flexibility in determining the items to be included in the analysis, given the view in this thesis that policy can be considered as both product and process. However, as a starting point, the search began with a review of formal institutional policy.

At Simon Fraser University, official textual policies are ordered along eight distinct categories: *Academic* (A); *administrative* (AD); *Board of Governors* (B); *general* (GP); *information* (I); *research* (R); *academic honesty and student conduct* (S); and *teaching and instruction* (T) (Simon Fraser University Policy and Procedures, n.d.). For the purposes of this thesis, the *teaching and instruction* category (Series T) seemed most applicable, however within this category policies relate only to *student conduct and discipline* (T 10), *grading and exams* (T 20), and *course scheduling* (T30), which are not of direct relevance to this thesis and therefore not considered within this work. A review of the other categories was similarly unfruitful in identifying relevant institutional policy specifically related to career education and student engagement.

The next step in the policy selection process was to consider works developed by influential groups with explicit mandates to influence policy and practice. In the university context, committees and task forces typically do this type of work. Fortunately, relevant task force documents are publicly available at SFU. Similarly, the University's new vision statement was selected for analysis. Beyond being aspirational, a good vision statement highlights both the unique characteristics of the institution as well as desired future direction (Ozdem, 2011) and thus is appropriate in this type of analysis. Though none of these works

represent official policy texts in the traditional sense, they do provide

considerable insight into the University's priorities and direction.  They also

provide insight on how the processes of policy creation and implementation

influence practice (Taylor et al., 1997).  While the vision statement and task force

documents were at the core of this analysis, some consideration was also given

to faculty-specific initiatives that emphasized career development.

Through this process of policy review, the following four University initiatives

and guiding documents were identified for analysis:

1.  Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force*:  New
    Directions for the Undergraduate Curriculum: A discussion paper on
    the implementation of university-wide writing, quantitative, and
    breadth, requirements* (2004)

2.  SFU Task Force on Teaching and Learning: *Recommendations
    Report* (2010).

3.  Business Career Passport (2012).

4.  Simon Fraser University Strategic Vision (2012).

These were chosen because they: (a) are relatively recent in their initiation

(within the last decade); (b) are specifically focussed on the preparation of

undergraduate students; (c) are broad in scope, generally extending to the entire

student body; and (d) are strong influences of institutional policy and practice.

To satisfy Ozga (2000), each of the documents reviewed provides

background information that identifies source and scope and collectively they

have the potential to highlight particular patterns.  Specifically, the document

release dates range from 2004 to 2010 to 2012.  By recognizing the normative

framing of each initiative and by identifying connections to the Blueprint for

Life/Work Design competencies (Haché et al., 2006), thematic patterns related to

the thesis were identified.

The recognition of normative framing is supported by Bridges and Watts

(2008) who claim "all educational propositions and policies have some

normative… framing or foundation" (p.55).  They provide questions to guide

critiques around key normative principles that were used to assess the

usefulness of each document.  Specifically:

1. Are the normative principles underlying any particular policy actually

   rendered in explicit or at least intelligible form?

2. Are these justified?  Is there a coherent rationale for them, which

   perhaps links them to a view of human nature, of societal good or of

   human flourishing?

3. Are the normative principles internally consistent and coherent?

   What is the nature of any conflicts between these principles?

4. Are the normative principles consistent with the actions

   recommended or taken under the same policy framework?

   (Bridges & Watts, 2008, pp.58-59)

Having these questions satisfactorily answered suggested the documents

were appropriate for review, but they did not fully address the research

questions.  The next step was to review each document for evidence of the following:

1. Explicit references to the words "career", "employment", or concepts within the career development literature.

2. Explicit references to concepts within the student engagement and retention literature.

3. Evidence of alignment with career theories and frameworks.

4. Examples where explicit career or employment references may have been appropriate but were not included.

5. Evidence of possible power privileges (related to Ozga's (2000) notion of scope).

Underlying all aspects of the analysis is the lens of a critical policy analyst: challenging dominant assumptions; illuminating possible inequities; questioning power relations; and recognizing personal biases (Ozga, 2000; Taylor et al. 1997).  Use of this lens has influenced both the creation of the research questions and the spirit of the analysis.

A number of experiential education programs at SFU with explicit work or career orientations are not included in this analysis. The largest and most recognized is the Co-operative Education (Co-op) program, which has existed at SFU since 1975.  Co-op is available in all SFU faculties and is mandatory in Engineering Science (three work terms) and in the Masters of Public Policy program (one work term).  Similarly, the Faculty of Education's Professional

Development Program has a longstanding requirement for the completion of unpaid practica. Though these programs form an important element of the SFU learning landscape, they are not part of this review due to their well-established and long-term existence within the University and because they are not accessed by the majority of SFU students. The emphasis is on the last decade as this is the period where a renewed interest in undergraduate education has been identified (Marshall, 2011).

Given the importance placed on power and on questions relating to who benefits from specific initiatives within critical policy analysis, it was necessary to understand the bodies within the University that are ultimately responsible for policies and activities related to the student experience. In the next section, university governance is reviewed.

## 3.6  University Governance

At SFU (as with most Canadian universities), there are two senior bodies with responsibilities related to governance: The Board of Governors and the Senate. The Board of Governors has primary responsibilities related to the corporate aspects of the University (property, revenue, policies), and is made up of 15 members, including eight appointees from the Province of British Columbia. The remainder of the Board is made up of the Chancellor, the President, two elected faculty members, two elected students, and one elected staff member (Office of the President (governance), n.d.).

The Senate holds ultimate academic responsibility for Simon Fraser University.  It is much larger than the Board of Governors with a total of 60 members, 26 are elected faculty members.  The remainder of the Senate is made up of the Chancellor, the President and Vice-Presidents, University Deans, the University Librarian, 13 elected students, four individuals elected by convocation, and four provincial appointees.  There are no spaces reserved for staff (Office of the President (governance), n.d.).

The SFU Senate website states:

> Senate is responsible for the academic governance of the University and so it must be concerned with all important matters that bear on teaching and research in the University; this includes the development of new initiatives, the formation of priorities, and the consideration and approval of policies. Senate's agenda should be open for informed debate of issues of significance for the whole University (Simon Fraser University Senate, n.d., ¶ 1).

Given the stated responsibility for all important matters that bear on teaching and research in the University, the role of Senate played a greater role in the issues of interest to this thesis than that of the Board of Governors.

## 3.7  Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the methods of analysis used in this thesis were presented. The concept of policy as product and process (Taylor et al., 1997) was introduced and arguments were made that this conception of policy provides for

a richer analysis than conceptions focusing solely on the concept of policy as text (Ozga, 2000). The research purpose and questions were provided and the SFU guiding documents and initiatives to be reviewed were identified.

In the next chapter, the initiatives and guiding documents identified in this chapter are critiqued and reviewed.

# 4: Analysis

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a selection of SFU initiatives and guiding documents that explicitly reference the student experience are reviewed. The analysis looks both for explicit career and employment references as well as for evidence of where the initiatives may align with career theories and frameworks. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Design* competencies (Haché et al., 2006) serve as a useful tool in this respect. As appropriate within a critical theory perspective, the analysis considers the source (Who is served? What is the relationship to external imperatives?); the scope (How is the issue framed?); and the pattern (What is built on or altered?) (Ozga, 2000). Questions related to source and scope are addressed within the reviews of the individual initiatives whereas all initiatives are considered collectively when addressing pattern.

The specific SFU initiatives and guiding documents reviewed are: The SFU Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force's *New Directions for the Undergraduate Curriculum* document (2004); The Task Force on Teaching and Learning's *Recommendations Report* (2010); The *Business Career Passport* (2012); and The Simon Fraser University Strategic Vision (2012). It is important to note that the author does not necessarily agree or disagree with content or intent of these initiatives and documents. However, in order to satisfy Taylor et al.'s (1997) requirement that the researcher's values "be declared and argued for

up front" (p.19), the author is explicit in his bias towards the value of appropriate career education in a university setting and consequently examined the policies for evidence of the University's perspective on career education.

Prior to the analysis of specific SFU initiatives and guiding documents, the *UR Guarantee* from the University of Regina is presented, and a general review provided, in order to explore how another research university has chosen to engage with its undergraduate students.

## 4.2  University of Regina – UR Guarantee

### 4.2.1  Highlights

In the fall of 2009, the University of Regina received national attention by announcing that its graduates would be guaranteed employment within six months of graduation – a bold and unprecedented claim.  However to be eligible for the guarantee, students would have to be enrolled in the *UR Guarantee* Program.

The *UR Guarantee* Program is comprised of a series of non-credit courses that take students through a maximum of five levels.  Each level is comprised of both mandatory and elective elements and the requirements for each level must be completed within one calendar year (University of Regina, 2010).

*Mandatory* Activities include:

1.  Regular academic advising;

2.  Participating in academic success activities such as Exam Preparation and Time Management workshops;

3. Attending career development seminars;

4. Joining the Co-op Program or gaining other relevant work or community service experience; and

5. Participating in relevant networking opportunities.

*Elective* Activities include:

1. Attending Fall Orientation;

2. Participating in campus life (intramurals, athletics, fine arts productions, tutoring and campus employment);

3. Attending on-campus career fairs;

4. Volunteering as an Ambassador at Fall Orientation; or

5. Joining one of the many student clubs on campus (UR Guarantee, n.d.).

As part of the program, students are matched with an advisor who supports them in all aspects of their university experience. This includes support with transition and academic issues, as well as exposure to the various requirements. In order to remain in the program, students must maintain a 70% Program Grade Point Average and complete all program requirements within five years (University of Regina, 2010).

Upon graduation, students are responsible for securing their own employment, where employment is defined as "being fully employed (either in a permanent, part-time, term, contract, or casual position) in a career related opportunity, including self-employment" (University of Regina, 2010, Program Requirements section). If a student has met all the program requirements and is

unable to secure career-related employment (as defined above), within six

months of graduation, they are eligible for the *UR Guarantee* Program Waiver.

As part of the Waiver, they receive up to 30 credit hours of University of Regina

undergraduate courses, without having to pay for tuition or course fees

(University of Regina, 2010).

The *UR Guarantee* is so central to the University of Regina's identity that a

direct link to the program is one of only two prominent and distinguishable links

on the University's home page (University of Regina, n.d.).  The other is a link to

the University's application portal.

### 4.2.2  UR Guarantee - Review

It is interesting to review the *UR Guarantee* initiative in light of the factors

influencing universities across the country.  Initially conceived as a recruitment

strategy aimed to appeal to students' employment concerns, currently "the main

focus of the *UR Guarantee* Program is student engagement" (University of

Regina, 2010, ¶ 1).  The new emphasis explains why so many of the required

and elective activities are of a strictly academic nature (e.g. participating in

academic success activities and participating in campus life activities).  They are

also consistent with practices recommended in student engagement and

retention literature (Astin, 1993b; Braxton et al., 2007; Chickering & Gamson,

1987; Kuh et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).  Similarly, the

requirement to commit to the program within a student's first 30 credit hours is

again consistent with literature that emphasizes the importance of developing

positive student behaviours in year one (Braxton et al., 2007; Nora, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 19933; Tinto, 2006).

The fact that a student engagement program can guarantee employment success suggests that program developers and University of Regina policy makers believed there was a strong connection between the program's activities and post-degree employment opportunities.  In addition, the nature and breadth of the *UR Guarantee* program, particularly the requirement for participation in co-op or other type of community service is consistent with emergent career theories that emphasize the importance of taking action as a necessary part of career learning (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).  It also suggests a belief that degree attainment is just one part of the equation for employment success.

Though this initiative received a lot of media attention due to the claims of guaranteed employment (University of Regina, 2010), the guarantee may not be as bold as it may appear on the surface.  First, the university already had evidence of post-graduation success with its Co-op graduates, and this initiative, with its foundation in student engagement literature, would ensure that students with co-op or related experience would be even better prepared.  Second, in the Spring of 2009 (just before the program was announced), the Conference Board of Canada declared that Saskatchewan would have the greatest GDP growth of all Canadian provinces and was also projected to lead the country in job growth. In fact, only one other province, Manitoba, was expected to have a net job increase that year (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009). Therefore, employment prospects for university graduates in general were expected to be favourable.

Finally, for those students who would be unsuccessful in their job search, and thus collecting on the University's guarantee, the cost to the University would be negligible.  There are few, if any, variable costs associated with allowing an extra student to participate in courses at an institution as large as the University of Regina.

## 4.3  The Selection of SFU Initiatives

The identification of documents and initiatives for review began with a search of official Simon Fraser University textual policies.  As this did not yield any specific documents that referenced career education or student engagement, works by task forces and committees were considered and two appropriate documents were identified: The SFU Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force's *New Directions for the Undergraduate Curriculum* document (2004) and The Task Force on Teaching and Learning's *Recommendations Report* (2010).  The SFU Strategic Vision (2012) was also considered for this study given the emphasis that vision documents place on unique institutional qualities and desired future directions (Ozdem, 2011).  Finally, despite not having a campus-wide reach, the *Business Career Passport* (2012) was included due its explicit "career" reference.  Though not official policy texts in the traditional sense, an analysis of these initiatives and documents has the potential to provide considerable insight into the University's priorities and direction.

## 4.4 SFU Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force (2004)

### 4.4.1 Context and Highlights

Arguably, a new era of undergraduate education at SFU began with the work of the SFU Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force in 2004. The *New Directions for the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Discussion Paper on the Implementation of University-Wide Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth Requirements: Revised Recommendations* (amended version - hereafter referred to as *New Directions*) was an attempt to update undergraduate requirements and was an explicit acknowledgement that "business as usual" was no longer sufficient.  Reporting to the then Vice-President, Academic, Dr. John Waterhouse, the initial Discussion Paper was released in December 2001, near the beginning of Dr. Waterhouse's second year in the role.  Prior to being Vice-President, Academic, Dr Waterhouse was Dean of the SFU's Faculty of Business Administration.  Of the 12 Task Force members, there were eight faculty members, one undergraduate student representative (elected by Senate) and three professional staff representatives.  The three staff members were the only representatives not eligible to vote (Curriculum Initiative, n.d.).

It is also worth noting that a few months prior to the release of the initial *Discussion Paper*, the political landscape in the province of British Columbia changed dramatically. The ruling New Democratic Party was reduced to only two seats and the Liberal party won the remaining 77 in one of the most one-sided election results in Canadian history (Elections BC, 2001).  Given the nature of the funding relationship with the provincial government and given the anticipated

shifts in government policy directions, it is reasonable to assume that the election results played at least some role in influencing this initiative. It is also possible that new government priorities were being referred to when the Task Force highlighted the need to respond to the "conflicting sets of expectations on the part of social and political institutions" (Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force with the Writing, Quantitative and Breadth Support Groups [UCITF], 2004, p.1).

Finally, the start of the millennium was also a time when universities from across the country were increasingly attempting to differentiate themselves. Many institutions were going through branding or rebranding exercises – often for the first time (Kizilbash, 2011). Within this context, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the key benefits argued for in *New Directions (2004)* relates to the "potential to enhance significantly the quality of undergraduate education at SFU and to elevate its national profile" (UCITF, 2004, p.23). It is interesting to speculate as to whether the words "elevating its national profile" would have been used as justification for this initiative or if this initiative would have even been implemented, if the political context had been different or if activities related to institutional differentiation had not been undertaken by other schools.

Regardless, the initiative was implemented and the WQB guidelines (writing (W), quantitative (Q), and, breadth (B) requirements) are now an entrenched part of the SFU undergraduate student experience. Highlights of the recommendations include:

1. New admissions and continuation requirements pertaining to English competencies, writing skills and quantitative skills.

2. New WQB graduation requirements. Specifically, six credits in courses that foster writing (W), six credits in courses that foster quantitative abilities (Q), and 18 credits in designated breadth courses (B).

3. Establishment of a Student Learning Centre (now known as the Student Learning Commons).

4. Creation of a limited number of Foundational Writing and Quantitative skills courses (UCITF, 2004).

### 4.4.2 Analysis

The analysis of *New Directions (2004)* begins by addressing the "normative questions" provided by Bridges and Watts (2008). It will begin by looking for evidence that the normative principles of the document are explicit, justified, internally consistent, and consistent with actions (Bridges & Watts, 2008). The requirement for explicit framing is similar to Ozga's (2000) need to seek clarity on issues of scope.

Within *New Directions (2004)*, there is reference to Senate approval of earlier recommendations "designed to enhance students' foundational writing and quantitative abilities and to expose them to the basic concepts and modes of inquiry in the humanities, sciences and social sciences" (UCITF, 2004, p.1). Principles guiding the development of recommendations (being workable for

students, being workable for faculty and programs, and addressing resource issues) (UCITF, 2004) are also included.  In addition, the report claims that this initiative will "enhance the reputation of the University, enabling us to attract an increasing number of well-qualified students" (UCITF, 2004, p.2).  The above provide evidence that the normative principles behind this initiative are explicit in intent (enhance writing and quantitative abilities) and in possible motivations (enhance reputation and attract more top students).  They also address the issues of scope identified by Ozga (2000) and provide some clarity related to source.  The final point relates to the University's self-interest in enhancing its reputation and in attracting top students and speaks to the environment of competition amongst Canadian universities at the time.  As a former Dean of the Business Faculty, Vice-President Waterhouse would presumably already been attuned to the competitive environment of Canadian universities given the importance that business schools place on external rankings (Canadian Business Schools, n.d.).

Throughout *New Directions (2004)* significant rationale is provided to justify each of the recommendations.  Furthermore, the key recommendations of the report (i.e. new admission requirements; new WQB course requirements; creation of a student learning centre; and the development of foundation writing and quantitative skills courses) are consistent with the overall normative framing.

With the normative and scope questions addressed, the analysis now focuses on the first two research questions of this thesis: How are the career development needs of students reflected in WQB?  What is significant about

WQB with respect to the career development of students and what are key contextual factors?

Given this thesis' focus on career development, the explicit reference to students' future careers within the *New Directions (2004)* document's opening pages is of particular interest. The document states that as a result of this initiative, "undergraduate students will be better prepared to live productive lives and to make significant contributions to society – qualities that the parents and taxpayers who fund Simon Fraser University expect" (UCITF, 2004, p.2). It goes on to claim, "in graduating students who are more literate, numerate and broadly knowledgeable, we will improve the employment prospects of our degree-holders" (UCITF, 2004, p.2).

The reference to "parents and taxpayers who fund SFU" (UCITF, 2004, p.2) is consistent with Marshall's (2011) comments that "governments in some provinces continue to look for more cost-effective degree delivery models" and that "the public may have now been pushed too far by changes in undergraduate delivery…" (Marshall, 2011, p.66). It also provides further clarity on Ozga's (2000) notion of source by explicitly identifying the influence of "parents and taxpayers" (UCITF, 2004, p.2). However, statements such as "our undergraduate students will be better prepared to live productive lives and to make significant contributions to society" and "we will improve the employment prospects of our degree-holders" (p.2) demand closer scrutiny.

Though outcomes related to "contributing to society" and "improving employment prospects" (UCITF, 2004, p.2) are laudable, no studies are

referenced that suggest a relationship between writing skills, quantitative skills, and academic breadth and these outcomes.  It is as if a cause and effect relationship exists between academic coursework and employment prospects and making contributions to society.  While writing and quantitative skills, and the benefits that come from breadth requirements, are undoubtedly helpful in supporting a student's employment prospects they are only part of the story. The Canadian government has identified nine essential skills that "people need for learning, work and life" (HRSDC, n.d., p.1) that include numeracy and writing but also include skills such as working with others and continuous learning.  Though other courses may address these skills areas (perhaps under breadth), the fact that they are not explicitly referenced within this initiative suggests that they are not seen as valuable as writing and quantitative skills.

While evidence linking enhanced writing, qualitative, and breadth requirements to improved employment prospects is absent in this document, the evidence linking a broader conception of career education to employment prospects is substantial (Bell & Bezanson, 2006; Hooley et al., 2011; Savard & Michaud, 2005).  A more accurate statement might be that improved literacy and numeracy skills are required for future employment opportunities, but they may be insufficient on their own.  Understanding how to leverage these new skills towards future opportunities is where career education can play a role and would support the goal of supporting students taking greater control of their learning (Chickering & Kuh, 2005).  The competencies outlined in the *Blueprint for*

*Life/Work Designs* provides a useful framework for how this might be developed (Haché et al., 2006).

Claims related to academically underprepared students are also worthy of closer review. Within *New Directions (2004)* it states "*experience* [italics added] shows that a significant number of undergraduate students admitted to SFU are poorly equipped to begin the quantitative courses required in their disciplines or to write at the first year level" (UCITF, 2004, p.4). It goes on to state, "some students are insecure about their quantitative abilities. We need courses that will help these students allay their insecurities" (p.14). While the existence of students who struggle in both qualitative and writing abilities is not in dispute, it can similarly be claimed that many SFU students are poorly equipped to begin their post-university lives and careers. In a study from one Canadian university, "only 24 percent of students in their graduating year in Arts and in Sciences reported feeling ready to enter the workforce" (Bell & Bezanson, 2006, p.14). Therefore, just as the argument has been made to develop courses that allay insecurities related to quantitative abilities, the case can be made for programming that addresses the very real concerns that many students have in regards to their working futures. This is particularly noteworthy given students' intentions of attending university to improve employment and career-related prospects (Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010). Just as *New Directions (2004)* created "opportunities for faculty to develop new courses and to redesign existing courses in ways that enhance their teaching experiences and the learning experiences of their students" (p.13), so, too, could new career-

centred programming provide opportunities for creative enhancements. Career education elements could even be used to complement or enhance programming that was developed as part of WQB.

For example, since "the fundamental purpose of the writing initiative is to make sufficient improvements in the literacy of SFU students to enable them to become decent writers" (UCITF, 2004, p.10), and to "teach students to write in the forms and for the purposes that are typical of disciplines and/or professions, …" (p.14), it is clear that one of the goals of good writing has to do with how this writing will be used in the future. In particular, the term profession by its very definition implies an employment orientation. However, professions are not static entities; they are subject to the same forces of change that exist throughout society and in all work places. Therefore, any courses or programs that claim to prepare individuals for specific professions should, at the very least, explicitly acknowledge the complex and changing environments that these professions are a part of (Pryor & Bright, 2011). If they do not, they risk perpetuating false conceptions of the modern work place and thus do their students a substantial disservice.

As a final comment on *New Directions (2004),* it is worth highlighting the statement, "we should not accept more students than we are willing to help" (p.5). It appears from the document that "help" refers to supporting students in an academically rigorous and diverse environment. However, if "help" was used more broadly, to refer to preparing students to successfully navigate the personal and work related challenges they are likely to face, the report's recommendations

may have looked much different.  They would likely include greater references to the types of skills and competencies Identified within the *Blueprint* and the *Essential Skills* documents (Haché et al., 2006; HRSDC, n.d.), particularly since these documents were developed with the explicit goal of supporting Canadians in successfully and intentionally addressing work and life issues.  These frameworks and contemporary approaches to career education enhance an institution's academic mission by encouraging students to become more involved in activities outside the classroom, to think about how to integrate their classroom and non-classroom learning, and to become more intentional with their actions (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993, Haché et al., 2006; Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).  These types of non-classroom activities and the types of reflection associated with them are supported by *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004); a document released the same year as *New Directions* (2004).  There is also evidence that career programming enhances the types of academic performance that is at the heart of *New Directi*ons (2004) (Austin, 2011; Hooley et al., 2011).

In the next section, the work of the SFU Task Force on Teaching on Learning is reviewed; a Task Force that was established in 2008, just four years after the release of *New Directions*.

## 4.5  SFU Task Force on Teaching and Learning (2010)

### 4.5.1  Context and Highlights

Whereas the focus of the Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force was on official changes to SFU curricular offerings, the Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TFTL) was charged with the goal of "making recommendations aimed at supporting quality teaching and learning at SFU" (Task Force on Teaching and Learning [TFTL], 2010, p.2).  The TFTL was established in June 2008 as a first key initiative of new Vice-President, Academic, Jon Driver, and its final *Recommendations Report* was released in January 2010.  Dr. Driver is a faculty member in the Department of Archaeology and former Dean of Graduate Studies at SFU.  This Task Force had 18 members compared to the Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force's (UCITF) 12 members, however the overall composition was relatively similar. The most significant difference from the *UCITF* committee was that all members had voting privileges (VP Academic, n.d.), which was at the very least a symbolic attempt to address issues related to power.

While the role of faculty is central to any major university initiative, particularly those related to student learning, the importance of non-faculty members is immediately evident within the Task Force's document.  References to "the community" and "engagement with the community" occur within the first line of the executive summary and are repeated throughout the document.  Key groups of the University community are explicitly identified to reinforce the inclusionary intent.  With regards to the process for implementing and moving

forward with Task Force recommendations, the report states it "will involve instructor groups, educational and support staff and students, as well as Senate, the SFU Faculty Association (SFUFA), the Teaching and Support Staff Union (TSSU), the Administrative and Professional Staff Association (APSA) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), where appropriate" (TFTL, 2010, p.1). The inclusion of support staff, APSA, and CUPE in a teaching and learning process suggests a new view of the student learning experience, one that is more consistent with holistic view of student learning advocated for in *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

The explicit interest in teaching and learning at SFU is again consistent with Marshall's (2011) observation of the Canadian university landscape, and an interest that he stresses is both "welcome and overdue" (p.66). Within the *Recommendation Report's* Executive Summary, the renewed national interest in undergraduate education is acknowledged: "Many academic institutions are redoubling their focus on the student experience and student retention by investing in engaging learning environments and integrating classroom and non-classroom experiences" (TFTL, 2010, p.i). This comment provides some clarity to the concept of source (Ozga, 2000), in that the University's actions are at least partially influenced by the actions of national competitors.

Thus, it is within this context that the Task Force on Teaching and Learning presented the following recommendations:

1. Establish and communicate a vision statement and principles to provide direction and common purpose around teaching and learning at SFU.

2. Develop and implement a phased institutional plan to raise awareness of the broad range of SFU teaching and learning successes, services and support for teaching and learning and to ensure that they are recognized, used, and celebrated in all three campuses in an appropriate manner.

3. Expand student-centred approaches to teaching within a process of ongoing improvement.

4. Increase awareness of policy provisions that address the importance accorded to teaching and learning, promote a consistent interpretation of policy provisions, and implement further initiatives that value the teaching mission of the University.

5. Establish a new, highly-integrated, coordinated and extensive teaching and learning support system that fosters the exchange of ideas and promotion of teaching between teachers within and between programs, between teaching support staff from different venues in the university, and between teachers and teaching support staff (TFTL, 2010, pp. 3-5).

At the time of writing this thesis, the Task Force's full recommendations had not been approved by Senate.

**4.5.2  Analysis**

The analysis begins by exploring whether the normative principles within are explicit, justified, internally consistent, and consistent with actions (Bridges & Watts, 2008).  Within the *Recommendations Rep*ort (2010), the first two pages situate the complete Terms of Reference for the Task Force and provide a summary of the Task Force's history.  In combination, these two provide ample evidence of explicit normative framing while also providing clarity to issues of scope (Ozga, 2000).  The reference to receiving input from "~ 315 university community members" and the hosting of "Community Participatory Events" for the purposes of receiving input (TFTL, 2010, p.2), is consistent with the Task Force's emphasis on community involvement.

The *Themes and Recommendations* portion of the *Recommendations Report (2010)* is provided using the following subheadings: Challenges, proposed solutions, recommendations, and benefits.  Within each theme, the key issues are presented clearly and explicitly along these subheadings and the recommendations flow logically.  Thus even though the challenge presented to the Task Force on Teaching Learning was broad and complex, the *Recommendations Report* (2010) is both internally consistent, and the actions are consistent with the overall framing.

The analysis now focuses on the first two research questions of this thesis: How are the career development needs of students reflected in the *Recommendations Report*?  What is significant about the report with respect to the career development of students and what are key contextual factors?

Like *New Directions (2004)*, there is much in the report referencing the classroom aspects of the student experience.  However, there are also elements and specific recommendations that acknowledge that student learning also occurs outside the classroom and by people outside of traditional faculty roles that suggests an influence of the student engagement literature (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; NASPA & ACPA, 2004).  For the purposes of this thesis, the non-classroom learning is of particular interest as it demonstrates a philosophical shift within the University and because non-classroom activities are more likely to address life and career skills (Hooley et al, 2011).  The only reference to non-course based learning in *New Directions* was in the recommendation to develop a student learning centre (UCITF, 2004).

Of the five recommendations, it is Recommendation #2 where the notion of a shared responsibility for learning amongst faculty and staff is most pronounced:

> Develop and implement a phased institutional plan to raise awareness of the broad range of SFU teaching and learning successes, services and support for teaching and learning and to ensure that they are recognized, used, and celebrated in all three campuses in an appropriate manner (TFTL, 2010, p.5)

There is explicit recognition for "the multiple roles necessary for teaching and learning (faculty, staff, students)" (TFTL, 2010, p.5).  Community members are encouraged "to share knowledge and provide feedback about teaching and learning" as this will support instructors to "make more use of available services

and supports" and, in turn, will allow engaged staff to "better support instructors and students," (TFTL, 2010, p.5). This inclusionary tone is consistent with contemporary views of campus learning (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) and parallels Ozga's (2000) calls for a broader view of who is involved in the development of strategic initiatives in that she sees "practitioners as well as policy makers as potential makers of policy, and not just the passive receptacles of policy" (p.7).

The Task Force on Teaching and Learning's belief that non-faculty members can support student learning is but one departure from traditional thought. For they also acknowledge that learning can exist outside of a traditional classroom or lab setting. In this way, the TFTL echo Marshall's (2011) goal that "the student experience is viewed as more than what happens in the classroom, and many out-of-class activities are linked to the classroom learning goals" (p.70). This recalls the work of Chickering and Reisser (1993), who claimed "integrating work and learning not only adds educational power for adult learners, it also is *critical* [italics mine] for typical college-age students" (p.471). There is also recent evidence that has linked non-classroom learning to institutional benefits such as student persistence (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Bruke, 2006, as cited in Hooley et al., 2011, p.11).

In response to concerns that there was an inadequate formal recognition "of experiential learning as an appropriate way to meet degree requirements" and "of learning that extends beyond the classroom (co-op, field school, etc.), [and in light of an] emerging body of research on student satisfaction and retention that focuses on creating engaging learning environments by integrating classroom

and non-classroom experiences," (TFTL, 2010. p.5), the Task Force

recommended an expanded notion of a student-centred experience.  More

specifically, they argued that the University needed to "better align, grow and

accredit and realize the full learning potential of the many and varied experiential

programs offered at this university" (TFTL, 2010, p.6).

To emphasize this point, the Task Force further recommended that SFU

"determine mechanisms to develop, recognize, and integrate more research,

experiential, and international learning opportunities into the formal curriculum

and recognize these with integral academic credit" (TFTL, 2010, p.7).   This

would allow the University to investigate "processes that allow a unit to designate

a percentage or number of experiential (E) or international (I) opportunities

toward minimum degree completion requirements and, mechanisms for quality

assurance and regular review of E or I opportunities" (TFTL, 2010, p.7).  The

suggestion that experiential or international learning opportunities might be

recognized with academic credit, and that there might even a minimum

requirement for such opportunities, is in keeping with Marshall's (2011)

observations of the influence of a greater public who view improvements in the

undergraduate experience "as much more than simply improving teaching"

(p.66).  They are also consistent with views of student learning and development

that emphasize the importance of participating in a variety of activities (Astin

1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Krumboltz; 2009; Kuh, 2010) and with

emergent career theories' notions that all experiences are learning experiences

(Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).

Though these are, again, recommendations that may be challenging to have adopted as official policy, it is important that these issues are being discussed and debated at the highest levels.  At minimum, this demonstrates that academic institutions are increasingly recognizing that their responsibilities extend beyond the academic preparation of their students.  This change in perspective from a previous Vice-Presidential Task Forces is also evidence of the types of agitation and negotiation noted by Taylor et al. (1997).

As with other recommendations, the Task Force was keen to see greater integration and greater promotion of success stories.

> …many of the features of the extant teaching and learning environment such as experiential learning opportunities (e.g., Co-operative education, Peer Educators Program, LEAD program), foundational academic preparation courses, and technological and e-learning pedagogies, should be made more visible and further incorporated in the curriculum. Furthermore, these features should be celebrated and promoted and regularly reviewed, adapted, and refined to facilitate student engagement and sustainable mentoring platforms (TFTL, 2010, p.8).

In addition to the promotion of successes, there is also a commitment to "critically review all extra-curricular programming" (TFTL, 2010, p.7) to ensure that all programming meets the University's quality standards and to allay any fears of watering down the curriculum.  This is again consistent with numerous trends related to quality assurance in Canadian universities (Council of Ontario Universities, 2011; Marshall, 2011).  The competencies identified within the

*Blueprints for Life/Work Designs* (Haché et al., 2006) and HRSDC's (n.d.)

*Essential Skills* could serve to support the framework used for these reviews.

Finally, one of the most significant elements of the Task Force's work is in calling for the creation of an "ideal set of attributes that all students (undergraduate and graduate) completing a degree at SFU would acquire by graduation" (TFTL, 2010, p.6). In light of the international trend toward learning outcomes (Council of Ontario Universities, 2011; Weingarten, 2011), this call can be viewed as a proactive attempt to prepare for an inevitable requirement. It is also in contrast to programs such as the *UR Guarantee* (n.d.) where the benefits are only for those who enrol and persist in the program. The specific attributes identified by the Task Force on Teaching and Learning relate to: (1) *depth and breadth of knowledge*, (2) *knowledge of methodologies*, (3) *application of knowledge*, (4) *communication skills*, (5) *awareness of limits of knowledge*, and (6) *autonomy and professional capacity* (TFTL, 2010). The goals are also similar to those of the *Blueprint* (Haché et al., 2006), and *Essential Skills* (HRSDC, n.d.) authors, though the emphasis is different.

Attributes 1 and 2 focus on the acquisition of knowledge (i.e. *depth and breadth* and *methodologies*) and have more in common with the *Essential Skills* framework (HRSDC, n.d.) than the *Blueprint*. However, it can be argued that gaining of this knowledge, and a university education generally, can be viewed within *Blueprint's* competency #4: *participating in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals* (Haché et al., 2006).

For Attribute 3 (*the application of knowledge*), the criteria are:

1. Apply technical and information skills appropriate to their discipline or professional area;

2. Have participated in learning in situ, i.e. co-op, research assistant, community-based learning, field school, practicum, etc.;

3. Have participated in "internationalization" experience, i.e. exchange, field school, international research, international co-op, international mentorship, on-campus international activities, etc.

(TFTL, 2010, p.6).

The first criterion with its emphasis on applying skills parallels the typical applications associated with *Essential Skills* (HRSDC, n.d.), though not to the same depth.  The second and third criteria further emphasize the critical role of non-academic environments in providing venues for students to apply their new knowledge and are supported by emergent career theories (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).  They can also contribute to the *Blueprint* competencies of *change and grow throughout one's life* and *understand the relationship between work and society/economy* (Haché et al., 2006).

The parallels to *Essential Skills* continues with Attribute 4 (*communication skills*).  The first criterion, "demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills in a variety of settings (academic, professional, community)" (TFTL, 2010, p.6), overlaps with *Essential Skills* in both specific skills (e.g., *writing* and *oral communication*) and in the emphasis on application to non-academic settings

(HRSDC, n.d.).   It also relates to the *Blueprint* competency of *interact positively and effectively with others* (Haché et al., 2006).

The final two attributes are arguably the most direct in acknowledging that university is but one step towards a student's future ambitions and have the most in common with the *Blueprint* attributes (Haché et al., 2006).  Attribute 5 deals specifically with the limits of knowledge and one criterion emphasizes that a university experience teaches students "how to learn, question, evaluate, and apply new ideas and concepts to an ever-changing world" (TFTL, 2010, p.7). This is similar to the concept of *continuous learning* within *Essential Skills* (HRSDC, n.d.) and can contribute to a multitude of *Blueprint* competencies including, *change and grow throughout one's life*, *participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals*, and *locate and effectively use life/work information* (Haché et al., 2006).  This acknowledgement of an ever-changing world also relates to *understand the changing nature of life/work roles* and is at the core of the work of the emergent career theorists (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).

The final attribute, *autonomy and professional capacity*, by its very name suggests a relationship to life/work competency.  The first criterion, *contribute effectively and appropriately to their discipline*… relates to both *secure/create and maintain work* and *make life/work enhancing decisions* (Haché et al., 2006). The second criterion refers to the need to understand one's personal values, but does not go as far as the *Blueprint's* (2006) call to *build and maintain a positive*

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*self-image*. This is a particularly important competency given the rise of mental health issues amongst students (American College Health Association, 2010).

Overall, the proposed attributes address seven of the Blueprint competencies (Haché et al., 2006; TFTL, 2010), though the gaps are notable. The first competency, *build and maintain a positive self-image*, is not represented in the proposed attributes and is one of the key issues facing universities today (American College Health Association, 2010). The final three attributes – *maintain balanced life and work roles*, *understand the changing nature of life/work roles*, and *understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process* - all have a forward-looking orientation and are perhaps not well addressed by traditional university courses. This is an area where some form of complementary programming could potentially address the gaps.

In the upcoming section, SFU's Beedie School of Business approach to complementary career programming, the *Business Career Passport,* is reviewed.

## 4.6  Business Career Passport (2012)

### 4.6.1  Context and Highlights

The Beedie School of Business operates the Career Management Centre (CMC), the only faculty-specific centre at Simon Fraser University providing career and occupational support to students. This is common within business schools across North America and reflects a strong business and industry orientation as these centres not only provide a key service to students, they also provide a mechanism for maintaining engagement with business and industry. In

2011, the CMC proposed the development of a *Business Career Passport* that would be required for all Business students and that would "focus on career management and preparation and would help students successfully launch their careers upon graduation" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.1). The initiative is similar to ones already in place at other Canadian business schools, such as those at the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary, and McGill University, where some form of workplace preparation has already been incorporated into the curriculum. In the competitive world of university business schools, it is important that Beedie not fall behind in this key area of learning and development.

The *Business Career Passport* initiative requires that all Business students participate in six workshops in order to be eligible to graduate (students enrolled in Business prior to Fall 2012 do not have to meet these requirements). The six workshops are: (1) *Self-Assessment & Finding Your Fit*; (2) *Networking & Business Etiquette*; (3) *Professional Business Resumes*; (4) *Competitive Cover Letters*; (5) *Interview Preparation & Tactics*; and (6) *Job Search Strategies & Career Management* (Career Management Centre, 2001, p.2). Students can complete the workshops in any order and at any time prior to graduation, but will be encouraged to participate in the Self-Assessment & Finding Your Fit session within their first 60 credit hours. There are no additional costs to students and grades are assigned on a pass/fail basis.

Senate passed the proposal in early 2012.

### 4.6.2 Analysis

With regards to its normative framing, one of the explicit goals of the *Passport* is to make participating students "recognized by employers as being polished and professional" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.2). It is also "intended to prepare BBA students to manage their career throughout their academic program and their life by helping them make informed decisions about career direction [while also helping them] understand the difference between getting a meaningful and targeted job versus getting any job…" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.2). Though the principles are explicit, clarity on scope is provided (Ozga, 2000), and considerable rationale is given in support of the recommendations, the possible tension between supporting students "manage their career throughout their academic program and *their life* [italics mine] and helping them see the "difference between getting a meaningful and targeted job versus getting any job…" (p.2) leads to questions as to whether the explicit principles are consistent with the proposed actions, a point that will be returned to later in this analysis.

The passing of the *Business Career Passport* is an interesting development in employment and career learning at SFU. Though there is no academic credit assigned to any part of the *Passport*, and thus is not treated as academically equivalent to a traditional course, the mandatory, "grad-check" element of the workshops is significant. By making the workshops mandatory, the Faculty is explicitly recognizing the value of this type of education and is ensuring that all Business students will have at least some support in this area.

The mandatory requirement is particularly significant in light of evidence that students who could most benefit from supports are not likely to take advantage of the supports that exist (Wiggers & Arnold, 2011).

The mandatory aspect is also interesting because the sessions offered as part of the *Passport* are arguably similar to the workshops and related supports previously available to Beedie School students through the Career Management Centre (CMC). In addition, the CMC has staffing levels equivalent to those of the University-wide Career Services team, which suggests that Beedie students, from an employment support perspective, are the best served students on campus. Despite this, the CMC found that students lacked a basic understanding of how to pursue employment after graduation (Career Management Centre, 2011). To confirm these views, Business alumni were surveyed and 71% felt the "*Business Career Passport* would have enhanced the value of their degree" and 74% "were comfortable with this being a mandatory graduation requirement" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.1). These numbers are very close to the 69% of US respondents who reported wishing they had participated in career exploration activities prior to embarking on their working lives (National Career Development Association & The Gallup Organization, 1999, p.3). In a related activity, surveyed employers rated the usefulness of the proposed program at 4.8 on a 5.0 point scale (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.1).

At the time of writing this thesis, the specifics of all six sessions had yet to be finalized, however the session titles and summaries provide a sense of what

the focus is for each session.  For the first session, *Self-Assessment and Finding Your Fit*, two online self-assessments (StrengthsQuest and Career Leader College) will likely be used to support students in better understanding their personalities, interests, and strengths.  This new information gained from these assessments will then be used to support students in choosing a concentration, identifying which careers are a best match for them, and understanding which organizational cultures they are best matched for (Career Management Centre, 2011).  In this way it could be seen to be supportive of the *Blueprint* competency of *make life/work enhancing decisions* (Haché et al., 2006).  This use of self-assessment for the purposes of matching is strongly aligned with the trait-and-factor and developmental approaches of the career development field (Holland et al., 1970; Super, 1985).

In the second session, *Networking and Business Etiquette*, the emphasis is on supporting students to perform well in corporate networking contexts and at least partially addresses the *interact positively and effectively with others* competency of the *Blueprint* (Haché et al., 2006).  In addition to developing strategies related to personal introductions and holding conversations, tips on dining protocols and appropriate dress are also covered.  The networking emphasis of this session also allows for the possibility of content influenced by emergent career theories.  For example, networking might be viewed as an opportunity to take action in a way that could lead to positive chance events instead of simply as a strategy of landing your desired job (Krumboltz, 2009).

However, the focus on etiquette and protocol in the session description suggests a more concrete and perhaps linear perspective.

Sessions three through five focus on the traditional pre-employment skills needed to secure positions (e.g. resumes, cover letters, and interviews) and could find support in any of the major theoretical perspectives. They are also consistent with the *Blueprint* competency of *secure/create and maintain work* and could also be related to the *locate and effectively use life/work information* competency (Haché et al., 2006).

The focus of the final session, *Job Search Strategies & Career Management*, is on supporting students with their transition out of school and into the world of work (Career Management Centre, 2011). The career management component of this session could emphasize the skills needed to succeed in an inherently unpredictable world and thus be aligned with emergent career theories while also addressing several of the Area C competencies (i.e. *life/work building*). However, given that the session description is almost exclusively dedicated to job search strategies, it appears there would be little time to address the complexities of longer-term career development.

The apparent weighting toward job search in the final session appears to reflect the emphasis on job search for the entire *Passport* as evidenced by the the final four sessions (i.e. (3) *Professional Business Resumes*; (4.) *Competitive Cover Letters*; (5) *Interview Preparation & Tactics*; and (6) *Job Search Strategies & Career Management* (Career Management Centre, 2001). These sessions also align with the more concrete of the *Blueprint* competencies: *locate and*

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*effectively use life/work information* and *secure/create and maintain work* (Haché et al., 2006). Two of the remaining nine *Blueprint* competencies (i.e. #2 and #4) also appear to be addressed within the *Passport*. Competency 2's emphasis on positive interactions with others should receive some treatment in the *Passport*'s networking session, while the overall existence of the *Passport* would arguably be an element of competency 4, *participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals* (Career Management Centre, 2001; Haché et al., 2006). The connections to the remaining six competencies are less obvious.

This emphasis on job search stands in contrast to Jarvis' (2010) conception of career development as "a quest to acquire and hone the competencies needed to construct a purposeful and fulfilling life, rather than a point-in-time choice of "the right career" (p.9). The job search emphasis is, however, consistent with the goals of helping students see the "difference between getting a meaningful and targeted job versus getting any job…" and being "recognized by employers as being polished and professional" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.2). It is perhaps less consistent with preparing students to "manage their career throughout … their life…" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.2).

It is important to note that these observations are based strictly on session titles and brief descriptions and it is possible that the actual content is oriented in a very different way. Furthermore, the *Passport* initiative is housed within the Beedie School of Business and other courses offered by the School may be addressing the competencies identified within the *Blueprint*. For example,

*understanding the relationship between work and society/economy* (competency

6) would presumably be addressed within some aspect of a business school

curriculum.  Though it would be interesting to continue this exploration, a more

thorough analysis of how the *Passport* complements the School's curriculum is

beyond the scope of this thesis.

Despite questions of whether the *Passport* is more of job search or career

development program, it is important to acknowledge the elevated profile for

employment and career programming at SFU given Senate's approval of the

*Business Career Passport*.  If an argument can successfully be made to make

this type of initiative mandatory in Business, the faculty that puts the most

resources into the employment needs of its students, an argument could be

made that the need is even greater in other faculties.

However, the perceived need for a career/employment program in any

faculty is influenced by many things, not the least of which is the faculty's

orientation.  With Beedie's existing business and industry orientation, it is not

surprising that matters relating to employment would have a higher prominence

within it as compared to other faculties.  It is perhaps also why the *Passport*

addressed the more concrete *Blueprint* competencies related to securing work

and developing professional relationships and did not appear to address

competencies related to personal development (#1 and #3) and the changing

and interconnected nature of work and life roles (#9, #10, and #11) (Haché et al.,

2006).

The business school context is itself unique in Canada.  One interesting difference between business schools and other faculties has to do with the numerous external ranking lists and the emphasis placed on these rankings by students and administrators (Canadian Business Schools, n.d.).  Evidence of this comparative tendency comes in the *Passport's* third paragraph: "Other business schools, including Sauder (University of British Columbia), Desautels (McGill University) and Haskayne (University of Calgary) have incorporated career preparation into their curriculum" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.1).  It is interesting that the existence of career/employment preparations programs at competing schools appeared in the proposal's rationale *prior* to the supporting evidence garnered from surveys and other forms of feedback.  Further differences between the Beedie School of Business and other faculties at SFU have to do with their levels of external accreditation (Beedie School of Business, n.d.) and the relationship with the corporate or employer community.  Given these factors, it is not surprising that Beedie takes more of an explicit interest in the employment success of its graduates and why the stated purpose of the *Passport* is to "help students successfully launch their careers upon graduation" (Career Management Centre, 2011, p.1).  The logic is simple:

> Successful alumni are a great marketing tool to recruit future students;
> therefore, *Business Career Passport* would contribute to the
> marketability and overall success of SFU Beedie School of Business
> students with employers and our reputation as a business school of
> choice both with students and employers (p.2).

This sentence neatly summarizes how the contextual factors of reputation and external relationships gave rise to an initiative with clear and explicit employment-related goals.  They also provide clarity on Ozga's (2000) concept of source, as the initiative aims to serve the interests of the School, its students, and the employer community, while acknowledging the competitive relationship between Business Schools from across the country.  The two references to "employers" in this sentence provide further evidence of the School's employer-focused orientation.

The term "employer" is also worthy of review within the broader notion of career development.  In the author's experience, "employers" typically refer to organizations (or their representatives) that most actively recruit at a particular campus and who thus have the strongest relationships with the respective career centre or co-op program staff.  They also tend to represent larger organizations (often transnational) as they have the on-going recruitment needs and the fiscal resources to justify such activities.  However these same employers also tend to employ a relatively small percentage of people.  According to a 2006 BC Ministry of Advanced Education report, of British Columbians who have a job but are not self-employed, only 7% work in large establishments of over 500 employees (including public service employers).  By contrast, 74% work in establishments with fewer than 100 employees (p.21).  These statistics highlight the disproportionate presence of large employers on campuses relative to their ability to employ and raises concerns about job search programming potentially reinforcing myths about where employment opportunities actually exist.

Regardless of how employment realities are framed, Beedie's relationship with the corporate community and the financial resources at its disposal were key factors in the development of the *Passport*, factors that may prevent other faculties at SFU from developing something similar in their areas.

In the upcoming section, the focus returns to a pan-campus initiative. Specifically, the comprehensive visioning exercise that led to the development of the university's new strategic vision will be reviewed.

## 4.7 Envision SFU (2012)

### 4.7.1 Context and Highlights

Whereas the SFU Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force and the Task Force on Teaching and Learning were both initiatives of newly appointed Vice-Presidents, Academic, Envision SFU was a process conceived and initiated by President Andrew Petter in 2011, shortly after beginning his term in 2010. Through a highly advertised campaign, community members, including those from communities external to SFU, were invited to provide their responses to a list of ten questions. These could be provided at facilitated small group meetings, at public information areas, or via a dedicated website. This process provided an opportunity for the new president to engage a large and diverse campus community in his vision of the University and to present a view of the University to the external community that fit with the times.

The specific national and provincial context at the time of the launch of the Envision SFU process in 2011 is important in understanding its intent. For

example, the provincial post-secondary landscape had recently changed dramatically as a result of the Province of British Columbia's decision to convert five post-secondary institutions to universities within a very eventful week in April of 2008 (Charbonneau, 2008a), effectively doubling SFU's "competition in the provincial degree granting field. The state of undergraduate education within Canadian universities continued to receive increased prominence (Charbonneau, 2011; Marshall, 2011) and at least one province (Ontario) had overhauled the way it financed universities (Bradshaw, June 2011). Finally, SFU had undertaken an accreditation process with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and was embarking on a comprehensive self-study as part of that process (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2011). Furthermore, as a former provincial politician with numerous cabinet posts including a term as Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology from 1998 to 2000 (Office of the President (President's biography), n.d.), President Petter would presumably have a sophisticated sense of political expectations and how new initiatives would be viewed by political funders.

Within this context, SFU developed a vision that would see it as the "leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2). Three overarching goals related to students, research, and communities were identified:

1. Engaging Students: To equip SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world.

2. Engaging Research: To be a world leader in knowledge mobilization building on a strong foundation of fundamental research.

3. Engaging Communities: To be Canada's most community-engaged research university (pp.3-4).

In addition to the above goals, the University further committed to the following underlying principles: Academic and Intellectual Freedom, Diversity, Internationalization, Respect for Aboriginal Peoples and Cultures, Supportive and Healthy Work Environments, and Sustainability.

### 4.7.2 Analysis

As an aspirational document, the SFU *Strategic Vision*, like vision statements generally, does not necessarily address all the normative principles identified by Bridges and Watts (2008). Overall goals for Simon Fraser University are clearly articulated but are not specific. Though an extensive consultation process was conducted, details of the comments are not provided within the *Strategic Vision* document nor are specific rationales provided for the goals. Given that no specific actions are stated, there is little ability to test for consistency.

With regards to Ozga's (2000) conception of scope, the vision "seeks to capture the university's strengths and to show how those qualities can be harnessed to distinguish SFU as the best university of its kind" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.1). It should also "help every individual perceive how they can contribute to SFU realizing its full potential" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.1). Given its clarity on scope and in providing key elements of a good vision statement such as highlighting unique strengths and future directions (Ozdem, 2011), the *Strategic Vision* is appropriate for inclusion in this analysis for the insights it provides.

The SFU *Strategic Vision* is an attempt to strategically locate the University in as favourable a position as possible, given the current Canadian university climate. In this way it provides clarity to Ozga's (2000) concept of source in that a self-interested position is clearly articulated within an unstated but acknowledge local and national context. When reviewing Marshall's (2011) characteristics of an exceptional university, several items within the *Strategic Vision* appear to align well. It is also worth noting that Marshall's (2011) specific characteristics (provided below) also align remarkably well with many of the key principles within *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004):

1. There is a balance between research and instruction in faculty workload that reflects the importance of the undergraduate student experience.

2. The focus upon the student experience and learning outcomes is not a delegated task, but part of the institutional culture led from the "top."

3. The institution takes pride in its position as an institution with a focus upon undergraduate success…

4. The student experience is viewed as more than what happens in the classroom, and many out-of-class activities are linked to the classroom learning goals.

5. There are very high and demanding academic standards.

6. Students often report a significant mentoring experience, usually performed by a faculty member.

7. Institutions perform well on measures of student learning and have formal processes to engage the students in discussion regarding their experience (Marshall, 2011, pp.70-71).

Returning to the *Strategic Vision,* one could argue that Marshall's (2011) second and third points related to pride and refocusing institutional culture on undergraduate students are overarching themes of not only the final *Strategic Vision* document, but of the entire visioning process. The first goal within the *Strategic Vision* is related to Engaging Students and student issues have been at the forefront throughout the entire Envision process (Simon Fraser University, 2011; Simon Fraser University, 2012). Despite being at the fore, goals related to students are not intended to be viewed in isolation from those related to

engaging research or communities for the "success of the … goals depends not just on their individual attainment but on their integration – on the degree to which each contributes to the others" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2).  To highlight this, within the Engaging Students section it states "students will have opportunities to participate in advanced research, …" while within the "Engaging Research" section it states "SFU will promote research excellence, supporting and encouraging all researchers, including undergraduates, …" (SFU, 2012, pp.2-3).  The spirit of these points finds support in Marshall's (2011) ideal of balancing teaching and research loads for faculty members and in his wish for faculty mentorship, as it would be difficult to imagine undergraduate research activity without some level of direct faculty support.

The spirit of *Learning Rediscovered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) resonates throughout the part of the vision that addresses goals for engaging students. The references to "supportive learning and campus environments" and the creation of "transformative learning opportunities" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) are at the heart of *Learning Rediscovered*.  Similarly, references to "engaged global citizens", "civic literacy", and the benefits of "experiential learning opportunities" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) use language that is remarkably similarly to that of *Learning Rediscovered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).

These references are also well aligned with emergent views of career development (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011) and the overarching goal related to Engaging Students - "to equip SFU students with the knowledge, skills and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging

world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) - is similar to the overall *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* goal. The goal for engaging students is particularly well connected to the final four *Blueprint* competencies – *make life/work enhancing decisions, maintain balanced life and work roles, understand the changing nature of life/work roles*, and *understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process* (Haché et al., 2006). This is noteworthy given that references to these competencies were minimal or non-existent in the Task Force on Teaching and Learning's (2010) proposed attributes or in the *Business Career Passport* session outlines (Career Management Centre, 2012). One could also argue that these are the types of topics best addressed by complementary programming.

The *Strategic Vision* goal statement related to experiential learning opportunities:

> Students will have access to an unparalleled selection of experiential learning opportunities that allow them to apply knowledge, to grow as individuals, to engage with diverse communities, to develop entrepreneurial skills and to refine their sense of civic literacy (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2),

This also overlaps with many of the competencies within both *Blueprint* Competency Area A (*personal management*) and Competency Area B (*learning and work exploration*) (Haché et al., 2006). The statement would also find support with the emergent career theorists (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011) in that experiential learning opportunities provide excellent opportunities for students to benefit from (positive) unplanned events and to experience

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change and complexity within authentic settings.  The reference to "civic literacy" also aligns with the views of Taylor et al. (1997) who state, "education has both individual and social purposes" and that "these two purposes converge around the idea of active and informed citizenship" (p.19).

From this perspective, SFU's new *Strategic Vision* suggests that the goals of a research university and the goals of career development are not contradictory ones and that a more integrated approach to career education at Simon Fraser University is possible.  The specific reference to experiential learning acknowledges that quality learning can occur outside a traditional classroom setting (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; NASPA & ACPA, 2004).  This is reinforced by evidence that has linked non-classroom learning to institutional benefits such as student persistence (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Bruke, 2006, as cited in Hooley et al., 2011).

In addition, the reference to preparing students for "an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) is precisely what the Chaos Theory of Careers refers to as the "edge of chaos" – "where change and chance are not seen as opposing forces to order and stability but rather as integrated realities of the fabric of existence" (Pryor & Bright, 2011, pp.45-46).  Similarly, within Happenstance Learning Theory, the main function of career-based support is "to help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives – not to make a single career decision" (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135), and is again directly applicable to the notion of "preparing someone for an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University,

2012, p.2).  Thus the goals of the University not only match contemporary

definitions of career development, career development also provides a

theoretical framework that supports these goals.

It is important to remember that the *Strategic Vision* has neither specific

outcomes nor deliverables attached to it and in this way has the limitations

inherent in any institutional document (Ball, 1994).  Furthermore, if the *Vision*

principles are not incentivised they are not likely to be realized.  Nonetheless, it is

a significant document with the potential to redefine the University.  In light of the

changes in the post-secondary landscape, including possible changes in

relationships with government bodies (Bradshaw, June 2011; Charbonneau,

2011; Marshall, 2011), the *Vision* aims to differentiate SFU from other post-

secondary institutions by highlighting its interconnected focus on students and

research.  The further connection to community provides a concrete means to

address concerns from government and the general public about the relevance

of universities to the greater society (Marshall, 2011).  It is also consistent with

the work of Chickering and Reisser (1993) who believed:

> We need collaborative relationships not only with the world of
>
> business, but with community organizations and volunteer programs.
>
> Such integration will help students develop knowledge, competence,
>
> and personal characteristics that will persist for a lifetime.  It will also
>
> strengthen our direct institutional contributions to local, regional, and
>
> national needs (p.472).

From a career education perspective, these collaborative relationships can provide students with opportunities to participate in learning and work exploration and to directly experience the mixture of change and relative stability that workplace learning environments offer.  In this light, the value of work and volunteer opportunities are not just in the experiences they provide but as opportunities for learning and development that cannot be replicated in a classroom environment (NASPA & ACPA, 2004).  However, as important as these relationships with external organizations are for possible learning opportunities it is important such relationships do not extend to the point of undue influence.  This is a particularly important consideration given anticipated financial challenges in the Canadian post-secondary sector and the potential need to seek funding relationships with private entities (Charbonneau, 2008b).

The *SFU Strategic Visio*n was the last of the four guiding documents and initiatives to be considered within this review.  In the upcoming section, the analysis moves from its focus on specific initiatives to exploring the existence of possible patterns in SFU's positions and views across the four initiatives reviewed.

## 4.8  Evidence of Pattern

In analyzing documents from a critical policy analysis perspective, it is important to seek clarity on source, scope, and pattern (Ozga, 2000).  Whereas comments related to source and scope were provided within the analysis of each initiative, comments related to pattern, by definition, necessitate a review of the initiatives as a group.  As a means of identifying possible patterns, a modified

version of the process used to review the documents individually was used in their collective review.  Whereas the initial review focused primarily on each document or initiative as a stand-alone entity, the exploration of possible patterns aimed to identify possible trends across all four initiatives along the same areas:

1. Explicit references to the words "career", "employment", or concepts within the career development literature.

2. Explicit references to concepts within the student engagement and retention literature.

3. Evidence of alignment with career theories and frameworks.

4. Examples where explicit career or employment references may have been appropriate but were not included.

5. Evidence of possible power privileges (related to Ozga's (2000) notion of scope).

Given that the initiatives range from 2004 to 2010 to 2012, and that they were all broad-based and aimed to address aspects of undergraduate learning, the ability to identify patterns was at least theoretically possible.

To help illustrate the existence of one aspect of pattern related to career development, a table was created that identified which of the 11 *Blueprint* competencies (Haché et al., 2006) were addressed in some way by the four documents and initiatives reviewed (see Table 2 on page 153).

Within the first initiative reviewed - *New Directions* (2004) - the reference to career development was minimal.  The only direct reference to career or

employment issues stated that improvement in students' in literacy, numeracy, and overall breadth "will improve the employment prospects of our degree-holders" (UCITF, 2004, p.2).  This statement was provided without supporting citations and belied an assumption of a linear relationship between academic competence and employment prospects.  Whereas the Canadian government has identified nine essential skills needed for "learning, work and life" (HRSDC, n.d., p.1), this initiative was only explicit about two, writing and quantitative abilities.  There was virtually no connection to the emergent career theories (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011) and the one clear connection to the *Blueprint* is within the *participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals* competency (Haché et al., 2006).  The breadth requirement, particularly the requirement for students to take courses outside of their major, could also connect to the *change and grow throughout one's life* competency (Haché et al., 2006).

By contrast, the work of the Task Force on Teaching in Learning in 2010 had a much broader view of the student experience and was more in line with emergent career development perspectives.  The Task Force's R*ecommendations Report* (2010) contained several explicit references to the values of experiential education that align well with emergent career theories in that they recognize actions as important forms of learning and development (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).  The identification of graduate attributes such as *application of knowledge* and *autonomy and professional capacity* have clear employment orientations and overlap with several of the *Blueprint*

Table 2. Evidence of *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* competencies within documents and initiatives reviewed

| *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* competencies (2006) | *New Directions for the Undergraduate Curriculum* (2004) | Task Force on Teaching & Learning *Recommendations Report* (2010) | Business Career Passport (2012) | SFU *Strategic Vision* (2012) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT** | | | | |
| Build and maintain a positive self-image | | | | |
| Interact positively and effectively with others | | X | X | X |
| Change and grow throughout one's life | X | X | | X |
| **AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION** | | | | |
| Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals | X | X | X | X |
| Locate and effectively use life/work information | | X | X | X |
| Understand the relationship between work and society/economy | | X | | X |
| **AREA C: LIFE/WORK BUILDING** | | | | |
| Secure/create and maintain work | | X | X | X |
| Make life/work enhancing decisions | | X | X | X |
| Maintain balanced life and work roles | | | | X |
| Understand the changing nature of life/work roles | | | | X |
| Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process | | | | X |

competencies (Haché et al., 2006).

Specific references to experiential education and applied knowledge continue in the *Strategic Vision* (2012).  Though more aspirational than operational, the *Strategic Vision* and its goal of equipping "SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2), aligns particularly well with the language and intent of both the Chaos Theory of Careers (Pryor & Bright, 2011) and the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché et al., 2006).  The forward-looking orientation is to be expected within a vision document, but the acknowledgement of an unpredictable and complex future is not only consistent with contemporary views and frameworks of career development, it stands in contrast to the language of the *New Directions* document of 2004.  It also suggests that the University is interested in addressing competencies not addressed by the initiatives reviewed.

The *Business Career Passport* was the only document/initiative that is located within one Faculty, thus its contribution to pattern should be considered within this context as it was not intended to have university-wide implications. Though it addresses approximately half of the *Blueprint's* 11 competencies, more notable perhaps is that Senate passed a mandatory career/employment initiative just eight years after the release of *New Directions (2004)* and in a research university setting that does not necessarily consider career-specific activities within its mandate (Brooks, 2009).

With regards to concepts of student engagement and retention, similar patterns were noted. Due to *New Directions' (2004)* focus on the academic preparedness of students and of those applying to the University, principles of student engagement or retention are virtually non-existent. Whereas student engagement perspectives emphasize how an institution can better support its students (Kuh, 2005), *New Directions (2004)* emphasizes "principles of fairness and equity" and the importance of evaluating individuals using the "same basic standards" (p.4). It also acknowledges "there is little support for the idea of implementing extensive and expensive remedial services to assist students…" (p.5). Outside of a recommendation to develop a student learning centre (UCITF, 2004), all other recommendations relate specifically to course or application requirements. *New Directions (2004)* was conceptualized and the final report released at a time when Canadian universities were just beginning to acknowledge their challenges in undergraduate education (Marshall, 2011). It was also the same year that *Learning Rediscovered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) was published. It is thus understandable that academic issues were the focus in 2004, as arguments in support of these changes would have been most easily accepted by the dominant academic culture.

For the remaining three documents and initiatives reviewed – the Task Force on Teaching and Learning's *Recommendation Report* (2010), the *Business Career Passport* (2012), and the SFU *Strategic Vision* (2012) – student engagement was no longer a new concept advocated by those on the fringes of student affairs but a necessary proposition to ensure positive student

experiences and outcomes.  In the work of both the Task Force on Teaching and

Learning (2010) and in the *Strategic Vision* (2012), there was a clear and

deliberate goal of reframing the undergraduate experience to a much more

holistic and comprehensive one.  Specific and repeated references to diverse

learning opportunities in both initiatives are but one example to support this, as

are the multiple overlaps with the *Blueprint* competencies (Haché et al., 2006;

Simon Fraser University, 2012; TFTL, 2010).  This change of focus was likely

influenced by the changing expectations of government and the general public,

as well as the changing nature of the post-secondary landscape (Marshall,

2011).  This is explicitly acknowledged within the *Recommendations Report's*

(2010) opening pages: "Defining teaching and learning and its uniqueness at

SFU compared to other universities, may also aid SFU in student recruitment.

This is an important consideration given the current landscape of BC post-

secondary" (TFTL, 2010, p.4).  Similarly, one of the goals of the *Strategic Vision*

is "to capture the university's strengths and to show how those qualities can be

harnessed to distinguish SFU as the best university of its kind" (Simon Fraser

University, 2012, p.1).  Based on these observations, it appears that SFU will

continue to try to differentiate itself by how and where legitimate learning is

acknowledged, by encouraging students to participate in diverse learning

activities, and in acknowledging the complexity and change in the world.  This

also suggests that contemporary career theories and frameworks could have a

role to play in helping shape this future direction.

## 4.9  Informing SFU Strategic Direction

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how career education is represented within Simon Fraser University policy and practice, with a particular focus on initiatives that affect the student experience.  In support of this purpose, the following research questions were developed:

1. How are the career development needs of students reflected in recent broad-based initiatives at SFU?  What assumptions exist and how do they affirm or counter existing research?

2. What is significant about these broad-based initiatives with respect to the career development of students?  What contextual factors influenced their development?

3. How can career theory inform SFU strategic direction around student engagement and what changes or developments are required to ensure the impact is meaningful?

The elements of the first two research questions are addressed within the analyses of each initiative presented earlier in this chapter.  For the third and final question related to how career theory can inform SFU strategic direction around student engagement, the case has been made as to the relevance of the *Essential Skills* and *Blueprint* frameworks, particularly given the move towards defining learning outcomes in Canadian universities.  The *Blueprint* in particular, as demonstrated in Table 2, can provide a framework for identifying possible gaps in programming.

Given that one of the primary goals within the SFU *Strategic Vision* is "to equip SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experience that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2), it follows that the Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC), a theory based on the acknowledgement of complexity and uncertainty in the world, would also be an appropriate fit (Pryor & Bright, 2011).  Similarly, Happenstance Learning Theory's (HLT) focus on the potential impact of chance events and the view that taking action is a necessary part of learning (Krumboltz, 2009) again appears very well aligned with the University's stated direction.  Beyond simply being aligned, these theories and their possible adoption at the institutional level represent an opportunity for SFU to redefine what is meant by career and life development at a comprehensive Canadian university.

CTC and HLT also provide additional theoretical support for SFU's goals related to community engagement.  Where the University sees "community connections as an integral part of its academic mission, creating opportunities for practical and experiential learning" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.4), both the Chaos Theory of Careers and Happenstance Learning Theory provide theoretical support for these connections, and their resultant experiences, as necessary elements of an individual's career and personal development (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011).  It is important that the emphasis of these connections is on maximizing student learning and not about granting certain organizations preferred access to "top" students or gaining undue influence over other aspects of the University.

The above points highlight how contemporary career theory aligns with the

*Strategic Vision* and can be used to inform future initiatives, without

compromising any of the University's core principles and values.  An explicit

reference to career development might also garner support from governments

and the general public, since the concrete benefits to society from an educated

populace have always been at the heart of public funding of Canadian

universities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011; Sattler, Wiggers, & Arnold,

2011).  A career perspective should also aid with future recruitment of students,

as students consistently report that career-related goals are their primary

reasons for attending university, particularly during economically uncertain times

(Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010; Dey & Astin, 1993; Donald,

2009; Galt, 2010).  The only stakeholder groups that may be concerned about a

greater career emphasis at Simon Fraser University are those campus members

who may be suspicious of the motives behind career or employment initiatives or

who philosophically feel these are not the mandate of a research university

(Brooks, 2009).  Given this, some form of internal education campaign would

need to be a key component of any initiative aimed at increasing career related

programming at Simon Fraser University.

The potential support for a greater career orientation at Simon Fraser

University from those outside the University is significant given how all four

initiatives reviewed were influenced by the increasingly competitive nature of the

Canadian university system (Marshall, 2011).  The documents from both Task

Forces (TFTL, 2010; UCITF, 2004) make explicit references to the efforts of

other academic institutions, as does the supporting documentation for the *Business Career Passport* (Career Management Centre, 2012). The goal of becoming "the leading engaged university" within the Strategic Vision (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) highlights this competitive spirit in a more aspirational sense.

The perspectives of each document's champion are also interesting. With both the WQB initiative and the *Business Career Passport*, courses (WQB) or workshops (*Business Career Passport*) were designed to address perceived shortcomings with student preparation (Career Management Centre, 2012; UCITF, 2004). This is possibly attributable to the shared business school context of former Vice-President Waterhouse and the current leadership in the Beedie School of Business. By contrast, the goals of the Task Force on Teaching and Learning led by Vice-President Driver are broader and arguably more complex. The language within the *Strategic Vision* (Simon Fraser University, 2012) and the extent of the public consultations that helped form it, were also likely influenced by President Petter's perception of what moved government funders and citizens from his time in public office. Thus any attempt to influence institutional positions on career education would benefit both from identifying key external imperatives and from a deeper understanding of the perspectives and motivations of the University's leadership.

## 4.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, guiding institutional documents and initiatives were reviewed both for evidence of alignment with career development theories and frameworks as well as with those from student engagement perspectives.

The review of each document considered the normative questions developed by Bridges and Watts (2008) and also sought clarity on source and scope (Ozga, 2000). Collectively, the initiatives were reviewed and patterns relating to increasing alignment with contemporary career development frameworks and theories as well as with student engagement perspectives were identified. A table highlighting the *Blueprint* competencies (Haché et al, 2006) addressed within each of the four initiatives was developed to illustrate these patterns and to shed light on possible future directions. The chapter closed with specific rationale as to why contemporary approaches to career development, particularly the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché et al., 2006), the Chaos Theory of Careers (Pryor & Bright, 2011), and Happenstance Learning Theory (Krumboltz, 2009) could support SFU reach the goals it aspires to through the *Strategic Vision* (2012).

In the next and final chapter, key insights gained from the analysis are summarized and future recommendations are provided.

# 5: Reflections

## 5.1 Review

In reflecting on the SFU initiatives and guiding documents reviewed in this thesis, two elements stand out. The first relates to the fact that though the *Strategic Vision* focuses on preparing students for "an ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2), there is little concrete evidence of how this is done, at least not in the documents reviewed. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* identifies at least four competencies (#s 8 - 11) that would support this forward-looking aspect of the *Vision* which suggests it would be an appropriate framework in the development of future *Vision*-oriented programming (Haché et al., 2006). The *Blueprint'*s additional emphasis on *building and maintaining a positive self-image* (competency 1) is particularly relevant to a university environment where mental health issues are an increasing concern (American College Health Association, 2010). It was also noted that competencies related to personal development (competency 1) and the changing and interconnected nature of work and life roles (competencies 8 – 11) are not necessarily well addressed in traditional university courses and thus some form of supplementary programming may be appropriate.

The second element relates to the impact that the student engagement literature has had on Simon Fraser University. References to the language and themes of NASPA & ACPA's (2004) *Learning Reconsidered* document within the

second Task Force's (2010) work and within the Strategic Vision (2012) are prime examples. The impact is particularly interesting given how relatively young the student engagement field is and given Marshall's (2011) comments that universities had largely ignored critiques of the undergraduate experience for the previous two decades. The influence of the student engagement and retention field is likely a result of external factors that have made universities more open to their messages as well as the fact the field is specifically focussed on the post-secondary sector.

By contrast, the career development field has been in existence for over a century and has been a significant part of the Canadian research university landscape since the 1940s, yet explicit career focussed programming continues to be resisted in research universities (Brooks, 2009; Emberley, 1996, as cited in Carson, 1999; Marcus, 2012). There are many possible reasons for this but the lack of explicit connections to strategic university priorities is likely a key factor. Given the intersection of the career development literature and the student engagement and retention literature, opportunities exist to support students' career development within the realm of general student development. This connection is somewhat ironic given that relatively little attention has been paid to career-related programming by some prominent members of the student retention and engagement fields. Though some form of career or employment programming has perhaps always been a part of universities with professional programs that require practica, or where co-op programs exist, it has rarely been presented as an integral part of the university experience for all students. The

*Business Career Passport* and similar initiatives at other business schools provide one model for employment-focussed programming, but they are typically only available to business students and their existence is likely due to the external/employer orientation of these faculties.

By considering the lack of programming currently available to "prepare students for and ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2) in combination with the relative influence of the student engagement field, insights on where and how career education can become further integrated into the SFU student learning experience become apparent and the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché et al., 2006) becomes an obvious tool. The *Blueprint*, in combination with the *Essential Skills* framework (HRSDC, n.d.), addresses virtually all of the 19 *educationally purposeful activities* identified by Kuh et al. (2008). It also provides a framework for future looking competencies related to the changing and integrated nature of life and work that is referenced in the SFU *Strategic Vision* (2012), but not well addressed in current University practice. Thus the *Blueprint* can be used to guide programming that aims to support a broader conception of career development or it can be used to ensure that student development initiatives also have a future-looking orientation. In both cases students will benefit.

Another lesson from the student engagement field relates to the impact of the *Learning* Reconsidered document on SFU practice (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). The document was jointly created by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel

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Association (ACPA) and suggests that associations that support campus-based career educators, such as the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) and the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE), could play a greater role in articulating a future for career education in the Canadian post-secondary system, possibly even jointly. Like NASPA and ACPA, they could look to create their own version of *Learning Reconsidered* that emphasizes how contemporary career education enriches the university experience and that could guide the actions of career professionals from across the country. Unlike NASPA and ACPA however, CACEE and CAFCE are influenced by stakeholders that are not directly affiliated with post-secondary institutions, namely employers, whose ideas around career and employment programming might be more influenced by their own recruitment needs than by contemporary career theories and frameworks. In the case of CACEE, employers can be full members of the association, and appropriately so. It would therefore be critical for the credibility of such an initiative (if it were to be undertaken) that it be led by career educator members of the respective associations. Employers could be consulted as stakeholders with unique and valuable insights, but such influence should be appropriately delimited.

For CACEE, limiting employer-member influence in such an endeavour could prove tricky to an association that has long prided itself on supporting *both* employer and educator members. One example of a CACEE document that aims to support both types of members is the *Ethical Recruitment Guidelines* (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employer, n.d.(a)). This

document serves to guide employers in their dealings with campus career centres but provides little guidance to educators on what their campus priorities should be around external recruiters. For example, there is no ethical requirement to ensure that a diversity of employers recruits on campus, let alone that they reflect local hiring realities. Within the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education's (2000) *Co-operative Education Manual*, co-op professionals are encouraged to survey employers to determine their interest in hiring co-op students and that the "employer sample should be representative of the public and private sector, and large and small employers, unless the proposed program is specific to an industry or geographic area" (p.10). However, in sections related to marketing or job development, no such references to representative samples exist.

Regardless of what is done by national bodies, Simon Fraser University is in a position to more thoughtfully incorporate career education into the student experience. This work should be grounded in contemporary theories and frameworks and should be regularly evaluated to ensure that intended learning outcomes are met. In doing the above, SFU has the opportunity to further establish its reputation as a leader and innovator in the areas of student development and engagement and SFU students will truly be prepared to thrive in an "ever-changing and challenging world" (Simon Fraser University, 2012, p.2)

Prior to presenting specific recommendations, the limitations of this thesis are presented.

## 5.2  Limitations

As is the norm within a critical policy framework (Taylor et al., 1997), the researcher was explicit in his biases.  Specifically, the researcher holds a strongly held belief in the value of career education for university students.  However, this bias is an inherent limitation of the work, particularly given that the researcher is currently the Manager of the University's career centre and is thus professionally invested in the expanded role of career education.  To address possible concerns around bias and credibility, the researcher sought out research materials from a diversity of sources.  Direct quotes from the literature were favoured when highlighting points that might be controversial or considered self-serving.

An additional limitation of the thesis has to do with the number and type of initiatives reviewed within the analysis.  Initiatives were chosen because they were relatively recent, specifically focused on the preparation of undergraduate students, and were broad in scope.  The act of developing criteria for which to consider initiatives presupposes that some initiatives will not meet the criteria and not be reviewed.  There is also the possibility that other initiatives that would appear to meet the criteria were not considered simply because the author was unaware of them (despite his best efforts).  It is thus worth noting that the analysis of different University initiatives could have lead to different observations and conclusions.

In a similar way, the review of the student engagement and retention literature focused on the major influences in the field and undoubtedly ignored

less-known approaches that might have shed different light on the study. With regards to the career development literature, a very selective approach was used to determine the theories and models reviewed. The more traditional approaches highlighted (i.e. trait-and-factor and developmental) were chosen because of their influence on the field of career development over the past decades. By contrast, for the more contemporary theorists the researcher used his professional experience to focus on the two theories (Chaos Theory of Careers and Happenstance Learning Theory) he felt were most appropriate for the current university environment. Similarly, the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* and *Essential Skills* frameworks were chosen based on their reputations and their development in a Canadian context. It should be acknowledged that strong arguments could be made for the inclusion of additional career theories and frameworks.

Despite these limitations, the researcher is confident that the specific recommendations presented in this thesis are relevant to Simon Fraser University's current context and climate.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Though the author has been clear about his bias in the role that career education can play in better engaging students, the resultant recommendations for increasing the role and visibility of career education at SFU have emerged from this analysis. The research in support of a more embedded approach to career education is significant, for example, Braxton et al.'s (2007) guidelines for improving institutional retention rates begins with: "Individuals who advise or

teach undergraduate college students should embrace an abiding concern for the career development of the students they serve" (p.370).

Based on the research presented in this thesis, the following recommendations are provided:

1.  Simon Fraser University adopts, or considers adopting, the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (or related) framework as a way of assessing whether University programming is addressing the goals laid out in the *Strategic Vision* (2012). Given the strong alignment with the *Strategic Vision* (see Table 2), the *Blueprint* provides both the language and measurable indicators to ensure that future initiatives address the spirit of the University's vision. The use of a career development tool might also garner support from governments and the general public, since the concrete benefits to society from an educated populace have always been at the heart of public funding of Canadian universities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011; Sattler, Wiggers, & Arnold, 2011). This may be particularly valuable during current economically uncertain times.

    Given that some members of the University may have concerns related to using a "career" framework in the guiding of University priorities (Brooks, 2009; Emberley 1996, as cited in Carson, 1999; Marcus, 2012), training and resources relating to contemporary career development frameworks and theories should be made available to all members of the Simon Fraser University

community (possibly through the Teaching and Learning Centre). A particular emphasis should be placed on faculty and other teaching staff given their influence with students (Braxton et al., 2007; Chickering & Kuh, 2005). Similarly, it is important that campus career professionals receive training on student development and engagement theories in order that they more fully appreciate the intersection of career development with student engagement and other University priorities noted in this thesis. Campus career professionals must also be prepared to present possible arguments in support of enhanced career programming in ways that are relevant and meaningful to senior University and Faculty administrators, regardless of their orientations. For as was highlighted in the analysis, University initiatives are influenced by key contextual factors and the orientations of their champions.

2. Simon Fraser University develops a comprehensive plan to address the needs of students' self-image and general mental health. None of the initiatives reviewed address the first Blueprint competency – *build and maintain a positive self-image* (Haché et al., 2006). Given the ongoing and apparently growing issues related to student mental health (American College Health Association, 2010) and the impact mental health can have on both students' academic performance and their life after studies, this recommendation is arguably of greater urgency than the others. It is also

recommended that career education be a key component of any new mental health strategy given the emphasis on optimism and related traits (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999; Neault, 2000; Pryor & Bright, 2011).

3. Simon Fraser University develops a plan to support the development of the *Blueprint* (Haché et al., 2006) competency areas that appear to be valued within the *Strategic Vision* (2012) but are not addressed within the other initiatives reviewed: *maintain balanced life and work roles, understand the changing nature of life/work roles,* and *understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work building process.* Given the personal development nature of these competencies, they are generally not well addressed within the formal academic curriculum and may be better suited for some form of co-curricular programming. These could be delivered by campus career professionals, in partnership with student engagement and retention specialists.

4. All faculties (and some schools or departments) develop a career engagement strategy for their students. This recommendation is presented in light of the existence of the *Business Career Passport* within the Beedie School of Business, and aims to acknowledge that different needs may exist within different academic areas. However, given that students attend university to enhance their career and employment prospects (Canadian University Survey

Consortium, 2010) and given the positive impact that career education can have on retention and other academic indicators (Austin, 2011; Braxton et al., 2007), it would be in the best interest of all academic areas to develop appropriate strategies. It also aligns with Braxton et al.'s (2007) guideline, "Individuals who advise or teach undergraduate college students should embrace an abiding concern for the career development of the students they serve" (p.370).

5. Simon Fraser University explores the possibility of formally incorporating elements of career education, including experiential education, into writing-intensive designated ("W") courses. This would address the Task Force on Teaching and Learning's (2010) goals of integrating more experiential learning opportunities into the formal curriculum and of teaching "students to write in the forms and for the purposes that are typical of disciplines and/or professions, …" (p.14). It would also find broad support from within the student engagement, career development, and university policy fields (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Krumboltz, 2009; Marshall, 2011).

6. SFU student engagement and retention initiatives incorporate contemporary career development perspectives in their design and delivery. Given the intersection identified in this thesis between the student engagement and career development fields, this should

lead to few, if any, philosophical challenges and could serve to create richer programming (Austin, 2011; Braxton et al., 2007).

7. Simon Fraser University identifies campus-based experiential opportunities that could be enhanced with career development and student engagement programming.  This recommendation is presented in light of the University's commitment to experiential education and community involvement in both the Task Force on Teaching and Learning's (2010) work and the *Strategic Vision* (Simon Fraser University, 2012), and in the spirit of *Learning Reconsidered's* call for the "use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student" (NASPA & ACPA, 2004, p.1).  This could include an exploration of both formalized experiential programs (e.g. Field Schools) and programs without formalized educational components (e.g. temporary student employment on campus).  In light of fiscal realities, identifying means of enhancing existing opportunities may be a cost-effective way of supporting students while recognizing that all experiences are learning experiences (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Krumboltz, 2009).

8. Simon Fraser University develops appropriate means to evaluate the impact of co-curricular programming, including career-focussed programming. This is in light of the expected move to learning outcomes for all academic programs at SFU (Northwest

Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2011) and the increased

call for demonstrating the value of career education generally

(Lalande & Magnusson, 2007). As presented in this thesis, career

education is not always appreciated nor well understood in a

research university. It is therefore imperative that career-based

initiatives demonstrate their impact to the student and their value to

the University.

## 5.4  Future Research Directions

As part of this thesis, several interesting questions arose that did not fit

within the study either due to questions of scope or due to the lack of detailed

information.  For example, had the *Business Career Passport* sessions been

delivered prior to the writing of this thesis, a much richer insight into the possible

intersection of *Passport* programming and contemporary career theories and

frameworks could have been gained.  A related analysis of how the *Passport* fits

into the Beedie School curriculum could be useful.  Similarly, a content analysis

and a more detailed review of the University of Regina's experience with the *UR*

*Guarantee* could provide interesting insights into what elements of the program

were most beneficial and what role, if any, the employment guarantee had on

program objectives.

Given that this thesis was written to highlight the possible intersection

between career education and student engagement and retention, the author

hopes for the development of future studies that measure the impact of

contemporary career education initiatives on student retention.  In a similar vein,

given Tinto's (2006) observations that lower-income students are less likely to

complete their degrees compared to students from more affluent backgrounds,

future studies measuring the possible impact of career education on

economically disadvantaged students would also be of value.

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# Appendices

**Appendix A.**

**Blueprint for Life/Work Designs: Competencies**

# Blueprint for Life/Work Designs
## Competencies by Area and Level

| COMPETENCIES | LEVEL ONE | LEVEL TWO | LEVEL THREE | LEVEL FOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT** | | | | |
| 1. BUILD AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE | 1.1 Build a positive self-image while discovering its influence on self and others | 1.2 Build a positive self-image and understand its influence on one's life and work | 1.3 Develop abilities to maintain a positive self-image | 1.4 Improve on abilities to maintain a positive self-image |
| 2. INTERACT POSITIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS | 2.1 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (I) | 2.2 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life (II) | 2.3 Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work | 2.4 Improve abilities for building positive relationships in one's life and work |
| 3. CHANGE AND GROW THROUGHOUT ONE'S LIFE | 3.1 Discover that change and growth are part of life | 3.2 Learn to respond to change and growth (I) | 3.3 Learn to respond to change and growth (II) | 3.4 Develop strategies for responding to life and work changes |
| **AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION** | | | | |
| 4. PARTICIPATE IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING SUPPORTIVE OF LIFE/WORK GOALS | 4.1 Discover "lifelong learning" and its contributions to one's life and work | 4.2 Link life-long learning to one's life/work scenario, both present and future | 4.3 Link life-long learning to one's career building process | 4.4 Participate in continuous learning supportive of life/work goals |
| 5. LOCATE AND EFFECTIVELY USE LIFE/WORK INFORMATION | 5.1 Discover and understand life/work information | 5.2 Locate, understand and use life/work information | 5.3 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information | 5.4 Locate, interpret, evaluate and use life/work information (II) |
| 6. UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND SOCIETY/ECONOMY | 6.1 Discover how work contributes to individuals and the community | 6.2 Understand how work contributes to the community | 6.3 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (I) | 6.4 Understand how societal and economic needs influence the nature and structure of work (II) |
| **AREA C: LIFE/WORK BUILDING** | | | | |
| 7. SECURE/CREATE AND MAINTAIN WORK | 7.1 Explore effective work strategies | 7.2 Develop abilities to seek and obtain/create work | 7.3 Develop abilities to seek, obtain/ create and maintain work | 7.4 Improve on abilities to seek, obtain/ create and maintain work |
| 8. MAKE LIFE/WORK ENHANCING DECISIONS | 8.1 Explore and improve decision making | 8.2 Link decision making to life/work building | 8.3 Engage in life/work decision making | 8.4 Incorporate adult life reality into life/work decision making |
| 9. MAINTAIN BALANCED LIFE AND WORK ROLES | 9.1 Explore and understand the interrelationship of life roles (I) | 9.2 Explore and understand the interrelationship of life roles (II) | 9.3 Link lifestyles and life stages to life/work building | 9.4 Incorporate the "balanced life/work" issue in life/work building |
| 10. UNDERSTAND THE CHANGING NATURE OF LIFE/WORK ROLES | 10.1 Discover the nature of life/work roles | 10.2 Explore non-traditional life/work scenarios | 10.3 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (I) | 10.4 Understand and learn to overcome stereotypes in life/work building (II) |
| 11. UNDERSTAND, ENGAGE IN AND MANAGE ONE'S OWN LIFE/WORK BUILDING PROCESS | 11.1 Explore the underlying concepts of the life/work building process | 11.2 Understand and experience the process of life/work building | 11.3 Recognize and take charge of one's life/work building process | 11.4 Manage one's life/work building process |

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**Appendix B.**

**What are Essential Skills?**

Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
Développement des compétences Canada

Now and Tomorrow
**Excellence in Everything We Do**

**Skills and Employment**
**Office of Literacy and Essential Skills**

# What are Essential Skills?

*Essential Skills are the skills that people need for learning, work and life. They are used in the community and the workplace, in different forms and at different levels of complexity. Definitions, typical applications and examples are outlined below to help you understand each Essential Skill.*

| Essential Skills | Typical Applications | Workplace Examples | Community Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading**<br>Understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs (e.g. letters, manuals). | • Scan for information or overall meaning.<br>• Read to understand, learn, critique or evaluate.<br>• Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources or from complex and lengthy texts. | An airline sales agent reads notices on a computer screen, such as special handling requirements or weather information. | You may use this skill to understand a lease agreement for a new apartment. |
| **Document Use**<br>Finding, understanding or entering information (e.g. text, symbols, numbers) in various types of documents, such as tables or forms. | • Read signs, labels or lists.<br>• Understand information on graphs or charts.<br>• Enter information in forms.<br>• Create or read schematic drawings. | A bricklayer interprets blueprints to determine the height, length and thickness of walls. | You may use this skill when referring to a bus schedule to plan an outing. |
| **Numeracy**<br>Using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks. | • Make calculations.<br>• Take measurements.<br>• Perform scheduling, budgeting or accounting activities.<br>• Analyze data.<br>• Make estimations. | Payroll clerks monitor vacation entitlements to prepare budget and scheduling forecasts. | You may use this skill to calculate deductions on personal tax forms. |
| **Writing**<br>Communicating by arranging words, numbers and symbols on paper or a computer screen. | • Write to organize or record information.<br>• Write to inform or persuade.<br>• Write to request information or justify a request.<br>• Write an analysis or a comparison. | Human resources professionals write recommendations on issues such as workplace health and safety. | You may use this skill to complete an application for a credit card. |
| **Oral Communication**<br>Using speech to exchange thoughts and information. | • Provide or obtain information.<br>• Greet, reassure or persuade people.<br>• Resolve conflicts.<br>• Lead discussions. | Office clerks take messages and share information by phone and in person. | You may use this skill to explain a food allergy to a server at a restaurant. |

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WP-077-12-09

| Essential Skills | Typical Applications | Workplace Examples | Community Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Working with Others**<br>Interacting with others to complete tasks. | • Work independently, alongside others.<br>• Work jointly with a partner or helper.<br>• Work as a member of a team.<br>• Participate in supervisory or leadership activities. | Municipal engineers work with technicians, inspectors, and suppliers to complete construction projects. | You may use this skill when working with volunteers to organize a fundraising activity. |
| **Thinking**<br>Finding and evaluating information to make rational decisions or to organize work. | • Identify and resolve problems.<br>• Make decisions.<br>• Find information.<br>• Plan and organize job tasks.<br>• Use critical thinking.<br>• Use memory. | Paramedics diagnose a patient's condition based on medical charts and their own observations. They use their judgement to start an appropriate treatment plan. | You may use this skill to research and select courses at your local adult learning centre. |
| **Computer Use**<br>Using computers and other forms of technology. | • Use different forms of technology, such as cash registers or fax machines.<br>• Use word processing software.<br>• Send and receive emails.<br>• Create and modify spreadsheets.<br>• Navigate the Internet. | Telephone operators use customized software to scan databases for telephone numbers or long distance rates. | You may use this skill when withdrawing or depositing money at an automatic teller machine (ATM). |
| **Continuous Learning**<br>Participating in an ongoing process of improving skills and knowledge. | • Learn on the job.<br>• Learn through formal training.<br>• Learn through self-study.<br>• Understand your own learning style.<br>• Know where to find learning resources. | Retail sales associates improve their skills and knowledge by attending sales training and reading product brochures. | You may use this skill when attending a first aid course at a community centre. |

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills has developed a number of free and easy-to-use resources that can help you

✓ assess Essential Skills    ✓ practice and improve Essential Skills    ✓ develop Essential Skills training

## Literacy and Essential Skills—
## for LEARNING, WORK and LIFE

To learn more about literacy and essential skills and other related tools, visit
**hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills**