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Preparing for Life Beyond Brown: The Value of Integrating Academics and Career Development

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What is the connection between the academic endeavor and the process of career development? How does teaching and learning in and out of the classrooms and labs of Brown relate to how we prepare our students to “discharge the offices of life with usefulness and reputation” as we find in Brown’s mission statement?

Students frequently note that one of their primary reasons for attending college is to get a good job. Prospective students and their parents have become savvy consumers. With the rising cost of higher education, students seem to be more judicious about college choices. It is not uncommon for people to ask, “What is the value of a liberal arts education at Brown?”

If the answer to this question implies that we are preparing students for life beyond Brown then I suggest we have an important role to play. Brown’s liberal learning environment stimulates the life of the mind. In our role as educators we assist students in integrating their classroom and experiential opportunities in ways which often shape their future. Employers from across the spectrum of industries seek candidates who are bright, and possess strong leadership, communication, analytical, technical, organizational and creative skills and students who can “think outside of the box”. We are preparing students

for a global marketplace which requires an agility of mind and an eagerness to develop professionally throughout a life of transitions.

It is incumbent upon us to introduce students to the notion of career development from the early stages of their academic experience. That is not to suggest we “professionalize” students by forcing them to choose a professional track or a prescribed path but rather that we introduce students to a process. This process will encourage them to explore their talents, passions and values and will help them develop decision making skills which will serve them throughout their lifetime. Our goal is to encourage students to think liberally about their courses, concentrations, and experiences in and outside of the classroom.

Career offices have often been viewed as ancillary offices which students visit when they are seeking an internship or pursuing graduate school or full time opportunities. The mission of the Career Development Center at Brown is much more than that. As Brown students prepare for “lives of usefulness and reputation” the career staff partners with faculty and administrators to support students in this endeavor.

Why integrate the academic experience (in the classroom, community service, undergraduate research, internships, fellowships, study abroad, etc.) with the career development process (of self assessment, exploration, reality testing and the development of skills to pursue graduate study and career opportunities)? We do so because this integration will help students to maximize their Brown experience and will position them well for the future. Please contact us to discuss ways in which we can partner with you or your department!