



Career Resource Center

Beyond the Podium Podcast

Alexandra

Did you always know what you wanted to do? Or did you accidentally land in a career that was just right for you? Did you pioneer your way into a field you were passionate about from childhood? Or did you forge a path for yourself filled with innumerable twists and turns? Did you do it your own way, to quote the song, or did you have some help-- guides, mentors, and great professors?

Welcome to this episode of the Beyond the Podium Podcast Series. My name is Alexandra Bitton-Bailey and I'm your host. And I'm so excited about this episode and our guests. The Beyond the Podium Podcast Series, at the University of Florida, is on teaching and learning. And our guests offer their best tips, strategies, innovations, and stories.

Now that you've had time to reflect on those big questions I asked a few moments ago and you're filled with anticipation, I think it's time we introduce our guests. Our guests today are Andie Cochran, Jaysen Williams, and Sara Gould. All of them work in the Career Resource Center, and all of them are passionate about coming alongside you to help your students discover their own path. After all, the CRC is here to provide workshops, mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, career planning appointments, help with resumes, and so much more. But the most important thing that they have to offer is that they, too, remember being students struggling to find direction.

Andie Cochran

I actually graduated from the University of Colorado, with an undergraduate degree in psychology. And like all psychology majors, I said, what am I going to do with this? And so I said, I graduated, I'm going to Disney World. And I did.

So I went to Walt Disney World on the college program, and I spent 10 years of a career at Walt Disney World doing a little bit of everything. So I migrated through the company, worked probably about eight to nine different jobs in that 10-year period. But that's normal for Disney. If you don't work eight or nine, that's not normal. So it's normal to navigate the company.

And while I was there, I always had this grass roots career development side of me. Because at Disney, they want you to navigate the company. They want you to have a full career there. But there's not a career research center at Walt Disney World. So it's up to the different areas to do what they can to help the cast members navigate through the company.

And so I always took that on, once I realized how to navigate through the company. I always took that on as my thing. That was my brand, I was like the career person. And then after 10 years of being in Orlando, I decided I didn't want to be in a big city anymore. I had done so much at Disney, that I was like, OK, I think I accomplished what I came here to do, and I'm ready to move on. And my mom actually also worked there, so we collectively decided we're ready to move to a smaller, maybe more quaint place.

But we wanted to stay in Florida, so that brought us here to Gainesville. Of course, I wondered what I was going to do when I got here, because not being in higher ed, of course, I thought you have to be a professor to be in higher education. That's the only people that work here. So when I started looking up jobs, I realized, oh my gosh, there's this amazing job at the career resource center. And I applied, and here I am.

Alexandra

So what is it that Andie loves so much about her work? What motivates her? What pushes her to keep helping students find their own way?

Andie Cochran

I think it's that moment when a student says-- they go, oh my gosh, I never thought of that, or I never knew that website existed, or my resume was a mess, and now it's-- you know, that kind of aha moment for them, where you realize, I taught them something. And it's like, yes.

That doesn't happen every time. I'll be honest. Sometimes it is just like the, OK, you got your resume, good. But when you have those students realize something-- about themselves, about the career world, just something that you taught them new that they didn't know before, and especially-- and this sounds funny. It's like my own little personal success.

When I have a student come back for a repeat appointment, if I see that, even if it was a kind of a touch-and-go, where I see, like, I don't know if we quite got there or not. Then when I see that appointment pop up the next time, I'm like, yes, they came back for more. So I think just that the want for them to do it really motivates me to-- and motivates me to think of more ways that I can wow students with new resources or new ideas, or something like that. So that really motivates me to say, that's impactful. I need to make sure I am up-to-date or educated, or whatever you want to say, that I can give that information out.

Alexandra

For Andie, Jaysen, and Sara it was evident that their dedication came from the fact that somebody had poured into them in their early career or education. They had really found a

mentor, someone to guide and advise them, someone who cared enough to invest time and energy in their future. And now they want to do the same.

Jaysen Williams

So if I'm being completely honest with you, I wasn't always the greatest student or this polished career professional you see. I had a mentor. He was actually the journalism instructor at my high school, and he knew my passion for music. He knew I liked to read. He's like, well, hey, I want you to come and write for the paper. And he gave my own column. And I laugh about it, because it was something as small as that, giving me my own outlet, that helped.

Alexandra

As faculty, we play an essential role in our students' lives, education, and development. We are truly in a position that allows us to help them, to guide them, and to open new doors for them to walk through.

Sara Gould

We are here for students, and ultimately, we want to make them be productive members of society, and we want them to find what they love. And ultimately, that is the role that we should play. I would even just say, as the role of a faculty member, they carry so much weight, and students really look up to them. They do. You know, they have a very strong influence, so if it's any pocket of students that they can influence and take advantage of having that relationship.

Alexandra

The influence we have with our students, the weight we carry in their lives, really gives us an opportunity to impact them, especially those that have not yet found a direction or those that have not identified their strengths. They really are hoping to find someone to guide them.

Jaysen Williams

Oftentimes, there's students who are go-getters, and they just know, I'm going to do this, and nothing is going to stop me. And then at times, you may have students that they're still trying to figure out that path. And so they may have an interest. And so that's a point in time where I feel like faculty can say, well, you know, hey, I was in that position too, and this is what I did-- letting them know that you weren't always a professor. You weren't always a claimed writer. There were steps there.

And so I think explaining those steps is not only great for the student to hear, but I think it also does something for that faculty. Oftentimes you'll see that it wasn't just you that made those steps. There were other people that helped you along the way. And I think reflecting on that, it gives you an idea that, you know, I might need to do the same to bring people up.

Alexandra

I know we all care, and we all want the best for our students. But I also know that despite our best intentions, our schedules are already packed. And thinking of adding just one more thing to an already full plate is overwhelming. But fear not, because the CRC is here to help.

Andie Cochran

We don't want them to feel like they have to reinvent the wheel of resources that are out there. We have them. We have them. We have them ready to go, and we can partner together to try to get those out to the students, if that's in the classroom, if that's making announcements of things that are happening outside of the classroom, however that might be, again.

But what I tell faculty in liberal arts and sciences is, to partner with me sounds like a big job, but it's not. It's basically forwarding emails. It's inviting me into the classroom. We have this motto of, don't cancel class. I think that's a thing. If a faculty member has to cancel class for a reason, don't cancel it. If you can't be there, I'll come and show up and do a workshop or do something.

We had that happen the other day in the College of Engineering. A class was going to get canceled, and they actually invited two of us to come and do a resume workshop. So it was really cool, because we got to teach the class that day about something totally alternative to what the students were going to be there for.

Alexandra

There are a multitude of ways that the CRC can support you and your students. And most of the time, it requires little to no effort on your part. The CRC does it all. In fact, the CRC will even invite and plan guest speakers for your class. And all it takes is a willingness to have them come.

Andie Cochran

If they're willing to, again, bring people into the classroom, a way that we can partner with them on that is we work very closely with employers. And if they have a subject that they're teaching on, an employer would be more than willing to come in and speak to that subject, like something that would be-- because when an employer comes into a classroom, it's not necessarily just an

advertising plug that they want to do. An employer would be willing to come in and talk about maybe leadership, for example, and maybe how what the students are learning in their classes can translate into leadership, and how leadership functions in a business setting or in a company, or something like that. So bringing those outside folks into the classroom to tandem what the students are learning could possibly be built into their curriculum.

Alexandra

And if you're concerned about class time being limited, which I know it often is, the CRC can design and implement activities that your students can complete outside of class. These activities provide great real world applications and takeaways, such as a solid resume.

Sara Gould

Actually, in a course that I'm working on right now, it's an online course, but it's for the public health program. And it's fantastic. It's kind of newer. It's been revamped a little bit. And the professor is having students meet with me for group career planning sessions outside of class.

So I opened up a bunch of times on my schedule, and I just met with a group of students yesterday, actually. And of course, they come in, like, what are we doing here? We're tired. By the end of the session, they're laughing, talking. They got so much from it. We talked about resume ability, and we talked about interviewing. We talked about what they want to do with their future. And they see value in the professional development.

Alexandra

Developing professional skills is an essential part of students' higher education experience. And the CRC is here for that purpose. They want to help and partner with you to support your students by providing the best resources possible and to save you time. If you'd like to learn more or find out who your college-specific CRC staff member is, please check out the links on the teach.ufl.edu page. Thanks for listening to this episode of the Beyond the Podium Podcast Series, at the University of Florida. You can look for other episodes from FDTE at UF on SoundCloud, Stitcher, or iTunes. And we hope to see you next time.