

Coursework to Career:

How to Empower Students
and Equip Advisors to
Improve Career Outcomes for
Community College Students



OVERVIEW

SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	3
SECTION 2	MISSION	4
SECTION 3	TECHNOLOGY	5
SECTION 4	TRANSLATIONAL SKILLS	6
SECTION 5	REAL OUTCOMES	7
SECTION 6	INTEGRATION	8
SECTION 7	ORCA ANALYTICS	9
SECTION 8	REFERENCES	9

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

Students and their families have lost confidence in the value of higher education. Traditionally, institutions were selected based upon the quality of their academic offerings, social life, and location. Unfortunately, stronger competition for a shrinking number of desirable jobs and rising student debt has led the best candidates to prioritize the career outcomes of institution graduates over anything else. And, perhaps sensing an uphill battle, many of the rest are either foregoing college altogether or dropping out.

Jeffrey Selingo, a noted Higher Education commentator and author, wrote a compelling piece calling for a “reimagining” of the college career center. In the article, he cites several surveys indicating that the current career services model is broken. A Gallup-Purdue Index poll reported that 40% of recent college graduates had never visited their university’s career offices.¹ Among the 60% who did, only 17% reported finding the experience “helpful.” And students aren’t the only ones frustrated by college career services: another recent Gallup Poll indicated that only 11% of employers believe college graduates are adequately prepared for the workforce.² To make things worse, today’s college graduate has over \$37,000 in student loan debt and a 45% chance of working a job that doesn’t require a college degree.³ At a time when graduate unemployment and underemployment are the highest they have been in decades, career services offices are not only failing to find jobs for their students, but colleges are failing to adequately prepare students for the workplace.

According to Selingo, there are five essential strategies to modernize career services:

- Integrate career planning into the curriculum.
- Offer vocational options alongside the formal curriculum.
- Assist students in transferring their learning from the classroom to the job.
- Employ technology to personalize career planning for students.
- Turn career services into lifelong services.

These five principles embody the ethos at Orca Analytics. We sympathize with the burden of today’s college career counselor who, on average, is responsible for advising nearly 3,000 students at a time.⁴ In fact, we have been hard at work on several practical solutions for colleges to effectively implement the strategies above.



SECTION 2 MISSION

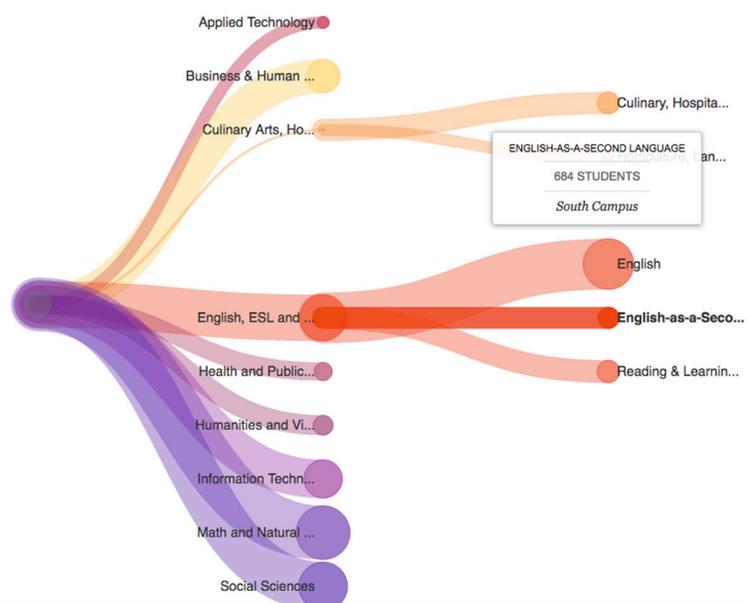
At Orca Analytics, our mission is to transfer learning from coursework into career skills and match students to career opportunities that best fit them. Traditional wisdom would have you believe that most degree and career paths are perfectly linear, following an established path. Speaking not only from the experience of our team members, this fact is further backed up by statistics. According to a national study, up to 50% of college students start their college careers without declaring a major. Not only that, but 75% of students change their major at least once during college, and the average college student changes their major three times.⁵ It seems today's average freshmen is just as confused about choosing a degree program that fits their goals as unfortunately, today's average freshmen appear just as puzzled about choosing an appropriate degree program as they are finding a fulfilling career.

However, even if a student has their course of study perfectly planned out, they are still unlikely to land their dream job at their top choice company. That is because what has always been true is still true today: it is oftentimes not what you know, but who you know. A recent national survey found that 85% of jobs are filled via networking.⁶ Critically, however, the most effective networking is done organically by forming and leveraging real connections; it cannot be contrived or forced. Remember the survey we referenced earlier stating that among students who actually consulted career services, only 17% found it helpful? Well, it should come as no surprise that first-generation college students, with little to no inherited social network, consistently reported finding the experience the least helpful⁷.

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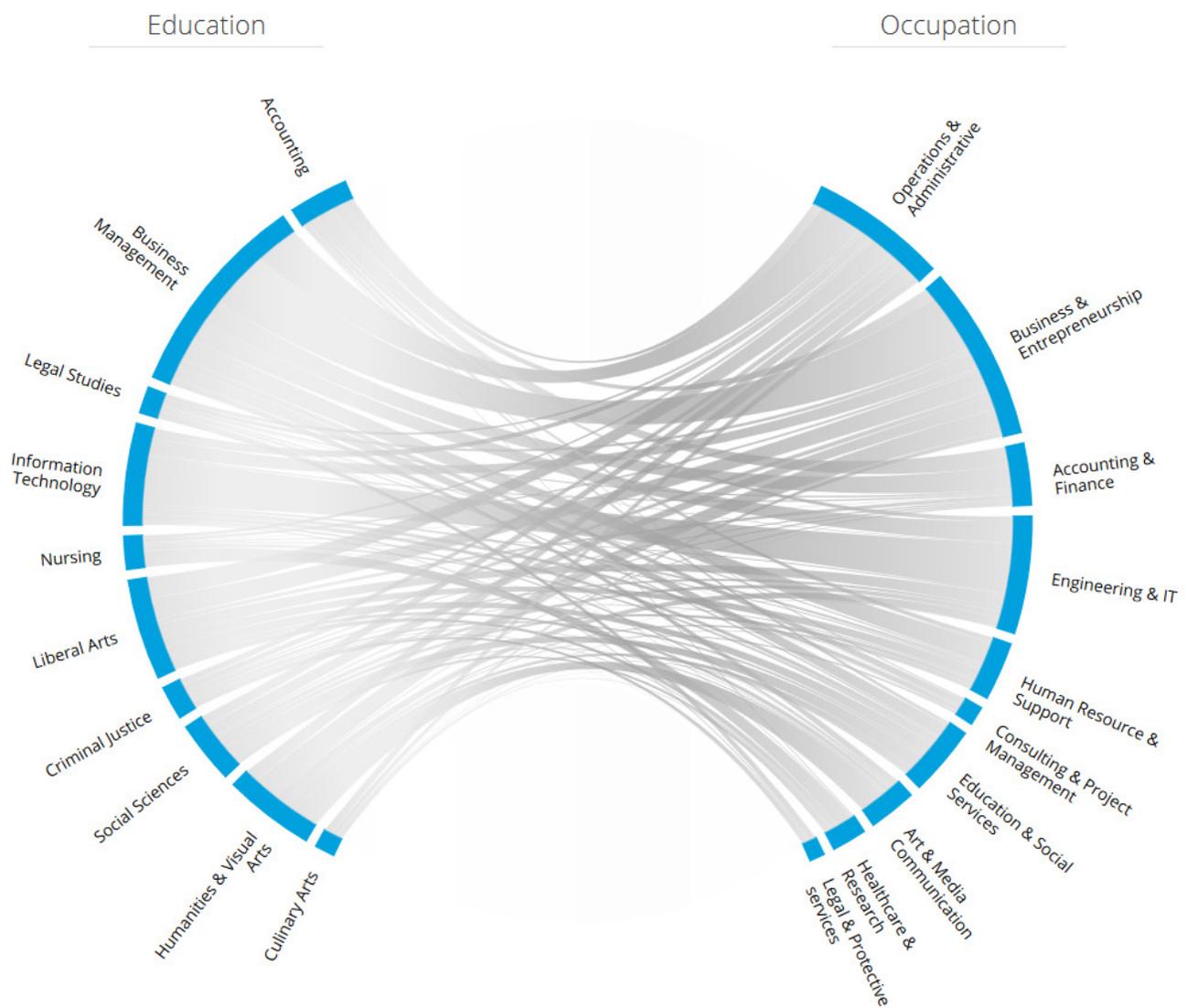
Enter Orca Analytics' flagship platform: Course to Career Pathways. We leverage an institution's academic records to create the real coursework pathways traveled by all of your previous students. We then connect these coursework pathways to tangible career outcomes at real employers by leveraging data from institutional alumni relations offices and foundations and outside repositories like LinkedIn and Facebook. The result is a visually intuitive, interactive graphical network that empowers students to chart their own coursework to career paths and track their progress in real-time against the progress of real alumni. Because these pathways are institution-specific and powered by real career outcomes of actual alumni, this tool can be used by both students to investigate actual career possibilities and by administration and advisors to prescribe novel career-driven degree paths. At Orca Analytics, we do not believe that your degree choice locks you into one career option, but a multitude of opportunities - and our tools equip students to leverage these opportunities better than ever before.

From enrollment to graduation, our interactive pathways tool guides students along their academic path. Easy integration with existing data sources means that students can compare their own progress to past students with the same desired degree or career.



SECTION 3 TECHNOLOGY

Today's college students are digital natives – 90% of college students report being active on social media, with 76% indicating they would participate in institution-specific online networks for educational and career planning.⁸ Orca Analytics employs technological solutions for every phase of a student's course to career journey. From the first day they step foot on campus, we offer algorithmic matching to engage freshmen in the career outcomes most likely to fulfill them based on their interests and activities. Students can then visualize an institution's coursework to career pathways to help plan their curriculum on the platform of their choice. As students complete their chosen coursework, both students and advisors can view their progress in real-time. Orca Analytics even offers built-in gamification and usage tracking to ensure students continue to utilize the career services at their institution. Our goal is to empower students to handle their own day-to-day advising, so that career advisors can focus on what they are most passionate about: working directly with students to identify the coursework to career pathway most appropriate for their life goals.



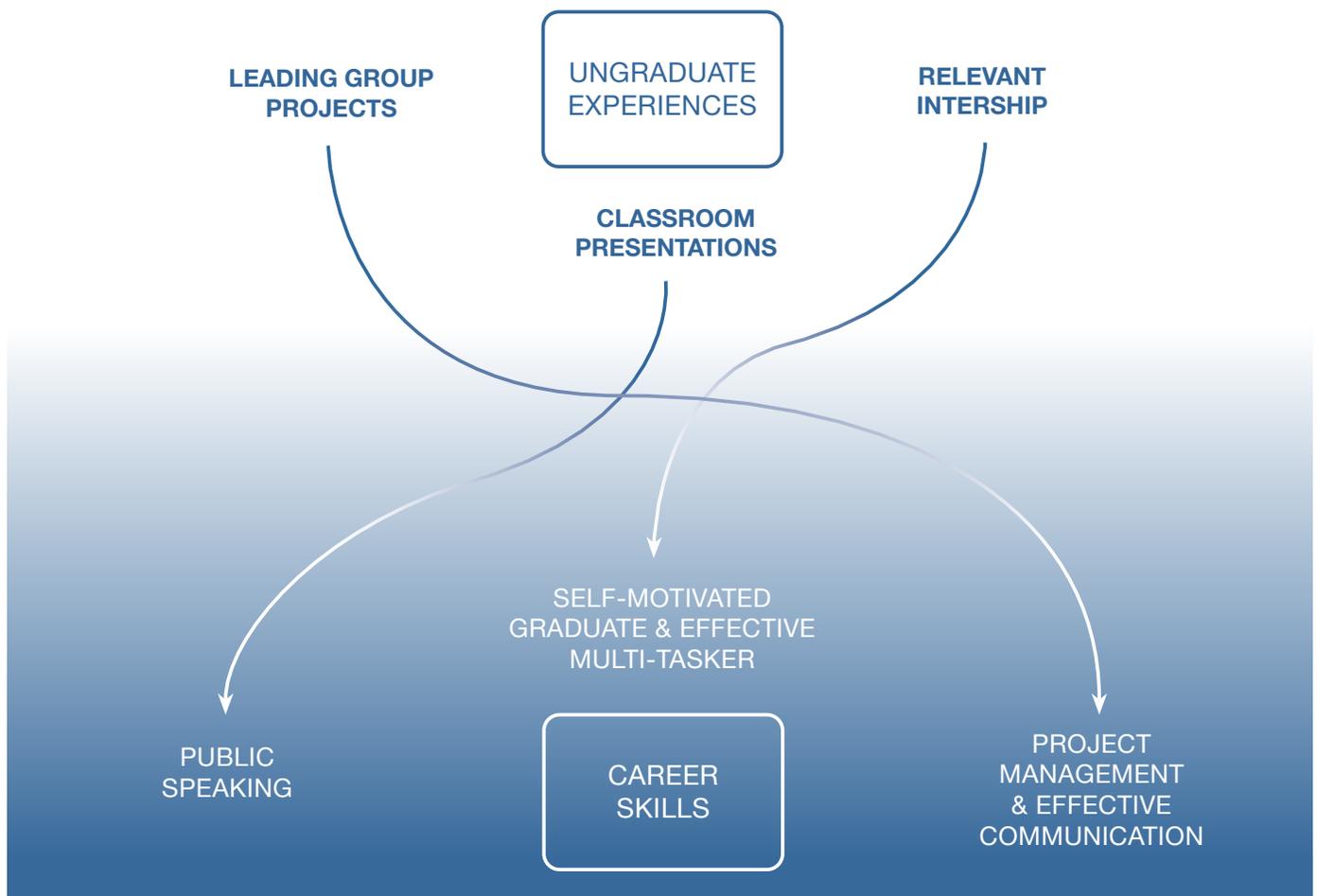
By integrating academic data with career outcomes, students can visualize likely career possibilities and join online communities of peers with similar goals. This shows the connection between degrees and career categories of 10,000 alumni from a selected institution.

SECTION 4 | TRANSLATIONAL SKILLS

Skills that translate from course to career are crucial to graduate success in the workplace and beyond. In fact, a recent Gallup-Purdue study correlated six meaningful experiences in college with successful and satisfying careers and overall well-being. Among these six experiences were working on a project that took a semester or more to complete, having an internship or job that somehow related to their studies, and being encouraged to pursue their dreams and goals.⁹

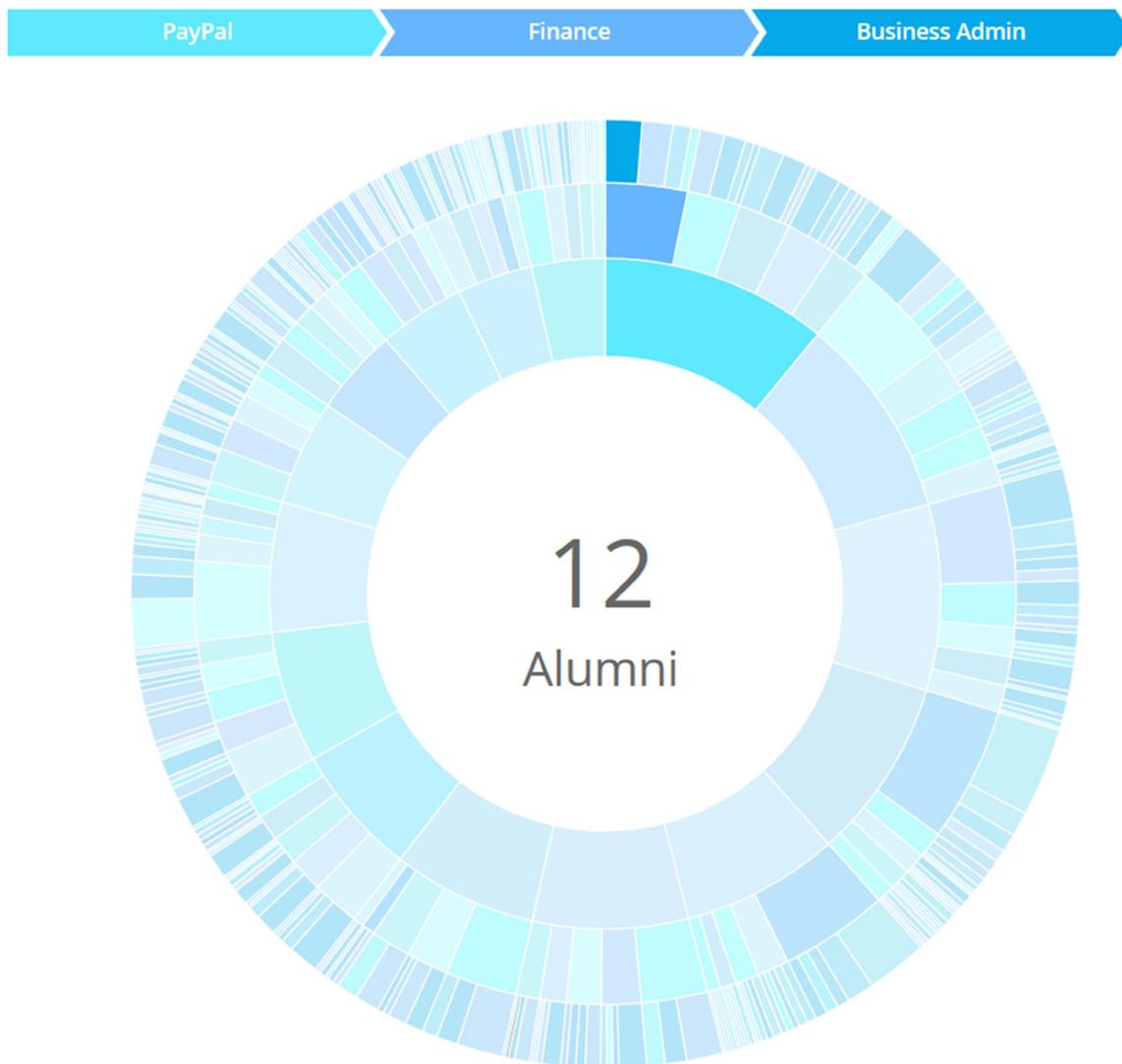
“Instead of distracting away from the curriculum, Orca offers a platform that allows students to focus on coursework while simultaneously developing their career skills.”

Orca Analytics believes that students can learn translational workforce skills within the classroom and during their collegiate experience, however students have difficulty identifying and building those skills. Our system empowers professors to name the key workplace skills that each course provides their students and automatically compiles those skills from completed courses into bonafide resume boosting skills. Classroom presentations translate to public speaking, leading group projects translates to project management and effective communication, a student with a job translates to a graduate that is self-motivated and an effective multi-tasker. Instead of distracting away from the curriculum, Orca offers a platform that allows students to focus on coursework while simultaneously developing their career skills. Let students be students and still feel confident about their life after graduation. Let students concentrate on their coursework; let Orca help inspire confidence in their future.



SECTION 5 REAL OUTCOMES

Students want to feel empowered when making their academic and career decisions. Orca Analytics leverages existing sources of alumni data to determine career outcomes in relation to coursework. We accumulate data from coursework and career goals to generate student profiles and match students with similar alumni using our proprietary algorithms. This matching gives students confidence in knowing that alumni have succeeded before them in their desired career path. Moreover, this same technology can be used by school administrators to better predict the courses that lead to a specific career, and in turn be used to prescribe the best coursework for a student uncertain of their academic and career aspirations. In addition, our technology provides insight into the top regional and national employers of an institution's alumni. Not only does this highlight employment pipelines and potential internship opportunities, but it also helps institution's formulate new academic programs by identifying existing coursework that leads to specific careers.



We display an institution's alumni data in an interactive and intuitive graphic that can be used to match students with alumni, inform academic program development, and reinforce strategic partnerships with industry. For example, this visualization shows the number of alumni working in finance at PayPal with business administration degrees from a selected institution.

Orca analytics understands the importance of integration – we don't want institutions to lose precious time managing redundant systems. Our systems fully integrate with major CRMs and database systems. More specifically, we can compile existing information from MyHub to bolster student data and create more complete and accurate student profiles. We also provide integration with Ellucian Advise to boost student information so advisers can take more effective action when assisting students with more complex student academic and career goals. For alumni, Orca Analytics integrates popular social media and career networking platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn to give institutions the most precise data about their alumni base. Our unique software platform provides the modular tools that institutions need to fit into their existing systems, without duplicating or over-selling. We believe partnering colleges should only pay for the specific solutions they need.



SECTION 7 ABOUT ORCA ANALYTICS

Orca Analytics is a data analytics company that helps foster a sense of community and improve student success on campus and beyond. We offer out-of-the-box solutions that utilize predictive and prescriptive analytics to help institutions empower their students and alumni. Our cloud-based, platform products maximize big data in a modular package so institutions only pay for the specific solutions they need.

SECTION 8 REFERENCES

- ¹http://www.gallup.com/reports/199172/gallup-purdue-index-report-2016.aspx?g_source=gallup%20purdue%20index&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles
- ²<http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/173249/higher-education-work-preparation-paradox.aspx>
- ³<https://www.forbes.com/sites/gradsoflife/2017/02/02/a-new-college-tradition-40k-in-debt-and-underemployed/#565eca4012e8>
- ⁴2016-17 Career Services Benchmark Survey Report for Colleges and Universities, National Association of Colleges and Employers
- ⁵Gordon, 1995.
- ⁶<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/new-survey-reveals-85-all-jobs-filled-via-networking-lou-adler>
- ⁷http://www.gallup.com/reports/199172/gallup-purdue-index-report-2016.aspx?g_source=gallup%20purdue%20index&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles
- ⁸Noel-Levitz. (2011a). E-expectations report: The online expectations of prospective college students and their parents. Retrieved from <https://www.noellevitz.com/papersresearch-higher-education/2011/2011-e-expectations-report>
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