



# Rising to the Challenge: Career Readiness in Communication

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<https://bit.ly/MHIAFacDevatNCA>



# Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA)



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# National & Institutional Context



- **New University Strategic Plan:** every student completes a Work-Based Learning (WBL) experience by 2027.
- **\$5M Mellon** grant created the **Monarch Humanities Internship Academy** (MHIA).
- Students want meaningful, career-relevant education; faculty want to preserve disciplinary depth.

# MHIA Faculty Development Model

- **Workshop-based summer series:** faculty-led, community-centered.
  - Led by COMM faculty, grounded in *reflection, storytelling, professional identity formation*.
    - Humanities at Work: Work-Based Learning in the Classroom
    - Humanities in Action: Employer Perspectives & Student Experience
    - Connecting Classroom to Career: Empowering Learning Communities with WBL
- Collaboration between **Communication** & Writing Studies = shared humanities foundations: *narrative, reflection, meaning-making*.
- **Grounded in High-Impact Practice (HIP) pedagogy** = reflection, feedback, integration, application.
  - A faculty-driven incubator for applied communication in the Humanities.
  - We approach career readiness not an add-on, but an embedded, reflective practice across the humanities curriculum.

# Faculty Development as Communication Intervention



## Reframing WBL through Communication

- Shifted from *building new internship courses* to *weaving preparation & reflection* into existing coursework.
- Treated as a communication intervention:
  - Make professional learning visible through *relational, reflexive, strategic* communication.
- Applied small teaching principles for sustainable change:
  - Redesign one assignment around NACE competencies.
  - Add short reflective scaffolds linking learning to identity.
- Emphasized peer-to-peer learning and iterative reflection (*double-loop learning*).

# Impact & Early Outcomes

## Lowering the Threshold for Adoption

- Menu of adaptable assignments across disciplines.
- Iterative feedback loops: *faculty* ↔ *students* ↔ *internship sites* ↔ *MHIA staff*.

## Emerging Evidence (Year 2)

- 59 faculty engaged & 45% of Humanities faculty.
- 29% repeat participation = sustained engagement.
- Faculty report increased confidence linking to NACE competencies.
- Student reflections show stronger professional identity:  
*"I can articulate." "I contribute." "I lead."*



"it helped me to crystalize the importance of WBL, and honestly to understand how much I already incorporate this pedagogy into my class. It helped me feel confident in integrating a showcase ePortfolio into my course which I have not yet had the chance to do"

# MHIA Faculty Development Materials

| Assignment Title                  | Keywords / Tags                                                                                                  | NACE Competencies                                                            | Assignment Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Learning Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                               | Assessment Method                                                                                                                                                           | Timing in Term                                                                                                                       | Comments / Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Career Readiness Blog Post</b> | career readiness, campus resources, ePortfolio, self-reflection, professional development, low-stakes assignment | Career & Self-Development, Professionalism, Communication                    | Students write a 2–3 paragraph career readiness post summarizing campus/online professional resources, identifying resources most relevant to their current goals, and reflecting on how these connect to their intended industry and professional trajectory. | Explore available professional resources at ODU, Reflect on personal career goals and alignment with coursework, Practice synthesizing resource information into a professional blog or document                  | Completion-based (15 points out of 450 total course points); assignment reviewed for effort; feedback through in-class discussion and scanning submissions for completeness | Approximately 1/3 into the term (around Week 4–6), after initial coursework and ePortfolio setup                                     | Excellent example of a low-stakes, early-career exploration task; encourages engagement with university resources without requiring large-scale course redesign. Highlights best practices for piloting WBL components incrementally. Suggests building a series of related reflections to reinforce professional development throughout the course. |
| <b>Career Vision Plan</b>         | reflection, career planning, vision statement, SMART goals, goal setting, values inventory                       | Career & Self-Development, Critical Thinking, Professionalism                | Students reflect on personal values and interests, write a career vision statement, and develop SMART goals for short- and long-term success                                                                                                                   | Reflect on personal and professional values, Articulate a future career vision, Translate that vision into SMART goals, The objectives align directly with the activity structure and stated learning goals       | Rubric-based or Completion-based (based on depth of self-assessment, clarity of vision, and goal specificity)                                                               | Early to Midterm (Week 2–6), ideal for early engagement in career readiness coursework or as a foundation for internship search prep | Includes sequential development (reflection → vision → goals), and could support future assignments like resumes, portfolios, or internships                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Charting Your Skill Sets</b>   | SMART goals, skill development, self-assessment, soft skills, technical skills, ePortfolio, resume writing       | Career & Self-Development, Professionalism, Communication, Critical Thinking | Students research required skills in potential careers, write evidence-based skill mastery statements, plan how to improve weaker areas, and develop SMART goals to support their growth.                                                                      | Identify key technical and soft skills relevant to a chosen career field, articulate skill mastery through professional genres, create and revise SMART goals for skill development. Based on clear stages in the | Summative or Formative Rubric-Based (4 Dimensions: Skill ID, Mastery Statements, Growth Plan, SMART Goals). A sample rubric and alternative assignment series were          | Midterm to Final (Week 5–14)                                                                                                         | Designed as a flexible unit with individual components and optional workshops, group work, and reflection. Suitable for the middle or later part of a term after students have had exposure to course content and career interests. Highly adaptable assignment with strong connections to WBL preparation.                                          |



## Scaling the Model

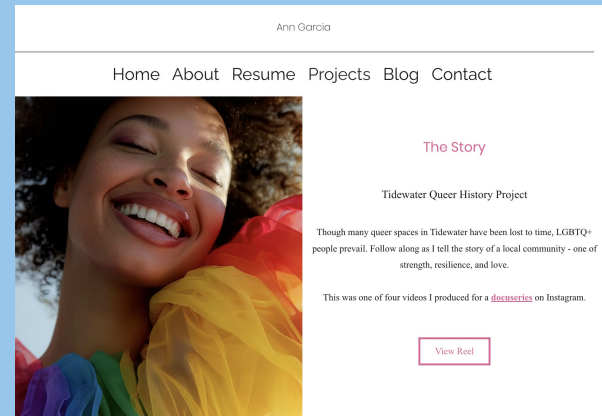
- Designed for a *post-grant era* of institutional adoption.
- As Gen Ed reform adds an *Experiential Learning requirement (including WBL)*, the challenge is *scaling sustainably*.
- Our model, grounded in *small interventions, preparation, mentorship, reflection, and community*, provides a replicable framework for ODU and regional universities.
- Centers Communication and Humanities pedagogy in ODU's Experiential Learning framework.

# Institutional Ripple Effects

Career readiness is less about résumé polish and more about rhetorical awareness, how students narrate their emerging experience and professional identity.

When communication becomes the lens for career readiness, we move from teaching students *what* to do to empowering them to articulate *why* it matters.

- **Brooke Mullins**, WAVY TV-10 Internship: [bit.ly/mullinswavy](https://bit.ly/mullinswavy)
- **Ann Garcia**, Tidewater Queer History Project: [bit.ly/garciaTOHP](https://bit.ly/garciaTOHP)





THANK YOU!

for joining us

# Resources

- [bit.ly/MHIAFacDevatNCA](https://bit.ly/MHIAFacDevatNCA)
- [bit.ly/MHIA](https://bit.ly/MHIA)
- [bit.ly/HumanitiesAdvantageODUCareerSummit25](https://bit.ly/HumanitiesAdvantageODUCareerSummit25)
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# Rising to the Challenge: Career Readiness in Communication

**Abstract:** This paper examines the Monarch Humanities Internship Academy, an experiential learning initiative that embeds career readiness into humanities education and internship preparation. Grounded in Communication pedagogy, MHIA fosters faculty-student collaboration, reflective practice, and industry partnerships, positioning students as co-creators in their professional development while bridging academic learning with career pathways.

# Reframing the Narrative

## Challenge the "Skills Gap" Myth

Shift the focus from what humanities students "lack" to what they already excel at.

## Celebrate Disciplinary Strengths

Highlight critical thinking, ethical reasoning, communication, cultural competency, and adaptability as vital workplace assets.

## Align with NACE Career Readiness Competencies

Showcase how humanities curricula naturally develop competencies employers demand: communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, professionalism, and teamwork.

## Bridge Academia and Industry

Equip faculty, career advisors, and employers with strategies to recognize and promote the value of humanities-trained professionals.

**Figure 1**

**Attributes Employers Seek on a Candidate's Resume**

