

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Welcome to another edition of Let's Talk Ed With Professor Chris. So today, I wanna talk about probably one of the most-important question you gonna ask yourself even before you go to college?

What is it that you want to do? Some of us know what us want to do. Some of us don't, and for those who even think they know, how many times do they change career while in college?

Today we do have an expert with us, Mr. Larry. Hopefully it will help us see if we can make some decisions or provide us with natural resources or where to go to if we need any of those help.

So welcome to Larry. Well, first of all, I should say, are you okay with me putting on my Cooley High hat this this morning?

LARRY TUCKER: I'm I'm perfectly fine with that Cooley High hat.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.

TUCKER: No doubt about that.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you. I appreciate it. I appreciate it. It said no, no haircuts, reasoning for my Cooley High hat I have today. So, well thanks again for for coming.

As I mentioned, the goal for this podcast reel is to help students experience college and not try to survive college. So we provide them resources that they need.

I will go to when I've told them I will go to whoever, whomever they want me to go and talk to, because fortunately for me, I can actually do that.

So, anyone I get to talk to is a privilege and I'm very honored that you are here to help us with Career Services.

I wanna start with, so students understand, that we are not perfect. Like we didn't start off knowing exactly what we want to do.

But this article came out is a career focus. So I wanna start from there because Career Services has an article in here and a very good quotes in here that I wanna start off with is this; Find a job love and you will never work a day in your life.

Those words from Confucius are inspiring, but often easier said than done. Some people know what they want to do early in life, but for others the future career is harder to visualize. And those who embark on this one career trajectory, may find they want a different one.

So that being said I must start with you and I'll come to myself. Tell us a little bit about how you started college and by the way, is this where always seen yourself to be 20 years back, right?

That's it. 20 years back. Is this where you've always envisioned yourself to be career wise?

TUCKER: That's a great question, Professor Chris. I tell you, thinking back back then. Initially I wanted to be an architect believe it or not.

I was from a small town up north called Brooklyn and I and I lived in town with a lot of skyscrapers, tall buildings, bridges, and I was fascinated by how people made these buildings and bridges. And I wanted to be an architect.

And so when I finally got the chance to go to college, you know, I majored in... I was an architect major. However, I was about to take trigonometry for the second time when my professor stopped me at the door, and said "what are you doing back here?"

I said, well, Professor Lewis, I'm an architect major.

I need a "C" or better in trigonometry you gave me a "D" last semester. He said "Well, Larry, I mean you really deserved an "F," but I like you and gave you a "D." And he said something to me that really made sense. He said he said; "Larry, you said nobody wants a lopsided building."

And I really had to think about that. But he's right. In order to be successful as an architect, I had to be really good at math, I couldn't just be OK.

You see what happens when they when when you got people who are designing buildings that are just okay. You might have a disaster, you see what happened to Miami and some of these other buildings?

And so I really had to go back to the drawing board and think... literally go back to the drawing board and say what do I what do I really want to do?

The next thing I said, well, I want to be a disc jockey. And the reason why I want to be a disc jockey is because when my favorite disc jockeys back then...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right, We're talking booths.

TUCKER: So why not, right? Back then it was Frankie Crocker at WBLS, and I wanted to be a disc jockey just like him.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Nice.

TUCKER: And so, I changed my major to communications. and I did graduate with communications. But what I realized, I think... I got a job as a disc jockey and I actually got a job on a country and western station.

Umm, so it started off the Top-40 station and it was bought out by some folks who decided wanted to make it a country and western station.

And so I had to learn how to how to how to accept and appreciate country western music. But, make a Long story short, as a disc jockey, I didn't realize that I would spend most of my time in this 10 by 10 foot room.

The first year was okay. After that, it was kind of boring.

A friend of mine said, you know you have been moping around and say you don't really, you know, like your job that much, take a career test. So, I took a career test... Eventually went to see a career counselor.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: You actually had a career test then?

TUCKER: Yes, yes, in school. I went to St. Augustine's college and and and went to the career counseling center and the career counselor is probably the reason why I'm career counselor now is because she she gave me this test and I forget the name of it. But it was kind of the the test we offered here at Wake Tech as well.

And the test said that that you're an extrovert, you need to be around people. Then it all of a sudden made sense.

Here I am in this 10 by 10 room we, me and the microphone bunch of... does your audience know about record? 45's and LP's?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Probably not. No.

TUCKER: Cassettes?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: The last assets the last time we did a show I asked about VCR and then right so probably not but yeah.

TUCKER: But I was I was bored to death. I need to be around people and so, in my weekends off I would, I would, I would, I would volunteer at the local YMCA working with kids, and I loved it.

And that's when I said, wow, I didn't... maybe just the what I need to do.

And so I I I decided to go back to do my master's in counseling. loved it and I decided to go into career counseling because I was always fascinated by how people chose career. I changed my major three times.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Wow.

So I kind of have a similar problem.

I'm happy with discussing this here because as I told you before I do want the students to understand that it doesn't happen magically. And I'm actually very excited and also very happy that we do have a place to go to which looking back maybe was because I thought I knew what I wanted to do.

So I didn't look for a Career Services, but I really didn't know there was a place like that that actually goes to help you.

My journey started off almost very similar to yours. I was about bridges. I love bridges. I always wanted to do bridges and that was it. Fortunate for me, I was actually good at math, so it took me on that track.

When I was in grad school I worked for a minority [indecipherable] office where we tutored students and my boss would always say, Chris, you know what? The students radiate to you. You should try and think about teaching and what did I say? No. No way.

I'm trying to be an engineer to make all the money that engineers make. Why would I even think about teaching?

Well... Fast forward. Got into the industry, actually, worked in the industry for some time. I got called in by my alma mater to kind of help students with their student design and the review I got at the end of that semester was probably one of the best I've had ever, right?

I got called in by the department chair late at night and I thought I was in trouble. But actually what he wanted to do was to offer me an opportunity to teach.

That's that's how immediately it progressed and even that took me a while to really say yes, no... to to that decision.

I love students and that's kind of why I am here where I am today, but I'm very, very happy that we started with that to let students know that we go through the process to really find find out what is want to do.

So one of the first episodes I did actually was *College or No College*, right? And I'm I'm gonna ask you the same question, right?

Obviously, we're here and you have all the centers? In your mind, and I want you guys to know, yes, we're still both involved in college, but what do you think student should go to college or no college?

And I the reason I ask that is because students do ask me with social media and why the college

process is so long. And they feel, you know, I really don't need it to kind of do what I want to do. So yeah, what are your thoughts on that?

TUCKER: That's a very good question. I get the question a lot as well.

My answer that is this is you've got to think about the career, the occupation you're passionate about. What is it that you think we were born to do?

And once you have that image in your mind that idea that college in your mind, you have to do a little bit of research. Umm, I fellow by the name of Stephen Covey said... wrote this book called *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I think I know that book.

TUCKER: He said "begin with the end in mind." Think about what your end goal is. So let's say for instance, you wanted to be an engineer. You need to maybe do some... go to Indeed or Job Board. Look at the job description and see what it is to get hired as an engineer.

Can you do with a certificate? Can you do it with an associate degree? A bachelor's degree? Whatever it said. So, the the occupation that you are passionate about... if it requires if the job description requires a degree that's what you need.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah, that's what you need. Perfect. So college, right? Go to college. Help you to make that decision right?

So we're gonna get into Career Services and what you do to kind of help students. But before we do that, I wanna actually go back a little bit to high school.

Right? When students high school are thinking about where to go to college... and maybe this could be a whole different segment?

I always tell students don't go to Harvard to major in basket weaving. It doesn't make sense to me, right? You're gonna spend so much money right to go to a college like that.

So for high school students that are getting ready for college, especially not knowing what they want to do. What is your, what is... what will be your advice to them on how to pick college to go to? Yeah.

TUCKER: Well, first of all, the first thing in beginning with the end in mind. What is it she wanted to do? You don't need to have an idea of what you want to do, and it's interesting you said with high school students... I used to be a former high school guidance counselor.

A lot of students had no idea they wanted to do, you know, and part of it is a lack of exposure.

So one thing that I suggest you do is read about different different careers and you see a career or somebody talking about career in television, that looks interesting. Do some research on it, you know.

And about choosing a college, you don't choose a college, you choose a program.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.

TURCKER: You choose a major.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.

TUCKER: What happens if decide you want to go... you wanna be engineer?

And because of the fact that you like Appalachian State, a culture you wanna go to Appalachian... what if they don't have your program?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That's a good point.

TUCKER: They don't have your program. So, you wanna make sure that you choosing a program, a major versus choosing a school because you like the way the the, the put paint on their face or their or their marching band or something like that.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah, perfect. OK.

So let's get into Career Services. First again very, very great idea... you have these resources here for students.

Let's talk about... With your experience, how many students... Let's just put a number there.

How many students do you know come in knowing exactly what they want to do and follow through?

TUCKER: I I would say that that that is a very low low percentage that actually you know what they do. Most of them come in to career Career Services because they have no idea what they want to do and which kind of it's kind of a a consistent with statistics, 70% of new freshmen have no idea what they would do.

They know they want to go to college, but they don't know what they really want to major in. You know so well, most people, when they go and they go into the AA program, it's kind of like when I wasn't sure what I wanted to do was liberal arts.

AA program is considered like, you know, maybe I'll I'll come here and I'll change later.

50% of current students change their major and one time.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No way

TUCKER: At least one time.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Wow.

TUCKER: So to answer your question...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Why the surprise, since we're both did that, that right?

TUCKER: Right. So so most of them have no idea, and the ones that have an idea what they want to major in... not sure what to do with that major. So, they come to me and say what can I do this major?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH:, I commend Career Services, yourself for all you do, because as a professor that needs to advise students, it was challenging enough, right, for me and all I have to do is point students in the right engineering discipline, right? All I deal with is engineering students.

So if a student comes to me, Professor Chris, I know I want to do engineering... I'm not sure which one to do; mechanical, civil, aerospace, right... chemical.

I try to help them pick that track, but Career Services, you're doing everything.

TUCKER: Yes.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right? And that's why I feel like this is huge. You're not just looking at engineer, you're looking at almost every discipline.

So, walk us through the process for a student that comes in, has no idea what they want to do. Do you look at... what's the process? Do you test them on their math skills? Do you test to say "Ohh no, you can be an attorney." "You you could be hospitality."

Just walk us through that process, yeah.

TUCKER: This is pretty much a three-step process. There's three questions I ask that I want students to be able to identify... to answer.

Number one question number one. Who am I? This is about self-assessment. Knowing your strengths, your weaknesses of knowing where your interests you value, what do you value? What do you love to do?

And so through the process of self-assessment, we help them with that if they don't know.

Second question is based on who you are, who see yourself to be. What occupation is aligned with who you are. We call that career congruency.

It's just a fancy word of, of way of saying you are who you are, aligned with what you do.

Then that's what we call career exploration. This is when we we have a lot of tools to look at different occupations. We do what we call a sweet spot uh, uh, method.

We feel that the occupation that is right for you, the career that is right for your creative attention is at the intersection of your strips, what you do best, what you love to do, and what the world will pay you to do.

So again, we look at your strengths, we look at what you love to do and care about most and what the world will pay you to do.

And so, we look at those, those, those, uh those occupations that are aligned with that.

And based on that, the next process is is program placement. Which occu... which program or major will prepare you for that occupation that is right for you?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So I'm getting ready here, I hope students will see this from what you told me... I think my recommendation would be; even if you think you know what it is you want to do in college, how about the first semester, the first day you walk into the college to go and reassess yourself.

I mean, wouldn't that be a a very good thing to do even if you know what you want?

TUCKER: Yes, to confirm.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes.

TUCKER: Confirmation.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

TUCKER: Verification. This is where you need to be.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

TUCKER: Because you would be surprised with lots of people. Once they come in. I'd say that most of them find that this is not like great place. You know? You thought this might be, but



there once we start talking about, you know, why did you choose this? Why do you think, you know... Like, let's let's let's take me being an architect, you know. Why did you want to do this?

But you know, let's look at your math scores. You were never really good at math.

You know, I know you like the skyscrapers in the in the, um, uh, the aesthetic part of architecture but, do you have the skills to be that, you know?

And so we help them look at those things and see is there a match there? So, you make the decision on whether or not I'm at, I'm, I'm not going to turn it, turn anybody away or make or or or pop anybody's dream.

We have the ILC, Individual Learning Center to give you the tutoring. Because if you I believe if you really want something bad enough then you would do what you can to bring those grades up, you know?

And we have tutoring, but after you have exhausted all of those resources, maybe we need to come back to the drawing board and think about what's a better fit for you? What's a better career fit that is more in line on which you which you should be doing with your life?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So I'm really trying for students to understand kind of the process and I feel like they're gonna come to the Career Services and gonna be putting things on their fingers to do a lie detector test.

How long in and out for a student comes in... I just need confirmation on what I want to do.

Tell us a little bit about your lab centers and how long the process when the students come in to kind of look through that process?

TUCKER: It should take, it takes about an hour if you can give us a good hour we could, we could.

We can pretty much confirm that you're int the right major.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Just one hour.

TUCKER: Just one hour.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Wow.

TUCKER: You know, you gotta do the work.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yes.

TUCKER: If you do the work the work will work for you.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

TUCKER: OK.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

TUCKER: OK. We have uh, some great tools. One of my, our... one of my favorite tools is a tool called Focus 2. Focus 2 is career assessment that looks at uses the sweet-spot method that looks at your your your interests, your personality, your values and skill to determine and what occupations are aligned with each one of those.

And then we look at your sweet spot. Which occupation was at the intersection of all of those at the most of those?

You know, then we guarantee you that in your sweet spot or, either a dozen of occupations, maybe two dozen of occupation, and maybe one or two majors that'll get you to that occupation.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That's great. So again, I'm focusing more on the front part of what Career Services does. I know you all do a lot, right?

I know part of what you also do is helping students find an internship opportunity and, you know, careers and different things.

One of the questions that I have for Career Services is especially for the engineering components. Students want to do engineering... again, we clear that out. Students think they want to do engineering, before they find out they have to do math, right? And hopefully they come to you guys. I know you had said, well, no, that's not what you want to do, right?

However, the other side of that is for student that is doing engineering that takes a lot of their time. When you help them with an opportunity to do an internship, What is the time commitment? Are they able to balance that internship with their school work?

What has been kind of, in your experience, how students are able to manage both if they're still in school and want to do an internship?

TUCKER: We have what we call career specialists. OK, I'm a career coach, career development coach and I deal with the career exploration and help them answer those three questions.

In terms of looking for employment... an internship, we have career specialists...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Ok.

TUCKER: That can probably better answer that question

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Ok.

TUCKER: But, um, I would say that in doing, looking for an internship. You want an internship that is not going to interfere with your schooling.

So if you go into school Mondays through Fridays and Mondays through Thursdays, you want an internship that possibly on the weekends, or if you're going to to to, to school in the afternoon and evenings you might want to internship in the morning.

So internship will kind of will be a a short term experience that you would have with an employer, and usually most interns, uh, the employers work with you in terms of your time.

OK, so you have to balance your... you it's time management... study skills as well as you know make your your work commitments as well as the commitments to your internship.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So we're getting pretty close to kind of the information that we needed for this interview. But for that, what is it that you do in Career Services that students probably don't even know about.

TUCKER: Wow, we do... we do a lot of things. One thing that we do have is we have, um, we have a have a job board and a lot of people don't know about that.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Me neither.

TUCKER: We have a job board called College Central Network. We have, we have employer relations specialists that go out to the community and say, listen, we have students studying to become engineers. We have internship, we need internships. We need jobs for them. We have students studying to become nurses. We need internships, we need jobs.

And when we get that information, we put this on our College Board called College Central Network. College Central network is only Privy to students... credited students and alumni.

So another thing you might not be aware of, but even after you graduate, you can't get rid of us.

You're still are eligible to take part in College Central Network, the College Central Network, you can also find information about internships that you mentioned.

So we have a college we have a, a, a job board.

We also do what we call we... we are kind of the bridge from school to work and when we can't bring employers on campus, we try to bring them to bring you to the employers.

We used to do this thing called road trips. Before COVID, we would take students to places like to see the Charlotte Hornets. The different job opportunities... people who are interested in careers in sports. We would take them to Charlotte Hornets to meet with management to talk about the different careers. We did it with the Carolina Hurricanes.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I'm going to be calling you for some tickets no, right?

TUCKER: And you will be surprised at the different types of jobs that were there.

So, now now that, with COVID we have tried... We worked around this and we're doing virtual tours. We just did one with Amazon. A tour of Amazon and different jobs.

We did one recently with NASA, uh space center and the different jobs.

So, we... that's another thing that we do, we try to bring our students to to the employers and employers here, to the students.

We have different networking events where we would have panels of people in specific industry for instance, engineering where you can ask them questions virtually or in person.

Umm, how do you... how do you get an internship in your company, for instance...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right.

TUCKER: That kind of thing.

You know what are the uhh the the new, umm... uh, things that we need to be aware of as students trying to get into your industry.

So, we have those, we do vision board parties, vision board workshops, there's a lot of different different things that we do with Career Services.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: One other question, by the way, students always want me to ask the people that I interview is how to motivate them to stay in college and keep going in college.

What is your advice or suggestion to keep motivating students or for them to motivate themselves to still stay in college?

TUCKER: Always remember why?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.

TUCKER: Why did you... Why did you go decide to go to college in the first place? You know... is

it because you wanted to prove to yourself, prove to your grandma... go to your parents, that you can do this?

Because of the fact that you're wise that you wanna help people. You know of one of my "why's" is that I, because of the fact that when I when I my journey with career development, my mission is to help people find out who they are, what they want to do in life and how to do it.

You know, find out what your "why..." your "why" can... always come back to your "why," because your "why" can motivate you. You know, sometimes we forget, you know, why did we come here in the first place?

So I think that's that's good that that's good to do that motivate you. Find a mentor, find somebody who is doing what you want to do and it doesn't have to be a physical mentor could be a virtual mentor, you know, find uhh uhh... one of my mentors was a guy called Les Brown, a motivational speaker.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I know Les.

TUCKER: You know him?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah.

TUCKER: So, this is his journey right in in in that can motivate you sometimes is to find out what they do because you're not the only person going through things, life will happen to you. You're right, life will happen to you, but you just dust yourself off and get up and keep on moving.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, before we wrap up, we talked about Career Services it's the place that I would have gone to if I was a student.

So then probably I would have changed even though, by the way, I don't regret the steps that got me to this part here. I'm happy I am where I am, but I wish I had the resources to go to.

Where can we find you, Mr. Larry?

TUCKER: OK, remember this careers... careers with an "s"... [careers.waketech.edu](https://careers.waketech.edu)... [careers.waketech.edu](https://careers.waketech.edu). When you go to [careers.waketech.edu](https://careers.waketech.edu) you have an option to schedule an appointment virtually or an in-person.

We do have in person wheat we call career lens labs available Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 5 on most campuses, but again, if you go to [careers.waketech.edu](https://careers.waketech.edu) you can find out how to make an appointment, whether it be in-person or virtually with one of our career coaches.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Well there you have it another edition of Let's Talk Ed With Professor Chris. I'm gonna try and summarize what Mr. Larry just told us, but I think the first thing is look for the Career Services as we already established, whether you think you know what you're doing, it's not a matter of changing what you think you wanna do.

But like Mr. Larry said it's a confirmation. I like that... it's a confirmation.

Just run through the... and it provides you more options as well on what to do. It only takes about one hour for you to really know that this is what you want to do. One hour. That's all it takes.

With that... Stay tuned for the next edition.

Thank you Mr. Larry.

TUCKER: Alright. You're welcome. You're quite welcome.