Issues Detected with the Career Competency Compass
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ENGL5182 Writing User Documents
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Note: Numbers in () refer to the participant number.

[Career Competencies page](#) (from University Career Center website)
This researcher began the usability tests by asking the participants to locate the "Competency Compass" from the [Career Center webpage](#). Since the shortcuts are off the screen below the image/marketing announcement, only one participant found the icon labeled "Competency Compass" (7). Most of the participants looked under "I want to.." and found nothing (2, 3, 6). One participant who started from "I want to…" clicked on the "Find A Job or Internship," then "Apply for Jobs," and then saw "Career Competencies" on the left menu (6). One participant looked under "Students & Alumni" and scrolled down to the "Prepare for Interviews" button (5). One participant looked under "Employers" because they thought that a list of competencies that employers are looking for would be found there (4). Then when I reminded them they are a "student," they clicked on "Students & Alumni" and eventually (it is a very long list) saw "Career Competencies" and clicked on it (2, 3).

Recommendation: Improve marketing of the "Competency Compass" or change the name, so students recognize it as an entity and will click on the named icon.

Once on the [Career Competencies page](#), the participants learned about career competencies with a brief introduction followed by a list of each of the competencies with an explanation and an icon at the top. Nearly every participant wanted to click on the name of each competency and the icon to see more information. One participant recommended that the long page of competencies be converted to a Drupal accordion list of the names of the competencies (6). A click on one of the names of a competency would open the full description and the icon would click to go to more information. This structure of the webpage would bring the introduction to the "Competency Compass" much higher on the page or preferably link to another page focused on the "Competency Compass."

There is no introduction to the "Competency Compass" other than the video and the text at the bottom on the Career Competencies page. With this introduction so buried on the page, few students would find it independently and figure out what it is. One participant said they would not have scrolled to the bottom of the page and would have missed the entire introduction of the "Competency Compass" as well as the video (6). The video is really the best introduction. From the name, one participant thought they would find sample resumes as well as lectures, videos, and Canvas courses to explain and explore the competencies as well as actual jobs (7).

Recommendation: Abbreviate the **[Career Competencies page](#)** using Drupal's accordion menu for the competencies and link to a separate landing page to introduce the "Competency Compass."

Video

The video found on the **Career Competencies page** is extremely helpful to explain the purpose of the "Competency Compass." It is perhaps better at explaining the application than the paragraph at the bottom of https://career.charlotte.edu/competencies or anything on the "Competency Compass" itself. However, the video is not clearly labeled as a video. It has an icon like an audio file rather than an icon like a video (1, 2, 3, 7) and does not have a description indicating it is a place to learn about the purpose and use of the application. Participants suggested renaming the video something like "Video Introduction (Orientation) to Career Competencies" and expanding the video for improved visibility and recognition and so that the length of the video (1:25) is visible. It might also be promoted as a source to help you get the most out of the application.

Recommendation: Highlight the video by showing it full screen, giving it a more accurate title, displaying the length of the video, and marketing it as a quick introduction/overview.

Name

The name "Competency Compass" is really awkward to say out loud (5). The word "compass" means giving directions or pointing in the right direction and is perhaps not the best name for this site, which gives options for UNC Charlotte students to review for things to do while at UNC Charlotte that might help them develop the NASE competencies as well as provide sample resume bullets and interview questions they might be used in preparing for the job search and interview process. Self-improvement, self-development, or career development are really the focus of the site as are personalized development of desired skills and expertise. The application does not provide directions or guide students; hence participants did not know what the application was or would do for them. One participant thought the "Competency Compass" would be about their values and morals (3).

- Career & Self-Development, which is one of the NASE competencies, might be a better term with the other 7 competencies being beneath the umbrella competency (1).
- Ignite your career (6).
- Career Compass (6).
- Add the word "career" to the title.
- "Career skills inventory."
- "Inventory" might be a more appropriate word instead of compass.
- "Career experience compass" (2).
- "Skill Map" (5).
- Other words that were mentioned for the title: self-Improvement, self-development, career development, develop your skills (1).
- Other suggested terms were skills or expertise (7).

"Competency" has a minimal or negative connotation (5) to it and did not have meaning for the participants.

- Competency seems like a broader term that applies to more than just career competencies.

Career is not a part of the name and does not appear anywhere on the application, except for the Career & Self-Development competency. "Competency Compass" is a totally stand-alone application ("portal", 6) and does not link to anything outside of it.

Recommendation: Consider renaming the application with a more descriptive, positive, and appealing name and include the word "career." Provide a link to and from the Career Center website to more fully integrate the application into the other Career Center offerings. Add Career Center branding (6). Link to other useful sites that relate closely to what is in the "Competency Compass": Hire-A-Niner, NinerEngage (5), and the course catalog for fuller descriptions of the "classes" listed.

Activities and Classes
The two organizing elements: "activities" and "classes" might not be clear to all participants
- Activities might be better named "opportunities" as not everything listed is an activity (1, 5).
  - Several participants were confused by the variety of different types of activities and recommended dividing "activities" into categories such as: jobs, learning communities, internships, student organizations/clubs/groups, volunteering, in-class assignments, etc.; perhaps a drop-down menu could appear when you click on activities, so students could select the desired category (2, 6).
- Classes might be more accurately named courses - as a class is just one session/meeting of a course (1); but student participants understood "classes."

When participants clicked on "Classes," they noticed a helpful introduction; however, "Activities" does not have an introduction that explains what is included in that area (6). An introduction under "Activities" could list what is included in that category.

One must start from "Activities" or "Classes" to find a list of items under one of the competencies. Why wouldn't starting from each "competency" be a better approach or at least an option since the competencies are what the students are approaching the system to develop? All participants wanted to click on a competency and find both classes and activities for that competency and were frustrated when they were forced to approach the content by classes or activities. Since the "activities" category contains so many different types of things they might do, the participants did not understand why they could only approach the content from the two categories.

Recommendations: Restructure the application, so that the list of competencies are clickable and go to a list of the activities and classes that help develop them. Add an introduction to "Activities." Divide "activities" into categories such as jobs, groups and organizations, learning communities, internships, in-class assignments, etc.

Specific Entries
Once you get on an entry for a single class or activity, the label "How much are you using?" for the competencies and the # of stars assigned to each one is not clear. The phrase suggested to

several participants: "how much am I using the skill listed in my life right now before engaging in a class or activity" (1). One participant thought it was a survey question (6). The label should indicate that this activity/class focuses on developing the listed competency to the extent indicated by the number of stars. Perhaps something like: "Helps you develop…," "Helps you develop your competency in…," "To what extent would you develop these competencies in this activity or class?," "How much are you using these competencies in this class?" (6), "What competencies are you using in this class or activity?" (7), "What skills are you gaining?" (4), "Competencies developed in this class or activity" (2), or "Main types of competencies used" (3). One participant recommended rephrasing the label away from the question format (7). On entries that list a large number of competencies, they are not in order by the number of stars, which is highly confusing (See LEADS; 4).

Recommendation: Rename "How much are you using?" to more accurately describe that what follows are the competencies and the extent to which you would develop them in this "class" or "activity."

Stars
According to the participants, the stars are inconsistently applied. They based this observation on entries for classes or activities in which they had participated. Sometimes the competency with the largest number of stars was not the most-emphasized or developed competency in the course. Once a participant noticed the inconsistency in the application of the stars, they stopped looking at them (as with the search feature). One sophomore said the stars were "not helpful" (5).

Recommendation: Apply the stars to activities and classes more consistently.

Descriptions of Classes and Activities
Some participants preferred to see the university catalog description for courses rather than the conversational description that is included in the "Competency Compass" entry. Or a link could be provided from the "Competency Compass" entry to the catalog entry.

One participant (5) suggested that students be encouraged to add entries for student groups and organizations as their descriptions would be more accurate for students. Several participants were extremely pleased to find activities or classes they had participated in or taken and then got excited about the application. But then, they did not agree with the narrative describing the activity and number of stars assigned by the faculty member and then they wanted a link to the actual description of the class from the catalog or the organization from NinerEngage (5).

Recommendation: Connect the entries to the official catalog description of classes and the website for a group or Hire-A-Niner for a job.

Self-Assessment

While all of the participants selected "Remind Me Later" because of the time pressure during the usability test, they were frustrated by being prompted to take the Assessment every time they clicked the "Home" button. One participant said there should be a check-box option to not be prompted again. Another participant said the prompt to take the assessment should only appear once per session (3). The presence of the "Assessment" button at the top of all screens re-emphasized that they could easily take the assessment whenever they wanted. Several participants said they would not take the assessment unless there was an explanation of why it was important (motivation) to get the most out of the application (6) and they would need to be referred by an academic advisor to take the self-assessment (1). Naming the link "Self-Assessment" as the actual page is titled might help students know what it is. Two participants thought taking the assessment was important to get the most benefit out of the application and said they would go back and take it later.

Recommendation: On the menu bar, rename "assessment" to "Self-Assessment." Allow students to check that they do not want to be reminded to take the assessment.

Marketing
Several participants said they would not use the "Competency Compass" unless they were directed to by an academic advisor or in a face-to-face session. Even when in the "Competency Compass," the participants had a very difficult time understanding what it is for and how they would use it. It needs to be more fully and clearly explained on the Career Center website and in introductory sessions with students. One participant suggested promoting the "Career Competency" in SOAR, with advisors, in the Career Center and its programs (such as Meet-Ups), and in a required orientation to the Career Center for some courses (6).

Recommendation: After providing a fuller introduction on the Career Center website and the application itself, conduct a full marketing campaign to bring it to the attention of students.

Search
There is no explanation of what the Search does or what it should be used to accomplish. It does not make any suggestions or auto-correct typos. It does retain previous search terms, which is helpful and was noted by the participants. Nearly all of the keywords the participants entered came up with zero results, which led them to question its utility. Participants wanted to search by major (political science; psychology), course prefix, course title, or an activity they had participated in during their time at UNC Charlotte. The search function was very important to all the participants.

Once you are in Search results and click the back button, you get a form submission error (document expired) and have to click a 2nd time to get back to the search box (6). It seems to happen the first time you click the back button consistently in Chrome and sometimes in Safari. On subsequent attempts to click the back button to return to the Search results, it appears to work. The previous search string remains in the Search box so you can easily re-run it, which is helpful.

Recommendation: Build the search index to include all UNC Charlotte course prefixes, majors, tags, and categories of "activities."

Tags

The tags are rarely used, but several participants thought they would be highly useful if applied consistently throughout the application. Participants wanted to search by "activity," "clubs & organizations," etc. and recommended they be applied consistently to every record or indexed so they could be searched in the "Search" feature. One participant wanted to see a tag for activities and classes appropriate for a student's year in school (freshman, sophomore, etc.) (5).

Recommendation: Create a taxonomy of tags and apply them consistently to every record.

One participant was highly supportive of the "Competency Compass" as a concept and thought it could become a co-curricular transcript for students of the activities and classes they had participated in while at UNC Charlotte. It would have to be a comprehensive inventory of what is available at the university. But marketing it this way might be more successful with students (2).

Minor Issues
- There is no way to log off the site or get out of it without closing the browser window (1).
- On a Macbook Pro using Safari, the "e" in "Chart Your CoursE" was not visible on the screen.
- On results screens with a white background, one cannot see the menu items that are in white text.
- Some participants liked the themed graphics (6) and others disliked them intensely. One participant thought the images should be smaller, but the navigation bar larger (6).