

This is Eastern Michigan University's *Career Corner*. And welcome to Season 2, Finding Your Fit.

Welcome back to the *Career Corner* podcast. I'm back for the first time after a few weeks. And I'm really excited that I get to co-host with my fellow career coach, Barb, for the first time. So how are you doing today, Barb?

I'm doing great, Brad. Thanks for having me on today. I'm excited to be co-hosting this episode with you as well.

And we're winding down the season of the podcast. And over the last several weeks, we've had a really, really great time examining important factors that grow into your career development as a student here at EMU. Additionally, we've examined various avenues of personal and professional growth and development that you can take and that you can really dive into to help explore and navigate options in your time here. Today's episode is really all about ownership, in particular, taking ownership of your learning and your degree path.

Brad, this is an essential topic that I'm glad we're covering today. Ownership is critical for students to get the most out of their college experience. However, this topic can get lost in the weeds if we don't encourage intentional thought around it. So in light of the message of ownership, we're happy to have Gregg Heinrichs join us. Gregg is an Academic Advisor in the University Advising and Career Development Center. And he can help us understand the various ways students can take ownership of their own degrees and make that what they want. Welcome, Gregg.

Thanks, Barb. Thanks for having me on, Brad and Barb.

So, Gregg, we're so excited to have you join us today. And let's go ahead and jump right into this topic of ownership. So on this subject, we're really talking about individualizing degrees to fit the student. So one of the hidden gems at EMU is this thing called an Individualized Studies Plan, or an ISP. This particular path is your specialty. So can you tell us a little bit more about what this ISP actually is? And, really, who can benefit from it?

Absolutely, Brad. As you've noted, ISP stands for Individualized Studies Program. The ISP substitutes for a more conventional major. And it's flexible enough to include a wide variety of courses already completed by the student. For our students who have been earning college credit for decades or whose academic goals have changed multiple times, and especially for students who've earned a lot

of community college credit, ISP can be the difference between frustration and graduation.

Thank you for that information, Gregg. As a career coach, I see students experience the struggle of narrowing their degree down to just one area. This program is an excellent opportunity to take ownership of their education and develop an academic plan that is customized to their passions, interests, and goals. So, Gregg, as you know, one of our concerns as career coaches is making sure the students are career ready and making sure they present well to employers. How is this particular degree perceived by employers? And what advice would you give students to make sure they're using it in the way it was intended?

Excellent questions, Barb. We tell students that ISP is a great fit for individuals who've earned lots of college credits and whose professional goals require them to have a bachelor's degree, if their goals don't require that a specific major be attached to that degree. When we work with prospective ISP students who aren't sure of their professional goals, or whether ISP is appropriate for reaching those goals, we always refer them to a career coach. We want to be sure an ISP student and bachelor general studies recipient gets where they want to go professionally.

It's vital that ISP students know how to refer to their major and degree on their resume and that they're comfortable talking with prospective employers about why they chose ISP. With this in mind, we recommend that ISP students review their LinkedIn profiles with their career coach. Reviewing a LinkedIn profile with a career coach satisfies learning beyond the classroom requirement for general education. And it also gives students valuable practice marketing their bachelor general studies degree, and marketing themselves.

Gregory, we really, really appreciate that shout-out there. And we're very thankful that you send those students to us. And from that career coach perspective, we appreciate that. Because we're always having students reflect on how these decisions make sense to their longer term goals. And I like what you said about being comfortable talking with employers, and that marketing piece about how this particular degree, how these courses, and how all these embellishments really fit into that plan.

So it's all in context. For example, if you choose an ISP degree, or specific major, or you take an internship, it really needs to be about the knowledge and the skill development relative to your field. In the workforce of 2020 and beyond, it's going to be a little bit less about that specific title of the degree and really more about what went into it. So the last question that I have for you, Gregg, is, what are some other ways that students can create and modify their own degree to really fit their

individual goals, so that they don't need to feel pigeonholed into taking classes that they maybe just don't enjoy?

Excellent question, Brad. Co-ops, internships, and field experiences are all excellent ways to earn credit in practical real-world settings. Many EMU majors require one of these to graduate. But any student can do one. They just need a faculty sponsor in their area of interest. The same is true of independent study courses.

ISP works best for students who've already earned 90 or more credits. But it can also work for students with fewer credits, too, provided they've met prerequisites for the 300 and 400 level courses they wish to take. The coordinators work closely with our ISP students to help them identify courses they may take as ISP students in their areas of interest.

If the student's ISP is approved, and they decide they want to substitute a course or courses in it later, the process is exactly the same as substituting courses for other majors. If students want to learn more about ISP, their next step is to visit the UACDC website and schedule a meeting with one of the ISP coordinators. The coordinators are really, really good at helping students create a strategy for satisfying unmet ISP, general education program, and credit hour requirements to help them graduate as soon as possible.

Thank you, Gregg. This is wonderful information for students to have while looking at their academic plan. I find that the more conversation students can have with their career professionals, professional mentors, family and friends to solidify their academic plan, the more confident they become about their decision around it. That confidence allows them to take ownership of their decision and articulate exactly why they chose ISP, as well as how they see it fitting into their professional goals.

Well, Gregg, thank you so much for being with us today and speaking about this important topic. Stay tuned next week when April and I talk about your career secret weapon-- the informational interview. This can really be a game changer. And we will discuss how to conduct these interviews and the benefits they have to your career. Until then, remember--

We support your goals.