



Clemson University Uses Harrison Assessments To Help Students Improve Career Planning and Selection

Dr. Charles Tonkin understands just how daunting career-related decisions can be for his students, especially as graduation day approaches.

Dr. Tonkin is Chair of Clemson University's Graphic Communications Department. His students' career options include jobs in printing, packaging, publishing, imaging and a variety of other fields. But having so many possibilities actually makes career planning and selection more complex-particularly as his students try to determine which jobs they're best suited to ... how to prepare for post-graduation job interviews ... and how to map out their career paths.

These are the issues Dr. Tonkin addresses when students finally make their way into his classroom. "I teach the last class our Graphic Communications students take before graduating," he says. "So my focus is very real-world oriented-prepping them for the rigors of job interviews, for example, and helping them think seriously about the jobs and industries that interest them most."

To give his students their best chance for career success, Dr. Tonkin uses a variety of tools and resources in his classroom including Harrison Assessments' Career Assessment Package.

The Company:

Clemson University

The Challenge:

To help its Graphic Communications students better prepare for real-world job interviews, imminent career choices, and long-range career planning.

The Solution:

Harrison Assessments' Career Assessment Package.

The Outcomes:

Shows students the jobs that best suit their specific capabilities, personalities and behaviours.

Opens students' eyes to career possibilities they might not have considered.

Helps students clearly communicate their skills and strengths to potential employers during job interviews.

– Helping Students Understand Themselves and Their Options –

"I've looked at a variety of assessment tools and the Harrison assessment definitely asks the best questions," he says. "It not only gives you a clear picture of your personality, behaviours and skill sets but it also reveals critical aspects of how you work and make decisions. It even identifies potential career choices you might not have known about."

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The Harrison assessment achieves this deep level of insight by measuring 175 separate characteristics of each student—from interests and motivations to work values and task preferences, among others. The assessment then provides each student with graphs and data to give them insights into their decision-making style, how strategic they are, their ability to delegate, their organization and communication skills, and other skills and qualities that are essential to choosing the right job as well as the ideal employer and work environment. Harrison also ranks each student's specific career options based on these findings. It can sort career options by likes/dislikes, personal strengths, educational level or a variety of other factors. The assessment even provides students with a Career Enjoyment Analysis, comparing their career preferences and interests to those of a given job.

Dr. Tonkin first introduced the assessment to a group of 45 Graphic Communications students. "They were a little sceptical at first," he admits. "But once they saw their individual results, they realized how valuable the assessment is." The same scenario played out with a second group of 65 students.

According to Dr. Tonkin, the common theme among both groups was, "This is really about me. This assessment truly understands how I operate and shows me how well-suited I am to particular jobs and career paths."

Insights That Change the Course of Careers

Haley Hendry, one of the first Clemson Graphic Communications students to take the Harrison assessment, says it unquestionably changed the course of her career plans. "My original plan was to go directly into sales or account management," she explains, "but the assessment opened my eyes to other opportunities that better suited my skills and personality." Haley now works as a print process engineer for Coveris, a premier packaging and engineered coatings manufacturer.

"I never would have considered an engineering role prior to taking this assessment but my job works really well with my analytical nature," she notes. "The assessment specifically told me that I have a strong desire for decision-making authority. I didn't realize how true this was until I started the job I'm in now."

To help students like Haley improve their career planning and selection, Dr. Tonkin reviews some of their assessment results in the classroom. He also spends time on interviewing strategies based on their potential job choices, asking students questions they're likely to face during job interviews.

Haley believes this experience was crucial to her immediate career success. "Being able to communicate your strengths and talents to an employer is critical in interviews. After taking Dr. Tonkin's class and the Harrison assessment, I could clearly describe myself to interviewers and answer tough questions about how I would handle certain situations. It's imperative that you understand yourself to effectively communicate all of this to someone else."

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Now that Dr. Tonkin has guided two groups of students through the Harrison assessment, he's considering initiating the process sooner rather than waiting until a few months before students graduate. "I think it would help students to have these personal insights earlier," he says. "It would give them more time to think through what they've learned about themselves and how all of that impacts their career planning and choices."

Dr. Tonkin believes the more students understand about themselves, the better their career choices will be. That's exactly what makes the Harrison assessment so valuable.

About Clemson University

One of the country's most selective public research universities, Clemson University serves a uniquely driven and highly accomplished student body. Ranked as the 23rd best national public university by U.S. News & World Report, Clemson is a science- and engineering-oriented college dedicated to teaching, research and service. Founded in 1889, we remain committed both to world-class research and a high quality of life. In fact, 92 percent of our seniors say they'd pick Clemson again if they had it to do over.



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