

Embedding Career Readiness in the CIS Curriculum: Insights from an Undergraduate Professional Development Course

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Abstract

As the job market becomes increasingly competitive, students must rely on more than technical and soft skills to secure internships and full-time positions. Networking with industry professionals and demonstrating sustained engagement in campus activities have become crucial ways for students to distinguish themselves. Most institutions offer support through career centers—such as career fairs, employer events, and résumé coaching—yet many students do not fully utilize these opportunities. To address gaps in students’ awareness of and participation in professional opportunities and networking, the computer information systems department at Georgia State University created a required, zero-credit professional development course. In this paper, we describe the rationale for the course, provide an overview of its design, and report on its impact over one semester. Findings from this initial study suggest that the course enhanced students’ ability to identify career options and roles aligned with their major and expanded their professional networks. We also present student feedback on the course and conclude with implications for practice and research.

Keywords: career readiness, professionalism, professional networking, undergraduate computing education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the cost of higher education rises, gainful employment of graduates with bachelor's degrees has become an important metric for assessing the value of a college education (Sin et al., 2017). According to a Princeton Review (2022) survey, 42% of college applicants and their parents indicated that the biggest benefit of getting a college degree is the potential of getting a better job and higher income. Unfortunately, the transition from being an undergraduate student to a professional can be daunting for students as they navigate an uncertain job market, limited prior work experience, and an unclear view of employability (Green et al., 2019). Research also indicates a gap between graduates' skillsets and employers' expectations (Doherty-Restrepo et al., 2023; Mayorga, 2019).

For information systems undergraduate students, while technical knowledge is foundational, soft skills and professional development remain critical to securing internships and full-time positions. Professional networking skills have become crucial in finding the right opportunities in today's world for all undergraduate students, especially as artificial intelligence (AI) is upending the entry-level job market. In response to these needs, institutions of higher education are adopting a multi-faceted strategy to produce "career ready" computing students (Lunn et al., 2026). Strategies include aligning curriculum to industry needs (Banisakher & Stewart, 2024), integrating career-related assignments into existing courses (Zheng et al., 2025), embedding high impact practices (e.g., service-learning, internships, and capstone projects) into the curriculum (Young, 2020), supporting co-curricular programming (Jin et al., 2025), and offering career services.

Despite these efforts, we found no research that examined the alternate approach described in this paper: a mandatory zero-credit professional development course specifically designed for computer information systems (CIS) students. This discipline-specific course is run as a co-requisite to a required junior-level CIS class, and students must pass the course to be eligible for the senior-level capstone course. This study addresses the following research questions:

What impact does a zero-credit career readiness course have on:

- RQ1. Students' awareness of and participation in professional opportunities?
- RQ2. Students' development of a network with peers?
- RQ3. Students' development of a network with IS professionals?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of career-readiness in the literature is generally adopted from National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and is defined as a combination of competencies, skills, and personal attributes that allow students to transition successfully into the workplace or graduate school (Xiaoqing & Bin Zainudin, 2025). Research indicates that institutions of higher education address career readiness in a variety of ways, such as including career readiness content in discipline specific courses, through career centers, and through co-curricular programming (Moore and Thaller (2023), Seth (2020), Newell and Ulrich (2022), Naseer et al., 2025)). Priddis et al. (2025) indicate that career development centers or the curriculum alone is not sufficient to prepare students for transition to the workplace. A comprehensive system consisting of multiple stakeholders across campus can better help achieve the career readiness goal.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is frequently used to design career-readiness and intervention courses. It draws on Bandura's research on self-efficacy. Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to execute behaviors and achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1977). Lent et al. (2002) describe that students with moderate self-efficacy are more likely to view their capabilities

realistically when tackling challenging situations. Importantly, efficacy is not considered static and can be affected by an individual's level of confidence, experience and situations. According to SCCT students' self-efficacy, expected outcomes, and goals are central to their career interests, choices, and performance. Studies indicate that students who receive structured career guidance aligned with SCCT principles demonstrate high career decision making ability (Yuan and Zainudin, 2025, Flores et al., 2020). Thus, self-efficacy theory and in turn SCCT provides a strong grounding for developing career readiness courses.

A longitudinal study by Naseer et al. (2025) found that decisional outcomes were associated with self-efficacy and expectations, suggesting that as students act and observe results, their sense of control and agency grows. Additionally, several intervention studies show that when undergraduate students practice professional networking, their networking or career-related self-efficacy increases. For example, Kanar (2023) links informational interviewing with improved networking self-efficacy. Similarly, Anders (2018) connects professional networking with improved self-efficacy for social networking and professional development. Jin et al. (2025) specifically focus on computing undergraduates connecting speed networking with alumni resulting in improved understanding of career development and positive rating for career readiness.

Successful career transitions require students to actively build adaptability resources—concern, curiosity, control, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). This aligns with Bateman and Crant's (1993) concept of proactive personality: a stable disposition toward seeking out opportunities, taking initiative, and persisting until meaningful change is achieved. Proactive individuals tend to pursue growth opportunities, apply creativity, and adapt themselves to improve their circumstances, allowing for more effective career management (Crant, 2000). Given that proactive personality correlates with career planning, exploration, commitment, and self-efficacy (Green et al., 2019), fostering this trait should be a key goal of any career readiness course.

Only 40% of colleges offer for-credit career readiness courses (Reardon et al., 2024). Research indicates that existing career readiness efforts are often generic and that discipline-specific approaches are needed (Newell & Ulrich, 2022), while Reardon et al. (2024) warn that the volume of required career-related content risks overloading such courses. Collectively, these studies suggest that interventions are most effective when they integrate experiential learning, structured reflection, and opportunities to build professional self-efficacy—principles that informed our course design.

3. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Georgia State University (GSU), a large public research university in Atlanta, enrolls 53,144 students (45,065 undergraduate) and has made career readiness central to its academic mission through an institution-wide college-to-career initiative in its latest QEP (Georgia State University, 2026). The CIS department requires students to complete either an internship or capstone course before graduation; most opt for the capstone's department-provided industry projects over self-obtained internships. Although RCB's career center (CAC) offers resume reviews, career fairs, and employer sessions, these services have not translated into robust internship placement or strong student engagement, likely influenced by the fact that roughly 55% of GSU students are Pell-eligible and balance work and family obligations alongside coursework. Additionally, since the CAC serves all RCB students rather than CIS students specifically, its programming tends to be generic rather than discipline-specific, and many students remain unaware of available resources or the importance of early professional development engagement. To increase internships, provide discipline-specific support, boost awareness and participation, and cultivate a professional development mindset the department created two zero-credit courses: CIS 3205 (Professional Development, primarily juniors) and CIS 3980 (Intermediate Professional Development, primarily seniors).

4. COURSE OVERVIEW

Given that 55% of OSU students are Pell-eligible, the department designated the career readiness courses as zero-credit co-requisites to core CIS courses, ensuring all majors complete them without additional cost; satisfactory performance counts for 3% of the corresponding course grade. Now in their third year and refined through several revisions, CIS 3205 introduces students to academic and professional resources, supports progression in the major, and helps them explore career pathways and

establish professional connections. CIS 3980 focuses on expanding and sustaining students' professional networks and exploring opportunities beyond campus.

This study focuses on evaluating the impact of CIS 3980 which has the following course outcomes:

- CO1. Demonstrate basic professionalism, such as meeting deadlines, following instructions, time management, planning and organization, timely and professional communication, etc.
- CO2. Develop and/or extend professional network beyond GSU's campus.
- CO3. Develop or enhance materials used in a job search, such as a technical resume or an elevator pitch.
- CO4. Participate in professional events.

Each semester, enrollment ranges from 140-200 students. The course follows a hybrid format with three in-person meetings and asynchronous assignments described below.

4.1 In-person meetings

This course has monthly, mandatory in-person meetings (three per semester). These 2.5-hour class meetings provide an opportunity for the faculty to build a relationship with the students, engage them in the vision of the course, provide networking opportunities with peers, and provide professional connections with industry leaders. A typical class format is shown below:

Duration (minutes)	Description	Related area
10	Ice-breaker activity	Peer networking
30	Capstone information session	CIS experiential learning course
5	Break	
60	Capstone Panel with alumni and industry partners	CIS experiential learning course
20	Networking with guests	Professional networking
10	Student presentation on conference opportunity (e.g., National Retail Federation student program)	Professional opportunities
15	Course announcements and reminders	

Table 1. Typical Timeline for Class Session

In Spring 2026, in addition to the capstone panel, students also had an opportunity to learn about job search strategies in the age of AI from a professional coach, and graduate school opportunities and application process.

4.2 Asynchronous work

Students also complete assignments asynchronously throughout the semester that are aligned with the expected course outcomes. These assignments require students to engage with their existing professional network, continue growing their professional network, seek guidance, improve their professional artifacts, and attend professional events. In Spring 2026, students worked on the following asynchronous activities:

- Job deconstruction and resume revision to match the posted job
- Participating in a professional society meeting external to GSU
- Participating in an employer event hosted by RCB's CAC
- Working with a professional connection to conduct and obtain feedback on a mock interview
- Participating in a CIS-specific professional opportunity promoted through the CIS newsletter
- Attending a career fair and applying for internships or full-time positions

These assignments require students to perform actions, such as attending events, connecting with professionals, updating and recording an elevator pitch, etc. that result in network building/growing and

improving professional awareness as opposed to merely consuming information passively. Through this combination of in-person and asynchronous activities the authors aim to create a culture of continued professional development and develop a proactive personality among students, along with improving their self-efficacy that can prepare them for a successful career.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Study design and participants

A total of 148 junior and senior-level CIS students participated in the CIS 3980 course in Spring 2026 semester. Students were asked to complete a pre-survey at the beginning of semester and a post-survey at the end of the semester. The pre- and post- survey questions were distributed via Qualtrics and captured students' demographic information, perceived career readiness proficiency, experiences with professional opportunities, and engagement with peer and professional networks. The survey questions were designed by the authors after considering the course goals and the student opportunities emphasized throughout the program. The experience and engagement questions support studying the actions performed by students through course assignments. In addition, each survey included free response questions. The pre-survey asked students what they hoped to gain from the course, and the post-survey asked about the top three things that worked best for them in the course as well as three things that could be improved about the course.

Data collection procedures were approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure student confidentiality, and only data from students who consented to participate were included in the analysis. As an incentive, each survey was worth 2 points toward the course, but non-completion could not harm students' grade in this Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory course.

In total, 84 CIS students (57% of the class) consented and completed both surveys. Participants were predominantly upper-division students under age 30 and were nearly evenly split by first-generation status and by gender. Table 2 summarizes participant demographics.

Category	Survey Participants
Classification	53 Seniors (63%) 30 Juniors (36%) 1 Sophomore (1%)
Age Range	73 -18-24 range (76%) 20 - 25-29 range (21%) 3 - 30 or older (3%)
First-generation Status	40 First-Generation (48%) 44 Not First-Generation (52%)
Gender	43 Male (51%) 41 Female (49%)

Table 2. Survey Participant Demographics

5.2 Data Measures

This study focuses on questions surrounding student awareness of and participation in professional opportunities (RQ1), development of a professional network with peers (RQ2), and development of a professional network with IS professionals (RQ3).

RQ1: Professional Opportunities

Two survey questions addressed student awareness of professional opportunities in terms of the variety of IS roles available as well as ability to identify career options. These questions were asked on both the pre and post surveys and used a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, students indicated their agreement with the statement: "I am aware of the various roles that align with my major and concentration that I can pursue upon graduation" (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). They also rated their perceived proficiency in identifying career options (1=highly deficient, 5=highly proficient).

To evaluate student engagement in optional professional opportunities such as scholarships, participating in computing-related conferences, and attending competitions or hackathons students had

to check which opportunities they had either applied to or participated in. We then computed the number of activities within a category they had participated in (Table 3). For instance, the *Scholarships* variable was coded as 1 if students checked that they had applied to or participated in either academic scholarships or travel scholarships, 2 if they checked both, or 0 if they checked neither. For our analysis, we focused on student responses on the post-survey.

Variable	Prompt: I have applied to/participated in the following
Computing Competitions	• Participated in competitions or hackathons
Scholarships	• CIS or other academic scholarships/fellowships • Travel scholarships
Conference Attendance	• Presented at computing-related conference(s) • Attended a computing-related conference locally in the Metro Atlanta area • Attended a computing-related conference outside of the Metro Atlanta area

Table 3. Items Measuring Student Engagement in Professional Opportunities

RQ2: Peer Network

We measured students' development of a peer network through their participation in CIS-related student clubs. We asked them to respond to yes/no questions on both the pre- and post-surveys:

- I am a member of one or more CIS related student clubs
- I have attended one or more CIS related student club events.

The post-survey also asked students to report directly on whether they built relationships this semester with peers inside of GSU CIS as well as with peers outside of GSU (whether CIS-related or not).

RQ3: Professional Network

We measured student's development of a professional network through their engagement in external activities that would allow for direct contact and networking with IS professionals. We asked students several yes/no questions about their participation in specific activities on both the pre- and post-surveys:

- I am a member of one or more CIS related professional organizations outside of GSU
- I have attended one or more CIS related professional development events at external/off-campus professional organizations, such as Technology Association of Georgia

Both the pre- and post-surveys also asked students to rate on a Likert scale the extent to which they engaged in practices designed to nurture professional relationships. They were asked if they regularly checked-in with existing professional contacts and sought career guidance (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). They also assessed their proficiency in building or maintaining a professional network (1=highly deficiency, 5=highly proficient).

The post-survey also asked students to report directly on whether they built relationships this semester with professionals inside or outside of GSU. They were also asked if they had followed up with professionals after an event.

5.3 Data Analysis

When the survey had both pre- and post- items that used Likert scale, we conducted a paired-samples t-test to examine whether there were statistically significant differences between the beginning and end of the semester. When both pre- and post- items used yes/no responses, we used McNemar's test to determine if changes were statistically significant. In cases where we had only post-survey measures, we provide descriptive statistics.

To better understand students' perceptions of the class, students were asked two open-end questions on the post-survey: "What are the top three things that worked best for you in this Professional Development class this semester?" and "What are three things that could improve this Professional Development class further?". The responses to each question were imported into NVivo 15 for qualitative

analysis. Open coding was used to identify major themes, especially around the areas of professional opportunities, peer networks, and professional networks. We adopted an inductive, bottom-up approach to qualitative data analysis using first- and second-cycle coding (Miles et al, 2019). During first-cycle coding, the second author applied descriptive codes to each student response about what they liked about the course and things they thought could be improved. During second-cycle coding, the initial codes were clustered into themes.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Professional Opportunities (RQ1)

Students showed statistically significant gains in both identifying career options and various roles that align with the CIS major (Table 4). A variety of activities were acknowledged to help students understand their career options. Several students applauded the use of guest speakers with one stating that the “ability to hear from fellow GSU alumni and professionals about career development and opportunities” was one of the best parts of the class. Others mentioned the mock interview assignment: “I also think the mock interview from someone in your network was a valuable experience; I learned a lot from a very experienced CEO in the field I want to go into.”

Statement	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post-Mean (SD)	p-value
Please rate the degree of your proficiency (how skilled you are) in the following items: Identifying career options	3.68 (0.794)	3.96 (0.798)	<.001
I am aware of the various roles that align with my major and concentration that I can pursue upon graduation	4.00 (0.821)	4.23 (0.734)	0.014

Table 4. Student Awareness of Professional Opportunities

Students acknowledged that the class helped them learn more about the professional opportunities available to them through the class announcements, the emailed CIS Newsletter, and guest speakers. As one student mentioned, the class helped them to remember “to utilize resources at GSU.” Beneficial professional opportunities that were specifically mentioned included career fairs, masters programs, scholarships, and potential internships. In considering ways that the class could be improved, students mentioned wanting to increase the number and variety of opportunities discussed. Students asked for “more opportunities for internships and jobs”, “more options for events”, and “sending more informational news about outside conferences.” Students also offered suggestions for additional opportunities that could be useful, such as hosting career fairs during the class session, discussing the certificates students can apply for, and encouraging the development of projects that could become part of a technical portfolio.

We next turn to whether this awareness translated into actual student participation in three categories of professional opportunities: scholarships, conferences, or computing competitions by the end of the semester (Figure 1). Scholarships were the area with the highest level of participation, with roughly 51% of students applied for at least one type of scholarship. This breaks down into 31 students who applied only for academic scholarships, 3 who applied only for travel scholarships, and 9 who applied for both academic and travel scholarships.

Participation in computing-related conferences was slightly lower, with only 33 students (about 39%) indicating they had applied or participated. Among attendees, Atlanta conferences were most popular, with 26 students indicating they had participated in at least one local conference. Only 15 students participated in a conference outside the metro area, and 8 students participated in both local and non-local conferences. Only 2 students reported that they had presented at a conference.

Our lowest level of participation related to computing competitions and hackathons (N=17, roughly 20%), and nearly 24% of students indicated that they had not engaged in any of these areas.

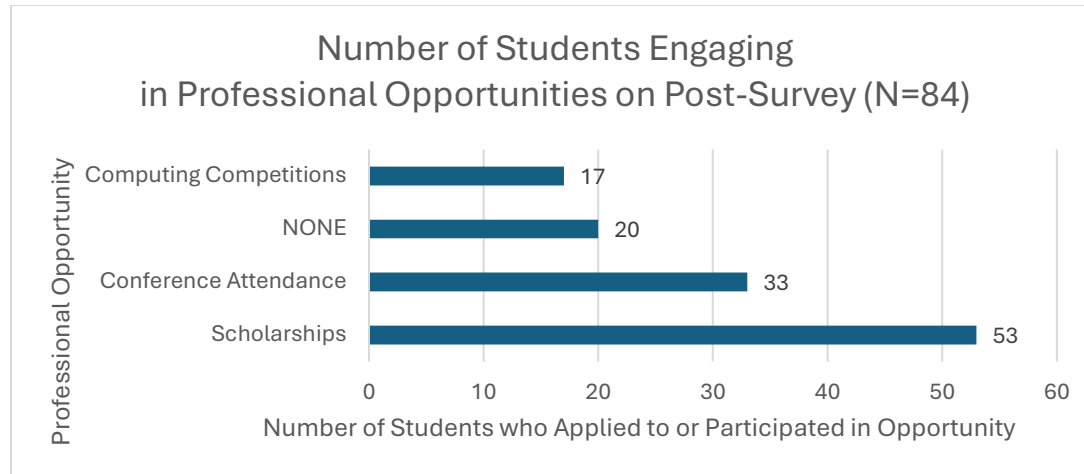


Figure 1. Student Engagement in Professional Opportunities (Post-survey)

6.2 Peer Networks (RQ2)

As shown in Table 5, student engagement with CIS-related clubs was high and largely stable across the semester. About 70% of students reported being members of at least one CIS-related student club at the beginning of the course, compared with 74% at the end. Overall, 8 students became club members (i.e., moved from no to yes) and 5 reported no longer being members (i.e., moved from yes to no). This small increase was not statistically significant based on McNemar's test. Similarly, roughly three-quarters of students reported attending at least one CIS-related club event at both pre and post, with equal numbers of students starting and stopping attendance, resulting in no net change in overall participation.

Category	Item	Yes PRE (%)	Yes POST (%)	Significant?
RQ2: Peer Network	I am a member of one or more CIS related student clubs.	59 (70.2%)	62 (73.8%)	.581
	I have attended one or more CIS related student club events.	65 (77.4%)	65 (77.4%)	1.000
RQ3: Professional Network	I am a member of one or more CIS related professional organizations outside of OSU	20 (23.8%)	49 (58.3%)	<.001
	Pre: I have attended one or more CIS related professional development events at external/off-campus professional organizations, such as <i>Technology Association of Georgia (TAG)</i> Post: I have attended one or more CIS related professional development events at external/off-campus professional organizations, such as <i>Technology Association of Georgia (TAG)</i> this semester.	23 (27.4%)	53 (63.1%)	<.001

Table 5: Student Membership and Event Attendance

By the end of the semester, most students reported building new peer connections across multiple contexts (Figure 2). Nearly all students (91.7%) made at least one new connection with peers in the

CIS department at GSU, and a large majority (79.8%) formed new connections with GSU students outside of CIS. In addition, 82.1% of students reported making new connections with peers outside of GSU, suggesting that students were also extending their networks beyond the university. In open-ended comments, some students recommended adding even “more in-class activities so students can get to know one another” and “having a student only networking event”. This points to mechanisms other than student club participation to increase peer-to-peer connection.

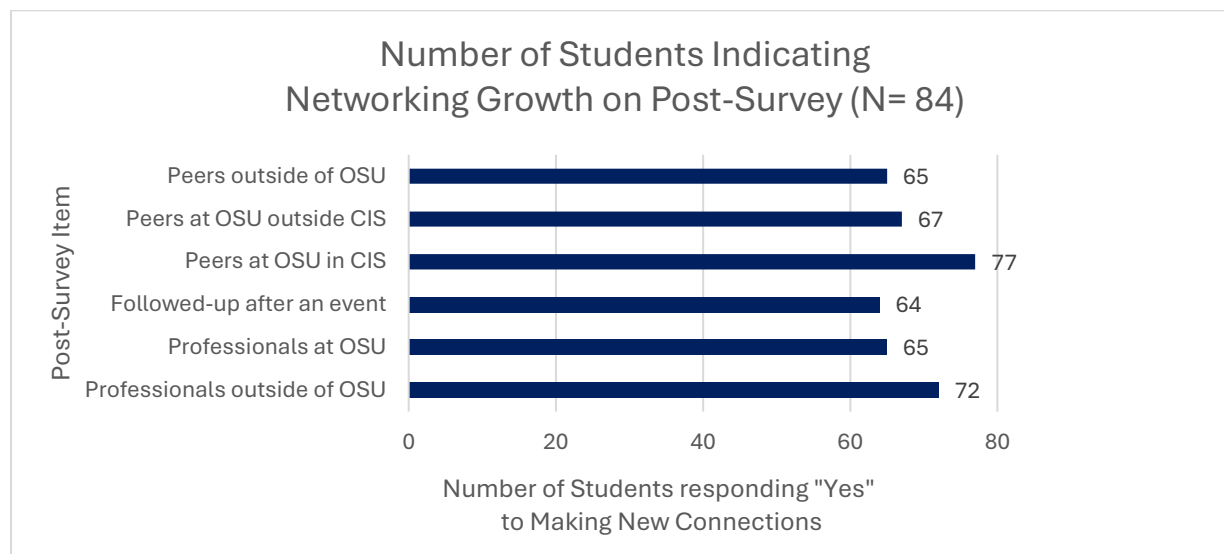


Figure 2. Student Connections with Peers and Professionals

6.3 Professional Network (RQ3)

Students showed substantial growth in their professional networks over the semester, especially in their engagement with external organizations (Table 5). Membership in CIS-related professional organizations outside of GSU more than doubled, rising from 20 students (23.8%) at the beginning of the semester to 49 students (58.3%) by the end ($p < .001$). Similarly, the share of students who had attended at least one CIS-related professional development event at an external or off-campus organization (e.g., TAG) increased from 23 students (27.4%) to 53 students (63.1%; $p < .001$).

Qualitative results support that students found this part of the course valuable. One student mentioned that “attending an event outside GSU ... really helped me grow my network and realize that i was passionate about the field”. Another mentioned that the course “taught me how important it is to attend events.” At the same time, there were some challenges mentioned with event attendance, including taking time away from the demanding nature of classes, student preference for online activities, and the fact that attending such events requires advanced planning. One student cautioned that we should “be aware of how hectic students’ schedules are. It’s hard to attend events not hosted by GSU.”

Students reported substantial growth in their professional contacts over the semester. By the end of the course, 65 students (77.4%) had made at least one new connection with professionals in their field at GSU, and an even larger share—72 students (85.7%)—had made new professional connections outside of GSU (Figure 2). Overall, 34 students joined such organizations during the semester (i.e., moved from no to yes), while only five students moved from membership to non-membership. As shown in Table 6, students’ self-rated proficiency in building/maintaining a professional network increased significantly from 3.32 to 3.58 ($p = .008$). In open-ended comments about what could be improved, several students wanted even more priority to be placed on bringing in “guest speakers from various companies” and “more professionals who have been working for 10 years plus” to further expand their network.

Although students felt more skilled at networking by the end of the course, they did not always practice the skills needed to maintain those relationships. On the post-survey, 64 students (76.2%) indicated that they had followed up with a new contact after meeting them at an event. In comparing pre- and

post-survey results, self-reported frequency of checking in with or seeking guidance from existing contacts showed only marginal, non-significant increases (Table 6).

Statement	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post-Mean (SD)	p-value
I regularly check-in with my existing professional contacts	2.65 (1.103)	2.86 (.984)	.054
I seek career guidance from my professional contacts	2.99 (1.146)	3.17 (1.004)	.066
Proficiency in building/maintaining a professional network	3.32 (.946)	3.58 (.895)	.008

Table 6: Student Engagement with Professional Network

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Implications for Practice

In response to RQ1, we found that the course improved students' awareness of CIS roles and their confidence in identifying career options. This is consistent with prior literature (Osborn et al., 2020). Overall, scholarship applications were the most frequently applied for opportunity, which makes sense given GSU's large population of low-income students. Very few students engaged in competitions and conference attendance. While our survey did not directly address reasons for not participating, the literature suggests they may lack the proactive personality and agency needed to commit to career planning (Green et al., 2019). We also note that these events frequently require off-campus participation, a longer time commitment, and additional funding for travel – all of which may be challenging for low-income students with family and work responsibilities. When presenting the benefits of these opportunities, faculty might also consider emphasizing available financial support options.

Our results for RQ2, indicate strong peer-network growth both within CIS and across broader campus and external communities. Since co-curricular programming can impact career-readiness among students (Naseer et al., 2025), the strong numbers for CIS student club membership and event participation are positive outcomes. Enhancing peer-based relationships is important for students, and we found evidence that students wanted even more opportunities to network with peers during class time.

Our RQ3 results indicated a gap between student's self-reported proficiency in maintaining a professional network and their actual actions (i.e., they failed to check in and seek career guidance). This suggests that students may have a high self-efficacy that causes them to overestimate their professional networking abilities (Lent et al., 2002). This also raises opportunities for directly coaching students on this in future semesters. In addition, our findings suggest that students prefer interacting with professionals on campus, during class time. However, having a required class assignment provided the additional incentive needed for students to address real barriers to participating in off-campus events.

7.2 Implications for Research

As discussed in section 3, literature review in this space indicates a lack of for-credit career readiness courses, a need for discipline specific career readiness courses, along with collaboration with campus stakeholders and identifies the challenge of such courses being overloaded. This paper addresses these challenges and presents a novel framework for embedding career readiness skills into the CIS curriculum. While some 1-3 credit career-readiness courses exist at the undergraduate level, our literature search did not reveal studies focused on a two, zero-credit, mandatory career-readiness course sequence. A dedicated two zero-credit course sequence offered as a co-requisite for core CIS classes ensures that all students benefit from the curriculum, the courses do not add to students' financial burden and provides an opportunity to develop a professional development mindset among students. This

framework can be adapted by others and studied further with specific research questions to be explored based on the curriculum included and desired outcomes. Additionally, our literature review indicates that research on career readiness specifically among computing majors is thin as compared to that across majors. Thus, this study fills a gap and contributes knowledge that is specific to CIS majors.

7.3 Limitations and Future Work

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future work. First, our survey items did not distinguish clearly between applying for and participating in professional opportunities, limiting our ability to interpret those behaviors; future instruments should separate these actions and provide clearer response options. Second, our analysis reflects a single semester of the second professional development course and does not follow students from their initial exposure to the curriculum, so longitudinal work linking pre-survey responses from CIS 3205 to post-survey responses from CIS 3980 is needed to capture the cumulative impact over time. Finally, only 57% of enrolled students both consented to the research and completed matched pre/post surveys, raising the possibility of nonresponse bias; future studies should aim to increase participation across multiple semesters to obtain a larger, more representative sample and to strengthen the robustness of the findings.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper presented the design of the second career readiness course for CIS students in a two-course sequence. Analysis of 84 pre- and post-surveys conducted in Spring 2026 showed statistically significant gains among students' awareness of CIS-specific roles and their confidence in identifying concrete career options. Results showed that student engagement in co-curricular activities, such as student club membership and participation was high to begin with and remained high until the end of the semester, while engagement in conferences, competitions and hackathons needs improvement. Results also showed substantial growth in students' peer and professional networks, while leaving room for improvement in behaviors required for maintaining a professional network over the long term. Multiple opportunities exist to further this study, including taking a broader look at the two-course sequence and investigating the impact from the start of the first course to the end of the second course. Given the low number of dedicated for-credit career courses, the large amount of information that needs to be conveyed to students and limitations on number of credit hours that can be required of undergraduate students, this paper presents an adoptable discipline-specific course structure to support students' career-readiness as they prepare to transition into the professional world. The results show the importance of embedding career readiness throughout the curriculum rather than treating it as a single capstone experience.

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