

## TRANSCRIPT

## A Needed Precursor

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[Title Slide: *A Needed Precursor*]

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Brook Oliver from Sierra College here has worked in career and counseling for 25 years in public, private, and education agencies. She's been a faculty member at Sierra College for 14 years, where she teaches personal and career development classes and coordinates career, transfer, and internship programs. She also serves as the co-chair of the Chancellor's statewide advisory committee on career development and is on the Board of Directors for the California Internship and Work Experience Association.

BROOK OLIVER

Welcome everyone. My name is Brook Oliver and I am from Sierra College. Just...probably most people know I was down south yesterday, so I felt like I had to kind of describe where Sierra was, and so you're here. You're right on the edge of our district—we actually stretch basically up 80. So if you went up 80 for about at least an hour you'd still be within our district. We stretch all the way up to Tahoe, and as you know we cover Placer and Nevada Counties. This is our comprehensive campus. It offers all the programs. And then we have site centers in Nevada County and another one up in Truckee. So if you go up 80 and you take the exit to go to Squaw Valley you'll see the sign to our campus on the left. Don't forget, there are some roundabouts that we all have to learn how to use.

And so, again, we're down here. We're considered kind of suburban because of the rapid growth in the south Placer area, but the vast majority of our district is going to be considered rural. It's a lot of open space. I'm here to talk about something that I think is a needed discussion about a precursor for this whole SEP to start with. So should I suffice it to say that I'm a career counselor. Do you know where I'm going with this? Okay, so I think that...I work with my students and talk about what a happy world that we would all be in if we're all in the right jobs, doing what we love because you've run into someone who obviously doesn't like their job this week, right? We...I flew down and flew back, and met lots of people who didn't like their jobs in the last couple of days.

And so we'd all be productive and happier and more successful and all kinds of wonderful things can happen. But somehow the legislature, in their infinite wisdom, have decided that

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that is some kind of magical moment that happens. You know, I call it a visit from the career fairy, right? Did you all get one of those? I don't know how, who it is, or where they come from, or how often, but a lot of students don't get that visit, right? So here to just say that career exploration, while I think that it's seen as an implied but still essential part to the SSSP process—yay, preaching to the choir. So there were some of us that were on the statewide committee who kept giving feedback to the SSSP task force as they were going through to reinsert the word *career* in there. So if you find it in there, it's in there folks, it's in there. But what got lost is that it didn't get associated in with assessment, orientation, counseling. So then you get the pushback from whoever on your campus, or I should—I know Denise is here—or the Chancellor's Office or wherever is, is that “Oh, we don't...that's doesn't pay...we don't pay for that.”

It kind of goes under your MIS reporting 11; your SS 11 code, right? “Other,” which is at 10%, you know, that little tiny amount? And so I'm fortunate enough that my SSSP administrator, our dean, and our vice president have stepped forward to say, “No, we do believe this is essential and that it is funded and coordinated and supported in all kinds of ways.” So, again, so the word is these exploration activities can be funded through SSSP funds, okay? They can be funded. Are you going to do huge intensive stuff like cover all your job search stuff? Maybe not. Maybe we're not there yet, but some kind of intervention. In fact, there is...I just found out about a new initiative, a new task force that's being formed at the Chancellor's level through...along with nominees from the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges, to have a team to put together some kind of app for all of us, some kind of assessment exploration piece. We already kind of have that in the California Career Café for those folks who are out there using that. Whether it's using some of those resources and restructuring it yet again as we've done time and time again for that resource or pulling in some stuff. But again it needs to be cheap and easy to get to and easy for students to follow, and so I'm actually hoping that I can maybe be on that team.

So it's...it is something that we do need students to have an informed decision on “how do we get there?” It's that we need them to be able to research and to affirm their choice. In kindergarten they get asked, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” And then we kind of don't ask them again, okay? In our educational process...there is a few schools out there that do things, but for the most part there is no designed activity piece of the curriculum to help lead them there. And there is no one single test, as we all know who are in career. Wouldn't that be great if there is a crystal ball that gets handed out or there is something else? But there isn't one so how we all combine those in different ways...I'm here to present our idea of how Sierra College is going to start getting there, beyond the things that we've already done. The idea is to not—I'm telling her—is to not do this.

[Slide: *Not THIS!*]

Okay, and this is what happens when we sit them down and say, “You must declare a major right now,” right? And they got nothing in high school or they're recurring adults or whatever the thing is, and we're going, “Yeah, but pick.” And we took “undeclared” off of their options and all this. So I think that that's a bit unfair that...the folks that it's unfair to also is the counselors, because there's nothing worse than having a student sit in front and you know

you're supposed to be writing a student education plan, whether it's an initial or comprehensive, and they're like, "I don't know." And you're like, "Hmm, transfer, no transfer..." I mean, you start with the basic kinds of things, and they don't always get there. And then what's going to happen? They're going to come back and you're going to redo it. And then you're probably going to come back, and then you're going to redo it. And how many times do we get paid that big lump amount of money for the comprehensive? Once. So wouldn't it be better to invest something front end, and how can we do that?

Also, for the students, as we know, if they come in they lack...they're going to lack motivation. They're going to turn or you say kind of swirl in the system, right? And now SSSP has been putting timelines financially on that clock. There's all these other things that are driving us to make sure that when they do come...I present this to high school counselors and they're like, "But, but they need this time for exploration and they...and they don't...they get two years of general ed." And I'm like, "Yeah, no." "But, but..." I'm all, "It doesn't." This...this is in place. This is where we're going, but we can help students get there, and I'm hoping that they'll actually use some of our interventions as well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

[inaudible]...Common Core is college and career readiness is a component of that...[inaudible]

BROOK OLIVER

I just asked them that question last Friday in this exact room. I had 50 counselors in here, vast majority were high school, and they all looked at me going...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It's not part of the curriculum.

BROOK OLIVER

They haven't done it. There's some work at the Chancellor's Office and some other things to look at how to pull that through. I'm trying to remember who mentioned it to me yesterday, but, no, they're very unaware of that. There hasn't been a lot of support or push. And remember, some districts can kind of decide how and what they're going to do. Now the counselors at the high schools that I've found—very willing, very willing. They're...so I'm also thinking that we can partner with them to push something that we develop down. And we might get those students, or at least more of them, having thought about these questions.

[Slide: *Career Exploration Online Class (.5)*]

So our answer that we're trying now is that we started with a workshop called Looking for Direction that we offer once a week; not highly attended because students don't do optional. But we do get some great referrals from our counselors. The students come in. We really just do an hour but it's raising essential questions. It is actually kind of just priming the pump, because what I found is that when, you know, when you research a new car and you set to buy a new car and then you drive around, everyone's driving that car, right? You thought you're going to be new and different? Is it that they all bought the new car? Or you can finally notice

it. So what I found, if we pose the questions to students and then send them out to almost just live their life without very little, their brain keeps working on it. So that's what my job was, to formulate these questions, give them a couple of little activities in this workshop. And what we did is we followed up. We called the students who had attended over the first section of them, and we said, "Was that worthwhile? Did you feel like that hour, and anything that came out of it..." We called them about a week, week and a half after, and nearly 80% said, "Yeah, it moved me forward. It moved me in some way. I clarified that I didn't want to do something that I wasn't willing to let go of," or, "Now I think I feel like I have a choice between two things," or, "Now I know I at least...I need to answer this, because this is what's keeping me from declaring a major and feeling certain about it."

And then the other piece is that we had a follow-up. We offer a one-on-one follow-up to the students, to come back after a week of kind of doing whatever activities they'd like to do off of the menu that we give them. And when they...for those that come back, really only 40% of the students that went through the workshop chose to come back. We don't know how many of them thought they had got enough movement, they didn't need it, or, again, it was an optional. But those students by and far came back out with very specific questions, asking for a plan, and for most of them I could write a comprehensive SEP at that point. So, not that it wouldn't be adjusted some, but it's better than nothing.

So we did the workshop to winnow the activities and assessments, to formulate the questions and assignments, and we're continuing to adjust. It's gone through curriculum. We readjusted the previous half-unit career exploration class and kind of really brought it down. This is not the one and only career thing that they'll have to do. It's just enough to move them along to getting to course of study. And we still have some more work to do with them later, but this will get them there.

So, of course, we're going to do the basics of looking at value, skills, interest, a little bit of personality. We're not going to do the Meyers-Briggs. We're not going to add on costs or interpretation time. We're going to skim a little...a little lighter than that. The impact of each of those—a little bit of an introduction to labor market and then crosswalking over to course of study.

So I want it to result in some basic decisions. And that would, of course, be—the ultimate would be—they can declare course of study, right? That's...that would be perfect. Now, they're not all going to get there. It's a four-week class. And so, if nothing else, they're going to rule some things out. And what I want is—bare minimum—go with me, academic planning folks—could we get you to maybe choose science, no science, right? Wouldn't that be glorious? Because science, okay—sequential. We've got biology, we've got chemistry, we've got math things and all that stuff. I know you've got to get started, and if you're starting back at basic skills then we're starting to talk about how long you're going to be here and all the stuff. If not, you're college ready blah-blah-blah. And the non-science, like, okay—we might have a little more time to continue to do this.

I would throw in there business; you got business, no business. Because we've got the accounting, the economics, the...that. But if we could at least get them there, couldn't you

write a better SEP than at the beginning? And would it need less adjustment later and maybe not all that time? And at the very, very least, will they come back and be able to—at the end of this class they'll have a one-on-one with their instructor or another assigned counselor if they're in another program like EOPS, ESPS, Trio, all of those, to identify, “Okay you went through this, what's still stopping you?” And we really believe that they'll be able to know. “Because I feel like this essential question hasn't been answered. I still feel like I need to research at least this.” But they'll have a plan. A lot of out of a half unit, but that's the plan as of now. We do offer the full three-unit career planning class, so we're not replacing that.

**[Slide: Key Components]**

So as we go on in this, the key components for us to be able to move this way, and the reason why we can do it now, is we have a way to identify these students. So we have a way to identify those students. And in a newly implemented thing that's being used for the second semester right now, which is a pre-registration questionnaire that all students will fill out. So all students fill out this when they go in to find out what their registration appointment is; they have to do these questions first. Because that's what they want to know is, “when I get my classes.” “Ha ha, not yet. So answer this.” Of course, we're going to have them affirm, is this still your address and your phone number and all that important stuff. What is your course of study? What is your educational goal? And then there are some transfer kind of things so they can attach a GE pattern to them if they're on the transfer track. And then these two questions come up. It says, “How certain are you of the educational goal that you selected on a scale of 1 to 10?” That's it. And then one more question, “How certain are you of your course of study decision 1 to 10?”

But through a system called Starfish we can now go in and grab that information, and we can send a personalized invitation to everyone who rates themselves below a 5 to say, “You need help and we've got it for you.” So that's my way to identify the students. We have a way to notify them, again through the Starfish system. We can add other attributes. So I just talked to our folks...to our person that runs Starfish, and she ran the students that were below a 5 and those on probation, which we can make do stuff, right? So there's about 450-ish, something around there, students right now through this, her last run, that I could really go in and go after, and I think really help move along.

And then, of course, that's the compel. So how to compel students who don't do optional well: probation and dismissal. Maybe it's not going to be optional. Possibility. Compel is...that's why we added it to...from a workshop to a unit-bearing course, okay? So it counts in some way, shape, or form for those that it matters. Now it doesn't have to be just that. We're also—well, I can't remember where I talked about this, we—I'm going to maintain it as a workshop as well, but we're also going to move it to an online workshop for our students who live up in Truckee, etc. And then we're still going to do a self-help version package for those students who self-identify and happen to go in or get sent to—they'll be able to take themselves to the same activities, end up with a kind of results page that they would then make an appointment with the counselor with. That's their ticket to their individual appointment to then start or finish that conversation.

The cost's very low the way that we've done it. The supporting resources that we're using for the most part are free. That would include California Career Café, mynextmove.org. We're looking at integration of maybe a couple of others; I learned of another one yesterday from a colleague. We may use the interface of Eureka Express, which is a new packaging to Eureka that they rolled out this year. If you're going like this, you got an email. So go back in your email for Eureka. It's called Eureka Express and—I think it's [eurekaexpress.com](http://eurekaexpress.com) you can go to—and right now if you want to see my assessment results you can go in under SIERRA CTC, and then the password is “career” because I'm so creative, and go in and take a look at it. So it's the same Eureka database, but it's a little more intuitive. It takes them through the three steps. So assessments, crosswalks to some careers, crosswalks to some majors, but it, it kind of collects it for them in a more readable format than the Eureka, where you have to keep clicking and clicking. So that's...that was their attempt, and it's focused specifically on high school and incoming freshmen as the audience that it's written for. No text will be required. So just the half-unit class; hopefully if they're BOG or on financial aid it'll just tag on without any additional cost to them.

[Slide: *Key Components*]

And then our biggest reason for online is that it offers the flexibility that students want. It offers the flexibility that I'll need in trying to staff this many sections. And then it allows us to scale, because we're out of space on this campus. We were built 60 years ago, and between 9 and 2 there's not another room to be found. Unless we start, you know, hauling in, I don't know...I was thinking about those little pods that you can get for storage. Like, how many students can you fit in a pod? Just have an SEP pod. So we're just really bursting at the seam, so for this kind of intervention we need to be able to keep it online. And that will work for us. So, again, as I mentioned, the alternate versions.

[Slide: *Take-away*]

So our last piece is just the takeaway...is that I really don't believe, especially in addressing this at the beginning...okay, I'm a career counselor. I don't want to do myself out of a job, and I think that the intensive wonderful stuff that I do is wonderful, but most students, or many students, don't need an intensive career exploration. They just need someone to get them focused. All the answers, they have them. They're inside them. They're not out there, but nobody's had them or directed them to look inside, take into account what your values are, and what you really are good at, and what you like to do. And as the Oprah—we have an Oprah video that we show called *Possibilities*—is like, figure out what your role in this world will be and go for it. So it doesn't have to be extensive. There can be more stuff that we can offer for those; that this is not enough. It's not expensive, which used to be, you know, an issue and still can be in many ways. But I think it is a very efficient way to reach a lot of students, to make a step that will lead to more efficiencies in SSSP down the road. It is, I believe, effective as shown through the kinds of work that we're already doing in our workshop. We're just running it into an online version of it. And, as I mentioned before, I think it's an essential step.

MARY RAUNER

Thank you very much.