



## Enhancing career prospects for students from Low SES and underrepresented backgrounds

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# Why?

“Every STEM student to have the opportunity to gain meaningful experience in industry, integrated into their courses, for credit”

Chief Scientist (2015)

Prinsley, R & Baranyai, K 2015, ‘STEM-trained and job-ready’, *Office of the Chief Scientist*, Canberra



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# Why?

## Social Capital

# The program

Aim to increase participation by:

- Inviting students to 1 on 1 intensive support
  - CV advice, identifying employers, approaching employers
  - Tapping into networks (internal and external)
  - Providing networking opportunities for building relationships
  - Providing female mentors
- Ongoing support
- Utilising current career workshops and seminars



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FREE SHORT COURSE

# JOB READY

EMPLOYMENT & COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR STEM STUDENTS



# Job Ready

- SSAF funded program
- Runs over 8 weeks (1hr per week)
- Select entry – Access Melbourne priority

# Hour of Power

## Job Search 101

- Tailored 1hr workshop
- Students actively learn how to:
  - Search for potential organisations
  - Find professional associations
  - Utilise alumni tool on LinkedIn
- Sessions are oversubscribed

# The outcomes

## Immediate success and ongoing demand of all programs

- **Increase in numbers** of students:
  - women in underrepresented backgrounds **increased** financially disadvantaged, rural/regional, Indigenous and students with a disability **increased**
- **Student feedback** was extremely positive
  - Tailored support was critical to their success but how can we scale up further?
  - Understanding and developing professional networks allowed them to feel more confident



# New knowledge for us

- Scale it back to basics
- Identify skills and interests first
- Introductions are sometimes necessary

## **Key learning for us:**

Barriers for the target group are no different to the barriers for other students!

# Case Study - Aaron

## First appointment:

- No idea where he wanted to intern and what skills he might have
- Exploring anything in the pharmacology and biochemistry fields

## Attended:

- Hour of Power workshop, Science networking event, Interview Preparation workshop (run centrally)

## Second appointment:

- Returned with a shortlist of 10 different organisations
- With assistance, the 10 preferences were ordered into priority and discussed skills for making an initial approach
- He identified his top preference
- Increase in confidence and ability to apply

## Application:

- Applied directly to the organisation
- Completed a two-stage interview process
- Successfully secured a summer placement...(is now working there in a paid role!)

# Feedback

“...it feels great to have secured an internship, I'm absolutely over the moon! Again (I can't say it enough) thank you so much for all your help and the support system you've created, I really appreciate it. If it weren't for the connections I wouldn't have come across this fantastic opportunity!”

“Thank you so much, you have really taught me a lot and I wouldn't have gotten to this point without your help”

“I didn't even realise I had that many skills!”

“Thank you very much for your help yesterday! It was very useful and interesting, and I will definitely take on your advice. It's great to see that the university has such great support networks set up for students (especially women in stem).”

‘This subject has been a highlight of my course so far for sure! I hope that many more students can also gain lots from this experience, especially women and underrepresented groups.’

# Moving forward

## New model to roll it all into **Job Ready**:

- Increase numbers to include 2 more sessions per semester (currently 4 per semester)
- Include Graduate Research tailored programs
- Initially provide drop in option rather than specific appointment (peer support)



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