

The Life Design Catalyst Program

**William H Johnson Jr., Student Success Navigator and Life Design Catalyst Coach
School of Health and Human Sciences, University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

Institutional description

With more than 20,000 students and 2,700 faculty and staff, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is the largest state university in the Piedmont Triad and has an annual economic impact of more than \$1 billion. The campus has grown to include 30 residence halls and 30 academic buildings on 210 acres. UNCG takes pride in being a learner-centered public research university. The College of Arts & Sciences and seven professional schools offer more than 100 undergraduate areas of study and over 100 master and doctoral programs. UNCG is considered a Minority Serving Institution (MSI).

The School of Health and Human Sciences (HHS) are a group of faculty, staff, and students who value outstanding teaching, research, community engagement and service. Our dedicated and experienced faculty engage undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students in a love of learning, the creation of new knowledge, a spirit of entrepreneurship, and a commitment to our vision of making the world better, safer, healthier, and more humane and just. The School of HHS has a total of 3654 students - 3087 undergraduate and 567 graduate - with nine academic departments and programs, with more than 50 concentrations and certificate programs. 49% of our students are from minority populations.

Program Development

The Life Design Catalyst (LDC) Program started as a 1-credit course - Personal and Academic Success in Health and Human Sciences - in Fall 2008 with 40 students (2 sections of 20 students). The course was originally created to provide students to "know themselves" better in order to choose a major that matched their values, interests, strengths, and talents and gifts. Over time, the course evolved from that original model to its most recent iteration as an academic/success coaching process, empowering students to create their educational experiences, such as choosing their major, getting involved in student and/or professional organizations, and exploring potential entrepreneurial endeavors, that resonate with their heart and their soul.

Our biggest obstacle: the number of LDC Coaches. From Fall 2008 to Fall 2015, we could only serve up to 200 students at a time (only one trained Life Design Catalyst Coach). We felt that facilitating 10 "coaching courses" per week (one course in the morning, once course in the afternoon, 5 days a week, 20 students per course), was the most effective caseload for our coaches. In November 2015, the School of HHS was able to receive funding to hire an additional LDC Coach; as a result, we increase the enrollment in the coaching course from 193 students in Fall 2015 (with one LDC Coach) to 320 students in Fall 2016 and 374 in Fall 2017. In December 2017, we hired an additional LDC Coach, with the goal of expanding the program to 500 students in the Fall 2018 and for all first-year and new transfer students in Fall 2019.

In August 2016, we were able to secure a space (the HHS Life Design Center) to host all of our Design Your Life courses, as well as provide additional coaching support after traditional work hours for enrolled students through our trained undergraduate LDC Coaches. As of this writing, we are in the process of securing another space on campus to serve our needs due to the demolition of the building which housed the original Center.

Program Description/Goals and Objectives

The Life Design Catalyst Program was created for the advisors in the School of HHS at UNCG to identify a way to work with students in a more meaningful way. Through the exploration of PURPOSE ("Who do I want to be?") and MEANING ("What am I here to do?"), the Life Design Catalyst (LDC) Program empowers students to actualize their potential and optimize their lives to find their right path and become the best version of themselves, in order to utilize their gifts and talents in service to something bigger than themselves and make a positive contribution to the world. We help students answer the question, "What COULD I do with my life?" instead of "What SHOULD I do with my life?"

Life Design Catalyst Program Principles

The Life Design Catalyst Program are guided by these principles:

- Views the exploration of purpose and meaning as the foundation for student development and student success.
- Learning focused on self-actualization (becoming the best version of yourself) and self-transcendence (utilizing your gifts and talents for something bigger than yourself).
- Incorporates design thinking as a process in designing one’s life.
- Guided by concept of self-expertise – that YOU are the expert on YOU.
- Empowers students to take control of their lives through self-directed learning and self-created experiences.
- Integrates the development of the entrepreneurial spirit - a true passion and deep commitment to create meaning, taking calculated risks to design a better life and a better future.
- Coaching for meaningful conversations AND personal transformation vs. coaching for performance. LDC Coaching is content-based process.
- Better character = Better people => Better people = Better students.
- Simple Rules to Thrive (Adapted from Eric Barker’s “Barking Up the Wrong Tree”)
 - (1) Know Thyself. (2) Pick the Right Pond. (3) Serve Profoundly.
- Life Design Catalyst Motto: Find Your Place in the World. Today.

Design Your Life Courses

We have developed four courses for the Life Design Catalyst Program. Two of the course are primarily for first year students (1 credit each) and two courses are geared towards sophomore students (3 credits each). We believe these four courses are the building blocks for students to define their path, craft their message, and develop a plan to make the world a better place. We’ve provided a more extensive description of the two first-year courses below, which supports the data results shared in the next section of this paper.

First-Year

- HHS125: What Could I Do With My Life (1 cr)
- HHS135: Redesign a Life You’ll Love (1 cr)

Second Year

- HHS250: Purpose-Driven Entrepreneurship (3 cr)
- HHS275: Entrepreneurial Personal Branding (3 cr)

Below is a sample curriculum of the two 1-credit courses (Fall and Spring Semesters) which incorporates the skills to become self-experts, the connection with an advisor/coach, and aligns with registration and scheduling of classes for the following semester. Note: We don’t require a textbook for the course; we are big proponents of Open Education Resource, so students are provided materials on-line, free of charge.

HHS125: What Could I Do With My Life (Fall)	HHS135: Redesign a Life You’ll Love (Spring)
<u>Weekly Activities</u> Introduction to Breathing Meditation Kick-Ass Questions About Life Personal Responsibility I Am Statements My Life Story Worksheet Personality Type Assessment Personal Core and Desired Work Values Character and Engagement Strengths Lollipop Moments and Seven Word Life Motto Find Your Spark Questions and Purpose Statement Meaningful Work Statement and Personal Manifestos Vision of Best Self Twitter Pitch I Am Poem <u>Posters/Presentations</u> My Life Story Major/Career/Calling Exploration Personal Charter	<u>Weekly Activities</u> Gratitude Project Random Act of Kindness Activity Meditation/Prayer Activity Journaling Activity Movement/Exercise Activity Daily Practice/Life S.A.V.E.R.S Activity Life Word Activity Best Things About Self Activity Find Your People and Build Your Community Activity <u>Posters/Presentations</u> Current State vs. Ideal State Be Your Own Superhero My Good Life

Life Design Catalyst Program Data/Assessment

Procedures used in program evaluation

We use both quantitative and qualitative assessment for the LDC Program. Most of the quantitative assessments is based on retention and graduation rates, focused on the HHS125 course, since we've been able to track the students since Fall 2008. We have also been able to obtain qualitative assessments focused on students' response to our learning objectives. Results are listed in the sections below.

Results/outcome

Since the inception of the HHS125 course in Fall Semester, 2008, we have tracked students' graduation and retention rates. The chart below shows that students who enroll in the "HHS125: Design Your Life I - What Could I Do With My Life" course in the Fall Semester of their first semester are retained from their first to second year AND they graduate from UNCG at a higher rate than those students who do not enroll in the HHS125 course in the Fall Semester. (Note: UNCG Retention and Graduation Rate Data obtained from UNC-GA Data Dashboard and/or UNCG Office of Institutional Research Common Data Set web site)

Fall to Fall Retention Rate	HHS125	UNCG	Total Enrollment in HHS125 (Fall Semester)
Fall 2008 to Fall 2009	78.9% (30)	77.0%	Fall 2008: 2 sections, 40 students (38 1 st year)
Fall 2009 to Fall 2010	75.6% (31)	77.0%	Fall 2009: 3 sections, 56 students (41 1 st year)
Fall 2010 to Fall 2011	76.9% (30)	75.6%	Fall 2010: 3 sections, 65 students (39 1 st year)
Fall 2011 to Fall 2012	81.1% (30)	75.8%	Fall 2011: 3 sections, 66 students (37 1 st year)
Fall 2012 to Fall 2013	65.3% (32)	73.6%	Fall 2012: 3 sections, 73 students (49 1 st year)
Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 ^{1,2}	75.0% (66)	78.1%	Fall 2013: 8 sections, 111 students (88 1 st year)
Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 ^{3,4}	84.9% (101)	77.0%	Fall 2014: 10 sections, 170 students (119 1 st year)
Fall 2015 to Fall 2016	83.5% (111)	76.0%	Fall 2015: 10 sections, 193 students (133 1 st year)
Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 ⁵	82.5% (221)	76.0%	Fall 2016: 17 sections, 320 students (268 1 st year)
Total (652/812)	80.3%	76.2% est.	Fall 2017: 20 sections, 374 students (TBD)
(Number in parentheses are actual number of first year students retained)			(Number in parentheses are actual number of first year students enrolled in HHS125 in the Fall Semester)
Graduation Rates (5-year)			-----
Fall 2008 class (25/38)	65.8%	50.1%	Enrollment in HHS135 (Spring Semester)
Fall 2009 class (23/41)	56.1%	51.5%	Spring 2014: 2 sections, 13 students
Fall 2010 class (19/39)	48.7%	49.7%	Spring 2015: 3 sections, 35 students
Fall 2011 class (21/37)	56.8%	-	Spring 2016: 3 sections, 33 students
Fall 2012 class (19/49)	38.8%	-	Spring 2017: 4 sections, 62 students
Total (107/204)	52.5%	50.4% est.	
Graduation Rates (6-year)			Retention Rate: Students enrolled in both HHS125 and HHS135 during their first-year: 90.6%
Fall 2008 class (28/38)	73.7%	55.0%	
Fall 2009 class (25/41)	61.0%	56.0%	
Fall 2010 class (22/39)	56.4%	54.0%	
Fall 2011 class (22/37)	59.5%	53.1%	
Total (107/155)	62.6%	54.5% est.	

¹ Reviewing transcripts of the 66 retained students in Fall, 2013, 37 (42%) have already graduated by December 2017 (4.5 years or less); an additional 17 are on track to graduate in May 2018 - which means that 61.4% are on track to graduate in 5 years or less.

² Fall 2013 was the introduction to the Life Design Catalyst Coaching process and curriculum to HHS125 students.

³ Reviewing transcripts of the 101 retained students in Fall, 2014, 95 of the 101 (79.8%) are still enrolled and on track to graduate in 5 years or less (May 2019).

⁴ Fall 2014 was the introduction of Life Design Poster Projects and Presentations in the HHS125 courses.

⁵ Fall 2016 was the first time all HHS125 instructors followed a common Life Design Catalyst curriculum (posted on-line through Canvas) for the HHS125 course.

We have also been reminded of other success metrics of the "HHS125: What Could I Do With My Life" course, that students who've enrolled in the course had a:

- 86% retention rate for our most at-risk students at the end of Spring Semester, 2016.
- 67% graduation rate for a subset of fifteen minority males enrolled in the course as part of the Rites of Passage Minority Male Mentoring Program in the 2012 Summer Session.

Student Learning Outcomes (Fall 2017)

We have also obtained student responses to the Student Learning Objectives outlined in the syllabus for the HHS125 course from the 2017 Fall Semester. The information below is the students' responses results to specific questions regarding the learning objectives, the effectiveness, and the overall value of the HHS125 course. The percentages indicate responses of students that chose either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to each of the questions, out of 328 total responses. Many of the responses below are most pertinent to the mission of HHS125 – which is to help students identify how they want to serve the world in a meaningful way, then connect that declaration with their major and their vision for the future.

- **92.7%** - This course helped me understand my personality, my strengths, and my values.
- **86.0%** - This course helped me understand my meaningful work - how I plan to serve others.
- **86.9%** - This course helped to clarify my goals and dreams, and create a vision for my future.
- **74.4%** - This course helped me decide on my major or helped me clarify that I am in the right major.
- **87.8%** - This course provided me with knowledge that could help me be successful in life.
- **82.0%** - I believe that I can make better decisions about my life and my future now that I have completed this course.
- **80.0%** - I have a much better understanding of who I want to be and what I'm here to do now that I've completed this course.
- **84.2%** - I found the "Major/Career/Calling Exploration" Poster or the Calling Connection Mind Map useful in creating a plan of action in college and/or after college.
- **70.4%** - I enjoyed having meditation/quiet time at the beginning of every class.
- **79.2%** - I appreciated the opportunity to interact with my classmates during class each week.
- **76.5%** - I believe a course like this should be a required course for ALL new students.

Potential for adaptation by other institutions

In June 2014, we hosted our first Life Design Catalyst Coach Training Program (then called Purpose and Vision Navigator Coach Training Program), for students, faculty, and staff interested in integrating purpose, meaning, and vision as a foundation for their coaching program. Any money earned from these Coach Trainings are used to support the Program - which includes hiring student coaches, purchasing supplies for the Design Your Life courses and the HHS Center, and supporting travel to conferences. We've hosted 8 Coach Trainings at UNCG, as well as 5 Coach Trainings at campuses across the country. Again, all proceeds from the Trainings are invested back to the Life Design Catalyst Program.

We have found that those trained as Life Design Catalyst Coaches have used their experience in the training to:

- Implement a new coaching/advising program.
- As part of a college-wide First-Year Experience Program.
- As a foundation of a First-Year Experience course.
- As a foundation for a TRIO Program.
- As a course for new Transfer students.
- And many more.

We have now trained over 375 Life Design Catalysts Coaches from 57 different colleges and universities internationally.

Summary

The Life Design Catalyst Program engages and empower students to create educational experiences that matter to them – and they stay and finish college!

“Our job in this lifetime is not to fit into some mold that others have determined is best for us. Our job is to find out who we already are – and become it.” - Steven Pressfield