



## Vocational Reflection

*Interested in having students engage matters and questions of identity, meaning and purpose, and consider how they, as scientists and as whole persons, are situated within the broader context of the world and its needs? Learn about how Dr. Jeff Dahlseid does this in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology capstone course.*

Jeff Dahlseid

Attendance #: 5

### Group discussions

- What is vocation?
  - How you view the importance of your work, how chemistry impacts your future, what work brings you purpose, work through your position to serve (a calling), how you choose to live.
- What are we doing now to engage students in vocational reflection?
  - There is interest in helping students expand their possibilities for the future - there is more to “helping people” than the medical field, but students aren’t aware.
  - Research experience can help students learn about their options.
  - What kind of guidance can we give to students in undergrad for them to realize their vocation?
  - Students often think that being a doctor is the one way they can help people. We need to encourage them to look around themselves and find things (technology, materials, etc) that they could learn about.
  - We should encourage students to find joy in learning. Bethel University works to incorporate this in their curriculum (alumni talks, essay assignments, ethics in research, etc)
  - Upper Iowa University: Has a required 2-semester research sequence (lit review, intro research paper, presenting), career development talks, active science club on campus.
- How do faculty incorporate vocational reflection in students’ earlier college years?
  - Incorporate “science in the real world” given at the end of textbook chapters.
  - Discuss how different fields of study can work together (geochemistry, materials, etc).
  - Help students recognize and apply their strengths.

### Jeff’s capstone course example: Identity, Meaning, and Purpose

- Vocation is PLURAL! We have many vocations.
- Themes: learning to be astonished (paying attention, noticing, etc.), narrative and story (to explore meaning), resiliency (self-awareness, development toward grit).
- Course meets 4 days/week
- First class of the semester focuses on astonishment (this sets the tone of the course; discuss the meat of the course later). Listen and watch a music/nature video: what do they notice?
- Reading assignment: The Slow Professor (book). Pleasure and learning - what is their relationship?

- Deep listening: one-on-one listening activity. Students read a poem, one asks questions from a prompt, the other answers them. The student asking the questions does not respond - they only listen.
- VIA Character Strengths assessment (free online resource).
- Zin Obelisk Activity: a game that explores the attributes that make you work with other people effectively.
- Resiliency inventory assignment: students reflect on their resiliency and how they can grow it. Aids in self-awareness.
- Gratitude and Mindfulness
- Narrative and story: what is personal narrative?
- Ego stories and soul stories.
- Superhero story (if a student was a superhero, what would that look like?). A deep listening exercise about what they wrote is assigned.
- Write a personal narrative. Parks reading (Sharon Parks and Larry Daloz).
- Students are given time during exam week to show others what they want to be observed regarding their identity (read a poem, perform a dance routine, demonstrate swimming skills, etc).
- Authenticity with students makes this lesson plan work!