Agricultural Sciences, Waterford Union High School
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Dear parent or guardian,

My name is Craig Kohn and I am the department chairman of Agricultural Sciences at Waterford Union High School. If you are receiving this letter, you have a student who is currently enrolled in an agricultural course. I’d first like to thank you for helping your student to gain a valuable educational experience through their course and other opportunities that we offer.

Secondly, I’d like to make you aware a major class assignment that your student will need to complete over the course of this semester. In the same way that all students in a Driver’s Ed course needs to get behind-the-wheel experience, we want all students to have Career Experience related to the course. We know that too many students leave high school with inadequate skills and preparation for the demands of the workforce. We hope to change this by helping students to gain college and career experiences while they are high school students to maximize their college- and career-readiness, and we intend to do this through a project called the Supervised Career Experience.

The Supervised Career Experience is comprised of the following components:

* **15 hours of career experience**: we are expecting students to gain at least 15 hours of experience outside of class. They can do this by having a job, job shadowing, volunteer work, educational presentations outside of school, research experiences, or a combination of any of these options. While they are completing their hours, students will be expected to get multiple performance reviews from an adult supervisor, record their hours and skills acquired, and complete a reflection on what they gained and learned from their experiences.
* **Career Experience Portfolio**: while students are in class, they will be completing profiles of a possible future career and a college they could attend to obtain that career, writing a resume and cover letter, and gaining experience in job interviews. Students will compile their college- and career-profiles, their resume and cover letters, and the reviews, journals, and reflections from their 15 hours of career experience into a portfolio that they will present and submit at the end of the semester.
* **Exit Interview**: students will meet with the instructor for their class before the end of the semester to present their portfolio and to discuss their experiences, what they’ve gained from those experiences, and what areas in which they still need to improve to be college- and career-ready.

While we are encouraging students to seek opportunities in fields related to the course in which they are enrolled, our main objective is that they are getting real-world experience outside of the regular high school setting that will maximize their readiness for college and for careers. An FAQ is included on the back of this sheet; more details can be found on our website at <http://wuhsag.weebly.com/supervised-career-experience-program1.html> . If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email me at ckohn@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us.

 Living to Serve,

 Craig Kohn, Instructor and Dept. Chair

# Frequently Asked Questions:

**So, what are they doing?** In a nutshell, we are expecting students to gain real-world experiences in a career of their choice through options such as having a part time job, job shadowing, volunteer work, independent research, or a combination of one of these options. Their experiences should total at least 15 hours. Students should be supervised by an adult and receive regular performance reviews. Students will document their experiences and present them as part of a portfolio that includes verification of their hours by an adult, a final reflection, and photo or video documentation as well as a copy of their resume and cover letter and profiles of their intended career and future college.

**When will this happen?** Students should gain their 15 hours of experience outside of class before the end of the semester. Students will have class time to get training on resumes, cover letters, and the college/career profiles.

**Why is this necessary?** Currently the number of teenagers with career preparatory experience is the lowest level since the 1940s. Many employers have expressed concerns that high school students are graduating without sufficient real-world preparation. Our goal is to reverse this trend by enabling students to gain this preparation in a real world setting.

**What counts towards their 15 hours of experience?** We will try to be as flexible as possible as to what actually counts for their15 hours so long as those hours are met with activities that help students to gain real-world career skills and knowledge. While a part-time job is one option, students could also job shadow, do volunteer work related to their future career, conduct scientific research related to a career, start their own business, or do an educational presentation outside of school to an elementary/middle school, civic organization, village or county board meeting, etc.

**What if my student doesn’t have any personal contacts in their intended field?** If a student is unsure about who they can contact to complete their work, they can email their instructor for assistance in finding professionals who will be willing to assist. We will work closely with students to connect them to any opportunities we can find if they request it. Students can also work with their instructor to complete a research experiment or develop an educational presentation.

**My student is very busy. How are they supposed to get this many hours completed?** In a semester, 15 hours averages out to less than an hour per week. If needed, students can complete a portion of this requirement at school outside of class time (including study halls). For some extra-valuable experiences, we will also be willing to count them for extra time; e.g. we might consider a very-valuable 8-hour experience as a 10-hour experience to encourage more students to take part. In extreme situations (e.g. medical absences), a student may be allowed to complete a 10-page paper in lieu.

**Will this be graded?** The entire portfolio that students submit at the end of the semester will count for **10% of their final semester grade**. A rubric for evaluation of the students’ 15 hours of experience can be found at <http://wuhsag.weebly.com/supervised-career-experience-program1.html> . Click on the link for the packet to see more.

**What if my student already had a job this summer? Can that count?** Part of the goal of the 15 hours of experience is to help students understand their own ability to succeed in a work environment. For that reason, we want students to gain career experience while they are enrolled in class so that they can get feedback from an adult at the same time that they are completing self-reflections. We also need students to document and verify their hours as they are being completed.

**I own a business; can my student just work for me?** They *could*… however, we also know that the more professional contacts that students have in their career field, the more prepared they are for life after high school. For this reason, students will score better at the end of the semester if they are working for someone not in their immediate family.

**I work in an environment that might be able to provide opportunities to students in this class. Would that be helpful?** Definitely! If you or your employer might be able to provide job shadowing opportunities, employment opportunities, training, or other career-related experiences, please email me at ckohn@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us .