

# PAYING ATTENTION TO THE PERSONAL DETAILS



Darrell Cole, the founder and CEO of Career Trek.

## Pilot course emphasizes passions and personality in career choices

BY SAMANTHA SAMSON

**D**arrell Cole wants everyone to be like a certain 10-year-old boy from La Broquerie, Man. "In our programs, we have kids trying different occupations and reflecting on what they like and don't like," said Cole, the founder and CEO of Career Trek. "This boy didn't like school — he made that painfully clear to everyone."

The boy was learning about being a turbine engine repair technician. When he realized he needed to learn math to become one, "you could literally see his pupils dilate," Cole said. "Instead of math being an impediment, it became his savior. That's just an example of how transformative a good career development program can be."

Cole wants to bring that type of clarity to university students with the Career: Life/Work Planning course.

The new course is being offered at the University of Winnipeg for three credit hours during the Winter 2017 term. It's listed as a faculty of education course, but any

undergraduate or post-baccalaureate education student can sign up.

This is a practical approach to career development. With lessons in effective communication, building positive relationships and exploring passions, the new course emphasizes self-awareness as much as it does preparing for the workforce.

Which, really, are one in the same.

"You can go in and excel at any number of post-secondary courses," Cole said. "But if you don't know who you are or where you're going, it's easy to understand how a lot of people end up feeling unengaged."

This all started when Cole realized his staff — many of which are post-secondary students — might not have as much career clarity as he thought.

Career Trek has career development programs for students of all ages across the province. But Cole saw his staff didn't have enough self-knowledge to really help young people make good choices for their futures.

Cole and a team of experts then created this course to

bring personal career development into post-secondary schools. That way, students would gain school credit and possibly get hired by Career Trek after taking the course.

"They would be in a better place in terms of guiding youngsters through [Career Trek] programs," Cole said.

The University of Winnipeg doesn't have anything like this, according to Bill Schulz. As the professor emeritus for the faculty of education at the University of Manitoba — and someone who's spent his entire career focusing on career development — Schulz helped shape the course's goals.

"These students might study major American career theorists, but nobody chooses a career based on theories," Schulz said. "We need to put far more emphasis on students' interests, aptitude and childhood fantasies — you know, dream a little."

Schulz said he made sure the course emphasized group work and communication— skills that actually matter once you're in the workforce.

"You can go on your computer and find information on any career," Schulz said. "It's putting it all together that's so crucial. That's why I like the fact that they're doing more than just a resume and career portfolio."

That's where Connie Korchak comes in.

Korchak, who's dedicated her working life to developing career understanding and counseling across Manitoba, will instruct this pilot course. She and Schulz were the primary builders of the course, along with Career Trek's Career Development Advisory Group.

She said the course includes resume building and other traditional skills, but Korchak wants students to take their personalities and preferences into account when researching careers.



UWinnipeg's Connie Korchak will instruct the pilot course on personal career development in post-secondary schools.

"When people are very smart, they can be good at many things," she said. "But jobs are 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year — do you want to be doing something well that you don't really enjoy?"

The answer, according to Cole, is absolutely not.

"If you don't know what your calling is, what your strengths are, or areas where you want to work on self-improvement, you're not going to do well and be happy," Cole said. "That's not just your own personal detriment, it's to the detriment of everyone around you."

Once the Winter 2017 term is done, Cole said the team will evaluate the course and work to improve it. Hopefully, he said, Career Trek can take it to other schools across Manitoba. That way, no student will have to feel lost again. ■



For 20 years Career Trek has inspired thousands of young Manitobans to gain new skills, understand the relevance of education, set career goals, and become their own career champions.

With Career Trek, a career path is no longer a guessing game. It is a thoughtfully laid out tool—a road map—that helps students realize their potential.

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