

Career Centers: Changing Needs Require Changing Paradigms

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This article looks at the past, present, and future models of career services. Showcasing the College Career Liaison model at Colorado State University, the authors discuss how student affairs actively is collaborating with academic affairs to meet the challenges of today's learning-centered campus.

INTRODUCTION

"Today the academy is being asked, and in some instances mandated, to adjust its thinking from an internal model of curriculum development to an external model of effectiveness and accountability" (Kretovics, in press). This climate of accountability has placed an increased emphasis on outcome measurements as parents, students, and governing boards want evidence that they spent their money, time, and energy well. The ultimate criterion in the minds of many of these stakeholders is whether or not the student is able to obtain a job after graduation (Feldman & Turnley, 1995). Employment as the end result of an education has brought career services to center stage at many colleges and universities across the country. On most campuses, career services is the department directly responsible for connecting students with employment opportunities. This new-found interest in career services has prompted taking a closer look at where career services has been and where it is heading.

Ironically, as the world outside of academe demands employment statistics, career services within the academy has recently completed a transition away from the placement model. Within career services the early emphasis was on job placement (1940s & 1950s). This emphasis then shifted toward a career planning model (1960s & 1970s), which now has moved into the current model of networking (1980s & 1990s), which eventually may evolve into a another model, perhaps the liaison model as implemented at Colorado State University.

Over the years, career service operations have evolved by adapting to the changing economic conditions, diverse student population, and dynamic structures and theoretical constructs within departments and divisions of student affairs. As the career centers have changed, so too has the role of the career counselor/career services specialist. This article will examine some of the factors involved in this change and a discuss how the Career Center at Colorado State University is leading the way in implementing the newest model -- the College Career Liaison (CCL).

CAREER SERVICES: FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY

The roots of today's career center date back to the late 1800s in Europe. The first career centers appeared in the United States in the early part of this century (Herr, Rayman, & Garis, 1993). Frank Parsons is credited with bringing career and occupational research to the foreground. In 1901, he established the Civic Service House for immigrants and young people seeking work. Later, he was named the Director of the Breadwinner Institute which became the Vocation Bureau in Boston in January, 1908 (Zunker, 1998). Parsons' work in career and occupational selection was adopted later in college and university settings.

At the turn of the century, college faculty were responsible for assisting students with their career planning needs. Professors viewed students as candidates to be groomed, advanced, and mentored into a promising profession (Herr, Rayman, & Garis, 1993). Herr et al. (1993) described this metamorphosis from student to professional as a sponsorship. In this model, the highly qualified student need only enroll in college and the faculty mentors planned the student's future employment, thus the term "placement" resulted. As time progressed, universities and workplaces changed and the placement center replaced mentoring or sponsorship by professors as the primary means for finding employment, allowing all students access to job opportunities instead of just those with a faculty mentor (Herr, et al. 1993). Yale University established one of the earliest prototypes of the placement center in 1919 (Teal & Herrick, 1962).

The placement center staff consisted of professionals trained in vocational guidance hired to advise and counsel students for job placement (Teal & Herrick, 1962).

According to Zunker (1998), Parsons' three-part Trait and Factor Theory provided the underlying theoretical assumptions of the placement center:

- A clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources,

limitations, and other qualities.

- A knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work.
- True reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts. (p. 10)

As employer demands for young, talented workers increased, the interest in placement centers, employment offices, and career development on college campuses began to emerge. These services, combined with the efforts of faculty, student affairs professionals, and alumni worked to match students with employment opportunities (Lorick, 1987).

This placement model articulated the *in loco parentis* philosophy of institutions of higher education. Institutions were viewed as needing to provide for the student in lieu of the

student's parents, including job placement assistance. The placement model also was greatly enhanced by the post-World War Two (WWII) economic expansion. Corporate America was anxious to hire students directly from college campuses, thus creating an increased demand for college graduates. In addition, numerous job-related training and rehabilitation programs increased the attention paid to placement centers on the university campus (Bishops, 1966).

The *in loco parentis* driven placement model remained in place through the 1950s and into the early 1960s, before it was replaced by the planning paradigm (Casella, 1990). The 1960s were a time of significant change within the country, especially within higher education. College enrollments never had been higher, and the post WWII expansion began to slow, creating a surplus of college graduates. Changes in economic conditions coincided with a philosophical change within higher education. *In loco parentis*, the dominant paradigm for the past few decades was now giving way to developmental theory. As developmental theory began to take hold, higher education became more interested in developing rather than parenting the student. This movement toward a student development paradigm coincided with the transition from the placement model into a career planning or career development model (Bishops, 1966).

The planning model lasted from the turbulent 1960s through the recession of the 1970s and into the economic expansion of the 1980s. Central to this model were the processes of planning, self-discovery, and self-assessment which were all consistent with the more goal oriented "Me" generation of the 1970s and 1980s. Career theory made the transition from Trait and Factor (abilities, preference, attitudes, job requirements, performance demands), used primarily in early placement centers, to a more humanistic emphasis on counseling and the application of student development theories (Rentz & Sanddlemire, 1988). The combination of placement activities with counseling provided a more full and developmental perspective of the progress, purpose, and pursuit during a student's academic journey. Placement still had a role, but it was no longer the focal point. As Herr, et al. (1993) states:

The placement event needed to be viewed as the end of a process of career development that involved knowledge, exploratory activities, the development of skills, career planning, the choice of a major as an intermediate career decision and learning that began before entrance to college and continued through diverse learning in higher education and that ultimately brought the student to the activity called placement. (p. 3)

COLLEGE CAREER CENTERS OF TODAY

As the student affairs profession shifts its emphasis from student development toward student learning (Blimling, 1998; Schroeder, 1998; AAHE, 1998), career services is transitioning from the placement and planning models to the networking model. While placement and planning models can still be found, the dominant model for today's career services is the networking model (Casella, 1990). This model is characterized by Casella (1990) as:

An intersection where students and alumni, employers, and faculty and staff meet to deal with all the many varieties of career matters in an active association of . . . human, print, and electronic career resources [as] the most efficient and effective method of performing both the job placement and career planning activities. (p. 33)

Increasingly, the main focus of a career center's activity revolves around acquiring and dispensing more comprehensive information at a faster pace. Several recent efforts have been undertaken in an effort to understand the effects of this paradigm shift upon the roles of professionals within the career service field (Casella, 1990; Wessel, 1996). Casella (1990) stated that the networking era ushered in a new criterion for career counselors' performance reviews including the term coordination, which refers to mobilizing the efforts of departments, campus organizations, and external agencies and employers in common goals of service. In a 1994 survey of 784 career center directors, Wessel (1996) reported that 41% of directors characterized career professionals as organizers, rather than employment specialists or skilled clinicians. Ninety percent of the directors stated that their client base now included faculty, alumni, and staff, along

with the more traditional student and employer base. Thirty percent of those directors mentioned connecting student candidates and employers as the career center's main function. This certainly reflects a movement away from the placement and the planning models toward the networking model of today (Casella, 1990).

In addition to the changes required of the career center staff, the physical environment also has changed. Placement and planning models focused on interview and counseling rooms while the networking model emphasizes access to information and technology as well. Centers now include expanded resource libraries and computer labs with access to a variety of databases and internet connections. The requirements of the networking model also impact students. Students need to take a more active role in the career development process. The networking model requires the student to learn the process rather than just participate in the process, emphasizing self-help or self-reliance. This is exemplified by the greater emphasis on internships, providing additional career fairs, and expanding activities that are designed to connect students with alumni and other potential employers.

THE COLLEGE CAREER LIAISON AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Colorado State University (CSU) responded to the shift from planning to networking by developing and implementing a College Career Liaison (CCL) program in 1993. The Career Center staff at CSU believes that the CCL program epitomizes the application of the networking model.

A CCL is a career counselor who is dedicated to a specific academic college within the University. However, the University did not simply take an existing counselor and assign her or him to work with students from a selected college. Instead, the Career Center and the participating colleges recruited counselors to serve as links between the Career Center and the academic college (Kretovics, Cornell, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). The CCLs have either a degree represented within their colleges or significant work

experience in those academic areas. This gives the CCL credibility among faculty, employers, and students as both a career counselor and a subject matter expert.

Currently, the liaison system is implemented in six of the eight academic colleges at CSU, including: Agriculture, Business, Liberal Arts, Natural Resources, Natural Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. Beginning its sixth year, the CCL program has been viewed as having positive impact on the campus by the participating colleges and the Career Center. The colleges have acknowledged a greater appreciation of, and a higher commitment to, the efforts of the Career Center. Additionally, the Career Center staff has gained first-hand experience in academic affairs, which has resulted in a better understanding of the complex nature of that portion of the University operation (Kretovics, et al., 1997).

Initially, the job descriptions for all six liaison positions were identical, differing only in the specific degree and/or work experience required. However, each liaison has modified his or her position to meet the needs of his or her respective college. As the needs of the colleges and Career Center change, so does the working position description of the liaison counselors. For example, in addition to the traditional career counseling and career marketing functions, each liaison provides unique services to their respective college. For example, the Natural Resources liaison conducts many of the college's orientation and admission sessions, the Business liaison is involved in the teaching of an introductory business course and an outcomes assessment program, the Liberal Arts liaison is building stronger relationships with alumni, the Natural Sciences liaison is active in job development, the Vet-Med liaison co-teaches a senior seminar in Environmental Health, and the Agriculture liaison coordinates the college's career fair.

While each liaison has customized her or his position, each remains a member of both the Career Center and the college staff. This unique model appears to be effective and beneficial to both the participating colleges and the Career Center. The college gains an in-house expert to provide career services to its students and the Career Center has an

additional staff member to assist in handling the continuously increasing work load.

The funding for these positions is shared equally by the Career Center and college involved. Each department pays 50% of the salary and benefits, and both units provide office space for the liaison. Other expenses such as office supplies and travel also are shared as well. However, this partnership involves more than just shared expenses. The partnership is a commitment from the academic unit to support the Career Center on an institutional level. Each of the academic departments have been involved from the very beginning with the initial hiring and continue to be involved in the on-going evaluation process for each Career Liaison. The search process for each position includes representation from the Career Center staff and the respective college's faculty and staff. Evaluation of the CCLs varies as each college has its own review process and schedule, which may not always coincide with the Division of Student Affairs. Therefore, one or more colleges may prefer to conduct a separate evaluation process, while the others may choose to conduct a joint review with the Career Center. The success of this process lies in its ability to adjust for the needs of both units involved.

As indicated above, the CCLs report to both the college Dean (or Associate Dean) and the Director of the Career Center. Having two supervisors may seem rather confusing from an outsider's perspective, however, from the liaisons' view, this structure works well. The liaisons attend all of the Career Center staff meetings and also work closely with their college supervisors. This open communication keeps both the Career Center and the college informed of the counselor's actions, thus continuing to strengthen the relationship between the participating colleges and the Career Center.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER PROFESSIONALS

Within the networking model, the career professional's role has expanded to include the coordination and connection of the service efforts between departments, campus organizations, and employers and external agencies (Wessel, 1996). The former roles of the employment specialist in the placement model and the skilled clinician in the planning model are being replaced by an increased demand for the flexible generalist in the networking model. As a flexible generalist, the counselor needs to have the ability to use technology, make presentations, and teach effectively; market services, outreach to an increasingly diverse clientele, research, and write; as well as continue to advise and counsel (Murray, 1995). Career counseling is moving in the direction of less therapeutic counseling and testing of the planning model into more information giving and providing networks of alumni and employers to students (Casella, 1990). Career counseling goes beyond identifying and developing student skills by teaching self-reliance and self-responsibility for many careers within a lifetime. Career counseling also is being transformed by the effects of technology. Internet job posting and career related information, plus career exploration data bases such as Discover, Eureka, and SIGI-Plus work for the student with or without a counselor present. Other telecommunications, such as faxing, emailing, and teleconferencing have begun to reframe the traditional appointment approach to counseling. As the paradigm continues to shift from planning to networking, career professionals will continue to face many changes driven by internal and external forces. The primary challenge for career counselors is to provide viable and current information consisting of a whole-system approach in which the tools of the trade, theory and assessment, are utilized with a savvy knowledge of the effects of national and global economic trends on careers (Honaker, 1996).

At CSU, the CCL program is meeting the challenges facing today's career services by employing the networking paradigm. This program requires counseling professionals to bring additional skills to the positions, enabling each liaison to work more effectively with his or her academic college. In addition, each liaison also stays current in the general practice of career counseling. This dual focus has created a program that requires the counselor to be a flexible generalist that allows him or her to adapt to the challenges of

the 21st century.

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