



Presented by DeVry University

EFFECTIVELY COUNSELING GRADUATING STUDENTS

Executive Summary

Introduction

Are graduating students prepared to enter the job market and succeed in their first jobs? How are students utilizing college career centers in their job search? To answer these questions, the Career Advisory Board, established by DeVry University, partnered with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) to conduct a survey of college career services directors concerning issues and possible responses to the problem of effectively counseling graduating students for entrance into the job market. The survey was a follow-up to a series of interviews done with a group of career service directors on the same issues. The results of the interviews were used to structure this broader, quantitative survey. This quantitative survey provides statistical support for identifying which issues and responses the universe of career service directors find as the most significant in their providing employment counseling direction to their students.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from June 21, 2012 to July 18, 2012. The online questionnaire was distributed to 1,365 career center directors who are members of NACE. Responses were received from 593 directors for a response rate of 43 percent, with a margin of error of 3 percent. Appendix figures 1 through 4 detail the distribution of respondents by school size based on enrollment; by regional location; by sector (public, private-nonprofit, private-for-profit); and by degree level (predominantly two-year and four-year institutions). There were adequate responses for all these divisions with the exception of the private, for-profit sector. The report provides detailed tables for the responses to the questions that highlight significant differences that were found in the text.



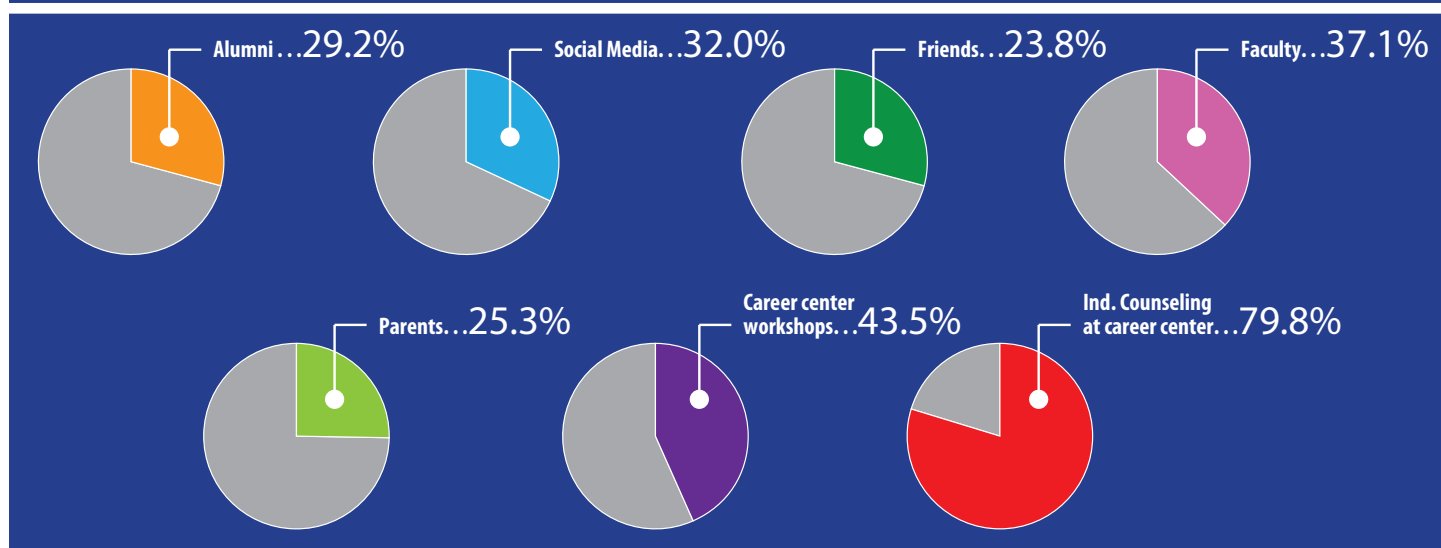
Key Findings

The survey resulted in the following major findings:

Career Centers Highly Effective

- Directors of college career centers are confident that they and their staffs can provide effective career guidance and job search skills to their students when given the opportunity. Career center directors feel that their offices are the most effective resource available to students in searching for and locating jobs – nearly 80 percent of respondents rated individual career center counseling as very or extremely effective. By comparison, only 43.5 percent of respondents rated career center workshops, the second highest rated resource, as very or extremely effective. With the exception of faculty, no other resource was perceived by more than a third of our respondents as particularly effective (Chart 1).

Chart 1. % Rating resource as highly effective

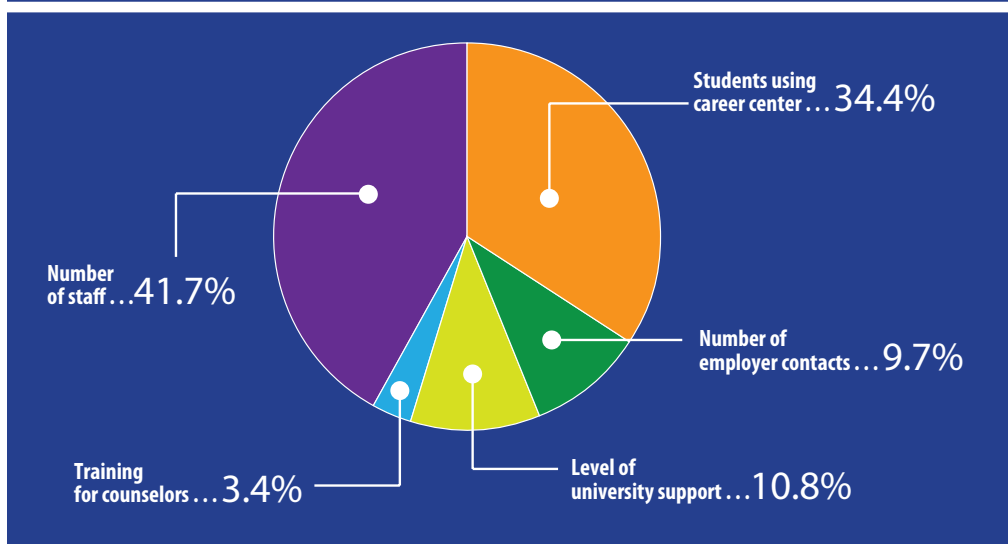


One-on-One Counseling: Most Effective

- The counseling is most effective when it is conducted in one-on-one sessions and when there is adequate follow-up to these sessions. When asked to identify what they would do if they had the optimal amount of resources the directors nearly 70 percent of the respondents would choose to either increase the amount of one-on-one counseling and/or increase the amount of follow-up with the students who come in for one-on-one counseling.

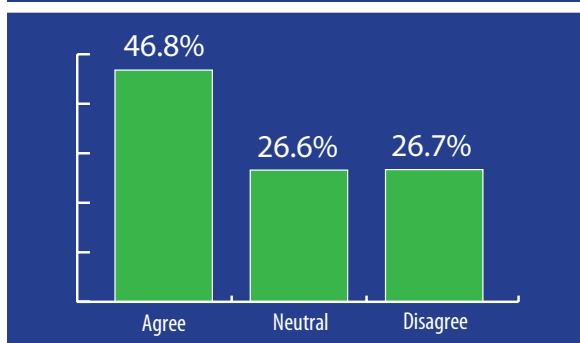
Greatest Impediments: Limited Staffing & Student Motivation

- As a consequence of what they see makes them effective, career center directors view the major impediments their offices face in successfully counseling their students to find their place in the job market as (1) the lack of staff available to conduct the one-on-one counseling and (2) getting their students to take advantage of the resources available at the career center (Chart 2)

Chart 2. Percent ranking as top impediment

Students: Poor Understanding of “What it Takes”

- The directors overwhelmingly feel that students have a poor understanding of the effort required to secure employment. Over 77 percent felt that the greatest obstacle to be overcome in counseling students wishing to enter the job market was getting the student to understand the effort required to successfully search and compete for a job. This poor understanding of the effort it takes to be successful can be a principal cause of student delay in making use of the career center or skipping this resource altogether.

Chart 3. Students are prepared to succeed in the job

Recommend: Required Career Classes

- To become more effective in employment counseling the directors would have students required to take part in career preparation classes and for their administrations provide more support for staffing so that students could be adequately counseled and followed through their job search process. A plurality of respondents (44.7 percent) felt that the best way to increase student interaction with the career center was to require students to attend career preparation classes. The next most identified option – cultivating relationships with key faculty – drew support from only 18 percent of respondents.

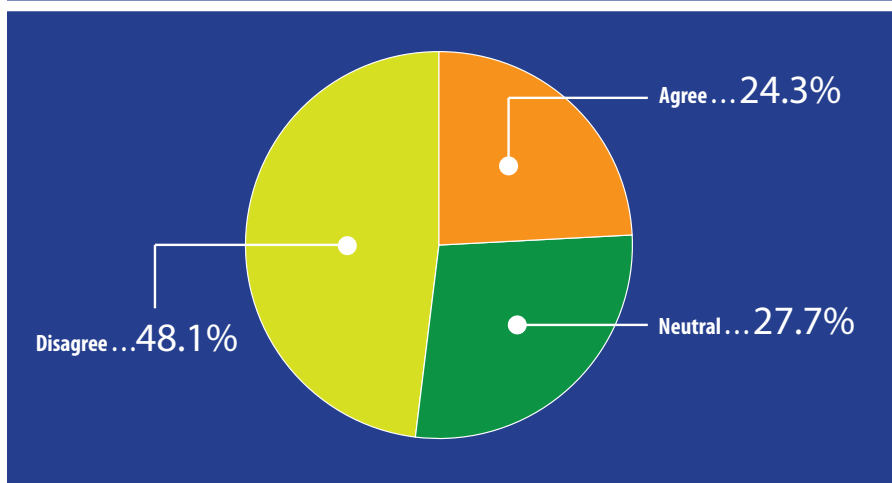
Graduates: Prepared for the Job

- If given the chance, most new college graduates will be successful hires for their employers. When asked to rate their students on their preparation to be successful in their first job a solid plurality (46.8 percent) agreed with the sentiment “The majority of our students are well prepared to succeed in their first full-time job after graduation.” (Chart 3)

Graduates: Not Prepared to Find the Job

- However, the directors generally feel that the students attempt to enter the market not fully prepared to compete for jobs because they lack some of the tools necessary to locate and acquire a job. When asked to agree or disagree with the sentiment “The majority of our students have the tools and skills necessary to find a job” only approximately 24 percent agreed. (Chart 4).

Chart 4. Students have tools necessary to find a job



[The principal goal of the Career Advisory Board is to provide insight and counsel for job seekers and career advancers to succeed in their careers. Please see the section “Successful Strategies...” for tips to students that will make them better prepared for finding that job after graduation.]

College career centers face an increasingly difficult challenge. They must prepare their students to think seriously about their career options after they graduate from college and make sure these students possess the requisite skills necessary to market themselves to employers. They take on this challenge at a time when the opportunities for graduating students are constrained because of a generally weak labor market and when the pressure from outside sources (parents, elected officials) has never been greater.

What the results of this survey show is that the directors of these career centers are confident that they and their staffs can provide effective career guidance and job search skills to their students when given the opportunity. However, they are limited in that opportunity by two primary conditions: (1) the understanding and motivation of the students themselves to undertake the effort necessary to compete successfully in a competitive labor market and (2) the limited number of career center staff available to promote career center operations, to conduct the counseling sessions with the students, and to follow through to see that the students implement the suggestions provided to them in the counseling sessions. Consequently, while the majority of students are prepared to be good professional employees as a result of their college education most leave college without the necessary job search skills to get that first professional job.

Successful Strategies to Transition from College to Career

It is not at all unusual for high-achieving college students to have problems finding and keeping jobs immediately after graduation. Recent graduates may have learned how to excel academically but have not learned how to translate their skills and experience to meet employers' needs. Specifically, job seekers need to be able to communicate effectively with instructors and peers, contribute meaningfully in a group setting, master new information, and write coherently -- all important skills for the workplace. Successful graduates entering the job market need to be able to translate their excellence in these skill areas to the demands of the professional world. Often a gap starts to emerge in communicating these skills during the first job search. For instance, a student may know how to speak articulately to an interviewer in general, but unable to phrase her experience in terms of past achievements and results.

The Career Advisory Board recommends the following strategies for recent graduates to become market-place ready:

- **Expand network.** Conduct informational interviews with mentors in their mid-twenties who can provide advice on how to most effectively position their background and experience in a specific field.
- **Customize resume.** Review sample resumes in the desired field and craft theirs in a way that will interest an employer immediately. Also it's important to customize their resume with keywords from their target position's job description.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** Rehearse quickly and succinctly communicating results from past jobs or internships, always asking: "why was this organization better off because I worked there?"
- **Seek guidance.** Practice interviewing with a coach or career services professional to learn the appropriate level of formality and insightful feedback on what skills and experience to emphasize as well as do's and don'ts.
- **Show enthusiasm.** Present themselves as can-do enthusiastic employees who are humble and eager to learn.
- **Consult resources.** Review expert materials on transitioning from college to career including books, articles, DVDs and blogs. Learn how to convey the right first impression, understand expectations, acquire important transferable skills, manage stress and negativity, and add value to organizations.

Appendix

Figure 1. Respondents by Size of Enrollment

		Responses	% of Responses
Size	1,000 or less	36	6.2%
	1,001 - 2,500	139	23.9%
	2,501 - 5,000	117	20.1%
	5,001 - 10,000	109	18.8%
	10,001 - 15,000	46	7.9%
	15,001 - 20,000	51	8.8%
	More than 20,000	83	14.3%

Figure 2. Respondents by Region

		Responses	% of Responses
Region	New England	46	7.9%
	Mid-Atlantic	115	19.8%
	Southeast	131	22.6%
	Great Lakes	101	17.4%
	Plains	66	11.4%
	Southwest	49	8.4%
	Rocky Mountain	14	2.4%
	Far West	58	10.0%

Figure 3. Respondents by Sector

		Responses	% of Responses
Sector	Public	279	48.0%
	Private, not-for-profit	294	50.6%
	Private, for-profit	8	1.4%

Figure 4. Respondents by Degree Level

		Responses	% of Responses
Degree Level	2-year	59	9.9%
	4-year	534	90.1%

Find more information on the survey at www.careeradvisoryboard.org

About Career Advisory Board: Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is a panel of leading career experts and authors from business and academia who provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates proprietary research and commentary, and creates tools, insight and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from Cisco, DeVry University, IBM, LinkedIn, McDonald's USA, LLC, and Microsoft Corporation as well as nationally-recognized career experts. For more information, visit <http://www.careeradvisoryboard.org>.



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About NACE: Established in 1956, NACE is the leading source of information on the employment of the college educated. The professional association connects more than 5,200 college career services professionals at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities nationwide, and more than 3,000 HR/staffing professionals focused on college relations and recruiting.

Through its research, NACE forecasts trends in the job market and tracks recruiting and hiring practices; salaries for new college graduates; college student attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes related to employment; and benchmarks for college and employer professionals.



NACE is headquartered in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It maintains a website at www.naceweb.org