

STUDENT SUCCESS UPDATE

Winter 2020, Issue III

The role of career services in student persistence and advancement



86% of incoming freshmen within the U.S. have said that getting a job represents a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college¹



Four out of five college graduates believe it is very or extremely important to derive a sense of purpose from their work²

>> What We Know

Why Focus on Career Development

Rising tuitions and student debt have increased discussions about financial accountability and return on investment in higher education. Prospective students — and their parents — are worried about their return on investment, and they want career services to be part of their education. Since 2010, 86% of incoming freshmen have said that getting a better job represents a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college, compared with only 73% between 2000 and 2009.³

As mentors to students, professors and staff are encouraged to learn about the systemic inequities inherent in their own discipline and →

In this issue

- >> **What We Know:** Career development is an important part of the college experience
PAGES 1&2
- >> **What is Happening at OSU:** The Career Development Center partners extensively with colleges
PAGES 2&3
- >> **What is Next:** New online tools support career development
PAGE 3

For more information

Brandi Fuhrman |
Executive Director,
Career Development Center
Brandi.Fuhrman@oregonstate.edu
541-737-1543

career.oregonstate.edu

adopt practices advocated by the discipline for facilitating greater levels of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Impact on Persistence

Fostering the career development of incoming freshmen increases student satisfaction and has the added benefit of aiding the institution's retention efforts. In addition, career development interventions present opportunities for students to connect college activities with a future career path. Research indicates a lack of clear academic focus and career goals as factors for students "stopping" or dropping out. Targeting, tracking and engaging "deciding" students can be a useful way to institutionally support first-year students exploring majors and thus serve as a means of retaining these students.⁴

Impact on Advancement

Building experience and skills through curricular and co-curricular experiences (including part time jobs/student employment), and learning job search competencies (how to prepare for and get the job or career they want) are two important factors in getting a job. Universities play a critical role in helping students develop career readiness competencies and prepare for life after college. Every facet of the university plays a role in students' career development.

Skills Gap

There is a disconnect between how employers and higher education view college graduates' preparation for the workforce. Notably, 95% of colleges feel

that their institution is effective in preparing students for the world of work, while only 33% of employers and 36% of students agree.⁵ There is misalignment in the skills that companies need and value, commonly referred to as core competencies or transferable skills, and the skills students present.

Based on extensive research among employers, a National Association of Colleges and Employers task force of college career services and human resources/staffing professionals has identified eight competencies associated with career readiness. Recruiting professionals have ranked the career readiness competencies students/graduates should possess upon entry into the work force:⁶

- > Oral/Written Communication (91%)
- > Critical Thinking/Problem Solving (96%)
- > Teamwork/Collaboration (90%)
- > Professionalism/Work Ethic (97%)
- > IT Application (72%)
- > Intercultural Fluency (category created after initial ranking)
- > Leadership (56%)
- > Career Management (45%)

It isn't that students aren't gaining and developing these skills. But they struggle with connecting how their experiences translate to their goals. We need to help students connect the dots.

What Career Readiness Competencies Do For Us

Career competencies provide students with a flexible vocabulary to connect learning from across

disciplines to career-related activities; provide specific domains in which students can connect curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences to career related activities; and serve as a common language for the campus to use when discussing and measuring career-readiness initiatives. These competencies can bridge the wide-array of rich, well-developed competency frameworks in use by specific fields of study across campus.

“The momentum of a competencies-based approach linked to real world applications, plus wise measures designed and owned by the entire institution, are a good recipe for collective engagement, effort and results.”⁷

>> What is Happening at Oregon State

Partnerships with Colleges

The Career Development Center (CDC) partners extensively with colleges. The center's assistant directors of career development work within colleges to support students' career development. Each assistant director works alongside college faculty and staff to determine how to integrate career development within their infrastructure. Examples of college specific career activities include:

- > Centers inside the College of Engineering and College

of Liberal Arts, which have dedicated student peer advisors

- > College specific career fairs, such as the Natural Sciences and Environmental Fair, Hire A Psych Student and the Ag Science Expo
- > Classroom and club integration through career workshops, extra credit and assignments
- > Treks and Job Shadows to visit industries and alumni off site
- > Alumni and employer networking opportunities
- > START programming on career development offered by advising teams within colleges
- > Software tools and trainings for teaching faculty to support classroom assignments
- > One-on-one advising appointments

>> What is Next

New Tools and Resources for Students, Faculty and Staff

The CDC now provides a number of online tools that make it easier to support more students:

- > The CDC launched a new website with a more comprehensive set of tools and resources
- > Focus 2 is an online career self-assessment that is free for OSU students that combines four assessments on work interests, values, personality and leisure preferences and then identifies relevant career options
- > VMock provides instant, 24-7 personalized feedback on résumés and CVs
- > StandOut is an interactive video tool that allows students to practice for interviews

- > Handshake is a job board designed specifically for students that includes 250,000+ employers ■

REFERENCES

- ¹ Gallup, Inc., “The American Freshman: Fifty Year Trends” (2016).
- ² Gallup, Inc., “Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work” (2019).
- ³ Gallup, Inc., “The American Freshman: Fifty Year Trends” (2016).
- ⁴ National Career Development Association, “Career Development as a Retention Tool: Early Intervention for Incoming Deciding Freshmen” (Nov. 1, 2007).
- ⁵ Inside Higher Ed, “2018 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers” (2018); Gallup, Inc./Lumina Foundation, “What Americans Need to Know About Higher Education Redesign” (2014); Strada/Gallup, Inc., “2017 College Student Survey” (2017).
- ⁶ National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), naceweb.org (accessed November 2019).
- ⁷ NACE Journal, “Career Readiness Meets Institution-Wide Outcomes Measures” (April 2016).

WAYS FOR YOU TO ENGAGE

career.oregonstate.edu/faculty-staff

Career Development in the Classroom: Review the CDC website for ways to weave career development into your courses. Also, promote the career fairs and numerous career-related events, as well as the free services that the CDC provides. Encourage students to use these resources — focused on career exploration, résumé and cover letter feedback, networking information, job search tools and interview preparation — as early as possible in their academic careers.

Help Students Network: Introduce students to alumni and industry professionals for informational interviews and to broaden their networks. This is one way faculty and staff can help address systemic inequities for historically

underrepresented students, who may not have access to networks available to more privileged students.

Encourage Students to Get Experience: Students gain invaluable experience, learn about the world of work and make connections through internships or volunteering. Having an applied internship while a student is one factor in finding purpose in work upon graduation.

Build Understanding of Career Competencies: Work with students to identify what career-readiness competencies they are leveraging or building upon in your classroom or program. Help students connect what they are learning to their future careers.