

Career Center
Illinois State University
Comprehensive Program Review
April 17-19, 2005

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

Background

On April 17-19, 2005, the Site Review Team appointed by Dr. Helen Mamarchev, completed the campus review as part of the Comprehensive Program Review of the Career Center. The members of the team are:

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Team members reviewed the Self-Study Report prepared by the Career Center, The CAS Standards Self-Assessment Guide, as well as additional documents and department information provided during the campus visit. Meetings were held with Student Affairs officers, Career Center professional and support staff, Student Center staff, Student Affairs directors, a group of College of Business students, a group of internship coordinators and academic advisors, and a group of employers.

According to the guidelines for the CPR process in the Division of Student Affairs, the primary purpose of CPR is program improvement. This report will include information

about the Career Center strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats presented in writing and in person and discussed during the Site Review.

FINDINGS

Strengths: what the Career Center does best

Mission and Planning

- Completed the CAS Standards Career Center Self-Assessment Guide in Fall 2004

Programs

- Growing numbers of outreach programs are offered
- Most students participating in job search activities seem to be well prepared
- Good effort to develop programs for minority and diverse student groups

Organization and Staffing

- Senior administration supports a centralized Career Center
- Interim director has begun to develop direction for the Center and is committed to doing whatever the university requires to be successful in this position
- Staff are professional and interested in providing personal service to students
- Staff appreciate being involved in decision making and professional organizations
- Graduate students assist with marketing activities

Facilities and Equipment

- Location of Career Center is convenient for students and adjacent to the Student Center
- High visibility of career fairs generates positive opinions about the Career Center

Relationships

- College of Business is supportive of Career Center services
- Availability of Employer Advisory Board and corporate partners
- Strong relationships with employers result in large numbers of them attending career fairs and interviewing on campus

Technology

- The vendor supplied eRecruiting system is used by other Illinois career centers and is familiar to employers recruiting on Illinois campuses

Challenges: Career Center problems or areas of concern

Mission and Planning

- Difficult to determine direction for the Career Center without a strategic plan
- Career Center is not closely connected with professional organizations and their professional standards and guidelines
- Data about Career Center programs, services, and activities are not kept in a consistent manner and are not used for planning
- There is little program evaluation and assessment
- There is no annual report to describe the accomplishments for the year or establish the baseline for future goals and objectives
- Significant drop in employer participation in on-campus interviews, but staff are not sure why

Programs

- Educational student development programs lack consistent learning objectives and methods for measuring outcomes
- University problem of at least 2,000 students who have no academic major and who may receive inadequate advising is a concern for the Career Center
- Career Center activities seem to be job-search related but are often described in career development terms
- There is no central source of career information for students to use in career exploration
- Career Center is perceived as a placement office that primarily works with graduating seniors and alumni who are changing jobs; very little outreach is directed towards freshmen
- Credential files and records retention practices consume a great deal of staff time and resources

Organization and Staffing

- Director of Career Center is an interim appointment and not a professional career services professional
- Staff often work independently, rather than as part of teams with common goals and direction

Facilities and Equipment

- Career Center space may be adequate, but it doesn't seem to be used to its best advantage
- Space for career fairs in Student Center with nearby parking is barely adequate, but moving to larger space in the Arena presents transportation and potential attendance problems

Relationships

- Inconsistent programs and strategies for liaisons who work with different academic areas results in different levels of service to students, depending upon their majors
- Logos on employer partners' page don't portray the real strength of employer relations accurately, because they include employers with sometimes less than professional reputations (College Pro Painters, Vector Marketing, Cutco)

Technology

- Different levels of application and use of technology among the staff; no common standards or protocol within the Career Center for using technology for communication, scheduling, and record keeping
- Technology support appears to be inconsistent and insufficient
- eRecruiting is not fully utilized for capturing data and producing reports
- Web site is weak and underutilized for information and administrative purposes

Opportunities: what the Career Center could do or what it could improve

Mission and Planning

- Use services of Institutional Assessment to develop assessment plan for programs, activities, and services
- Explore availability of resources to help Career Center develop marketing and communications plan and to improve their Web site
- Evaluate all aspects of career fairs to determine impact on staffing, program development, employer relations, and department revenue

Programs

- Provide leadership and direction for undecided students, because Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have a good working relationship
- Market to non-profit organizations to attend career fairs

Organization and Staffing

- Expand services for freshmen because Counseling Center is willing to supervise counseling interns doing career counseling in the Career Center
- Use Registered Student Organization volunteers more to help with special activities

Facilities and Equipment

- Time is right to evaluate space utilization and most appropriate department locations to be assigned to the Student Services building and Student Center before renovating Career Center

Relationships

- Leverage the strength of relationships with academic areas and offer to assist with developing a university plan for coordination of internships and internship development
- Take advantage of the support from the director of the Counseling Services Center and lead the development of programs that provide more assistance to students with career development and exploration activities

Technology

- Investigate electronic scheduling and database systems already in use on campus and supported by technical staff

Threats: barriers the Career Center faces

Mission and Planning

- Perception that Career Center is still a placement office
- Lack of strategic plan for the next 3-5 years

Programs

- No involvement in the advising process for more than 2,000 undecided majors

Organization and Staffing

- Interim director status indicates the university may not be committed to Career Center
- No one in the Career Center appears to have expertise in career information
- Even though several people are assigned to employer relations, no one seems to be able to articulate an employer relations plan.

Facilities and Equipment

- Two entrances to the Career Center appear to separate students and prevent them from learning about all functions that are available
- Lack of career information resource center

Relationships

- Lack of representation on the newly created Advising Task Force and proposed Council of Advisors

Technology

- Lack of minimum standards for use of technology in maintaining records, administering services, and providing Web access to information
- Lack of technical support for staff

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Planning

- Adopt the NACE Professional Standards for College and University Career Services to guide development of programs, activities, and services. (See attached)
- Develop a strategic plan for a comprehensive career center that covers the next 3-5 years and ties into “Educating Illinois;” identify program needs and staff necessary to direct related goals and objectives.
- Identify universities with best practice career programs and encourage staff to visit in order to develop a vision for Illinois State University.
- Develop a marketing and communications plan that establishes a consistent image for the Career Center for all print and electronic media.
- Develop a plan for continual assessment and evaluation of programs and services that parallels the CAS Guidelines, or some other system of evaluation.
- Begin to prepare annual reports of all major programs, activities, and services that can be used to report the contributions the Career Center makes to the campus and can help with department planning efforts.

Programs

- Conduct a program needs assessment to determine what programs should be offered by the Career Center to students and alumni.
- Review content of educational programs, establish learning objectives and outcomes, and develop consistent content and presentation materials. Use of booklet, “Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience,” could be referenced.

Organization and Staffing

- Plan to hire a permanent director within a year, according to requirements for someone to lead, direct, and manage a comprehensive, centralized career center.
- Review all tasks being done by staff, then review staff expertise and time available through work load analysis in order to maximize the work output of the center.
- Analyze the work assignments of graduate assistants and student employees to make sure they are appropriate for their skill level and that they are fully employed.
- Evaluate the need to have two different reception areas; consider staffing the career resource area with graduate assistants.
- Identify ways for support staff and professional staff to work more closely together.

Facilities and Equipment

- Evaluate space needs and determine best location for Career Center within the Student Services Building within the next year. Assign staff according to new organization plan.

- Establish current, comprehensive, and accessible career and job search information as central to services for all students engaged in career exploration and career-decision making, and consider developing career resource lab near interview rooms.
- Improve interview facilities according to department needs.

Relationships

- Take advantage of strong relationship between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and strengthen links with academic advising services and the University College Academic Advisement Center in order to address the needs of undecided and undeclared students.
- Request involvement in the new Advising Task Force that will evolve into the Council of Advisors.
- Involve Employer Advisory Board members in developing a plan for employer relations.

Technology

- Make the expansion and development of the Website a priority
- Staff need to make maximum use of eRecruiting or another job management system and also maximum use of internal technology system to maximize efficiency. University staff or external consultants should be considered for training.
- Require the use of available computer technology for scheduling and managing data in order to improve communication among staff and make better use of scarce time.
- Develop a database to record outreach data and advising activities to aid in assessment and evaluation.

NACE Professional Standards for College and University Career Services

1. Career services must support the mission, academic programs, and advancement of the institution.
2. Career services must assist students and other designated clients in developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education, and employment decisions and plans.
3. Career services should help individuals to develop self-knowledge related to career choice and work performance by identifying, assessing, and understanding their competencies, interests, values, and personal characteristics.
4. Career services should help individuals obtain educational and occupational information to aid their career and educational planning and to develop their understanding of the world of work.
5. Career services should help individuals select personally suitable academic programs and experiential opportunities that optimize their future education and employment options.
6. Career services should help individuals take responsibility for developing their career decisions, graduate/professional school plans, employment plans, and/or job-search competencies.
7. Career services should help individuals prepare to find suitable employment by developing job-search skills, effective candidate presentation skills, and an understanding of the fit between their competencies and occupational requirements.
8. The institution should help individuals gain career-related experience through student activities, community service, student employment, research projects, cooperative education, internships, and other opportunities.
9. Career services should help individuals link with alumni, employers, professional organizations, and others who will provide them with opportunities to develop professional interests and competencies, integrate academic learning with work, and explore future career possibilities.
10. Career services should help individuals seek a desired employment opportunity or entry into an appropriate educational, graduate, or professional program.
11. Career services should help individuals prepare to manage their careers after graduation.

12. Career services should consider the needs of all students of the institution in designing and delivering programs and services.
13. The institution should provide linkages and/or coordination among career-related programs and services where appropriate.
14. Career services must develop specific goals for services to students, employers, alumni, and other client groups that are consistent with the nature and the goals of the institution and with the standards in this document.
15. Career services should review and update its goals annually.
16. Career services should communicate its mission and goals, as appropriate, to administrators, faculty, staff, and other appropriate institutional constituencies.

Source: *Professional Standards for College and University Career Services*, NACE, May 1998

