NACE
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS
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MAY 2020

SPECIAL REPORT

THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION, COLLEGE RECRUITING, AND NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES

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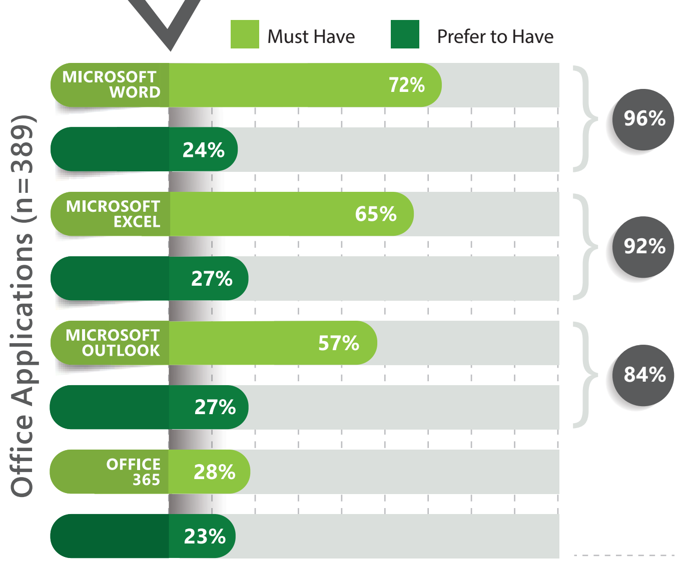

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WHAT'S INSIDE

The May issue of the *NACE Journal* was well underway when the coronavirus pandemic was declared. We stopped the presses—figuratively speaking—so that the magazine's content could reflect this consequential experience. This issue now features a special section devoted to the NACE membership's response to the pandemic and includes trends information gathered from polls conducted from March through the beginning of May.

The section also highlights some top-of-mind issues addressed by the membership—virtual internships and how to collect first-destination data when students are not on campus. Although it is not part of the special section, this issue's Legal Issues column addresses some of the legal questions that have arisen as a result of the pandemic.

In this issue's Op-Ed column, Casey Lowe, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, asks "Should Job Location Development Be Housed in Career Services?" and lays out her case for why she believes the answer is "yes."

In "The Leadership Competency: How Interns and Employers View Development," Troy Nunamaker, Clemson University, and his co-authors offer research into the varying view of this career readiness competency.

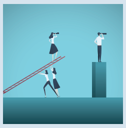
Working with faculty is the focus of two of this issue's features. First, Tricia Zelaya-Leon, Rollins College, discusses how collaboration between career development and faculty has been formalized at her institution in "Career Preparation: From Afterthought to Center Stage." Rachel Smydra, Oakland University, discusses "Facilitating Faculty Buy-In to Career Readiness" and offers some examples of how institutions have achieved that.

Rounding out this issue is "Hire Education: Getting Students to Think Like Hiring Managers," by Miriam Miller, New York University. Miller walks through the innovative program she developed to help students understand the interview and candidate selection process and improve their own performance. J

TOP STORIES FROM THE FEBRUARY 2020 ISSUE

Predicting Interns' Intention to Convert
www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/trends-and-predictions/predicting-interns-intentions-to-convert/

Creating a Mentoring Program
www.naceweb.org/career-development/best-practices/creating-a-mentoring-program-using-gamification-to-increase-students-career-readiness-and-graduation-outcomes/



On the Cutting Edge: Building Culturally Aware Career Services Initiatives
www.naceweb.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/best-practices/on-the-cutting-edge-building-culturally-aware-career-services-initiatives/

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NACE

CORONAVIRUS-RELATED LEGAL QUESTIONS

by **Edward J. Easterly, Esq.**

The world is changing on a daily basis, and it is important that colleges and universities, students, employers, and career services professionals have the knowledge and information to respond to issues and questions as they arise. This article addresses some of the key legal questions that have arisen in regard to the coronavirus pandemic.

QUESTION: Can an employee's start date be delayed or an offer withdrawn due to COVID-19?

While unfortunate for those just entering the work force, yes, an employee's start date can be delayed or an offer can be rescinded due to COVID-19-related issues. In this regard, an offer can be delayed if either the place of business is shut down or the applicant has COVID-19 or is symptomatic. In either situation, an employer is not, generally, required to pay the applicant until the employment actually commences. The applicant may file for unemployment at that time, but the individual's eligibility would be based upon the applicable state law.

An employer may also withdraw a job offer if the employer is shut down due to a state order or if the applicant is unable to start immediately due to having COVID-19 or being symptomatic of COVID-19. If an employer decides to withdraw a job offer, it should do so in writing and make it clear as to why the offer is being rescinded. Once again, an applicant may file for unemployment; their eligibility would be based upon the applicable state law.

QUESTION: Can an employer ask about an employee's or applicant's health condition?

In the non-pandemic world, the answer to this question is generally "no." Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are generally prohibited from making disability-related inquiries or engaging in medical examinations unless they are job-related and consistent with business necessity. Inquiries and reliable medical exams meet this standard if they are necessary to exclude employees with a medical condition that would pose a direct threat to health or safety. A direct threat is defined as "a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation."

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has stated that employers may take steps to determine if employees entering the workplace have COVID-19, including testing to determine if employees have the virus, because an individual with COVID-19 poses a direct threat to the health of others. Therefore, during the pandemic, an employer can ask employees questions regarding their medical condition as it relates to COVID-19. In this regard, employers can ask employees if they are symptomatic or if they have been around anyone who is symptomatic or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Employers may also take an employee's temperature prior to commencing a workday and send an employee home if the employee has an elevated temperature.

If an employer is taking an employee's temperature, the employer should inform employees in writing of this practice and that it is being done solely to check for symptoms of COVID-19. Any records maintained from the temperature checks should be stored in an area separate from an employee's personnel file.

An employer may also screen job applicants for symptoms of COVID-19 after making a conditional job offer, as long as it does so for all entering employees in the same type of job.

QUESTION: What happens if an employee is unable to work due to COVID-19?

If an employee is unable to work due to a COVID-19-related reason, there are several factors that come into play. As an initial matter, the reason is important to ascertain in order to determine what laws, rules, regulations, or polices are applicable. This is due to the fact that, as of April 1, 2020, the Family First Corona Response Act (the FFCRA) went into effect.

Under the FFCRA, all employers with fewer than 500 employees, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, are required to provide an employee with paid sick leave for certain reasons relating to COVID-19. In this regard, employees of a covered employer may be eligible to use paid sick leave if the employee is unable to work or work remotely because he or she 1) is subject to a local, state, or federal quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19; 2) has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine because of COVID-19; 3) is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis; 4) is caring for an individual subject to or advised to quarantine or self-isolate; 5) is caring for a child whose school or place of child care is closed, or whose child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19; or 6) is experiencing substantially similar conditions as specified by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the U.S. Secretaries of Labor and the Treasury.

The FFCRA also provides for an expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act, referred to as the EFMLA in the FFCRA. In this regard, the FFCRA also requires all employers with fewer than 500 employees to provide up to 12 weeks of job-protected EFMLA leave to an employee who has been employed for 30 calendar days if he or she is unable to work or telework due to the need to care for a child whose school or place of child care has been closed, or whose child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19. The first two weeks of the EFMLA leave would be unpaid and the remaining 10 weeks would be paid at two-thirds an employee's regular rate for the number of hours the employee would have otherwise worked, up to a cap of $200/day and up to an aggregate of $10,000.

If a leave request is not covered by the FFCRA, the employer's response would be based on the applicable state or federal law and the employer's applicable policies. For example, if an employee has been instructed by a physician not to come to work due to a medical condition (such as asthma) that renders that employee more susceptible to COVID-19, an employer may have to accommodate the employee's request for leave pursuant

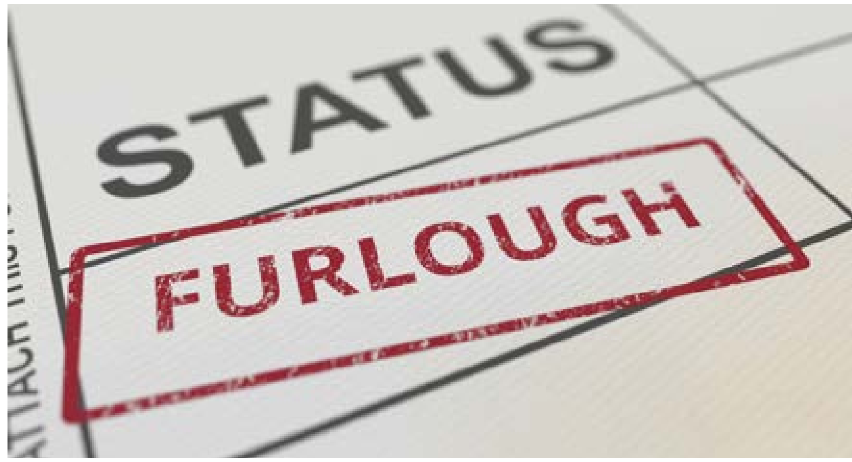
to the ADA. Each request for leave must be reviewed by an employer on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate response.

QUESTION: How are employees paid in the event of a "layoff" or "furlough"?

As an initial matter, it must be noted that there is a difference between a "layoff" and a "furlough." A layoff is a separation from employment with an employer; in this case, the employee no longer is employed as of the date of the layoff. A furlough, on the other hand, is a period of unpaid leave for an employee. The employee remains, technically, "employed" by the employer and may, depending on the employer's policies and the health care policy, remain eligible for certain employer-provided benefits during this time, such as health insurance.

In the event of a layoff, an employee will generally no longer receive compensation or benefits beyond the date of the layoff. An employee may, however, be eligible for unemployment compensation. The amount of unemployment compensation an individual would be entitled to during the period of layoff would be dependent on the state law where the individual is located. It should be noted, however, that the CARES Act, which was passed in response to COVID-19, has provided for an additional $600 per week in additional unemployment compensation for eligible individuals through July 31, 2020.

In the event of a furlough, the initial determination of compensation is up to each individual employer. An employer may continue to pay employees while on furlough, may require an employee to use any accrued and unused paid time off, or may place the employee on a fully unpaid leave of absence. In the event the leave is unpaid, the unemployment compensation benefits mentioned herein would be applicable



for those impacted individuals, e.g., the employee may receive the state-provided benefits plus the additional $600 per week.

QUESTION: Can an employer require an employee to work from home during the pandemic?

The simple answer to this question is "yes"—an employer may require an employee to work from home during the pandemic. To the extent practicable, an employer may require its employees to perform duties remotely while a place of business is shut down due to state, local, or federal order, or if a business merely chooses to remain closed during this time period.

There are certain issues that arise when an employee works remotely. The first consideration for employers and employees is compensation. If an employee is non-exempt, meaning that the individual is entitled to overtime for any hour worked over 40 in a workweek, the employer must ensure that it has a mechanism in place to track employee work hours. The foregoing can be as simple as requiring the employee to submit a weekly timesheet indicating the hours worked in a given workweek. Employees must make sure that they account for all hours worked during the given workweek to guarantee they are not missing out on earned compensation.

Employees who are exempt under state or federal law must be paid their weekly salary for any week when they perform services for an employer. An employer may require employees to use accrued and unused paid time off for days when no services are provided; however, if an employee does not have any accrued and unused paid time off for a given week, the full salary must still be paid if any work is performed during a workweek.

Another significant issue that employers and employees must be mindful of in a telecommuting situation is the potential for work-related injuries. If an employee is injured while working from home—for example, the employee trips over a carpet while working from home—that employee may be eligible for workers' compensation (depending on applicable state law). As such, the employer and the employee should agree as to where the employee will "work" while at home and limit the workspace to avoid potential issues in the future.

To the extent an employer does not have a "telecommuting policy," one should be implemented as soon as practicable so that there is no confusion as to the requirements, expectations, or restrictions placed on the employees. The policy must be communicated to the employees and should be provided in writing.

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QUESTION: What is an employer required to do to maintain a healthy and safe work environment?

Pre-pandemic, employers were required to provide employees with a healthy and safe work environment. That requirement has not changed; it has only been enhanced by pandemic-related issues.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the federal agency responsible for overseeing and handling complaints regarding workplace safety matters. Since the start of the pandemic, OSHA has issued guidance and rules for employers to follow to the extent they remain open. In addition to OSHA, each state may have implemented distinct requirements for employers to follow to ensure worker safety.

Employers must adhere to the guidance from OSHA, state agencies, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to avoid potential liability. As such, employers should implement a pandemic response plan that documents what steps it is taking to comply with the various state and federal requirements, e.g., social distancing, cleaning of work areas, the wearing of masks, and so forth. The plan should be communicated to employees, and employees should be provided with training—virtually, if necessary—on what they can and are required to do to comply with the new requirements. The plan should also address what employees should do if the employee is in contact with someone with COVID-19 or if the employee contracts the virus.

If an employee believes that an employer is not complying with the various federal, state, or local health and safety requirements, the employee should immediately notify the employer. Employees are also permitted to make a report of any workplace issues directly to OSHA. Employees should be aware that they are protected from retaliation for making any such complaints. Accordingly, if an employer terminates an employee for making a complaint, it may be in violation of OSHA; such an action would also entitle the employee to damages under the applicable law.

QUESTION: What happens if an employee or intern contracts COVID-19 while at work?

If an employee contracts COVID-19 as a result of a workplace exposure, the employee would be entitled to protections based upon pertinent state law. In this regard, depending on the state or commonwealth, work-related injuries or illnesses are generally covered by workers' compensation. Accordingly, if an employee contracts COVID-19 due to a workplace exposure, that employee should notify the employer and file a claim for workers' compensation. That claim would cover lost wages in addition to medical costs related to the exposure.

If the impacted individual is an intern, the same general rules would apply, with a few caveats. If the intern is paid, the individual would be considered an employee of the organization and the organization's workers' compensation coverage would likely cover any such claims.

The more complicated question arises when the intern is *unpaid* and not considered an employee of the business. In this situation, the law of the state or commonwealth would once again need to be considered. Some states' workers' compensation laws would cover the intern in this situation, as the individual would still be considered covered by the organization regardless of whether the person receives compensation. If the organization's workers' compensation coverage did not apply, the unpaid intern would have a potential claim for negligence (depending on the circumstances of contraction) against the employer. The unpaid intern could also seek remuneration from the educational institution to the extent that the educational institution maintained any responsibility over the internship. For example, if the educational institution placed the student and was aware of potential risks at the internship site, the intern may claim that the educational institution was also negligent in failing to protect the student from harm.

To protect themselves from such claims, educational institutions should enter into specific agreements with employers if they are placing

students in an internship. The agreements should articulate who is liable in such circumstances and include indemnification provisions that indicate that, if a claim is brought, the employer will be liable for any costs and expenses and reimburse the educational institution for any costs and expenses related to a claim.

QUESTION: Am I entitled to unemployment compensation?

One of the biggest questions that has come up is whether an individual is entitled to unemployment compensation if the person is displaced due to COVID-19-related reasons. The initial answer to that question is "yes, but."

As a general matter, if an employee is out of work due to a workplace closure due to COVID-19 or a reduction of hours, the individual would be entitled to unemployment compensation. The more difficult question arises when an employee elects not to work due to health and safety concerns or because the employee would prefer to stay home and collect unemployment due to the increased amount provided through July 31, 2020. While each state law would dictate entitlement, there is some guidance that can be provided.

If an employee refuses to return to work due to health or safety reasons, the employer should request additional information regarding the refusal. If the employee has legitimate concerns that preclude the person from returning to work, the employee may be entitled to unemployment compensation. Conversely, if an employee merely wishes to remain unemployed to collect increased unemployment benefits, it may impact the employee's ability to continue to receive such benefits.

Depending on the applicable state law, an individual normally has to be "able and available" to work to be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. Those who refuse to work to remain on unemployment compensation are technically removing themselves from the work force and may lose entitlement to benefits. Accordingly, employees need to be mindful of the reason they are refusing to return to work as it may ultimately impact their benefit entitlement.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Employees and employers alike need to remember that the regular workplace laws still remain applicable regardless of the pandemic. As such, employers are still prohibited from engaging in workplace discrimination, employers still must pay their employees properly, and employers must abide by other state and federal work-related laws.

With regard to the pandemic, employers and employees must be mindful of the workplace laws when decisions are made pertaining to layoffs, furloughs, employee pay, employee leave, returning employees, and workplace accommodations. For example, if an employee indicates that he or she cannot wear a mask due to a health or religious reason, the employer cannot merely dismiss this request. The employer must engage in an interactive process to determine if any reasonable accommodation is available to remedy the problem.

Of equal significance is that employers must continue to address any claims of harassment or discrimination in the workplace. If an employee believes he or she is being treated differently or subjected to harassment due to a COVID-19 diagnosis or because of his or her race or national origin, the employee should lodge a complaint pursuant to an employer's policies and procedures. The employer must then investigate any such complaints as it would have done so previously. The pandemic has not relieved employers from complying with the laws that were in place pre-pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Employees, employers, and educational institutions are all hopeful that the pandemic we are currently facing is a bad memory in the near distant future. Until that time, however, the laws, statutes, and regulations in place need to be followed to protect the employees who continue to work and employers from potential future liability. J

Edward J. Easterly, Esq., is a partner at Hoffman Hlavac & Easterly.

THE GREAT DEBATE: Should Job Location Development Be Housed in Career Services?

by **Casey Lowe**

There are two types of people in the world of career services: people who know about JLD and those who have not heard about it yet. It is a tad obscure and vague; however, it can have a significant impact on a student's educational journey and pathway to career success. As a JLD coordinator myself, I have experienced the many benefits of this program being housed in the career services office on my campus.

WHAT IS JLD?

What is the job location and development (JLD) program? JLD is a federally funded offshoot of the federal work study program, which connects students of financial need to part-time employment. Unlike work study, JLD aims to help students regardless of financial need. The program provides funding primarily to cover the salary of the JLD coordinator, who locates and develops part-time jobs off campus for students. JLD coordinators also collect data and compile and submit a report annually to the federal government that details the number of students for whom jobs were located and the total earnings of those students.

The program structure relies on the coordinator to determine how the program should be set up. In most cases, the coordinator conducts site visits to local employers while also maintaining the university's job posting service. Typically, when the position is housed in career services, the coordinator provides career coaching through one-on-one student appointments.

WHERE CAN I FIND JLD ON MY CAMPUS?

The challenge with JLD is that it can be housed in many different departments on campus. The program can fall under career services, financial aid, student employment offices, and, in some cases, human resources. (As you can probably imagine, collaborating with JLD coordinators across the state, let alone the nation, can be tricky. Sometimes you may have to visit numerous departmental websites to find the JLD coordinator.) In my case, the JLD program falls under career services, and I advise students on how to identify and obtain positions.

However, from my perspective, I believe there is an added impact to the program being housed in the career services entity on campus. Looking through the employer relations and career-advising lens, there are numerous benefits. Additionally, a JLD coordinator who is knowledgeable about different career theories is better able to help students tie these seemingly "unimportant" work experiences to their future goals and next steps.

EMPLOYER RELATIONS AND JLD

For the employer relations side of the house, JLD offers a whole other network of employers to find and with which to connect. This is another opportunity to build your employer engagement profile and bring employers to campus we had not thought about while also building a connection between the university and the local community. For example, a business owner who runs several dining establishments in the area could present to a group of entrepreneurship majors while also recruiting service workers for the summer.

In addition to employer engagement, this program provides the opportunity to create more part-time job fairs. While other offices may not always have the bandwidth or time for these, career services is where job fairs thrive. In my office, we plan to pilot a part-time job fair by tapping into employers that hire students for part-time summer work.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND JLD

Housing JLD within the career services office allows the coordinator to look at the program from a career developmental lens. For example, the JLD coordinator can assist with resumes and other job-search documents to solidify the student's pathway to a part-time position. In addition, following the part-time experience, the JLD coordinator can assist students with how to portray their part-time work experiences on their resumes and coach them on how to speak about such experiences with graduate schools and employers offering full-time positions.

As career professionals, we know how significant a part-time job can be in the next step after graduation, but the student does not always realize that. For example, a senior majoring in engineering who worked at a retail store during his or her freshmen and sophomore years may be having difficulty explaining how this experience could be relevant to full-time engineering positions. Through our career development lens, we can explain the NACE career readiness competencies to the student and share

STUDENTS ARE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE WHAT SKILLS THEY ARE GOOD AT AND OTHERS THAT THEY NEED TO BUILD ON.

how these eight core aspects can help a new college graduate succeed in the workplace. We can speak about how the student's part-time work—which included becoming a shift supervisor—relates to those competencies, including teamwork, professionalism, and leadership. In this case, the student's coursework and internships relate directly to engineering, and the transferrable skills the student developed from the retail job will demonstrate that the student can be a dedicated and professional worker, making the student attractive to many engineering employers.

Incorporating theory

If JLD is housed in the career services entity on campus, the program coordinator is also equipped with theory to help support the importance of part-time jobs and is better able to market them to students.

For example, the coordinator may use the cognitive information processing (CIP) approach, developed by researchers at Florida State University, which is focused on career thinking and decision-making. One component of this theory is the information processing pyramid. Each component of the pyramid focuses on three domains: executive processing, decision-making skills, and knowledge domains. These represent everything one must analyze before making a career-based decision. The knowledge domain focuses on one's own interests and skills. In thinking about their part-time jobs, students are given an opportunity to see what skills they are good at and others that they need to build on.

Having the knowledge of theories such as the CIP approach allows the JLD coordinator to relate these part-time work experiences to a student's career goals and aspirations.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

JLD is a federally funded program that does not always get the time and attention it deserves from colleges and universities. JLD can provide students with financial stability and a platform on which to build their skills during their collegiate journey.

For those colleges and universities that do not currently have a JLD program, I hope you will look into the possibility of establishing one on your campus. For campuses where JLD has been established in offices other than career services, I urge you to reach out to these campus partners and find ways to collaborate. And, for institutions where JLD is housed in career services, I encourage you to find innovative ways to market this program, connect with these employers, and create partnerships between the students and these opportunities that can await them.

The partnership between JLD and career services can be impactful: The ability to combine and leverage JLD's strengths with career advising, employer relations, and career theory perspectives is a strong case for establishing this program within the career services office. J

Casey Lowe is the job location and development coordinator at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She locates on- and off-campus part-time positions while simultaneously advising students on the best ways to locate and obtain these positions. In addition to this role, Lowe serves as part of the employer relations team at university career services and is in the process of creating a job shadow program for the university.

Lowe received her master's degree in public administration as well as her B.S. in family and child sciences from Florida State University. During her graduate program, she served as a graduate assistant in the Florida State Career Center working primarily on their job shadow program, FSUshadow.

The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic On Higher Education, College Recruiting, and New College Graduates

MESSAGE FROM SHAWN

When I applied to become the executive director of NACE, I looked forward to working with and for members to address their needs and strengthen our professional community. I never imagined that my first days would be focused on addressing the needs of members as they—along with the rest of the world—grappled with the personal and professional challenges presented by a pandemic.

I have been amazed and awed at the willingness of members to help each other by sharing information. Through polls, through virtual events and presentations, and through the NACE Community, members have stepped forward—and keep stepping forward—to help all of us navigate this unprecedented experience. It is hard to find good in such a disruptive and, often deadly, experience, but it has shown us that we can count on each other—that **#WeAreNACE** is much more than a hashtag.

This special section of the *NACE Journal* features some of the data and insights members have brought to the table. Obviously, as you read this, some of the data are already outdated. That's okay. They provide us with a historical record of where we were at a point in time and provide us with context so that we can learn from this experience and apply those lessons going forward.

Sincerely,
Shawn VanDerziel
NACE Executive Director

6 / 12,114
Number of Town Halls / Number of Participants

21 / 2,307
Number of Virtual Roundtables / Number of Participants

NACE QUICK POLLS: TRACKING THE RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

In January, although there were murmurs of a deadly virus in China making its way around the world, employers and their college counterparts, looked forward to spring recruiting.

NACE's *Job Outlook* indicated that spring recruiting would be robust: More than 70 percent of employers taking part had firm or tentative plans in place to be on campus to recruit.

Still, there was a steady trickle of information that suggested the coronavirus was both serious and pervasive, and people began asking what, if anything, they might need to do differently.

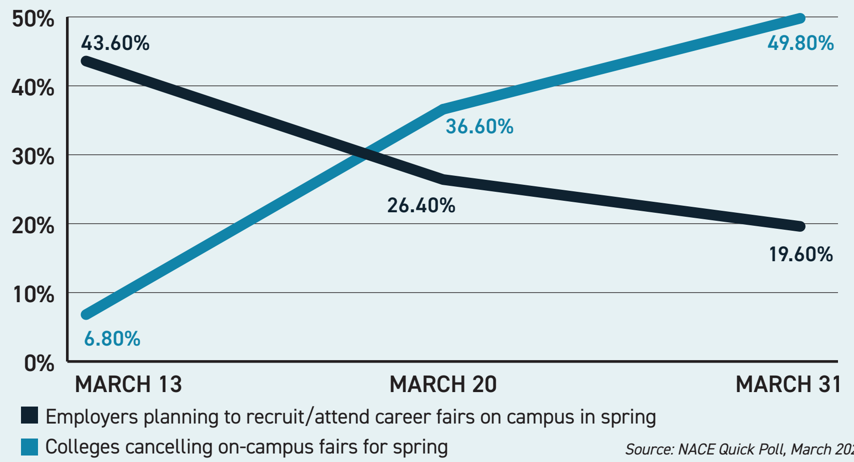
On March 9, NACE launched a poll among its members to determine how the coronavirus might affect spring recruiting as well as summer internships. Initial results—posted on March 13 in the NACE Community and NACE website—suggested there was *some* concern and a recognition that things might have to change.

More than one-quarter of schools, for example, had either decided to shift all classes online or were giving that option serious consideration. Still, less than 7 percent had cancelled the career fairs they had planned for the spring; however, as less than half of employers said they expected to carry out their plans to attend career fairs in the spring, this may have reflected a lag in communication between the groups. (As it turned out, the disconnect was short-lived and, ultimately, did not matter, as most states went into some form of lockdown by the end of March.)

In addition, although the World Health Organization had declared the coronavirus a pandemic on March 11, initial poll results indicated that summer internships would proceed as planned, with more than 90 percent of employers expressing that intent.

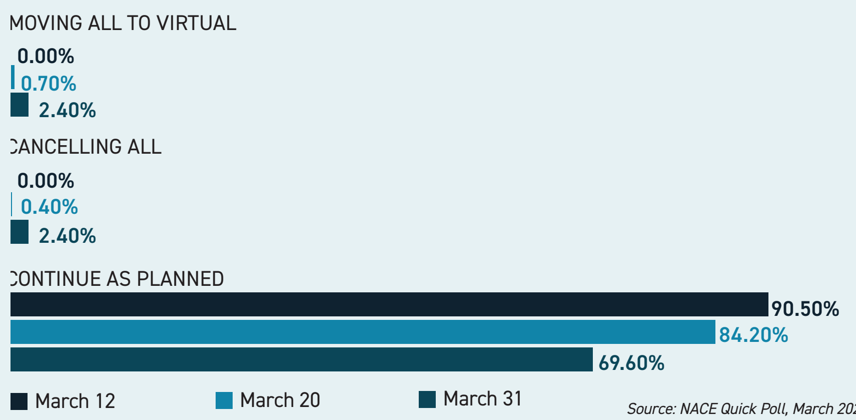
Within a week, plans had shifted, and by month's end, the shifts were dramatic. Employer plans to be on campus to recruit largely fell apart, and far fewer organizations said their internships would proceed as originally planned. **(See Figures 1 and 2.)**

FIGURE 1: SPRING RECRUITING PLANS: MARCH 2020 RESULTS



Source: NACE Quick Poll, March 2020

FIGURE 2: INTERNSHIPS: MARCH 2020 RESULTS



Source: NACE Quick Poll, March 2020

April's data reflect the recognition among participants that the effects of the pandemic would extend beyond spring. In fact, much of what had been unthinkable in March was top-of-mind by the end of April. Whereas 70 percent said they intended to conduct their internship programs as planned at the end of March, more than 80 percent of organizations reported some change to their internship program by the close of April. **(See Figure 3.)** Organizations also began taking stock of the offers they had extended for internships and for full-time positions. **(See Figure 4.)**

For career services professionals, too, the shifts were stark: Nearly all reported they were providing services to students virtually and that all interaction with students was, in fact, virtual.

As April settled in, people also began to think about and plan for an extended state of lockdown. Consequently, in looking ahead to fall 2020 recruiting, more than 10 percent of schools reported plans to conduct career fairs only virtually, and a similar percentage of their employer counterparts (8 percent) said they would only attend virtual fairs.

EVOLVING STRATEGY, TACTICS, AND UNCERTAINTY

May's polls—underway as of this writing—will no doubt further illustrate how university recruiting and career services are evolving their strategies as well as their tactics to meet the needs of the "new normal."

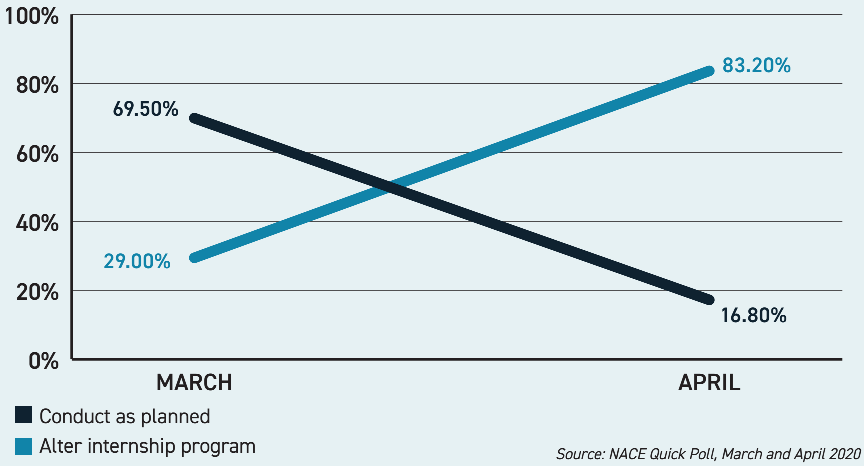
At this early juncture, core resources—current staffing levels and budget—are still largely intact, although significant portions of both institutions and organizations are unsure how those will shake out over time and with the start of a new fiscal year. Moreover, budget status is largely rendered moot in the short term for many schools: Nearly half of colleges have implemented a spending freeze; more than one-third have frozen hiring. Employers (18.3 percent) are more likely than their career services counterparts (10.4 percent) to report furloughed or laid off staff.

Even without the full May data, however, it is obvious that both career services and university recruiting professionals anticipate that they will have to retool their operations in some way to address a fall recruiting season unlike any other. For example, nearly half of employer organizations expect to alter their target school list, shifting to a more regional focus or reducing the number of schools on the list, while another 22 percent are not decided about their list.

Not surprisingly, along with the recognition that fall recruiting may be different this year comes a high degree of uncertainty about *how* different and how to manage those differences. Among employers responding to NACE's initial poll in May, for example, nearly one-third have started planning for the 2020-21 academic year, but those plans haven't been initiated. Nearly as many say they are still deciding about the coming year. Similarly, approximately one in four organizations expects to stick to its standard recruiting schedule; nearly as many, however, are uncertain and waiting to see how the situation unfolds. **(See Figure 5.)**

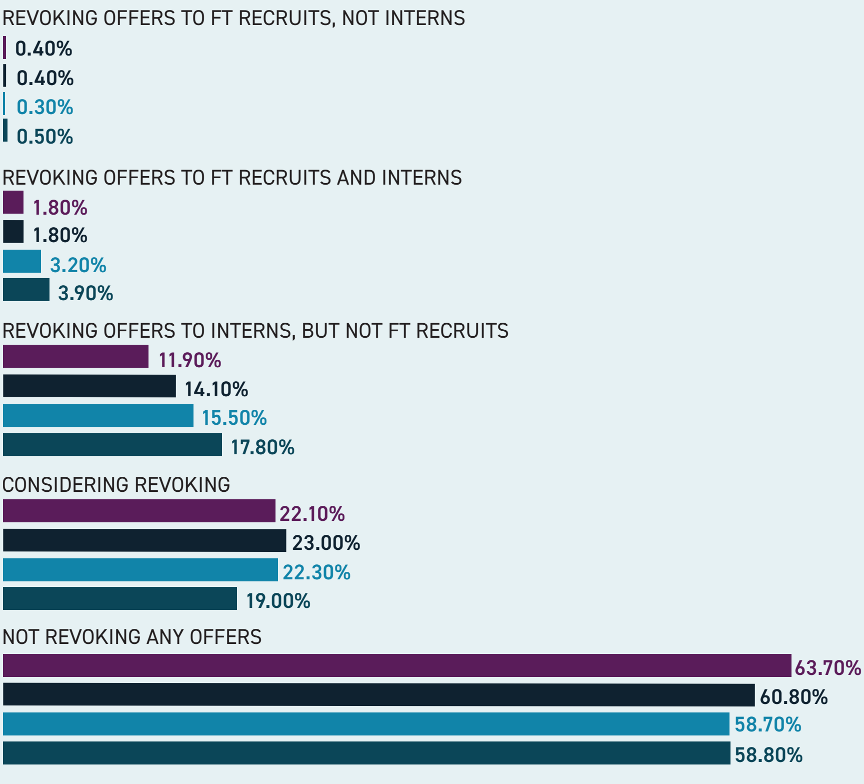
The uncertainty repeats on the career

FIGURE 3: SUMMER INTERSHIPS



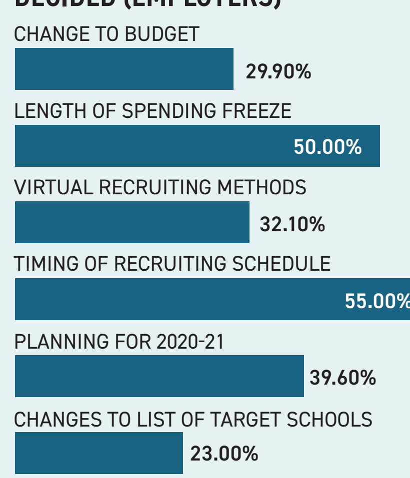
Source: NACE Quick Poll, March and April 2020

FIGURE 4: REVOKING EMPLOYMENT OFFERS



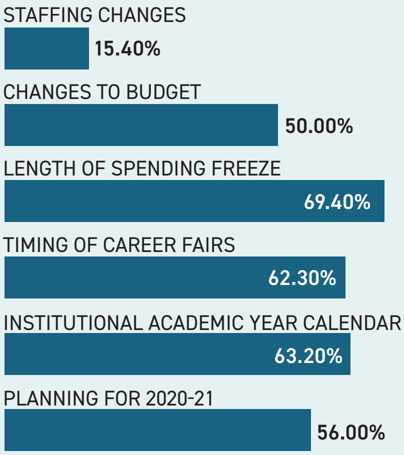
Source: NACE Quick Poll, April and May 2020

FIGURE 5: STILL TO BE DECIDED (EMPLOYERS)



Source: NACE Quick Poll, May 11, 2020

FIGURE 6: STILL TO BE DECIDED (CAREER SERVICES)



Source: NACE Quick Poll, May 11, 2020

services side: More than half report they have started to plan for 2020-21, but are still undecided about what those plans hold, driven, most likely, by the fact that nearly two-thirds of institutions had not made a decision about their academic year as of early May. **(See Figure 6.)**

POLLING TO CAPTURE TRENDS AND THE NEW NORMAL

NACE expects to continue polling around the effects of the pandemic on recruiting, career development, and the job market for new college graduates through the summer. General information will be available on the NACE website; detailed results will be available to participating members.

NACE QUICK POLLS

Beginning March 9, 2020, NACE launched a series of weekly polls to gather and feed back critical information to members to help them base decisions on real-time data and gain perspective on a fast-moving, ever-evolving situation. The polls allowed participants to update their responses so that the data reflected today's reality, not yesterday's. This also enabled members to see trends around key issues—such as, initially, travel restrictions and internship plans, and, as the lockdown continued, revoked offers, budget cuts, and hiring freezes.

March poll: N=361 (employers), N=1,055 (career services). April poll: N= 439 (employers), N= 839 (career services). May 11 results: N=137 (employers), N=251 (career services).

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS

The following were gleaned from posts in the NACE Community as well as discussions during Town Halls and Virtual Roundtables.

START WITH THE BASICS. Your virtual internship should incorporate the elements that give your in-person program value: meaningful work that is tied to your organization's mission and goals; immersion in your organization's culture; and the opportunity to build a community with other interns that outlasts the summer.

RE-EARN BUY-IN FROM YOUR INTERN MANAGERS. Anecdotally, some employers have reported internal resistance to making the internship program virtual. Provide your intern managers with the tools and guidance they need to make the virtual experience work for everyone. Develop a toolkit for your managers that is based on the resources your managers say they need. This might include detailed information about processes, slide decks that the manager can amend for use in onboarding interns to a particular unit, and revamped job descriptions for the interns that reflect the change in environment.

PROVIDE YOUR INTERNS WITH THE NECESSARY TECHNOLOGY. If your interns were on site, they would likely be provided with the necessary equipment. Replicate that for their virtual experience. Don't assume they have wifi or a laptop or access to the various platforms needed to get their work done.

MAKE YOUR INTERNS' WORK MEANINGFUL. A virtual experience has a certain amount of "disconnect" baked in, so it is important that you use every opportunity to build connections. Chief among these is giving your interns work that gives them a chance to connect with and contribute to the goals of your organization.

RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGES YOUR INTERNS FACE WORKING VIRTUALLY. Your interns are likely working from home and may not have access to a private space. They will likely need to deal with interruptions, background noise, and other distractions. Don't misinterpret a lack of privacy as a lack of professionalism.

HAVE YOUR INTERNS ADHERE TO A SCHEDULE. A schedule is fundamental to providing your interns with structure. This doesn't mean, however, that your schedule has to be static or rigid. You can build in flexibility based on the work and interaction required.

PROVIDE YOUR INTERNS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER. Connection with other interns is important: Provide the means, e.g., tools and platforms, so they can work in teams as well as connect "socially" and build interactions into their schedules.

EMPHASIZE COMMUNICATION. Schedule regular check-ins with your interns and provide (or ask your intern managers to provide) ongoing feedback.

RELATED RESOURCES

NACE April 2 Town Hall: Internships, Recruiting, and Early Talent

NACE April 1 Virtual Roundtable: Virtual Internships

See www.naceweb.org/about-us/coronavirus-updates/

Special Report, continued on page 20

BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLECTING FIRST-DESTINATION DATA

Many institutions collect initial data from their students when they pick up their graduation cap and gown. That is not going to be an option with most spring 2020 graduates, who are likely to attend a virtual graduation or see their in-person graduation moved to later in the fall.

LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER OFFICES THAT CAPTURE DATA, such as Institutional Research and specific academic departments. Compare notes on how to shift strategies and gather the data together instead of sending out multiple, separate surveys.

EMAIL YOUR STUDENTS WITH AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF YOUR SURVEY. Put the survey behind a firewall so that students can provide that information securely.

LET STUDENTS KNOW YOU WANT TO CELEBRATE THEIR SUCCESSES TO GAIN BUY IN. This could be through a social media campaign.

CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN DEPLOY YOUR STAFF—possibly by shifting their hours—so that they can call students personally to gather data.

BE SENSITIVE IN YOUR APPROACH. Your messaging should be student-centric. For example, craft your message to emphasize career services is here to support the student in the job-search process and has resources and programs to help; you can position the request for their job-search information in that context. Collecting data should not be approached as a transaction, and that is especially true in the current environment.

EXPLAIN WHY YOU ARE COLLECTING THE DATA AND HOW IT BENEFITS THEM AND OTHER STUDENTS. For example, you may explain that the data can be used to help ensure the quality of the curriculum and that students get jobs in their chosen fields. J

Download the video and transcript from the NACE April 14 Town Hall: Strategies for Collecting First-Destination Data During COVID-19 at www.naceweb.org/about-us/coronavirus-updates/.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

SPRING 2020 RECRUITING

70.4%

OF EMPLOYERS WITH PLANS TO RECRUIT ON CAMPUS

2020 Job Outlook

19.6%

OF EMPLOYERS RECRUITING ON CAMPUS AS PLANNED

NACE Quick Poll, March 31, 2020

FALL 2020 RECRUITING

82.5%

OF EMPLOYERS EXPECTING TO RECRUIT FOR FULL TIME AND INTERNS

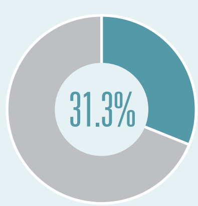
2020 Job Outlook Spring Update

37.5%

OF EMPLOYERS UNCERTAIN OF THEIR RECRUITING SCHEDULE

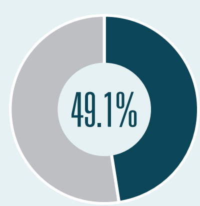
NACE Quick Poll, May 11, 2020

BUDGETS



OF CAREER CENTERS REPORTING **BUDGET INCREASE**

2018-19 Career Services Benchmark Survey Report



OF CAREER CENTERS IMPLEMENTING **SPENDING FREEZE**

NACE Quick Poll, May 11, 2020

TARGET SCHOOLS

20 MEDIAN NUMBER OF FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES FROM WHICH EMPLOYERS RECRUIT

2019 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey Report

22.1%

OF EMPLOYERS **REDUCING** NUMBER OF TARGET SCHOOLS

NACE Quick Poll, May 11, 2020

INTERNSHIPS

2.8%

PROJECTED **INCREASE** IN INTERN HIRING

2020 Internship & Co-op Survey Report

21.7%

OF EMPLOYERS **REVOKING OFFERS** TO INTERNS

NACE Quick Poll, May 1, 2020

CAREER FAIRS

9.1% OF CAREER CENTERS OFFERING **VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS**

2018-19 Career Services Benchmark Survey Report

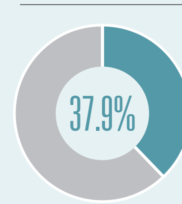
25.1% OF CAREER CENTERS EXPECTING TO OFFER **ON-CAMPUS AND VIRTUAL FAIRS IN FALL**

NACE Quick Poll, May 1, 2020

10.5% OF CAREER CENTERS EXPECTING TO OFFER **ONLY VIRTUAL FAIRS IN FALL**

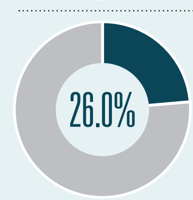
NACE Quick Poll, May 1, 2020

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING



OF CAREER CENTERS NOT OFFERING ANY VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING

2018-19 Career Services Benchmark Survey Report



OF CAREER CENTERS EXPECTING TO PROVIDE ALL FALL INTERVIEWS VIRTUALLY

NACE Quick Poll, May 1, 2020

THANK YOU TO OUR NACE20 EXHIBITORS!

- 12Twenty
- Adjacent Academies
- Amberjack
- AmeriCorps State and National
- Amherst College
- Asher Associates
- Avature Limited
- The Athlete Book
- Campus Commandos
- Candid Career
- Cappfinity
- Career Fair Plus
- CareerEco Virtual Events
- CareerOneStop
- CareerShift, LLC
- CareerSpots Videos
- CCE - Center for Credentialing & Education
- Certiport – A Pearson Vue Business
- Chicago Semester
- College Recruiter, Inc.
- College Transition Publishing
- CRCC Asia
- Cynaptx
- Disney Campus Recruitment
- EVENTUS
- FOCUS 2
- Focus EduSolutions
- Forté
- The Fulbright Program
- GeckoEngage
- Geographic Solutions
- GoinGlobal
- GradLeaders
- GradSift
- Graduway
- Group GTI
- Handshake
- HireVue, Inc.
- IES Internships
- InfoMart
- InsideSherpa Inc
- internhousing.com
- InternX
- Interstride
- Jobs Connected
- Jobscan
- Jobspeaker Inc.
- JobTeaser
- Knopman Marks Financial Training
- Management Consulted
- MyIceberg, LLC
- National Alumni Career Mobility Survey
- Newbridge Marketing Group/Door of Clubs
- NGWEB Solutions, LLC
- Oleeo
- Paradox
- PeopleGrove
- Phenom People, Inc.
- Potentially Ltd
- QuadJobs
- Quinncia Inc.
- Rakuna
- Residential Property Management (RPM) Careers
- Rezzio Learning
- RippleMatch
- RNL
- Securities Training Corporation
- Shortlist.Me
- SkillSurvey, Inc.
- SocialTalent
- SourceCast, Inc.
- Spark Hire, Inc.
- StandOut, by CollegeNET
- Steppingblocks
- Symplicity Corporation
- Think Business 360
- ThinkOptimal
- TruMotivate
- uConnect
- University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign - School of Labor & Employment Relations
- Vanderbilt University – Career Center
- Vault.com Inc.
- vFairs.com
- VMock, Inc.
- WayUp
- Wix.com
- Yello

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LEARN MORE AT NACEWEB.ORG/NACE20-EXHIBITORS

THE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY: HOW INTERNS AND EMPLOYERS VIEW DEVELOPMENT

by **Troy Nunamaker, Tony W. Cawthon, and Aaron James**

INTRODUCTION

National organizations such as the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), Adecco, and the Council for Industry and Higher Education have published reports claiming a shortage of and demand for career readiness amongst recent college graduates.[1, 2, 3]

Known as soft skills or career competencies, these career readiness attributes include leadership, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, technology, work ethic, intercultural fluency, and career management.[4] According to NACE, the understanding, attainment, and proficient demonstration of these skills are an integral part of the successful transition into the work force. Nonetheless, there remains a gap in how students and employers rate proficiency levels.[5]

Investigating how students and employers view and explain career readiness by studying the language they use to describe competency development is a first measure in closing that gap. Of the eight soft skills, NACE's 2018 report revealed leadership as one of the top three competencies with a substantial gap between desired proficiency and actual proficiency amongst recent college graduates.[6] Focusing solely on the leadership competency, we can identify the similarities and differences of how students and employers describe leadership and the various proficiency levels accompanying the leadership competency.

CONNECTION TO THE LITERATURE

College graduate, entry-level job skills studies by a range of researchers supported the claim that soft skills are often desired by employers more than hard skills and that a gap between desired proficiencies and actual proficiencies exists.[7 8, 9, 10] James Cappel's work on the topic even included the insightful statement: "Overall, employers rated nontechnical skills even higher than technical skills, and the gaps between 'expected' and 'actual' performance tended to be greatest for nontechnical skills."[11]

Compounding the issue, employers are seeing as many as five generations in the work force now.[12] A 2011 study found that cross-generational relations are one of the top three challenges for employers.[13] With a focus on increasing productivity, finding ways to resolve the work force differences and challenges among the generations is a priority for employers. Each generation has unique values, work ethic, and preferred management styles based on the societal factors and critical events that they experienced while growing up.[14] As Robert Tanner pointed out, many current workers agree they are confused by other generations' belief systems associated with professionalism, career readiness, and competency proficiencies.[15] This confusion has the potential to hinder productivity.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A likely first step in responding to the soft skills gap is defining career readiness, but "the data clearly depicts a large variation in assigned definitions" for career readiness competencies.[16] Understanding how students and employers describe each of the competencies will be part of assigning definitions. Analogously, there do appear to be discrepancies in the definition of leadership as a competency that is worth exploring. For this study, we chose to see how students and employers describe leadership using the lenses of transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership.

Transactional leaders work within their organizational cultures following existing rules, procedures, and norms. Transactional leaders are not known for changing or realigning cultures nor are they known for incorporating new visions, assumptions, values, or norms.[17] A transactional leader looks to employ reprimands and rewards, is focused on results and outcomes, and does not typically employ drastic changes in the structure of an organization.[18]

Conversely, others have defined a transformational leader as an agent of change and characterize transformational leaders as able to "elicit performance beyond expectations by instilling pride, communicating personal respect, facilitating creative thinking, and providing inspiration."[19] Transformational leaders change their culture by first understanding it and then realigning the organization's culture with a new vision and revision of its shared assumptions, values, and norms.[20] The four unique factors of transformational leadership are outlined as a) charisma, b) inspiration, c) intellectual stimulation, and d) individual consideration.[21, 22]

Lastly, Johnson proposed that the advantages of servant leadership are altruism, simplicity, and self-awareness.[23] Greenleaf explained altruism as "foundational in describing the servant leader assuring that followers' highest priority needs are served. Simplicity can be observed in the servant leader's willingness to serve first and let go of motivations that can drive leaders toward attaining perks, publicity, power, and prestige."[24]

It is important to determine if mentors and students view the competency through a servant-oriented lens, a transformational lens, or a transactional lens when describing leadership development. Even with these three being known as some of the most commonly researched leadership types in higher education,[25] we still do not know which leadership lenses students and employers most readily align with.

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Data collection

Since the fall 2017 semester, Clemson University's Center for Career and Professional Development has used the same zero-credit-hour internship course final evaluation.[26] Consistent career competency-oriented questions were evident in each of the successive semesters. Open-ended questions about the student interns' leadership development were a part of the final evaluation of the internship course for student interns and mentors. Other than minor adjustments to the language, student interns and mentors encountered the same competency-focused questions. Student interns and mentors were asked to rate the student interns' proficiency level in each competency, including leadership. Those proficiency levels consisted of awareness, basic, intermediate, advanced, and expert. After answering the proficiency-level questions, both groups were asked in an open-ended question to describe why they chose the proficiency rating for each competency. The answers to the open-ended, competency question on leadership development is the narrative text analyzed in this study.

Those open-ended responses were exported to an excel spreadsheet and cleansed of student and mentor names or identities before beginning the coding and analysis work with the data. The Excel randomizing function was used to pull a stratified sample of 15 student intern narratives with at least 30 words and 15 mentor narratives with at least 30 words.

Findings

The researchers applied first cycle and second cycle coding to the 15 student intern responses and 15 mentor responses using the same leadership codes for both cycles. Adding a second layer of sub-coding based on numerical identifications (such as 1.1, 1.2), helped in searching efficiently for data during the analysis process.

Of the first cycle codes for the 15 student intern responses, there were 16 transactional leadership codes, 13 transformational leadership codes, 18 servant leadership codes, and six unknown leadership codes.

Of the first cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were eight transactional leadership codes, five transformational leadership codes, two servant leadership codes, and nine unknown leadership codes.

The researchers determined an overall sense of leadership style for the second cycle coding of each narrative based on the results of the first cycle coding. In looking at the individual chunks for a narrative from first cycle coding, the researchers then used a second cycle coding process to align each narrative with the transactional, transformational, servant, and unknown leadership types. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 student responses, there were six transactional codes, five transformational codes, two servant codes, and two unknown codes. Of the second cycle codes for the 15 mentor responses, there were three transactional codes, two transformational codes, one servant code, six unknown codes, and three responses that did not relate to leadership.

In this second cycle coding, there is a distinction between student intern narratives and mentor narratives. Keeping in mind that servant leadership is considered by some scholars to be a type of transformational leadership, most of the student comments could be aligned almost equally with transactional leadership and transformational leadership. More than 86 percent of the student narratives could be classified into one of these two leadership types.

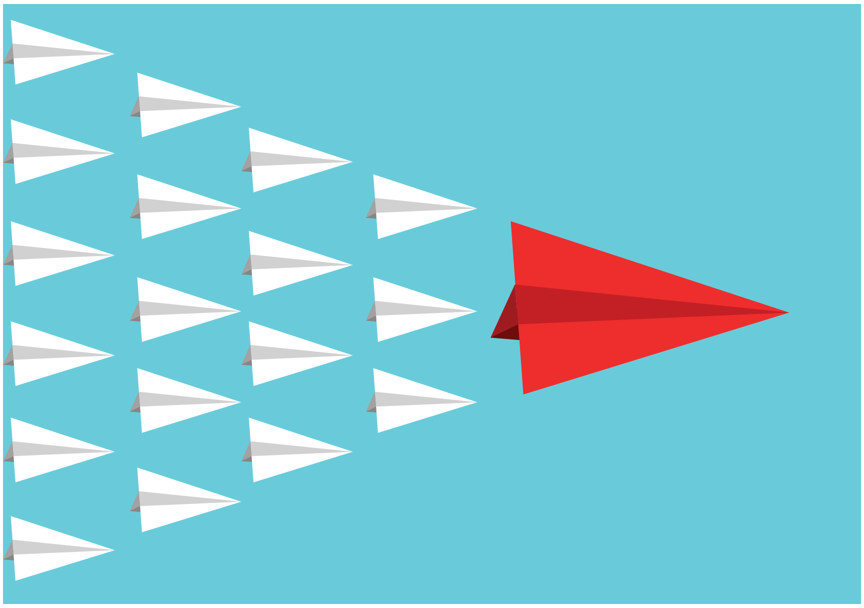
However, the mentor narratives trended in a different direction. The highest portion of second cycle codes amongst the mentor narratives was categorized as unknown. Unknown leadership codes included narratives that had text, chunks of data, and phrases that displayed aspects of leadership, but they could not be categorized as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, or servant leadership. Combined with mentor narratives that did not display any leadership coding, unknown and non-leadership codes accounted for more than half of all the mentor narratives. Stated differently, more than 53 percent of mentor narratives could not be classified as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, or servant leadership.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

As noted by NACE, competencies are key to a successful transition from college into the work force, but there remains a gap in how students and employers rate proficiency levels.[27] Adecco confirmed that more young professionals are unsuccessful in the workplace because of career competencies issues than due to issues with their hard skills.[28]

The findings in this study support the belief that there is a gap between what the work force expects and sees in new hires and what competencies are being promised and delivered by higher education institutions and their students. Adding to some of the quantitative data already available, the findings begin to look at how employers and students explain competencies and career readiness. As Denise Jackson pointed out, "Only tentative conclusions on the relative importance and extent of skills gaps within and across developed countries can be drawn due to the ambiguity of skills definitions."[29] This research helps to confirm the idea that there is ambiguity in the skills definitions.

continued on page 26



Students are confident that they are ready to enter the work force,[30] but employers disagree and state that students need more competency development during college.[31] In an earlier article, one of the co-authors pointed out that "each new generation that enters the work force is believed to be less qualified and less motivated than the previous. However, even though business leaders, supervisors, educators, and politicians hold a bleak view of how well-prepared college students are for entering the workplace, the [college students] themselves are very optimistic in their abilities to join the work force and bring the desired employment skills with them."[32]

The miscommunications about how each group defines and explains the leadership competency become apparent in this study, and previous scholarly writings tell us that frameworks like the social change model are not the right leadership theories to bridge the communication gap.[33] As Peck stated, "very few [students] indicate that they are not gaining these skills in college."[34] Rather, this study supports Jackson's statement that employers and students are "comparing and rating skills based on their own interpretation of the assigned skills."[35]

A 2017 report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation claimed, "somewhere along the road from education to employment, the system is not routinely equipping all students with all the skills they will need to succeed."[36] Jackson was critical of this sentiment and noted that the ambiguity around definitions afforded only "tentative conclusions…[about] the relative importance and extent of skills gaps."[37]

The findings in this study help to discredit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's statement and support Jackson's work. Mirroring Jackson's statement that "participants are left to derive their own meaning of termed skills,"[38] this study reveals a disconnect in how students and employers describe leadership traits.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The American Association of Colleges and Universities reported that more than 70 percent of employers wanted higher education to place more attention on soft skills and competency development.[39] Yet, higher education has been slow to make any significant adjustments to the way the curriculum is organized and delivered to students.[40] Mason, Williams, and Cranmer found that "structured work experience and employer involvement in degree course design and delivery have clear positive effects on the ability of graduates to secure employment," but acknowledged in the same study that those experiential education teaching efforts had significant impact on labor market performance.[41] This study helps to explain this phenomenon by revealing a disconnect in how students and employers define career readiness and competency performance.

Administrators and policymakers have an opportunity to implement high-impact practice requirements that have been known to move the competency needle. Leveraging employer-centric language in the curriculum and incorporating experiences such as internships and co-ops into every discipline could have powerful effects on reducing the skills gap. Based on research investigating employer opinions on the significance of internships and co-ops, implementing such requirements would also go a long way toward strengthening the relationship between higher education and employers.[42] Doing so would also be a step at diminishing the articulation gap seen in this study.

Administrators, accrediting agencies, and policymakers should also look at the option of verifying and certifying competency attainment during the education process. Better defining competencies through a verification and certification process might help to reduce the variance in student and employer language found in this study, but these types of activities require significant staff and financial resource investments by higher education institutions.

Scalability also continues to be a challenge for this initiative, but successful integration could be a victory for hiring practices in the United States and beyond. More than 600 million hires occur in the United States each year, and all of them fall under the purview of the U.S. Department of Labor's discrimination laws.[43] Nonetheless, studies find systematic evidence of gender and race discrimination in the hiring process.[44] Building frameworks that tie candidates' application materials to proficiency levels instead of some of the other biased employment qualifiers currently used has the potential to reduce discriminatory practices while also further protecting applicants and employers. A universal and verifiable competency framework and proficiency scale could help with hiring and promotion inequities.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Earlier, we discussed the implications of this study and noted that desired leadership traits outside of the transactional and transformational approaches can be introduced into either the educational curriculum or employer onboarding process. Before that process occurs, educators need first to determine what leadership types best align with employers' comments. Now knowing that transactional and transformational leadership approaches do not resonate with the majority of mentors and employers, further research should be conducted on analyzing leadership types that might align with mentor narratives. Since themes like confidence, self-awareness, and initiative were present in the mentor coding for this study, the leadership identity development theory[45] is one model that might align with employers' view of leadership.

Moreover, exploring other facets of leadership dynamics in the workplace will also help better explain how mentors and student interns explain leadership differently. Dulewicz and Higgs stated that the three dimensions used to measure the relationship between leadership style and work production show equal allocation among the dimensions. Dimensions, including "organizational context, follower commitment and leader performance, and the relationship between the personality and the leadership,"[46] remain consistent regardless of personality factor

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variances in leadership styles. Thus, educators and employers need to look to other aspects of leadership outside of personality and style when discussing career readiness. Through additional qualitative research methods, such as focus groups and ethnographic studies, educators and employers might more effectively communicate with each other through improved frameworks and definitions that ultimately close the competency gap.

Lastly, exploring the remaining seven career competencies in a similar historical narrative analysis fashion might further reduce all the gaps associated with career readiness. By first conducting individual qualitative research studies on communication skills, critical thinking, collaboration, technology, work ethic, career management, and intercultural fluency, current scholars interested in these individual competencies can pave the way for a meta-analysis by future scholars interested in overall career readiness.

The discrepancy in the way students and employers talk about leadership development during the internship could be part of incongruent leadership proficiency rating problem for these two groups. Likewise, looking at the subject matter through an interpretivist's lens, the incongruent language that students and employers use could be attributed to how these two groups view and interact with the world. Again, there is more generational diversity in the current work force than ever before.

In launching its career readiness initiative, NACE notes that "career readiness has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, work force development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today's graduates."[47] Continued exploration of how students and employers view, explain, and discuss their understanding of each of the eight competencies has the potential to reduce the career readiness gap.

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CAREER PREPARATION: From Afterthought to Center Stage

by **Tricia Zelaya-Leon**

It seems like you don't have to look far to find criticism regarding the value of a college degree. In fact, some critics (and graduates who are riddled with heavy student loan debt) are recommending a harkening back to vocationally focused education as apprenticeships and trades seem to provide a more lucrative benefit.[1] College leaders try to respond to this challenge in well-intentioned ways, hoping to remind the public that the value of a college degree is about so much more than getting a job. However, that doesn't stop the pressure being placed upon college career centers to not only prepare students for the jobs that don't exist yet, but also to get students those jobs directly upon graduation.

Rollins College, a small, private institution, located in Winter Park, Florida, serves just over 2,000 College of Liberal Arts undergraduates. As a liberal arts school, Rollins is no stranger to the value-proposition critique. Four years ago, with our quality enhancement plan (QEP) serving as the catalyst, we prioritized career and life planning as a top strategic initiative. The directive from the college president—to more explicitly articulate to our constituents the value of a Rollins education—came at a pivotal time in Rollins's history, when many were growing increasingly critical of the job prospects for liberal arts graduates.

Since the fall of 2015, we have undertaken an ambitious enterprise, not only working to prepare our students for meaningful lives and productive careers post-graduation, but also to transform a campus culture. Before this project started, "career services" was viewed by some as the professionalization, and thus degradation, of the liberal arts ethos. A 2014 survey revealed that recent Rollins alumni were generally dissatisfied with

R-COMPASS IS A FORMALIZED PLAN TO ARM FACULTY ADVISERS WITH TOOLS AND RESOURCES THAT HELP THEM INFUSE CAREER AND LIFE PLANNING PRINCIPLES INTO THE ACADEMIC ADVISING RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS.

their career preparation; nearly 30 percent reported that they had never even interacted with the Office of Career Services during their time at Rollins.

With a presidential directive in place and a QEP focused on career development for students, a cross-functional team was tapped to fully implement an entirely developmental, integrative, and sustainable action plan. That plan became known as R-Compass. (Fun fact: The Rollins mascot is the Tar—an outdated term for a sailor, so much of our nomenclature is nautical by nature.) While many committees and leaders have helped to evolve R-Compass into its current form, the present leadership team is mainly comprised of four individuals—the director of undergraduate advising and academic support; two associate deans; and myself, the director of career development. Together, we have been tasked with infusing career-focused initiatives into the academic and co-curricular fabric of the Rollins student experience.

WHAT IS R-COMPASS?

At its core, R-Compass is a formalized plan to arm faculty advisers with tools and resources that help them infuse career and life planning principles into the academic advising relationship with students. The plan involves a comprehensive professional development program for faculty advisers; a faculty peer mentor program; a required R-Compass Fair for all 500 to 600 first-year students; a new career-focused peer mentor position for student leaders; a four-year planning tool template; career document review training for all campus tutors and writing consultants; and explicit career outcomes publicized on academic department websites.

One of the few shared experiences that all Rollins students have is a relationship with their faculty adviser, who is a full-time, tenure-track professor (there is no professional advising model for our College of Liberal Arts students). Because research has shown that capitalizing upon this significant relationship could lead to greater career outcomes for students,[2] our plan focuses on strengthening the advising experience in general.

Prior to R-Compass, adviser training and development were haphazard; if a student received excellent advisement, it was dependent upon the faculty member's instincts as opposed to the result of a formalized training program. With the advent of a full-time staff position devoted to making adviser training accessible, relevant, and incentivized for faculty members, regular professional development sessions were launched. The focus of these trainings is relationship-building with students. Faculty are given opportunities to role play appreciative advising conversations that help students visualize their academic and career journeys at Rollins and beyond.

As of November 2019, 75 percent of Rollins faculty had voluntarily participated in adviser training, and 26 faculty peer mentors, known as R-Compass advising mentors (RCAMs), were serving as champion advisers to their peers. These RCAMs participate in a weekend-long intensive training program that deputizes them as uber-advisers on our campus for a two-year period. A powerful indicator of success for this program is the ever-growing waiting list of faculty who have expressed their interest in serving on future cohorts. This attention to the faculty advising experience was critical to cultural shift; with nearly 200 faculty members on campus, their buy-in and support of career-focused initiatives provided a much-needed springboard for further institutionwide integration.

Once that groundwork had been laid, the full infusion of career and life planning could begin.

THE NEXT STEP: STUDENT AFFAIRS INFUSION

Recall that Rollins's career services office had been underused by alumni. Although half of young alumni respondents believed that staff were helpful, the office had experienced some of the same challenges as their national peers: Workshops were not well attended,[3] satisfaction with the office was low,[4] and the faculty had little faith in career services as a whole.

At the behest of a new vice president for student affairs, the Office of Career Development and the Office of Experiential Learning were merged; together, they became the Center for Career & Life Planning. (We often refer to the whole operation as the "career center" or "center" for short.) For the first two years of the merger, the main task for the center was to respond to heavy staff attrition and to develop a cohesive mission.

Once new staff members were hired, our team began to work on an overhaul of the center, its services, and its campus reputation. One-off workshops were replaced with targeted classroom and student organization presentations where a captive audience already existed. We leveraged relationships with faculty and our student affairs colleagues to gain access to students and provided content that was relevant to established courses and groups.

"Market Your Experience" guides were created for various co-curricular activities so that students could visualize how to translate engagement in student organizations and in key leadership positions to their resumes and in interviews. All departments within the student affairs division were also held accountable for assessing how they communicate to students the transferable skills inherent in their programs. As a result of career-focused partnerships within student affairs, nearly 1,300 students participated in targeted career outreach presentations. Additionally, the 12 "Market Your Experience" guides that were created prompted additional outreach requests. In the fall of 2017, just two years into R-Compass, all 14 student affairs programs had created learning outcomes associated with the assessment of students' transferable skill attainment.

Even with all this progress, we still lacked curricular reach.

MOVEMENT TOWARD CURRICULAR INTEGRATION

Research suggests that engaging college students in career-focused conversations earlier and more often in their academic tenure correlates to better career outcomes for students and alumni.[5] In response, a liaison program was created that paired a career center staff member with each section of the Rollins required first-year seminar course. These courses are unlike typical freshman seminars in that the content is not standardized and it is closely related to the discipline of the faculty member teaching the course. In all, there are typically 30 to 35 sections of these courses, so each of our staff works with three to five sections as a liaison. Career liaisons coordinate with faculty to share developmentally appropriate career content with first-year students; this happens via regular email messages, one-on-one meetings, and, most commonly, in classroom presentations. In 2015, the year prior to the start of the career liaison initiative, only 17 freshmen voluntarily set up one-on-one appointments with a career staff member; four years later—2019—through one-on-one appointments and invitations from faculty for liaisons to present in their classrooms, 80 percent of our first-year class engaged with us.

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Reaching nearly all first-year students was the first widespread step to achieving full integration (the "meeting students earlier" part of the equation), but how could we grapple with the "more often" part? The strong alliance our center's leadership had with academic affairs paved the way for a new, exciting, and *required* endeavor: a resume assignment built into the only common, standardized course mandated for all Rollins students in the College of Liberal Arts—"Health and Wellness." The nine dimensions of wellness[6] serve as the foundation for the course, so the R-Compass leadership team designed an assignment to elevate the career wellness dimension. Not only are students required to submit a resume as part of their assignment, but they must visit the career center so a staff member can review it. To receive credit, the student submits both a polished resume and a reflection of his or her experience with the career center. This allows not only for quality control and assessment, but it guarantees that 100 percent of students meet with us. Students can take the course at any point in their undergraduate experience, but it is required for graduation, so this initiative has been a game-changer for career-focused curricular infusion and expansion.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO TRULY EMBED THE CAREER JOURNEY INTO THE FABRIC OF YOUR INSTITUTION, A FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT AND MEASURED OUTCOMES HAS TO BE TANTAMOUNT TO PROGRAM AND SERVICE ENHANCEMENT.

To provide additional voluntary options for students, elective careers classes were enhanced to include new courses on financial literacy, how to navigate the world of work with a visible and/or invisible disability, and how to make any major marketable. All sections of these courses feature engagement with the career center, and many courses are co-taught by Rollins faculty and career staff. Future course offerings, already in the planning phase, will include digital literacy and advanced topics to cater to the specific career needs of adult learners. These courses not only provide students with practical skills that complement their liberal arts experience, but they also give our staff the opportunity to engage with students and faculty in the classroom, sustaining those relationships so crucial to the hallmarks of a personalized Rollins experience. Course evaluations and anecdotal student feedback have demonstrated the value of these courses, and our faculty state that they feel more confident in their ability to infuse career preparation into their discipline-specific courses.

So, how did we get here?

EARLY SUCCESS, BUT STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS

While the formula may not yet be fully set, the ingredients have been simmering for years: Innovation plus intentional collaboration have given us the pathway toward integration. Not only did our career center capitalize on our already collaborative relationships across campus to uplift the career conversation, but we also took the time to revise unit mission statements and introduce new, cutting-edge programs to amplify the career experience for our students. Both our internship and student employment agendas were enhanced to infuse career development requirements and principles. A new career champions mentor program was installed to connect Rollins alumni to current students who are in need of career-focused mentorship.

After researching the University of Nevada, Reno's career studio model,[7] we quickly decided that a studio of our own might provide the lynchpin necessary to bring the career journey experience to the forefront for our students. Indeed, in 2018, the first year of the Rollins career studio, nearly 200 students regularly dropped in each month for career guidance, even though the office was located on the periphery of campus.

Because of the infusion of required resume assignments, enhanced careers courses, and a robust first-year career liaison program, students have now flocked to our space; in fact, many have become regulars, returning repeatedly throughout the course of the year.

Although Rollins is a small, private, liberal arts institution, its career center is much like many others, persistently searching for ways to prepare students for a constantly evolving job market. The Rollins solution has been to capitalize on the advent of R-Compass and to evolve it into a multi-pronged approach to further infuse principles of career development into academic affairs and student affairs. What made this cultural shift possible was a perfect storm for change: 1) institutional leadership with an eye toward intentional and future-focused strategic planning, 2) a QEP devoted to infusing career preparation into academic advising, and 3) a career center that was committed to innovation and collaboration.

Although 2020 marks the fifth year of formalized R-Compass assessment—and the cultural shift is palatable—there is still work to do. For instance, we have really focused so much on meeting with students early on and often that only time will tell as to whether or not this approach will actually realize our students' job attainment outcomes: Will they get jobs at higher rates upon graduation, and will those jobs be better than those secured by their predecessors? Or, will we see little job attainment shift early on, but more awareness of career principles that will help alumni navigate their own future career journeys more effectively and independently? Either way, the literature out there is on our side; it suggests that an integrative methodology is a worthwhile endeavor.

That said, if you are looking for a way to truly embed the career journey into the fabric of your institution, a focus on assessment and measured outcomes has to be tantamount to program and service enhancement. As you continue to evaluate and revise approaches, philosophies, and strategies, keeping the return on investment top of mind will be key.

Identifying a common goal is also necessary. Is your goal to impact overall job attainment, is it cultural shift, or is it simply to infuse the career conversation into as many layers of the student experience as possible? Rollins has enjoyed early success with a focus on the latter, which we are hopeful will indirectly impact the other possible outcomes. This process is far from complete, and our students' outcomes related to job and career attainment will continue to be monitored over time. There is hope, however, that new alumni will speak about the strong relationships they built with their peers, their faculty advisers, and the Rollins career center staff, all of whom were intentionally committed to their success as they pursue meaningful lives and productive careers.

Tricia Zelaya-Leon, Ph.D., is the director of career development at Rollins College, where she oversees career center staff who provide personalized guidance on career discernment, employer engagement, and post-graduate success. Zelaya-Leon earned her Ph.D. in higher education and student affairs from The Ohio State University in 2011. Her teaching and research interests focus on student identity development theory, the development of second-year college students, engaging students in transition, and infusing career preparation into the academic curriculum.

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FACILITATING FACULTY BUY-IN TO CAREER READINESS

by **Rachel V. Smydra**

For many graduates, walking across the stage and receiving their degree represents a culmination of their hard work, accrued knowledge, and skill development. However, when many of these graduates encounter potential employers, they have a difficult time articulating exactly what they learned and showing how this knowledge transfers to the workplace. In response, many universities are shifting their culture to embrace career competencies to improve students' efficacy with regard to career readiness.

A competency is "the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced employee performance and ultimately result in organizational success."[1] Focusing on competencies rather than basic skills or "content knowledge" aligns better with employers' needs.[2] To be successful in building such a culture, universities must embrace a vision that places faculty in the driver's seat. Ascan Koerner, professor of communication and associate dean of undergraduate studies in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota, indicated the university community must consider career readiness "a shared responsibility that cannot be delegated to student and career services."[3]

Administrators, however, face difficult challenges in onboarding faculty if they use a top-down approach that packages career readiness as a new program or initiative. Some faculty may object to the idea of having to center their courses around a career focus; others may be skeptical and fearful of an administrator's ability to track course outcomes more closely; and still others may lack a current, comprehensive understanding about careers, workplace, work culture, and competencies. To overcome these hurdles, universities must let much of career readiness implementation be faculty-driven since the success of career readiness plays out in the classroom.

CAREER READINESS DEVELOPMENT

Building a campus culture that focuses on career readiness must start with faculty input. Koerner emphasized that faculty must be "heavily involved in all stages, in particular, in the efforts to bring career readiness into the curricula and the classroom."[4] Inviting faculty and other stakeholders to participate in the developmental phases can foster buy-in, which is essential to success. The alternative to including faculty is failure since, according to Koerner, "student-focused initiatives, and really any activity by the college that is not supported by the faculty, rarely succeed regardless of how much support a college's leadership and administration lend to it."[5]

To some degree, the discussion about one's competency is nothing new; however, moving the discussion onto a college campus, branding it, marketing it, and encouraging both faculty and students to engage in the effort is relatively new. Consequently, a primary challenge facing a career readiness task force is deciding "how to move the conversation from subjective competency measures to objective competency measures."[6] Working together, career readiness task force members can shape an organization's mission that includes not only a knowledge focus but also the application of that knowledge pre- and post-graduation. Task force members can also address key questions that stimulate fruitful conversations:

- What is the institution doing right with regard to career readiness and student engagement?
- How does the organization fall short?
- What skills and competencies are essential for all graduates?
- What kinds of results as far as employment or graduate school admission does the institution see or want to see with regard to student success?[7]

Asking these broad questions early on in the process can move organizations toward constructing a common language that takes different stakeholders' perspectives into consideration.[8] Finding a common language to describe, measure, and evaluate competencies early on will open up the process to discussion and reflection as well. In an article regarding competencies and employability skills, the author recommended that

"eliminating subjectivity should be at the forefront of discussions involving the development of new employability frameworks."[9] Even though gathering input and debating language, relevancy, procedure, application, and outcomes can be time consuming, shaping goals and objectives early on and collectively can pay off in the long run.

FACULTY CAREER READINESS LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Diana Echols, Patricia Neely, and Diane Dusick noted that "many institutions have foregone opportunities" to train instructors in curriculum development with regard to career readiness and engaged learning.[10] Plenty of research is available about institutional and administrative roles with regard to career readiness, but data on effective methods of training or exposing faculty to the idea of career readiness and competencies are lacking. Koerner noted that the University of Minnesota's College of Liberal Art's career readiness team members knew that they had to give faculty "the tools and training necessary to successfully teach and learn career readiness."[11] Facilitators, however, must also consider the design, platform, and delivery of faculty engagement.

PLATFORM AND DESIGN

Increasing faculty awareness about career readiness can take on many different forms that create opportunities for professional strategy sharing, but, according to researchers, "the type of training a faculty member receives affects his or her perceived levels of confidence" in embedding competencies into his or her curriculum.[12] Self-study and mentoring also reflect viable options for practitioners with relatable experiences, and online training can be effective because it offers practitioners flexibility, feedback, and access; however, research indicates that face-to-face sessions foster better outcomes.[13]

Regardless of the delivery method, faculty engagement facilitators should consider participant technical skill variance, assumptions, knowledge level, and desired outcomes. In a piece for the *Journal of Teacher Education,* authors Karen Koellner and Jennifer Jacobs emphasized that "faculty professional development should occur on a continuum" to allow for flexibility, goal setting, and sustainability.[14] In addition to faculty training, career readiness facilitators should build a dedicated online repository that will serve as an accessible space for faculty to access sample modules, strategies, and assignments. For example, Oakland University uses a cloud-based platform—accessible to all faculty—to store competency-related videos, syllabi, teaching tips, and flexible integrative modules.

FACULTY COHORTS

Since face-to-face interaction provides the best method for immersing faculty in the language and culture of competency-based education, a faculty learning community may serve as the best option for engaging faculty. A small cohort allows faculty to contemplate how to create meaningful learning experiences and receive feedback about assignment designs. Sessions can also assist faculty in using a backward design, unfamiliar to most faculty, to create a framework for instructional design that incorporates competencies.[15]

Adam Peck, writing about employability and co-curricular activities, noted that a cohort can also assist educators in learning how to "leverage the practice of mapping activities to competencies."[16] This mapping process resonates as the "missing link" in most academic competency programs because organizations fail to design "educational interventions to support these outcomes" that generate "high-quality measures that could help educators, students, parents, and others understand how students perform and monitor their development over time." [17]

Mapping competencies to specific learning activities and then connecting them to rubrics will assist educators, students, and employers in moving toward an objective level of discussion. Both the University of Minnesota's College of Liberal Arts and Purdue University career readiness initiatives included many of these aspects to engage faculty in career competency discussions and development.

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UNIVERSITY PROGRAM EXAMPLES

University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts

The University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts (CLA) serves as a model in building a culture that embraces career competencies. With the CLA dean's support, Koerner and Judy Anderson, director of career readiness, have been instrumental in constructing a foundation that connects learning to student competencies. Well aware of barriers with regard to faculty, Koerner and Anderson knew early on that they needed the idea of career readiness to be faculty driven since faculty are the ones constructing and delivering assignments that focus on competencies.[18]

To expand faculty buy-in, Koerner, Anderson, and their team focused on a few key strategies: providing open and continuous communication channels, offering faculty leadership roles, and creating opportunities for feedback and interaction with the career-readiness committee and faculty direction. Koerner supported the idea that engaging faculty in teaching and learning with regard to career readiness can improve faculty buy-in as well.[19]

As scholarly research shows, many faculty members are skeptical about career readiness, and Koerner and Anderson found that CLA faculty are no different, as they voiced concerns about measuring course outcomes with regard to faculty performance. Faculty were also resistant because they felt administrators were trying to dictate how and what they should teach. To avoid faculty viewing career readiness as a program or an initiative, Koerner and Anderson chose their language carefully in the planning stages and focused on dissuading faculty from viewing career readiness as another top-down directive from the dean's office. They also formed an advisory board consisting of faculty members and staff from career services and advising to shape building a culture centered on competencies.[20]

To engage faculty further, both tenured and non-tenured faculty can apply for the Career Readiness Teaching Fellows program, developed and implemented by faculty members Amy Lee, director of first-year writing and the faculty director of career readiness faculty engagement, and Kris Cory, associate director of first-year writing and faculty engagement coordinator. The program awards participants professional development resources. During face-to-face sessions, participants share resources, experiences, and best practices for constructing assignments that connect learning to competencies. Faculty also choose one or two assignments and one or two competencies and learn how to shape opportunities that enable students to reflect on what they have learned. Even though the overall focus is on career readiness, the fellowship's primary mission is facilitating effective teaching. On average, 10 faculty join the cohort that meets once a month. To date, 52 fellows have completed the program and 21 out of 31 departments have participated, along with 17 graduate instructors.

Building the foundation for career readiness in the CLA entailed many different pieces. Inviting faculty to the early stages of development, listening and responding to faculty feedback, and implementing the Career Readiness Teaching Fellows program served as key factors in changing the CLA's culture. Moving forward, Koerner and Anderson are considering ways to motivate faculty participation, including, for example, giving faculty excellence awards related to career readiness.[21]

Purdue University

Purdue University developed IMPACT, a faculty fellowship to help instructors design or redesign their courses in ways that include competencies and student-centered learning. The cohort meets face to face for 13 weeks as a large group and periodically in smaller support teams.

Fellows are expected to complete a course redesign in one year after the program ends. On program completion, first-time instructors receive $5,000 for participating in IMPACT; returning instructors committed to converting a different course receive $2,500.[22]

To date, more than 300 faculty have completed the IMPACT fellowship. Faculty reported that they not only improved "their own teaching, self-efficacy, and satisfaction," but they also made their courses "more student centered without removing the rigor" of the content.[23] Data collected by its showed that more than 70 percent of Purdue undergraduates enroll in its courses each semester, indicating that Purdue is committed to developing and sustaining courses that engage and prepare students for opportunities after graduation.[24]

CONCLUSION

With many universities rolling out career readiness, creating faculty buy-in and fostering sustainability through support and incentives are paramount for program success. Involving faculty in every phase of implementation and offering training, such as faculty fellowships and ongoing workshops, will motivate faculty to revisit how they teach and ways that they can improve the connections between course content, career readiness, and student success.

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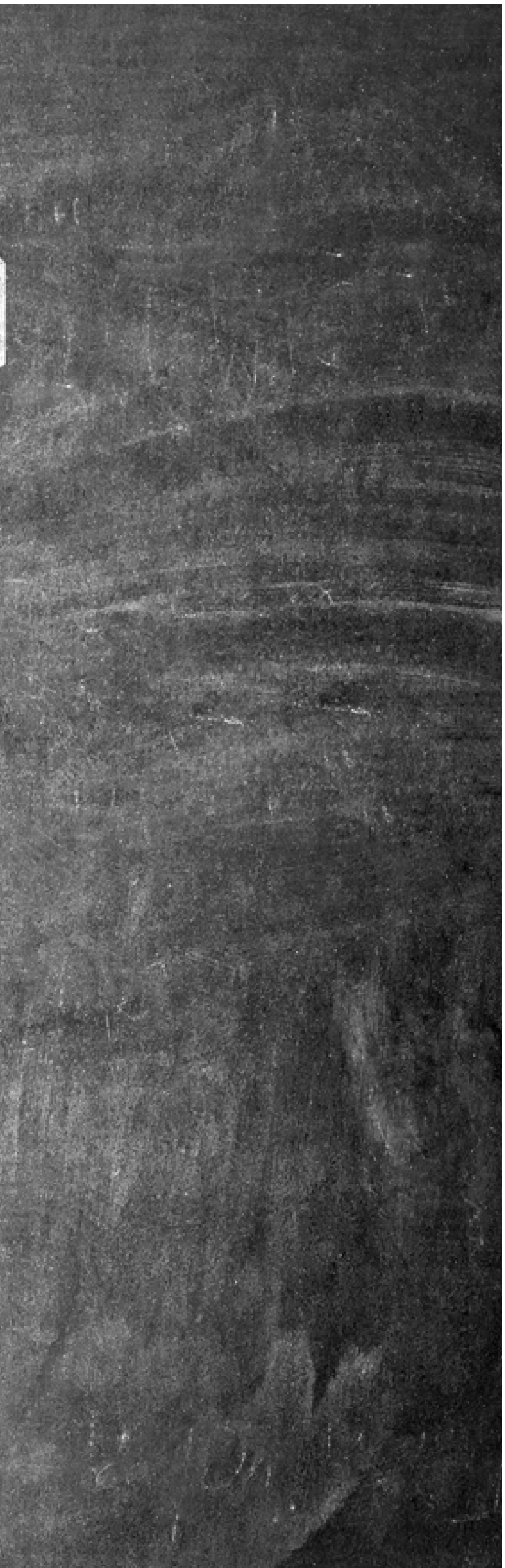

HIRE EDUCATION: GETTING STUDENTS TO THINK LIKE HIRING MANAGERS

by **Miriam Miller**

Those of us who develop and deliver career programming to students or alumni will hardly be shocked to hear that incorporating active learning strategies yields benefits. Many of us would even argue that not incorporating some kind of engagement—a short worksheet or perhaps a peer review of job materials—misses an easy opportunity for applied learning. At New York University (NYU), where I develop the bulk of the career programming for current and recent graduate students, we explored the idea of active learning in a much more intensive and immersive kind of program and came up with the Mock Hiring Committee. The Mock Hiring Committee is an extended simulation that allows participants to assume the functions, responsibilities, and perspectives of those in charge of hiring decisions with the purpose of increasing participants' understanding of the hiring process. Our goal is to transform the way students understand this process and how they view themselves within it.

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA

To create this program, I wanted to apply a model similar to what I had seen during my years working in college admissions, but had never personally encountered in career development. In my admissions career, my fellow counselors and I sometimes engaged in mock admissions committees. We occasionally led these for community-based educational organizations or individual schools that had organized these for their students and parents. The basic premise was that participants working in small groups would receive a packet of fictional applications along with a profile about a pretend college, including the types of students who were a good fit for the institution. The

participants would then give a holistic review of the "applications" and then, as a mock admissions committee, decide who they felt they wanted at their fictional college.

Discussions amongst the members of these committees could be surprisingly intense as people developed strong feelings about who they felt deserved the coveted spot. It was a level of investment and engagement that felt radically different than the many talks I would give about the process of applying to schools and the tips I would share for going about the process. I hypothesized the reasons for this. One possibility was that there was power in participants feeling a sense of ownership in a process for which they often felt they had little control. I also wondered if it was a way for them to engage with the process through a means that generally just felt more resonant. Regardless, it was clear to me then, as it is now, that a simulation made for a markedly different, and seemingly more meaningful, learning experience. This was something I knew I wanted to replicate with career education. So, in the summer of 2018, I set out to create a mock hiring committee for NYU to do exactly that; the program launched in fall 2018.

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THE NEED

There were three factors that drove the creation of the program.

1. Better insight into the hiring process: There is a very large international student population at NYU, and the majority of graduate students come to their programs with three years or less of full-time work experience. As a result, many of the students we serve have limited experience working in the United States and are often unfamiliar with the expectations that employers have when seeking to fill roles. So, the program needed to provide students with a high degree of insight into the process.

2. A one-time, comprehensive program rich in content: As NYU is an urban institution, many of our students commute from across the New York metro area. This makes it challenging for them to attend many shorter programs offered at varying times on individual topics. (Previous attempts to create comprehensive programs spread out over multiple days inevitably saw a steady decline in attendance, meaning that many students would end up missing essential content.) We determined that this program would need to be done in one day and have both breadth and depth.

3. Opportunities for active learning: While we identified content that would be important for greater student insight into the process, we wanted the simulation model of delivery to be informed by the NACE career readiness competencies.[1] Specifically, we wanted content to be taught through extended opportunities for collaboration, leadership, and critical thinking. We also wanted to use digital learning in meaningful ways that complemented our goals; part of that meant testing students' ability to demonstrate learning, as opposed to only surveying for satisfaction.

PROGRAM LENGTH

One of our major concerns with launching the program was its length—five hours, with a 45-minute break for lunch, provided by the career center. We have likely all heard that attention spans are decreasing among college students, but we hypothesized that we would draw in students if we explicitly articulated the return on investment. We framed the program as an intensive bootcamp that would teach resumes, cover letters, interviewing, and negotiating all in one day. We also chose to emphasize the fact that they would get an insider's view of the hiring process, which we believed would be appealing for many students.

We have now run this program on three separate occasions and had 86 returned evaluations, but we have had no complaints about the length of the program. In fact, we received a comment that this format "combines the process into one bootcamp, which is a truly efficient way" since it prevents students from needing to return again and again to learn about an array of topics.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

So, how would all of this come together, and would it actually work?

Launched in November 2018—and offered once each semester since then—the Mock Hiring Committee begins with each student joining a table. Every table becomes its own hiring committee for which students designate a hiring manager and HR manager to represent their interests at various points, while the remaining students are classified as team leads.

With these leadership roles established, the daylong simulation begins. As facilitator, I introduce their purpose: to fill a vacancy for an analyst at the policy institute where they are "employed." We provide a fairly detailed overview of the fictional organization's size, mission, corporate culture, global presence, and specialized expertise, and then share the responsibilities for the specific analyst role. Their task is to:

- review the resumes and cover letters of a pool of five fictional applicants and whittle them down to two interviewees;
- watch video interviews of two candidates and determine who will be recommended to receive a job offer; and
- engage in a negotiation with their fictional candidate and determine what counteroffer to make, if any.

Job materials

Once students mutually determine the organization's priorities for the

STUDENTS DISCUSS WHAT THEY LIKE AND DO NOT LIKE WITH THEIR FELLOW HIRING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO DETERMINE HOW THEY WOULD RANK THE CANDIDATES AND SELECT THEIR TOP TWO FOR INTERVIEWS.

types of candidates that would be most desirable, they apply those priorities in evaluating five fictional candidates' resumes and cover letters. We intentionally incorporate some of the most common errors into the design of these materials. For example, some resumes have unappealing formats, fail to show impact, are poorly organized, are overly long, or do not highlight skills relevant to the job. Meanwhile, some cover letters are written with inappropriately informal tones, accidentally name another company, or are not tailored to the job.

Students discuss what they like and do not like with their fellow hiring committee members to determine how they would rank the candidates and select their top two for interviews. Once every team submits its rankings, they can compare with other hiring committees and see which kinds of resumes and cover letters tend to be favored by decision makers.

Following this first portion of the simulation, we briefly discuss best practices for resumes and cover letters to explicitly call out what they have just proven to themselves: There are best practices that, when applied, are generally much more appealing for a reader. We then give students the opportunity to view the same resumes in a large size—we have them blown up—so they can make any needed improvements as a group. It is a striking experience to see how well they apply what they just learned; we have consistently seen groups notice nearly every error at this point.

We ask students to then diagram the cover letters they just reviewed, to identify whether the structure was appropriate and whether the necessary content was present and well-organized.

Next, we conduct a short quiz, which students can complete with their smartphones. The quizzes help us assess whether students are able to answer content-based questions on the material that has been covered, which then enables us to clarify any concepts that have not been sufficiently grasped. The platform also allows students to see who gets the correct answers first, which enables students to compete for prizes; that function makes the testing element much more palatable for students. Overall, aggregated results* from our quiz show that:

- 94 percent of participants correctly answered our question about the types of information that should be included on resumes.

*These results were aggregated from the quizzes of three sessions—November 2018, February 2019, and September 2019.

- 91 percent of participants correctly answered our question about the types of information that should be included on cover letters.

Interviews

During the interview portion, students receive lists of interview questions and log into a laptop located at every hiring committee's table. Laptops come preloaded with links to unpublished YouTube videos. (Note: These are captioned for accessibility and also to cope with the volume of noise that comes with multiple hiring committees watching videos simultaneously in proximity.) Students are instructed to view only the interview videos of the two candidates they selected after the job materials review process.

The videos are scripted to incorporate both common mistakes and best practices, and they are filmed in-house with staff and student workers posing as the interviewees. After watching their chosen candidates, students discuss the strengths and weaknesses they see. Many of the students report that the videos are particularly helpful, since the majority of them have never seen someone interview before. This is often the first time they have seen what a strong interview performance looks and sounds like.

Once students have watched both videos, they make a group determination as to which candidate they want to hire. The participant from each committee deemed to be the hiring manager then presents the group's recommended candidate to a staff member acting as their division director and has to field questions about the potential hire. This element of the simulation serves as an additional opportunity for students to practice public speaking as they lay out their reasoning for a business decision to an authority figure.

Following this process, the staff facilitator provides a brief overview of interviewing best practices and strategies for answering difficult questions.

Negotiations

The final part of the simulation is the negotiation phase. Students are presented with an employment offer drawn up by HR; the offer includes salary, benefits, and a proposed start date. They are then told their chosen candidate would like to discuss the offer, so they select another pre-loaded video on their laptop, which includes the negotiation with whichever candidate they have chosen. While all but one of the fictional candidates attempt to negotiate their offers, they do so with varying degrees of success, so students must evaluate the arguments they hear. If they are persuaded, they must determine a counteroffer, which the HR manager then presents to other teams.

This process allows students to hear negotiation tactics that are compelling to various degrees; this helps them to determine how they would want to approach such a conversation for themselves. It also enables them to think through which types of things can be negotiated beyond salary. Students are

further able to see that, in many cases, there may be a more favorable offer available, even if the candidate does not get everything requested.

Following this exercise, students are debriefed on negotiation strategy by the facilitator. They are then tested. Overall, aggregated results found:

- 97 percent correctly answered our question about interview strategy.
- 90 percent correctly answered our question about when to negotiate.

STUDENT RESPONSE

As of this writing, the program has been conducted three times—November 2018, February 2019, and September 2019—with 120 students participating, 86 of whom completed and returned their evaluations. In addition to testing student understanding of career content with virtual quizzes, we wanted to assess the participant experience with this format. The overall results have been overwhelmingly positive for us:

- 100 percent of participants agreed strongly/agreed somewhat that they learned what to include in their resumes and cover letters to make them stand out to employers;
- 100 percent of participants agreed strongly/agreed somewhat that they felt more knowledgeable about preparing for interviews;
- 100 percent of participants agreed strongly/agreed somewhat that they felt more knowledgeable about preparing to negotiate a job offer; and
- 98 percent of participants gave the program an overall rating of excellent or good.

We also sought qualitative feedback about the simulation model for teaching this content. Through this feedback, three main themes emerged: 1) Students felt that seeing an employer's perspective demystified the process for them; 2) Tangible examples of successful and unsuccessful candidates helped them realize mistakes they had been making, while seeing strong candidates showed them how to correct these mistakes; and 3) They enjoyed being able to make decisions with their peers through interactive discussions and debates.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

One of the discussions we had hoped might emerge between participants and facilitators was about assumptions and biases of those reviewing resumes toward the applicants. While this was never intended to be a primary goal of the simulation, we intentionally gave several applicants gender-neutral names on their job materials. In multiple cases, we saw participants express surprise during the interview videos when the perceived gender identity of the candidates was different from the ideas they had formulated about who they were interviewing. In one instance, we also had a participant make assumptions about the age and family responsibilities of one fictional candidate with a Ph.D., leading the participant to assume the candidate was less interested in traveling for the job and therefore less qualified. We used these moments to briefly discuss legal and illegal interview questions and how bias can sometimes influence decision making.

There was a second interesting outcome that emerged during the negotiation activity: When we allowed the participants to make counteroffers, we noticed that a fair number of hiring committees counteroffered with non-monetary incentives, such as tuition remission, virtual work options, and child care grants, as opposed to focusing only on salary. This suggests that Gen Z and young millennials place significant value on work/life balance and growth in terms of the job.

IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Simulations are a common strategy for teaching content, and with good reason. According to Smith and Boyer, "Simulations have the power to recreate dynamic...processes in the classroom, allowing students to examine the motivations, behavioral constraints, resources, and interactions among institutional actors."[2] Active learning, they say, is believed to have five major benefits for students: 1) deeper levels of insight into process, 2) greater attention and activity levels in the process, 3) more long-term retention of information, 4) development of analytical skills through collaboration, and 5) stronger speaking and presentation skills.[3]

With this knowledge and understanding, we felt compelled to use a simulation model to deliver this content and further felt there were opportunities for students to develop skills through the program, based on the NACE career readiness skills.[4] Ultimately, we wanted the simulation to translate into the ability for students to apply the material and have it inform their approach to their job search in ways that would provide value.

There is also research about simulations and related active learning strategies that shows participation leads to better knowledge of the material being taught and also better performance when being tested, compared with students who learn through more passive means.[5] The act of frequent testing itself is widely believed to be a key component of learning and long-term retention, as is relevance for the participant.[6] As a result, having short testing experiences incorporated strategically into the design was a priority for our purposes at NYU.

To make the process as relevant as possible for our graduate students, we opted to make the vacancy being filled an "analyst" position at a fictional consulting/policy firm. The decision to do that was based largely on the interest in that role we see from our graduate students, but also because the analyst position is inclusive of many different fields of study and tends to prioritize many of the strengths our graduate students have, e.g., teamwork, analytical, and communication skills, and ability to conduct research. In addition, we believed our students had some context for the analyst position and therefore would be able to use that context in their role play as hiring managers.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge in designing and implementing this program is the preparation that it takes. Because there are five applicants who students review, a resume and cover letter must be created for each, and an interview and negotiation must be scripted and recorded for each. This takes time and research. Many institutions without dedicated communications teams may also find that partnerships with school TV stations or theater groups can be valuable in the video creation process. (Note: Theater or other acting experience is very helpful in terms of the videos.)

Regarding set up of the actual event, every session requires attention to detail with technology. In addition to every table needing to be fully prepared with all of the materials for participants, it is helpful to have extra

backup laptops available and fully loaded with the videos, in case there are issues. Testing the quizzes and videos with staff ahead of time to make sure that any bumps are smoothed out in advance is essential, since it is difficult for a facilitator to troubleshoot for multiple groups. Finally, if possible, it is best to have at least one other staff member on hand to help with day-of event execution.

Another challenge is event size. We found that 25 students seemed to be a highly effective size group. Our September 2019 program saw 70 students participate, which we considered to be room capacity for the set up. While students still reported very positive feedback, it meant that every hiring committee was made up of eight or nine students; this made it somewhat more challenging to ensure that every hiring committee was engaging all of its respective team members fully.

THE FUTURE OF THE MOCK HIRING COMMITTEE

Overall, we were very pleased with how our simulation has worked to deliver meaningful, relevant content to students in an interactive way. We hoped that students would gain insight into the process from another perspective. We further hoped that this insight would translate into ideas about how to implement potential improvements in their own approach. This turned out to be remarkably consistent with the feedback we saw from participants.

This was the first major effort at the Wasserman Center at NYU to use simulation-based learning, and we have since developed additional simulation-based scenarios for specific populations, including doctoral students and postdocs on the academic job market. Long term, we intend to revisit our other career education programs and use further simulations and case studies to teach essential content and promote peer-to-peer learning.

Miriam Miller is a senior assistant director of graduate student career development at the NYU Wasserman Center for Career Development, where she oversees content for programs and resources for roughly 36,000 current and recent master's and doctoral students, as well as postdocs, all from a variety of schools and programs within the university. Miller leads multiple groups in the office dedicated to examining career engagement. Her work centers around comprehensive career education with a more recent focus on resources for virtual learning. She began at NYU as an assistant director at Wasserman in 2015 and was promoted to senior assistant director in 2017.

Launched in 2018, the Mock Hiring Committee became the framework for the Grad Boot Camp and received the 2019 Alva Cooper Award for Best Existing Program from the Metropolitan New York College Career Planning Officers' Association (MNYCCPOA). Miller presented the program at the Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers 2019 Annual Conference.

Prior to NYU, Miller was an assistant director of admissions at a Manhattan private school; before that, she worked in the admissions offices of Barnard College and Harvard Divinity School.

Miller holds an Ed.M. in higher education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.A. from Barnard College of Columbia University, where she majored in American studies with a concentration in higher education. She has been a member of NACE, EACE, the Graduate Career Consortium, and MNYCCPOA.

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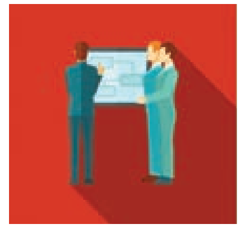
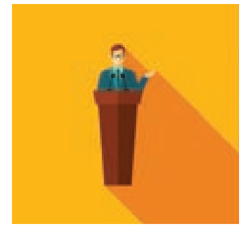


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