



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST
FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Bloomington

**CAREER EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT
STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD**

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST
FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION**

MAY 1, 2015

Executive Summary

As students serving on the Advisory Board for the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, we seek to provide insight on diverse matters involving the undergraduate experience. Given the task of increasing the accessibility and appeal of career exploration and development, we found it first necessary to identify the benefits of such pursuits for students in achieving their vocational goals.

The changing environment of the workplace has several implications for the professional and academic pursuits of university students. As current graduates enter the workforce, they must address the expectations of career choice flexibility and technological proficiency amid a rapidly changing social milieu. The diverse undergraduate education provided by Indiana University is only one of several important factors that play into securing a job post-graduation. Other salient factors include acquisition of practical career-specific experiences, development of necessary social communication skills, and familiarity with hiring and selection processes.

The importance of these career-specific pursuits cannot be dismissed, and it is essential for students to participate in career development activities in order to ensure a smooth entrance into the professional world. Building a strong resume, effectively articulating suitable strengths through interviews, making informed decisions about career paths that highlight personal interests and strengths, networking with peers and professionals in the field; all are components of career exploration and development that guide students to success in the workplace after graduation. Indiana University provides an impressive array of career resources through maintenance of a strong digital presence and additional services made available through the Career Development Center. However, despite the overwhelmingly high success rates of students who utilize the services offered through the Career Development Center, many students do not make career exploration and development a priority.

We propose several measures to increase the effectiveness of career exploration and development at Indiana University by expanding the avenues used to distribute relevant information, building early interest in career-related pursuits, and employing existing resources in different capacities. Implementation of such measures will enhance the undergraduate experience of Indiana University students and show measurable increases in employment opportunities for students post-graduation.

Purpose

Indiana University provides a strong infrastructure for career exploration and development, though many of its resources remain underutilized. It is the goal of the student advisory board to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and provide solutions that take into account existing resources, novel approaches, and student engagement in the initiative.

Career Development Background

The primary purpose of attending college is to acquire the skills and resources necessary to begin a successful career. Career development is critical to achieving this goal as it assists students in choosing an appropriate career path in order to maximize job satisfaction. It also provides students with the skills necessary to stay competitive in the continually changing global job market. A 2013 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York showed that compared to college graduates of the past, recent college graduates are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. In today's competitive job market, simply obtaining a college degree is not enough. Career development ensures that students are able to use their degrees effectively in the professional world.

Career exploration courses present one classic avenue for disseminating general information regarding career planning and execution of job search strategies. Common components of career courses are choosing the right major and career path based on personality and interests, becoming familiar with career resources on and off campus, and learning how to navigate the internship and job search process by exploring topics such as resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, and networking. The effectiveness of career courses at IU can be improved by offering courses tailored to more specific career paths and fields of study such as natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and graduate school. The inclusion of alumni and guest speakers from different industries and post-graduate programs can also be used to better introduce students to the many options available to them.

Common offerings among career centers include walk-in and scheduled advising appointments, online resources for resumes, cover letters, etc., several career and internship fairs throughout the year, online job search resources, and career development workshops. Some unique and particularly useful opportunities that career centers at different campuses offer include:

Purdue

- Online resources specifically for international students such as how to write resumes, visa information, and job expectations in America
- Office of Professional Practice for connecting students with internships and Co-op experiences
- Office of Field Experiences for connecting students to student teaching jobs
- A Liberal Arts Career Development office and career classes specifically for liberal arts majors; student internships are also available in the LACD
- Students on the Purdue Engineering Student Council put on two major career fairs each school year, the Industrial Round Table and EXPO
- Several career fairs offered throughout the year, most with some type of specialization such as aviation, liberal arts, management, teaching, etc.

- CCO career closet: students can get 1 free outfit of professional clothing per year (donation based)

University of Michigan

- The campus-wide Career Center Connector (C3) for finding jobs, internships, and related events
- Online Resume Builder
- VMOCK, an online resume grader that gives “customized suggestions for improvement”
- Freshman Fridays at the career center with free food

University of Illinois

- I LINK, a campus-wide recruiting platform for jobs and internships
- UIntern, a program to connect students to summer internships with local non-profits in the Urbana-Champaign area

Other

- Clark University: InterviewStream, an online interview practice program
- Princeton: the Princeternship program offers students 1-3 day shadowing opportunities with alumni over spring break

IU's career services website is not as intuitive and user friendly as many other career services websites. Although there are many resources available online, they are most easily accessed by using the search option, and the results are often an overwhelmingly long list of external resources. Students also have resources available to them from their major department, but the lack of centralization makes tracking down all of these resources challenging.

The Career Development Center's website also strongly encourages students to schedule an appointment with a career advisor, but there are several obstacles to doing so. Before scheduling an appointment, students must first go to the Career Development Center for drop-in advising to be assigned an advisor, and they also must have a MyJobs account. The Career Development Center has relatively short hours of operation, and its location puts it far from most class buildings, further hindering students from scheduling appointments.

We present the following recommendations with the aim of addressing aforementioned concerns with possible solutions that originate in our experiences as undergraduate students at Indiana University Bloomington. Recommendations are the result of research conducted on measures taken by other universities, as well as research on effective methods of encouraging student action.

Recommendation to Implement Orientation Seminars

Indiana University offers a multitude of vocational opportunities for undergraduates but career exploration is often overlooked as many students trivialize the importance of such a pursuit in the first steps of their academic career. We

recommend implementing a series of Orientation Career Seminars to introduce the diverse career paths open to students graduating with an Indiana University degree.

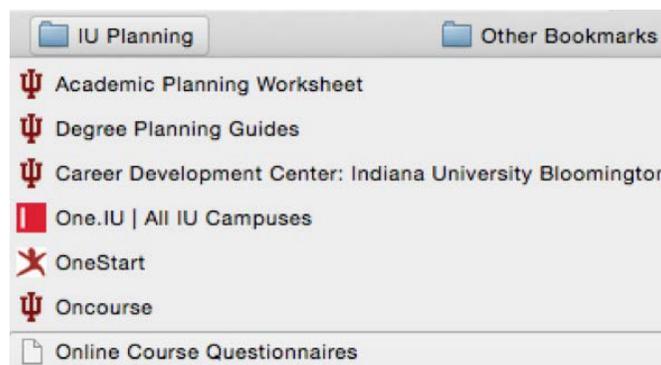
- **What:** A one to two hour seminar (multiple options) presented during Freshman Orientation that would be attended by all incoming students. Seniors representing each of the different schools would be asked to reflect upon their undergraduate experiences, expand upon their career trajectories, and provide insight on the career opportunities available to students at Indiana University.
- **When:** If the seminar series cannot be conducted during orientation, we recommend that it is presented within the first semester of the student's admission into Indiana University. It is imperative to introduce the concept of career exploration and development at an early stage as there are several relevant programs and workshops with GPA requirements – interested students must prepare early to be accepted into such programs.
- **How:** We recommend providing each student with a career map which would contain a trickle down list of all the majors that would help them towards their career goals. There should also be a supplementary list including names of all the relevant student organizations and workshops with their respective requirements and website link to encourage the student to easily seek out more information. Student organizations and workshops are crucial for freshmen as they provide opportunities for students to network with like-minded individuals sharing similar aspirations. Such students can assist each other throughout their college careers towards achieving their end goals. Relevant existing or new software should be used for the purpose of creating personalized career maps.
- **Who:**
 - **Mentor:** We recommend recruiting seniors from each of the different schools to speak with the freshmen regarding their future plans after graduating from Indiana University. This arrangement would be ideal as seniors generally have accommodating schedules and can provide appropriate guidance. They could be prompted to discuss their personal experiences and challenges they faced, and expand on how these factors have shaped their future after Indiana University.
 - **Mentee:** As mentioned earlier, we suggest our target audience to be freshmen in their first semester at Indiana University, those we feel who would benefit the most from guidance at this early and formative stage of their undergraduate life.
- **Cost:** Since we recommend seniors to voluntarily lead these seminars, there should be no cost associated with the staffing of the seminar. Any costs incurred would be incidental and administrative for the organization of the seminar itself.

- **Benefit:** Incoming students will have the opportunity to hear from a student mentor figure who has experienced university life and seized multiple opportunities in achieving their career goals. Freshmen will be able to inquire about deadlines, application requirements, and information regarding helpful student organizations.

Through implementation of an orientation career seminar series, Indiana University will gain an informed freshmen population. Freshmen who have participated in this experience would actively seek career resources (knowing where to look) and opportunities provided and paid for by Indiana University, resources that have always been available but often overlooked by younger students due to poor interest and lack of awareness.

Recommendation to Provide Constructive Resources

The most important part of creating measurable means for tracking a student's planning is making sure that these tools are readily available and actively used by students. Introducing these tools during the orientation process will help students become accustomed to using them, but may not ensure their continued use. A quick solution is to create a one-click link that allows students to import a bookmarks folder directly into a web browser of choice filled with links to the IU resources we see fit (ex. Academic Road Maps, Online Course Questionnaire results, etc....). An example of this is shown below.



An additional tool we suggest adding to the new student orientation workshop is an aspirational resume in which students create the resume they hope to have at the end of their academic careers. This will force all incoming students to at least begin thinking about where they want to be and how they will get there. Having an academic and career advisor help facilitate and answer any questions during this activity will also allow students to see firsthand the importance of seeking guidance throughout their career planning process. We also believe that this exercise provides a vital opportunity to get incoming students accustomed to building a properly formatted resume, a skill that will undoubtedly prove beneficial as they begin searching for jobs, internships, or further schooling. Providing students with a few preset templates for creating their aspirational resume during new student

orientation will give them the needed building blocks to later properly design their personal resume. Finally, this aspirational resume can be documented and made available to academic advisors, career advisors, parents, and any other necessary parties for further reference and editing throughout the student's academic career, providing one more tangible measurement of a student's progress.

Another aspect of students' success in planning for post-graduation is the ability to track their involvement in co-curricular activities. With employers becoming increasingly interested in finding candidates who have found ways to discover and develop their talents and interests, it has become equally important for students to measure and articulate their abilities outside of the classroom. Currently, students must do their best to quantify these achievements in a brief resume. However, we believe it could be beneficial to at least provide students and on-campus organizations with the infrastructure to begin measuring and tracking students' involvement outside of the classroom. This process can begin by implementing additional tools into IU's myINvolvement software, allowing organizations to log member hours, create event quotas, track dollars raised during charitable events, and many other relevant aspects of their organization. This information will not only provide students with more quantifiable data to include on their resumes and discuss during interviews, but will also aid career advisors in tracking a student's progress towards their ultimate career goals.

Recommendation to Establish Mandatory Career Exploration

We propose establishing mandatory career exploration courses for select student populations in an effort to encourage early deliberation about potential career paths. To increase effectiveness of this measure, this requirement would apply to exploratory students who have not declared a major by their sophomore year. In this case, a one or two credit hour career course must be taken by the spring semester of the student's sophomore year.

We believe that declaring a major is an important first step for students as major requirements often guide decision-making regarding registration for courses, networking with faculty and alumni, and engaging in extracurricular activities. With a preliminary major established, students will get a better idea of the academic expectations and trajectories of particular career paths. Implementation of mandatory career exploration may help students graduate on time while enhancing student engagement in post-graduation planning on a large scale. Declaring a major does not restrain students from exploring other academic options, however, and it should be noted that students are free to change their minds.

We have identified two additional groups of students who may benefit greatly from participation in a career course - international and pre-professional students. Both groups of students are particularly vulnerable as they are quite absorbed in their initial career plans and often find it difficult to consider other possibilities given an unexpected change in circumstances, shifting interests, or incompatibility with the

expectations of specific fields. We do not believe it necessary to enforce mandatory career exploration in such cases, but highly recommend that personalized emails containing career course options be sent to international and pre-professional students at various points throughout the first two years of their undergraduate experience.

Indiana University offers a variety of career courses that are well suited for exploration and development of necessary career skills. There are five courses offered through the Career Development Center, with countless variations of such courses offered departmentally. Current career courses are titled as follows:

- College to Career I: Explore Your Options
- College to Career II: Navigate Your Arts & Sciences Experience
- College to Career III: Market Yourself for the Job & Internship Search
- Building Your Professional Portfolio
- The Art of Meaningful Work

Behaviors

Advisor Involvement in Departmental Decisions

If one of the major challenges that many advisors face in their yearly routine is keeping up to date with degree changes, the most effective and immediate way to ensure that advisors stay current is to have them involved in departmental decisions affecting those areas. One advisor who sits on the undergraduate committee in her department confirms that she has no trouble keeping track of evolving degree requirements and changes in the departmental booklet. It is perhaps logical, though worth noting, that advisors can be strong assets to such undergraduate committees by nature of their direct link to various student needs, which professors may not otherwise encounter. *Chairpersons should be encouraged by the provost to include advisors in departmental meetings wherever possible to ensure that everyone is up to date on changes.*

Strong Departmental Enrichment Opportunities for Students

Along those same lines of student advocacy by advisors, the professionals who seem best in touch with their students, are those who take some active role in facilitating participation in extracurricular activities related to their respective department. For instance, the Jewish Studies Student Association benefits from a small budget given to the Jewish Studies department's advisor. This modest budget is extremely helpful in providing Jewish Studies majors with relevant activities and programs, such as an honors dinner, a weekly Hebrew table, and subsidizing part of a scholarship. The Department of Economics offers an Economics Club, a competitive Federal Reserve Challenge team, and an honors society for undergraduates, all of which provide opportunities for students to engage with the material and department more deeply.

Encouraging and supporting advisors in various departments, with their already busy schedules, to help facilitate and foster such student associations may do much

to help budding student organizations. Effectively allocated, such efforts may help students better succeed academically and socially. The funding for aiding such organizations might be found in an IU Foundation endowment or may be allocated from individual departmental funds on a case by case basis. A model worth investigating is found within the realm of high school advising: If an advisor serves on their department's student association, perhaps they may receive an additional \$1,200 pay, that is, an additional \$100 per month for their extra involvement.

Communication from Advisors to Students

In terms of helping students stay abreast of various opportunities in their chosen field of study, several departmental advisors indicate that they send out weekly or bi-weekly emails containing information such as job or internship opportunities, extracurricular group activities, course offerings, etc. Students appreciate these updates, so long as they are not more frequent than once per week. These emails help students sift through and quickly organize rewarding opportunities based upon their priorities. Alternatively, an advisor blog is a great way for students to stay current with opportunities and developments within and outside their departments.

Walk-in Office Hours

Finally, several advisors have begun holding walk-in office hours for students seeking consultation. As many campus administrators and professors will attest, students are not always quick to jump on such opportunities; however, giving busy students some flexibility in scheduling their academic advice will at the same time provide advisors with the opportunity to quickly help a large number of students seeking small pieces of advice.

Recommendation to Expand the Existing Early Alert System

As noted in the previous section, advisors are valuable resources for undergraduate students. Students meet with their advisors at critical times throughout their academic career and advisors are often the first to know a student's academic and career aspirations. The Indiana University FLAGS Early Alert System, though currently exclusively used by instructors, presents a model that can be used for identifying students who may benefit from career exploration and development. FLAGS (Fostering Learning, Achievement, and Graduation Success), allows instructors to provide "real-time assessments of a student's attendance, academic performance, participation, preparation, and coursework success in their class" (Policies & Grades).

Through use of this system, or similar software, advisors can flag students who are demonstrating difficulty in articulating career plans, lacking directionality in course selections, moving fleetingly from major to major, etc. In doing so, advisors can reach out to specific students with career course recommendations, providing an avenue for the student to explore options and develop their interests and career-specific skills.

Future Directions

The Career Development Center at Indiana University currently lacks the physical capacity and appeal to satisfy the needs of the students. Although career services currently offers countless resources, students seem to lack interest and have little knowledge of the services available. This stems, in part, from the inaccessibility of the Career Development Center.

Location

The current location off of 10th and Jordan seems to be well within a high traffic area; however, few students realize the purpose of the building. The Advisory Board has been tasked with best increasing the accessibility of the services provided by the Career Development Center, and one of our main suggestions is the relocation or redesign of the current entrance.

Redesign

To align with the University's 2018 Bicentennial plan of centralizing the university facilities, we believe it is imperative to rethink the location and/or the entrance of the Career Development Center. The most cost-efficient plan available is to add a pedestrian entrance off of 10th Street.

Looking at the picture to the right, taken from Google Street, it is evident that the current location is ideal. Yet, no person walking along 10th street has any idea what is located beyond the berm. It is our hope



to create a walkway with access from 10th street. The walk way would consist of a doublewide path, colorful shrubbery, and a stone marker, marking the entrance to the Career Services grounds.

An additional hope is to make the grounds of the Career Development Center a mecca for student congregation. The popularity of Dunn Meadow and the Arboretum stems from their lush green space and attractive surroundings. The Career Development Center has the ability to create an attractive green space for students with increased flowers and benches. As students begin to spend more time around the building, they become more likely to share with their friends, growing the popularity of the Career Development Center.

Conclusion

These recommendations are presented by members of the Student Advisory Board as suggestions for change within the realm of career exploration and development at Indiana University. Recommendations were shaped by our research and personal considerations as undergraduate students. We are optimistic about the potential for growth in this area and hope to observe increased student engagement in career-related pursuits in the near future.

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