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Program Review ACDC 2014

UNO Student Affairs
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Program Review Committee Career Services

MARCH 2014

PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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The committee wishes to begin by thanking the students, staff, faculty and community partners who so graciously gave of their time, insights and reflections making this review possible and adding to its depth and quality. In particular we would like to extend a special thanks to both Dr. Daniel Shipp and Jessica Wolff of the UNO Division of Student Affairs for their guidance, access and transparency in the organization and execution of the review process. Without their participation, this report would have been far less comprehensive and useful to the UNO community. We are especially grateful for the self-study that they provided. It proved to be a useful template for guiding the review process and assisted the committee greatly in structuring their inquiries and evaluations of the academic and career development programs and activities under their auspices. the intentional focus of this self-study will be only on the career services offered. With that said, the self-study will also address how the addition of the academic advising function supports the delivery of career services.

While in principal the committee concurs with the vast majority of the recommendations from the self-study provided by the ACDC staff, it is abundantly clear that few if any of the recommendations will be sustained in either the short-term or the long-term unless there is a clear and articulated statement from the senior administration of the university (cabinet-level) signaling it's support for and promotion of the importance and centrality of academic advising and career development as integral elements of the university's strategic plan.

In this context, the committee sees **academic excellence** as being closely tied the programs and services offered by ACDC to enhance student academic and career objectives and aspirations. Moreover, the ACDC mission is closely aligned with the remaining two goals of the strategic plan by virtue of its close relationships with students and their success, and the importance of establishing and maintaining strong employer and business community relations (**student centered and community engaged**).

Specifically, the committee strongly endorses two recommendations that will immediately impact the short-term staffing and operations of the ACDC operations:

- **The hiring of a full-time Employer Relations Director, and**
- **The addition of no less than two FTE academic advisors.**

In the case of the former, UNO must have central point of contact for all units within the institution and externally for the broader business community. As for the latter, the program review revealed that the caseloads for the academic advisors are untenable.

While the advisors are dedicated and passionate about their service to the students, it was clear that there is a palpable sense of anxiety about the balance of responsibilities and duties between the academic advising, career development services and the First-

Year Experience classes. The addition of two or perhaps three academic advisors would alleviate this concern. In the long-term there are significant two changes that if implemented would beneficially improving the advising and career development services in a sustainable fashion.

First, a move toward specialization of tasks and duties of the staff along the lines of academic advising, career development and employer relations, and FYE activities would improve service delivery and channels of communication. At present, all ACDC staff participates in activities across the spectrum of office responsibilities. Specialization will allow for the improvement of service delivery while simultaneously reducing caseloads for academic advisors. The creation of an Employer Relations Director position (with the authority to convene related directors from across the university) would centralize the effort in ACDC without diminishing the already existing successful efforts at UNO. It also responds to a criticism from the business community that there is no single “point of contact” for employers to call, and would channel both employer relations (job fairs) and career development services.

A critical dimension of the creation of the Employer Relations Director will be the funding of the position. We recommend that the position be funded for no less than three years with funds from within the existing ACDC budget. We also recommend that the Employer Relations Director reinstitute a corporate partnership program that offers a set of services to prospective employers for their participation in all UNO job fairs and other career development services. The successful growth of the corporate partnership program could develop into a revenue stream for Career Services that could potentially

underwrite the salary and benefits of the Employer Relations Director as well as associated activities.

It should be noted that these recommendations are a response to the immediate needs and challenges to meet the standards set forth by NACE as well as the concerns articulated by the self-study and the program review, but that as the university seeks to expand enrollment by 2020, it is imperative that goals and objectives of ACDC reflect a quality and effectiveness in service delivery regardless of the size of the student population and relations with the business community. It may imply that there be continuous attention paid to issues of efficacy and sustainability (advisor workloads, appropriate resource allocation, etc.).

What follows are the detailed deliberations and responses from the committee to the self-study. As a whole they represent the base from which the committee's recommendations are drawn for this review.¹ Each of the sections of the ACDC self-study are responded to by the committee and where appropriate recommendations were made. These recommendations were supported with information gathered in face-to-face meetings with students, faculty and staff at UNO. Additionally, we were given access to survey data from the UNO's business partners related to recruitment, hiring and career preparation of the students seeking employment and placement. All of these sources provided rich detail for the committee to assess and evaluate the program and activities of ACDC.

ACADEMIC & CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER (ACDC)

¹ A process note: All program reviews should include an external expert from an aspirational program (i.e., career center rep. from Vanderbilt University, Wake Forest, etc.)

Committee Response

Committee members were curious if the impact of undergraduate advising is represented appropriately in the mission statement? That is, is undergraduate advising and the First-Year Experience such an obligation that other aspects of a comprehensive career center can't be delivered?

Committee Recommendations

A vision statement should be written to describe what the successful ACDC program will look like in 5-10 years. Currently it is written a bit tentatively as: "we will be...." Consider rewording to eliminate the tentative nature: UNO's ACDC is the region's premier center for... and resource leveraging the power of..... students, alums and community partners.

SECTION II. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Committee Response

We agree that greater coordination with Colleges, Departments and other academic units would benefit students, and others. Moreover, there must be signaling from senior administration that this is a priority, and as such, should be championed by the Chancellor and Senior Vice Chancellor, as well as the AVC for Student Affairs or some equivalent.

Committee Recommendations

The idea of assembling an advisory group is on point. Great idea. Even one meeting per semester would be sufficient. In addition, the advisory committee must be chaired by a senior administrator.

SECTION IIA. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: CAREER ADVISING

Committee Response

- The challenge here is to provide evidence of “How are students different as a result of our program?” Some of the data offered was process data, which is not as compelling, but understandable given the short history of the ACDC.
- *Process data* (e.g., 200 employers attended, advised 400 students, etc.) are not as powerful as *outcomes data*, the number of students retained, transitioned to a college, graduated, etc.
- If alumni and employers are constituents, how are they different? How can we know?
- There is a big difference between an undecided student and an indecisive student? How does ACDC distinguish or adapt their approach? Do they refer the indecisive to the Counseling Center...or alter their internal way of working with these students?
- Make a purposeful plan to address and measure one or two examples of evidence each year. Target and identify SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) goals.
- You may wish to explore use of the CDM - Harrington O’Shea Career Decision Making Inventory. It is self-scored, quick, and available in Spanish/English and addresses a wide range of career concepts (e.g., not just interests and skills, but work values, employment projections, level of education as related to jobs in specific employment clusters). Personality assessments and strengths based tools are fine (MBTI and Strength Finder) but other career “counseling” tools are more powerful.

SECTION IIB. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: CAREER INFORMATION

Committee Response

Career information resources seemed solid.

Committee Recommendations

Almost all area high schools use career planning tools (like Naviance, etc.). Is there a way to access their previous work? Rather than having them start cold again, with no acknowledgment of previous career work.

SECTION IIC. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: EMPLOYER SERVICES

Committee Response

Clearly, two themes emerged from the discussion. First, there needs to be a dedicated “Employer Relations Coordinator” in the Career Development area. Moreover, this individual has to be supported by the ACDC Director and AVC for Student Affairs to be able to coordinate and monitor these efforts across the entire campus if it is to be completely effective. Second, the staff division of labor needs to be focused on “specialists” within the structure and function of the office. This doesn’t mean that these individuals will only do one task, but the lion’s share of their time should be dedicated to a primary task. This will improve their effectiveness and expertise in these critical areas. This does imply that there may be need for the expansion of staff but it goes without saying that the effectiveness of staff efforts could be improved by decreasing advising caseloads and improving outreach and coordination through focus and specialization in the structure and division of labor in the office.

Committee Recommendations

The career services - employers relations, career fairs, resume writing and mock interviewing, employer referrals – a spread across campus in various units with no central “point of contact” or clearing house within the institution. The colleges of Education, Business and Information Science and Technology have well-established employer relationships and contacts that serve their students directly but there is little if any communication or integration across the entire campus about the breadth of employment and recruiting opportunities available for students and employers alike. Within the ACDC office, there is a sense that while all of the staff is at a minimum “conversant” in employer relations, none is a specialist. For the staff it creates a “Zero-sum” equation where dedication or concentration in one task area necessarily implies that it diminishes

SECTION IIC. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: EMPLOYER SERVICES

dedication or concentration in another. It compels the staff to continuously balance duties and responsibilities, and on the whole they feel that they really do not do any very well. The committee is very supportive of ACDC's focus on strengthening alumni partnerships.

Caution

There is a lot of "process" data here. It has value, but don't lose sight of outcomes for students, employers, alumnae, etc. as you develop further assessment plans.

SECTION IID. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Committee Response

This is an endeavor that reaches well beyond the scope of only the ACDC...but as written, ACDC has a key role to play.

Committee Recommendations

The experiential learning is sometimes referred to as the “unwritten curriculum”. This should be done in close cooperation with already established platforms within the university (the Service Learning Academy, the Community Engagement Center, etc.)

SECTION IIE. PROGRAM COMPONENTS GRADUATE SCHOOL

Committee Recommendations

This is a great need, and efforts are seemingly disjointed at this time. It is a great target to keep on the radar. It needs to be coordinated with the Office of Graduate Studies. They do currently have some efforts underway, as do units in other Colleges across the university.

SECTION III. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Committee Response

- Positive steps in the last year to work through a myriad of issues such as no handbook on policies and procedures, working with the different entities that provide careers services (Graduate Studies).
- Question: Is the Governance Board and Task Force the same group or is it based on the work the Governance Board does different task forces will be created?
- Comprehensive and clear section that addresses all the NACE standards, except employee performance reviews. This section makes the best case as for why a governing board is essential.

Committee Recommendation

As stated in other sections, having ACDC be the point place for all the groups on campus that offer services is very important mostly for the students and also the businesses contacting UNO. At one time UNO did have an office that handled student employment and much of what is discussed in this document. During a previous round of budget cuts the department was downsized. Partnerships will be key and with any partnership both areas have to see benefits so focusing on figuring out what each area outside of ACDC that offers student career support will be one key to the success.

Committee Response

The committee wants to applaud the Director, her team and the administration for recognizing the need to increase the staff. Along with the increased staff came additional responsibilities as outlined in the mission statement as well as in section 2. Phrasing makes it unclear if the graphic design intern was hired for ACDC, DSA, or both. Challenge 1 ends as if the challenge has been resolved already. Is this the case, or do you still need an employee specifically for ACDC?

Committee Recommendation

To support the vision of ACDC the committee recommends the hiring of an additional staff person in the area of employee relations will benefit the students as well as the business in our community. It would be ideal if only one employer relations position was hired for the whole university, and they could service all career providing resources. This would streamline information and erase confusion for employers.

Another opportunity for additional support is to create partnerships with the existing services around the campus. Another thought is these existing services become outreach locations and become part of ACDC. Maybe not all of them but the governance board/task force could look into an option where these are satellites of ACDC. This allows for everyone knowing what each other is doing and also sharing the staff when needed at peak times. Some thoughts for undeclared academic advising. Maybe utilize some academic departments' advisors.

Meeting with ACDC staff

The panel met with four ACDC staff members to inquire on the key mission objectives, barriers and obstacles, and ways to improve the operation of the office. Immediately, it became apparent that the division of labor between the essential tasks of

SECTION IV. ORGANIZATION

academic advising, career advising and maintaining the First Year Experience workload are untenable. There are dedicated “academic advisors” with an average workload that is far in excess of what is suggested in the literature on academic advising. Optimally, academic advisors should manage a caseload of 300 to 400 advisees, on average the UNO advisors see anywhere from 500 to 600 advisees in the course of a semester. At first blush, there must be some effort undertaken to lessen the workload to something much more manageable for the staff and the office. As this relates to the other core tasks of the office – career and personal development and the FYE – there are other issues that must be dealt with. The discussion of the staff’s participation in the FYE program yielded similar frustration. While all of the staff members who are instructors for these courses believe that they are important and serve the students well, they are not compensated in any way for their effort. Moreover, they are not relieved of any other regular duties and tasks.

Committee Response

We commend the ACDC staff for continuing to take on more duties with a limited staff. Having the CMS in place for easier updates will definitely help ACDC. Working with CBA office (spring career fair) promotes the idea of possibly moving to satellites within colleges but under the umbrella of ACDC and not separate entities. If challenge 1 is resolved, it doesn't seem necessary to include.

Committee Recommendations

- With advisors continuing to do administrative work and the amount of increased advising is there a need to hire more administrative staff or supplement with student workers/interns?
- Commitment to employee professional development is obvious and impressive.
- Explore option of sharing resources with other units, especially for academic advising during peak times.

SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Committee Response

Consistent with NACE standards, Career Services must demonstrate fiscal responsibility and cost effectiveness consistent with institutional policies and procedures. ACDC is doing a good job with the budget and making the dollars stretch.

Committee Recommendations

Each college is relying on ACDC in support of their students. What opportunity is there to ask for a financial piece from the college based on how well the students are given internships, jobs, etc.? Also if satellite operations are created with ACDC oversight can the college assist in costs that assist this satellite operation?

First Year tuition money should be part of ACDC budget. We do not know how this money currently is allocated.

It seems necessary for internal funding to be established first, in order to create positions that can then help generate external funding. This should be a divisional priority to continue the momentum ACDC has been able to build thus far.

Symlicity has great data management capabilities and is more user-friendly for both students and employers.

Committee Response

- Plans to move an on-line resource library are a good goal as it will give students access 24 hours 7 days a week.
- Another positive move will be to develop a stronger partnership with Engineering.
- **A question from the committee:** Has the move to the new location decreased career-advising appointments due to foot traffic?

Committee Recommendations

- Since a door has opened in Engineering continue to see how you can expand that partnership.
- Consider a resume printing station in the office. Resume paper usually comes in packs with more than what students need, and can be expensive. I could see the appeal of paying a few cents to a dollar to just print off one or two copies.
- Regarding the technology cart: is this used in just this location? How can you make this look more permanent to look more professional?
- When events are held parking needs to support ACDC in their events to help employers get on campus.
- With MBSC possibly being remodeled and having a satellite the Career Closet could be housed in a satellite in future.
- Is there a peak time when interviews are being done on campus? Possibly working with colleges where the students are coming from to help in finding interview spaces. If satellites were set up in each college then the employer/student interviews could take place within the college. Maybe the advising take place as well as the college satellite sections. Over a period of time the idea of where do I go, etc. would become easier.

Committee Response

The committee viewed as a positive step the allowing electronic means of setting up appointments. Along with the use of electronic advising. Students are busy and with these features help increase use of ACDC services. Also a good move to first make the students come in once. They can see the office and resources available.

New CMS will help with webpage updates and not have to rely on someone else updating the page. The whole campus is waiting for this!

A very positive move: The management of UNO Career Connect takes a considerable amount of time away from the advisors. The new Administrative Assistant is being trained on how to manage and monitor UNO Career Connect.

Committee Recommendations

- Keep up the partnership Career Coach, a platform sponsored by Avenue Scholars, Metro Community College, and UNO. Any other partnerships like this that reach beyond the campus. Anything with UNL/UNK?
- Are students at all confused about the online tools available to them? We saw they were able to use UNO NetID with one of the systems. Do the others require a unique log in?
- Is the following adequate at the moment? Computer Access: ACDC has four computers for student use in its office. Students can also print from these computers. Student tech Fee Grant have already contacted Jessica for this year's funding.
- Virtual Model idea - May be able to make a project for students in IS&T. This could be a project that spans semesters along with having students maintain in future courses.
- What would the laptops offer the students? IS already provides laptops and tablets, as does the library for daily use.
- The library has a helpful "ask a librarian" instant messenger feature on their website. I could see this as an easy additional duty of peer advisors for ACDC if they could set up something similar.

SECTION VIII. TECHNOLOGY

- Have a better explanation of what a full time technical person would do it is scattered throughout the report. Create a job description, then decide of all the jobs you need which are the most important. Definitely made a point for the addition of an employer relations director.

SECTION IX. CAMPUS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Committee Response

- Utilize alumni expertise and experience in working with students and other alumni.
- Create and effectively use advisory groups including employers, alumni, other students.
- Current staff members should be more involved with their assigned college.

Committee Recommendations

- Use alumni to serve as mentors for students and other alumni.
- Form Advisory Councils:
 - Employer
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Professional organizations
 - Faculty
 - Student
- Hold regular joint meetings of all councils.
- Hire a qualified individual to serve as liaison with employers/chamber of commerce (Candidate should have experience in higher ed and in business/non-profit community.)
- Centralized employer relations plan with consistent message/branding; even if staff is expanded to include liaison, all ACDC staff should be trained and available to provide consistent support and resources to employers
- Increased PR/marketing presence on campus to spread awareness of ACDC services and inclusivity; centralize PR functions with one staff member, including both on-campus marketing and web and social media management.
- Collaborate with existing university internship programs.
- Understand which programs have established and successful programs and work with those programs to further strengthen their internship opportunities and ensure compliance with applicable laws and standard.
- Develop internship opportunities for lacking areas.
- Understand which programs or areas need assistance in creating / developing an internship program and work in conjunction with the leaders of that program to establish.

SECTION IX. CAMPUS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- Current staff members should be contacting the college/ departments on a monthly basis to coordinate what their internship processes looks like. Current staff members should also be meeting with the departments to promote ACDC resources as well as establishing relationships with the faculty of their assigned college.

SECTION X. EMPLOYER RELATIONS AND SERVICES

Committee Response

- Agree with recommendations offered in the self-study, however, we believe the recommendations need to be prioritized and recognize that all of what's offered cannot be accomplished without significant financial support from central administration.
- There is a strong need to gain 'buy in' from top-level university officials. This will reinforce the importance of the ACDC and help to create a more united effort regarding student development

Committee Recommendations

- Assign a new staff member dedicated to employer relations.
- Individual should have exposure to corporate recruitment.
- Reinstate working lunches hosted by employers to allow hiring organizations to share their hiring needs.
- Ensure that employers are encouraged and allowed to participate in an advisory capacity to ACDC
- Employer relations led by director, but must have all staff on board to provide resources/information to employers for consistent messaging and support
- Self study mentioned keeping consistent relations with employers to ensure fair access to all students -- unified message must also be reinforced with employers, parents, faculty members as well as ACDC staff

SECTION XI. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee Response

ACDC should do everything stated in the study. Items should be prioritized to ensure effective implementation and adherence to legal statutes.

Committee Recommendations

Suggest the ACDC ask NU Legal Counsel and/or GEG to provide information to ACDC on any legislation that may impact ACDC.

SECTION XII: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, ACCESS, AND DIVERSITY

Committee Response

- ACDC must implement what has been stated in the self-study.
- ACDC should coordinate with under-represented groups, such as LGBTQ, students with disabilities, and Multicultural affairs, to make the departments aware of its services so that the staff of those departments can forward the information to their students.

Committee Recommendations

- Support what the self-study recommends.
- “Lunch and Learn” with the other departments of UNO.

Committee Response

ACDC must follow what's been stated in the self-study.

Committee Recommendations

No further recommendations.

SECTION XIV: PROGRAM EVALUATION, ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH

Committee Response

- Gathering data in a centralized area is critical and yet has been difficult in the past. This will take more than parties simply agreeing to work together. There should be a directive from administration that data-collection, analysis and reporting must be done.
- If staff members do not have the time to research, then this could be a source of student employment/internships.
- Work-study students personally contact alumni via email or phone to gather survey information. Potentially contact individuals at 2 - 5 years post graduation.

Committee Recommendations

- Make research, data collection and interpretation a function of UNO Strategic Plan. Integrating this requirement into the Strategic Plan and establishing reportable measures is a must.

The UNO Academic and Career Development Center (ACDC) is at a crossroads. The structure, goals and objectives while recently revamped to meet immediate challenges, must be enhanced and bolstered in a manner that will allow this vital component of academic and student services to meet evolving and new tasks and challenges. Moreover, it must improve in the identified areas that have been by almost any measure deficient if the institution as a whole seeks to continuously deliver on the promise and centrality of its strategic objectives. As laid out in the primary recommendations, we believe as a committee that the dedicated and highly professional staff and leadership can and will rise to address these critical issues. They will be greatly assisted by a declarative and resolute endorsement from the university's senior leadership so that it is deemed central to success and advancement of our collective enterprise at UNO.