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Program Review ACDC Response to Program Committee's Review

UNO Career Services
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
CAREER SERVICES
Response to Program Review Committee Report

Introduction

To begin, we would like to thank the Program Review Committee for their thorough and thoughtful review of the Career Services self-study. The recommendations provided by the Program Review Committee were not only helpful, but insightful. In reviewing the recommendations provided by the committee, we recommend the action steps outlined below.

Committee Recommendations

In the Executive Summary, the Program Review Committee stressed the importance of the following recommendations:

1. “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.”**

2. *‘...[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.’*

The sections below will highlight ACDC’s response to each recommendation by area and provide actions steps.

I. Mission

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 regions premier center for... and resource leveraging the power of..... students, alums and community partners.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC will continue to monitor the impact of undergraduate advising on the delivery of career services. As a unit, ACDC has only been fully operating since August 2013. In order to fully evaluate whether career services can be effectively delivered under the model of academic and career advising, it is critical to see ACDC fully staffed. As recommended by the committee, it is imperative that ACDC add at least three new staff members. The addition of these critical hires would assist in the effective delivery of both academic and career advising. With that said, ACDC agrees that at its current staffing levels, it is difficult close to impossible to effectively deliver both career and academic advising.
- ACDC agrees with the recommendation to eliminate the tentative nature of its vision statement. In future publications, ACDC will revise its vision statement to reflect the committee's recommendation.

II. ACDC 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.

ACDC Response: ACDC, with the help of the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, will continue to advance the idea of creating a campus advisory board for career services with the goal of implementing this board by August 2015. ACDC would also recommend that a key player from Academic Affairs chair or lead this committee with the Director of ACDC. The success of this advisory board will hinge on the buy-in from the academic departments.

A. Program Components – Career Advising / Counseling

Committee Response and Recommendations:

- 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 I think other career “counseling” tools are more powerful.

ACDC Response:

- At the insistence of new student affairs leadership, assessment is now a part of the student affairs culture. During the 2013-14 academic year, ACDC implemented two non-process data assessment projects to determine how students were different as a result of ACDC programming. ACDC did assessment projects related to mock interviews and first year experience. The results of these assessments were not available at the time of the self-study. ACDC will continue to conduct at least one non-process assessment project each academic year.
- At this time, ACDC has not explored assessment projects for alumni and employers. ACDC appreciates this recommendation and will incorporate these two important constituents in its assessment work.
- ACDC is mindful of the fact that the academic and career advisors are not counselors, purposely choosing to identify staff members as advisors. ACDC is mindful to refer students if they are experiencing anxiety or high-level indecision. ACDC recently revamped its resource guide to act as a workbook to help students with the exploration process.
- ACDC will research and review the option of using the CDM.

B. 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.). I wonder if there is any way to access their previous work. Rather than having them start cold again, with no acknowledgment of previous career work.

ACDC Response: ACDC will research and review the option of accessing high school career planning tools.

C. Program Components – Employment 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 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC is working to create staff specializations. For example, all staff members will be cross-trained in academic advising and career advising; however certain staff members will be designated as a specialist in either academic advising or career advising. This will allow staff members to focus on one area, but still assist during peak advising times.
- As a result of this program review, ACDC has secured two-year funding for an Assistant Director of Employer Relations and Internships. After two years, the position will be reevaluated for effectiveness. The goal is to make this a self-sustaining position. This position will be responsible for the Employer Partnership Program, Internship Advisory Board, and general coordination of employer activity at UNO. This position will assist with the division of labor in ACDC and as result allow advisors to focus on advising students. Additionally, the position will work to serve as a central point of contact for UNO. This person will not serve as the *only* contact for employers, but will provide employers with a coordinating contact at UNO. **A word of caution from the author of the self-study and action steps.** If this position gets “too big” – it will not help the staffing needs of ACDC. ACDC needs a person committed full-time to the day-to-day tasks related to serving our employer population. If we cannot serve employers with the simple things (i.e. easily posting a job or hosting an information session), it’s hard to sell them on the promise that we can help them on a larger scale.

D. Program Components – Experiential Education

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.)

ACDC Response: ACDC agrees that the experiential education must be a campus endeavor. ACDC can act as a hub of information for students, but does not need to facilitate all aspects of experiential education. ACDC will continue to work to gather information from respective departments and units.

E. Program Components – Graduate School Planning

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.

ACDC Response: ACDC recently identified a staff member to serve as the liaison to the Graduate Studies program. In addition to the liaison, ACDC also shared a communication plan with Graduate Studies. ACDC is working with Graduate Studies and University Communications to host a Graduate and Professional School Fair for UNO and the greater metropolitan community.

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 Recommendations: 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC envisions having two separate entities or boards supporting UNO and the mission and vision of ACDC. The advisory board would provide non-binding but informed guidance on how to best serve the needs of students related to career services. The advisory board would be comprised of employer, committee members, and internal board members. ACDC envisions that the “career task force” or “career advising council” would operate similar to the “academic advising council”. It council would have open membership, but it would be a forum to share upcoming career events, discuss problems and solutions related to career services at UNO, and provide a forum for career services education.

IV. Organization

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 outline 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 Recommendations:

- 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 staff members of the ACDC office 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 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC currently has a student worker devoted to graphic design. A new administrative assistant was also hired. She has experience related to communications and public relations. This will help with the promotion of ACDC events.
- Please refer to early comments on staff specialization, mission, and the hiring of an employer relations director.
- ACDC agrees that centralized employer relations at UNO would provide clarity for employers.

V. Human Resources

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.
- The discussions produced great ideas on generating revenue to pay for additional employees. Need to figure out which ones will give you immediate revenue versus the longer term and then which positions are needed most.

ACDC Response:

- As noted earlier, ACDC agrees that it is understaffed and under-resourced. Currently, ACDC has two-year funding for an employer relations position. This will help alleviate some of the responsibilities for staff members.
- ACDC will investigate the solution of providing satellite offices. This solution would be viable if there is buy-in from the Colleges. It would be advantageous to further explore the liaison model for academic and career advising. Each college would have an ACDC liaison. The college would be involved in the hiring of the person, but primary supervision would be from ACDC.

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 an 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC will continue to work the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs on the financial support for ACDC. ACDC is currently looking at different funding models related to the delivery of the US 1010. This could provide additional support and funding for ACDC operations.
- ACDC agrees with the recommendation that if a satellite or liaison model is created funding from departments/colleges would be helpful.

VII. Facilities

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.

ACDC Response:

- Career advising appointments have increased since the creation of ACDC.
- ACDC will implement a trial run of the resume printing station.
- ACDC continue to work with parking to resolve issues related to parking. During the Spring Career Fair, ACDC offered valet parking to employers.
- ACDC is working with MBSC on a satellite location for the Career Closet.
- On-Campus Interviews take place primarily in September and October. Currently, most interviews take place in Mammel Hall. At times the variety of locations can cause confusion; ACDC continues to work on providing clear communication to students and employers regarding location, times and availability of on-campus interviews.

VIII. Technology

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 has 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.
- 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 a employer relations director.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC visited the possibility of sharing Symplicity (software used to run UNO Career Connect) with UNL/UNK because all three campuses use Symplicity. However, initial conversations with UNL indicated that the governance would be difficult. ACDC is

open to revisiting this conversation. At this time, ACDC works with UNL/UNK to make appropriate referrals to each office.

- ACDC is unsure if students are confused about the on-line resources available to them. This creeps beyond just the on-line resources offered by ACDC. Students must individually sign into MavSync, MavTrack, Blackboard, UNO Career Connect, and many others. It would be great to create a single sign-on for students. ACDC is willing to make this recommendation to Information Services.
- ACDC would like to continue to invest in the in-person services provided, and explore the virtual model in future years.
- ACDC is satisfied with the remodel of its computer space. Additional laptops are unnecessary.
- ACDC likes the idea of instant message future. ACDC will investigate how the library is using this feature.
- As for the technical support person, this hire might be a better division hire. A technology coordinator could help support all of the technology needs of Student Affairs.
- ACDC will make an application for Student tech-grant fee for 2014-2015.

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, and 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 standards.
- 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
- 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC agrees with the recommendations suggested by the committee, and currently strives to do the things suggested. However, current staffing levels prohibit a great deal of additional work beyond advising and event planning. As staffing levels increase, ACDC will continue to focus on the recommendations provided in this section.
- ACDC plans to implement one advisory board to start. ACDC fears that multiple advisory boards will create confusion and possibly diminish the value of the advisory board. ACDC agrees that the players identified should have representation on the single advisory board.

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

ACDC Response:

- ACDC appreciates the recognition that strong buy-in is needed from top-level university officials. Career services and employer relations should be a University priority. With an increased lens toward accountability and employability of college graduates, it is important that this area is appropriately supported and resourced.
- As mentioned early, support was given for an employer relations position. This employer relations position will be responsible for creating opportunities for employers to connect with UNO, such as working lunches.

XI. Legal Responsibilities

Committee Response: ACDC should 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC will ask legal to provide and send any updates to the Director. ACDC will also continue to stay active in NACE (the professional organization for career and employment services). NACE often provides communication on possible legal issues or changes in the law.

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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC will continue offer and investigate options to include inclusive career services.

XIII. **Ethics**

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

Committee Recommendations: No further recommendations.

ACDC Response: No response needed.

XIV. Program Evaluation, Assessment and 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.

ACDC Response:

- ACDC agrees and supports the committee's recommendation to include data collection as part of UNO's Strategic Plan. At the Strategic Planning Forum in May 2014, ACDC's director included this as a recommendation for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. The Alumni Association is also in the process of reviewing its strategic plan. ACDC will suggest that data collection be part of the Alumni Association's strategic plan.
- ACDC is working with Institutional Effectiveness to create a plan for collecting post-graduation data and internship data. The goal is to have a plan in place by December 2014.