

# Career Center Program Review

## Executive Summary

*This section should be a summary of all high-level information over the last 5 years that represents the greatest impact and influence on the department. In addition, the executive summary should include information relating to the following: Department's vision, mission and values; review of the previous program review's action plan and progress; current program review departmental assessment; and action plan.*

## *Process*

The Career Center team launched their program review process in the Summer of 2019, which was led by Barb Richardson, Senior Associate Director for Assessment and Strategic Initiatives, and supported by a committee of internal Career Center team members. The program review was completed approximately 12 months after the launch in the early fall of 2020. In addition to the extensive assessment and reflection required through the program review, the process also included the committee conducting a site visit to another reputable program.

## *Current Vision, Mission, and Values*

The Career Center's vision, "Equitable success for CSU Rams," and mission statement, "We empower and equip CSU Rams to discover and pursue their goals that honor their identities through intentional collaboration with campus partners and employers" guides the work that we do every day. These are new vision and mission statements, defined during a collaborative and intentional process throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, including consideration of the mission and vision for the Division of Student Affairs.

The Division mission guides all units in Student Affairs, including the Career Center, in the support and development of students during college ("developing their unique potential" and "inspiring them to be active learners"), helping to position them for success after college ("successful graduates" and "engaged global citizens"). While traditional views of Career Services primarily focus on post-graduate success, we view our work as being integral to the entire student experience, which is represented in our mission statement. Throughout students' undergraduate experiences, we help them "...to discover and pursue their goals" and develop the career competencies needed for whatever they choose to pursue after college.

Additionally, an important phrase within the Student Affairs mission statement is "unique potential", which references our Divisional commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social justice. All of our students, especially those with marginalized identities, have unique stories and skills, and we have the responsibility to understand, support, and affirm those identities. You will see these concepts present in both the Career Center's vision ("Equitable success for all CSU Rams") and mission statements ("honoring their identities"). In the Career Center, we believe that career services work is social justice work.

Finally, the Divisional mission statement references that we aim to "foster a campus community" supporting our work, a concept that is critical to the Career Center's work and represented in our mission ("intentionally engaging with campus partners and employers"). The Career Center team alone cannot provide all students with career education or help them understand and articulate how what they are

learning and doing in and out of the classroom directly relates to their career goals. By leveraging mutually beneficial relationships with other units, especially the academic colleges, we will ensure CSU graduates continue their legacy of being intellectually curious lifelong learners, as well as become even more coveted candidates for employers and graduate schools.

#### *Previous Program Review Summary and Progress*

The previous program review for the Career Center occurred over the years 2009 to 2011. Limited information from that prior program review exists (it was conducted in another software system and is no longer accessible); however, a summary is included below, along with our progress.

Regarding programs and services, the previous program review's action plan included: continue to refine services based on assessment data, continue to change with technological advances, conducting more industry-specific programming, starting mock interview services, redesign the Center's website, and increase online service delivery. The Career Center committed to assessing services and programs and added an Associate Director of Assessment and Strategic Initiatives to lead these efforts in the summer of 2013. Changes were made to service delivery, programming, and materials based upon feedback from evaluations as well as the Student Advisory Board. The Career Center has integrated more industry-specific events including Connect events as this continues to be a trend amongst students. Additionally, the Career Center initiated a mock interview program that was staffed by student interns and that has evolved into a multi-layered interviewing preparation option that includes a technological platform, Big Interview. In the online space, the web site has undergone several redesigns for continuous quality improvement and updated accessibility. Technological platforms such as Zoom, have allowed for the Career Center to provide more online program delivery, which is especially important as online students are now served by the center due to a new partnership with CSU Online. This has also included a robust and updated resources page for the website.

Regarding student-specific improvements, the previous program review's action plan included maintaining an active student marketing advisory committee to help support the Career Center in keeping a pulse on the direction and needs of students, and placing an intentional focus on serving diverse populations. The Student Marketing Advisory Committee is now the Student Advisory Board and is co-facilitated by the Senior Associate Director of Communication, Outreach, and Technology and the Senior Associate Director of Assessment and Strategic Initiatives. While attendance ebbs and flows, the board continues to provide valuable feedback to the Career Center. Next, over the past three years, the Career Center has made a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. This effort launched in academic year 2017-2018 and included a Multicultural Organizational Development audit, incorporation of self-knowledge of inclusion and social justice goals into professional development plans, a re-evaluation of handouts and presentations to center identity and recognize the variety of challenges students might face in transitioning out of college, and continual training facilitated by an internal Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Regarding staff-specific improvements, the previous program review's action plan included: strengthening the relationship between teams within the Center; freeing the career counselors' roles to focus on the direct delivery of student services; working to increase employee morale around communication, accountability, and role clarification; and using individual work plans to ensure everyone is working towards the same strategic goals. Admittedly, morale has continued to ebb and flow in the Career Center in the years since this last program review, with some staff continuing to voice concerns. The team is committed to addressing these concerns and evaluating whether problems exist at the

individual-staff level because these concerns are now persisting through multiple leaders with very different leadership styles. Recent organizational goals have shifted away from allowing career counselors (now career education coordinators and career education managers) to focus solely on individual students, instead also incorporating scalable solutions, strategy, and developing partnerships. This shift away from career counseling has added to the morale issues in the office because there is a group of staff members that (both in the Center and across campus) believe career counseling should be the priority and have actively resisted shifting away from that.

### *Current Program Review Analysis*

The program review's assessment component of our current operation is extensive, including a review of existing quantitative data, a reflection on the qualitative components of current operations, benchmarking against national association's best practices, and a site visit with another institution.

Our current assessment efforts, particularly around the collection of quantitative data, are extensive. During the five-year period covered by this report, the Career Center served a range of 3,467 to 4,734 students annually in either drop-in or one-on-one appointments. Participation in this service has remained steady within this range and continues to be one of the most recognized and sought-out services within the Career Center. Additionally, satisfaction with these services, as measured by Net Promoter Score (a nationally accepted research method), has continued to increase over the past five years.

As noted, we believe career services work is social justice work. Racially minoritized students and students from other underrepresented backgrounds face unique challenges in the career journey. Students of color may have to navigate discrimination in the hiring process. First-generation students may need a specific strategy to create social networks that are critical in the job search. Because of these considerations, we consider it critical to monitor participation in our services by social identity. Regarding ethnicity/race and participation, the Career Center serves racially minoritized students in a greater percent than that group's representation on campus. Amongst gender, which is limited to male/female binary or no response, those identifying as women seem to be more inclined to seek out career services than those identifying as men.

It is interesting to note participation in our services by academic college. The number of students seen from various colleges seems to be heavily dependent on whether that college has a liaison, if the liaison is new or established, and whether the college has stand-alone career services. For example, the percentage of students served from the four colleges with liaisons – College of Liberal Arts, College of Natural Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and Warner College of Natural Resources – ranges between 2.8 and 7.1 percentage points higher than their representation of the overall campus population. Students from the four colleges without liaisons – College of Agricultural Sciences, College of Business, College of Health and Human Sciences, and Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering – are served at rates between 2.2 and 5.9 percentage points lower than their representation of the overall campus population. This adds to our belief that we are better when we work in close partnership with the academic colleges, specifically having a shared position, when possible.

Not surprisingly, seniors continue to utilize services more than other years. First-year students and sophomores consistently use services less, and juniors and graduate students vacillate from year-to-year. Knowing that a successful job search (and skill development for lifelong career success) cannot always be

accomplished in one year, our focus on the career ecosystem and strategic partnerships with people and departments across CSU supports engaging all students earlier and often in their academic careers.

We are particularly proud of our efforts around equity and inclusion. While the Career Center's purpose has always been to serve all students, an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives has become a focus for the organization in recent years. Historically, career services as a field has not prioritized equity and inclusion in their practice; however, beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year the Career Center included equity and inclusion in the strategic plan and put structure around our efforts to examine our individual identities, privileges, and actions. While the Center has hosted programs focused on specific identities for several years now, within the past two years, a renewed effort to dig deeply into this work has commenced. This includes extensive self-focused learning for our team members, particularly the examination of privileged identities and how that influences the lens by which we view the world. Additional efforts include developing a social-justice approach to career education model, developing a diversity toolkit for employers, engaging the team in trainings and reflections, hosting diversity dialogues, conducting a diversity and inclusion audit, engaging and presenting at the regional and national level about how to do career services through a social justice lens, and working to incorporate E&I into our everyday work.

The Career Center team has intentionally aligned itself with several national associations including the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the Mountain-Pacific Association of Colleges and Employers (MPACE), the National Career Development Association (NCDA), NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (national and regional), the Colorado Career Development Association, and the Collegiate Career Services Association of Colorado & Wyoming. Several team members in the Career Center serve in leadership positions within these various organizations. These types of professional affiliations benefit the institution by offering opportunities for staff to connect with peer institutions across the state and the nation through conferences, webinars, and other mediums, learn about best practices, and stay engaged in current work trends.

As part of the program review, the Career Center Program Review Team chose the National Association of Colleges and Employers Professional Standards to use as the most appropriate national standards to use for self-assessment. The program review committee met and self-assessed the 384 total dimensions across 13 areas. Of the 13 areas, the team identified Mission, Program Components, Organization, Management and Leadership, and Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity as strength areas. The Career Center's mission statement is directly tied to the Division and institutional mission statements. The program components of the Center's work are incorporated throughout the institution through intentional partnerships, and the Center serves students in all stages in their career journey. Organization, Management, and Leadership refers to career services being well-positioned and supported in the institution; the Career Center is positioned in Student Affairs with a close connection and reporting line to Academic Affairs (through the Assistant Vice President of Student Success). Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity is supported as a strength through the Center's commitment to doing career education through an equity lens and the ongoing training and development for the team.

The area of most growth that emerged from the NACE benchmarking was identified as Legal, Policy, and Risk Management. While the Career Center has strengths in certain dimensions, such as understanding FERPA, privacy, and responsible employee responsibilities, there are many areas where knowledge is in pockets, rather than widely spread throughout the center. Examples include: defamation laws, equal employment opportunity laws, affirmative action regulations, ADA, labor standards, and risk management. These areas will require a plan to determine (a) what specific areas (and at what depth) are

necessary for the Career Center team to be familiar with and (b) a training process around this knowledge.

Finally, as part of the program review process, departments can either choose to bring in an outside consultant to review their existing organization and services or send a delegation from the organization to conduct a site visit at another campus. We chose to conduct a site visit, with the full committee spending two days with the Career Center team at the University of Washington, a well-respected program in the industry. The University of Washington was selected after a review of nearly 40 institutions. There were several key opportunities to better strengthen CSU's program after visiting Washington, a selection of which include: starting a campus-supported internship program, potentially partnering with the County or State; building a sustainable funding source to support unpaid and underpaid internships; integrating career competencies into orientation and other first-year student experiences; being able to articulate the exact value centralized career services adds (knowing decentralization is always a pending threat); revisiting our marijuana, hemp, and CBD policy with general counsel knowing the growth and attraction to this industry; and considering running a mentoring program through the framework of a for-credit course.

### *Action Plan*

After pulling together all information collected and reviewed for the program review, several items were identified as part of the action plan to carry the Career Center forward. Additionally, in the process of writing this program review, the national landscape has changed, resulting in both new areas to address and continued areas to focus. This includes the national pandemic (and resulting budget considerations), the new rhythm of remote work, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

### *Equity and Inclusion*

- Prioritize and maintain an Equity & Inclusion Steering Committee to facilitate a curriculum for staff to do self-work relating to equity including providing trainings and diversity dialogues, interrogating whiteness, and continuing to assess our actions.
- Provide programming and services that recognize systems of oppression within society and specifically the world of work and problematize traditional career advice that ignores the reality of privilege, racism, and discrimination.
- Engage employers in conversations regarding developing inclusive and equitable workplaces, recognize those that are creating inclusive environments, and share CSU's EEO policy and recruitment guidelines.
- Facilitate and participate in discussions on-campus and nationally regarding centering equity and inclusion in career services.
- Interrogate why our full-time staff is predominantly white, work to understand why this is, and identify how we can create a workplace that doesn't perpetuate that career services is only for white people.

### *Ecosystem/Collaboration*

- Promote and educate campus on CSU Career Competencies to provide a common language and goal for career education across campus; communicate with employers to gain information on the value of developing these competencies.

- Position the Career Education Managers and Career Education Coordinators as partners and strategists in the career ecosystem within each academic college and campus partner (respectively) including using a faculty tool kit.
- Focus on building deeper collaboration with the academic advising community on campus to promote student success with special attention to underserved student populations on our campus.
- Collaborate with campus and community partners to support their events (rather than adding more events) to obtain more buy-in from both students and partners.

#### *Campus Employment and Experiential Education*

- Ensure each team member feels better equipped and empowered when discussing campus employment and take action to position campus employment as a core service and access point for career education
- Continue to provide training to student supervisors that allows for an improved student employee experience
- Promote the 'On Campus Work and Success' assessment performed by Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness that illustrates campus employment as a high impact practice at CSU
- Create and sustain more access to work opportunities for students, on and off campus while attending CSU
- Create opportunities to engage with other student supervisors across campus as well as student employees on campus to build community
- Assess the Career Center's capacity to meet the established goals around internships and experiential education including mentorships

#### *Process Improvement*

- Implement new event and marketing processes that shifts centralized support to signature Career Center events only and provides templates and ownership to the broader team for non-signature events.
- Reevaluate the Career Center's student staff model to make recommendations to promote equity and inclusion, review the necessity and structure of each role, and consolidate existing positions (if appropriate).
- Evaluate the use of technology to be more accessible, equitable, scalable, and sustainable.
- Ensure that the leadership team and all staff are recognizing those who are performing exceptionally via campus wide and professional association awards.
- Support the staff in developing knowledge regarding equal opportunity laws, defamation laws, and laws regarding disabilities and accessibility.
- Develop additional policies and procedures on all relevant operations, transactions, or tasks that have legal and institutional policy implications.

#### *Industry Trends*

- Use data to make informed decisions about which employers and industries with which to pursue relationships
- Develop a deeper understanding of how the economy and industry trends impacts the job search and share that knowledge between the Employer Connections team and the Career Education team.
- Provide employment market and trend data to faculty, administration, and students to help inform understanding of the economy and its impact on graduates in the marketplace.

### *COVID-19 Impacts*

- Adjust our physical office operating procedures by creating virtual events, facilitating active outreach to graduating students, and continuing to focus on supporting student success.
- Renew the focus on helping students, alumni and employers understand how the following might affect them: part-time employment, full-time employment, contract employment, independent contract employment, commission-based employment, work-from-home employment, virtual employment, and so forth.

### *Conclusion*

The Career Center today bears little resemblance to the Career Center when the last program review was completed nearly 10 years ago. The Center is in a different physical location, has grown greatly in personnel, has taken on increasingly high-priority institutional responsibilities, and has shifted its philosophy and priorities. Through the program review, it has been affirmed that the CSU Career Center is well-positioned, both in meeting and achieving national association best practices, and in comparison, to other institutions. The Career Center is appropriately staffed, supported by institutional leadership, working to incorporate career services throughout the institution, and vision and mission driven.

The Career Center is emerging as a leader in equity- and inclusion-related work, something that has been substantively lacking in career services nationally. The site visit, staff presence and participation at national conferences, the social justice model for career education, interrogating of white- and male-centric notions of traditional career services, and working to incorporate equity and inclusion into day-to-day practices are all examples of the positive direction the Career Center is headed.

The coming years will be particularly challenging, exciting, and important for the Career Center as we come to understand as a nation and institution the effects the national pandemic will have on the economy; also, how the increased capacity for remote work and services will change our organization in unforeseen ways.