

De Anza College Career Center Program Review

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Description and Mission of the Program

The De Anza College Career Center provides resources and services to individuals engaged in career exploration and employment search activities. The Career Center serves both students and community members. Visitors to the Career Center have access to a reference library, educational and occupational databases, self-assessment tools, career counseling services, workshops, job and internship listings, volunteer postings, apprenticeship information, individualized job search consultation, semi-annual job fairs, and a wide array of office technology to assist in the job search process. In keeping with the De Anza College mission statement, the Career Center assists students in the formation of educational and career goals as well as aids them in the search for employment so that they are able to become productive, contributing members of our community. Moreover, the Career Center provides students with up-to-date information on the employment environment so that they are prepared for the diverse and changing world which awaits them beyond the College boundaries. This function is especially important during periods of economic downturn such as we are currently experiencing. During unstable times, the Career Center plays an increasingly vital role in assisting students to navigate amid a climate of occupational uncertainty as will be discussed in this report.

Access, Growth and Retention

The Career Center is committed to the institutional goal of increased access, growth and retention. In terms of **access**, the resources and services of the Career Center are available to all students at De Anza College. Data will be provided and analyzed in the subsequent "Student Equity" section of this report pertaining to the use of the Career Center by students of varying backgrounds including those of African, Asian, Latino/a, and Filipino/a ancestry as well as students receiving disability services. As will be discussed, the Career Center has had much success in attracting students from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education. With respect to **growth**, the Career Center is open to the public, and approximately 5% of our visitors are non-students who come to campus primarily to view our wide selection of job listings. By providing a service which non-students deem important enough to venture to campus to obtain, we are taking an important first step in cultivating a relationship between De Anza College and individuals who represent a pool of potential students. The same can be said for our semi-annual Job Fairs which draw hundreds of non-students to our campus in the Spring and Fall. Also, we maintain a listserv with approximately 1200 members, a large number of whom are non-students. In addition to e-mailing weekly job listings to these individuals which encourage them to come to campus to view our full

spectrum of job listings, we also use this as a forum during registration periods to suggest to the listserv members that they register for classes at De Anza College. When we do this we include a link to the course schedule on the De Anza College website so members are easily able to access the College's class listings.

With respect to **retention**, the Career Center resources and services positively impact student retention in several ways. First, students utilizing the Career Center are able to access resources geared toward helping them clarify their academic goals. Research shows that students with clear academic goals are more inclined to stay in school than those without clear goals. Likewise, students with defined career goals are more likely to remain in school than those without established career goals. The Career Center provides students with resources and services to clarify their occupational goals and thus provides them with the ability to envision the link between school and work, a factor which positively impacts college retention. Likewise, the Career Center is the contact point on campus for internship information. Taking part in internships enables students to apply the concepts they are learning in school to real-world work environments and further increases the school-to-work connection which benefits retention.

Moreover, the Career Center provides information, via the EUREKA and DISCOVER databases, for transfer-bound students in the process of investigating college majors and choosing among colleges. This information assists them in clarifying their transfer objectives and envisioning how completing their community college coursework at De Anza College will benefit their transfer plans. Also, the extensive job search resources and services available in the Career Center provide students with avenues to employment so that they can meet their financial obligations while remaining in school. This too has a beneficial impact on student retention. Our semi-annual Job Fairs similarly serve this purpose. For example, employers attending our Spring and Fall Job Fairs during 2008 were surveyed and reported that they were planning to fill approximately 286 positions with De Anza College students.

Student Equity

During 2008, the Career Center had 8821 visitors. This number represents all visitors to the Center (both students and non-students). Of these visitors, 6988 were students who signed into the Career Center on the SARSTrak system. The remaining 1833 visitors were individuals who signed into the Career Center via a paper tracking system. The paper tracking system is used for non-students, students whose identification numbers do not work in the SARSTrak system and students visiting in large classes. These visiting classes have, until now, generally been recorded on the paper sign-in log as a group due to the lengthy time factor inherent in having each class member sign in on our single SARSTrak computer. As of January 2009, however, we have changed this process and our staff now logs each class visitor into the SARSTrak system individually so that our electronic data more closely reflects the actual number of visitors we serve.

The Career Center strives to provide barrier-free service across lines of gender, ethnicity and disability to all students of De Anza College. The demographic data in the table that follows was collected via the SARSTrak system and shows that the Career Center is

utilized by a diverse mix of students. As a comparison, the table also provides demographic data for De Anza College as a whole.

**Ethnicity, Gender and Disability Services Data for Students
Served by the Career Center and by De Anza College
Winter, Spring, Fall 2008**

Ethnicity	Career Center	De Anza College
African American	7%	4%
Asian	42%	39%
Filipino	6%	5%
Latino/a	16%	14%
White	18%	26%
All Other Groups	11%	12%
Gender	Career Center	De Anza College
Female	55%	52%
Male	45%	48%
Disability Services (Receiving DSPS)	Career Center	De Anza College
	6%	4%

A comparison of the these two sets of data shows that the students visiting the Career Center are, in many ways, a reflection of the general student population at De Anza College. Nevertheless, there are some differences between these two sets of data. One of the main differences is that a smaller percentage of white students visited the Career Center compared to the percentage of white students at De Anza College (18% versus 26%). Another difference is that a larger percentage of Asian students visited the Career Center compared to the percentage of Asian students at the College (42% versus 39%). The same can also be said for African American students (7% versus 4%), Latino/a students (16% versus 14%) and Filipino students (6% versus 5%). As far as gender is concerned, the data shows that the Career Center is utilized by a larger percentage of females compared to the number of females at the College (55% versus 52%). The reverse is true for males (45% versus 48%). Also, a slightly larger percentage of Career Center visitors receive Disability Services than are represented in the student body as a whole (6% versus 4%). In all, this data indicates that the Career Center is utilized by a highly diverse mix of students at De Anza College, a blend even more diverse than the College as a whole. The Career Center is very proud of its successful ability to attract students from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education.

When students visit the Career Center, it is the goal of the Career Center staff to provide assistance leading to the successful formulation and achievement of educational and occupational goals by all students irrespective of gender, ethnicity or disability status. Toward this end, the Career Center has a multi-lingual staff, foreign language materials, reference materials addressing special populations, access to sign language interpreters, and a variety of adaptive computer software and hardware. It is the policy of the Career Center that each visitor has equal access to the resources and services provided in the Career Center.

Strategic Planning Initiatives

The Career Center performs many activities in support of the College's Strategic Planning Initiatives. In the realm of **Community Collaborations**, the Career Center develops and maintains positive working relationships with local employers by offering services such as job and internship posting (in both binder and online formats), on-campus recruiting opportunities and semi-annual Job Fairs. We also maintain connections with local agencies providing employment-related services as well as links with colleagues offering career development services at other academic institutions. With respect to **Outreach**, the use of our 1200-member job seeker listserv to support college recruiting efforts was discussed in the Retention and Growth section above. In addition to this, we regularly maintain a presence at Parent Nights, new student orientations, and a variety of other special events by staffing Career Center tables and providing Career Center tours.

Our activities in support of **Individualized Attention to Student Retention and Success** were largely covered previously in the "Access, Growth and Retention" section; however, we also assisted in the recruitment of peer advisors by posting job listings for the Summer Bridge/First Year Experience programs as well as provided Career Center tours for students enrolled in these programs to familiarize them with the breadth of our resources and services. In the realm of **Cultural Competence** we strive to educate not only our student population but also our staff and faculty on issues pertaining to career development and employment search. Our activities in this area include offering in-service training sessions, presenting workshops for PGA/PAA credit, giving presentations at Department/Division meetings, providing curriculum tips to faculty members for incorporating the Career Center resources and services into their lesson plans, and taking part in special events such as faculty training days.

Budget Limitations

For the 2008/09 academic year the Career Center received approximately \$2000 in B Budget funding. This level of funding is far short of the amount necessary to support the on-going needs of the Career Center (i.e., office supplies, copier maintenance fees, career software licensing fees, reference library purchases, etc.). We applied for, and thankfully received, VTEA funding which has greatly assisted us in meeting our financial needs. Additionally, we have brought in revenue through our hosting of the Spring and Fall Job Fairs which has further assisted us in keeping our resources up-to-date and the Career

Center staffed with part-time student assistants during peak operating times. Without these auxiliary funding sources, however, we would not have been able to cover our necessary financial expenditures. While we do not expect to receive any increased funding during the coming year, we do hope that our budget will be maintained at least at the present level. This, combined with supplementation from our auxiliary funding sources, will enable us to continue offering our career development resources and services at this turbulent economic time when they are critically needed by our student population. The vital importance of the Career Center, especially during times of economic downturn, will be further addressed in the “Trends” section of this report.

Assessment of Program

As discussed previously in the “Student Equity” section, data is gathered via the SARSTrak system (augmented by a paper-based sign-in system primarily for non-students) to track Career Center usage. This provides us with quantitative information regarding how many students we serve and allows us to analyze shifts in usage patterns. For example, the Career Center usage in 2008 (8821 total visitors) was 20.7% more than in 2007 (when we had 7308 total visitors). Since the Career Center employs two classified staff members, the 2008 Career Center usage represents a staff-to-students-served ratio of one staff member per 4410 students. Beyond this quantitative information, the Career Center solicits qualitative feedback from students and staff on an on-going basis. The feedback received impacts the decisions made regarding program resources and services. While much of this feedback is verbal in nature, the Career Center staff has also conducted a formal, written survey since our last program review to determine visitors’ satisfaction level with the resources and services offered at the Career Center and to solicit their recommendations for improvement. The results of this survey showed that 98% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the resources/services they utilized while in the Career Center. A complete summary of the results from this survey can be obtained by contacting the Career Center Coordinator.

In an effort to conduct on-going research with the aim of further improving our services, the Career Center staff also distributes surveys to the job seekers and the employers attending the Spring and Fall Job Fairs. The data gathered assists the staff in making improvements to subsequent Job Fairs. Written reports summarizing the survey data are compiled after each Job Fair and are available for viewing upon request. We are always particularly interested to note the number of students that employers intend to hire as a result of attending our Job Fairs. As stated previously in the “Retention and Growth” section of this report, employers attending the Spring and Fall 2008 Job Fairs reported that they were planning to fill approximately 286 positions with De Anza College students.

Relationship with Other Programs

The Career Center is an important support resource for many campus programs and departments including the Counseling department, the Student Success and Retention Services Center, the Cooperative Work Experience program, the Transfer Center, the

Occupational Training Institute, the International Students program, the Disabled Student Services department, the Staff and Organizational Development Department, the Student Activities Office, the Workforce Education program, the NASA/Ames Internship program, and numerous instructors who send their students to the Center to gather information for class projects and reports. The Career Center staff values the relationships it has cultivated with the other programs and departments on campus and looks forward to further opportunities for collaboration in the future.

Trends

The volume of visitors to the Career Center is impacted by local, state and national economic trends. When the economy suffers a downturn as it has during the past year, the Career Center becomes an even more integral and essential resource for the campus community and its surrounding citizens. While a portion of the previously mentioned 20.7% increase in the number of Career Center visitors between 2007 and 2008 can be attributed to heightened marketing efforts, a portion is no doubt also due to the economic downturn that occurred during this same time period. Over the course of the 12-month period ending in December 2008, the unemployment rate in Santa Clara County climbed from 4.9% to 7.8%. Many economic experts predict the unemployment rate will climb further throughout the course of the present year, perhaps to as high as 10%. Dramatic increases in the unemployment rate translate into more students and community members utilizing the Career Center for job search purposes. Likewise, many students and community members look to the Career Center during periods of economic instability for occupational exploration purposes as they maneuver through career transitions stemming from job reductions and lay-offs. Now, more than ever, the Career Center resources and services are vitally needed at De Anza College, and the Career Center staff very much hopes that any future budget decisions will be made with the goal in mind of keeping this valuable program sufficiently funded.

Program Strengths/Areas for Improvement

The overriding strength of the Career Center lies in its ability to offer a wide range of career development resources and services with only two primary staff members (three if our Counselor is included) and a shoestring B-budget of approximately \$2000. Most colleges of our size employ significantly greater numbers of staff members in the Career Center, and yet, even with our skeleton crew and budget, we have been able to offer a robust assortment of resources and services to rival those institutions with far greater staffing and funding. Moreover, as the satisfaction survey discussed previously in the “Assessment of Program” section attests, an overwhelming majority of students (98%) express satisfaction with the assistance they receive in the Career Center.

That said, our program could be even stronger with increased staffing. Given the current economic climate, it is of course highly unlikely that we will be provided with additional staffing; however, were we to receive this at some point in the future, we could branch out in new ways. One of the prime ways we could continue to develop the program with additional staffing would be to engage in more extensive off-campus job development

activities. With our current staffing of two classified individuals, the majority of our time is needed on-campus managing and administering our program. Additional staffing could eventually be used to expand our reach farther off campus to develop increased employment connections and opportunities for our students. For now, we do have a large Job Fair database of employer contacts as well as a new Online Job Board that already has a database of hundreds of employer contacts after only a few months in operation. At a future point though, when the budget is more favorable, it would be advantageous to the college to consider hiring one or more Job Developers as has been done at other community colleges.

Suggestions for Campus-Wide Change

The Career Center operates on a system of communication and team-work. Using a collaborative process, we are able to provide a full array of career development resources and services to the De Anza College community despite operating with a very small staff and budget. We intend to assist the campus in facing the current monetary crisis by offering a similar mix of team-work and collaboration. We support the ideas put forth previously by the V.P. of Student Services to reduce the duplication of effort generated by programs on campus. While the resources and services offered by the Career Center are fairly unique in the sense that they are largely ones not offered elsewhere on campus, the Career Center staff is very interested in working with the various campus divisions, departments and programs to coordinate our services in a way that is as efficient and cost effective to the College as possible. Our goal is to reach as many students as we can with our program, and we are committed to doing so in a way that simultaneously assists the college to move in a more streamlined and efficient direction. The next few years do not appear easy, but we are prepared for the challenge and look forward to serving both our students and the College to best of our ability during these trying times.