To Centralize or Decentralize?  
The Question Facing University Career Services Today  

Kelli Smith & Farouk Dey • 06/04/2010
To Centralize or Decentralize?

INTRODUCTION

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Subjectivity Statement

• Presenters work in centralized models
• This presentation will not provide a recommendation for a particular model.
• Our hope is to shed light on the issues facing both models and to stimulate discussion.
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Trends in Career Services

Survey Results
- Students
- Employers
- Career Services Professionals

Discussion

Panel
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PURPOSE OF OUR RESEARCH

NACE 2009-10 Career Services Benchmark Survey for Four-Year Colleges and Universities

- 557 members responded, 40.1% response rate
- 87.5% have primarily centralized offices, and 54% private

KEY FINDINGS

- Sizable increases in less traditional sectors of activity, such as drop-in career counseling and counselors dealing with students in online sessions
- Indicates that there was an increased level of demand
- Unfortunately, resources for career centers did not match the increase in demand for services, particularly for schools in the public sector
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PURPOSE FOR OUR RESEARCH

PUTTING EDUCATION TO WORK: CSU Directors Statewide Employer Survey, Dec. 2009

• Statewide survey of Cal State grad employers
• 21/23 campuses conducted survey
• 258 responding employers

KEY FINDING:

• Importance of centralized campus-based employer services
• Almost 90% indicated ‘great impact’ or ‘some impact’ on their hiring of grads should employer services no longer be available as a centralized campus service
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Our Research

What is the most effective model of career services on college campuses?

• Students
• Employers
• Institutional Outcomes

Method

• Survey sent to students/recent alumni
• Survey sent to career services professionals via listservs
• Interviewed employers
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

Describe your institution.

- 96.6% Four-year public university
- 3.4% Four-year private university
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

What is the student enrollment of your institution?

- 0 - 4,999: 3.3%
- 5,000 - 9,999: 7.2%
- 10,000 - 19,999: 13.3%
- 20,000 - 29,999: 6.7%
- 30,000 and above: 60.8%
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

What is your college classification?

- Undergraduate Student: 29.5%
- Graduate Student: 37.9%
- Professional Student (Medical, Law, MBA): 26.6%
- Alumni: 4.1%
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

Select the name that MOST closely matches the function of the career center where you currently seek career services?

- Centralized Career Center serving all or most students of your institution: 83.1%
- Satellite career center serving a specific college: 9.9%
- Other (please specify): 7.0%
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**SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS**

*Where do you prefer to receive career services on your campus?*

- A centralized career center within your university able to serve all... 30.5%
- A career center located within your specific college serving your specific... 65.9%
- Other (please specify) 3.6%
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

What are your thoughts about receiving career services from an office within your specific college? Please share advantages and/or challenges.

• I believe college specific career services offices would allow more individually tailored and specific career advice and be more beneficial in the long-term to both students and (especially) alumni.
• This would be much more helpful because career advice could be more specific to the student's education.
• These offices have greater visibility for students and can aid in the recruitment process for the individual colleges. I would be concerned with their ability to collaborate with each other without a central office.
• I would feel more comfortable with this because then I could see the opportunities that I could have taken with my major. If the selection looked unappealing, I could just change my major.
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SURVEY RESULTS - STUDENTS

What are your thoughts about receiving career services from an office within your specific college? Please share advantages and/or challenges.

• College departments are slow and inefficient.
• Huge waste of money.
• In theory this would be great and more people would end up working in their field of study, which would create a stronger alumni. Plus current students could reach out to alumni for career prospects in their area. However, each individual student is at a different place when they graduate...The best option for them may be to take a path outside of their course of study. So I feel a centralized office is better.

• ...since Arts and Sciences is such a big college, it would help to have multiple sections within an Arts and Sciences advising office, otherwise there wouldn't be much of any benefit over the current centralized system.)
What are your thoughts about receiving career services from a central campus office? Please share advantages and/or challenges.

• Trends and ebbs and flows within an industry change year to year, or even month to month. These are difficult to follow for a central campus office.
• I felt like my major received little to no attention from the existing central campus office.
• I have found the centralized Husker Hire Link online job posting service to be helpful. The resume and mock interview services were helpful and wouldn't necessarily benefit from being outside of a central campus office.
• I think the cost to support such an office is less and you come out with a more universal resume, search, etc... Also, it may encourage employers to participate that may require students from multiple disciplines.
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SURVEY RESULTS - EMPLOYERS

The majority of employers interviewed favored a centralized system in relative to:
Management of the logistics of career fairs
Preference in arrangement of campus interviews and locations
Preferences in posting job listings and web link connections
Resolution of recruitment issues, schedule adjustments,
Special requests and problems
Cost effective and time efficient manner of recruitment

Strong preference for separate MBA office
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SURVEY RESULTS - EMPLOYERS

“A ‘central single office’ is the best case …. Whenever we have Engineering/Business specific needs, we have no problems reaching out to the schools for them. However, we like dealing with one office for the majority of our recruiting logistics.”

“Easy survey and to me a no brainer. I have worked with Illinois and now U Texas and being centralized is the only answer except MBA!”

“When students from all disciplines come to a centralized career center, companies gain economies of scale and are able to meet their recruitment needs.”
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SURVEY RESULTS - EMPLOYERS

“We have concerns about departmental career events – more expensive and limits the talent…and if departments get a ‘no’ from me, they turn to our alumni. Our position is that we don’t do departmental career fairs.”

“All engineering disciplines are able to see requisitions that apply to different degree types. If we are limited to a single department or college, a Chemist might miss an opportunity only a Chem E was able to access. In addition, most companies need scalable recruitment approaches. Any streamlining that can be accomplished helps us save time and money.”
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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

Describe your institution.

- 41.8% Four-year public university
- 58.2% Four-year private university
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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

What is the student enrollment of your institution?

- 31.3%: 0 - 4,999
- 28.4%: 5,000 - 9,999
- 16.4%: 10,000 - 19,999
- 14.9%: 20,000 - 29,999
- 9.0%: 30,000 and above
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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

Select the name that MOST closely matches the function of the career center where you work?

- Centralized Career Center serving all or most students at your instit...
- Satellite career center serving a specific population only
- Other (please specify)

82.1%
9.0%
9.0%
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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

What is the structure of career services on your campus?

- 50.0% - Completely centralized
- 8.8% - Centralized with very few other career services offices
- 5.9% - Completely decentralized
- Other (please specify)

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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

What is your preferred model of career services?

- Centralized: 87.9%
- Decentralized: 12.1%
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SURVEY RESULTS - CAREER SERVICES STAFF

What do you perceive to be the greatest strength of your current system?

• We're able to cater to specific needs based on interests/majors/career paths.
• Students really feel connected to the career counselor that serves their college. Faculty like having one person to go to for career issues. Students can received advising from staff who are more specialized ...
Employers can target which students they are trying to reach in their recruiting efforts, but also have opportunities (career fair, multi-school environment on Symplicity..) to efficiently recruit students from various schools/colleges...

• Employers have one office to contact to meet their needs for job fairs, job postings, on-campus recruiting, etc.
• It is the easiest model for employer to use having basically one point of service. It is the most equitable for the most number of students as we encourage employers to look at a wide variety of majors.
• one-stop-shop for students
What do you perceive to be the greatest weakness of your current system?

• We are very unsure what other offices are doing, and there is no obligation to collaborate.
• Employers are continuously frustrated with trying to make sense of how to recruit the students that they want to recruit.
• We're not able to specialize as well as decentralized centers. Since funding is tight and staff numbers are locked in for the time being, there's always more to do, more to learn, and more to serve.
• Faculty collaboration - some academic departments are really easy to work with; others don't seem to be interested in working with our office
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**Centralized**
- Access to variety of employers
- Less bias from advisor
- Access to more resources
- Major ≠ Career

**Decentralized**
- More individual attention
- Faster access to specialized employers
- More customized services
- Integration of career advising with academic advising
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**Centralized**
- Cost effective
- Access to variety of students
- One stop shop
- Easy management of database

**Decentralized**
- Focus on desired discipline
- More individual attention
- Access to faculty
- Influence over curriculum
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**Centralized**
- Increased burden on a centralized center
- Increased cohesion between departments

**Decentralized**
- Increased support for students
- Diffusion of Resources
- Potential divisions and competition
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EXPERT PANEL

Angela Biscardi – Vector Marketing Corporation

Kim Link – University of Colorado Boulder
Leeds School of Business
THANK YOU

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