

University System of Georgia
Committee for Career Services and Cooperative Education
Professional Standards for Career Services at Two-Year Colleges

Statement of Purpose

In December, 2001 the University System Committee for Career Services and Cooperative Education (hereafter referred to as USC-CACE) met for the purpose of discussing the need to set uniform standards for Career Services units in each sector of institutions within the University System. These sectors are:

- Two-year colleges primarily conferring certificate, diploma and associate degrees (commonly referred to as “two-year colleges”).
- State colleges primarily conferring associate degrees and a limited number of baccalaureate programs targeted to serve the economic development needs of their region (commonly referred to as “state colleges”).
- State and regional universities conferring bachelors, masters, and specialist degrees (commonly referred to as “four-year institutions”).
- Research universities offering degree programs from the bachelor level through the doctorate or equivalent terminal degrees with research.

The purpose of this document is to establish professional standards for the sector of institutions defined as two-year colleges. These institutions, as of August, 2002 are as follows:

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Atlanta Metropolitan College
Bainbridge College
Coastal Georgia Community College
Darton College
Floyd College
East Georgia College
Gainesville College
Georgia Perimeter College
Gordon College
Middle Georgia College
South Georgia College
Waycross College

Historically each institution's career services unit operated independently, developing standards as the need arose, without system wide standards or continuity set to establish consistency and uniformity in the level of service delivery to students. Further there were no standards set for the purpose of developing benchmarks and evaluative measures for these units.

Members of USC-CACE agreed unanimously on the need to develop a set of standards for each sector of institution within the University System. A committee was appointed to develop standards for each classification of institution.

In August 2002 a committee of two-year institutions met at Clayton College & State University to examine all available options for establishing professional standards for the career services field.

Acknowledgement

The decision was made to adopt, in principle, the Professional Standards for University Career Services set forth by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, with some modifications in the text to accommodate the needs and terminology of practice in the Georgia University System. The two-year colleges within the University System of Georgia voted to approve this document via electronic ballot October 31, 2002.

We, the members of the committee to set professional standards for the two-year college sector of institutions in the USC-CACE membership, gratefully acknowledge the permission to use, and assistance provided by, the legal council and executive staff of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 62 Highland Avenue, Bethlehem, PA. Their guidance and advice was critical to the development of this document.

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Professional Standards for Career Services

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I. Mission Statement at Two Year Colleges

In support of the mission of the University System of Georgia, the Career Services units of each institution exist to serve students, recent graduates, faculty, alumni, employers in the state of Georgia, and others as designated by each institution. Our mission is to provide those programs and services that enhance career awareness and exploration, and promote the transition from education to career development and employment, or higher education. These programs and services may include, but are not limited to, employment listings and referrals, on-campus employer visitations, and career library resources. In providing these services, students and graduates are encouraged to improve their ability to communicate, think critically and make informed decisions about occupational choices.

The Career Services Offices exist to serve employers in both the public and private sector by providing them with the resources to meet specific human resource needs for well educated qualified personnel, which in turn impacts the economic development of the community and state. It is the mission of the Career Services units to make these services available to all currently enrolled students (and alumni when indicated by an individual institution's mission.)

Two-year colleges may integrate other programs/resources into their career services areas at the discretion of each institution. The objectives specified in this mission statement reflect ways in which central duties are to be performed/provided at all career services programs at the two-year colleges.

II. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The key program components of career services **must** be clearly defined within the career services mission statement. As appropriate, key program components **should** be designed and implemented in alignment with:

- a) the career development needs and the academic and occupational interests of students and other clients;
- b) current research, theories, and knowledge of career development and learning;
- c) contemporary career services practices;

- d) economic trends, opportunities, and/or constraints;
- e) institutional priorities; and
- f) resources.

Career services **should** work collaboratively with academic divisions, departments, individual faculty members, student services, and other relevant constituencies of the institution to enhance students' career development. Career services **should** promote career development for students as integral to the mission of the institution.

Career Counseling and Advising

The institution **must** offer career counseling or advising that assists students at any stage of their career development while enrolled in the institution to:

- understand the relationship between self-knowledge and career choice through assessment of interests, competencies, values, experience, personal characteristics, and desired lifestyle;
- obtain and research occupational, educational, and employment information;
- establish short-term and long-term career goals;
- make reasoned, informed career choices based on accurate self-knowledge and accurate information about the world of work.

Career counseling or advising **should** be offered through career services in order to link students' career decision making with access to employers and employment information. Career services **should** disseminate information on the availability of career counseling or advising through a variety of means, e.g., official publications, electronic publishing, presentations, etc.

Career services **should**:

- provide career counseling or advising to students at any point in their college experience;
- encourage students to take advantage of career services as early as possible in their academic programs;
- provide career counseling or advising through scheduled appointments with individuals, group programs, career planning courses, outreach opportunities, special events, and information technology;

- refer students to other campus or community resources if assistance is needed beyond the scope of career counseling or advising;
- provide opportunities for students to interact with employers;
- maintain appropriate records for future work with the students.

Career Information

Current, comprehensive, and accessible career information **must** be available to students as they explore and make career decisions. To be effective, career information resources **must** be:

- comprehensive, enabling students to explore the widest range of information; and
- current and up-to-date to reflect economic, occupational, and work conditions.

Career services **should**:

- disseminate information on the availability, scope, and use of career services through institutional publications, campus media, presentations, outreach, and orientation programs;
- provide information for constituent groups on career and employment topics and the ethical obligations of students, employers faculty, and others involved in the employment process;
- provide resources to help students assess and relate their interests, competencies, needs, expectations, education, experience, personal background, and desired lifestyle to the employment market;
- provide information on current and projected employment opportunities and on employers to ensure that candidates have the widest possible choices of employment;
- provide information on graduate and professional academic programs and other continuing education programs; and
- use information technology to give students and staff access to the Internet and other computer resources.

Career information **should** be conveniently available in a variety of media appropriate for different learning styles and special needs.

Career information resources **must** be accessible and organized with appropriate counseling, advising, librarian, or information technology competencies to assist students in accessing and using career information.

Career information facilities **should** be staffed with persons who have the appropriate counseling, advising, librarian, or information technology competencies to assist students in accessing and using career information.

Career information **should** include the following categories:

- self-assessment and career planning;
- occupational and job market information;
- four-year colleges and universities;
- employment search;
- employer information.

Employment Services

Career services **must** assist students in:

- exploring a full range of career and work possibilities that match their career goals;
- preparing job-search competencies and tools to present themselves effectively as candidates for employment;
- obtaining information on employment opportunities and prospective employers;
- connecting with employers through campus interviews, job listings, referrals, networking, publications, and information technology; and
- anticipating career management issues relevant to the individual, e.g., dual careers, gender, sexual preference, disabilities, etc.

Career services **should** develop and maintain relationships with employers that provide career development and employment opportunities for students.

III. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

An institution **must** assign a leader to manage career services and align career services with the mission of the institution and the needs of the constituencies served. If career services are offered by several units, the institution **should** designate a leader or leadership team that will be responsible for coordinating the institution's programs and services for students and other clients. That leadership is necessary to ensure adherence to institutional and unit missions and to enhance program effectiveness and efficiency.

Career services leaders **must** develop a mission statement, program goals and objectives, and strategic and operational plans for fulfilling the mission and goals of the program. Career services **must** conduct regular program evaluations to improve operations and to adjust to changing client needs and environmental threats and opportunities.

Programs and services **must** be structured purposefully and managed effectively to achieve stated goals. Evidence of appropriate structure could include current and accessible policies and procedures; written job descriptions and regular performance reviews for all employees; functional workflow or organizational charts; facilities appropriate for career service functions; and defined service standards. Evidence of effective management could include strategic and operational planning processes; clearly defined areas of responsibility; effective communication practices; decision-making and conflict resolution procedures; accountability systems; sound fiscal management practices; and proof of continuous improvement. Regular review of policies, procedures, and budgetary issues **must** be defined.

Career services leaders **should** coordinate efforts with other career services providers in the institution to integrate career services into the broader educational mission. Key constituencies of career services **should** be identified and their needs **should** be reflected in the mission and goals of the unit. Priorities for services **should** be defined. Career services leaders **should** be advocates for the advancement of career services within the institution.

IV. ORGANIZATION

The external and internal organization of career services, including its place within the institution, **must** support its mission. Career services **should** be structured to ensure effective functioning of client services. It **must** be organized to develop positive relationships with students; academic, administrative, and student affairs colleagues and employers.

Since the organizational structure of career services **must** be designed to support its mission, external and internal reporting relationships **should** relate to desired student outcomes. These outcomes **should** be reflected in the departmental mission statement. Career development services **should** be integrated with, and complementary to, employment-related services.

V. HUMAN RESOURCES

Career services **should** have an adequate number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill its mission and functions. Career services **must** embrace fair employment practices and must be proactive in attracting and retaining a diverse staff. To ensure the existence of suitable and identifiable role models within career services, staff diversity **should** reflect and/or be representative of the student population.

The ratio of professional and support staff should be established and reviewed annually. The size of the staff should be consistent with the following: the size of the student body served

(enrollment, number of campuses, distance between campuses), other student support resources on campus, the objectives and expectations imposed on the staff, the mission and philosophy of the institution, and the actual as well as projected service demands. The desirable minimum professional staff ratio is one to every 500-1500 students, depending on the extent and diversity of services provided to the institution and community.

Career service units **must** be staffed by persons who, in combination, provide the core competencies to perform primary program functions effectively. Primary program functions and their related core competencies and knowledge domains are defined below. (Please feel free to add specific competencies and knowledge areas that reflect your program.)

<i>Functions</i>	<i>Core Competencies</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>
Program management and administration	Needs assessment; program design, implementation & evaluation; strategic & operational planning; staffing; staff development & supervision; budget planning & administration; reporting.	Systems theory; organizational development; research design; statistics; accounting and budgeting procedures; purchasing; staff selection; supervision; performance appraisals; management information systems; goal setting; problem solving; customer service; marketing.
Career counseling or advising and consultation	Needs assessment & diagnosis; intervention design & implementation; test administration & interpretation; counseling or advising; feedback; evaluation; empathy & interpersonal sensitivity; work with individuals & groups; use of career, occupational, & employment information.	Career development theories; statistics; counseling or advising processes; evaluation of person-job fit; job analysis; career decision making; behavior management; job search, interviews, & resumes.
Teaching/training/educating	Needs assessment; program/workshop design; researching, evaluating, & integrating information; training/teaching; coaching; work with individuals & groups.	Setting of objectives; designing curricula & learning resources for specific content areas; experiential education.
	Needs assessment; written, verbal, & interpersonal communication; public	Customer service; knowledge of institution & its academic programs;

Marketing/promoting/relations	speaking; job development.	career services; employers' needs & expectations; recruiting & staffing methods.
Brokering/connecting/linking	Organizing information, logistics, people, & processes toward a desired outcome; consulting; placement operations.	Systems & procedures; campus interviewing; candidate/resume referral; experiential education; recruiting, interviewing, and selecting employees.
Information management	Organization & dissemination; storage & retrieval; computing systems & applications; data entry & analysis.	Library/resources center organization; computer systems & applications; specific electronic management information systems; publishing.

Professional staff members **must** have the requisite qualifications and competencies to perform effectively in their defined roles with students, faculty, administrators, and employers, as well as highly specialized functions, such as career and employment counseling or advising, student employment, work-study, computer technology, etc.

Management/Director Level Positions: In any functional area where there is a full-time director, that individual **must** possess skills in management and leadership and have the professional credentials and experience to supervise professional and support staff. Program managers **should** (1) develop the career services mission statement and program objectives and policies, (2) prepare and maintain annual budgets in alignment with the mission and goals, (3) establish effective procedures for implementing policies and programs, and (4) conduct outreach efforts.

Managers **should** have competence in strategic and operational management, staffing, staff development, supervision, budget management and program marketing. They **should** have experience in and be able to manage and integrate multiple programs, such as career counseling or advising. Program managers **should** have a related graduate degree.

Professional Positions (Associate and assistant directors, career counselors, advisers, consultants): To be qualified, professional staff members **must** have a graduate degree in a field of study relevant to the particular job in question or have an appropriate combination of education and experience. Prior work experience may be of considerable value to the career counseling or advising and program coordination functions.

Pre-professional Positions: Paraprofessionals and work-study staff **must** be carefully selected, trained in helping skills and institutional procedures, closely supervised, and evaluated regularly.

Support Staff and Technical Positions: Each organizational unit **must** have adequate administrative and technical staff adequate to accomplish its mission. Such staff **must** be

competent to perform their duties. The size of the support staff **should** be sufficient to perform the tasks of reception, secretarial, appointment scheduling, maintenance and processing of student credentials and other files, compilation of data, and other tasks required by the programs. A technical support person or support service **should** be available to maintain computer and information technology systems for career services.

Career services **must** develop and maintain job descriptions for all staff members and provide regular performance appraisals. Salaries and benefits for staff **must** be commensurate with similar positions in the institution, geographic area, and national job market.

All staff **must** be trained in legal, confidential, and ethical issues related to career services. Career services professionals **must** engage in continuing professional development activities to keep abreast of the conditions and developments that affect career services. Staff training and development **should** be ongoing so that broad skills are developed within the office.

VI. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Career services **must** have adequate facilities and equipment to fulfill its mission and to perform its functions effectively. Facilities **must** be accessible to persons with disabilities and must comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Career services **must** have private offices for professional staff in order to perform counseling or advising or other confidential work; support staff work areas; reception and student registration area; career resource center; storage space sufficient to accommodate supplies and equipment; and necessary office equipment. Career services **should** have access to conference rooms and large group meeting rooms. Accommodations for students with special needs **must** be provided by career services or in conjunction with the department that serves this population.

Career services **should** be located conveniently on campus. Career services **should** project a welcoming, professional atmosphere for students, employers, alumni, parents, and others.

Career services **must** provide students and employers with private interview facilities. The number of employment interview rooms **should** be adequate to meet employer and student needs. The number of counseling rooms **should** at least equal the number of professional staff members counseling or advising at any time. Space for both counselors and recruiters **should** provide privacy and adequate conditions and equipment to function professionally.

Career services **should** provide office hours at appropriate times for its constituencies. Parking for visitors **should** be adequate and convenient.

Sufficient information technology **should** be available for students and staff to support career services functions. Equipment and facilities **should** be secured to protect the confidentiality and safety of records.

VII. CAMPUS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

As an integral function within the institution, career services **must** develop and/or maintain productive relationships with relevant campus offices and key stakeholders. In order to achieve this, career services **should**:

- develop institutional support for career development;
- involve the academic administration and faculty in career planning and employment programs; and

In addition, career services **should**:

- participate fully in campus activities such as faculty organizations, committees, student orientation programs, classroom presentations, academic courses in career planning, and student organization programs;
- exchange information with the academic administration and faculty concerning employment requirements, labor market trends, specific jobs, and employment that may be related to academic planning and curriculum development;
- arrange appropriate programs that use alumni experience and expertise;
- establish cooperative relationships with other offices and services in order to support mutual referrals, exchange of information, sharing of resources, and other program functions;
- provide information and reports to the academic administration, faculty, and key offices of the institution regarding career services for students and employers;
- encourage dialogue among employers, faculty members, and administrators concerning career issues and trends for students and graduates;
- encourage staff participation in professional associations and community activities related to career and employment issues; and
- participate in professional staff development activities.

VIII. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Career services professionals **must** be knowledgeable about accepted and current professional practices and be responsive to those obligations and limitations imposed on the operation of their program areas by relevant civil and criminal laws, institutional policies, and any contractual commitments. The particular areas of the law that career services **must** be aware of and seek advice about from legal counsel are:

- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, regarding disclosure of student information contained in education records;
- Defamation law, regarding references and recommendations on the behalf of students;
- Equal employment opportunity laws, regarding employment referral practices of the career services office and others employed by the institution that refer students for employment;
- Affirmative action regulations and law, regarding special programs for minority students;
- Laws regarding eligibility to work in the United States; and
- Any other state or federal employment or student related statute.

Career services staff members **must** use appropriate policies and practices to protect students and limit the liability exposure of the institution, its officers, employees, and agents. In this regard, the institution must provide access to legal advice for professional staff as needed to carry out assigned responsibilities. The institution must inform career services in a timely fashion about extraordinary or changing legal obligations and potential liabilities.

IX. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, ACCESS, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, AND DIVERSITY

Career services **must** adhere to the spirit and intent of equal opportunity laws in all activities. Career services' operating policies and procedures **must** not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or veteran status. To the extent permitted by the institution's budgetary resources, all career services programs and facilities **must** be accessible to special student populations. Likewise, hours of operation **should** respond to the needs of special populations. Special student populations include traditionally under-represented, disabled, evening, part-time and commuter students. Career services **must** seek to identify, prevent, and/or remedy any discriminatory practices associated with the delivery of its services. Accordingly, career services staff **must** serve as advocates in bringing the needs of special populations to the attention of the institution's administration through resource requests.

In addition, efforts **should** be made to ensure that employers that use career services adhere to the word and spirit of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. Career services staff **should** make every effort to inform or educate faculty members about issues relevant to discriminatory practices related to their referral of students directly to employers.

Career services **should** work in conjunction with the institution's special services and minority organizations to enhance students' awareness and appreciation of cultural and ethnic differences. Collaborating departments and minority organizations **should** provide educational programs that help minority students, multicultural students, and individuals with disabilities to identify and address their unique needs related to career development and employment, to the degree permitted by numbers of students, facilities, and resources. Career services **should** initiate partnerships and cooperative programming with other offices representing special populations to ensure appropriate service delivery.

X. ETHICS

All persons involved in providing career services to students **must** maintain the highest standards of ethical behavior as set forth in the "Career Services Professionals" section of the National Association of Colleges and Employers' *Principles for Professional Conduct*. In addition to adherence to these standards, leaders/managers **should** proactively provide guidance and education on these standards to all persons involved in providing career services, including, but not limited to, entry-level professionals, support staff, student staff, interns, graduate assistants, faculty, and other administrators.

In addition, all individuals providing career services **must** adhere to the following ethical obligations:

- Staff members **must** be aware of and comply with the provisions contained in the institution's human research policy and in any other institutional policy addressing ethical practice.
- Whenever handling funds, all staff **must** ensure that such funds are handled in accordance with established and responsible accounting procedures.
- Referral of an employed graduate to another employer **must** be preceded by that person's request for referral.
- Staff members **must** refrain from any form of sexual harassment, as defined by school policy.

XI. RESEARCH, ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION

Systematic qualitative and quantitative evaluations of program quality **must** be conducted in order to determine whether and to what degree the stated mission and goals are being met. Although methods of assessment vary, a sufficient range of measures must be employed to maintain objectivity and comprehensiveness. Data collected **should** include responses from students, employers and other affected constituencies.

Results of these evaluations **must** be documented and used in revising and improving programs, services, and staff performance. In order for institutions to employ comparable methods of evaluation, resources such as the NACE *Sourcebook for Conducting Evaluation and Measurements of Career Services* **should** be consulted. Offices **should** collaborate with institutional research units, state agencies, accrediting bodies, and other evaluative groups that generate and assess evaluation information.

Evaluations **should** include:

- Review of the strategic plan, mission, human resources needs, diversity efforts, and other areas covered in this document;
- Systematic needs assessment to guide program development; and
- Reports and satisfaction surveys from students and other constituencies interacting with career services such as employers, faculty, and four-year colleges and universities.

Career services **should** prepare and disseminate annual and special reports, including career services philosophy, goals, and objectives, current programs and services and service delivery information.