

A Study Benchmarking
Career Services
at Public Two-Year Colleges

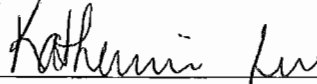
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ABSTRACT

Preparing for employment is one reason to attend a Wisconsin Technical College. Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), one of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges, offers career services and programs to students, recent graduates, and alumni. This research used benchmarking to determine how the career services and programs offered at two-year public colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota compared to each other. The researcher reviewed literature to find typical characteristics of a career services center, what services and programs are commonly provided, and how career services centers address the issues they are faced with. The researcher surveyed 46 career services professionals in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MNSCU). Similar surveys have been completed previously by NACE, the National Association of Colleges and Employers. The researcher collected demographic data, and specific information about career fairs, programs and services offered, and databases to track job postings, recent graduates, and employers. The

results of the 32-question survey were evaluated using descriptive statistics. Because CVTC wanted to enhance the career services being offered, several recommendations were provided to the college. It was recommended first that CVTC change their title from Student Employment Services to Career Services, as Career Services is the most common title used.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The variety and quality of programs, the expert faculty, staff and counselors, and outstanding facilities and flexible course delivery make a technical college education uniquely valuable for students, employers and communities alike. Wisconsin's Technical Colleges provide education for many high-skill jobs within the state and prepare students for careers required by today's technology-based economy. Preparing for employment continues to be the top reason for attending a Wisconsin Technical College. According to the 2007 Graduate Follow-Up Report, 36% of respondents said the reason they enrolled was to prepare for employment (WTCS, 2008). Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), located in Eau Claire, is one of the 16 colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). CVTC has a total of five campuses: Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Menomonie, Neillsville, and River Falls.

The WTCS has a long history of conducting employer satisfaction surveys and graduate employment surveys to assess program success. The Wisconsin's Technical Colleges Guidebook 2008-2009 indicates that 92% of students get jobs within six months of graduation. More than 90% of CVTC graduates are employed, most in their chosen field, within six months of graduation (Bressler & Mahaffey, 1998).

When most people hear the title Career Services within higher education, they think of it as a place where students go (or are referred) in the final semester of college when it becomes apparent that a "real job" is in their near future (Rayman, 1993). However, the field of career services is unsettled about how to describe itself. The researcher found references to Student Employment Services, Career Services, Job Placement Office, and Career Resource Center, among others. The terminology is often used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used career services. The most common service offered by career services is job

placement; however, placement is a very small part of what goes on in career services. Some comprehensive career services centers devote up to 60% of professional staff time to the functions of counseling and programming, while the remaining 40% is spent assisting students with the task of finding their initial job (Rayman).

Career services exist to provide students, recent graduates, alumni, and employers with programs and services to meet their employment needs. Statistics show that career services have an impact on student retention and job placement rates. Each college within the WTCS operates their career services independently, using a variety of programs and services. The WTCS does not have system-wide programs and services, other than the Wisconsin TechConnect website and the Graduate Follow-Up Survey, to establish consistency and uniformity in the level of services provided to students. Furthermore, there are no standards set for developing benchmarks and evaluative measures for these services.

Currently, Career Services at CVTC is supervised by the Student Support Specialist, who reports to the Vice President of Student Services. A Dean of Students was hired in 2007 to lead the student services team. In 2009, the Dean of Students was promoted to Vice President of Student Services. The Vice President of Student Services oversees counseling, academic learning, student life, disability and diversity services, the library, and enrollment services. Appendix A is the organizational chart for Chippewa Valley Technical College.

Previously, the duties within Career Services were handled by one member of CVTC support staff; this was a small portion of their job duties. As of 2007, the duties within Career Services have spread to three employees, all CVTC support staff, with the Student Support Specialist as their supervisor. The three support staff members are Enrollment Assistants. Primarily, CVTC Enrollment Assistants meet with prospective students to discuss many aspects

of enrolling: admissions, registration, and financial aid. Even with the increases in personnel, Career Services is still only a small portion of their job duties. CVTC has not recently changed its programs and services within Career Services.

Statement of the Problem

A college's most important role is to prepare its students for a career. The tight employment market is causing higher education institutions to put a greater emphasis on the career services that are offered to their students, graduates, alumni, and the community. The strategic plan for Chippewa Valley Technical College includes goals to meet the employment needs of the region and recognize the changing student educational needs. Looking at programs, services, staffing, and other aspects of Career Services is an integral part of this plan.

Purpose of the Study

This study looked at career services in the Wisconsin Technical College System and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MNSCU). The MNSCU system includes all of the public colleges and universities in the state, except the University of Minnesota. Benchmarking the services and programs other two-year colleges are offering within career services was the main purpose. There are benefits to having a career services center at every two-year college. A national survey by Eduventures, a consulting firm, found in late 2006 that entering students considered professional preparation the most important factor in assessing the value of their college degree. In 2007, the Princeton Review introduced a new ranking: best career services (Lipka, 2008). Tuition and student-loan debt have risen to record levels, while the economy has slowed. Economic conditions, public expectations, and a greater emphasis on student success have pressed many colleges to increase their career services (Lipka). Because retaining students is critical, offering career services is another way to increase student retention

and job placement rates. One goal of the researcher was to gather information about the career services offered by two-year colleges. Another goal of the researcher was to recommend ways to implement career services and programs at CVTC.

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that all two-year colleges offer career services, to some extent, to their students. The second assumption is that students are going into a career and into the labor market once they graduate. It is assumed that the need for career services at two-year colleges will continue. The study assumes that the word “career services” is used in a broad sense; it is the generic term the researcher uses for the department or office. This study assumes that the public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota are representative of all two-year colleges.

Definition of Terms

Career development. In higher education, career development is a component of career services that focuses on the life stages of students and how those decisions impact their college careers (Rayman, 1993).

Career fair. A career fair is generally characterized as events open to all students as a way for them to find out more about various employment opportunities. A career fair’s purpose is for employers to provide career information rather than find candidates for current openings. Employers participating are representing their profession, not necessarily their employer (McGrath, 2002).

Career services. In higher education, Career Services is the comprehensive department that includes career counseling, job placement, and career development, among other areas. The researcher used this term interchangeably with Placement Services, Career Resource Center, Career Services Center, and Student Employment Services, among others.

ISEEK. ISEEK is the Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge. It is Minnesota's web-based gateway to career, education, employment and business information and services. The ISEEK website at www.iseek.org provides information on exploring careers, planning your education, finding a job, and growing your business (ISEEK, 2009).

Job fair. A job fair is targeted toward graduating students looking for employment within their field after graduation (McGrath, 2002).

Job placement. In higher education, job placement is a component of career services that focuses on placing students, graduates, and alumni into jobs that match their abilities (Stewart, 1993).

Job placement rate. A job placement rate is the percentage of most recent graduates responding to the graduate follow up survey, in the labor market and reporting training related to employment (WTCS, 2008).

MNSCU. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system includes 25 two-year colleges and seven state universities. MNSCU is the largest single provider of higher education in the state of Minnesota. The MNSCU website at www.mnscu.edu provides information for students, business and industry professionals, and the media (MNSCU, 2009).

NACE. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), established in 1956, is the professional association connecting career services professionals at colleges and universities to staffing professionals focused on college relations and recruiting. NACE is the leading source of information on the recruitment and employment of new college graduates (NACE, 2008).

Student employment services. Some of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities use the term Student Employment Services as the department

that provides job placement, resume assistance, and employment counseling to students, graduates, and alumni.

Wisconsin TechConnect. The website of Wisconsin TechConnect is www.wisconsintechconnect.com and it is where employers post jobs for free and Wisconsin Technical College students look at any of the jobs posted. This website is monitored by the Student Employment Services staff.

Limitations of the Study

The intention of this study is to benchmark what services CVTC is currently offering through Career Services with what other public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota are offering. One goal is to recommend the next steps to develop and implement changes to Career Services. It is not the researcher's intention to change how the College operates, but to give recommendations to the Vice President of Student Services. This study is limited and representative of two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. This study does not attempt to predict the successfulness of a new Career Services Center. It does not determine or evaluate the effectiveness of career services and programs currently being offered at CVTC.

Methodology

To evaluate career services, the researcher used several measures. First, the researcher surveyed career services professionals at the public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota to determine their perceptions with regards to programs and services. Next, the researcher compared CVTC's programs and services offered by career services to others in the WTCS and MNSCU. A goal was to recommend ways to implement career services and programs at CVTC.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature has shown the development of career services within higher education throughout the years. Career services focus on their placement rate because students compare graduate placement rates when they are looking at colleges. Many institutions of higher education are in a budget crisis, which has impact on career services. Another issue is that student loan debt is on the rise. Career services centers have developed ways to address these issues. The literature was compiled to provide common characteristics of a typical career services center. In addition, benchmark surveys have been completed over the past ten years to show the changes with services and programs being offered.

History of Career Services within Higher Education

Career services has emerged over the last several decades to become a more visible and fundamental department within higher education institutions. Career services has evolved from a single-purpose administrative unit offering very few placement services to a comprehensive career services center providing a wide variety of career services to students, graduates, alumni, and employers (Rayman, 1993). The role of career services is changing and in some cases, the title of the department is changing as well. The focus used to be on placement services, but offices are becoming more widespread with the programs and services they offer not only to recent graduates, but to alumni and the community.

Changing role of a college degree. Before the 1970s, earning a college degree almost assured the graduate of a good job with good pay (McGrath, 2002). In the early 1970s, the slower economic growth and increase in the number of college graduates argued with the previous assumption. In the mid 1970s, college enrollment declined and colleges became more

concerned with matriculating their students (McGrath). Prospective students began considering graduate placement rate and career services when selecting a college (McGrath).

Focusing on job placement. In the early 1980s, the focus of most career centers was on career development, counseling and planning (Rayman, 1993). “In the mid 1980s, demand for entry-level professional employees in the fields of engineering, science, and business was running at all-time high levels” (Rayman, p. 3). Since there was a high demand for college graduates, many colleges focused on the job placement function. Because of the recession in the 1990s, college-educated employees were laid off from their jobs; this created competition between the laid-off employee with a college education and five to ten years of solid work experience and the recent graduate (Rayman). Very qualified current graduates found themselves competing with experienced professionals for entry-level jobs.

Changing role of career services. While career services centers vary in size, mission, and organizational structure, the trend is toward greater capacity of programs and services, more personnel, and a more comprehensive mission. To reflect these changes, most career services offices have changed their names to Career Development and Placement Services, Career Planning and Placement Services, or Career Services (Rayman, 1993). According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), Career Services is the most common title (NACE, 2006). Unfortunately, in many institutions the title change has signaled little change in actual function.

In some cases, the emphasis was on getting the right student in the right room at the right time with the right employer (Rayman, 1993). In other cases, career centers expanded their services to include career planning programs for first and second-year students and prospective students. Other centers developed programs of career assistance for alumni throughout their

career and broadened their services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body (Rayman). Academic advising and career development were becoming increasingly intertwined with each other (Rayman). In addition, the career services department became the college's primary contact for employers interested in hiring its graduates (McGrath, 2002).

Current Issues Affecting Career Services

In the tight economy, organizations struggle to keep within their budgets. The economy has impacted competition between new graduates and workers with years of experience. In addition, a college's development office sees career services as a way to secure gifts and grants for the college. As tuition rises, the average debt that students acquire from college increases. Student diversity and changes in student population, as well as technology, also affect career services.

Budget cuts for organizations and higher education institutions. Businesses have been and are still "rightsizing" or downsizing. Most Fortune 500 companies are downsizing, flattening their organizations by minimizing the layers of management, and becoming "lean and mean" (Rayman, p. 4). As corporations cut personnel and benefits, the employee needs to assume responsibility for finding themselves a new job or career. This places greater demands on the staff of career services and college administrators to equip college graduates and alumni with skills relating to finding employment (Rayman).

Many colleges are also in a serious financial crisis. Career services have become and will continue to be targets for funding reductions, both in resources and staff, even though other economic and social forces suggest that career services should be expanded (Rayman, 1993). Career services operating budgets may be insufficient to providing the necessary programs and services (McGrath, 2002). Some colleges have started to charge students and employers fees for

the career services as a way to generate revenue. Since career centers maintain a relationship with employers, it is not unusual for the college's development office to approach career services for help with identifying and soliciting employers for donations (McGrath). If an employer has been successful in hiring a number of graduates from a college, it is assumed that they would be a candidate for a monetary contribution.

Student loan debt is increasing. The cost of college tuition and student loan debt has risen, contributing to the concern among students and their parents about the economic impact of a college education (McGrath, 2002). In 2006, the average tuition at two-year colleges was \$2,272, which was up from \$1,899 in 1996 and \$1,227 in 1986 (Draut, 2007). Almost two-thirds of students have to borrow money to go to college and some students use credit cards to help pay for college (Berfield, 2005). Today, nearly two-thirds of graduates have student loan debt (Draut). This debt places enormous pressure on students to make career decisions based more on immediate job opportunities and high starting salaries.

Diversity brings about challenges to career services. "Student populations are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnic identity, levels of academic preparedness, and reasons for attending college" (Bryant, p. 25). As the student body becomes more diverse, programs and services offered by career centers will change. Many minority students are first-generation college students. They have limited knowledge and experience dealing with job hunting and often need different, and possibly additional, assistance with finding a job. The task of providing the needs of returning adult students, disabled students, and other special populations will be a challenge (Rayman, 1993). When career services enhances the programs and services to meet the needs of special interest groups, the enhancements are likely to improve the quality of programs and services to all (Rayman, 1999). Rayman (1999) stated that "we do the right thing by reaching

out to our special populations, and we do things right by enhancing our relevance and effectiveness for all students” (p. 180).

Technology impacts career services. Technology has been incorporated into career services operations. Career counselors use software to give career assessments and aid students in searching for career information. Students often times research prospective employers electronically and employers have realized the importance of eye-catching and informative company websites (McGrath, 2002). According to Nagle and Bohovich (as cited in McGrath, 2002) technology has made communication easier between students and employers, but it has also required a large investment in equipment and staff with technical expertise for career services.

Means to Addressing the Current Issues Affecting Career Services

Career services centers have come up with ways to address the fiscal constraints, diversity, student debt, and technology. There are many ways to enhance the career development of students. A typical career services center offers a variety of programs and has seven core functions.

Services and programs common to career services. Two-year colleges most commonly offer the following programs and services: career fairs, career planning workshops, classroom presentations, job websites, and career advisement and counseling. Wisconsin TechConnect is the online job board exclusively for Wisconsin Technical College students, graduates, and alumni.

Offer programming within career services. Programming plays a critical role in the success of a career services center (Yerian, 1993). Programs ranging from needs assessment and programming for the majority, to programming for special populations, to program evaluation

needs to be offered. Yerian surveyed career center directors and gave many programming ideas based on the survey responses (Yerian).

Seven core functions of a career services center. College students, whether it is prospective students or graduates, need assistance with the career development process. There are seven core functions of a comprehensive career services center, but not every college can provide all of those services (Rayman, 1993). For that reason, the services are listed in their order of importance. Career centers that can deliver all of the services are more likely to be successful. Centers that cannot provide all seven services ought to at least provide those at the top of the list. The seven functions include: career planning and counseling, placement, career programming, information support, communications, training, and assessment and research (Rayman).

1. Career planning and counseling provides one-on-one career counseling, career planning workshops and seminars, and aptitude and interest surveys. It provides group career counseling, credit courses, and workshops for alumni.
2. Placement provides one-on-one assistance with resume and cover letter writing, skill development workshops and seminars, and coordinates career fairs and on-campus recruiting. The library of employer information is included in this function.
3. Career programming provides outreach programs, workshops, and seminars on special topics.
4. Information support provides worksheets, handouts, and brochures regarding the services and programs offered. This function sends graduate follow-up surveys and employer surveys and reports that information.

5. Communications handles all communications for the department. Developing the annual report, brochures, newsletters, and placement manual are some duties of the communications function.
6. Training takes place for all career services center employees including: work-study students, volunteers and alumni, interns and practicum students, and graduate assistants.
7. Assessment and research coordinates the annual graduate follow-up surveys and publishes periodic evaluations of individual services within the department.

Career Services Benchmark Surveys

Several surveys have been completed with two-year colleges and career services. The surveys were sent in the mail to the career services professionals. The results were utilized by other career services professionals to benchmark the services provided to students and alumni. NACE is the organization that supports, delivers, and compiles the results for several of these surveys.

Career Services Survey of 10 Midwest States, 1998. In July 1998, Alfred Waters mailed a survey to career services and placement offices within the Midwest. The survey focused on staffing, practices, services, and other aspects of career centers; the response rate was 61%. The respondents indicated a wide range of services and programs offered to students including: career classes, job fairs, interviewing, job-searching, and resume programs. At least 50% of the respondents indicated an increase in interest/demand for these services and programs (Waters, 1999).

NACE Career Services Benchmark Survey, 1998. This benchmark survey reported information on facilities, finances, and staffing for career services' offices. This survey was

mailed to NACE members; the response rate was 34% (NACE, 1999). Those results indicated that staffing had increased in career centers. No respondents reported that the director was the entire staff, unlike 3.3% of the respondents to the *1997 Career Services Survey*. Both of these benchmark surveys included two-year colleges and four-year colleges and universities. In 2005, to provide two-year colleges with benchmarks that better reflected their needs, NACE decided to permanently separate benchmark surveys for two-year colleges from four-year colleges and universities (NACE, 2006).

NACE Career Services Benchmark Survey for Two-Year Colleges, 2005. NACE's first Career Services Benchmark Survey for Two-Year Colleges was evaluated in 2005. The overall response rate was 31.1%. This survey indicated several statistics regarding the office structure of the responding colleges. More than 25% of the respondents reported to the Dean of Students. The most common department title was Career Services. The researcher uses Career Services interchangeably with Student Employment Services. Student Employment Services is the more common term used in the Wisconsin Technical College System. According to the survey respondents, Table 1 compares the average number of staff in an average college in 2005 and 2008 (NACE, 2005 and 2008).

Table 1. Staffing within Career Services

Average number of staff	2005	2008
Full-time professional staff	2.2	3
Part-time professional staff	2.1	1.7
Full-time support staff	1.4	2.2
Part-time support staff	2.5	4.9

NACE Career Services Benchmark Survey for Two-Year Colleges, 2008. Another survey was evaluated in 2008 with benchmarking Career Services for two-year colleges (NACE, 2008). The survey was sent to 371 NACE two-year college members. Of those surveys sent, 122 or 32.9% responded. The results of this survey indicated that classroom presentations, career outreach programs, career fairs, career advising, and services to alumni are the five most commonly offered services among the respondents. Almost 75% of the respondents indicated that their college provides services to campuses other than the main campus, and more than 75% provide services to members of their community. Overall, 85.2% of respondents have full-time professional staff members in their office and 31.1% have part-time professional staff members. Table 1 shows the average number of staff in 2005 compared to 2008. Staff in a support role is most common on a part-time basis, but many of the respondents indicated full-time support staff in their office as well.

In summary, the literature shows the changes that have been made to career services within higher education throughout the years. Career services previously focused on their placement rate, but there is so much more to consider. Career services centers are impacted by the budget crisis that affects many institutions of higher education. Career services centers have developed ways to address these issues. The literature provides characteristics of a typical career services center and examples of previous NACE surveys.

Chapter III: Methodology

Higher education institutions put a big emphasis on career services offered to their students, graduates, alumni, and the community. The strategic plan for Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) includes goals to meet the employment needs of the region and recognize the changing student educational needs. CVTC hopes to increase programs, services, staffing, and other aspects of Career Services as part of the strategic plan. The researcher surveyed all 16 colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and all 30 two-year colleges within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system to determine the characteristics of the career services center and what services and programs are provided. The 32-question survey was developed using previous career services surveys and data the researcher gathered. The link to the SurveyMonkey survey was emailed to 46 career services professionals. The survey results were analyzed, evaluated, and benchmarked for the purpose of developing the department at CVTC.

Subject Selection and Description

The researcher chose to survey one career services professional at each of the WTCS and MNSCU two-year colleges. The researcher visited each of the college's websites to find a contact person for Career Services. A majority of the colleges surveyed have more than one campus location; however, only one person was surveyed from each college. The survey website link was sent via email to 46 career services professionals at public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The professionals who received the survey work in Career Services at the college. One person from each college campus was asked to complete the survey. The entire population was the sample size.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed the survey based on previous NACE Career Services surveys for two-year colleges. After completing the literature review, the researcher had other helpful data to create more questions. Some questions were adopted from a 1998 Midwest career services survey, others from NACE surveys, and others were constructed by the researcher. The researcher requested a copy of the NACE 2008 Career Services Benchmarking Survey – Two Year Schools from NACE. This survey was categorized into five sections: general information, services, staffing, budget and finance, and technology. The researcher adopted questions from the general information and services categories.

The goal of the survey was to benchmark the career programs and services other public two-year colleges are offering. The analyzed results were used to provide information to CVTC to assist with enhancing the Career Services department, currently called Student Employment Services, within Student Services. The researcher asked several open-ended questions to reiterate on the closed-ended questions. The researcher chose to use several demographic questions to determine the characteristics of the responding colleges. The researcher created five questions regarding career fairs and four questions regarding the graduate follow-up study. The researcher also asked questions about a resume system or database, a job listing service, and employers recruiting on campus. One question asked about the future of career services and what it is expected to look like in the next 5-10 years. The questions developed were crucial to getting the results necessary for CVTC to enhance their career services.

The researcher gave the survey to three career services professionals to review. The reviewers provided feedback so the researcher made adjustments before sending the final survey. J. Goodman (personal communication, March 31, 2009) indicated that Career Services Offices

have a hot button when it comes to providing career assistance to alumni; this is because Career Services is the only office at any college that is asked to provide any services to alumni. She indicated that it becomes an issue because they are not typically allocated additional budget dollars or additional personnel to work with the alumni. More recently, in the economic downfall, alumni have requested more career assistance as the unemployment rate has increased. Goodman suggested the survey include questions to differentiate between the services provided to alumni and those provided to students. Another suggestion was to determine if alumni are charged for the use of career services.

Appendix B is the Career Services Survey. The survey was developed within SurveyMonkey, the online survey software to assist with creating and analyzing surveys. The SurveyMonkey website is www.surveymonkey.com. Within SurveyMonkey, the researcher was able to customize the type of questions used and arrange the questions in an order that was appropriate. The researcher began with demographic questions, and continued on with questions about the services provided, career fairs, the graduate follow-up study, and systems used to automate the department.

Data Collection Procedures

A 32-question survey was administered to career services professionals within the 16 Wisconsin Technical Colleges and 30 two-year colleges within the MNSCU system. The goal of the survey was to determine what the Wisconsin Technical Colleges and Minnesota State Colleges are doing with regards to career services and benchmarking their data to determine best practices. The researcher emailed one person at each of the colleges to verify that they work in Career Services and are one of the appropriate people to be sent the survey. Appendix C is the Introductory Email that was sent. This email explained the researcher's charge. The researcher

wanted to verify that the survey would go to the appropriate person at the college. The researcher used implied consent and indicated in an introductory email sent blind carbon copy that their participation is entirely voluntary and if they choose not to participate, there are not any consequences. The introductory email introduced the researcher and explained that in a few days they will receive a website link for the survey. Four days after the introductory email, another email was sent including the survey website link. The respondents were given ten days to respond to the data. Appendix D is the Email Including Survey that was sent. After the ten-day timeframe, all 46 career services professionals were sent an email reminding them to complete the survey if they had not already done so. After allowing two weeks to complete the survey, an email was sent to each individual requesting they complete the survey if they had not already. The results were anonymous, in that the researcher did not know who completed the survey. Participants were given an additional ten days to complete the online survey. Appendix E is the Reminder Email.

Data Analysis

Once the results were received, the researcher began data analysis. The results were reported in aggregate form; the institutions were not individually identified. The researcher did not know which career services professionals completed the survey, just the number of respondents. The results were compiled and several conclusions were drawn. The researcher created several tables comparing the data provided by the 25 respondents.

Limitations

The purpose of the survey is to benchmark what services are being provided in public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The online survey is a quantitative survey; many of the questions were closed-ended questions. This survey is not as thorough as a qualitative

survey is, but online surveys are easier to give as quantitative. This survey is not meant to implement change in how CVTC operates, but to give recommendations to the Vice President of Student Services. This study is limited and representative of two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota only; the sample size is small. Also, it does not evaluate the effectiveness of career services and programs currently being offered at CVTC.

Summary

There is an emphasis placed on career services offered at two-year colleges, especially with the current economic times with people going back to college to get a better job. CVTC expects to meet the employment needs of the region and recognize the changing educational needs of students. With this, the College may need to increase programs, services, staffing, and other aspects of Career Services as a result of this benchmarking survey. The researcher surveyed one career services professional in each of the 16 colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and 30 two-year colleges within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system. The 32-question survey was developed using previous career services surveys and data the researcher gathered. The link to the SurveyMonkey survey was emailed to 46 career services professionals, who were given several weeks to complete the survey. The results were analyzed and the responses were compared to each other. The results were used to help CVTC determine the most common practices in career services.

Chapter IV: Results

This benchmark study looked at career services in two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. A 32-question survey was emailed to 46 career services professionals in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system. The completion rate to this survey was 54.3%.

Item Analysis

The researcher compiled the results of the survey using SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey provided a response summary for each question, indicating the number of respondents and the percentage of respondents that chose each answer. Within SurveyMonkey, the researcher was given each answer to the open-ended questions. The question about services provided by career services or other departments is telling of the current organizational structure of each college.

Department name. The researcher included six survey questions to evaluate the population of the respondents and their particular college. Of the 25 respondents, 10 of them included “career” and five of them included “placement” in the name of their office or department; those two were the most common responses. Other responses included student services, employment, advising, and counseling. Six responses indicated student services as the department they work in. The results show that career services is the most commonly used term for the name of the office that assists students with finding employment when they graduate.

Number of employees. Forty percent of the respondents indicated that they were the only full-time employee in their department. Thirty-two percent of the respondents indicated there were between two and five full-time employees in their department. The remaining 28% of respondents had greater than seven full-time employees. The researcher concluded that the respondents indicating more than five employees in the department worked within Student

Services, not specifically Career Services. Forty-eight percent of the responses indicated that they did not have any part-time employees. Thirty-two percent of the responses indicated one part-time employee and 12% of responses indicated two part-time employees. Two responses had more than three part-time employees; those responses were provided by respondents that indicated Student Services as the name of their department.

Position titles. Two survey questions referred to position titles of the respondents and the person they report to. Of the 25 survey respondents, 11 of them indicated that they were the director of their department. The other responses included counselor, advisor, specialist, coordinator, dean, assistant, and instructor. Although career services professionals, at times, report to a college dean or associate dean, the majority of career services professionals report to student affairs. Forty percent of respondents indicated that they reported to one of the deans at their college. Of that 40%, a majority reported to the Dean of Student Services, Dean of Student Affairs, or Dean of Students. Three respondents report to the CEO, President, or Provost of the college. Since 44% of respondents were in a director role, very few of them reported to someone working in Career Services specifically.

Number of degree-seeking students. Table 2 below shows the percentage of respondents indicating the number of degree-seeking students they have taking credit classes at the college.

Table 2. Number of degree-seeking students

Number of degree-seeking students	Response Percent
0-1500	20%
1501-3000	36%
3001-4500	28%
4501-6000	4%
6001+	12%

Services provided. The majority of respondents, 79%, indicated that their college provides career services to all campus locations. The most important question in the survey was the question related to what services are provided. For each of the services, the respondents were to indicate if the service is currently being provided through Career Services, through another office/department, or not at all. Although each department of every college has clearly assigned responsibilities, they recognize their connections to other departments and all function within student services together. Table 3 below shows the responses for each of the services provided.

Table 3. Services provided by two-year colleges

Service Provided	Career Services	Another Office/Dept	Not Provided
Academic Advising	8.3%	91.7%	0.0%
Career Counseling	41.7%	58.3%	0.0%
Assistance with Internships	29.2%	62.5%	8.3%
Career Planning Workshops	50.0%	29.2%	20.8%
Job Search Workshops	75.0%	16.7%	8.3%
Classroom Presentations	78.3%	8.7%	13.0%
Career Classes	21.7%	69.6%	8.7%
Employer Information Sessions	56.5%	13.0%	30.4%
On-campus Interviewing	60.9%	13.0%	26.1%
Recruitment Tables	56.5%	21.7%	21.7%

For the majority of respondents, Career Services provides the following services: career planning workshops, job search workshops, classroom presentations, employer information sessions, on-campus interviewing, and recruitment tables. The following functions are within another office or department: academic advising, career counseling, assistance with internships, and career classes. More than 20% of respondents indicated that their college does not offer career planning workshops, employer information sessions, on-campus interviewing, or

recruitment tables. Of the survey respondents, 63% indicated that their college has a resource library and 37% indicated that their college does not have a resource library.

Graduate follow-up study. Survey participants were asked if their college has a procedure in place to measure the results of the programs and services offered by Career Services. Thirty-three percent of respondents indicated that they have a way to measure the results of the programs and services offered by Career Services whereas 67% do not. The most common procedure used to measure the impacts of Career Services is the graduate follow-up study. A couple respondents indicated that their college uses an institutional or departmental assessment, but no further details were given.

If the college conducts a graduate follow-up survey, the researcher asked how many months after graduation the survey is conducted. Several of the colleges surveyed indicated that their graduate follow-up survey is ongoing; it is sent out several times a year. Several other colleges indicated that they send the survey to graduates after six months, one year, and five years. Over 40% of respondents indicated that they send the survey approximately six months after graduation. Over 20% indicated that they send it out three months after graduation.

The graduate follow-up survey results are used to determine the graduate placement rate. Of the respondents that gave a specific placement rate or percentage, all but two indicated that their college had a placement rate above 80%. Of those, 82% of respondents indicated a placement rate above 90%. The placement rate is based only on the graduate follow-up survey respondents; it does not take into consideration the graduates that did not respond to the follow-up survey.

Career fairs. The researcher included five questions in the survey regarding career fairs. Not all colleges that participated in the survey hosted career fairs. Career fairs are hosted by 79%

of colleges that responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 21% do not host career fairs at their college. For those colleges that host career fairs, the overwhelming majority indicated that they host one or two fairs each year. Forty percent of respondents indicated that their college hosts one fair each year and 55% indicated that their college hosts two fairs each year. Five percent, or one college, hosted four career fairs over the past year.

One respondent indicated their college does not host career fairs because they have employer presentations and interviews on campus instead. The average number of employers recruiting at each college annually varies. Several respondents indicated 10 or less employers recruiting at their college, not including career fairs. Other respondents indicated up to 150 employers each year, including career fairs.

All of the survey respondents indicated that career fairs are free for students. Forty-two percent of respondents indicated that their college charges employers to attend career fairs. The remaining 58% indicated that they do not charge employers to attend. Of the 42% of respondents that charge a fee for employers, the fee ranged from \$20 to \$160. The practice of charging employers fees to recover the costs of room rentals, parking, food, and publicity to participate in job fairs is acceptable practice; however a majority of WTCS and MNSCU colleges do not charge employers.

Career services for alumni. A large majority, 88%, of respondents indicated that they provide the same services to alumni as they do for students. Twelve percent of respondents, which included 3 respondents, indicated that the programs and services differ. One respondent indicated that they provide services for graduates only for one year after they graduate. Another respondent noted that they do not provide any career services to alumni. All of the respondents indicated that they provide career services to alumni for free. Of the respondents, 37% indicated

that they provide career services to community members and 63% indicated that their college does not provide career services to community members.

Using a resume database. The researcher asked the survey participants if their college uses a resume system or database. Seventy-nine percent of respondents, 19 respondents, indicated that they do not use a resume system or database for career services whereas the other 21%, five respondents, do use a resume system. Of the five respondents that use a resume system, the systems used include: Efolio, Symplicity (an online job posting system), and Interface. Three of the five respondents indicated that employers had access to their resume system or database.

Listing and posting jobs. Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated that their college uses a job listing service; 21% do not use a job listing service. Of those that use a job listing service, all of the respondents use a type of web-based job listing service. Many of the respondents use Wisconsin TechConnect, which is the standard system that all WTCS students have access to. Two colleges use Symplicity and one uses Interface. Several colleges have job postings on their college's website or use their own service developed in-house. Others refer to their local Workforce Resource Center for job postings.

Future of career services. The researcher asked the question: From your perspective, where do you see career services within the next 5-10 years? There were 17 respondents who commented on the future of career services. General themes included the following topics: increased need for career services caused by the economic recession, more outsourcing is possible as college budgets are reduced, and more web-based or online services being provided. In some ways, the recession has made people more aware of the importance of career services. Hopefully, the need for career services will continue to grow. With all the time and money

students spend on getting an education, they deserve some kind of career and job assistance from the college, including job placement. Several respondents hope to see career services being integrated into college curriculum, starting with career planning and continuing to helping students find internships and jobs. Several respondents would like to see more outreach to the community and employers.

As college budgets are being cut, some respondents expect that career services may be outsourced. It appears that many campuses are downsizing their career services due to budget and yet from a technical college standpoint, there should be more emphasis put on the importance of providing job search advising and assistance. There is talk of outsourcing career services because it would be cheaper for the colleges. Another trend may include Workforce Resource Centers joining with colleges and being located on college campuses. One respondent expects that career services will be handled exclusively by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development within the next 5-10 years.

Another trend within the future of career services is to provide more web-based or online services. Many of the respondents expect online services to increase and more correspondence take place through the college and employer websites. The need for expanded career services websites may also become necessary. Several respondents indicated that linking job search engines, employer websites, and other links to the career services website would be very beneficial. Email may also become more readily utilized with career service professionals as a way to communicate with students, graduates, and employers. The comments on the future of career services are telling of the current economic times and trend towards the use of more technology.

Chapter V: Discussion

One goal of Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) is to enhance career services offered to students and graduates. The researcher developed an online survey and sent it to career services professionals at the public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The results of the survey were used to determine best practices for CVTC. There were limitations to the results however many recommendations came about from the results. The researcher provided conclusions after comparing the literature review and survey results and provided recommendations for the Vice President of Student Services at CVTC.

Limitations

It is not the researcher's intention to change how CVTC operates, but to give recommendations to the Vice President of Student Services. This study is representative only of public two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota, so the sample size is small. This study does not attempt to predict the successfulness of Career Services at CVTC. It does not determine or evaluate the effectiveness of career services and programs currently being offered at CVTC. The survey results are strictly used to compare CVTC to other colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) system. There are limitations in the results as well.

Since the researcher had to find the career services professionals that were going to participate using each college website, it was difficult to narrow down the most appropriate person to survey. Some college websites did not provide a contact person within Career Services. The survey results indicated that not all respondents worked specifically within Career Services. In the introductory email, the participants were asked to notify the researcher if they did not work in Career Services. Based on the responses, not all respondents worked in Career Services;

unfortunately, the participants did not contact the researcher to provide the appropriate person. A few of the results were skewed because of this.

Conclusions

The researcher found correlations in the literature review to the survey results. The literature and survey results both show that the title for a career services department is not very consistent. The title previously focused more on placement, but today, institutions are still indecisive on what they call themselves. However, the literature and survey results indicated that Career Services is the most commonly used term. Table 1 indicates that the staffing in career services has increased from 2005 to 2008; this may be because of a greater demand in services being provided. Several comments from the survey indicated that budgets for career services may be cut within the next 5-10 years; with budget cuts, it would be difficult to provide the services and programs necessary to meet the needs of a diverse student body.

Technology has impacted career services in a variety of ways. Technology has allowed students to do online career assessments, search for jobs, and view perspective employer websites. Technology has also allowed career services professionals to utilize Wisconsin TechConnect and other job listing websites to attract employers and students from across the state. Several colleges surveyed indicated that they use a resume database or system to track students.

The research stated that colleges most commonly offer career fairs, career planning workshops, classroom presentations, job websites, and career advisement and counseling. In comparison, the survey results showed that job search workshops, classroom presentations, employer information sessions, on-campus interviewing, and recruitment tables are commonly provided through Career Services.

The researcher concluded that the response rate may have been better if the introductory email stated less than 15 minutes to complete the survey. The 15 minutes may have deterred some participants from responding. The average person took less than 10 minutes to actually complete the online survey.

Recommendations

The researcher made several recommendations to CVTC. Based on the research and survey results, changes in practice were brought up to the Vice President of Student Services. The researcher recommends several changes according to the research and several changes according to the survey results. Further research may need to be completed as well, to gather more information on budgets within career services.

First and foremost, the researcher recommends that CVTC change the name of Student Employment Services to Career Services. The reason for this is that research and survey results show that Career Services is the most commonly used term. Another recommendation is to update and add more information to the Student Employment Services section on the CVTC website. While browsing other college websites for a Career Services contact person, the researcher found several pieces of information that could be added to the website. The researcher would like to see Career Services staff, contact information, and details about the services that are provided added to the website. The researcher recommends CVTC looks at the career services websites of other colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota for ideas.

The researcher recommends that CVTC joins the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Nine Wisconsin Technical Colleges are members of that organization. An organizational membership costs \$400 to join, but there are many benefits to joining NACE. Benefits include a quarterly salary survey, forecast of employer hiring expectations, the quarterly

NACE Journal, job search and career planning guides, biweekly newsletter, and full access to the members-only section of the website. The researcher recommends that CVTC adopts the Principles for Professional Conduct. The principles are designed to provide career services professionals with ways to implement career planning, placement, and recruitment.

The researcher recommends that CVTC provides career services to alumni. With the tough economic times, some graduates are not finding jobs and alumni are losing their jobs. When alumni are provided with services, they may be more likely to support the college long after they have graduated. One survey respondent recommended a way to correspond with recent graduates. This college requires students to fill out a survey, similar to the graduate follow-up survey, at the time of applying for graduation.

The researcher recommended a change to the current organizational structure of CVTC. Most of the colleges surveyed indicated that another office, most likely Counseling, does the majority of career counseling. Those counselors may also do academic advising. Because counselors play a variety of roles within the college, they may not be able to devote as much time to career counseling as academic advising takes priority. Another survey respondent recommends that counseling/career planning merges with career services.

Future Considerations

The researcher suggests that if CVTC were to use this survey, several changes should be considered. The researcher hoped to have all respondents from Career Services; however some respondents did not work directly in Career Services. If this survey were to be completed again, the researcher would contact each college directly via phone to retrieve the email address for a career services professional, instead of relying on each college website for that information. The

researcher would ask the respondents to provide the location of their employment, Wisconsin or Minnesota.

If the researcher would complete this study again, additional questions should be included. The researcher wanted to gather information about the graduate follow-up study: what questions are on the study, how the study is sent to recent graduates, and what office or department sends and evaluates the results. The researcher asked several questions pertaining to career services for alumni, but did not ask, "Does your college provide career services to alumni?"

If the researcher would conduct a similar study, some of the questions in this survey would be removed before conducting the next survey. The two questions pertaining to using a recruitment scheduling system would be removed; the colleges surveyed do not use a recruitment scheduling system.

If this survey would be sent out again, the researcher provided recommended changes to the wording of some questions. The two questions concerning the number of employees could include student workers in the numbers. The questions could be revised to, "How many employees, including student workers, are in Career Services?" The question about when the graduate follow-up survey is conducted could be revised as, "If you conduct a graduate follow-up survey, how many months after graduation do you first conduct the survey?" Many of the respondents to that question indicated each time that they send the graduate follow-up surveys. The respondents provided a wide variety of answers to the question regarding graduate placement rate. The question may be reworded to state, "What is your graduate placement rate for those employed in a related field?" The questions concerning career fairs should have used job in place of career. Job fairs focus on employers with specific job openings and on graduates

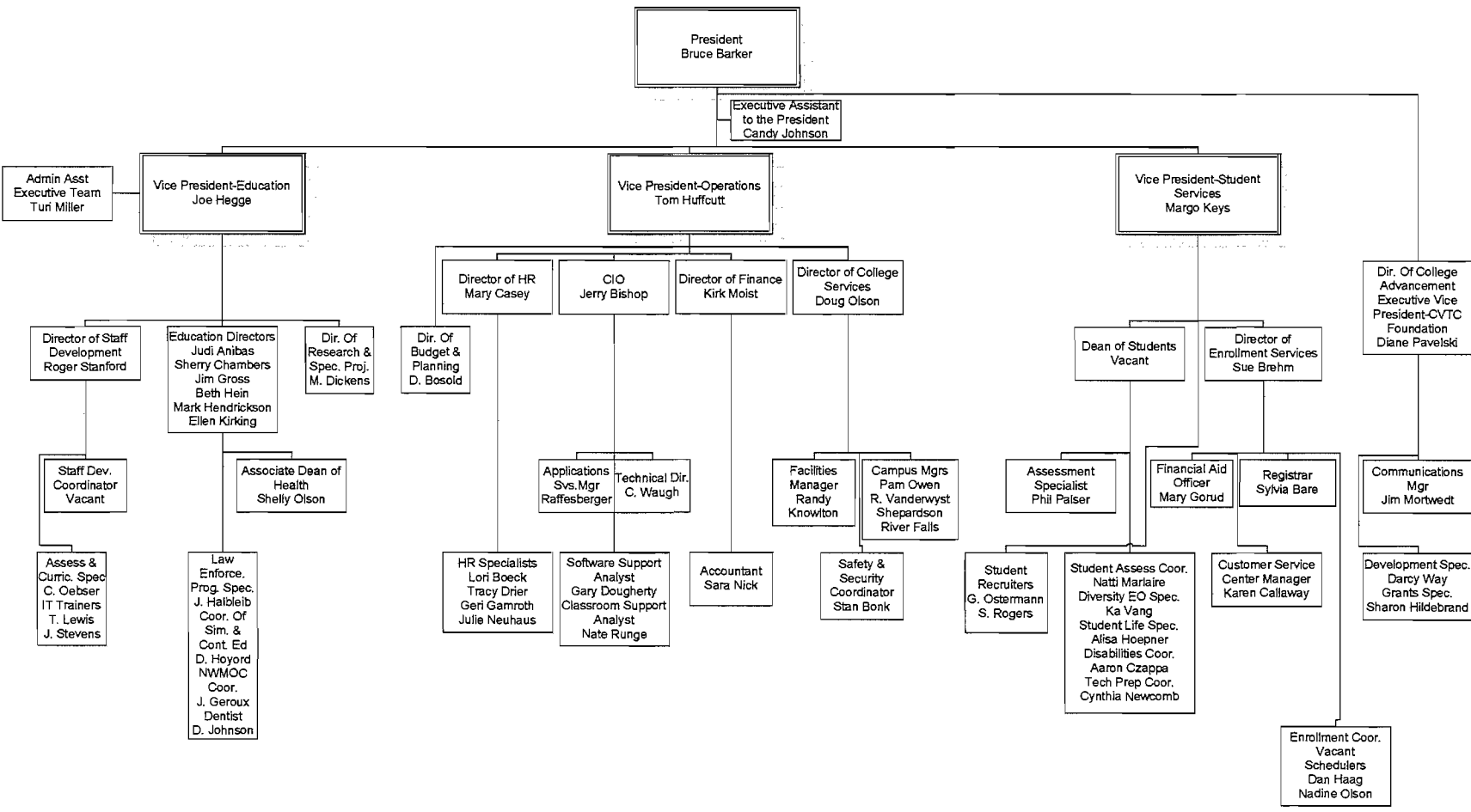
looking for those specific jobs. An addition to the question concerning employers recruiting on campus should specify if the number of employers includes those that attend jobs fairs or not.

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Appendix A: CVTC Organizational Chart



Appendix B: *Career Services Survey*

1. What is the name of the office or department you work in?
2. How many full-time employees are in your office/department?
3. How many part-time employees are in your office/department?
4. What is your current position title?
5. What is the position title of the person you report to?
6. Approximately, what is the total number of degree-seeking students taking credit classes at your college?
7. Does Career Services at your college have a resource library?
8. For each of the services below, please indicate if the service is currently being provided through Career Services, through another office/department, or not at all.
 - a. Academic Advising
 - b. Career Counseling
 - c. Assistance with Internships
 - d. Career Planning Workshops
 - e. Job Search Workshops (interviewing, resumes)
 - f. Classroom Presentations
 - g. Career Classes
 - h. Employer Information Sessions
 - i. On-campus Interviewing
 - j. Recruitment Tables (other than job fairs)
9. Do you have a procedure in place to measure the results of the programs and services offered by Career Services?

10. If yes, please describe the procedure(s) you follow for measuring these results.
11. Do you provide career services to all of the campus locations?
12. If you conduct a graduate follow-up survey, how many months after graduation do you conduct the survey?
13. What is your graduate placement rate?
14. Does your college host career fairs?
15. If yes, how many career fairs do you have each year?
16. Do students need to pay to attend career fairs hosted by your college?
17. Do employers need to pay to attend career fairs hosted by your college?
18. If yes, how much is the fee?
19. Does your college provide the same programs and services for alumni as they do for students?
20. If no, how do the programs and services differ between students and alumni?
21. Do you charge alumni a fee for career services?
22. If yes, how much is the fee?
23. Does your college offer career services to community members?
24. Does your college use a resume system/database?
25. If yes, which resume system/database(s) do you use?
26. If your college uses a resume system/database, do employers have access to that database?
27. Does your college use a job listing service?
28. If yes, which job listing service(s) do you use?
29. Does your college use a recruitment scheduling system?

30. If yes, which system(s) do you use?
31. What is the average annual number of employers recruiting at your college each year?
32. From your perspective, where do you see career services within the next 5-10 years?

Appendix C: Introductory Email

From: Bloom, Stacy L

Sent: Thu 3/26/2009 9:29 PM

Subject: Career Services Survey

Good evening,

I am a graduate student at UW-Stout and am doing my thesis on career services in two-year colleges. You have been selected to participate in an online survey. You will be receiving the link to this online survey via email within a few business days. The survey is to aid in a benchmark study of programs and services offered at two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Your response is very important in determining future needs of career services. Please respond to the survey with the information about your college. The survey should take only 15 minutes to complete. If you are not the contact person for Career Services at your college, please provide me with the email address of the person I can contact.

All responses will be anonymous. If you have any questions or need assistance, please email me at blooms@uwstout.edu.

Your time and participation in this survey are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Stacy Bloom

Graduate Student

Training & Development Program

Appendix D: *Email Including Survey*

From: Bloom, Stacy L

Sent: Tue 3/31/2009 11:04 PM

Subject: Career Services Survey

Good evening,

I am a graduate student at UW-Stout and doing my thesis on career services in two-year colleges. I am conducting a survey to identify benchmarks within career services and the programs offered at two-year colleges in Wisconsin and Minnesota. You have been selected to participate in my online survey and I value your comments.

Below is the link to the survey. I would appreciate if you would respond to the survey with the information about your college. The survey should take only 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please complete the survey by Friday, April 10, 2009. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used for data collection purposes only.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=abAHn_2bCTJK8buepfJAWhHA_3d_3d

Your responses are very important in determining future needs of career services. Your time and participation in this survey are greatly appreciated. If you would like a summary of the results, please send me an email with your request.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the survey, please email me at blooms@uwstout.edu. Thank you for your commitment to the profession of career services!

Sincerely,

Stacy Bloom

Graduate Student

Training & Development Program

Appendix E: Reminder Email

From: Bloom, Stacy L

Sent: Mon 4/13/2009 6:23 PM

Subject: Career Services Survey deadline extended

Good evening,

You received an online survey a couple weeks ago regarding career services at two-year colleges. Thank you to everyone who has taken time to complete the survey. If you have not already done so, the deadline to complete the survey has been extended to April 22, 2009. The information gathered from the survey results will be helpful in determining benchmarks for career services.

The results will be kept confidential. The survey link is below. Again, your input is essential to the success of this survey.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=abAHn_2bCTJK8buepfJAWhHA_3d_3d

Thank you in advance for your feedback.

Sincerely,

Stacy Bloom

Graduate Student

Training & Development