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JOB LOCATOR AND DEVELOPMENT: A MODEL PROGRAM

by Don L. Warrington and Debra L. Daly

INTRODUCTION

Inflation and the resulting increased costs of higher education in recent years have made it increasingly difficult for individuals to attend college. In response, Congress has expanded financial aid programs and appropriated additional monies to assist not only low-income students, but students from the middle-income *stratum* as well.

However, even with this increase in available federal assistance, a significant number of students seek additional or alternate income sources. One such source of income for students has been full or part-time seasonal work, i.e., summer jobs. Concurrently, there has been an increase in the number of college students who seek temporary and permanent part-time employment throughout the academic year. Post-secondary educational costs are expected to continue to escalate and it is anticipated that the "student as worker" trend will continue.

The need for students to engage in part-time employment to defray educational expenses was recognized in the Educational Amendments of 1976. Federal regulations ensuing from the legislation permit an institution to allocate a portion of its College Work-Study (CWS) funds to develop off-campus, part-time employment opportunities for all students regardless of their financial need (*Federal Register*, February 28, 1977).

This legislation and available funds led to the establishment of a unique and effective Job Locator and Development (JLD) Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO).

UNIVERSITY SETTING AND STUDENT PROFILE

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is centrally located within a metropolitan area of more than one-half million people. Greater Omaha supports an agri-business, light manufacturing and industrial environment, and is a major distribution center for retail products and services.

With an enrollment of 15,000 students, the University is a state supported, commuter institution which attracts both the recent high school graduate as well as the non-traditional, "worker as student" individual. Therefore, in addition to the University's traditional curricula, many academic programs are oriented to the needs of the metropolitan business community members. Extensive day and evening undergraduate and graduate classes as well as student development services are available to the diverse student population.

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Data collected from the Student Profile Section of ACT illustrate that in the past five (5) years the number of freshmen entering the University who seek and request assistance in obtaining part-time employment has increased six percent (6%). Recent surveys of the student population indicate that approximately seventy-five percent (75%) of the students are employed while attending the University. Eighty-three percent (83%) of those employed seek and obtain work on a part-time basis. Consequently, the development of off-campus, part-time employment opportunities is critical for students to enter and remain at the University.

PROGRAM GOALS

The JLD Program at UNO was established in January of 1978 and was designed to address two basic goals: 1) to identify and develop off-campus, temporary and permanent part-time employment opportunities and, 2) to assist students in securing part-time employment while attending the university. However, in addition to these primarily service-oriented functions, the program also encompasses an educational component through an integrated career development emphasis. Educationally, it serves as a vehicle by which students: 1) obtain insight into work and its meaning in life, 2) seek and identify potential career fields, 3) test the reality of career decisions by obtaining "hands on" work experience in a career field, 4) acquire technical skills and work experience in a career field, 5) develop effective job search skills and techniques, i.e., resume writing and interviewing skills, and 6) prepare to move from a part-time position to full-time career employment upon graduation.

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

The organizational alignment of a new program often can be a substantial factor in determining the program's future growth and total student impact. Therefore, the establishment of the JLD Program required extensive planning and discussion as to its proper organizational alignment within the institution.

Two basic questions were addressed by UNO: Should the Job Locator and Development Program be incorporated within an existing program or office such as Student Financial Aid, Career Placement Services, or the University's Personnel Department? And, should the Job Locator and Development Program be established as a separate organizational unit? To answer these questions effectively, advocates of the program considered the uniqueness of the University and its student and employer communities.

Placement of the JLD Program within the Financial Aid Office would be logical from an award monitoring standpoint; however, an organizational alignment of this nature might imply that the program was available only to students who qualified for financial aid. Consequently, to avoid student confusion and to accommodate the legal intent of the JLD legislation, the decision was made to align the program within the existing office of Career Placement Services. Another determining factor for placing the program within Career Placement Services was the decision to include the educational component, i.e., career development emphasis. Several other mutually beneficial aspects of this alignment were identified:

1) Increase student traffic in Career Placement Services to familiarize more students with the services and programs of the office at an early time in their educational program.

2) Provide the opportunity for Career Placement Service Staff to contact students at an early and appropriate point in their college program and thereby impact their career decision-making process.

3) Increase program effectiveness through utilization of existing staff expertise and office facilities.

4) Insure operational and procedural efficiency since part-time employment and full-time career placement functions are similar in nature and complement each other regarding staff activities and program monitoring functions, e.g., outreach to community employers; identifying and developing positions with employers; developing job descriptions and displaying jobs; candidate identification and referral; record keeping; EEO/Affirmative Action considerations and follow-up activities.

5) Provide students and community employers a "full service," "one-stop" employment service and avoid confusion associated with having similar functions located in separate offices on campus.

6) Provide a vehicle for formal cooperative education and academic internship development.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The JLD Program functions as a direct referral service. Detailed job descriptions are obtained from employers via the telephone, by mail, and through office visitations. Each position is categorized by one (1) of ten (10) job classifications and is assigned a position number on a job posting card. Job posting cards summarize the job title, duties, requested candidate skills or qualifications, salary, work hours, and general geographic location of the job. The name and phone number of the employer are not posted and remain confidential. Students refer to job posting boards conveniently located on campus which display all current and available positions.

This confidential or closed job listing system versus a non-confidential or open listing system requires students to visit the office and interview with a job counselor to obtain additional, pertinent job information (employer's name, address, specific duties) and to be referred to the employer.

Interviews are conducted on a walk-in or appointment basis. Students seeking employment record the number of the position (s) of interest and complete a brief registration form prior to being interviewed by a job counselor. During a typical half-hour interview period, the counselor discusses the position (s) of interest and assists the student in clarifying: general career interests and goals, special skills, financial needs, and available work hours. Additional positions which meet the needs of the student may also be discussed. Special emphasis is placed on identifying positions consistent with the student's academic and career field. (Presently, forty percent (40%) of all placements are in career-related positions). If a position is not identified, the student's name is recorded chronologically by academic major or skill area within a log book. Students are notified when positions matching their interest become available.

Counselors directly refer students to the employers of interest by calling and arranging a job interview. Students are referred to more than one interview if they desire. Each is given appointment reminder cards and asked to provide feedback as to the results of the job interview (s) .

If students do not secure the position (s) to which they are referred, the counselor will provide additional referrals until placement occurs. Counselors may further assist students to develop interview skills through role playing or other instructional means and provide positive reinforcement.

Several advantages of the direct referral system versus a self-referral system are noteworthy. Direct referral:

- provides an educational experience for the applicant through discussion of career goals.
- assists job seekers in self-assessment of interests, skills and qualifications.
- assists inexperienced job seekers to develop effective job search skills as well as to obtain actual job interviews.
- allows counselors to discuss the position (s) in detail and to prepare the applicant for job interviews.
- assures employers that all referred candidates will be university students.
- improves public relations with students and employers and encourages employers to update current listings and register new positions.
- saves employer time through pre-screening of applicants.
- provides for effective candidate referral follow-up and compilation of required program statistics.

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

Effective development and maintenance of a JLD Program which utilizes a confidential listing and direct referral system requires that major emphasis be placed upon selecting and training an adequate number of staff to accommodate resulting student office traffic. The staff consists of one (1) supervisor (1.0 FTE), four (4) job counselors (.5 FTE each) and two (2) clerical assistants (.5 FTE each) .

The supervisor is responsible administratively for the overall program development and coordination. A major portion of the supervisor's time is directed toward campus and community outreach activities; selection, training, and supervision of staff; budget and fiscal management; and research and reporting activities.

Direct contact with students is provided by job counselors. Other counselor responsibilities include: follow-up activities, development of job descriptions, numerous public relations activities, and maintenance of daily activity logs and placement records. Counselors also become involved in routine office functions and job development during peak activity periods.

Clerical assistants type job descriptions, answer and direct phone traffic, record student placement statistics, and monitor and update job posting boards. A major portion of their work involves student reception and scheduling counselor appointments.

Continuous in-service training of JLD staff is essential. All members are provided a procedures manual and detailed job description outlining their responsibilities and duties. Due to the sensitive and demanding nature of their work, counselors receive training for conducting effective interviews on an on-going basis. Information on referral procedures, resume writing, upgrading salaries, and "fine tuning" job descriptions is provided to staff during monthly staff meetings. Counselors also attend workshops and seminars provided by the University which enrich their professional and personal growth. Individuals with previous experience or training in human services, guidance and counseling, college student personnel and business personnel have been found to be effective staff due to their ability and interest in establishing meaningful working relationships with students.

All counselors and clerical personnel are undergraduate and graduate students who qualify under the College Work-Study Program. Through intentional hiring of Work-Study eligible students salary expenses are reduced, thus allowing sufficient budget for additional staff, expanded outreach activities and operating expenses.

JOB DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

To accomplish the basic program goals, i.e., to identify and develop off-campus part-time employment opportunities and to place students seeking employment, a variety of outreach activities are conducted on a regular basis. However, job development campaigns are initiated at appropriate periods during the calendar year in response to both student and employer needs.

Job development is done on a daily basis for students who have special skills or who desire work experience related to their academic program. Counselors develop jobs by selectively calling employers to determine their employee need. Contacting employers in this manner provides an opportunity to place a student in a desired position, to initiate a relationship with an employer, and to create the possibility of obtaining additional jobs.

In addition to this on-going job development, a conscious effort is made to plan outreach activities which promote an awareness of the program. An aggressive and extensive public relations effort is directed toward both employer and campus communities. Employers from every facet of business and industry are contacted and informed about the program and benefits derived from hiring students on a part-time basis. Several economic and human resource development benefits may result from this symbiotic relationship (Warrington and Rives, March 1980).

Activities found to be most effective include: media advertising, printed brochures and literature, summer jobs fairs, presentations to civic and service clubs, on-site employer visits, and direct mail campaigns. Similar outreach activities have been found to be effective in informing campus community members and increasing student involvement. Job development and public relations efforts have expanded and will continue to develop as the campus and community needs demand.

PROGRAM FUNDING SOURCES

The JLD Program is funded by both federal and non-federal monies. Federal

guidelines permit a maximum of ten percent (10%) or \$15,000, whichever is less, of the institution's annual College Work-Study Award to be utilized for program development and maintenance (Federal Register, 1977). Additionally, federal funds used for said purpose may not exceed eighty percent (80%) of the program's total annual budget. Consequently, additional matching funds are contributed from non-federal sources to meet total budget needs, i.e., state appropriated and student activity funds.

Funding sources and respective percentages of the total budget at UNO for 1980-81 include: federal (CWS) funds, (47%); state appropriated funds, (21%); and student activity fee funds, (32%). The majority of program funds are utilized for staff salaries (74%), with the remaining amount expended for outreach activities and operating expenses. Similar percentage breakdowns existed in previous funding periods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this article has been to provide student employment professionals with information about a model Job Locator and Development Program and hopefully to stimulate interest in the establishment of similar programs at other institutions. Several unique aspects of the University of Nebraska at Omaha program have been presented, each of which could have potential application on other campuses. Additionally, an attempt has been made to provide a conceptual framework upon which others may base JLD Programs.

Professionals who anticipate the establishment of a JLD Program at their institution will find it beneficial to assess adequately the uniqueness of the student and employer communities as well as the campus environment during the initial planning period. The following primary and related questions are provided to serve as a guide during this assessment process and to stimulate discussion between appropriate campus decision-makers and program advocates.

Is there a need to establish a JLD Program on campus?

- What are the basic employment patterns of the current student body?
- What proportion of the current enrollment seek some form of financial assistance while attending college?
- Do recent surveys indicate that students seek off-campus, part-time employment?
- What percentage of the students are presently employed in off-campus, part-time positions versus on-campus, work-study or non work-study positions?

Will the local employer community support a JLD Program?

- Is the university located in a community which is highly industrialized and labor intensive?
- Do the types of industry in the community lend themselves to part-time and seasonal work for students?
- Have recent surveys been conducted to determine employer interest and attitudes concerning the employment of students for part-time positions?

What job placement services presently exist on campus?

- Does the office of financial aid provide non work-study, off-campus work opportunities?
- Has the office of career placement developed a part-time service?
- Is there presently an office which formally or informally serves as a "clearing house" for part-time jobs?
- Are students informed about part-time opportunities within the separate academic units, i.e., college and department?

If established, is there a need in integrate a career development component within the JLD Program?

- What are the career development needs of the student body?
- What percentage of students are employed in career related part-time positions?
- Would a direct referral system facilitate or enhance career related placement?
- Do existing campus programs meet the career development needs of students?

What organizational alignment would be most conducive to the immediate and future growth of the JLD Program?

- Is there an organizational alignment which would directly or indirectly facilitate student and employer involvement?
- Would the JLD Program best meet the needs of students and the employer community if established as a separate unit or sub-unit of an existing office?
- If established as a sub-unit within an existing office, what are the philosophical orientations, attitudes and expertise of the existing staff?
- Can the existing staff assume a portion of JLD Program responsibilities, i.e., clerical, counseling, job development?
- What about physical space considerations?

Will executive level administrative staff of the institution support the establishment of a JLD Program?

- To what extent have university administrators outwardly supported past or present efforts to assist students in obtaining employment?
- Can administrative support of a JLD Program be generated if student and employer need is demonstrated?
- Which individuals of the administrative staff are likely to become program advocates once a need has been established?
- Who will be most influential during the planning and decision-making process?

What present or potential funding sources are available to finance a JLD Program?

- Does the institution's annual CWS allocation provide sufficient funds to allow a portion to be utilized for a JLD Program?
- Do alternate or supplemental funding sources exist on campus, e.g., student fee monies, revenue generating accounts, alumni funds?
- What potential sources of funds exist within the employer community in the form of trusts, endowments or other direct contributions?

It seems reasonable that additional questions may need to be addressed once the assessment of the institution begins; however, careful consideration of each of the above questions will tend to insure a JLD Program which is responsive to the needs of students. Finally, the authors invite requests for program statistics, procedural manuals, and office forms.

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