

**REPORT ON COLUMBIA
UNDERGRADUATE CAREER
EDUCATION INCLUDING
PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**COLUMBIA COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL
and
ENGINEERING STUDENT COUNCIL**

MARCH 2003

To The Administration,

The Columbia College Student Council (CCSC) and the Engineering Student Council (ESC) recognize that undergraduate advising is in a time of transition. In particular, the implementation of a reformulated Class Center Advising system, and the willingness of the SEAS administration to work to improve departmental advising marks a critical and positive change for first and second-year students. However, during this period of transition and review, we believe that it is equally critical for Columbia to make career education and career services for undergraduate students a priority.

This report represents an effort to encourage Columbia to do just that, and it is predicated upon achieving the following four objectives: divide the Center for Career Education (CCE) into independent undergraduate and graduate centers; broaden the mission of CCE to include career service in addition to career education; actively recruit employers across a diverse range of industries and geographic locations; finally, increase the number of career counselors for undergraduate students. At the outset, it should be noted that many of the issues we identify in this report result from the lack of human and financial resources available for undergraduate career education.

While much of the report that follows focuses on the Center for Career Education, our broader mission is to consider how students use university resources in order to choose a career and find a first job.

We look forward to working with you to achieve the outcome most beneficial to Columbia undergraduates.

Respectfully Submitted,

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A. General Structure

I. Division of the Career Center

Observation:

The Center for Career Education currently serves both undergraduate and graduate students.

Proposal:

CCE should serve undergraduate and graduate students separately. As such, CCE should be restructured into two independent centers—one serving undergraduate students and one serving graduate students.

Argument:

The needs of undergraduate and graduate students with respect to career education differ greatly. Undergraduates often have little or no work experience and are uncertain what career path to follow. By comparison, graduate students often enter graduate school with work experience, acquire career-specific information and skills during the course of their graduate studies, and so have a clearer vision of their career path. Moreover, the career opportunities available to undergraduates and graduates differ greatly: while undergraduates are generally suited for entry-level positions, graduate students tend to enter the workforce at a more advanced level.

These differences require the delivery of significantly different types of career advising and resources. The lack of undergraduate-centered career advising is clear because four of the 17 full-time CCE employees are devoted entirely to graduate students:

- Two employees devote all their time to managing the dossier service, a service not available to undergraduate students.
- Two other employees are the Director and Associate Director of Graduate Student Career Development; no such position exists for undergraduates.

In view of Columbia College's and SEAS's ongoing commitment to strengthening their relationships with alumni, the formation of a separate undergraduate career center is especially important. It should come as no surprise that active Columbia College and SEAS alumni are most interested in interfacing with students from Columbia College and SEAS. A career center which services six different graduate and undergraduate schools is not in a position to establish particularly strong or enduring bonds with these alumni, an indispensable career resource.

Finally, of the eight Ivy League institutions, only one—Columbia—does not maintain separate career centers for undergraduate and graduate students. Cornell, for example, maintains seven undergraduate career centers – one for each of its undergraduate colleges.

A. General Structure

II. Hours of the Center

Observation:

The Center for Career Education is open from 9 AM to 5 PM Monday through Friday. On Wednesday, CCE is open until 8 PM.

Proposal:

The Center for Career Education should be open on Saturday, and make an effort to program some of its events during evening hours. Additionally, during the times of the year when they are inundated with students, (September, January, April and May) CCE should have late hours two nights per week.

Argument:

Undergraduate class and work schedules generally restrict free time during weekly business hours. As CCE is an invaluable resource to undergraduate students, it should be open when students are best able to use it.

A. General Structure

III. Location of the Center

Observation:

The Center for Career Education is located in the basement of East Campus.

Proposal:

The Center for Career Education should move its offices to a more central location on campus that is accessible to both students and employers. We propose that CCE move to Buell Hall.

Argument:

CCSC and ESC are well aware that Columbia is an institution short on space. However, CCE's out-of-the-way, underground location makes it uninviting, cold, and easy to overlook. As a welcome mat from Columbia to employers, and as a resource critical to undergraduate students throughout their four years here, CCE deserves a centrally located, well-lit, above-ground space.

A. General Structure

IV. Education and Service

Observation:

The mission statement of the Center for Career Education, adopted in September 2001, reads in part: “Careers are each individual’s personal responsibility.” The CCE mission statement focuses on career education to the exclusion of career services.

Proposal:

Without undermining its stated commitment to career education, the CCE should also provide traditional career services for students.

Argument:

At least in part, the success of CCE’s commitment to career education can be judged according to the number of undergraduates who have found a job with which they are satisfied by using CCE. In other words, the purpose of career education is two-fold: to assist students in selecting a career, and to facilitate their acquisition of a job with which they are satisfied.

At present, CCE ignores the reality of the job-search process: even qualified candidates must often rely on networking and connections to acquire a job. The provision of basic career skills to students—resume writing, interviewing, and so on—thus comprises only one part of “career education.” What’s missing is an effort to connect undergraduate students to alumni and employers with whom CCE has fostered a strong bond.

B. Employer Relations

I. Active Recruitment

Observation:

CCE waits for employers interested in recruiting Columbia undergraduates to contact the center.

Proposal:

CCE should actively seek out employers potentially interested in hiring Columbia undergraduates across a variety of industries.

Argument:

By waiting for recruiters to contact them, CCE can only offer a narrow, unrepresentative range of job opportunities for students. Industries such as finance and consulting have recruitment divisions with the time and personnel to initiate contact with CCE. However, since the majority of industries do not have such resources, the employer relations division of CCE must actively contact employers in these industries. Limited recruitment on the part of Employer Relations pigeonholes students into a small number of job fields. The Center for Career Education is afforded the unique opportunity to cultivate relationships with employers in a multitude of different industries thanks to its position in New York City. CCE should take full advantage of its position to initiate contact with a broad range of employers.

B. Employer Relations

II. Industry Diversity

Observation:

CCE's on-campus recruiting and job postings are highly concentrated within a small subset of the industries available to students.

Proposal:

The Employer Relations division of CCE should seek to diversify the industrial breadth of its job offerings.

Argument:

Columbia undergraduates possess various interests and goals for their employment. Not all of these students intend to find a job in the financial or consulting sectors, where most CCE job postings are currently concentrated. Students who intend to seek such employment are disadvantaged by CCE's lack of information and job postings on opportunities outside these industries.

B. Employer Relations

III. Geographical Diversity

Observation:

CCE's on-campus recruiting and job postings are highly concentrated in the New York City area.

Proposal:

The Employer Relations division of CCE should seek to diversify the geographical breadth of its job offerings.

Argument:

Columbia undergraduates come from across the country and the world. Not all of these students intend to remain in New York City after graduation. Students who intend to leave New York are disadvantaged by CCE's lack of information and job postings on opportunities outside of this area.

B. Employer Relations

IV. Standardized Employer Contact

Observation:

There is currently no system by which CCE maintains its existing relationships with employers.

Proposal:

The CCE should devise a standardized protocol to facilitate consistent communication between the center and employers. By establishing a protocol that includes directions for first contacts, initial meetings, and regular follow-up, CCE can ensure that it is consistent and thorough in maintaining its relations with each potential employer.

Argument:

A strong relationship between the Center for Career Education and possible recruiters is indispensable. A standardized protocol would establish such a relationship, and increase the likelihood of employers returning to Columbia to recruit its undergraduates year after year.

C. Career Counselors

I. The Number of Counselors

Observation:

Currently, CCE employs four Career Counselors. These counselors serve seven university schools: Columbia College, the undergraduate and graduate divisions of The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, The School of the Arts, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation.

At approximately 2950 to 1, the ratio of students serviced to career counselors at Columbia is by far the lowest in the Ivy League:

<i>School</i>	<i>Serviced Students</i> [†]	<i>Career Counselors</i> [†]	<i>Ratio</i>
Harvard	6,637	17	390:1
Yale	5,282	5	1056:1
Cornell	13,769	13	1059:1
Brown	5,766	5	1153:1
Princeton	4,613	4	1153:1
Dartmouth	4,055	3	1351:1
Penn	9,863	7	1409:1
Columbia	11,800*	4	2950:1

*According to the CCE, for spring 2002, the CCE was responsible for servicing 11,800 students (graduate and undergraduate).

[†] For each school except Columbia, the students serviced are only undergraduates. Undergraduate populations and career counselor data were taken from each institution's website, and are meant for comparison, not statistical accuracy.

Proposal:

CCE should employ a minimum of six career counselor dedicated to working with undergraduate students exclusively.

Argument:

In its literature, CCE stresses the inherently personal quality of the job-search process: in exploring career opportunities, a student must follow a path specifically tailored to his or her needs and values. For the student embarking upon the job-search process, one-on-one career counseling is an invaluable resource, proving an opportunity both to ask specific questions about individual career planning and to receive much-needed feedback on self-assessments.

Because CCE's human resources are so scarce, it is nearly impossible for its counselors to develop individual relationships with undergraduate students. By hiring a group of counselors dedicated to serving undergraduate students exclusively, CCE can alleviate the strain on its current employees, and improve the quality of the job-search process for those it serves.

It also deserves mentioning again that the Center for Career Education is woefully understaffed in comparison to Columbia's peer institutions.

C. Career Counselors

II. Counselor Specialization

Observation:

CCE's career counselors do not specialize in career fields.

Proposal:

CCE's career counselors should each choose three to four fields on which to focus their attention. In their chosen career fields, career counselors should act as liaisons to relevant academic departments, stay abreast of industry trends and developments and attend workshops, forums, and meetings of pre-professional societies. A student interested in a particular field would have the opportunity to receive career advice from a counselor best suited to address his or her needs.

Argument:

We recognize that Columbia students are interested in pursuing a wide-range of career paths. It is unreasonable, however, to expect any one counselor to be knowledgeable about the intricacies of each of these paths.

CCE quite rightly informs students that job searches are most effective when tailored to the specific protocol of individual industries. By employing six career counselors, each with expertise in three or four industries, CCE can provide a more comprehensive and effective resource to undergraduates. Students who currently perform career research and apply for positions without industry-specific advice would stand to benefit greatly from such a change.

D. Student Contact

I. Early Action and Follow-Through

Observation:

CCE tends to aim their programming, workshops, seminars, and outreach at juniors and seniors.

Proposal:

Without diminishing its commitment to juniors and seniors, CCE should make a greater effort to target first and second-year students. A four-year career education and development plan should include the following components:

- An introductory class for first and second-year students addressing career research, networking, cover letter and resume writing, and other skills requisite to the job-search process. This component is discussed at greater length in section G of this report.
- More extensive individual career counseling for undergraduates. This component is discussed at greater length in section E II of this report.
- Industry-specific workshops, practice interviews, seminars, guest speakers and information sessions.
- A strong and extensive alumni network providing students with both information and potential job opportunities. This component is discussed at greater length in section E III of this report.
- An annual statistical report detailing the future plans of seniors after graduation.

Argument:

Career education and job acquisition are four-year processes, and the early bird gets the worm. As such, it should be the responsibility of CCE to foster bonds with Columbia undergraduates during all four years.

Few first- and second-year students recognize the ways in which they can use classroom, internship, and summer experiences to uncover career interests and acquire job-relevant skills. First-years should be oriented to the career-research and self-assessment process as early as Orientation Week.

During junior and senior year, CCE should strive to educate students about industry specific matters including hiring cycles, interviewing techniques, and resume formatting. CCE should also aid upperclassmen in synthesizing their classroom, internship, work, and summer experience in a way that identifies their transferable skills.

Finally, publishing a report on graduates' paths will both assess a four-year relationship between students and CCE and track annual student job placement.

D. Student Contact

II. Advertising

Observation:

The highly informative, well-planned workshops and seminars sponsored by CCE are poorly attended by undergraduates in part because these students are not aware of such programming.

Proposal:

CCE should seek to communicate more effectively, and through new channels, with undergraduate students. In an effort to help CCE do this, we offer the following suggestions:

- CCE should employ a more targeted advertising strategy. In order to reach those students most likely to be interested in a particular event, CCE can communicate with relevant student clubs, academic departments, and pre-professional societies.
- Representatives from CCE should make an effort to attend those academic events which attract the largest student audience—first-year orientation; major declaration night; the Degree Audit Report Barbecue; Post-Graduation forums; and the Apply for the Degree Party.
- CCE should make an effort to reach out to students in the most heavily trafficked areas on campus—John Jay Dining Hall; Low Library steps; and Lerner Hall.
- CCE should redesign its e-mail communiqués to the student body: subject lines should pique student interest, and text should be organized in order of immediacy and importance. For example, “CCE Registration Instructions,” repeated in every communiqué, should appear at the end of a message. On the other hand, day-of workshops should appear in the subject-heading of e-mails.

Argument:

On the basis of the overwhelmingly positive reviews students give them, poor attendance at CCE workshops is likely the result of the manner in which they are publicized. It stands to reason that a new advertising strategy, as detailed above, can do much to alleviate this problem.

D. Student Contact

III. Workshops

Observation:

Current CCE workshops are not industry specific.

Proposal:

The Center for Career Education should offer workshops tailored to specific industries on job search skills such as researching companies, finding jobs, interviewing, and completing job application materials. These workshops should be conducted by the career counselor who specializes in that career field. This component is discussed at greater length in section C II of this report.

Argument:

A lack of resources restricts CCE to holding generalized workshops. These workshops are well-suited for students seeking general job search skills, such as resume and cover letter writing. In these generalized workshops, students are told that they must tailor their resumes, cover letters and even the way they look for a job to their chosen industry. However, CCE does not currently offer such specific workshops.

Tailoring workshops to academic majors, sectors of industry, job types, or any one of many limiting factors will ensure greater detail within, and more effectiveness from, workshops.

Moreover, as Career Counselors prepare such detailed workshops, they may gain even greater specialization within a specific sector or industry.

E. Collaboration

I. Inter-Divisional Contact

Observation:

Currently, there is little interaction between CCE, the Columbia College Office of Alumni Affairs, the Engineering Development and Alumni Relations office, the Class Centers, the Scholars and Fellowships Office, and the Pre-Professional Office, despite the significance of each of these divisions to the post-college life of Columbia undergraduates.

Proposal:

Employees of the Center for Career Education, the Columbia College Alumni Affairs Office, the Engineering Development and Alumni Relations office, the Class Centers, the Scholars and Fellowships Office, and the Pre-Professional Office should communicate with one another regularly and familiarize themselves with the resources offered by the other divisions in order to direct students more effectively.

Argument:

Columbia students frequently complain about “the-run-around”—being directed from one office to another in a maddeningly futile search for information. This feeling is particularly characteristic of the period immediately preceding graduation. Consolidating and focusing the efforts of the different divisions concerned with post-graduation life—CCE, the Columbia College Office of Alumni Affairs, the Engineering Development and Alumni Relations office, the Class Centers, the Scholars and Fellowship Office, and the Pre-Professional Office—can help ease the strain of the-run-around phenomenon.

E. Collaboration

II. Individual Advising: What's After FYSAAC?

Observation:

Columbia College and SEAS undergraduates are currently enjoying the benefits of personal advising that the First-Year Sophomore Academic Advising Center provides. However, such individual advice ends after the first two years at Columbia.

Proposal:

The CCE should supplement the class center system in order to create a post-graduate advising system for upperclassmen. Academic advising will continue to be provided by departmental advisors.

To accomplish this new advising system, the Junior and Senior Class Center should be combined. At the end of the sophomore year, students will be asked if they are continuing their education or planning to work after graduation. Those who intend to work will be assigned an advisor from CCE; those planning post-graduate education will be assigned an advisor from the new combined Junior/Senior Class Center. Finally, students are likely to change their mind during the last two years, and so they should be able to switch advisors.

Argument

The last two years at Columbia should be thought of as a single path towards completing graduation requirements and deciding what to do after graduation. Along this path, students require two types of advising during their Junior and Senior years: academic and post-graduate advising. Departmental advisors currently provide individual academic advising. However, there is no individual advice for what students should do after graduation.

Post-Graduate advising fits into two categories: professional/graduate school advising, and career advising. It is clear that no one advisor can provide adequate information on both types. However, selecting an appropriate post-graduation path remains a highly individual decision which requires personal attention. By dividing the responsibility between two offices, students will profit as they interact with specialized advisors. CCE Counselors can provide career advice, and Class Centers can provide professional/graduate school advice.

In that way, students will have two advisors in their Junior and Senior year, the first guiding their academics toward graduation, the second focusing on their path after graduation. This collaborative effort would strengthen the advice students receive.

E. Collaboration

III. The Alumni Network

Observation:

CCE does not currently offer a functioning alumni network as part of the resources it makes available to undergraduates.

Proposal:

CCE should work with the Columbia College Office of Alumni Affairs and the Engineering Development and Alumni Relations office to provide students with the opportunity to network with alumni.

Argument:

Networking is a crucial component of the job search process: according to CCE, between 50 and 80 percent of newly hired employees obtained their positions through networking. Insofar as many are leaders in their fields, Columbia's alumni represent an invaluable yet untapped resource. The benefits of establishing a functioning alumni network are two-fold: for Columbia students, an alumni network promises to open up new opportunities; for Columbia alumni, a network can facilitate the acquisition of talented new employees.

F. CCE Resources

I. Electronic Resources

Observation:

Students searching for job listings can access three electronic databases: InterviewTRAK lists positions offered by on-campus recruiters; ColumbiaTRAK lists positions offered by on-site recruiters; and Employer Showcase details pertinent information about potential employers. It is not possible to search the InterviewTRAK, ColumbiaTRAK, and Employer Showcase databases simultaneously. Additionally, these databases offer users a limited number of criteria through which to filter postings.

Proposal:

The InterviewTRAK, ColumbiaTRAK, and Employer Showcase job databases should be integrated in order to enable users to search all three at once. This integrated database should also feature an expanded list of search criteria. A comprehensive list of search criteria should include:

- Keyword search
- Industry search
- City and state search
- Company name search
- Job title search
- Job level search
- Salary search
- Prerequisite search (major, degree, age, experience, GPA)
- Job posting submission date
- Resume submission deadline date
- Number of resumes posted to date

An integrated database should also include a section instructing students how to find job listings and contact information if such information is not listed in ColumbiaTRAK, InterviewTRAK, and Employer Showcase.

Argument:

The job-search process requires the matching of individual preferences to available positions. The large amount of information available contained within ColumbiaTRAK, InterviewTRAK, and Employer Showcase can be rendered more effective through a greater number of search criteria.

F. CCE Resources

II. Physical Resources

Observation:

Given the overwhelming amount of information available, it is often difficult for students to find a point-of-entry into the job-search process.

Proposal:

In addition to the highly effective informational handouts CCE already produces, the center should develop two additional types of tip sheets: Industry Snapshots and CityScapes.

An Industry Snapshot should be devised for each of the dozen or so most popular sectors. Each Snapshot should include the following information:

- Industry title
- Descriptions of possible positions
- Cities in which positions are available
- Entry level options
- Pay scales
- Qualifications
- Web resources
- Material available in the Career Resource Center
- Career counselor who specializes in the industry

A CityScape sheet should be devised for each of 30 major American and international cities. Each CityScape should include the following information:

- Major industries centered in the city
- Major company headquarters in the city
- Cost of living index
- Employment rate
- Demographic statistics
- Availability of public transportation
- Weather
- Availability and variety of housing including web resources
- Cultural institutions
- Languages spoken
- City traditions
- City website

Argument:

For students embarking upon the job-search process, Industry Snapshots and CityScapes represent an important resource. For students further along in the job search process, these tip sheets facilitate side-by-side comparisons.

G. A for-credit Career Education Class

Observation:

No option currently exists for students interested in obtaining a comprehensive overview of the career education and job-search process.

Proposal:

CCE should offer a 1-point class in Career Education, to be taken pass/fail. The class would touch upon the following issues:

- Researching career paths
- Searching for internship and job opportunities
- Gathering references
- Constructing resumes and cover letters
- Networking
- Navigating career fairs
- Learning interview techniques
- Practicing interviews
- Balancing a job-search and graduate school search
- Negotiating job offers
- Progressing from an entry-level job
- Finding jobs abroad

Argument:

According to the CCE mission statement, “the many resources of the Center for Career Education can help students acquire the knowledge, tools, and skills necessary for success.” By offering a class devoted to honing the skills listed above, CCE can ensure that interested Columbia undergraduates will obtain a comprehensive and coherent career education. A for-credit class can provide students with a picture of the job-search process in its entirety and reinforce the importance of beginning career education early.

The University of Michigan and the University of California at Los Angeles offer possible models for such a class.

APPENDIX

Email Communications

On December 10th, 2002, the following email was sent to the Columbia College Student Body:

Calling for all comments on the Center for Career Education (CCE)—formerly Career Services

****Tell us about your interactions with the Center for Career Education****

The Columbia College Student Council is composing a proposal on CCE that will be sent to the Center as well as to administrators. If you have a comment that you would like us to consider and/or include, please email Kim at kng12@columbia.edu. All comments will remain anonymous.

We have included a sampling of the email responses below:

Just a comment since you solicited input. A lot of seniors don't have time to make it to the "How to make a great resume"/etc events--but we really are interested! Why can't the Center reach out and put minutes of such meetings on the web?

Thanks for listening!

Hi,
career services may have lots of information and guidance for those interested in mainstream careers (e.g. business, finance, law school etc.), but their assistance and their contacts regarding arts related careers are terrible. Also, their information listings for international jobs are pretty poor.

Being in New York does not only mean networking with Wall Street. The contacts Columbia could and should have to the greatest arts community in the world should be pursued much more actively by the university and CCE.

I don't know how you could offer any "critique" of career services, because in fact it doesn't really exist at all. You go into this void of information and intelligence that exists on the bottom of EC only to find out that the people who work there are probably more desperate to find a job than you are.

They offer no career counseling or services, only incorrect and plain stupid suggestions on your resume. They offer no job listings...

whenever you go on columbiatrak, you look up a job in new york city and either 1,000 or 2 come up. I think it's the weather outside that guides that thing.

You'd think, well maybe I'm being pessimistic from a student's perspective... Well I had a friend who used to work at Princeton Review, and tried to post a job at Career Services, he got NO responses in 6 months, and couldn't figure out where the posted it. Even the corporations can't stand this place.

You pay 37,500 dollars at year to go to a school with this great name so that maybe you'll have better chance at getting a job when you graduate... I think it's really insulting and abominable that the career services center not only is terrible; but it doesn't even exist. It's just a mix of colored copies, a receptionist, and an awkward work-study student. Maybe you'll run into a completely idiotic employee who attempts, with an attitude to explain that it's not their fault you can't get a job, and just points to the "internship bible" when you ask of job listings.

You might as well sit staring at a wall for two hours instead of going to career services or attending anything they offer. Three years at Columbia has taught me one thing... you've got to do it yourself. I searched for a non-work study job for two years, and finally I've found a few professors who know of off-campus areas to get jobs. BUT I've put hard effort into it... going to almost every dep't and library on campus looking for a job at one point or another... sending out my resumes/applications to dozens of corporations and universities for internships or research scholarships. You have to find it yourself or find a useful professor who knows what's going on. And even that's hard to figure out.

So whats' the point of the rambling? If you come here to get a good job when you graduate, you've made a mistake unless you're willing to put in hours of your own time and effort to guiding YOURSELF into a career or job. Don't waste your time trying to improve career services. Just demolish it and put a magic eight ball there in its place. It will be just as useful.

I thought that CCE did a good job of advertising their events. What would have been much more helpful would have been supplying students with the alumni contacts that Columbia alumni have access to. Contacts are what get you furthest in the working world, and i think CCE could do a better job of helping students with that.

You all had asked about Career Services so...

For the most part my experiences with CCE have been overwhelmingly negative. While the staff is friendly enough, there just doesn't seem to be anything in particular that they do to help me get a job. An extensive library of JobBank books doesn't meet my needs, exactly. When I've dropped by, I've wound up waiting a fairly long amount of time while nothing appeared to be happening, and didn't

really get any productive advice in exchange.

Admittedly I've not been the most proactive about taking advantage of their resources. But if I already had my resume all together and everything else in shape, then I wouldn't need their advice. Also, I have attended a number of workshops. The really useful ones, like Networking, tend to be offered at inconvenient times, when I'd otherwise be in classes or have other commitments. The ones that I have attended wind up following CCE's "know yourself" touchy-feely job search tips. While I think it's great to have self-knowledge about your career goals and where you'll be happy, etc., I didn't learn anything in any of these seminars that I didn't know already. Moreover, I've found that their "know-yourself" questions tend to be pretty transparent and only reinforce the prejudices about what you want to do that you went in with.

As it is, an alarming number of workshops that I've attended tended to be someone talking at you and telling you to visit their website, then handing out flyers with information. While the information on the flyers is very useful, if a paper document is all that I can get out of CCE, there's a problem.

One thing that definitely needs to be changed -- and that wouldn't be particularly difficult to implement -- is to provide the video on using InterviewTrak. I know it exists, it was mandatory a few years ago, but now it's hard to find. About InterviewTrak. Well, this'll make me seem like an idiot, but that system is just impossible to figure out offhand. I had no idea how to use it, or even that I should, until one of my suitemates (in SEAS, natch) showed me how. And of course it wasn't until three months later when she showed me how to check whether I'd been preselected for an interview that I even realized you needed to do that...

not to get into too many specifics, it's very awkward that you need to interact with a pull-down menu to choose the most commonly desired setting, ie search for resume drops; it's even more awkward that you have to go through the same screen to check interviews, look for employer presentations, and send out resumes. But, the design of the interviewTrak website may not be under the control of CCE, so that's possibly a side issue.

Anyway, thanks for the time to voice my opinion. Good luck in producing useful change!

Hi,

I'm writing this because I was so disappointed with career services. Not only is it beaureaucratic, but the appointments given are completely unhelpful. People I spoke to just kept telling me to make another longer appointment with someone of a higher rank than them, and the only job advice I was specifically given was to check websites like wetfeet.com. Their library is out of date, and the woman I spoke to did not even know what was in the library anyway. They all echo each other in the same useless advice they give (no specifics, just general idioms like be positive) The only helpful person gave me some decent advice on

improving my resume, but not really on the field (publishing) I wanted to enter. They should hire people with actual knowledge of various fields, and who know what the best ways of approaching businesses in those fields are.

Thanks,

I have been really unhappy with my career services experience. First of all, I am really disappointed that the overwhelming majority of job presentations and organized interviews are in the field of finance or are for pre-med or pre-law students. Where are the employer presentations for those of us interested in anything else?? I went in to the Career Services office one day this semester looking for help on a couple of things, and left very frustrated. I brought in my resume for critique, and the woman gave me some good advice about that. However, when I asked her about an alumni contact database, she said career services had no such thing. It seems to me that this is one of the most useful job search tools, and I thought every school had one. She told me to look on the Columbia College alumni website. She asked what field I was interested in, and I told her "television production." She then referred me to the journalism school center for career services, stating that they might let undergrads use their resources. What good is a career services department that simply refers you elsewhere whenever you really need their help?

I went home and did as the woman told me; I went on the Internet and found the Columbia College alumni website. There was just one small problem: In order to access any relevant information on the e-community I needed to be alumni. As a senior, I clearly have not graduated yet, and could not sign on. I called a friend who graduated two years ago and she was kind enough to let me use her name and password. I signed on to the e-community, and easily found a handful of alumni who were in my field of interest. I contacted them, and have since set up three interviews. This was the most useful career search tool I have used thus far.....too bad our career services does not make it possible for undergrads to use it.... Basically, if you are totally desperate and have not found a job by May when you graduate, THEN you will be able to use the alumni database. Heaven forbid someone should want to have a job BEFORE graduation.

All in all, I think career services should focus on more career fields, and most definitely should keep a connection with the alumni contact database.

thanks for letting me vent my rant!

In today's ultra-competitive world individual's need to find a way to separate themselves and gain an advantage over candidates from other Ivy League Schools. Therefore, an excellent career center helps a school tremendously, but unfortunately a bad career center can hurt the students even more. Columbia's career center is the later!!

I will use the analogy of an assembled car to make my point clearer. Imagine that GM has made a car with the best engine, exhaust, and

transmission ever built, but the car has an exterior with dents and uneven, sloppy, and flaky paint. Although the car is the best built car on the market, nobody is going to buy the car because it is the minor exterior elements that matter: a flawless exterior with a good paint job. A candidate from Columbia is like this car in that they have tremendous credentials, but lack the exterior elements that the career center should help them with. Good cover letters, resume advice, interview practice, as well as other "exterior" skills aren't taught or even to students.

The individuals in the career center don't answer questions or give advice, they only seem to tell you where the books are on the shelf. This does not suffice.

Hopefully, in the coming years the career center will blossom and as a result the world will see the beauty of the "cars" at Columbia that have been hidden for too long due to poor "exterior" elements.

So, I went to career services second semester junior year to try to get some advice on applying to law school. I didn't know that we had somewhat of a pre-law office at the time, so I thought career services could help.

I walked in and met with a woman who could not tell me a single thing about law applications. I don't believe that she knew we had a pre-law office either. So that's the extent, but I'm planning on visiting soon. Also, a complaint concerning the lack of jobs in anything related to international affairs on the job search engine. (it's a little better for nonprofits) Could they solicit more companies?

Career Education is nothing but a joke at Columbia. The office is poorly trained to adequately assist in any meaningful job search. Career counselors are nothing more than glorified proofreaders. The dearth of jobs outside the financial services sector means that a) all students not interested in financial services can't get a job and b) when the financials are in a bad market, no one can get a job. Furthermore, CCE does a horrible job of preparing students for interviews. Companies rarely take Columbia seriously anymore--the number of hires we get in relation to other Ivy League schools at major companies is a joke. It isn't all CCE's fault--we are at the bottom of the Ivy League barrel in terms of amount of staff. But it doesn't help that the staff we do is pretty incompetent. I was lucky to find a job, but I had to depend on myself for everything, from how to figure out interviews to what sort of resumes and cover letters to submit. Unless CCE gets a radically new direction, the future of Columbia's students in the job world is bleak, which consequently means the future of this university is even bleaker. CCE is single-handedly creating classes of disgruntled, dissatisfied, angry alumni and is probably not helping Columbia's so-called reputation at all.

1- job fairs are useless for most people- the only people who come are mostly IT, consulting, the NBA, some magazines. What about some more advertising, marketing, consulting that's not financial, other job possibilities if u didn't major in Economics or you're not in SEAS and aren't a computer programmer.

2- I went to the job fair and basically was told I wasn't allowed to give my resume to anyone there- what's the utility of going to talk to the reps at the fair vs. going online to their websites if I can't give my resume in?

3- I had a 15 minute appointment to go over my resume and we hadn't finished going over it but the counselor was like, oh sorry, your 15 minutes are up- so u'll have to reschedule for another appointment- meanwhile I needed my resume to be checked fully and I could do nothing to convince her to spend 5 more minutes with me

4- Smiling at the CCE office!

5- I wish someone would call me and tell me about jobs that fit my interests. I wish there were more jobs to search through

6- The vast majority of places that come to present and interview are IT, banking, and computer programming...what ever happened to other business areas? Seems like we're giving a certain area of interest all the optionsfor work

I got an email on Tuesday from the CIA telling me that I'd been preselected for an interview today, and that I was supposed to contact CCE by Wednesday to schedule it. I checked Interviewtrak on Tues to see if I had any other interviews and nothing was there, so I assumed that I had to contact career services manually, which I did on Wednesday by sending an email to the only address that I had (cce-recruit -- the address that my interview invitation was cc'ed to originally by the CIA.) No response on Thursday, so I called this morning. After leaving two messages, I decided to use the trick that keeps the phone from going to phonemail, and just let it ring until someone picked up. Twenty-five rings later, I get a response, from a guy who tells me that it was all supposed to be done online. When I pointed out to him that I couldn't actually do that, since the online system didn't recognize my existence, he told me to come by during their lunch hour today and basically indicated it was my fault for not going to the information session yesterday, since the CIA apparently was signing people up for interviews then (though nothing in my contact with them mentioned that they would be doing this, they explicitly said to sign up through Career Services.)

The upshot of all this is that I'm basically going to wind up missing an interview because of a convoluted CCE system, and the only person of theirs that I've talked to doesn't seem to care.

Trying to be a bit more constructive about this, I can see a couple things that would have made this situation better. First, CCE should be more clear about whether or not they sign people up for interviews manually, and if so, who to contact and how to contact them. Second,

the online system needs to be a lot more reliable and clear if they're going to rely solely on it to arrange career services. Last, it'd be nice if their representatives would acknowledge the seriousness of missed interviews in this economy. If it wasn't disheartening enough that the CCE homepage is a message about "why you aren't going to get a job," the fact that they don't seem to care whether or not you do is just too much.

Thanks for your time,

On one occasion I needed to scan my resume for an employer who so requested it. I went to career services, assuming they must have such a basic technology. After finding out they didn't have a scanner, I told them I thought that it was an essential tool for a career services center to have. To that comment, I was given the following response: "We are career education, not career services." While the staff of the career services center might seem themselves on some higher plain than "providing" a service, the students surely do not. Why don't they worry about the basics (like a scanner) before they worry about educating me about careers?

CCE has been mostly fine, but sometimes it isn't quite as helpful as I would hope it would be.

One time in sophomore year I went to one of CCE's help sessions. I brought my resume to be looked at, and I just wanted general advice for planning on how to get a job, etc. I found the meeting to be utterly unuseful. She didn't really do much other than point out stylistic deficiencies in my resume. I tried to get some industry-specific advice, but she had nothing to say. That's really about it. It was disappointing.
