



CAL POLY POMONA Career Center Program Review Response

Introduction

The Career Center's Program Review was conducted on November 17-19, 2014 by Cheryl Allmen, recently retired from the San Jose State University Career Center and Deborah Crane current Director of the Career Resource Center at the University of the Pacific. The review team conducted a comprehensive assessment to identify the Career Center's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The program reviewers met with both on and off campus partners including students, Deans, faculty, Academic Advisors, the Career Center team, Student Affairs leadership, Cal Poly Pomona leadership, and employers.

The Program Review report provided an evaluation of key areas including strategic direction, positioning, assessment, resources, partnerships/academic integration, programming/service delivery, image management, marketing, and branding. The final thirty-two page report was received on December 5, 2014. What follows is a summary of key findings. This is the Career Center's response to the review team's feedback.

Overall Impressions

Prior to the reviewers visit to campus, they analyzed and reviewed the Career Center's Self-Study, the Career Center's website, handouts, brochures, the Student Affairs Division Strategic Plan, and the Cal Poly Pomona Student Success Fee Initiative. The Career Center's Self-Study was followed the NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) Career Services Professional Standards which are patterned after the CAS Standards. The reviewers also considered the campus demographics understanding that Cal Poly Pomona is a Hispanic-Serving Institution along with a significant population of first generation students, culturally diverse students most of whom work.

The review team explored external factors which significantly impacted the campus focusing on primarily budget reductions and the shifts in the employment market. As the state of California addressed the perils of its recent fiscal crisis, the cuts that all California State Universities faced during this recession were particularly devastating to the 23 campus system. Tuition costs escalated, staff and faculty were furloughed and went without compensation increases for almost a decade, programs were eliminated, and many departments were forced to shift to reducing their scope of services.

CPP was not immune to these factors. The resulting impact of fiscal belt tightening at CPP and specifically on its Career Center is still evident. The aftermath of downsizing compromised some of the programs and services offered and decimated the team down to levels not in alignment with current career center best practices or NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers).

Despite the last decade of fiscal and resource reductions which adversely impacted the Cal Poly Career Center, the review team found the Career Center (although significantly depleted) to still be a relatively full-service department,

giving it **good (4 out of 5)**. Throughout the visit, themes became very apparent to the reviewers which demonstrate how the Career Center could move forward and make the changes that are imperative to ensure the success of Cal Poly Pomona students as they capitalize on their educational experience and utilize the Center to more competitively enter today's diverse and global market.

The reviewers recommended that providing the Center with resources to support the expectations and demands of its stakeholders by reinstating a state-funded operating and personnel budget to support the addition of professionals and services expected by the Center's stakeholders. The Director explained to the reviewers the history of the current funding model of the Career Center and that a return to a state funded budget model for operating expenses would probably not happen.

Strengths

There were many areas addressed by constituents that are definite strengths of the Career Center and a wide variety of affirmative adjectives were used to describe the director and staff including collaborative, accommodating and willing to partner with other groups.

Programs and services that were viewed as very strong included:

- Current liaison roles to colleges with staff presence in including Hospitality, Education, and Business
- Strong interview and resume preparation
- Resumaniacs resume review program
- "Big Interview" and on-line access
- CPU 100 Course
- Clothes Closet
- Facilitating connections between employers and colleges as well as student groups and budding relationships with emerging academic partners

These areas were mentioned in nearly every meeting and at this point define the Career Center with its stakeholders. There also exists many opportunities for the director and staff to elevate the center to the next level.

The reviewers said, “Based on the current availability of Career Center team members to foster and develop collaborations and partnerships, they are one of the Center’s strengths and strongest assets. As the team shrank during the past budget crisis, the Center team relied on partners to expand their sphere of influence and deliver services to a greater number of stakeholders. Some of the most significant partnerships appear to be the budding relationship with academic advisers, selected colleges, faculty and deans, Athletics, Extended Studies, Alumni Association, employers, and the presenter of the CPU100 course. In particular, the review team heard many compliments from partner professionals such as accommodating, good follow through, supportive, interested in our students, flexible, easy to work with, and professional.

Recommendations

Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The Reviewers recommend that:

“Dedicate time to develop a multi-year strategic plan to position the Center for added value and contribution to student retention, success and graduation initiatives. It would be advisable to secure the services of an outside consultant skilled in strategic plan positioning to facilitate the group in developing the plan, goals, objectives, outcomes etc.”

The Career Center agrees and has implemented the following:

- The Career Center has a multi-year plan that is part of Student Affairs Strategic Plan. The Career Center will share this with Career Center Partners. The Career Center is going to join in campus-wide strategic planning process.
- The Career Center has yearly goals (5) and objectives to reach the goals. The Career Center has quarterly staff retreats where objectives that are accomplished are reported to the Career Center team. Director will report objectives that are accomplished at each staff meeting.
- The Career Center can post goals on the Career Center website.
- The Career Center is happy to secure the services of an outside consultant skilled in strategic planning.

- The current Cal Poly Pomona strategic plan ran from 2010-2015. Under the new president of Cal Poly Pomona, the campus community is currently designing a new strategic plan.

Partnerships with Key Stakeholders

The reviewers recommend that:

- The ideal would be to have one career counselor serve as a liaison to each of the colleges and transition from a generalist style of counseling to a specialist style. The intent of this type of partnership is to customize the services of the Career Center to meet the needs of the students in the various colleges on the campus.

The Career Center agrees with the recommendation and has:

- Initiated having one career counselor serve as liaison to each academic college. Currently there is a career counselor for Collins College of Hospitality Management, College of Business Administration, College of Science, College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, College of Education and Integrative Studies. Currently the director is liaison to the College of Engineering, College of Agriculture, and College of Environmental Design. The Career Center is in conversation with the deans of Cal Poly Pomona to secure a career counselor as liaison to the colleges of Engineering, Agriculture, and College of Environmental Design. The Career Center would also like to have a full-time career counselor for Alumni Relations. The director and each career counselor have met with the dean and their leadership team to discuss ways that the career counselor can connect with students and faculty. Each dean has provided office space for the career counselor including computer and phone. The deans have connected each career counselor with key faculty contacts and student groups in that college.

The reviewers recommend that:

- Divide the employer relations positions of on-campus interview coordinator and events coordinator so that they also become industry specialists to understand the needs of the employers they work with as well as the skills they are seeking in potential candidates.

The director disagrees with this recommendation:

- Both positions work in tandem with each other and work with over 500 employers that come to campus each year. When one is discussing on-campus interviewing and information sessions the other is also discussing career events.
- The events coordinator supports eight career fair/events and the on-campus interview coordinator supports the on-campus interview program, information sessions, PR tables, and resume books. This keeps both very busy with the work that is required to complete these services for students and employers.

The reviewers recommend that:

- The Career Counselors set up a “career advice” table at each career fair so that students can speak with a career counselor and get last minute questions answered before going to a career fair.

The Career Center agrees and has implemented the following:

- Cal Poly Pomona Career Center Career Fairs are held outside. The Career Center had a booth at the Spring Career Fair in April 2015 for drop-ins as well as to prep students with career fair assistance. The Career Center will continue to have a booth for drop-ins for all future career fair events.

The reviewers recommend that:

- The Career Center consider some cross-functional training both internally and externally. Academic advisors indicated that training about the Career Center’s services and programs would be very welcomed.

The Career Center agrees and has implemented the following:

- The Career Center team has met with International Programs and with ARCHES for exchanges of information. The career counselors are meeting with the academic advisors in their colleges to provide information on services and programs.
- The Career Center will host the College of Business Career Week May 4-7. This is in partnership with the College of Business Administration’s academic advisors. The business week includes a career fair panel and a career fair.

- The Career Center will co-sponsor the veterans job search and career development workshop series in partnership with the Veterans Resource Center.

The reviewers recommend that:

- The Career Center place increased emphasis on capitalizing on the “internship to career pipeline” currently used by many employers by adding an internship coordinator to the team.

The Career Center agrees with the recommendation and agrees:

- The Career Center has a full-time position of job location and developer. The person in this position has taken on the role of internship coordinator for the Career Center. The person works with all faculty and staff on campus that have anything to do with internships. The Center for Community Engagement has hired full-time staff to take on working with all academic departments that offer internships for credit. The Career Center has met with this staff person to coordinate information about internships.
- The Career Center seeks approval to hire a full-time internship coordinator, but lacks the funding to do so.

Personnel Support

The reviewers recommend that:

- Free the director from direct services delivery to students to focus energy on development, strategic planning, professional development/staff mentoring and technology advancements.

The Career Center agrees:

- The director serves as liaison to three academic colleges which includes over ten thousands students. Currently there are five full-time career counselors who are liaison to one college each.
- The Career Center proposes to hire three full-time career counselors to be liaisons to the other three academic colleges.
- The Career Center proposes to hire a full-time career counselor to assist Cal Poly Pomona alumni and be liaison to Alumni Relations.

The reviewers recommend that:

- Build a Career Center ladder, converting one position to an employer relations associate director and another to a career counselor associate director, creating an associate and assistant director hierarchy.

The Career Center disagrees:

- The director proposes funding for a full-time associate director for career counselor and a full-time position for associate director for employer relations. Both these positions can assist with the appropriate area.

The Reviewers recommend that:

- It would be wise to encourage outreach and alliances of the Career Center team with community organizations, workforce recruitment agencies, veteran and disability-oriented organizations, and local and city governmental agencies.

The Career Center agrees and has implemented:

- The Career Center is a member of Professionals In Human Resources Association (PIHRA) and Society For Human Resource Management (SHRM), Pomona Valley Chamber of Commerce and attends meetings. The Career Center is working directly with The Los Angeles County of Human Resources.

Budget

The reviewers recommend that:

- It is imperative that the Division of Student Affairs review its allocation of fiscal resources to the Career Center and allocate sufficient funding to ensure both its operating and personnel budgets are in alignment with institutional demands. Heavy reliance on Foundation and development funds to support basic Career Center needs is risky as the economy fluctuates.

The Career Center agrees:

- The Career Center continues to assess fees for services used by employers. As the reviewers point out that in a good economy this model works, but as seen in the recent economy downturn, many employers are not recruiting.
- The Career Center has developed a plan for future positions. The Career Center will present the plan to the associate vice president for student services and will ask for permanent funds from the Division of Student Affairs.

Technology

The reviewers recommend that:

- To remain relevant to all its stakeholders, the Career Center must invest resources in updating and expanding its website.

The Career Center agrees and implemented the following:

- The Career Center has a full-time graphic designer that updates the Career Center website. The Career Center is limited to the look and some content by IT@CPP.
- Include more videos on the website.
- Contact Social Media organizations that can assist with marketing programs and services via the Career Center's Social Media site. One organization might be the Amplify group which was started by Cal Poly Pomona alumni.
- One of the Career Center's graduate intern's is responsible for social media and assists with updating information and keeping the Career Center up to date of current trends. The Career Center's events coordinator works closely with Public Affairs to post information on events on Cal Poly Pomona's social media sites.

Programming and Service Delivery

The reviewers recommend that:

- The Career Center should also take into account the many different student populations on the campus and ways to customize programs for them. These populations may include Hispanic students, non-traditional students,

commuter students, transfer students, and veterans. This might even warrant a survey of these groups to find out their needs and then decide on the choices for service delivery. In addition, this effort would support the expansion of partnerships with administrators and leaders in such organizations, further enhancing communication and referrals giving students more of a “one-stop shop” appearance on campus.

The Career Center agrees and has been doing the following:

- The entire Career Center team has been, and continues to be liaisons to all six cultural centers on campus and conducts workshops on site at each cultural center.
- The Career Center has a career counselor that is liaison to the Veterans Resource Center and does weekly drop-ins in the center.
- The director is liaison to the College of Engineering including Maximizing Engineering Potential (MEP) students.

The reviewers recommend that:

- Cal Poly Pomona restore Career Center state funding to allow for a minimum one career counselor per College. The reviewers heard many comments from the deans and faculty stating the need for more career support for their students. Given the fact that the majority of CPP students are first generation college students and lack mentors in their families, the review team further emphasizes the importance of expanding the Center’s staffing.

The Career Center agrees:

- As the demands grow from deans and faculty for assistance for students the Career Center invites them to step up and contribute to as least jointly funding a Career Counselor position.
- The Career Center proposes to hire three full-time career counselors to be liaisons to the other three academic colleges.
- The Career Center proposes to hire a full-time career counselor to assist Cal Poly Pomona alumni and be liaison to Alumni Relations.

The reviewers recommend that:

- One way for the career counselors and peer mentors to receive feedback on their career advising skills is to have a simple survey that students or

alumni can take at the end of their session. Some institutions have developed a very short survey that is stored on a tablet and handed to the student to complete after their appointment. This allows the student to provide immediate and accurate feedback on the service received and to identify the career counselor with whom they met.

The Career Center agrees with the recommendation and intends to:

- Initiate a four question survey e-mailed to students after their appointment with a career counselor. The Career Center will initiate this in summer 2015.

Image

The reviewers recommend that the Career Center:

- Create a visibility plan. The Center's image could be turned around to a more vibrant, innovative model in a relatively short period of time with the incorporation of new collateral, social media content etc. through this plan.

The Career Center agrees and has implemented the following:

- The Career Center has hired a full-time graphic designer who has updated fliers, brochures, and all Career Center marketing materials.
- The graphic designer has been charged with creating a Career Center look for all marketing pieces including fliers, brochures, and banners.

Closing

The Career Center is appreciative to the reviewers, Cheryl Allmen and Deb Crane for their time, effort, and expert advice offered in this program review. The Career Center thanks the reviewers for their recommendations, which will assist the Career Center to make some immediate improvements and ideas for future improvement.