Education Advisory Board | Community College Executive Forum

Developing Career Services for Traditionally-Underserved Students

Employment Outcomes and Career Programming

Research Brief

Community College Executive Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Career services offices serve all students and do not dedicate resources or staff expressly to improve employment outcomes for traditionally-underserved students. Career services staff collaborate with international student services, First Nation student services, and student with disabilities services staff to organize joint programs, conduct cross-marketing, and refer students to each other's services. Conduct surveys and track digital metrics to evaluate student awareness of and satisfaction with employment services.

Develop one-on-one advising, workshops, and career fairs to improve students' networking, resume construction, interviewing, and job search skills. Skill gaps vary by individual, but traditionally-underserved students often must overcome additional barriers posed by cultural differences, disabilities, or generational difference to reduce skill gaps and obtain employment. Collaborate with English as a Second Language or international student offices to develop professional English communications skills so employers can focus on students' technical skills and unique qualities.

Connect students with local and non-local employers during career fairs, networking sessions, and through online job boards. Federally-regulated employers often offer additional opportunities for students with disabilities or First Nations students due to federal employment opportunity laws. Encourage traditionally-underserved students to pursue internship, co-op, or volunteer opportunities through their academic departments to develop skills and grow employment networks.

Incorporate additional questions on institutional surveys to gather demographic data designed to track employment outcomes for traditionally-underserved students. Profiled institutions do not disaggregate existing employment data to study employment outcomes for traditionally-underserved student groups. Survey timeframes impact completion rates and employment outcomes; surveys included in graduation processes increase student participation, whereas surveys administered six months after graduation may yield higher employment rates.

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2) Employment Support Structures

Needs Assessment and Service Structures

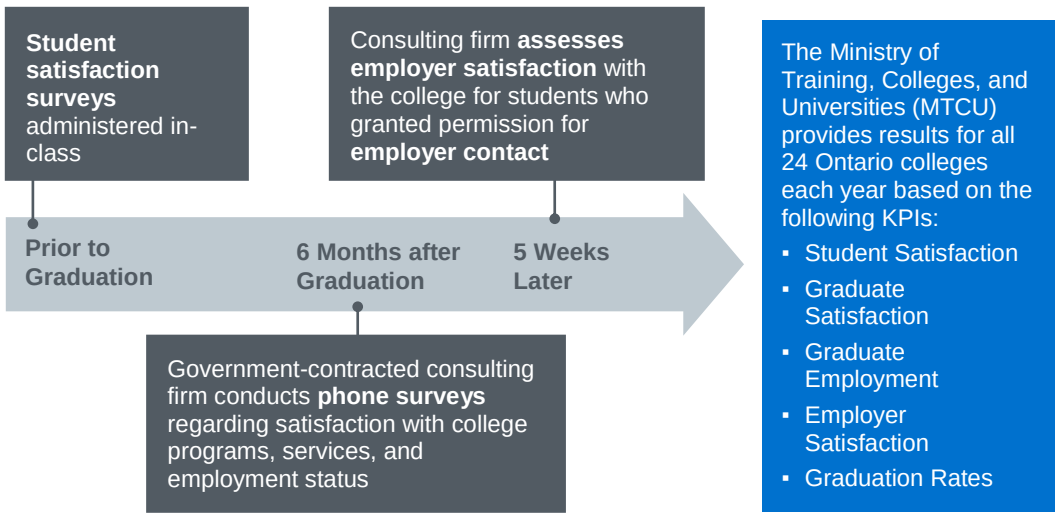
Incorporate Disability, Residency, or Ethnicity Data into Existing Employment Surveys to Track Student Outcomes

Institutional research, alumni services, or academic departments administer graduate surveys to assess employment outcomes but do not segregate survey data to identify employment outcomes for traditionally-underserved students (e.g., First Nations students, students with disabilities, international students, adult learners). Graduates typically report employment outcomes six to nine months after graduation in response to telephone outreach by profiled institutions or government officials. Some institutions administer graduate surveys face-to-face prior to graduation or after graduation via online surveys.

Develop supplemental employment surveys or incorporate additional questions on existing institutional surveys to gather demographic data designed to track employment outcomes for traditionally-underserved students. Incorporate these institution-led employment surveys into existing graduation processes to obtain higher student response rates.

Career services offices at profiled institutions within Ontario rarely conduct voluntary employment tracking.

Data Collection Process for Ontario's Key Performance Indicators[1]



Anecdotal Evidence Suggests Weaker Employment Outcomes for Traditionally-Underserved Students

Anecdotal information from contacts indicates lower employment rates and higher instances of under-employment for students with disabilities, First Nations students, and international students. Contacts at **Institution C** report that international students typically obtain employment in their desired field but often must enter at lower levels than Canadian peers who can harness networks of family and friends to locate employment. Contacts report that domestic students often also enjoy local, part-time employment experience from high school or summer breaks that may improve employment prospects following graduation.

1) Mohawk College. "KPIs – Key Performance Indicators." Accessed November 2014. http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/about/research/institutional-research/kpi.html.

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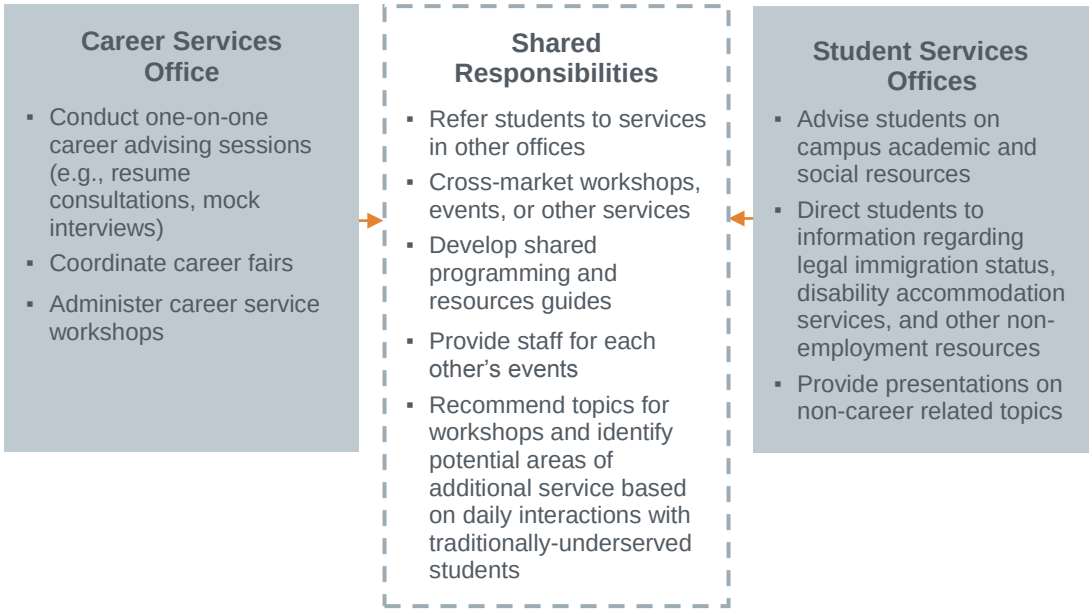
Develop Referral Systems and Joint Programming between Career Services and Relevant Student Support Offices

Staff at **Institution A** employ an institution-wide digital notes system to ensure traditionally-underserved students receive necessary career and academic services across offices.

Profiled institutions do not maintain resources or staff dedicated to traditionally-underserved student groups and instead collaborate with various student services offices (e.g., First Nation Student Services, International Student Office, Students with Disabilities Office) and academic departments to offer tailored programs and services. Contacts at **Institution F** do not dedicate staff members to traditionally-underserved student groups and prefer to individually assess each student's needs because students may identify with multiple groups.

Shared Responsibilities for Traditionally-Underserved Student Services



Career Services and Student Services Offices Possess Limited Funding and Few Staff

Career services offices at profiled institutions typically maintain two to six staff members who serve all students at the institution. The International Office at **Institution C** hired a registered immigration consultant to provide immigration advice to students due to government regulations that restrict the immigration information that administrators may offer. The consultant administers three to four workshops per term, develops fact-sheets, and serves as the office's resource on all immigration topics.

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3) Career Services and Employment Initiatives

Identifying Skill Gaps

Student Disabilities or Cultural Barriers Exacerbate Common Skill Gaps (e.g., Job Search, Resume, Interviewing Skills)

Assess skill gaps with individual students to identify distinct areas for improvement as contacts agree that skill gaps vary by individual rather than affiliate group. Common skill gaps occur in individuals across all student groups, but students in some traditionally-underserved groups may experience greater difficulty with these skills due to their disability status or cultural and generational barriers. Contacts identify skill gap trends through daily interactions with students during resume reviews, mock interviews, or other career advising sessions.

Common Skill Gaps and Employment Barriers

Networking

Contacts at **Institution F**note that acquisition of networking skills may be particularly challenging for some students with disabilities (e.g., visual impairment, learning disability, social anxiety).

Technology

Contacts at **Institution A** assert that adult learners often must dedicate additional time to development of technology skills to ensure these individuals understand the technology applied in their field as well as how to employ technology to conduct job searches and communicate once employed.

Job Search Strategies

International students often lack knowledge about the cultural aspects of local job search and hiring pracitices. According to contacts at **Institution F** all students, including international students, rely heavily on online job searches and remain unaware of additional in-person opportunities to locate and pursue potential employment.

Written Communication and Resume Construction

Advise all students on resume aesthetics, what experiences to highlight, and how to showcase unique skills. International student services staff at **Institution C** provide seminars on how to write a resume and cover letter for international students, including which common elements of international resumes students should exclude (e.g., photograph, marital status).

Verbal Communication and Interviewing

Contacts at **Institution C** work with all students, including traditionally-underserved students, on developing professional communication skills and confidence when speaking to potential employers.

Develop Workshops for Employers to Counteract Bias Against Hiring Traditionally-Underserved Students

Contacts at **Institution E** report that employers often over-perceive skill gaps in traditionally-underserved students due to societal biases. Develop relationships with local employers and communicate information on career services job posting websites to counteract negative perceptions of hiring international students, students with disabilities, or First Nations students. According to Employment and Social Development Canada, 57 percent of employees with disabilities do not require workplace accommodations. In the remaining cases over one third of accommodations result in low one-time costs averaging $500.[2]

Programs and Services

Employer Career Fair Attendance

100

The annual career fair at **Institution A** draws around 100 employers and is the largest in the county.

Conduct Individual Advising Sessions, Develop Targeted Workshops, and Establish Job Boards to Reduce Skill Gaps

Engage in conversations about students' interests, past experiences, and anticipated career goals during one-on-one sessions to identify opportunities to highlight existing transferrable skills and develop additional skills through volunteer or internship positions. Post resources online about resume writing, interview tips, and other career resources to assist alumni or accommodate students who hesitate to seek in-person career services. Contacts at **Institution A** developed an online video that describes the career development office and its services to make traditionally-underserved students more comfortable about meeting with staff face-to-face.

Strategies to Increase Student Employability and Reduce Skill Gaps

Conduct Individual Career Advising Appointments	▪ Tailor one-on-one sessions to individual student needs across a variety of topics (e.g., resume editing, mock interviews, career identification, and job search strategies). ▪ Contacts employ one-on-one advising sessions as their primary strategy to assess and reduce traditionally-underserved student skill gaps.
Establish Workshops and Presentations on Common Career Barriers	▪ Administer workshops and presentations to present topics of widespread interest and build awareness of additional services offered by career offices and First Nations, student disability, or international student offices. ▪ Staff in the international student services office at **Institution B** administer seven to eight sessions each term on international student work permits.
Implement Networking Sessions and Career Fairs	▪ Improve students' networking and communication skills with speed networking events and career fairs that encourage in-person interactions between students and employers. ▪ Contacts at **Institution A** encourage employers to post job postings on the institution's online job board prior to career fairs or employment events so that students may review desired qualifications and apply to positions.

2) Employment and Social Development Canada. "Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector." Accessed November 2014. http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.shtml.

> "We're trying to tell students that career workshops and immigration workshops go hand in hand. Post-graduate work permits don't mean much without a decent resume."
>
> - *Forum Interview*

Collaborate with International Student Services Offices to Develop Students' Communication and Teamwork Skills

International students possess valuable experience working across cultures and interacting in different languages, but often lack the English communication and teambuilding skills frequently sought by employers. Administer additional workshops, advising sessions, and English language communication hours targeted to international students to increase student employability relative to domestic peers. Academic department staff at **Institution D** noted that international students historically experienced greater difficulty securing internships and partnered with career services to offer a resume workshop.

Sample Career Services Workshops for International Students[3]

	Workshop Name	Frequency	Co-sponsor
	Job Search Strategies for International Students	Fall and Spring	International Student Office
	Internship Search and Funding for International Students	Spring	Office of Financial Aid
	Introduction to Networking for International Students	Fall and Spring	International Student Office, Alumni Affairs Office
	Interviewing Techniques for International Students	Fall and Spring	International Student Office
	Remaining Competitive in the Domestic Job Market	Spring	Department of Economics

Highlight Job Postings with Employers in Banking or Oil and Gas Industries to Students with Disabilities and First-Nations Students

The Employment Equity Act requires organizations and businesses that are regulated by the Canadian federal government to provide equal employment opportunities to women, First Nations individuals, individuals with disabilities, and members of visible minorities.[4] Send job postings with specified equal employment needs to colleagues in First Nations student services and disability services departments and promote job fairs or other on-campus events where students may meet these employers. Encourage traditionally-underserved students to also engage with small to medium businesses or employers in non-federally regulated industries without defined equal employment programs to ensure all students feel confident locating a job in their desired field.

3) EAB Research Libraries. "International Student Career Development." Accessed November 2014. http://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/student-affairs-forum/custom/2014/05/international-student-career-development.

4) Canadian Human Rights Commission. "Equal Employment Opportunities." Accessed November 2014. http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/equal-employment-opportunities.

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Top Diversity Employers in Greater Toronto[5]

Employers for Women, Visible Minorities, Individuals with Disabilities, First Nations Individuals, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered/Transsexual Individuals

- Accenture, Inc.
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- CIBC
- Corus Entertainment Inc.
- Ernst & Young LLP
- Home Depot of Canada Inc.
- KPMG LLP
- Loblaw Companies Limited
- McCarthy Tétrault LLP
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- Procter & Gamble Inc.
- PWC / PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
- Rogers Communications Inc.
- TD Bank Group
- University of Toronto
- William Osler Health System
- Xerox Canada Inc.
- YMCA of Greater Toronto

Includes employers listed as both Greater Toronto's Top Employers and Canada's Best Diversity Employers according to Mediacorp Canada Inc.'s Canada's Top 100 Employers project.

Career services initiatives to cultivate relationships with local employers across profiled institutions vary according to resource levels and career service strategic plans. Contacts at **Institution A** provide targeted career events to showcase local employers. Past events included a small career event with 17 employers with seasonal part-time work opportunities and an information and networking session with an employer seeking 12 HTML programmers. Contacts at **Institution F** do not maintain many local employer initiatives due to insufficient staffing and lack of student interest. Contacts recommend first identifying students' desired employers and employment outcomes prior to seeking out local employers to increase buy-in from both parties.

Academic Departments or Service Learning Offices Oversee Experiential Work Programs

Many Canadian colleges embed internship or co-op opportunities within academic programs. Academic program staff help students locate internship opportunities while career services staff provide guidance on resumes and interviewing. As with the majority of career service initiatives, administrators at profiled institutions promote experiential work programs for all students and do not develop targeted programs for traditionally-underserved students. Contacts at **Institution C** advise international students to meet with academic departments and career services to plan internship and employment opportunities as immigration regulations add logistical steps to the process.

5) Mediacorp Canada Inc. "Canada's Best Diversity Employers" Accessed November 2014. http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/; Mediacorp Canada Inc. "Greater Toronto's Top Employers" Accessed November 2014. http://www.canadastop100.com/toronto/.

4) Program Marketing and Assessment

Marketing Services

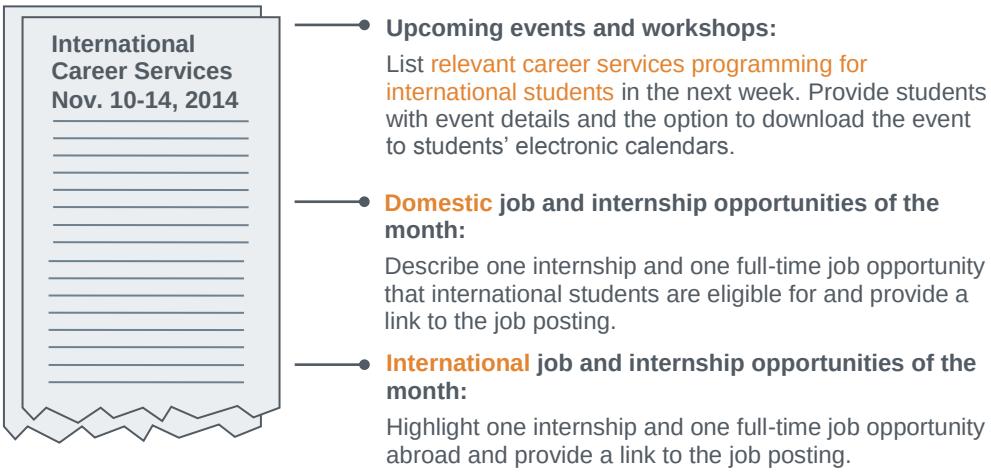
Market Career Services on Career and Student Service Offices' Websites, Social Media, and during Targeted Student Events

Cross-market career services with First Nation student services, the international student office, student disability services or other student services offices to build awareness of career services for traditionally-underserved students. Common cross-marketing strategies involve targeted emails, links to each other's websites, or presentations prior to each other's events. Career services staff at **Institution A** target emails to students according to their academic program. Staff consult the major listed for student accounts on the institution's virtual job board to identify targeted email recipients. Career services staff partner with faculty to develop email content and finalize contact lists. Contacts recommend targeted emails over general email blasts to provide students with relevant emails that will stand out in full inboxes.

Career Services Marketing Channels:

- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Virtual Ad Boards
- Videos Embedded on Websites

Sample International Career Services Email[6]



Program Assessment

Administer Surveys to Assess Student Satisfaction with Career Services Events or Advising Sessions

Few profiled institutions maintain structured evaluation processes for career services, and contacts do not collect data on which career services programs provide the greatest value to traditionally-underserved students. Contacts at **Institution C** report that workshops often serve as initial interactions and lead students to schedule in-person meetings afterwards. Contacts identify this funneling technique as a valuable way to help traditionally-underserved students.

Collect comments and feedback on workshops, individual advising sessions, and other career events at the end of each session with paper or electronic surveys that assess student participation and satisfaction. Include questions regarding student demographics, perceived value of programming, and suggested services or

6) EAB Research Libraries. "International Student Career Development." Accessed November 2014. http://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/student-affairs-forum/custom/2014/05/international-student-career-development.

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programming to build knowledge of career services attendance and desired services for groups of traditionally-underserved students. Contacts at **Institution F** report that staff assume that First Nations students maintain the same career goals as traditional students but do not possess evidence to support this. Contacts plan to conduct additional conversations with these students to realign services and better assess career services success. Employ input from survey results and other anecdotal feedback to determine future programming.

Monitor Digital Metrics to Evaluate Marketing

Emails sent early in the week and prior to mid-afternoon often achieve higher recipient open rates. International student service administrators at **Institution C** track email open rates sent to prospective, accepted, and current students with Mail Chimp. Other common digital marketing metrics include:

- Website, Webpage, and Video Hit Counters
- Website Bounce Rates
- Website Time Tracking
- Social Media Followers
- Facebook Likes
- Twitter Retweets

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Which traditionally underserved student groups possess lower employment or underemployment rates following graduation (e.g., adult learners, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, students with disabilities)?
- What perceived or real skill gaps exist for traditionally underserved student groups?
  - How do profiled institutions identify these skill gaps?
- What other barriers impede traditionally underserved students from obtaining employment after graduation?
- To what extent do some employers hire more traditionally underserved students than others?
- What processes are in place at other institutions to track and verify employment of graduates?
  - What information sources do administrators draw from?
- Which offices are responsible for providing career development services to international students, first generation students, or other traditionally underserved student groups?
- What resources (e.g., staff, funding, office space) do profiled institutions dedicate for these services?
- How do profiled institutions cultivate relationships with local employers to improve employment rates for traditionally underserved students?
- What strategies do profiled institutions maintain to reduce common skill gaps for traditionally underserved students' and increase student employability?
  - How do profiled institutions assist international students and ESL students with English proficiency and employability related to job search and professional communication?
- What types of experiential work and volunteer programs (e.g., co-op programs, internships, academic program) do profiled institutions offer to provide traditionally underserved students with practical work experience?
- How do profiled institutions help students to identify and highlight their unique qualities to employers?
- How do profiled institutions build awareness of career services for traditionally underserved students?
- How do profiled institutions evaluate current employment support structures or initiatives to improve employment rates of traditionally underserved students?
  - Which programs do contacts identify as particularly helpful to underserved student groups and why?

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Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Canadian Human Rights Commission. “Equal Employment Opportunities.” Accessed November 2014. http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/equal-employment-opportunities.
- EAB Research Libraries. “International Student Career Development.” Accessed November 2014. http://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/student-affairs-forum/custom/2014/05/international-student-career-development.
- Employment and Social Development Canada. “Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector.” Accessed November 2014. http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.shtml.
- Mediacorp Canada Inc. “Canada's Best Diversity Employers” Accessed November 2014. http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/.
- Mediacorp Canada Inc. “Greater Toronto's Top Employers” Accessed November 2014. http://www.canadastop100.com/toronto/.
- Mohawk College. “KPIs – Key Performance Indicators.” Accessed November 2014. http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/about/research/institutional-research/kpi.html.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Accessed November 2014. http://nces.ed.gov/.

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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed that oversee student employment initiatives at urban colleges.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief[7]

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Undergraduate Enrollment	Classification
Institution A	South, U.S.	20,000	Associate's--Public Urban-serving Multicampus
Institution B	Central Canada	10,000	N/A
Institution C	Central Canada	10,000	N/A
Institution D	Central Canada	25,000	N/A
Institution E	Central Canada	27,000	N/A
Institution F	Western Canada	14,000	N/A

7) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Accessed November 2014. http://nces.ed.gov/.