

Career Coaching Survey: Brief Report

May 2017

Introduction

The Career Center at Illinois (TCC) provides all students with 30-minute individual appointments by request. In October 2016, February 2017 and March 2017 TCC administered a new version of its Career Coaching Survey (formerly termed “Career Counseling”, which has been administered in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. This survey aimed to assess students’ self-reported learning outcomes and satisfaction with their career coaching experiences in efforts to improve services to help students better prepare and attain their career goals. This is separate from a regular survey of health-specific advising appointments. The survey design was revised this year to gain a better understanding of students’ perceived knowledge and learning outcomes.

Method

In November 2016, March 2017 and April 2017 TCC invited students who used advising services in the previous month (October, February, and March) to complete an online survey using CampusLabs. All students with a 30-minute appointment were invited, with the exception of repeat visitors who were not surveyed a second time.

A total of 1,208 (non-health) advising appointments were conducted for 504 students in October 2016, February 2017, and March 2017. The survey was distributed electronically to 322 students who used advising services. The survey was available for the entire month following the target appointment month. Of this group, 136 (43% response rate) completed the survey. Survey responses were matched to coaching appointment data based on email address.

The demographics of the respondents resembled those who were sent the survey in every category. Of the responses there were more females (62%) than males (38%). Most respondents came from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (49%) followed by College of Engineering (9%), Division of General Studies (8%) with less than 10 from all other categories. Most respondents were international (39%), followed by White (40%), and Asian (14%), with less than 20 in all other categories. There were 12% freshman, 15% sophomores, 18% juniors, 34% seniors, 19% graduate students, and 1% alumni.

Findings and Implications

How do students hear about Career Coaching at The Career Center? Academic Advisor (n=45, 33%) was the most frequent response. This was followed by website (n=42, 31%), word of mouth (n=38, 28%), walked by (n=25, 18%), and workshop/class presentation (n=25, 18%). As academic advisors are a key source for connecting students with TCC, it is important to ensure that academic advisors have accurate information about career advising services. TCC can continue to maintain strong partnerships with academic advisors by hosting regular meetings to share information and discuss key issues.

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Appointments and Scheduling. Online scheduling was the most frequent method (n=102, 76%), followed by in person (n=20, 15%), via email (n=8, 6%), and via phone (n=5, 4%). Most students “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” that scheduling their appointment was easy (n=128, 95%), checking in for my appointment was simple (n=127, 93%), reception staff was helpful (n=129, 96%), and reception staff was courteous (n=130, 96%). This provides evidence that the new addition of online scheduling is embraced by students. Moreover, most students said the 30-minute appointment length was “just right” (n=95, 77%) while some thought it was “not long enough” (n=26, 26%). Only 2 thought it was “too long”.

Overall Experience. The most common topic discussed was jobs or internships (n=77, 60%), followed by career or major exploration (n=72, 56%), and graduate or professional schools (n=26, 28%). Prior to their appointment, most students reported knowing “some” about the topic (n=67, 53), with a normal distribution of some knowing “little” or “nothing” (n=18, 14%) and some knowing “a lot” or “everything” (n=42, 33%). Students reported that their expectations for the appointment were “met” (n=65, 53%) or “exceeded” (n=40, 33%). On a scale of 0 (not likely at all) to 10 (extremely likely), most students fell within the 8-10 range (n=94, 78%). There were no discernable differences by demographics (e.g. class standing).

Experience with a Career Coach. Based on a five-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), most students either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that talking with a career coach was valuable (n=104, 90%) and positive (n=106, 91%). They “agreed” or “strongly agreed” their career coach was knowledgeable (n=108, 88%), their needs were met based on their conversation with the career coach (n=107, 88%), they felt comfortable discussing their concerns with their career coach (n=112, 91%), and they would recommend their career coach to others (n=104, 85%). Furthermore, 92% either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would return to the Career Center to speak with a career coach if they needed further assistance. Overall most students felt comfortable and satisfied with their career coach.

Outcomes of Working with a Career Coach. After talking with their career coach, students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they felt more prepared to achieve their career goal(s) (n=95, 81%), felt more hopeful about their future (n=90, 76%), clearly identified what their next step(s) would be (n=91, 78%), are aware of ways to find additional information/resources (n=98, 83%), and know themselves better (n=71, 61%). Most took an action based on the conversation with my career coach (n=93, 80%). The most popular actions included using web-based career resources (62%), logging into I-Link (41%), attending a career fair or networking event (24%), going to a drop-in resume, cover letter, or LinkedIn Review (20%), and scheduling a follow-up appointment with a career coach (18%). There were no discernable differences by demographics (e.g. class standing) except a general trend that across the board, scores for Career and Major Exploration tend to be lower than other categories.

What Students Expected to Gain and Actually Gained from Career Coaching Appointments? Among 99 usable responses from a question, “What did you expect to gain from this appointment?” 18 indicated that they were seeking help with resume or cover letter. Many listed major exploration or career choices. Often students listed general help such as “advice”, “more direction” and “general career guidance”. In response to “What did you actually gain from this appointment?” they listed new, useful **knowledge** and **resources**. Many students noted **affective benefits** such as reassurance, encouragement, and comfort. They commented on the process such as receiving clear instructions. A few students were dissatisfied with how their coach responded to their inquiries. This allows TCC to identify growth areas for career coaches and provide extra support around topics of working with exploring students, or incorporating probing questions.

Students’ Recommendations to Improve Career Coaching Services. Among 39 responses, over half (n=22, 56%) provided **positive feedback for both services and advisors**. Seventeen (44%) were related to suggestions such as **more information, individualized advice** by assigning an advisor with expertise in certain areas, and a wish for some information to be delivered in a different way (clearer, more step by step, more advice for students just starting out).

For More Information

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