



National Career Development Association

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National Career Development Association Leadership Academy Action Learning Project Summary

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Leadership Academy Class: Class of 2016

Project Title: Community College Membership: Needs, Systems, and Supports

Project Description: Community colleges are underrepresented in NCDA's membership, while they provide unique perspectives on service to a diverse and underserved population. A member and non-member survey was developed and distributed to better understand the needs and goals of career practitioners in community colleges. A summary will provide NCDA with guidance on how to include this constituency group within the larger organization.

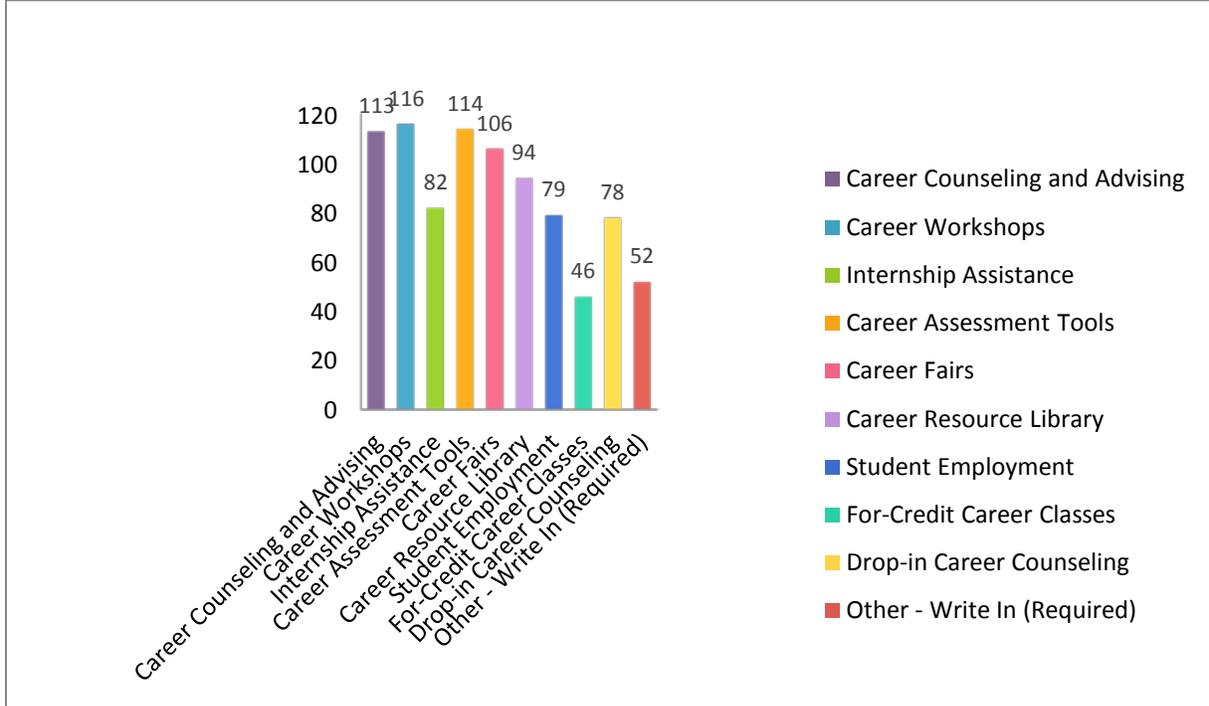
A survey was sent to 240 community college representatives, 200 from the NCDA membership list, and 40 additional from the Colorado Community College System, resulting in a 53% response rate. Participants were encouraged to pass on to additional colleagues who may not be NCDA members, to increase the number of non-member responses.

Summary/Conclusion:

76% of the respondents identified that their primary role is career services/career development in a community college, however the majority added that they have combined roles with academic advising, transfer, disability services, and mental health counseling, among others. The majority of the combined roles were with advising, a few in administration, teaching, internship/experiential learning, and even international student advising. Juggling multiple hats with a fraction of their role being career development appears to be the norm in community colleges.

The identified title of departments had little consistency, but the most common is "Career Services," followed by "Career Center," and "Career Development Center." Many titles illustrate further the combined roles, such as "Career and Transfer," "Academic and Career Advising," and "Counseling and Career Services." 77% reported to Student Affairs/Student Services, and 11% Academic Affairs (the remainder were a variety of other responses).

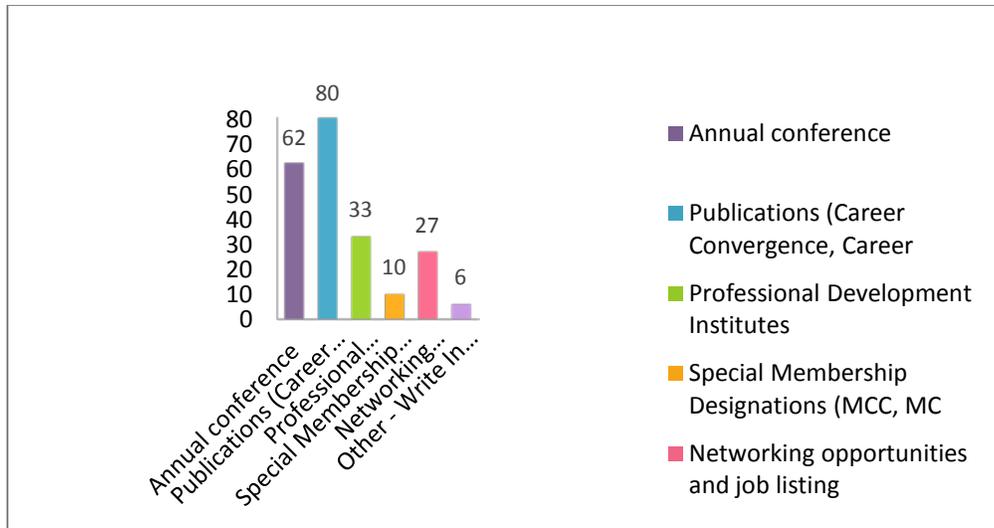
Services offered to students:



The other comments included job search assistance, classroom presentations, and experiential learning opportunities, as well as other career events including industry days.

When asked about Guided Pathways, referring to the Community College Research Center's (CCRC) recommendations, 35% answered that they are implementing the concepts of “Redesigning America’s Community Colleges” (Bailey, T.T., Jaggars, S.S., and Jenkins, D., 2015), which is quite remarkable since the book and initial presentation at the American Association of Community Colleges conference were just out in 2015. It is a concept of changing from the “cafeteria model” of course and service delivery to “guided pathways,” promoting program and degree completion. Many commented that their institutions were in process or just beginning implementation.

Since 88% of respondents are NCDAs members, we can determine that they have already identified with NCDAs as a professional “home.” Member services in which they participate:



Many seemed very satisfied with the services provided, but several identified as new members so were not as familiar with what is available. Training appears to be the largest identified need among members, specifically training that related to community college issues. They would also like to see: funding opportunities (especially to be able to attend conferences), local/regional resources, and webinars.

Of the 12% who responded as non-members, they identified the barriers to join in two areas: budget (60%) and unaware of benefits (40%).

Results/Recommendations:

Community colleges face unique challenges and support with career development for students. Their systems and processes have evolved as trends, student and community needs, and budgets required, resulting in a myriad of approaches to service students and promote their key mission of student access and success.

NCDA would be well-served to note the specific issues for community college members and may be an excellent resource for training and professional development. Some specific requests for training included unbundling the GCDF training so that employees could benefit by focusing on modules as time and budget allows. Other topic areas are for training related to specific populations, such as first generation students, adult-reentry, foster youth, veterans, underrepresented minority populations, undocumented students, basic skill students, and second language learners. Additional requests were for young (new) professional training, which fits well with past Leadership Academy project recommendations.

An additional need is for research and data to promote the benefits of career development to improve the completion rate of students, retention, and bridge the achievement gap, allowing community college professionals to advocate for increasing and enhancing their resources to promote overall student success.