

Annual Assessment Report
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Name of Department: Center for Students with Disabilities

Name of Contact Person: Jodi Falk Ph.D.

Name of Person(s) completing report or contributing to the project: Jodi Falk Ph.D.; Sarah Solovy, MSW; Heather Nicholson, MS; Michael Elias, MEd

I. Abstract

The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) is committed to successful college-to-career transitions for students with disabilities. College students with disabilities are often challenged by the skill sets needed to successfully prepare for and navigate the career search process. As a subgroup of the nontraditional student population students with disabilities are often so focused on achieving academic success that they do not take advantage of the college opportunities that will allow them to develop their employment seeking skills. Overall, employers are supportive of hiring qualified individuals with disabilities. Often their challenge is finding qualified candidates that can communicate their strengths, challenges, skills and qualifications for the job.

This learning assessment centered on the development of specific college-to-career skills for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities that were enrolled in the CSD volunteered to participate in the Career Club. The purpose of the Career Club was to learn and practice specific job-seeking skills. Students completed pre- and post-evaluations of their own skill sets. In cooperation with the Career Center, eight sessions were offered at both Lincoln Park and Loop campuses. The sessions included resume writing, interview skills, and job seeking strategies. At the conclusion of the program, Career Club participants reported an increase in their job search and interview skills. All regularly attending career club participants obtained a job, internship, or interview after completing the program. Results suggest that the career club positively impacted both the skill level and confidence of participants.

II. Learning Outcome Assessed

The Career Club focused on the development of specific job skills for students with disabilities. We endeavored to determine: Do students with disabilities who participate in specialized college-to-career activities report increased confidence in job search and interview skills? These skills include resume writing, interview skills, and job seeking strategies as well as behaviors promoting positive interrelationships in the workplace and an understanding of the role which extracurricular activities play in early career development. By building these skill sets and increasing the overall confidence and employability of students, CSD extends the impact and efficacy of DePaul University programming.

III. Introduction & Context

The Center for Students with Disabilities is committed to the provision of equal access to the DePaul experience as well as the instruction of skills and strategies that will enable students to achieve academic success and upon graduation transition into the workplace and community with confidence. Within Student Affairs, the goal is for students who participate in Student Affairs programs and activities to be able to integrate and apply knowledge gained across curricular and co-curricular experiences in order to advance academic, personal and career growth. By addressing the pre-employment needs of students with disabilities, this project advances the goals of each level of the university, emphasizing the needs and goals of the student.

The ability to find and keep employment is foundational to the transition from graduation to the workforce. However, students with disabilities face great challenges in moving into the workforce. For example, filling out an application form may be challenging for students diagnosed with AD/HD because they may miss important details of information requested. Students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders may have difficulty in face-to-face interviews because they may refrain from eye contact or hesitant to answer questions. Students diagnosed with a physical disability may not know how to present their strengths that greatly surpass their vulnerabilities. The overall preparedness of college students with disabilities for transitioning from higher education to employment has been shown to be substantially less when compared to their peers without disabilities. Students with disabilities typically have limited experiences with career development activities and little or no meaningful prior work experience (Hitchings & Retish, 2000). Stodden, Dowrick, Anderson, Heyer, and Acosta (2005) further report that, while there is a general sense that college students with disabilities believe that postsecondary education increased their self-confidence and marketability, higher education did not prepare them as well for transition from college to employment.

Springboard to Success was created with the support of a CSD grant designed to meet the needs of both students with disabilities transitioning into the workplace and employers who will be receiving them. This project encompasses the collaborative efforts of DePaul's Career Center and the Center for Students with Disabilities with key Chicago area organizations and businesses. The hypothesis is that participating students with disabilities benefit, moving out into society after graduation on more equal footing with their peers. The literature suggests that students with disabilities report increased job seeking skills and knowledge after participating in a job club or group, and those who participate have been found to find better rates of employment, higher quality jobs, and higher income than disabled nonparticipants (Faddis & Long, 1986). Additionally, students are more likely to engage in job-seeking behaviors when they believe they have effective strategies (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Turner, & Barlow, 2008).

Springboard to Success in cooperation with the Career Center provided group instruction, interaction, and feedback focused on building students' awareness of the job seeking process, instructing and practicing job seeking skills, and fostering the confidence to pursue employment after graduation in a series of four 90-minute sessions throughout the winter and spring quarters. Historically, college students with disabilities underutilize career centers (Sears, Strauser, & Wong, 2014; Briel & Getzel, 2014). However, research suggests that utilizing career centers leads to greater likelihood of employment for students with disabilities (Schneider, Slade, Secker, Rinaldi, Boyce, Johnson, Floyd & Grove, 2009). Student employment post-graduation and the successful placement of DePaul graduates within local business will reinforce DePaul's ties to the community and underscores the effectiveness of DePaul's academic programs.

DePaul University is committed to enriching students' educational experiences, increasing internship and professional networking opportunities, and strengthening partnerships with Chicago's business community (Vision 2018 Objective 2b). Specific skills-based training appears to be the most effective instructional method by which to teach job search strategies specific to students with disabilities (White, Summers, Zhang, & Renault, 2014). Skills-based training benefits students and the business community by creating stronger relationships based upon informed disclosure and reasonable accommodations (Briel & Getzel, 2014). Improved employment outcomes for graduating students can extend the reach of the university's quality programming and strengthen ties within the Chicago business community.

IV. Data Collection & Methodology

Students registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities were recruited for the Career Club by means of emails sent to all current CSD students, approved fliers in Loop and Lincoln Park campus common areas, and mentions by clinicians to those students with whom they work. Students not registered with CSD were not invited to attend. Participation in the club was voluntary and anonymous. Students were permitted to attend any or all sessions. Attendance varied between five and ten students per session with seven regulars common to multiple sessions. Each of four Career Club sessions focused on a different topic: Career Center services, job and internship fundamentals, resumes and cover letters; making a good first impression, effective communication and networking, and obtaining a job or internship; disability disclosure in the workplace; and self-advocacy, interview techniques, and asking for recommendations.

At the end of each session, students completed a questionnaire including basic demographic information and questions regarding the students' experiences of the club. Items included Likert scale, yes/no, multiple choice, and open response questions. Students reported on their use of the Career Center, actions taken after attending club meetings, their likelihood of taking specific career-related actions in the future, and their confidence on specific job-seeking and career-building skills. Confidence was indicated on a five-point Likert scale. Ratings included: Not Confident, Somewhat Confident, Confident, Very Confident, and Extremely Confident. Ratings of "confident" or above were considered acceptable indicators of student confidence. An increase of one level or more on the Likert scale indicated an acceptable increase in confidence. Data was combined and collated with specific attention to items informing progress towards the learning outcome by the Assistant Director of CSD, the *Springboard to Success* Project Coordinator, and a CSD Learning Specialist.

Participation in each Career Club session was optional. Attendees voluntarily completed anonymous questionnaires at the close of each session. A statement at the beginning of each questionnaire indicated that the form was both confidential and optional and that results would be used to "meet CSD students' needs regarding job and internship search." Although questionnaire data were non-identifiable, all materials were maintained in a locked cabinet in a private office for the duration of the project.

V. Data & Results

Students indicated increased confidence in job search and interview skills through participation in the Career Club. All students who attended each of the four Career Club meetings completed a questionnaire, and seven of eight students who had attended multiple meetings completed the final evaluation. Thirteen students in total attended Career Club meetings, six males and seven females.

This group comprised of two freshmen, two juniors, five seniors, and four graduate students. Two participants reported being of Asian descent, one African-American, eight White, and two declined to specify. Ages ranged from eighteen years of age to forty-four: two 17-18, three 21-22, three 23-25, three 26-28, and two aged 35 or higher. Among the thirteen participants, sixteen disabilities were reported and one participant declined to specify. Of the sixteen disabilities represented among the participants, there were: four mood disorders, four attentional disorders, three medical conditions, three learning disabilities, and two visual impairments. Specific diagnoses included Bipolar disorder, ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and Crohn's disease.

Of eight participants, seven reported confidence in networking skills after attending the session on networking. Five of the eight had previously attended a networking event. Eight of eight reported feeling confident and prepared to go on an interview after the club session.

Of the ten students who attended the session on disclosing disabilities in the workplace, only four reported increased comfort in disclosing to employers and five reported becoming less comfortable. Four of five students who attended the session on requesting accommodations became more comfortable requesting accommodations. Remaining students indicated no change in their level of comfort.

Seven of seven students reported an increase in confidence in job-seeking skills and an increase in confidence in finding employment after graduation on the final evaluation after attending multiple Career Club sessions. They found the informational sessions on disclosing disabilities in the workplace, writing a resume, and making a first impression most helpful and suggested future topics include how to present a disability as a strength, more detailed information on writing cover letters, and finding a fit between career and interests.

Of those students who completed the final evaluation, six of seven had written or revised their resumes based upon information presented during Career Club. Seven of seven had visited the Career Center during the club or planned to visit in the future. Beyond the questionnaires, three of the eight regularly-attending students obtained a job or internship following participation in the Career Club, and the remaining five had obtained and participated in interviews.

Learning Outcome	Number of Students Assessed	Number of Students with Acceptable or Better Performance
Students with disabilities who participate in specialized college-to-career activities will report increased confidence in job search and interview skills.	Increased confidence in job-seeking skills: 7	7
	Confidence in interview skills: 8	8

VI. Discussion & Interpretation of Results

Increased confidence and job-seeking behaviors: Research indicates that increased confidence in job-search skills supports the likelihood that a student will engage in job-seeking behaviors (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Turner, & Barlow, 2008). By providing direct instruction and practice in a wide range of job-search and job-readiness skills through the Career Club, *Springboard for Success* supported students' increased confidence and comfort in a range of career skills, including the targeted job-seeking and interview skills, for participating students registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities. Confidence or increased confidence was also reported for networking, finding employment after graduation, and requesting accommodations in the workplace. Eight regularly attending members successfully obtained a job, internship, or interview following participation in the Career Club.

Discomfort with disclosure: Following a discussion outlining both the benefits and potential risks of disclosing disability in the workplace, five of ten students reported decreased comfort with disclosure, a surprising result which may reflect previously limited awareness of potential conflicts or discrimination in the workplace. While students did indicate comfort establishing accommodations in the workplace with employers, such discussions will not arise until a disability is disclosed. In meetings with DePaul's CSD Director, Chicago employers working with employees with disabilities expressed that reluctance to disclose and negotiate reasonable accommodations can create challenges in the workplace by postponing such discussions until the employee is already facing probation. Developing an approach or strategy for disclosure to provide students which serves to inform employers while protecting employees would support both programmatic and community needs.

Personal and career growth: The program coordinator anecdotally reports that throughout the course of the program, students became more open to the coordinator and each other. While they developed confidence in their skills, they also developed comfort with one another as evidenced by increased group participation. In the future, we may want to investigate how the comfort developed within the group influences the success of the group model as well as individual students' comfort discussing or disclosing their disabilities. These anecdotal accounts evidence the personal development taking place during Career Club meetings alongside career growth. Both contribute to the mission of Student Affairs and the Center for Students with Disabilities.

Need for expanded participation: Both program coordinator and participants hoped that more students would participate in Career Club in the future. To this end, students suggested increased advertising, flexible scheduling, inviting non-CSD students, and serving pizza at meetings. An increased number of student participants would improve the reliability of demonstrated increases and extend the impact of the program. Additional information on student outcomes would provide greater feedback about the long-term and community impact of the program.

VII. Recommendations and Plans for Action

Results of the questionnaires will be shared among the staff developing the 2015-2016 programs. Student participants will have the opportunity to participate in the revised program in the upcoming school year as well as the Just in Time Job Fair this June where students will meet with employers, practicing and improving their newly-acquired job-seeking skills.

Staff will revisit the topic of disclosure to identify specific topics and issues which may have inhibited student comfort in disclosure and revise discussions to address concerns. To accommodate a greater number of students' schedules, each of the four sessions will be offered during two separate time slots. Additionally, the Program Coordinator will be available for appointments to review missed club content and reinforce knowledge and skills. The club will offer four workshops. Each will be available at two separate times during the day. These meetings will take place once a month on both the Lincoln Park and Loop campuses. With four opportunities to attend each workshop, students will be more likely to find a group which accommodates their schedules.

Recruitment will expand through greater marketing, sustained promotion by CSD clinicians, and advance planning to allow calendars to be distributed during CSD intake meetings. This will also increase program exposure to freshmen, a group which can benefit from the club by participating in multiple years over the course of their attendance at DePaul as well as by engaging in resume-building activities while in college. Additionally, *Springboard for Success* will shift from grant-based to departmental funding and become more integrated into CSD programming, also resulting in increased visibility to potential participants.

As greater numbers of students become aware of the skills and behaviors needed to successfully obtain employment after graduation, more students with disabilities may participate in resume-building extracurricular activities at the Career Center and student organizations on campus. Increased confidence in networking and job-seeking skills may result in a higher rate of employment after graduation, benefiting the university and ties with the Chicago business community. Greater DePaul student and graduate participation in on-campus and off-campus communities serves the goals of both Student Affairs and DePaul University. Continued and improved outcomes will help the Center for Students continue to teach students skills and strategies to transition into the workplace and community with confidence, and all of these strategies will empower DePaul students to pursue and obtain personal and professional goals.

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Appendix

**Springboard to Success - Career Club Participant Surveys
Sessions 1-4 and Final Evaluation**

**Springboard to Success: Session 1
Career Club 2014-2015
Participant Survey**

Please read and answer the following questions by circling the 'yes' or 'no'. This evaluation is completely confidential and optional. Your feedback is important and will help us to meet CSD students' needs regarding job and internship search.

1. Gender: _____
Age: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Disability(s): _____

2. Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman Graduate

3. Do you have a resume? Yes No
If yes, did you have help writing your resume? Yes No
Who helped you with your resume? (Circle as many as apply)
 - Writing Center
 - Career Center
 - Faculty or staff member
 - Family member
 - Friend
 - Partner
 - Other _____

4. Have you ever used services offered by the Career Center? Yes No

5. Have you ever been on a job interview? Yes No

6. Have you ever had a job? Yes No

7. Do you plan to use the Career Center to help you write/revise your resume? Yes No

Springboard to Success: Session 2
Career Club 2014-2015
Participant Survey

Please read and answer the following questions by circling the 'yes' or 'no'. This evaluation is completely confidential and optional. Your feedback is important and will help us to meet CSD students' needs regarding job and internship search.

1. Gender: _____
Age: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Disability(s): _____

2. Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman Graduate

3. Have you ever attended a networking event/Career Fair at DePaul or any other location? Yes No

4. After today's sessions how confident and prepared do you feel to attend a networking event?
Not confident somewhat confident Confident Very confident Extremely Confident

5. After today's sessions how confident and prepared do you feel to go on an interview?
Not confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very confident Extremely Confident

6. Do you currently have a LinkedIn Profile? Yes No

7. If you do not have LinkedIn Profile, do you plan to make a profile? Yes No

- 8.

9. Since the last Career Club meeting, have you sought assistance from Career Center to update/create your resume? Yes No

If you answered YES, please describe your experience at Career Center.

10. Did you make an appointment? Yes No
Were they helpful? Yes No
Did you feel comfortable? Yes No
Would you go back to Career Center for help? Yes No
If you answered NO to any questions above please explain why?
____ I was uncomfortable/too anxious/ too nervous
____ I was too busy
____ Weather related
____ I forgot
____ Other, please explain _____

Springboard to Success: Session 3

**Career Club 2014-2015
Participant Survey**

Please read and answer the following questions by circling the 'yes' or 'no'. This evaluation is completely confidential and optional. Your feedback is important and will help us to meet CSD students' needs regarding job and internship search.

1. Gender: _____

Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Disability(s): _____

2. Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman Graduate

Before today's session, how comfortable were you disclosing your disability?

Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

3. After today's session, how comfortable do you feel disclosing your disability in the workplace?

Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

4. After today's session, how comfortable do you feel asking for specific accommodations?

Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

5. After today's session, do you plan to disclose your disability at some point during the hiring process? Yes No

6. Have you ever disclosed your disability in the workplace before? Yes No

7. Do you feel your disability will interfere with your ability to get or keep a job? Yes No

Why or why not?

**Springboard to Success: Session 4
Career Club 2014-2015
Participant Survey**

Please read and answer the following questions by circling the 'yes' or 'no'. This evaluation is completely confidential and optional. Your feedback is important and will help us to meet CSD students' needs regarding job and internship search.

1. Gender: _____
Age: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Disability(s): _____

2. Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman Graduate

3. BEFORE today's session, how comfortable did you feel asking for accommodations in the workplace?
Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

4. AFTER today's session how comfortable do you feel asking for accommodations in the workplace?
Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

5. BEFORE today have you asked for accommodations in the workplace? YES NO

6. AFTER today, do you plan to ask for accommodations in the workplace? YES NO

7. AFTER today, do you feel comfortable explaining your disability with an employer including the ways it may affect your work and what accommodations will be helpful in you so that you are the most effective in the workplace?
Not Comfortable Somewhat Comfortable Comfortable Very Comfortable Extremely Comfortable

**Springboard to Success
Career Club 2014-2015
Final Participation Evaluation**

Please answer the following questions related to your job search and CSD Career Club experience. Your feedback is important and will help us develop future programming that will better meet the needs of all CSD students as they prepare for internship and job searches. Thank You!

DePaul University Career Center

1. How many times did you visit the Career Center PRIOR to your involvement with Career Club? ____
2. How many Career Center workshops did you attend PRIOR to the Career Club? ____
3. How many times did you visit the Career Center DURING your involvement with Career Club? ____
4. How many Career Center workshops did you attend DURING your involvement with Career Club? ____
5. Do you plan to visit the Career Center in the future? ____

Career Club

6. Did you have a resume before attending the Career Club? ____
7. Did you write or revise a resume based on what you learned in the Career Club? ____
8. BEFORE attending Career Club, how confident were you about your job seeking skills?
Not Confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very Confident Extremely Confident
9. AFTER attending Career Club, how confident are you now about your job seeking skills?
Not Confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very Confident Extremely Confident
10. BEFORE attending the Career Club, how confident were you about landing a job after graduation?
Not Confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very Confident Extremely Confident
11. AFTER attending Career Club, how confident are you now about landing a job after graduation?
Not Confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very Confident Extremely Confident
12. What Career Club topics did you attend? (Mark all that apply.)
 - Resources available through the Career Center
 - Resumes
 - 30 second Elevator Speech
 - Making a good first impression
 - Communication skills/body language awareness
 - Networking
 - Disclosing a disability to employers
 - Interviewing
 - Self-Advocacy and Asking for Accommodations

13. What Career Club Topics were most helpful? (Mark all that apply.)

- Resources available through the Career Center
- Resumes
- 30 second Elevator Speech
- Making a good first impression
- Communication skills/body language awareness
- Networking
- Disclosing a disability to employers
- Interviewing
- Self-Advocacy and Asking for Accommodations

14. What Career Club topics were the least helpful? (Mark all that apply.)

- Resources available through the Career Center
- Resumes
- 30 second Elevator Speech
- Making a good first impression
- Communication skills/body language awareness
- Networking
- Disclosing a disability to employers
- Interviewing
- Self-Advocacy and Asking for Accommodations

Future Career Club Ideas

15. Would you like area employers to be involved in future Career Club activities? YES NO

16. Would you like the see employers provide any of the following?

- Mock Interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Present on industry or company information
- Panel discussion about disability in the workplace
- Practice networking skills
- Provide internships and/or jobs for qualified students with disabilities
- Become a mentor
- Other (Please specify) _____

17. Are there any topics or events that you would like to see included in the future?

18. How can we get more students involved in Career Club?

19. Do you have any final thoughts or suggestions for improving the Career Club?
