



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

Career Services Peer Review 2019-2024

Final Report

Reviewers

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Unit Mission, Goals, and Outcomes

The unit has a mission and overarching goals/outcomes statements which are consistent with and which support the university and division mission statements and core theme objectives as laid out in their respective strategic plans.

The mission, vision, and core values listed on page 3 of the Self-Study (SS) are newly revised and they align well with the University and SAS mission, goals and core values. It is the opinion of the lead reviewer that there was consistent evidence of Career Services demonstrating their commitment to the core values at all levels in almost everything they do. This will be indicated in the remaining sections of the document.

Programs and Services

The unit provides a set of core programs/services which are central to and consistent with the unit's mission and goals. These programs/services are responsive to the needs of the unit's constituents, are cost-effective and, when appropriate, are supported by other units or agencies both within and outside the university.

Career Counseling

Five of the nine positions in the unit are at least partly responsible for career counseling. Of those five, two are the middle managers of the team, making 4.0 FTE assigned to the counseling role. This demonstrates the full commitment they have made to serving students. The staff in these roles are all highly qualified with master's degrees or higher. Students rate the quality of the services they receive very high (4.85-4.98, SS, Fig. 6). There were only 170 responses (~7%) to the survey over five years, but the lead reviewer believes these numbers would hold close if every student was surveyed based on the interviews held with staff and students. Individual appointments have been climbing fast over the past 5 years from around 350 total in 2019-2020 to almost 1,000 in 2023-2024 (~250 appointments per FTE). This is consistent with trends across the nation. There needs to be more work done to accurately track other types of engagement such as classroom & living group presentations, etc. Every encounter matters and should be tracked. Tying this service to the mission is done well in the SS on page 14.

Additional work is being done in academic departments to help students align coursework to career off-ramps. The review team recommends identifying these pockets of work and supporting departments to help students understand how off-ramps and on-ramps in and out of work and education benefit their career trajectories.

Career Mentor Program (Career Station)

This is a program the lead reviewer wants to copy at EWU. It is very well planned, executed, and evaluated. There is no greater evidence of this than the time the review team spent with the mentors. Every career mentor on the team is career-ready themselves. They are helpers, doers, organizers, planners, and critical thinkers. These qualities are what employers are

looking for. Also exciting is the two-step career ladder where the junior mentors work up to the senior role and then mentor those the junior role. This is how the world of work operates. It is modeled well by the career mentors.

In 2024, the career mentors saw ~425 students, extending the reach and capacity of Career Services significantly. It should be noted that a few of the people interviewed outside Career Services thought that the career mentors might be carrying too much of the load for the counseling staff. What those people don't know is that the extra time made for the counselors by the career mentors is usually spent doing things such as Employer Relations or event management in colleges because the team is short-staffed in those areas. This is an extension of the counseling services mentioned above and is tied to the strategic plan in the same way.

Graduate Intern Program

This was well explained in the SS on page 20, and it can be easily tied to the Career Services strategic plan in the mission statement. The review team wasn't exposed to it.

Classes & Workshops

The Career Services team is deeply involved in career-readiness curriculum and delivery at Weber State. EDUC 2900 is offered every term online and face-to-face. Career services counselors teach the courses in-load when it is face-to-face and outside of load (paid) when it is online. This is great professional experience for the counselors. It is a great opportunity to make sure more students are career-ready when they graduate. The lead reviewer's main question is how Career Services makes up for the loss in counseling productivity when the course is being taught in-load by a counselor? Is it in their job descriptions at 25%?

FYE Career Design Module is a fabulous way to assure that all students are exposed to career development in the first year. It won't happen any other way unless it is somehow required by the curriculum. The lead reviewer hopes that if FYE is optional at Weber State that it becomes required as soon as possible. This is only step one. There needs to be more career development content added to the curriculum so there is consistent exposure every semester for every student.

R.E.A.L. Projects were moved from Career Services to Wildcat Advantage and HIEE Programs when the reorganization occurred. The reviewer recommends that Career Services maintain a close relationship with this team to keep them up to date on what is happening in the employment world. Things change fast.

Wildcat Advantage Workshops are hopefully just iterations of workshops offered across campus to students from all backgrounds and academic pursuits. The lead reviewer assumes that these happen frequently, but they weren't highlighted in the SS.

Career information technologies are critical to create economies of scale and make the most out of the human capital a team has. The lead reviewer has been in the advising and career world in higher education for a very long time. It is his opinion that Weber State offers students and Career Services staff the most relevant and useful career-related software and technology services that can be had. Lightcast is one of the most expensive, but powerful and useful job-market tools students and staff can use. Weber State launched it in summer, 2024. This is a big deal and can be game-changing if it is blended into the online degree finder tool.

Career Services Sponsored Events are broad and diverse. They offer many general and focused fairs, while they also support fairs held by academic units. As reported in the SS on page 27, student and employer attendance at these fairs is climbing out of the hole created by the pandemic. Student attendance recovery is particularly impressive, but employer recovery is less so. The lead reviewer believes the team is offering a good mix of events for their size. Students have some access to employers in the region through these events. The events are also well planned and executed. However, the events could be improved with more employer participation. See the Employer Outreach & Relations section below for more detail and recommendations.

50/50 Program

This program is a great example of how collaboration with other campus units can lead to fabulous results for students. The funding comes from budget surpluses the previous year, which in most universities, is swept away, where only the budget office and administration have access. It funded 50% of 404 student employee jobs last year alone. The fact that Career Services is delegated to manage the program and its funding is a testament to the trust administration places in the team. They align many of these services to the strategic plan on page 35 of the SS. The lead reviewer has already brought this to the attention of his own VP.

Career Champions Program

The Career Champions program is used by Career Services to acknowledge and reward campus partners for their support of career education/readiness and their support of the work Career Services does. Nothing will go farther in promoting career education than rewarding those who are your best champions. The expense allocated to this program pales in comparison to the goodwill they have created all over campus. This is something else that the lead reviewer has taken home to copy.

Employer Outreach & Relations

This seems to be an area that has not received the attention or resources necessary, going back to 2004 when they had two people with a combined 1.0 FTE focused on employer relations. In 2024, they only have .5 FTE. As mentioned above, employer participation in career events is low for WSU, given the size and location. The team is fortunate that it isn't worse than it is due in large part to the exceptional work of Barry Flitton. At a university with 16,000 students that is

within 40 miles of a major airline hub, and a city as large as Salt Lake, the lead reviewer thinks that the employer counts at your fairs should be over 200 in the fall and crowding 200 in the spring in the current economy.

It isn't recommended that Weber State hire employer relations staff that would be paid out of a revenue index. When the economy contracts, it will be considered a win to attract 50 employers to a fair. Employer relations should be an investment made by Weber State into the career development of its students and into the economic needs of the region. They don't merely plan and execute career fairs. They develop and maintain sites for internships and co-ops, they keep Weber State visible and relevant to economic development associations and chambers of commerce, and they can be integral in significant development operations if organized and tasked to do so.

It is the recommendation of the lead reviewer that Career Services invest in a 1.0 FTE assistant or associate director of employer relations (on the leadership team). It is also important to retain the current .5 FTE employer relations staff member, while working to make that position whole when resources are available.

Career Services should consider leveraging the partnerships the Division of Online and Continuing Education (DOCE) is building with their Business Development Team. DOCE has 2.0 FTE employees building relationships with employers to better understand what education and training is needed for the current workforce. A collaboration of teams could deliver a smarter, more economical way of building relationships for career fairs, and talent acquisition.

Access & Equal Opportunity for Success

The unit contributes to the university's and the division's missions to increase access to services and ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to find success before, during, and after their time at the university. The unit details what measures are taken to ensure similar results for the staff in the unit.

In the interviews, it was clear to the lead reviewer that the University is committed to making sure that all students have access and opportunity for success. The topic came up often in both internal and external interviews. It is apparent that it is woven into all planning and decisions from the administration down to the Career Services team.

In looking at the data, Career Services appears to be delivering on this initiative. In the SS on page 55, Table 8 indicates that in fall of 2022, they were serving minority student populations at a higher rate than the majority population except for native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. As noted in Table 9 in the same timeframe, they were also serving freshmen and sophomores at a higher rate than the schools the lead reviewer has served. These numbers are getting old and should be tracked each year at the minimum, if not on a live dashboard.

Adult learners are a significant and growing segment of the Weber State student population. This segment was not well-addressed in the interviews or the SS. Therefore, they are likely underserved. While it is true the Career Services is committed to making sure all students have access to services, this growing segment at Weber State University needs to be a focal point of the Career Services team. The reviewers recommend implementing non-traditional student mentors into the center for added perspective on this growing demographics' needs for career services.

Leadership and Staffing

The unit has a sufficient number of well-qualified employees to effectively provide the core programs/services offered by the unit. Employees have clear and current job responsibilities. Employees are oriented to their roles, receive appropriate leadership and supervision, are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities, and are regularly evaluated.

Leadership

There are three positions on the leadership team, all held by capable, well-trained people that care deeply about the work they do, the people they work with, and the students they serve. There is a combined 56 years of service to Weber State Career Services on the leadership team. That is almost unheard of today. This is an asset to the team, but it can also be a detraction if the leaders are unwilling to change and innovate. The lead reviewer doesn't think this is the case based on the number of programs/events/services the team has launched in the past five years. The staff interviews revealed how much respect and admiration the team has for their leadership team and for each other. There has been an intentional effort to build a team in this unit. They hire people that fit and train them to do their jobs at high levels.

Three members on the leadership team is normal for an office of this size. It is unusual that only the Director has 1.0 FTE dedicated to management/directive tasks. This might not be out of the ordinary at Weber State, and it seems to be working well relationally in this unit. Is innovation and development on the team suffering because two are .5 FTE leaders? They accomplish a lot, but could they accomplish more? Also unusual is that both middle management positions come from the advising side of the operation.

During the interview process, a theme emerged to the review team regarding the leadership of the unit. Much of the Weber State community is at least partially unaware of what the Career Services team does. This is not a failure of the leadership team. The lead reviewer attributes it to the humble nature of the group. Most of the community is aware of the efforts made to help students get ready for internships and their first job and that they plan and organize career events. Career Services should be recognized at all levels of the Weber State community as experts in career development. They truly are the experts already, but nobody seems to know it. They need to be unafraid of the expert label and be intentional in their conversations with the campus community, especially those with budget or charismatic influence. Every member

of the team, from the director to the career mentors must be willing and capable of telling the Career Services story when an opportunity presents itself. Don't let humbleness prevent the team from sharing their career development expertise with the Weber State community. If you don't, someone with less expertise will.

Career Counseling Team

This is a well-organized, managed, and staffed unit. All of them have master's degrees, and all are well trained by respected professional organizations in the field. All of them love their jobs and love working with students. For a school this size and the budget this unit has, this team is well resourced and supported. According to NACE standards, the unit should be larger to bring advising loads into recommended ratios. With ~1,000 advising appointments made in 2023-2024, the team is right sized today in this regard, but they have plans to expand their services. Today, this team is also teaching, doing presentations, liaising with college faculty and leadership, and most are doing some employer relations work. As resources improve, consideration should be given to expanding this team and possibly promoting one of the leadership team members to a 1.0 FTE leader/manager of the team with no college assignment in exchange for liaising with Deans and other WSU administrators. For this team to significantly grow services to students, it must either grow in size or shed some of its services given to other areas of the office such as employer relations.

Employer Outreach

As stated earlier, this function is extremely under resourced. On the organizational chart, it is left to a .5 FTE staff member reporting to the Director. Because of this structure, the Career Counseling team is doing some of the work. This results in some students having excellent opportunities while others don't receive the same attention. There are some colleges that devote resources to career readiness and opportunity. The example that shines the brightest is the Goddard School of Business & Economics. It should be the goal of Weber State University and Career Services to make sure every student has the same opportunities as Goddard students. When a college doesn't have the resources or the expertise, Career Services must seek to fill the gap. If the resources aren't available to make the Career Services team larger, the Director should consider shedding a significant portion of his leadership responsibilities for the team over to the Associate and Assistant Directors. He should then devote a significant portion of his time to leading and doing employer relations work.

In the interviews, the team found that the director spends time fostering relationships with primary employer partners; those who have paid \$3,000 for annual partnership packages. The review team hopes that the director and employer relations staff have a plan in place to grow internship and job opportunities for students with new and existing employers. Relationship building starts there. Attending other job fairs and handing out business cards can be a great icebreaker, but that alone does not build or maintain true partnerships. Targeting employer engagement growth with regional employers should be a priority for the team.

We know the team is not yet optimally built to take this on immediately. It is recommended that Career Services leverage and partner with the employer relations program being developed by the Business Development Team in DOCE.

Operations & Student Employment

In the interviews, it became clear that the Operations Specialist is the glue to keeping the team running. This is normal when a good staff member is in the role. They are masters at getting things done and navigating the bureaucracy to help the team succeed. It is no different here. This team member is relied upon by everyone else and she delivers.

The Student Employment Coordinator manages a very large budget and navigates all the University rules and regulations surrounding budget and employment. Building a system to manage all of that is complex. The person in the role is competent and well respected by the team and by the campus partners she works with.

Events and Promotions

This position works with every position on the team. It manages all events and works with internal and external partners to manage the communications for all audiences for which the team engages. It is currently filled with a dynamic and capable person that is a great relationship builder. If the team ever gets a full employer relations team, they should consider having this position report to the Director because of the important role it plays with everyone else on the team.

Overall

The lead reviewer stated many times during the review and after that he would be honored to have any member of this team on his own team at EWU. Everyone is well credentialed and trained, is good at their job, is a great team member, and puts the student experience at the top of their priority list. However, if the lead reviewer suddenly became the director of this team, he would consider reorganizing the structure to make it more effective. On page 14, an org chart utilizing only existing FTE is presented to demonstrate the ideas. With only 2.5 days on site, the chart might not work for the team in place now, but it is hoped that it is fuel for thought and discussion about the future. A second chart is also included for thought on page 14 if additional FTE were considered.

Financial Resources and Budget

The unit has a well-defined and participatory budget planning process. This process results in sufficient resources to meet the unit's core programs/services, staffing, facility, equipment, and technology needs.

The budget was discussed with the leadership of the Career Services team. All three indicated that they felt like they had adequate financial resources given the Weber State budget climate. The lead reviewer agrees with that assessment, provided that Career Services continues to have discretion over hold-over funding from their revenue account. At many institutions, this index is raked at the end of the year. When the economy is weak, employers will stop attending fairs and other events, greatly reducing the amount of discretionary funding available to provide programs and services to students, professional development for staff, and travel funding for employer relations. Being able to access this funding will assure students are served, even in lean times.

Career Services has a development operation primarily built and managed by the Director. The lead reviewer feels like there is money left on the table. Employers will pay more for more personalized service and better access to students and faculty. It is recommended that research be done on what other career centers are doing in the region for the purpose of maximizing the development potential of the unit. Should the unit decide to pursue an enhanced employer relations team, these staff should be deeply involved in the development operations with the Director.

Facilities, Equipment and Technology

The unit has safe, accessible, and well-maintained physical facilities, equipment, and technological resources to support its core programs/services and personnel.

Based on the SS, page 49, and the interviews conducted with staff, Career Services is “fortunate” to have the facilities they do. They are centrally located on campus in a building called “Student Services” that is full of almost every service a student might use. It is located in an ideal spot in the building. It is clean, in good repair, and it is inviting to students and employers. The lead reviewer is envious of what they have and took many ideas for how to better use space home with him. There are no recommendations here.

Ethical and Legal Responsibilities

The unit is aware of and compliant with statutory and professional ethical and legal standards which apply to the unit’s core programs/services, personnel, facilities, equipment and technology.

The lead reviewer is not familiar with the ethical and legal responsibilities required of Career Services by Weber State University or the State of Utah. However, he is very familiar with the requirements in the states of Washington and Idaho and with Federal regulations. In the SS, pages 61-65, it is clearly evident that the Career Services team is well aware of what is required of them and that they keep ethical, legal, and policy considerations in mind in everything they

do and every decision they make. The lead reviewer saw no concerns in these areas during the visit or in the self-study.

Assessment and Evaluation

The unit has clearly defined and measurable core program and/or student learning outcomes which are consistent with the unit's mission and goal statements. These program and student learning outcomes are regularly assessed through both direct and indirect measures, and the results of assessment are shared among constituents and are used for decision-making and planning.

The unit has some data collection and analysis expertise on the team. The Associate Director tends to lead the unit in these efforts, but there are others that are very data-wise in their job functions. The SS on pages 42-49 describes what they have collected over the past five years. The pandemic made it difficult to collect enough data to analyze and use. Gaps in the data are understandable. Losing staff members has made it even harder for them to collect and analyze data now that they are generating it again. What they have collected does an adequate job of telling us what has happened, and that story is a good one. However, like most University services, there isn't much there on causation. Correlational data is useful, but causal data is game-changing for administration and external stakeholders, especially Legislators and Governors. It is the recommendation of the lead reviewer that Career Services select one program or event they do where they believe they are making the biggest difference in the lives of students. Develop a plan to collect and analyze causal data to determine the impact of the program or event on student outcomes. It gets easier to get this type of data when you have done one successfully and have a model for further exploration.

The internal members of the review team are aware of some University-wide tools that could assist with this team assessment and speak to Career Service's impact to student success. It is recommended that Career Services leadership connect with the internal reviewers to discuss the options that might be useful to them.

Summary

The unit has clearly articulated what they learned through the self-study process including concrete recommendations for their individual programs and services. The unit has set priorities for improvement and refinement and has made recommendations of items for the review team to consider.

In summary, the lead reviewer believes that the Career Services operation and team at Weber State University are exceptional in terms of the team they have built, the professionalism of the staff, the quality of the facilities, the amount of resources allocated to the unit given the current financial climate they are in, and in their relentless drive to serve WSU students.

Every good team and operation can always improve. The team should move quickly to build assessment programs that help them tell their story to students, faculty, administration, employers, alumni, and the Legislature. Telling the story of what has been is helpful, but telling them how their programs and staff have impacted Utah's residents and economy is game-changing.

The education that students receive in the classroom is the broad foundation for everything a university does. For students to reach the pinnacle of the pyramid, they need to have career development built in at several points along their journey, both at the University and beyond. Career Services is the entity that can and should lead that effort for Weber State. No unit is better equipped to be the leader of this initiative. Partner with faculty and administration and move change from within. Pull by demonstration rather than push with force. See to it that career development is embedded into the curriculum for every student and help faculty realize that it is the right thing for them, the students, and the region.

The lead reviewer has found a group of kindred spirits, and he stands ready to share information and programs with you in return for helping his team grow. All ships rise when we work together. He is grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow with you.

The internal reviewers on the team were fabulous to work with. There is no doubt that they are allies of Career Services. Continue to connect with them and find ways to partner with their units.

Included below is the preliminary report the reviewers shared with you on the final day of the visit.

**Weber State Career Services Peer Review
Executive Summary
Delivered at the close of the visit - 9/6/2024**

Team camaraderie, culture, and morale are very strong from Winn to the Career Mentors. This is evidenced by their high staff retention rates. There has been intentional work done by the leadership to build this team, and they have accomplished it.

The quality, quantity, and location of CS facilities are outstanding. Having a dedicated classroom in the center adds to the student experience.

All their professional staff are confident, self-managing, and autonomous. They feel strongly supported by the leadership team, both in CS and by the AVP and VP.

They are very adept at handling their budget. They generate enough revenue to make up for the central budget cuts they have faced. They have done a great job of handling staffing losses.

The advisors are proactive in their relationship building with colleges as much as the colleges will allow.

They have built strong relationships with their employer partners. Barry does a lot with his 20 hours. Having 12 partners at a school this size is impressive. We have questions about the work being done to build relationships with other regional employers. We suspect they are doing it, but it wasn't talked about. Are their goals set to build the employer list? Career Services' relationship with Marcom is very healthy and productive. They have defined their lanes well and they have created a symbiotic relationship where their skills complement each other, creating efficient workflows.

Other SAS units are undereducated what Career Services does, and there is some negative thoughts and feelings from other SAS units toward Career Services. We believe work needs to be done in telling your story to your divisional colleagues.

There is a lot of data being collected, but is it relevant to the rest of campus? Retention seems to be a huge priority. Work should be done to connect Career Services interactions with persistence and retention. At EWU, there is a large increase in retention when students use Career Services compared to those that don't. This is likely the case at Weber State also. Building dashboards using WSU and Handshake data should be built so that CS can quickly share data with other campus stakeholders.

The stakeholders we interacted with made it clear that Weber State is not thinking about the needs of large non-traditional student population. Time of day, delivery format, and work demands must be considered. There needs to be a WSU strategy for serving these students. Does Career Services have a presence at the Davis campus?

Career Services should develop SMART goal statements that support the WSU and CS strategic plans that define and support the work they are doing and where they want to go.

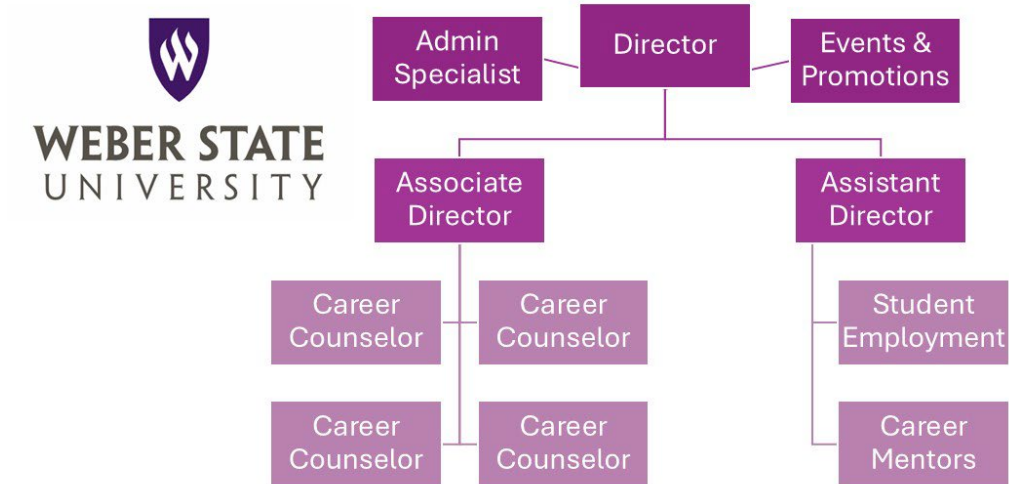
The Career Mentors seem to be handling a lot of the advising load. If we read the stats right, there were ~1,000 appointments and advisors handled ~400. If this is the case, there appears to be surplus advising capacity for the professional staff. One recommendation is to invest in more aggressive marketing strategies to raise awareness of Career Services across campus, particularly with adult learners. This could include developing clear brand standards for Career Services communication across all colleges and departments to improve marketing consistency. Also, invest more resources into social medial marketing to engage students where they are most active.

There is an opportunity for CS to lend their expertise surrounding the NACE competencies with colleges and other stakeholders. We recommend that CS become NACE competency champions and potentially own the Career & Self Development module. It is also recommended to work with CETL to incentivize faculty for integrating career readiness into curriculum.

Career Services must invest in employer relations in the form of a dedicated 1.0 FTE staff member that is preferably at the Associate or Assistant Director level. It is also recommended to conduct regular Handshake training for employers to maximize engagement with students and job postings. Another recommendation is to broaden faculty participation in Handshake to reach more students.

Who is the relationship manager for CS with Handshake? Please leverage that relationship to optimize Handshake for WSU. Also prioritize the integration of Starfish and Handshake data to streamline tracking and improve data accessibility.

Weber State Potential Org Chart with Existing Staffing



Weber State Potential Org Chart with Additional Staffing

