

# Spread the word



**Although written communication among those in college placement is well-established, efforts to communicate with other student services fields are sorely lacking.**

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**W**HERE CAN ONE find college placement literature? Two recent major books in the field of college student personnel were analyzed to determine the primary sources cited in the placement area. Sixteen volumes of a major generalist journal in student personnel were also searched to find out how many articles dealing with college placement were included.

The results of this study indicate that communication channels among professionals in college placement are well established but more effort must go into projecting this communication into the total student services field, where personnel in other specialties can assess information on the contributions of career planning and placement offices.

The specialty field of career planning and placement is growing and changing. Initially, the placement office on a college campus was charged with matching

students with jobs. Changes in the economy and the job market have forced placement to expand into the areas of career planning, cooperative education, job-seeking skills training, and research. Placement staff members are constantly being challenged to update their professional competencies in order to maintain the quality of service available to students.

John Shingleton, in his article, "The Three R's of Placement," has extended a challenge to placement personnel. He asserts that "placement has a responsibility to orient higher education to the world of work." Because placement offices are ordinarily viewed within the realm of student affairs, one logical place to begin this orientation process is with other student affairs professionals. To meet Mr. Shingleton's challenge, placement personnel will need to be well informed of developments in the work world and on the campus.

How can career planning and placement professionals keep up with developments in the field? What is the best way to share information with others in placement offices around the country? How can placement make other student services personnel aware of employment trends and of the expanded mission of a career planning and placement office?

Communication among those in placement and those in student affairs is

essential for keeping informed of developments in the world of work and for successful programming that meets student needs. Membership in professional organizations such as the College Placement Council provides one vehicle for such communication. Regional and national meetings offer forums for information exchange. These, however, represent only one type of channel for communication.

Professional journals offer a second medium for information exchange. The table on page 67 summarizes the contributions of professional journals to the placement literature within the field of college student personnel. In the survey of articles cited in *College Student Personnel* by Fitzgerald, Johnson and Norris (1970) and in *College Student Personnel Services* edited by Packwood (1977), the JOURNAL OF COLLEGE PLACEMENT far surpasses, in the placement area, any other printed resource in number of times cited. Since this journal is read by placement professionals nationwide and because no other resource approaches the frequency of citations by the two major books in the field of college student personnel, it can be assumed that the JOURNAL OF COLLEGE PLACEMENT is doing more than any other publication to keep placement personnel informed of developments in the field. *continued*

The fact that most placement literature is published in the JOURNAL OF COLLEGE PLACEMENT speaks well for its comprehensive nature, but also raises some problems. As Mr. Shingleton pointed out, it is not enough to talk to ourselves through this journal. An effort must also be made to communicate with student services administrators in specialties other than placement.

Formerly, the placement office was a self-sufficient unit on campus. Placement personnel dealt with employers and with students, but not as frequently as with other student services personnel. The expanded role of placement into career planning, advising, and programming has caused a shift in professional identity among many placement specialists. From a primary identification with the business world, placement personnel have recognized their position within the realm of campus services. This shift carries certain responsibilities, primarily the demand to communicate the contribution of placement to the total university program.

Thus, the nature of communication exchanged among student service specialties must be examined. As the most widely circulated generalist journal in the field of student personnel, *The Journal of College Student Personnel* comes closest to being the vehicle for all professionals in student services to use to share the research and programming taking place on various campuses. Unfortunately, the content analysis of this journal over a 16-year period from 1959-1974 indicates that only 0.7 percent of the articles published dealt with placement. This was the lowest percentage logged by any student service.

An equally small number of placement articles appear in the two other generalist journals in college student personnel, *The Journal of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors* and *The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*. Apparently, little information about the mission, research, and accomplishments of career planning and placement offices is reaching other student service professionals.

A difference exists between the type of articles published in the JOURNAL OF COLLEGE PLACEMENT and *The Journal of College Student Personnel*. *The Journal of College Student Personnel* publishes primarily research-based articles. Since placement staff members perhaps have little time or incentive for conducting research, there may not be much placement research to report in this journal.

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In contrast, the JOURNAL OF COLLEGE PLACEMENT accepts articles of interest to practitioners who want to improve their services and who want to increase student participation in programs designed to meet career planning and placement needs. The "how to" approach of this journal is of particular value to over-extended placement personnel who want to make the best use of time and energy resources. Knowing what is done at other institutions allows for increased diversity in program offerings.

Developing, publicizing, and executing a program are time-consuming tasks. Adding a requirement for researching the effectiveness of these programs beyond simple evaluation techniques might cause a decrease in programming. The prevailing philosophy seems to be "do as much as you can, as well as you can." Since most student service positions do not include research as part of their job descriptions there is little incentive to systematically study the effectiveness of placement services.

There are reasons for concern with this lack of research. Mr. Shingleton pointed to the desperate need for predicting employment trends for future graduates. There is also a need for analyzing the career potential of various



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disciplines in order to better advise students. Budget cuts to student services can be expected with decreasing enrollments in colleges and universities. In order to demonstrate the value of placement services, directors of these offices will need to convince budget administrators that the services provided are worth the expense.

How can we be sure that students would suffer in the job market without placement assistance? Does finding a job depend on luck or are certain job-seeking skills necessary? The answers to these questions will have to be provided in more than intuitive form. Data on students who have used and not used placement services will have to be collected and analyzed. Follow-up studies on the job-seeking success of these students are essential to back up contentions that placement offices are providing useful services. Studies of better ways to help liberal arts graduates translate their education into marketable skills will enhance the services of placement offices on liberal arts campuses.

Countless other research areas could be identified in placement offices—recruiter response to students with various educational backgrounds, employer use of confidential and open references, and long-term satisfaction with career advice received while on campus, are only a few potential topics for further study.

Another reason for conducting and publishing research studies is to ac-

quaint other campus professionals with career planning and placement. Common misconceptions about placement further the idea that placement is "the place seniors need to go just before graduation." With this attitude circulating among others in academic and student affairs, it is no surprise that students often share this misinformation about what is available to them through the expanded placement office.


Understanding of placement can be encouraged within each institution through participation of on-campus committees and by contributing to in-house student services newsletters. On an inter-institutional level, career planning and placement professionals must gain exposure by submitting articles to publications outside their immediate field. In most cases, these articles have to be empirically based.

Since it is essential to involve students in the career planning process early in their college years, assistance from other student services is very important. Individuals working in admissions, orientation, and housing have the first contact with students and can direct them to the career planning and placement office, assuming that individuals in other student service specialties know what is available in a career planning and placement office. Many students need vocational counseling before they can benefit from the placement services on campus. Since counseling and

placement often operate out of separate offices, cooperation between these two services is vital. This is further evidence for the need to communicate openly and publicly about what is developing in career planning and placement.

Placement has been the neglected child of college student personnel literature, as indicated by the low percentage of placement articles published in *The Journal of College Student Personnel*. This tendency may be reversing. In his recent book, *College Student Personnel Services*, Packwood (1977) devotes more attention to placement than to any other student service. If this is an indication of change within the field of college student personnel, career planning and placement may receive a great deal more attention as a student service.

The student service administrators of the future who read the Packwood text will perhaps have a greater understanding of the diversity of services provided by a career planning and placement office. Whether or not students choose to enter this field, they will be able to communicate with placement personnel about mutual goals in meeting student needs.

This research into college placement literature supports the contention that placement personnel have been communicating almost exclusively with one another. The question of whether we in universities can continue to afford the luxury of producing large numbers of graduates who are unable to identify ways in which their college education can be applied after graduation will have to be answered by career planning and placement personnel engaged in research and in the consequent publishing of results in places that are accessible to others committed to resolving this great dilemma in higher education. 

TABLE

**Sources of Placement Articles Cited in Two Student Personnel Texts**

| Publication                          | Fitzgerald, Johnson & Norris, 1970 | Packwood, 1977 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Journal of College Placement         | 48 (70%)                           | 51 (56%)       |
| Personnel and Guidance Journal       | 7 (10%)                            | 7 (8%)         |
| Journal of College Student Personnel | 5 (7%)                             | 7 (8%)         |
| NASPA Journal                        | 4 (6%)                             | 2 (2%)         |
| Personnel Journal                    | 0 —                                | 6 (6.5%)       |
| Vocational Guidance Quarterly        | 0 —                                | 6 (6.5%)       |
| Other                                | 5 (7%)                             | 12 (13%)       |
| Total                                | n = 69 (100%)                      | n = 91 (100%)  |

**References**

Fitzgerald, Laurine E., Walter F. Johnson, and Willa Norris, *College Student Personnel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).  
 Packwood, William T., ed., *College Student Personnel Services* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1977).  
 Shingleton, John R., "The three R's of placement," *Journal of College Placement*, Winter 1978, pp. 32-38.