

## **Paraprofessionals in Career Services Technical Report 32**

Janet G. Lenz, Ph.D.  
Julia Panke, B.S.

Florida State University  
Career Center  
Tallahassee, FL.32306-2490

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Dr. Janet G. Lenz is the Associate Director for Career Advising, Counseling, and Programming in the Florida State University Career Center. She is also a Senior Research Associate in the Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development (<http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/>). Julia Panke is a Career Advisor in the FSU Career Center and a doctoral student in the Department of Human Services and Studies. Appreciation is expressed to Robert Reardon for his review of this document. For further information contact Janet Lenz at The Career Center, A4106 UC, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, 32306-2490, (850) 644-9547, [jlenz@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:jlenz@admin.fsu.edu)

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## Introduction

The use of paraprofessionals, pre-professionals, and related peer advisors is a long standing practice in a wide variety of educational, human services, and healthcare settings, ranging from schools, libraries (Oberge, et al., 1992), community service agencies, student affairs units (Carns, Carns, & Wright, 1993; Frigault, Maloney, & Trevino, 1986; Winston & Ender, 1988;), counseling centers (Eason, Platt, & Van House, 1985; Lenihan & Kirk, 1990), and career services (Erickson & Olp, 1978; Kenzler, 1983; McKenzie & Manoogian-O'Dell, 1988; Whitt, 1993). With such great dependence on the use of paraprofessionals, it is surprising how little information has been published in formal career development journals. One of the longest standing models of the use of paraprofessionals in career services can be found at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Several articles and publications have highlighted various aspects of this program (Feehan & Wade, 1998; Hansen & Johnston, 1986; McDaniels, Carter, Heinzen, Candrl, & Wieberg, 1994). As best as the author can determine, there has not been a detailed survey on the use of paraprofessionals in career services since the study conducted by Whitt (1993). The survey used by the authors of the current report can be found in Appendix A. This paper is intended to provide a current overview of the status of paraprofessional programs using information from a sampling of settings across the country. The settings were contacted based on the fact that they had a currently functioning paraprofessional program that was documented in the literature or through their web site, or personally known to the authors. Appendix B provides a list of the schools or settings that provided information for this report. Appendix C contains a list of additional resources that may be helpful to persons researching this topic.

Due to the variety of interpretations of the term “paraprofessional,” the authors believe some discussion of this term is necessary before proceeding. Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1997) defines paraprofessional as “a trained aide who assists a professional person” (p. 843). This very general definition is subject to a wide variety of interpretations and can be used as an umbrella term for a wide range of positions. Various professional organizations in the field have developed more detailed definitions. For example, NACE’s 1998 Professional Standards for College and University Career Services included a discussion of pre-professional staff which contained the following statement: “Paraprofessionals, work-study, interns, graduate assistants, or volunteer staff must be carefully selected, trained in helping skills and institutional procedures, closely supervised, and evaluated regularly. Under supervision, interns from appropriate graduate programs may counsel students within the limitations of their knowledge and skills” (NACE, 1998). Ender, Schuette, and Neuberger (undated) in their statement on the use of paraprofessionals in student affairs focused on “undergraduate students employed by a division of Student Affairs for the purpose of providing direct services to other students” (p. 16). The California Registry for Professional Counselors and Paraprofessionals ([www.california-registry.org](http://www.california-registry.org)) includes a very specific set of requirements for paraprofessionals. For purposes of this report, the authors will use the term paraprofessional (PP) to refer to all types of peer and paraprofessional career service providers.

This paper primarily focuses on the use of paraprofessionals in college and university career services, including both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as persons not currently enrolled in school. However, much of what is covered may be applicable to other student and human services settings. The intent is to share information gathered from a variety of sources including the current literature, web sites, listservs, telephone interviews, and the authors’ personal experience. Topics include discussion of program titles, recruitment and selection, the training process, roles of paraprofessionals, supervision and evaluation, challenges and issues, and concluding remarks.

### What's in a Name

One of the interesting findings in reviewing information related to this topic is the varied titles given to persons working as PPs in career services. Some of these titles include: career advisors, career assistants, career specialists, peer advisors, and peer career assistants. A list of additional titles can be found in Appendix D. Very little discussion can be found in the literature regarding the choice of a particular title. "Peer" is defined as "one that is of equal standing with another, one belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade or status" (Merriam-Webster, 1997). The term peer in many settings often implies that undergraduates are seeing their undergraduate peers. As the UC Berkeley web page notes in its description of its peers advisors: "Peer advisors offer students the opportunity to speak to an individual who has been extensively trained about the services of the Career Center, but who is also experiencing some of the same academic and social issues with which many Cal students struggle" (<http://career.berkeley.edu/peers/Peers.stm>). A similar description is provided on Indiana University Career Development Center's (CDC) web page ([www.indiana.edu/~career/features/peer\\_advising.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~career/features/peer_advising.html)): "The Peer Advisors are undergraduate students who can answer any of your basic career questions, help you effectively use the library's resources and tell you about the services the CDC has to offer." Part of the rationale for using the term "career advisor" in the authors' setting was to avoid the implication that a person might be seeing a professional counselor. We are less comfortable with the term "peer" because our Center is open to the public and provides services to persons from the community, including non-university students and adults. Severy and Hernandez (2000), in choosing the title "career ambassador," noted that their goal was to choose a title that didn't compete with other student groups on campus. Career services and other settings that are planning to use PPs may want to consider what working title best conveys the role of paraprofessional staff and helps avoid confusion with other campus student groups.

### Recruitment and Selection

#### Recruitment Methods

Career services offices use a variety of means to recruit their peers or PPs. The majority of the programs described in this report were targeting undergraduates. Some of the most common methods for recruiting these individuals included letters to key faculty, advisors and other staff, advertising on the office web page, placing ads in the student newspaper and "table tents in residence hall cafeterias" (McDaniels, et al, 1994, p. 100), fliers on campus, recruiting through the work-study office, and announcements in classes. Many offices relied on current peers to refer students. Cornell has its peer advisors take information on the program to large lecture classes. Other offices indicated that they recruit from their current pool of student assistants who are already there functioning in some capacity, but not the peer career advisor role (M. Ardino-Annucci, phone interview, July 2000; Severy & Hernandez, 2000). One option that does not seem to have been fully exploited is having PPs apply on-line. Auburn offers this option for its peer career counselors; see the following Web site: [www.auburn.edu/student\\_info/student\\_affairs/success/career/students/news/pcc/peer\\_info.html](http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/student_affairs/success/career/students/news/pcc/peer_info.html) (J. Walls, phone interview, July 2000). Most offices used a brief application form or asked for a cover letter and resume. Only a few of the settings contacted indicated that they include references as part of the application process. A link to the career advisor application used in the authors' setting can be found at the following address: <http://www.coe.fsu.edu/departments/hss/ccfindaid.html>. McDaniels, Candrl, and Blinne (1995) include a sample career specialist application in their manual. In some cases, offices were also targeting graduate assistants and interns from counseling, higher education and related programs (N. Stahl, phone interview, July 2000; C. Shafer, phone interview, May 2000; G. Black, phone interview, June 2000). Offices that recruit graduate students for internships or assistantships may even do mailings (both regular mail and e-mail) to colleagues at institutions in their geographic area and or around the country, as well as post the opportunity on career development-related listservs.

Benedict, Casper, Larson, Littlepage, and Panke (2000) offered these tips for recruiting and selecting peer PPs:

- Start early
- Development advertisement publications, brochures, etc.
- Use networks and referrals
- Provide an application and request referrals
- Conduct the interview process with the involvement of current peer paraprofessionals.

Hansen and Johnston (1986) concluded that the “recruitment of top quality students is the life-blood of any student staffed program and a career center’s para-pro program is no exception” (p. 22).

### **Qualifications Sought**

The qualities that offices look for in peer advisors tend to be very similar. The University of Georgia’s Career Development Intern (CDI) brochure listed the following qualities: “self-motivated, team player, enthusiastic, independent, flexible, responsible, helpful, leader, comfortable speaker” (University of Georgia Career Services Center, 1999, pg. 1). Benedict, et al (2000) suggested the following “ideal characteristics”: student-oriented, friendly, helpful, available time/reliability, diversity in majors and cultural backgrounds, approachability, written and oral communication skills, and enthusiasm. Cornell uses a two-sided application that gathers information on why the student is interested in a peer advisor position, what their past workshop experience has been, their top three skills, their computer skills, their campus activities, and whether or not they are eligible for work-study funds. The interview rating form used in selecting the University of Florida’s career ambassadors includes items such as: motivation, coping with stress, communication, ability to listen, knowledge of center, ability to cope with difficult interpersonal situations, interest in career issues, ability to work with diverse populations, commitment, campus knowledge, and desire to help others (Severy & Hernandez, 2000). The University of Florida’s career ambassador program also includes a GPA requirement, e.g., a 3.0 is required of prospective applicants. At MIT, the position announcement for career development graduate assistants stated: “candidates should be pursuing a graduate degree in higher education administration, counseling, public or business administration, or a related discipline. They should also be able to demonstrate a propensity toward helping others, maturity, professionalism, and flexibility” (C. Pratt, e-mail, March 2000). At the FSU Career Center, while the majority of PPs are graduate level counseling students, we have occasionally brought on board undergraduates who have completed the career planning class, who are majoring in rehabilitation services, and who appear to have a sincere interest in being involved in career services delivery.

Offices varied in their preferences for the class levels of PPs. Syracuse University targets sophomores (C. Fulford, phone interview, May 2000). Other schools include both freshmen and sophomores in their recruiting pool, while some institutions will consider students at any class level. At the graduate level, both masters and doctoral level students may be recruited. With respect to PPs’ major areas of study, some schools are not overly concerned with majors, while other offices seek to select PPs that provide as broad a coverage as possible of academic areas. The University of Missouri recruitment flyer (McDaniels, et al., 1995) emphasized that their program looks for a “diversity of students, including minorities, non-minorities, internationals, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, greeks, independents, male and females, all majors” (p. 33). As Feehan and Wade (1998) noted in describing Missouri’s program: “our goal is to staff the Center with a variety of academic majors with leadership experience/aptitude while simultaneously building a culturally diverse team” (p. 154). Offices that also recruit graduate level students typically seek majors in counseling, higher education administration, or related disciplines.

### **Interview/Selection Process**

There is a consistent message throughout the literature that a key aspect of paraprofessional programs is the selection process. In general, the interview and selection process for PPs involves several steps. Settings use varied rating systems as part of the selection process. For example, the Auburn Career Development Services office uses a 100 point scoring system, with 50 points allotted to the package of materials the applicant submits and the other 50 allotted to the interview, appearance, and ability to communicate (J. Walls, phone interview, July 2000). Another common thread is the use of a variety of staff members in the interview process. A tendency with programs using undergraduate PPs is to involve the current ones in the interview process for the new PPs (Severy & Hernandez, 2000; M Watson, e-mail, August 2000). For its graduate assistant/internship slots, MIT uses 3 people in the interview process, but begins with phone interviews, then brings individuals to campus to participate in group interviews. The candidates are given a project to work on as a group (G. Black, phone interview, June, 2000). Regardless of the format and process used, these procedures are key to the success of any paraprofessional program. As Kenzler (1983) noted: "...we have discovered that carefully selecting competent, qualified students is the best way to guarantee success. Although selecting qualified students is somewhat subjective...we strive to identify outstanding students who possess the motivation, natural abilities, and developed skills to make a significant contribution to the center and its mission" (p. 60).

### **Training**

Many of the offices involved in using peer advisors or PPs have developed extensive training materials for use with their program. Hansen and Johnston (1986), while acknowledging the importance of recruiting talented students, also stated that the training component may be the key factor that contributes to the long term success of a paraprofessional program. Similarly, Angela Bannon at DePaul University (e-mail, August 2000) noted that for peer advising services to be successful, peers must go through extensive training.

One of the longest standing and most comprehensive PP training programs has been developed at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The University of Missouri's training consists of more than 100 hours, which includes classroom training, mentoring and on-the-job training. They make their training manual available for purchase to interested persons. For more information contact: Craig Benson, Director, Student Career Services, at the University of Missouri-Columbia Career Center, e-mail: BensonCA@missouri.edu. One feature of the Missouri training program, is the opportunity for their career specialists to evaluate the training program. The PP trainees are asked to comment on such things as: size of the training group, time of the training sessions, topics covered, what they liked best and least, ideas to improve the training process, etc. (McDaniels, et al, 1995).

Most schools seem to conduct their training some number of days before the start of school. Some schools begin in the spring semester before the PPs actually start their assignment in the fall. Syracuse University provides 24 hours of initial training in the fall, which includes one 6 hour retreat and approximately 12 weeks of 1 ½ hour training on the basics of career development. The spring training is an additional 16 hours, one 6 hour retreat and ten 1 hour training sessions continuing on the career development process and on leadership and character-ethical development as it pertains to counseling students (C. Fulford, phone interview, May 2000). The University of Wisconsin River Falls orients its peer advisors one week prior to the beginning of classes. The training covers resume and cover letter writing (as well as hands-on activities such as critiquing cover letters and resumes); interviewing (including participation in mock interviews); job-hunting strategies; orientation to the career resource center; hands-on work with DISCOVER and FirstPlace registration; and training on office operations (C. Croonquist, e-mail, May 1997). Lehigh University (M. Watson, e-mail, August 2000) covers the following topics in its peer educator training:

- office operations and staff

- resume critiquing and cover letters
- on-campus recruiting systems and online registration process
- library and related resources
- basic counseling techniques, interventions, and referral
- job search techniques
- graduate school information
- basic interviewing techniques

Angela Davis (e-mail, August 2000) reported that their training takes place 7 days prior to the first week of classes in the fall, and then ongoing training is provided throughout the school year at bi-weekly staff meetings. Rice's PP training program includes a full day retreat on a Sunday (H. Glantzberg, phone interview, May 2000). Auburn University has a 5 week training program for its Peer Career Counselors (PCCs). They train for 10 hours per week and are paid during training. Jack Walls at Auburn is willing to share his PowerPoint presentation used in the peer training. He can be reached at [wallsjl@auburn.edu](mailto:wallsjl@auburn.edu). At Florida State University, our career advisors are required to complete the training on an unpaid basis. To learn more about Florida State's Career Advisor training program visit the following web site:

<http://www.career.fsu.edu/documents/technical%20reports/Technical%20Report%2027/Technical%20Report%2027.htm>.

Most offices use a variety of training techniques which includes lecture, practical hands-on, role plays, discussion, and reading. Many settings also use a series of self-directed checklists which trainees can complete on their own time. Severy and Hernandez (2000) provided a syllabus for a semester long course used in training the career resource center's career ambassadors. A key resource we use for training PPs who may have less experience in a helping/counseling role is the book by Meier and Davis entitled The Elements of Counseling (2001). Many centers involve their experienced or advanced peers advisors in training activities. A key aspect of the training process is providing opportunities for observation and shadowing. A consistent message we've received from our PPs is that they learn best by observing other staff. Warren Kistner at Illinois Wesleyan University (e-mail, August 2000) noted that their new peers shadow their counterparts during the spring semester before their year starts. One school requires its peers in training to shadow or observe 3 career counseling sessions, 3 on-call advising sessions and to participate in 2 hours of shadowing current career ambassadors (Severy & Hernandez, 2000). One of the difficulties we've experienced with our paraprofessional training is that it is done in late summer during a period when Center traffic is slow so there is less of an opportunity to observe experienced staff working with clients. PPs are encouraged to continue their shadowing of experienced staff once the fall semester begins and the client traffic picks up.

Benedict, et al (2000) offered the following tips regarding training peer paraprofessionals:

- conduct primary training and orientation before classes begin
- provide written training manuals and support materials
- use both group and individual work during training
- provide time for staff teambuilding
- bring guest speakers in to discuss their areas of expertise
- provide for ongoing training and evaluation throughout the academic school year

Most offices provide some form of ongoing training, both through informal mentoring and a weekly or monthly meeting. The focus of these meetings may be a specialty topic (how to effectively use computer-assisted career guidance systems, how to deal with "difficult" clients or "heavy" issues") and/or office issues (e.g., policies, procedures, etc.), and/or internal communications (upcoming events, presentations, etc.). Some settings include case reviews as a key aspect of the ongoing training.

A resource for training that has recently emerged that has the potential to be useful in training paraprofessionals is the Career Development Facilitator (CDF) curriculum (<http://ncda.org/cdf.htm>), published by the National Career Development Association. Most of the initial use of this curriculum has tended to be in non-college and university settings, although some institutions have put their staff through the training. Most of the 12 competencies addressed by the CDF curriculum are directly relevant to the work of peer career advisors, including: helping skills, working with diverse populations, ethical and legal issues, career development theories, labor market information and resources, technology and career development, employability skills, promotion and public relations. Given that many offices don't have formal training manuals that they use with peer advisors, the CDF curriculum, with some minor modifications, could serve a useful function in this regard. Another source of information with regard to the training of persons in career services is the recent special issue of the Adult Career Planning and Development Journal (Feller & Davies, 1999). While much of this is focused on graduate students in training, it may serve as a source of ideas for training other populations as well.

### **Roles/Responsibilities**

The roles of peer career advisors or PPs tend to be similar across a variety of settings. Some places view them as their "front line" advisors (A. Bannon, e-mail, August, 2000). Ithaca College (Office of Career Planning and Placement, 1998) included the following requirements for its Peer Career Assistants (PCA): four scheduled office hours per week; one-hour meeting for training and evaluation every Thursday at 12:00 Noon, and participation in the recruitment and selection of the following year's PCA staff. Many offices require their PPs to do some minimum amount of walk-in career advising each week. For example, MIT's PPs all do walk-in career advising each weekday for 2 hours (G. Black, phone interview, June 2000). Some of the most common paraprofessional tasks include: assisting clients in locating information in the career library; resume critiquing (Green, 1995), mock interviews, assisting clients in using CACG systems and Internet resources; helping with major selection, staffing information tables, assisting at job fairs, and conducting outreach presentations. At Rice University (H. Glantzberg, phone interview, May 2000) each peer career advisor is assigned to one of the 8 residential colleges.

In many settings, PPs play a key role in helping to get the word out about career center services and programs. One very common model for outreach program training is to allow the peer advisors to observe a staff member presenting a workshop prior to giving their own; then they have the opportunity to co-lead a workshop with a professional staff member, before launching out on their own. Staff members assist peers in this process by creating "scripted workshops" on key career development and job hunting topics, that may include overhead transparencies, PowerPoint presentations on disk, key hand-outs, etc., to alleviate some of the prep work and to have a "presentation kit" that is ready to go. At DePaul University, peer advisors attend a session on "Presentation Skills" (A. Bannon, e-mail, August 2000). Many offices use peer advisors to reach out to targeted populations (e.g., residence halls, academic organizations, commuter groups, etc.). Lenz (2000) provided a job description for their office's graduate student career advisors. For a more detailed look at specific paraprofessional roles, see the job descriptions provided by the University of Florida and M.I.T., in Appendices E and F respectively.

Some offices assign PPs to various staff members based on what they'd like to do and the needs of the office, and these unique responsibilities are reflected in their position titles. For example, some PPs may have an interest in the career resource area, others may be more interested in outreach/publicity or technology. Warren Kistner (e-mail, August 2000) at Illinois Wesleyan University provided some examples:

**Publicity Coordinator**—handles all publicity for office including listserv, posters, fliers, newspaper advertising, radio station, etc.

**S.E.A.R.C.H. (Start Early and Reach Career Heights) Assistant**—plans programming targeted to underclassmen and undecided students.

**Communications Peers**—publishes three Career Center newsletters; involves writing and editing the work of other students.

**Volunteer Coordinator**—serves as liaison between the community and campus.

**Technology Peer**—maintains web site and trouble shoots technical problems within the office.

**Recruitment Peer**—coordinates a mock interview program which involves inviting Human Resources professionals to conduct mock interviews with students.

With the increasing use of the Internet as a virtual source of information on college and university career services, many centers are highlighting the roles of PPs on their career center web sites. Some examples can be found at the following addresses:

<http://www.ithaca.edu/careers/who2.htm>

<http://web.missouri.edu/~cppcwww/staff/carspec.shtml>

[http://www.indiana.edu/~career/features/peer\\_advising.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~career/features/peer_advising.html)

<http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/careers/students/getting-help/advisors.shtml>

One key difference in many paraprofessional programs has to do with the use of career assessment resources by PPs. In the majority of programs contacted for this report, undergraduate peer career assistants were not using any type of career assessment resources. As Carmen Croonquist at the University of Wisconsin River-Falls noted: “Students (i.e., peer advisors) are exposed to developmental career planning assessments (such as the Myers-Briggs, the SDS, and the Strong Interest Inventory so they understand what information these assessments provide) but they do not engage in any actual counseling” (C. Croonquist, e-mail, May 1997). The exceptions were a few settings where PPs were allowed to use card sorts and the Self-Directed Search. Also noticeably absent was the use of any type of pre-screening or readiness assessment (Sampson, Peterson, Reardon, & Lenz, 2000) tools by PPs, including such things as the Career Beliefs Inventory, Career Factors Inventory, Career Thoughts Inventory (<http://www.career.fsu.edu/documents/career%20thoughts%20inventory/Use%20and%20Development%20of%20CTI.htm>), My Vocational Situation, etc. In settings where graduate assistants and interns were part of the staffing mix, these individuals did make regular use of career assessment tools. For example, as Sue Sgambelluri reported: graduate assistants (GA) at Indiana University’s Career Development Center largely function as professional staff. Prior to administering career assessments with clients, GAs must observe interpretations, shadow, and process interpretations with a supervisor (phone interview, May 2000). In the authors’ research for this report, it seemed clear that most offices work very hard to make sure PPs do not engage in tasks outside the bounds of their expertise. It is interesting to note that many offices use PPs to assist clients using computer-based guidance systems. What is not entirely clear is how they insure that PPs explain and interpret the assessments in CACGs systems in a manner consistent with ethical guidelines.

Finally, one important issue for many offices is distinguishing students functioning in peer advisor roles from other work study students who may be performing duties that are more clerical in nature. This is often accomplished not only through the job description and training process, but also through more visible means such as providing peer career advisors with specially designed shirts and name tags, and creating separate work areas/office space. Recognizing PPs in this way acknowledges the time and energy they have put in to reach this level of responsibility. It is also important that clients coming into a Center know when they are engaging someone who possesses a certain level of skill and expertise in providing career assistance, e.g., a PP and when they are talking to someone who is simply functioning in a clerical role.

### Hours

Offices vary in the hour requirements they place on PPs. Ten hours seems to be the most common amount. Severy and Hernandez (2000) indicated that their peer career ambassadors work 6-10 hours per week, including paid time to attend a weekly supervision meeting. Their university publishes the schedule for its career ambassadors on its web site: [http://www.crc.ufl.edu/Library/semesterschedules\\_shell.shtml](http://www.crc.ufl.edu/Library/semesterschedules_shell.shtml). They stressed the importance of asking for a minimum time commitment. One school reported that their career advisors work 12 hours per week. Another indicated that their peers can do up to 20 hours. Some offices are very structured with respect to the time schedules PPs must keep, e.g., they must cover the drop-in career advising desk a set number of hours, while others allow their PP staff to simply put in their hours as their schedules permit. MIT's Graduate Assistants/Interns work 18-20 hours per week for up to 9 months. As MIT noted on its position announcement, graduate interns must be available for periodic evening career-related programs, as well as commit one morning a week to be at the office at 8 AM (C. Pratt, e-mail, March 2000). In the authors' center, the minimum commitment for graduate assistants is 10 hours per week, while interns may work up to 20 hours.

### Office Space

One important logistical issue is considering the use of PPs has to do with the allocation of office space. A center may need to ask some of the following questions:

- Do we have sufficient space to house PPs?
- Will they have a separate office where they can work on projects, make phone calls, etc.?
- Will they have mailboxes located with the rest of the staff or in a separate location?
- Will they have access to a phone, computer, etc. in their work area?
- Will they have a file cabinet or other storage space for maintaining their work materials, projects, training information, etc.?
- If the office uses a copier with a code, will each peer have a code or will they use another staff member's code?

It is unlikely that most offices can afford to allocate much more than possibly one office that is the work space for paraprofessional staff. The kind of space made available may be to some extent dictated by the roles and responsibilities of the PPs. Some will need regular access to a computer, others may need access to a phone, others may need a large area to spread out in when doing project work, and others may need a space that allows for some level of confidentiality. Besides just having space to work, it seems important for PPs to have an area they can "call their own." This area is also a place to socialize, catch up on personal projects before coming on duty, and/or do school work. In our center, the paraprofessional office is often a place where food appears for the group to share in, cartoons are put on the bulletin board, and related activities occur.

### Supervision/Performance Appraisal

Most offices seem to have one or two models for supervision of PPs. Either there is a primary coordinator of the program who provides supervision, or the PPs are assigned to several professional staff members who provide the primary supervision. Some settings have one supervisor who focuses on the graduate level staff, while another person focuses on supervision of the undergraduate paraprofessional staff. PPs who may have a special area of focus, e.g., technology, marketing, may receive specific supervision and evaluation from the staff member overseeing those functions. One program described in the early literature indicated that each paraprofessional in its office received a final performance appraisal which involved written, self, supervisor, and peer evaluations (College Placement Council, 1986). Many settings noted that supervision also occurs in the format of a weekly staff meeting. PPs may share difficult cases or situations they have dealt with and gather ideas from the group on other strategies for dealing with those cases. It may be the case in some settings that persons who end up supervising PPs have not

received formal supervision training, particularly in the area of counseling supervision. The author has found it helpful to rely on some key resources in the profession to help guide the supervision process. Books on this process are readily available through professional counseling associations. Some examples include: Borders & Leddick, 1987; Campbell, 2000; and Falvey, 1987. One area that was not addressed by most schools had to do with situations where PPs violate office guidelines. The University of Missouri at Columbia appears to be one of the few schools that has a detailed procedure in place for handling these types of situations. They use what are called “CPPC Incident Reports.” Students would receive up to 3 warnings before they would be terminated by the Center for a fourth offense.

Another important consideration is how to give positive feedback. One non-school based setting (Telephone Counseling & Referral Service, 2000) that uses volunteer PPs, has a special section in its Daily Log Notebook, which is read by all PPs when they come on duty. The section contains certificates that single out individuals for special recognition. University of Missouri Columbia has a “Center Stud(ette) of the Week” form that congratulates a particular paraprofessional for accomplishments above and beyond the call of duty. In many offices, weekly staff development meetings also provide an opportunity to offer positive feedback and recognition. At Rice University (H. Glantzberg, phone interview, May 2000), the staff picks out one peer career advisor who did something above and beyond the call of duty, and he or she receives a goody bag which is presented at the beginning of the weekly meeting. In the authors’ setting, PPs are singled out for their contributions in e-mails that are sent to all staff.

The written performance evaluation of PPs varies somewhat from setting to setting and also in terms of the evaluation of undergraduate vs. graduate students. In the case of graduate students, they may have a formal evaluation form required by their department. There may also be a form used by the particular office or center where the paraprofessional is working. McDaniels, et al (1995) provide several examples in their *Career Specialist Selection & Training Manual*. The authors’ setting (Lenz, 2000) uses an evaluation form that reflects the National Career Development Association competencies (<http://ncda.org/about/polccc.html>). Many settings did not have a formal form that was used with undergraduates.

### **Funding/Pay**

Based on a review of the literature and telephone interviews, it appears that the more common model is for PPs to be paid. Programs that began with unpaid PPs, often evolved to paid PP staffing. Many offices recruit their PPs through work-study programs. Some offices will continue to fund students whose work study money runs out using “temporary services money.” The author’s setting uses funds that are allocated through the primary budget, which are referred to as OPS funds which also function as a funding source for other temporary staff working in the Center (e.g., graphics assistant, technical assistant). When these funds are no longer available we also have access to auxiliary funds which are generated through fees charged to employers and students. Settings vary in the extent to which they offer higher salaries to PPs who continue on with them. One of the options that some offices have when offering positions to graduate students is to provide a “tuition waiver” in addition to the actual salary. This option makes a fairly low paying position much more attractive, especially to students who may be paying out-of-state tuition. One university funds its undergraduate Career Development Intern program through donations provided by a corporate sponsor. Another office received a small grant from one of its recruiters to cover the cost of training manuals, shirts, snacks, and other goodies to support and encourage the peers advisors (C. Fulford, phone interview, May 2000). UCLA’s career advocates are unpaid but they have a more limited role that primarily involves publicizing career services to students. One unique arrangement involved the peer career assistants (PCAs) at the University of Minnesota-Morris. The group started as volunteers in the career center, but then they became a formal student organization and received activity fee funding from the school’s Student Activities Council. Now the PCAs are paid work-study students-employees of the Career Center (G. Donovan, e-mail, April 2000).

### **Ethics/Standards**

Persons who train and supervise PPs in career services as well as other areas of student affairs must give some thought to communicating information about ethical issues and professional standards. While many professional associations (e.g., American College Personnel Association, ACPA – [www.acpa.nche.edu/pubs/prncstan.htm](http://www.acpa.nche.edu/pubs/prncstan.htm), American Counseling Association, ACA – [www.counseling.org/resources/codeofethics.htm](http://www.counseling.org/resources/codeofethics.htm), National Career Development Association, NCDA – [www.ncda.org/about/poles.html](http://www.ncda.org/about/poles.html), National Association of Colleges and Employers, NACE – [www.naceweb.org/about/principl.html](http://www.naceweb.org/about/principl.html), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, NASPA – [www.naspa.org/about/standards.htm](http://www.naspa.org/about/standards.htm)) produce guidelines in this area, much of what is included in these documents does not speak directly to the work of PPs. When training or supervising PPs, staff may want to highlight aspects of one or more of these documents that particularly speak to the tasks that PPs are involved in that particular setting. Depending on the setting, PPs may have access to confidential files and/or may have one-on-one interactions with students where personal information is shared. The training program used at University of Missouri Columbia for its Career Specialists PPs includes a section on paraprofessional ethics and an outline of an Ethical Decision-Making Process (McDaniels, et al, 1995). In the authors' setting, because we are working primarily with graduate students in the field of career counseling, the NCDA ethical guidelines are used. Key aspects of these guidelines that typically need to be emphasized with PPs are confidentiality, knowing when to consult with a supervisor, and knowing when to refer a case that is beyond their expertise. Carns, Carns, and Wright (1993) indicated that one of the problematic areas identified in their research “centered around legal/ethical issues, screening, and the ability of student PPs to respect their limits and abilities” (p. 362). Paritzsky (1981) noted the lack of guidelines for peer counselors to assist them in making effective referrals. Most persons contacted for this report stressed the fact that professional staff were available for consultation when PPs felt they were in a situation beyond their skills and training. Our center has developed a general set of guidelines for staff, including PPs, to use in making determinations about referrals to individual counseling (see Appendix G).

### **Challenges/Issues**

While most offices offer positive endorsement of peer or paraprofessional programs, these programs are not without their issues and challenges. While PPs often contribute a valuable service to an office, as Frigault, Maloney and Trevino (1986) suggested, student services who are considering implementing a paraprofessional program must be aware of the increased time demands it will place on them. While PPs provide additional staff resources, they also increase staff responsibilities with respect to training and supervision. Benedict, et al (2000) noted a number of challenges associated with peer paraprofessional programs including: the loss of students during the training process, pressures of student's academic life may not mesh well with office pressures, danger of asking too much of these students, limitations on their time schedule due to class conflicts, takes time and money to do these programs well, and non-paid peer programs are competing with paid positions.

Another issue has to do with funding. In her study, Whitt (1993) noted that some programs had dissolved due to budget-related issues. There are definite costs associated with paraprofessionals, ranging from the actual salaries, to printing of training materials, and to the extras like shirts, name tags, etc. If a center opts to initiate a paraprofessional program, they need to consider possible sources for funds to support this type of program, be it a corporate sponsor, campus-based grant or student government funding. There is a great deal of anecdotal data that supports the continuation of these programs but very little cost effectiveness/cost efficiency data.

With respect to the use of PPs in the service delivery process, in the authors' setting there is an ongoing concern that while the PPs are thoroughly trained, they are often lacking in the in-depth skills and knowledge that permanent staff members with advanced degrees possess. One can't help but have some concern about the unevenness in service delivery that may occur under these circumstances. As

McDaniels, et al (1994) suggested, committing to a PP program means letting go to some extent. "Giving up responsibility may mean that some programs, presentations, brochures, etc., may turn out differently than envisioned, in fact they may not resemble anything a career professional would have created" (p. 108). Settings considering the use of PPs to supplement their services must decide how willing they are to bestow a level of trust and confidence in their paraprofessional staff.

### **Benefits/Strengths**

There seems to be a fairly universal perspective among the settings sampled for this report that, despite the challenges and issues that PP programs often present, these programs bring many benefits as well. Benedict, et al (2000) listed "Top Ten Benefits for Peer Paraprofessional Programs" which included such things as: they are the best advertisers for our programs; they bring in a constant flow of new ideas and energy; they offer amazing talent at a bargain price; they bring in specialized expertise and they keep us young! Another person described them as "invaluable" (M. Merrill, e-mail, August 2000). McDaniels, et al (1994) cited numerous examples of where paraprofessional programs have proved to be a valuable resource. Heppner and Johnston (1993) suggested that many students actually prefer to receive help from a peer rather than a professional. For many educational and human services settings, PP programs allow them to reach many more students than they would be able to otherwise (Easton, Platt, & Van House, 1985). Feehan and Wade (1998) echoed a similar point of view noting that "the Career Center could not feasibly provide either the quantity or quality of services presently available without the contribution of its paraprofessional staff" (p. 153).

### **Conclusion**

This report reflects a limited, but current survey of paraprofessional programs in career services and related fields. The information reinforces the notion that PPs continue to play an important role in the provision of career services. Issues that need further attention in this area include how best to deliver all the training information that these individuals need to know to function effectively. Training of these individuals requires a significant investment of staff time and resources and decisions must be made about how best to use this time and what are the essential knowledge and skills these students must master before they can serve students and other clients effectively. An area that is not widely reported on is the screening process used by offices to determine which individuals seeking services can best be served by a paraprofessional and which individuals need the services of a more highly trained staff member. The criteria for making these determinations seemed to be vaguely defined at best. Also, there seems to be a great deal of variability with respect to evaluation. This includes evaluation of the work done by the PPs as well as evaluation of these types of programs in general. It is increasingly common to find information about paraprofessional programs being shared on career services-related listservs such as Professional JobTalk and JobPlace. This type of ongoing exchange will play an important role in the continued development and evaluation of these programs.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Paraprofessional Staff Survey

Please describe the screening, interviewing process used in selecting paraprofessionals? Do you have a “formal” recruitment process? How are these opportunities advertised, if at all?

On average, how many paraprofessionals (including interns, graduate assistants, peer counselors, etc.) are on staff in a given period (semester, quarter, year)?

What is the mix of undergraduates, graduate students?

#### Training Program

Who on the staff coordinates? What is that person’s degree/background? Who else on the staff participates in the training?

How long has this program been operating?

How long is the training? How often does it occur throughout the year?

Does the training program vary according to the background of the individuals?

Can the training be done on an individual, self-directed basis or does a group go through together?

What does the training consist of? Format? Types of materials, manuals, resources used in training? Are there any commercially published resources that you have found particularly useful for training?

What opportunities are there for ongoing training once the initial training is completed?

#### Roles/Responsibilities

What services/program functions do paraprofessionals get involved in?

How do the roles of undergraduates differ from graduates, if at all? Do paraprofessionals select, administer, or interpret career assessments?

#### Supervision/Evaluation

Who provides supervision for the paraprofessionals?

How do staff assess the performance of paraprofessionals?

How is feedback given? In what format? Group vs. individual?

How often?

**Pay**

Length of paid appointments

Pay range for undergraduates vs. graduate students

Do more experienced paraprofessionals receive a higher rate of pay?

Source(s) of funding to cover paraprofessional appointments.

**Other comments**

**Appendix B****Organizations That Provided Information for this Report\***

Auburn University	SUNY Cortland
Beloit College	SUNY Oswego
Cornell University	Syracuse University
DePaul University	Telephone Counseling & Referral Service
Florida State University	University of California-Berkeley
Illinois Wesleyan University	University of California-Los Angeles
Indiana University	University of Florida
Ithaca College	University of Georgia
Loyola College, Maryland	University of Minnesota-Morris
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Mississippi
Rice University	University of Missouri-Columbia
Southwest Texas State University	University of Wisconsin-River Falls
SUNY Brockport	

\*Information was gathered through personal interviews, phone interviews, and e-mail communication.

## Appendix C

The sites below were viewed by the authors during the course of this project and may be useful as an additional source of information.

### Sample Web sites:

<http://www.bacchusgamma.com/>

A site focused on peer educators who work in alcohol and drug education; but many of the training materials include information relevant to a variety of peer advisor programs, e.g., listening skills, confrontation skills, presentation and programming skills.

<http://career.berkeley.edu/peers/Peers.stm>

Another example of how a career center profiles its peer advisors on its Web site.

<http://www.cdf-global.org/index2.htm>

A site that explains how a person who does not have graduate level training as a career counselor can become credentialed as a career development facilitator (CDF).

<http://www.counseling.uci.edu/>

Example of a peer education program that operates out of a university counseling center.

<http://web.missouri.edu/~cppcwww/staff/carspec.shtml>

An example of how one career center profiles its paraprofessionals (called career specialists) on its web page.

<http://www.peerhelping.org/>

Web page of the National Peer Helper Association; many of their resources focus on peer programs with younger individuals (e.g., middle and high school) but some information on the site can be useful in planning peer programs, including the "Checklist for a Peer Helping Program."

<http://www.wartburg.edu/careers/pathjobDes.html>

Wartburg College Career Services Center's job description for its paraprofessional consultants.

[http://www.california-registry.org/paraprofessional\\_requirements.htm](http://www.california-registry.org/paraprofessional_requirements.htm)

Site that provides information on the requirements that must be met to be on the California Registry of career paraprofessionals.

## Appendix D

### Sample Titles Used in Paraprofessional Programs

Career Advisors

Career Advocates  
Career Ambassadors  
Career Assistants  
Career Associates  
Career Consultants  
Career Development Facilitator (CDF)  
Career Development Interns (CDI)  
Career Education and Outreach Peer Mentors (CEOs)  
Career Peer Advisors  
Career Peers  
Career Specialists  
Outreach Career Center Presenters  
Paraprofessional Career Consultants  
Peer Advisors  
Peer Career Assistants  
Peer Career Counselors  
Peer Counselors  
Peer Educators

## Appendix E

### University of Florida Career Resource Center CAREER AMBASSADOR POSITION DESCRIPTION

#### **Purpose:**

The CRC Career Ambassador Program provides opportunities for University of Florida undergraduate and graduate students to assist fellow UF students with career information and advising services within the Career Resource Center. Initial training begins in mid-late January. Career Ambassadors provide 5-10 hours of service per week and are asked to make a commitment of two semesters after training.

#### **Primary Responsibilities:**

Greet students entering the CRC and direct them to appropriate personnel and resources within the center. Answer questions pertaining to how students may utilize CRC services.

Staff regularly scheduled "Peer Advising Hours" in the Career Center Resource Library. Advising covers a variety of topics including: critiquing cover letters and resumes, assisting with on-line job searches, helping students find information about intended majors or careers, and providing referrals to other CRC services.

Refer students to appropriate CRC programs including workshops, library resources, on-line resources, Computer-Assisted Guidance Programs, on-campus interviewing and GRAD, internships and co-ops, and counseling/advising.

Develop a strong knowledge of major resources utilized in the CRC library and Audio/Visual Lab.

Provide proactive assistance to students in these areas.

Conduct outreach presentations and tours of the Career Resource Center.

Conduct mock interviews.

Participate in weekly Career Ambassador meetings.

#### **Additional Responsibilities:**

Help with CRC publicity.

Assist with campus interview registration and answer questions about the recruiting process.

Assist with recruitment and training of new Career Ambassadors.

Staff special career programs and events.

Answer phones and provide back-up to information desk and library personnel.

#### **Minimum Qualifications:**

Satisfactory academic standing with a GPA of 3.0 or above.

Strong interpersonal communication skills.

Motivated worker who enjoys a fast-paced environment.

5-10 hours per week and two semester minimum time commitment, *after semester of training*.

#### **Training:**

Career Ambassadors will be provided training to prepare them to be effective paraprofessionals. Training consists of a one-credit hour course offered in the spring semester. Training will consist of initial formal training sessions followed by job shadowing with experienced Ambassadors. There also will be regular, on-going training sessions throughout the Career Ambassador Program.

#### **Time Commitment:**

Selected students must be able to begin in mid-late January. Flexible scheduling of work hours is allowed, but you should have at least 6 hours per week to commit. Training, work, and meeting schedules are determined at the beginning of each semester by group consensus.

**Benefits:**

Career Ambassadors will be provided training in communication skills, facilitation skills, interviewing skills, giving feedback, and career development theory and application. In addition, they will become familiar with all of the programs, skills, and services the CRC has to offer. Career Ambassadors will strengthen their skills in such areas as providing information, assessing individual needs, effective communication, and problem solving. They will gain valuable work experience, help fellow students, and should be able to apply the career information and theories they learn to their own career path. Due to the Career Resource Center's high expectations of professionalism and commitment, the new Career Ambassadors will be paid bi-weekly at a rate of \$5.15 per hour.

**Application and Selection:**

Interested students should complete and submit an application available at the CRC Information desk, located on the first floor of the Reitz Union. Applicants will receive a phone call regarding their status within two weeks. Candidates will be interviewed starting December.

For Further Information on the Career Resource Center and the Career Ambassador program, check out our web-site at <http://www.crc.ufl.edu>

## **Appendix F**

### **Sample Job Responsibilities from the MIT Career Development Graduate Assistantship/Internships/Practica Announcement**

- Career advising of undergraduate and graduate students regarding resumes and cover letters, and quick questions related to pre-professional advising and our web-based employment recruiting system via “walk-in” appointments
- Conducting practice interviews individually with students
- Marketing of career development workshops and special events
- Planning/organizing events and workshops that involve employers
- Presenting workshops on topics related to: job searching using our web-based employment recruiting system, freshman programming, and pre-professional advising
- Data entry, use of Word, PowerPoint, WWW, and web publishing
- Participating in case conferences and staff meetings
- Organization/administrative tasks (such as answering the phone, greeting employers, registering students for events, assisting staff in preparation of events, etc.)

There will also be the possibility of working on special projects. These include: Pre-Professional Advising, the Survey of Graduates/Employer Relations, and the Freshman/Alumni Summer Internship Program.

## Appendix G

### GUIDELINES FOR REFERRING PERSONS TO INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING:

Given the limited number of slots allocated to individual counseling, we would like to make sure that this Career Center resource is used with those individuals who need it the most. The criteria below are designed to help staff make determinations regarding who might best be helped through an individual counseling appointment. Just because someone requests an appointment, is not a reason to schedule one!

Examples of clients considered appropriate for individual counseling include:

- 1).those who have not benefited from prior service delivery in a self-directed mode
- 2).those needing more than self-help assistance with career decision-making (undecided or indecisive)
- 3).those who have a Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) total score of 58 or higher; Career Advisors can make their own judgments regarding referrals of clients with lower CTI total scores who may have particular negative thoughts (individual CTI items) that could be best addressed through one-on-one counseling; also, through further conversation with clients, Career Advisors can use their judgment to determine whether persons with high CTI total scores are potentially “faking bad” and may not be as “needy” as the elevated total score might suggest
- 4).those whose presenting comments suggest that may have a low vocational identity (e.g., "I'm really confused," "I have no idea what I want to do," "I really need help"), and who continue to present themselves in this manner after the initial intake
- 5).those with a MVS Vocational Identity (VI) scores of 6 or lower; through further conversation with clients, Career Advisors can use their judgment to determine whether persons with low scores are “faking bad” and may not be as “needy” as the low VI score might suggest
- 6).adults who have experienced a job loss (e.g., been fired, downsized, etc.), who are initiating a job search campaign, and who are having difficulty coping
- 7).adult clients with multiple, complex issues, e.g., are clearly dealing with other life issues in addition to their career concerns (e.g., divorce, recent onset of a disability, loss of a loved one) and who are having difficulty coping
- 8).individuals with a disability who require more time and assistance than can be provided in a walk-in or drop-in mode of service delivery

Florida State University Career Center. (2000). Florida State University Career Advisor Guide. Tallahassee, FL: Author.