



The Career College Information Source

Second Annual Admissions Symposium Unveils Exciting Opportunities in Career Education Admissions

By Carla Cheatham, School Counselor, Bremen High School and Shannon Gormley, National Director of Enrollment Solutions, Norton Norris, Inc.

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The second Annual Career Education Admissions Symposium was held Tuesday, June 5, 2017, as a pre-conference workshop at the Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU) Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event was generously sponsored by Norton Norris, Inc. and gave leaders and experts in higher education the opportunity to share their insights into the admissions profession and career education.

The concept of the Admissions Symposium was introduced in 2015 when a group of leaders in career education, community colleges, high schools and higher education professionals came together to discuss how to serve students to a greater degree and give key influencers in the career education space the chance to get involved in meaningful dialogue to enhance the college admissions profession.

This year's Symposium focused on the importance of career education in

high schools, community colleges, career colleges as well as four-year colleges and universities. Presenters shared their personal and professional experiences in serving a student population that is interested in pursuing career education as a postsecondary option versus a traditional undergraduate track.

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Career education as a unifying element

According to edglossary.org, career and technical education can be defined as educational programs in schools and institutions that specialize in skilled trades, applied sciences, modern technologies and



career preparation (June 2017). The Symposium highlighted how career education could unify high school counselors and college admission professionals in providing robust postsecondary options to high school and adult students alike. One of the first elements discussed was that career and technical programs offer a hands-on curriculum, which appeals to student’s specific learning styles/preferences. These programs also provide relevant skills for today’s job market thus helping to address the skills gap in this country. A third element shared was the opportunity that career and technical education programs provide for pathways to

certifications and degrees increasing employability for students. Finally, these programs also have been shown to increase college and career readiness by providing a core that focuses on academic, technical, and job-related skills.

Vince Norton emphasized that career schools should not try to be a “one size fits all” solution for students, stressing that schools need to embrace their career and technical roots. Community college president, Angelia Millender, agreed and stressed the importance of offering degrees that are not designed to transfer to a four-year college or university and their purpose, reminding participants that “the community colleges offer those same degrees, which do not transfer to a four-year college or university because they are designed to get graduates into a specific career field upon graduation.”

Opportunities for growth and reform in career education

The conversation regarding increasing postsecondary options leading to viable employment has once again returned to the notion that career and technical education can help to fill a gap in the United States. Many employers are looking to hire workers who lack a traditional four-



CARLA CHEATHAM has worked in education and as a high school counselor for over 20 years. Carla earned the Global Career Development Facilitator credential through the National Career Development Association and the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE). Carla has earned

credentials as a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and a national career counselor (NCC). Carla is currently working toward her credentials as a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC). She has recently started the Cheatham Career Services, LLC, where she focuses on

career consulting and career coaching.

Carla received a B.S. in Journalism from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and a M.Ed. in School Counseling from Georgia State University. In addition, she received her Ed.M. in Global Studies in Education from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Carla will soon begin the doctoral degree program for Counselor Education and Supervision at Governor’s State University.

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year degree but are qualified to work in technical fields (Fain 2017). Consider this, there are over a million job openings in the trade, transportation, and utilities sector; 315,000 openings in manufacturing; and 12 of the 20 fastest growing occupations are in the healthcare field, and many require an Associate degree or less in terms of education level (www.acteonline.org 2017). Career programs help prepare high schools students and adults for those highly skilled and in demand careers.

Career and technical education is also receiving support from both parties in Washington as they look to introduce policy focusing on apprenticeship and education programs beyond a traditional four-year degree (Fain 2017). U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), leads the House Education Committee and recently introduced a markup of a bill to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, a federal law overseeing career education programs (Fain 2017). Foxx states that “the bill aims to improve the alignment of CTE programs with in-demand jobs by supporting innovative learning opportunities, building stronger community partnerships and encouraging stronger engagement with employers.” Foxx recognizes that higher education must play a role in career training citing that most good jobs require at least two years of education beyond high school. However, a stigma still persists about career education with those lacking a degree not feeling successful. This is something that we must strive to change in education and help people shift their perceptions of career and technical education from the plan B option to a plan A option (Fain 2017).

The high school perspective

Career and technical education

programs can assist students in building the skills necessary to be successful in today’s job market. At one time, vocational training was incorporated into secondary schools as a way of preparing students for work upon graduation. However, there was concern that vocational “tracking” placed more low-income and students of color in trade occupations and encouraged four-year college attendance for students on the higher socioeconomic scale (Aliaga, Kotamraju, Stone, 2014).

After No Child Left Behind had been introduced, vocational programs began disappearing due to the perception that four-year colleges and universities were for everyone (regardless of career interests). Within the past several years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in vocational (now, considered career and technical) education. One of the most important aspects of current career technical education programs is the realization that career education has diverse offerings for students, whether they plan to attend a career technical school, two-year college or a four-year college or university (Newman, Winston 2016).

To learn more about the high school perspective, high school counselors, Carla Cheatham and Takeesha Dade, joined the panel of presenters at the Symposium to share their insights, experiences and perceptions of advising students interested in postsecondary career education options. During their presentation, both counselors stressed their belief



that there is no such thing as a one size fits all solution for students. They also stressed the importance of helping their students explore fit by looking at their interests, skills, and values related to their career plans.

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could and should be an option for students to consider post-graduation. However, given counselors' limited resources and time, they

acknowledged that it could be difficult to address this specific path on an individual basis with their students. They shared their concerns regarding the hand-off between high school and college and having a trustworthy resource available at schools to ensure the student, as well as the counselor, understands the commitment, cost, and expected outcomes of a career school.

In order to increase awareness for career education programs, the counselors stressed the importance of cultivating partnerships between high school counselors and college admission professionals. "It can be

difficult to get in touch with us, given our caseload and daily responsibilities. Get to know which counselor or staff member at the high school is in charge of scheduling college visits," Dade encouraged. Both counselors went on to offer additional ways to connect with high school counselors and cultivate lasting partnerships, including:

1. Offer a quick glance guide of various career schools and programs in the area with contact names so that they have an individual to connect their students and families to at the school.
2. Provide experiences on campus that offer students a glimpse of specific careers.
3. Share scholarship opportunities/updates regularly to become a resource for students and their families.
4. Share success stories, especially of students who graduated from a particular high school to highlight outcomes.

Counselors wholeheartedly believe that students must have a postsecondary plan upon graduation that is realistic, cost-effective and offers opportunities that will enhance



SHANNON GORMLEY began her career in higher education 17 years ago as an admissions counselor. Since then, she has served in the role of student activities director, student advisor, director of admissions, and executive director of graduate recruitment. Shannon went on to work in admissions

training, serving as the director of training and EnrollMatch® Master Facilitator. She has worked extensively with Dr. Jean Norris in the development of EnrollMatch®, a comprehensive admissions training program offering proven results to balance compliance and outstanding performance.

After receiving her Master's degree in School

Counseling, Shannon worked in secondary education as a school counselor, assisting students in the development of their academic, social, and career pursuits, with a focus on college and career readiness. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and her Master of Arts in School Counseling, from Lewis University and is a licensed school counselor with the state of Illinois.

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their lives as well as provide skills leading to viable and long-lasting employment in their chosen field (Wyman 2015). They are responsible for ensuring this happens with their students and look to the college admissions colleagues to assist in making these plans a reality.

Current best practices and trends in college admissions

In the second part of the workshop, sector leaders in career education admissions shared best practices for advising students when it comes to identifying fit, regaining public trust in the sector, developing necessary skills to serve students to a higher level, and introducing opportunities for credentialing admission professionals to demonstrate their skill level and expertise in advising students appropriately.

Alissa Guidry, Executive Director of Admissions for Aveda Institute South, shared her personal experiences regarding determining “fit” as a student and how those experiences helped her to integrate identifying fit into her admissions process for AI South. Fit includes matching interests, abilities and values to a potential career option, which is important as it allows students the chance to learn more about hard and soft skills needed for employment. Both school counselors agreed that helping students determine fit early on is critical to understanding postsecondary options that make sense. As Cheatham pointed out, “the reality is that some school systems do not have the resources to devote to career exploration.” This presents a critical opportunity for admission professionals to bridge the gap to help counselors and their student “explore for themselves but with others, the role of work and vocational knowledge in forging a sense of personal competence,

integrity, and identity” and determine “what kind of work will fit their sense of who they are and what they want to become.” (Halpern 2012).

It’s no secret that career education has taken its share of knocks in recent years. And while career focused programs can be an instrumental part of the solution for closing the skills gap in this country, the perception of career schools remains lackluster.

Dr. Jean Norris and

Vince Norton, managing partners of Norton Norris, Inc., encouraged participants to look to other industries to learn how to change the story regarding career schools to become more favorable, sharing eight steps that schools can take now to help restore public trust. Some of these steps include:

- Return to your roots and embrace the career and technical training that you offer
- Avoid a one-size-fits all approach
- Help high school counselors by offering pre-enrollment advising in the admission process
- Pay attention to lead vendors and their practices
- Focus on fit when helping a student determine if your program and institution is the best choice

As Joe Sallustio, VP of Enrollment & Marketing for National American University, pointed out in his presentation, not only do we need to regain trust to make a difference; it’s critical that admission professionals also have the necessary skills to serve today’s students to a higher degree. As Joe reiterated, “the role of the admissions professional today is as much about gaining trust as it is presenting program information, more

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so than ever before.”

In order to be effective in serving students, Sallustio identified three skills necessary:

1. Empathy and the ability to understand a student’s specific situation and opinion regarding college, especially one that has been influenced by the news/media
2. Tech-awareness and how social media can impact the decision-making process for students
3. Knowledge and being confident in

delivering specific information about your institution

Another proponent of helping admission professionals develop

critical skills is Dr. Amanda Opperman, Director of Competency-Based Solutions with Wonderlic, Inc. In her presentation, Dr. Opperman shared examples of various professions that utilize credentials to demonstrate learned competencies such as the cosmetology industry, the healthcare field, and education. She also discussed the

soft skills that successful admission professionals possess such as interpersonal and customer services skills, adaptability, communication, and problem-solving. Oftentimes, individuals question whether these specific skills can be credentialed. Dr. Opperman assured the audience that soft skills can, in fact, be credentialed, stating “if it can be measured, it can be credentialed and the good news is...soft skills CAN be measured!”

Moving forward

The conclusion of the Symposium focused on ways to move forward in serving students interested in career education. Keeping the themes that had been laid out throughout the morning by Symposium presenters at the forefront: building lasting partnerships with high school counselors, understanding and celebrating pathways in career and technical education, and offering admission professionals the opportunity to build their skills. A new professional membership organization serving counseling and admission professionals was introduced. The Association for the Advancement of College Admission Professionals (AACAP) was formed to serve admissions and counseling professionals in implementing compliant best practices and servicing students interested in pursuing career education within the highest ethical standards. AACAP offers professionals working in high schools, career schools, community colleges and four-year institutions a number of resources to assist in their learning and professional development.

Membership for AACAP is free to professionals working for an institution that offers career education tracks for students. There are numerous benefits for members of AACAP including: advocacy,



educational blogs and newsletters, networking opportunities, and an AACAP credential for admission professionals to demonstrate their knowledge, skill and proficiency in advising students interested in career education.

High school counselor, Takesha Dade shared her thoughts regarding the importance of a credential for admission professionals. “Credentialing is a good way to demonstrate to high school counselors that admission professionals are skilled and can be trusted to do the right thing with the high school (and adult population) when it comes to planning for the future.” Thanks to a partnership formed with MaxKnowledge, AACAP members can begin the credentialing process by completing CHEP courses in the Admissions track.

To learn even more about the Association for the Advancement of the College Admissions Profession, visit the AACAP website at www.advancingadmissions.org.

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