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ABSTRACT

The degree to which the City University of New York (CUNY) prepares students for useful lives can be measured, in part, by the degree to which its graduates are able to find employment. In order to assess the effectiveness of the newly developed counseling services of the Office of Employment Counseling and Placement at Bronx Community College, graduates and alumni who had used the service during the 1979-1980 and 1980-1981 academic years were asked to complete counselor evaluation questionnaires. Results of these surveys were compared with results from an April 1980 college-wide survey conducted prior to the Employment Office efforts at program improvements. The percentage of graduates and alumni who rated the counseling services satisfactory increased from 46% in 1979-1980 to 67% in 1980-1981; this was significantly greater at the .01 level in both years than the percentage of students who rated job placement services adequate to excellent in the April 1980 college-wide survey. The results demonstrate that a well planned effort at improving services such as an employment counseling and placement program can lead to increased student satisfaction. (Author/JAC)

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Student Evaluations of the Bronx Community College

Office of Employment Counseling and Placement

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Student Evaluations of the Bronx Community College
Office of Employment Counseling and Placement

In 1970, the City University of New York (CUNY) established its Open Admissions program which guarantees every New York City resident who earns a high school diploma a place in one of its community or senior colleges. Over the years, CUNY's commitment to offering a meaningful and enriching collegiate experience to socially, economically, and academically disadvantaged students has remained constant. For example, in 1979, Blacks and Hispanics earned 43% of the associate's degrees and 27% of the bachelor's degrees awarded by CUNY compared with national averages of 13% and 9% respectively (Kaufman cited in Elliot, 1982, p. 5).

The success of the Open Admissions program was called into question by Trivett who, after reviewing much of the data concerning CUNY's changing student population and its success as reflected in graduation, retention, and credit generation, concluded that although open admissions has been a success in providing access to college for a sizeable group of previously underrepresented students, large numbers of these newcomers are not succeeding once admitted (1976, p. 5). On the otherhand, CUNY's former Vice Chancellor for Budget and Planning, T. Edward Hollander, stated that the Open Admissions program is the first realistic attempt to provide equal higher educational opportunity for high school graduates. The program is based on the premise that every high school graduate has a right to a reasonable chance for success in college and that the college's responsibility is to adopt its program

to compensate for educational disabilities attributable to socioeconomic causes that limit the student's ability to compete (pp. 256-257). Consequently, he urged that CUNY's Open Admissions program not be judged in terms of how many or what proportion of its students earn baccalaureates. Instead, the program should be judged in terms of who is now coming to college at CUNY and by CUNY's ability to prepare students for useful lives, recognizing that, for many, this goal will involve only one, two, or three years of college (p. 259).

The degree to which CUNY successfully prepares students for useful lives can be measured, in part, by the degree to which its graduates are able to obtain appropriate employment. Kaufman found that, within one year of graduation, 70% of all students who received bachelor's and associate's degrees from CUNY in June, 1979 were employed full-time. Only 5% reported being unemployed and those working full-time had an average income of \$14,000 per year (cited in Elliot, 1982, p. 5).

Clearly, with such a strong emphasis upon obtaining employment immediately after graduation, the various senior and community colleges within CUNY have a serious obligation to provide satisfactory employment counseling and placement services for their students, especially their graduating students. Unfortunately, due to continuing financial problems since the mid-1970's, CUNY has not always been able to meet this obligation satisfactorily. At Bronx Community College (BCC), for example, the Office of Employment Counseling and Placement was closed from February, 1978 until February, 1979. It was then staffed by one professional, on a part-time basis, until October, 1979 when the writer was appointed Coordinator of Employment Counseling and

Placement on a full-time basis. Not surprisingly, 54% of the 450 students who participated in a college-wide student opinion survey in April, 1980 indicated that the job placement service needed some or much improvement.

Twenty-four percent of them indicated that the job placement service was adequate while only 21% rated it good or excellent (Bronx Community College, Office of Institutional Research, 1980, p. 1).

In October, 1979, the writer began to improve and expand the counseling services offered by the Office of Employment Counseling and Placement. For the benefit of graduating students and alumni, employment interviewers from major corporations were invited to recruit on-campus. Students were also referred directly to employers for both part-time and full-time employment. With the aid of two graduate students from neighboring universities who each worked one day per week, 204 graduating students and alumni were helped, on an individual basis, to develop job search strategies, prepare resumes and employment application letters, and prepare for employment interviews during the 1979-1980 academic year. Hundreds of non-graduating students were also referred to local employers for both part-time and full-time employment by other staff members.

Method

In order to compare the evaluations of the 204 graduating students and alumni who used the Office's newly developed in-depth counseling services during the 1979-1980 academic year with the evaluations of the students who participated in the college-wide student opinion survey in April, 1980, a counselor evaluation questionnaire was sent to all 204 of them in August, 1980.

In addition to being asked to describe, in writing, the ways in which they were helped, by their counselors, to begin their job searches as well as what else their counselors could have done to be of help to them, they were asked to indicate, in general, how satisfied they were with the assistance they received from their counselors.

Results

Three of the questionnaires were returned by the United States Postal Service. Thirty percent of the remaining 201 students returned completed questionnaires. Two respondents did not indicate their degree of satisfaction with the assistance they received. Forty-six percent of the remaining respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while 44% indicated that they were satisfied. Ten percent indicated that they were dissatisfied. In August, 1981, the same questionnaire was sent to the 202 graduating students and alumni with whom the writer, working unassisted, met for employment counseling during the 1980-1981 academic year. Nine of the questionnaires were returned by the United States Postal Service. Sixteen percent of the remaining 193 students returned completed questionnaires. Three respondents did not indicate their degree of satisfaction with the assistance they received. Sixty-seven percent of the remaining respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while 33% indicated that they were satisfied.

Discussion

The percentage of graduating students and alumni who rated the counseling services they received very satisfactory increased from 46% in 1979-1980 to 67% in 1980-1981. While the increase is not statistically significant at

the .05 level, it, nevertheless, would seem to reflect refinements in the employment counseling and placement program. For example, the on-campus recruiting program more than doubled in size from one year to the next. Furthermore, additional teaching materials were obtained from the College Placement Council and other sources.

In both the 1979-1980 and the 1980-1981 academic years, the percentage of graduating students and alumni who rated the counseling services they received satisfactory or very satisfactory was significantly greater at the .01 level than the percentage of students who rated the job placement services adequate, good, or excellent in the college-wide student opinion survey held in April, 1980. The results of this investigation demonstrate that a well planned effort at improving and expanding student services, such as, an employment counseling and placement program can lead to increased student satisfaction.

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