

# Best Practices in Career Services

March 2019

In the following report, Hanover Research presents the results of a best practices analysis of career services offerings, utilizing a variety of secondary sources and benchmarking practices among nine institutions.



# Table of Contents

*Best Practices: Career Services*

<a href="#"><u>Executive Summary</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Page 3</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Research Questions and Methodology</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Page 4</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>State of Career Services</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Page 5</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>National Trends in Career Services</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Page 6</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Benchmarking Analysis</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Page 8</u></a>

# Executive Summary

## Best Practices: Career Services

### Recommendations

Based on an analysis of secondary literature and career services programming offered by nine peer and competitor institutions, Hanover recommends that institutions:

- 1 Leverage alumni and student networks to provide additional career services programs through mentorships.** Five reviewed institutions train current students or alumni professionals to provide career mentorship. Peer mentors can provide front-line assistance with resume writing and job searching, while alumni mentors can provide practical career advice and professional opportunities.
- 2 Explore opportunities to utilize third-party resources for job and internship searches, career assessments, and career planning.** While almost all institutions provide online job search tools, and some provide access to career assessment and planning, approaches vary between third-party providers and institutional providers. Utilizing third-party providers such as Handshake and Symplicity, or the University of Tennessee's career explorer, may help provide career services to students without requiring additional staff or oversight.
- 3 Conduct in-depth interviews to better understand specific practices in broad career services operations such as career counseling and career fairs.** While these are common services offered at reviewed institutions, relatively few institutions provide specific details regarding counseling practices and career fair processes. Conducting in-depth interviews with institutions of interest may provide insight into specific practices.

### Fast Facts

Overview of trends reviewed in the report



61%

Of students who graduated between 2010 and 2016 visited career services



92%

Of career services offices offer internship assistance, career fairs, and career workshops



1-2

Average staff size of career service offices at benchmarked institutions

### Key Findings

The most commonly-offered career services at reviewed institutions include career counseling, graduate school preparation, resume writing and interview help, career assessments, and career fairs. In considering what services are needed, institutions should offer most of these services to align with standard practice.

Survey data reveal that students prefer certain career services to be offered online rather than in-person through the career office. These services include job search assistance, job postings, career assessments, internship and co-op research, and employer information. Reviewed institutions typically also include event calendars, general career resources, and graduate school information on career center websites.

Unique services offered by reviewed career services offices include outcomes information and access to career roadmaps. Two institutions include employment outcome information through their career service website to help students identify potential options for employment, and four institutions provide students with a method to assess degree and career options with specific career outcome information and plans of action.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers provides professional standards and guides for career services operations. Standards focus on career service office operations and function, program components, and ethical considerations. Institutions may want to consider using these standards to guide expansion or changes in their career services offices.

# Research Questions and Methodology

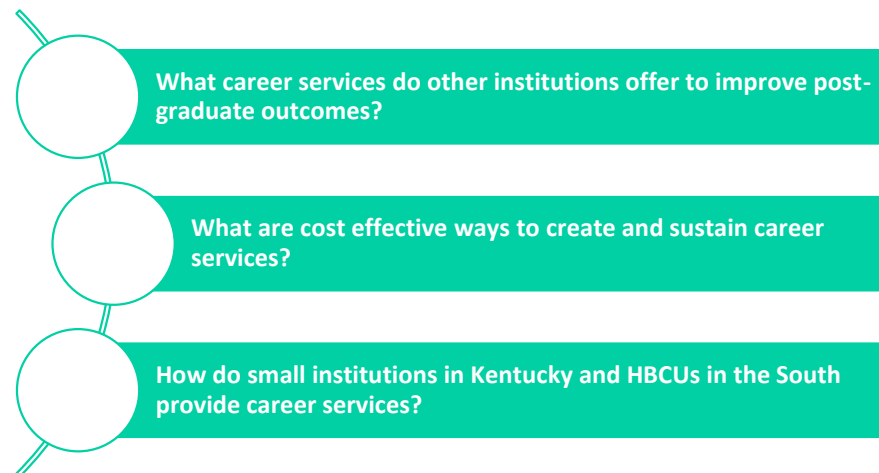
Best Practices: Career Services

## Methodology

To assist institutions with launching and sustaining career services programs to improve post-graduate outcomes, Hanover analyzed both literature and institutional websites. Analysis is drawn from a variety of sources, primarily emphasizing findings from the National Association of Colleges and Employers student and recruitment surveys.

Institutions included in the benchmarking portion of this analysis were selected based on institutional characteristics and location. The selection includes both small private colleges in the state of Kentucky and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) located in the southern region.

## Research Questions



## Peer Institution Characteristics

The benchmarking analysis is based on analysis of information drawn from the following institutions:

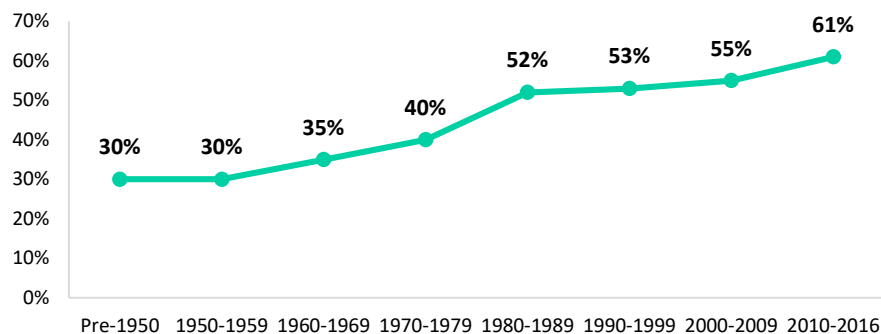
Institution	Career Services Office	State	Type	Affiliation	Enrollment
Campbellsville University	<a href="#">Career Services</a>	KY	Private	Christian	8,056
Central State University	<a href="#">Office of Career Services</a>	OH	Public	HBCU	1,784
Centre College	<a href="#">Center for Career &amp; Professional Development</a>	KY	Private	N/A	1,450
Clafin University	<a href="#">Career Development</a>	SC	Private	HBCU/Methodist	2,129
Dillard University	<a href="#">Center for Career &amp; Professional Development</a>	LA	Private	HBCU/Methodist	1,291
Elizabeth City State University	<a href="#">Office of Career Development</a>	NC	Public	HBCU	1,414
Georgetown College	<a href="#">Graves Center for Calling &amp; Career</a>	KY	Private	N/A	1,767
Johnson C. Smith University	<a href="#">Center for Career and Professional Development</a>	NC	Private	HBCU/Presbyterian	1,483
Union College	<a href="#">Becker Career Center</a>	KY	Private	Methodist	1,139

### Overview

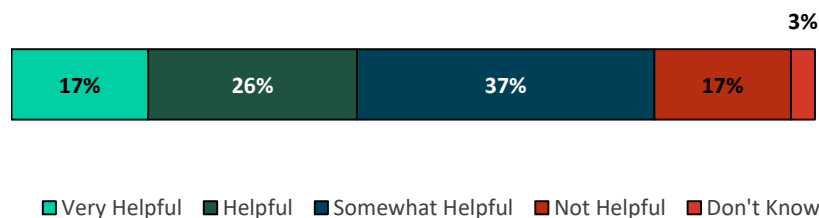
A 2017 survey conducted by Gallup, Purdue University, and the Lumina Foundation assessed over 30,000 recent graduates' interactions with career services ([Gallup](#)). Results from this survey provide a strong backdrop against which institutions can begin developing a career services program.

**Student engagement with career services offices is rising.** Of the students who graduated between 2010 and 2016, 61 percent report visiting career services at least once as an undergraduate, higher than any prior cohort. Despite the increased use of career services, just under half of students graduating in the same time frame rated their career services experiences as "very helpful" or "helpful," and 17 percent rated their experiences with career services as "not helpful." This suggests an opportunity for colleges to improve and reimagine how such services are provided to optimize student engagement.

#### Percent of Students who Used Career Services Offices



#### Overall Career Services Experience



### Student Preferences

Results from the National Association of Colleges and Employers surveys provide additional detail about college student preferences for the provision of career services. In the past year, 85.6 percent of surveyed students (class of 2017) visited the career center at least once online or in person, 54.5 percent of whom utilized both in-person and online services ([NACE](#)).

**Students who visit the career center more often are more likely to use online resources,** and students prefer that job postings, job search assistance, help with internships and co-op experiences, and employer research be provided online ([NACE](#)). Meanwhile, students prefer that resume writing, career development workshops, career coaching, and practice interviews be provided in-person at the career services office. Of these services, freshman and sophomore students rate in-office resume writing, online job listings, and job search assistance as the most helpful services.

#### Student Preferences for Services

##### Office



- Resume writing and reviewing assistance
- Career or employment workshops
- Individual career counseling
- Individual career coaching
- Practice interview sessions

##### Website



- Career center job listings
- Career skills testing and career assessments
- Job search assistance
- Internship/co-op search assistance
- Researching potential employers

# National Trends in Career Services

Best Practices: Career Services

## Benchmarking Career Services

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducts an annual survey detailing various components of college and university career services operations. The [2017-2018 Career Services Benchmark Survey](#) includes data from 666 respondents across associate's, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral colleges and universities. Key findings from the survey are highlighted below, focusing on office structure, organization, and services provided.



72.6%

*Of institutions report having one centralized career services office. Hybrid offices are utilized at 17.9 percent of institutions*



4

*Median number of career staff, including three professional staff and one clerical staff member*



\$35,000

*Median career services non-personnel operating budget. On average, 78.1 percent of the total budget is funded by the institution, while revenues generated by fees accounts for 14.6 percent of the total budget.*



5

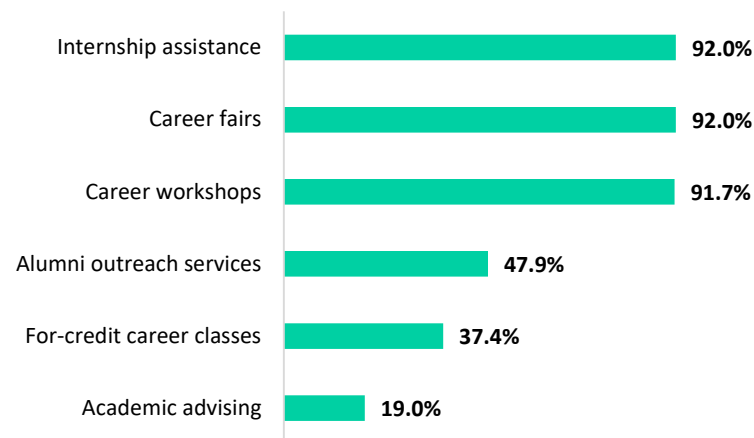
*Commonly offered career services including coaching/counseling, internship assistance, career fairs, career assessment tools, and career workshops*



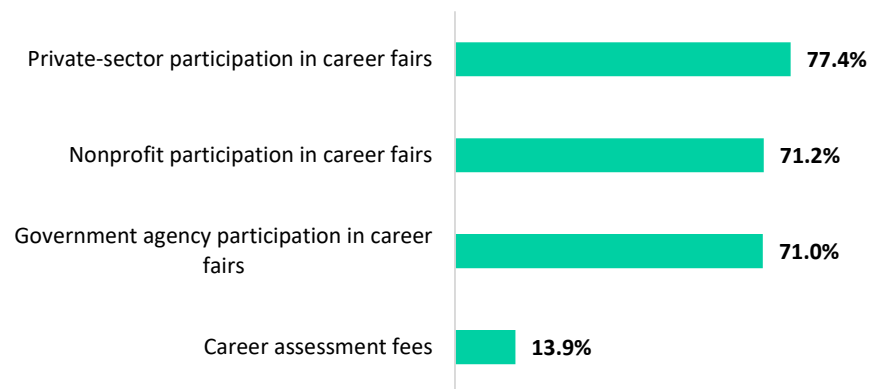
98.9%

*Of respondents report career center websites as the most commonly used internet-based technology, followed by online job posting systems (97.8 percent). Handshake and Symplicity are the most used electronic support systems.*

## Percentage of Institutions Offering Common Services



## Percentage of Institutions Charging Fees for Specific Services



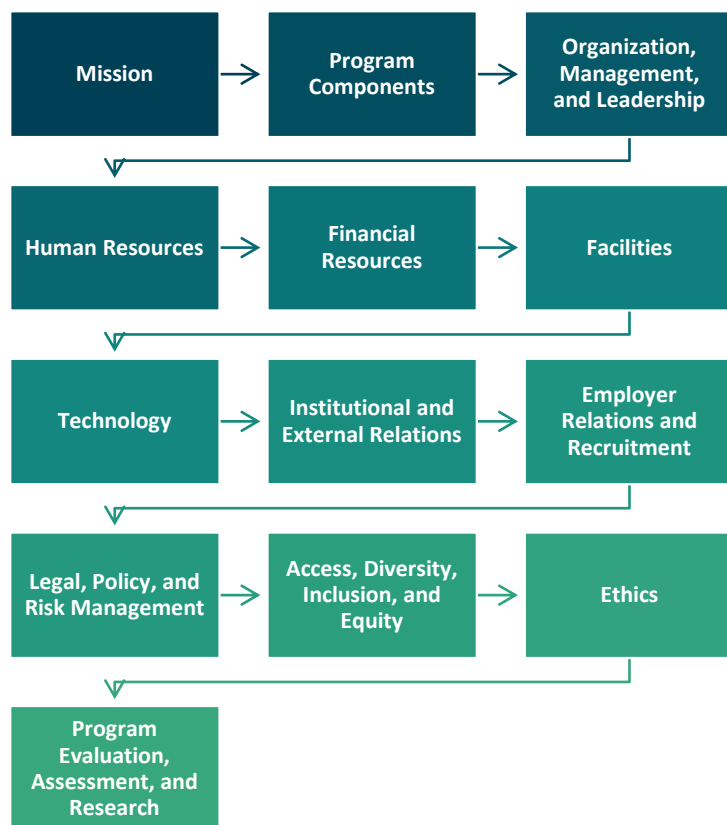
# National Trends in Career Services

Best Practices: Career Services

## Career Services Standards

NACE's Professional Standards are intended to provide institutions with best practices for the development and maintenance of career services programs, staff, and operations. [NACE](#) provides institutions with professional standards for college and university career services. Each of the components listed below include multiple standards that identify an institution's responsibilities for career services programming and thus can be utilized by offices other than career services in cases where such responsibilities are delivered by another office.

NACE Professional Standard Components



## Spotlight on Program Components

The professional standards outline key program components that career services offices should define, design, and implement in alignment with student needs, current research and theories of career development, external constituent needs, institutional priorities, and budget allocations. NACE also specifies that career services departments and offices should work collaboratively across academic divisions and departments, individual faculty members, student services, employers, and alumni to best enhance student career development.

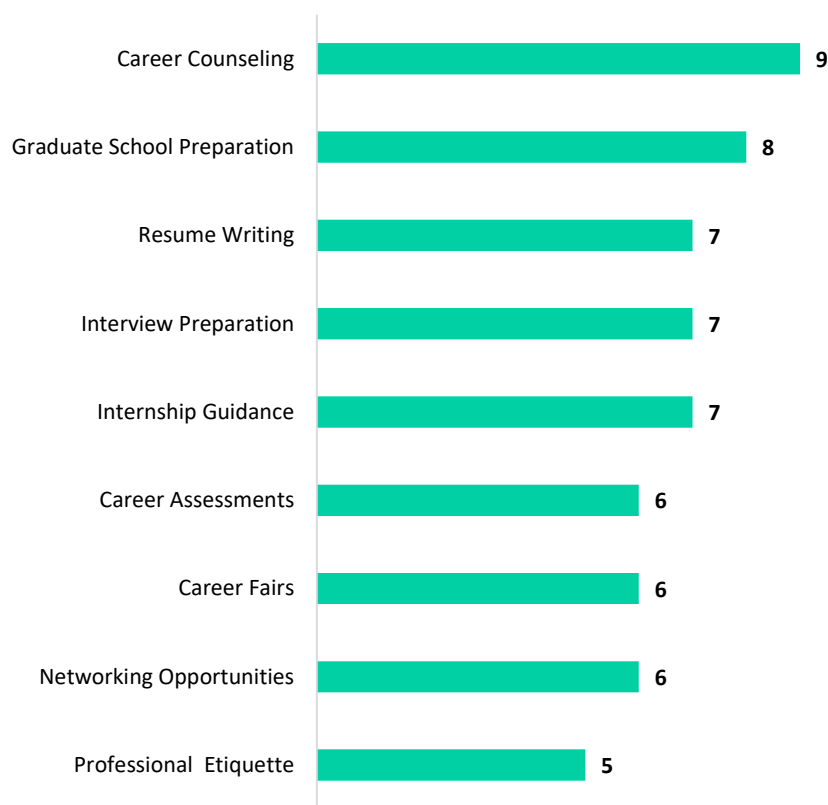
Component	Description
<b>Career Coaching, Advising, and Counseling</b>	Must provide coaching, advising, and/or counseling to assist students at any stage of career development
<b>Online and Distance Career Services</b>	Must provide current, valid, and reliable online resources to pursue their career goals
<b>Career Information</b>	Must make current and comprehensive career information accessible to students as they explore and make career decisions
<b>Employment Services</b>	Must assist students in exploring career possibilities, preparing job-search competencies, obtaining information of employment opportunities, using social media effectively, and connecting with employers
<b>Graduate School Planning</b>	Must assist students in identifying graduate school programs, presenting themselves as graduate school candidates, obtaining information of available programs, and connecting with relevant programs
<b>Experiential Learning</b>	Should provide experiential learning programs such as internships, student employment, service learning, civic engagement, and volunteering

# Benchmarking Analysis

Best Practices: Career Services

## Overview of Common Services

Across the nine reviewed institutions, Hanover identified significant commonalities in organization and practice including department, services offered, staff size, and mission statement/office descriptions. The most common services offered include career services, graduate school preparation, resume writing and interview help. The figure below highlights the number of institutions providing key services.



## Structure and Organization

### Department



- **Six institutions** house career services within the department of student affairs or campus life
- **Three institutions** operate standalone career services offices

### Hours of Operation



- **Three institutions** specify hours for their career services offices: Central State University, Elizabeth City State University, and Centre College. Offices are open Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm or 8:30am-4:30pm (Centre).

### Staff Size



- Most institutions have **1-2 career services staff**
- Centre College has the largest staff with **five staff members**
- Union College has **four staff members** shared between career services and student support

### Mission Statements



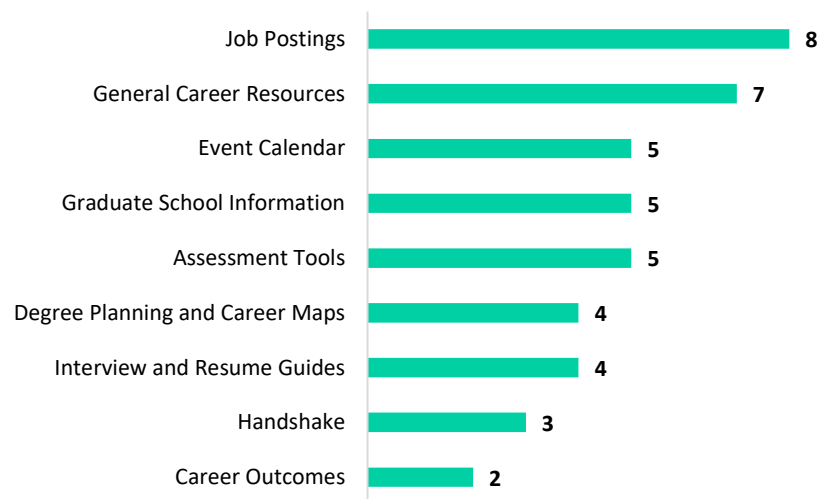
- **Five institutions** have career services mission statements focusing on:
  - Professional goals (4 institutions)
  - Personal goals (2 institutions)
  - Academic goals (2 institutions)
  - Services officered (2 institutions)
  - Impact and success (2 institutions)



## Overview of Online Services

Given that many students prefer to utilize online career resources, many reviewed institutions provide a number of resources online to better serve students and reduce costs. While institutions may provide additional resources online, the figure below highlights services that career services websites prominently advertise. Most commonly, institutions provide access to career assessment tools, online job postings, general career resources, and graduate school planning. Eight institutions provide access to online job and internship postings through their own curated website, or link to general job sites such as Indeed or Monster. Additionally, seven institutions provide general job resources including advice on career planning, how to research jobs and employers, and articles with tips and tricks for the job search process. Five institutions each provide career assessments, event calendars, and graduate school resources online.

Several institutions provide unique services online including degree planning and career maps, interview and resume guides, online mentorship networks, and access to Handshake, a subscription-based job search tool.



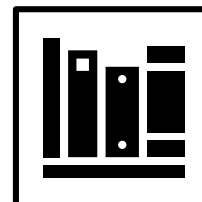
### GRADUATE SCHOOL INFORMATION

*Information on application timelines, graduate school test information and preparation, guides to the admission process*

### CAREER ASSESSMENTS

*Help students identify potential career fields based on skills and interests*

*For example: DISC Assessment, Myers-Briggs, CFNC Assessment*

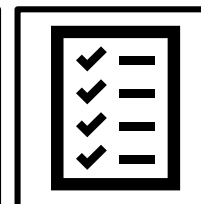


### CAREER RESOURCES

*Career exploration tools, hiring guides, practical advice for employment-seekers, access to articles on diversity employment*

### INTERVIEW AND RESUME GUIDES

*Practice interview questions and advice for formal interviews, resume examples and guidance on how to craft resumes for different job types*



### OTHER CONTENT

*Career Outcomes Information*  
*Handshake*  
*Online mentor network*

## Student and Alumni Involvement

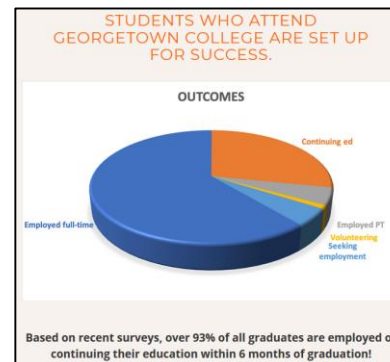
Five institutions train current students or utilize professional alumni to provide career assistance through student advisory boards and mentorship. Elizabeth City State University operates a [student advisory board](#) that serves as a liaison between the student body, Office of Career Development, and the professional community to disseminate important career information and share feedback from the student body. Centre College and Dillard University train current students to provide direct career assistance to students, while Georgetown College, Campbellsville University, and Claflin University utilize alumni professionals to serve as career mentors.

Mentor Program	Description
<b>Centre College: Peer Educators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students trained to provide front-line services to peers</li> <li>Weekly walk-in hours</li> <li>Presentations for organizations and residence halls</li> </ul>
<b>Dillard University: Peer Career Coaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students recommended by faculty and staff to participate in intensive career development program</li> <li>Serve as peer career coaches following completion</li> </ul>
<b>Claflin University: Panthers at Work Mentoring Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alumni serve as career mentors for current students to help students achieve professional goals</li> </ul>
<b>Georgetown College: <a href="#">Mentor Network</a></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students can find a professional mentor through the online mentorship network</li> </ul>
<b>Campbellsville University: Student Career Mentors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alumni provide valuable guidance, job shadowing, and networking advice to students interested in their field</li> </ul>

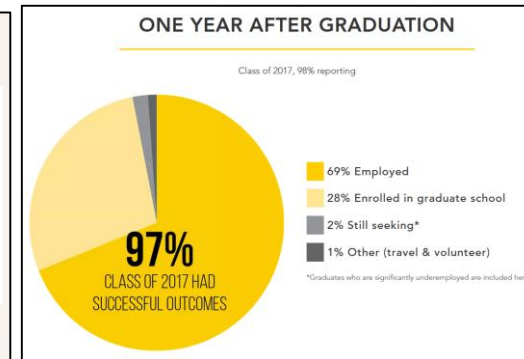
## Career Outcomes

Two institutions, Centre College and Georgetown College, highlight student employment or graduate school outcomes through their career services departments. Providing information about student outcomes may not only help recruit students but also provides current students with valuable information about common fields of employment as well as potential employers or graduate institutions to research. The images below provide examples of how these institutions utilize student outcome information.

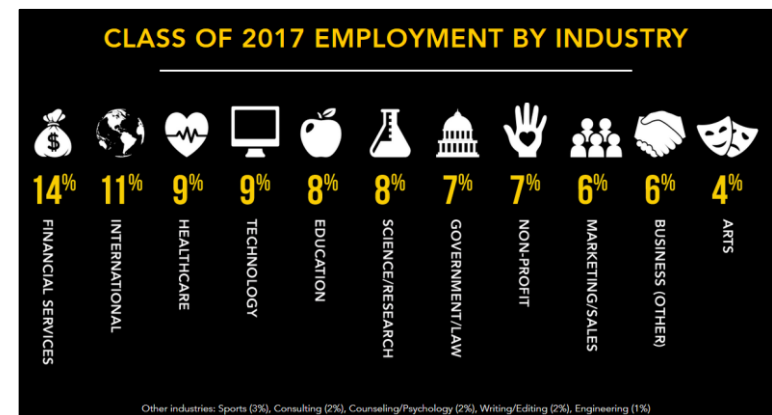
### Student Outcome Information



Source: [Georgetown College](#)



Source: [Centre College](#)



Source: [Centre College](#)

## Career and Degree Roadmaps

Four institutions created career and degree roadmaps to help guide students through their college and career experience: Centre College, Claflin University, Campbellsville University, and Union College. These services vary from paid subscriptions to external career-building resources (Union College and Claflin University) to institutionally-designed career roadmaps and four year plans (Centre College and Campbellsville University). Both types of resources aim to integrate career decisions with academic choices throughout the student's bachelor's degree program.

### Subscriptions to External Services

#### Union College: FOCUS

- Web-based career and educational planning system that helps students choose an academic major, map out career and educational plans, and make career decisions
- Students have access to career assessments, career exploration, creating their own career action plan, and requirements for desired careers

#### Claflin University: What Can I Do With This Major?

- Produced by the University of Tennessee to help students connect majors to careers
- Students have access to common career areas by major, typical employers in the field, and strategies to maximize career opportunities
- Additional links to professional associations, occupational outlook, and employment resources are provided

### Career Roadmaps and Four Year Plans

Year	Centre College	Campbellsville University
Freshman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend Extended Orientation</li> <li>• Complete interest profile</li> <li>• Explore major options</li> <li>• Join student organizations</li> <li>• Create college resume from high school resume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin Self-Assessment</li> <li>• Identify Likes and Dislikes through Assessment</li> <li>• Gather information about majors</li> <li>• Speak with professors</li> <li>• Attend career services workshops</li> <li>• Join student organizations</li> </ul>
Sophomore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore career fields</li> <li>• Meet with career counselor</li> <li>• Attend professional development workshops</li> <li>• Update resume</li> <li>• Explore internships, study abroad, and research opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information about career fields</li> <li>• Shadow professionals in career fields</li> <li>• Declare academic major</li> <li>• Draft resume</li> </ul>
Junior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further refine career goals</li> <li>• Participate in research or internship in field of interest</li> <li>• Create LinkedIn Profile</li> <li>• Research graduate school requirements and exams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend workshops and career fairs</li> <li>• Update resume</li> <li>• Intern or volunteer in field of interest</li> <li>• Locate summer job</li> <li>• Consider graduate school</li> </ul>
Senior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice interview skills</li> <li>• Update and customize resumes</li> <li>• Develop job search plan</li> <li>• Attend career fairs and on-campus interviews</li> <li>• Finalize graduate school application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide to pursue job or graduate school</li> <li>• Take GRE or other entrance exams</li> <li>• Finalize job search materials</li> <li>• Research and apply for jobs or graduate school</li> <li>• Practice interview skills</li> </ul>

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