Evaluating the Effectiveness of an International Student Career Program: A Mixed-Methods Approach
Jessamyn G. Perlus, M.S., Gaeun Seo, M.A., Un Yeong Park, M. Ed., & Julia Panke Makela, Ph.D.
The Career Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Introduction
The U.S. is the world’s top education destination for international students. The number of international students has increased continuously, more than 62% over the past decade (Institute for International Education, 2015). These students face unique challenges such as cultural differences, language barriers, and complicated employment regulations (Lin & Flores, 2011). Therefore, tailored services are needed to meet unique career needs of this population.

This study evaluated a 9-week career certificate program dedicated to helping international students become more competitive job candidates in the U.S. The program has been in existence since 2012 and incorporates various career interventions including weekly workshops, peer-mentoring, and access to a comprehensive career center.

Objective
The literature acknowledges: International students are a growing population in the U.S.; These students face unique academic and career challenges; Programs and services are being developed specifically tailored to their needs.

Yet, what do we know about the outcomes of those programs? How well do career services meet the needs of international students?

Method
Participants
• 49 students completed the Spring 2015 program
• 43 (88%) participated in the evaluation study

Student Response Rates
• 31 (63%) completed self-reported pre- and post-assessment of Career Search Efficacy Scale
• 43 (88%) submitted pre- and post-resumes
• 40 (82%) submitted pre- and post-networking scripts

Demographics
• Gender – Female 61%, Male 29%, Missing 10%
• Class – Undergraduate 55%, Master 35%, Missing 10%

Countries Represented
Bangladesh, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, and South Korea.

Method (Cont’d)
Data collected first and last week of 9-week CCI program. Written resumes and networking scripts were blindly-reviewed by trained reviewers. Analyses were paired samples t-tests.

Measures
Career Search Efficacy Scale (CSES; Solberg et al 1994)
• Focus on career/job search related domains
• Subscales: Job Search Efficacy, Interviewing Efficacy, Personal Exploration Efficacy, & Networking Efficacy; and International Student Job Search Efficacy (new for this study)

Results

Career Search Efficacy Scale

Resumes

Networking Scripts

Discussion
The overall results indicate that the CCI program significantly enhances both international students’ beliefs in their ability to successfully complete career search tasks and their actual job search skills.

Increases in quality of written documents in areas targeted by the program demonstrate evidence of effectiveness while providing direction for strengthening program content as it develops.

Implications & Future Directions

Implications for Practice
• Share Successes – Communicate successful aspects of the program to colleagues and future participants.
• Program Modifications – E.g. Reinforce "closings" on networking scripts; Identify additional student needs and strengthen referrals.
• New Resource – Developed networking script rubric for use with students. Updated research version of the rubric to improve interrater reliability in future studies.

Implications for Research
• Contribution – Demonstrated an intervention’s immediate impact on self-efficacy and job search behavior (summative outcomes). Long-term program goals include understanding how enhanced skills impact future employment; next steps are warranted.
• Next Steps – Examine progress to employment and students’ perspectives on the intervention’s impact on their career (developmental and process outcomes).

Future Directions
• Conduct qualitative interviews with CCI alums.