MWACE Award-Winning Assessment Projects: Experience Examples, Propose Your Own!

MWACE | 2017 CONFERENCE

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Presentation Goals

To inspire thinking about possible projects to submit to the Shingleton and/or Steele programs

- What might a “winning” assessment project look like?
- What types of “research” might practitioners take on?
- How does assessment or research impact what I do in day-to-day practice?

To invite MWACE members to submit grant proposals and assessment awards in Fall 2017.
Presentation Plan

Introduction to Grants and Awards by the MWACE Professional Development Committee

Presentation of the 2016 Award-Winning Projects

Brainstorming and Networking for 2017 Project Ideas

How to Apply for the 2017 Awards Program
Introduction to Grant and Award Opportunities
John D. Shingleton Award for Innovation

“Given for the best application of *completed* research or assessment that strengthens or enhances career services and recruitment practices.”

John Steel Grant

“Established to recognize the contributions of John Steele, one of the founders of the association now known as Midwest ACE. [This grant] seeks to support and encourage new research in career planning and college recruiting.”

(http://mwace.org/?page=Grants2016)
The 2016 Award-Winning Projects
## Overview of Recent Award-Winning Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submitted to</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Assessment / Research Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shingleton, 2016</td>
<td><em>Conexiones</em> (Networking Event for Latina/o Students and Alumni)</td>
<td>Pre- and Post-Surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shingleton, 2015</td>
<td>Individual Counseling Appointments</td>
<td>Brief Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steele, 2016</td>
<td>Career Services Paraprofessionals Program</td>
<td>Pre- and Post-Surveys; Student Journaling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steele, 2015</td>
<td><em>Career Certificate-International</em> (Job Search Group)</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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Resources and reports for all completed projects are accessible at: [https://www.careercenter.illinois.edu/scholarship-and-innovation](https://www.careercenter.illinois.edu/scholarship-and-innovation)
2016 John D. Shingleton Award for Innovation

Innovative Bridge Building: Design and Assessment of a Networking Program for Underrepresented Populations
The Need

What We Know

- Networking is an essential skill
- Students can benefit from instruction and practice with networking
- Minority students face additional career barriers and could benefit from role models sharing a similar background

What is Missing? What is our Gap?

- New program arises to meet an identified need
- External funding source requires evidence of student learning
- Learning outcomes and assessment plan must be developed and implemented
Conexiones: Latina/o Networking Event

- 2-4 hour networking event on a Saturday in the Spring

- Connecting Latina/o students with Latina/o alumni and professionals

- Includes keynote speaker, workshops, as well as both structured and informal networking practice

- Co-sponsored by La Casa Cultural Latina, the Latino/a Alumni Association, and a Latino Registered Student Organization
Study Questions

• Can an increase in students’ **self-efficacy for engaging in networking** be observed as a result of participation in *Conexiones*?

• What do students **learn** as a result of participating in *Conexiones*?

• What is the **value** of networking events specifically tailored to underrepresented student groups?
Study Design

- Brief paper-based surveys: one at registration and one at the end of the event
- Connected by unique identifiers
- Networking self-efficacy rated on a 5-point scale
  - Difference over time analyzed with paired-samples t-tests
- Include questions about what was learned or gained from the event
  - Coded thematically
Results

- 47 students and 7 professionals
- Increased networking self-efficacy across learning outcomes prompts
  - I feel comfortable initiating networking relationships. ***
  - I know how to structure an elevator speech. ***
  - I can create meaningful connections with alumni and professionals. ***
  - I can confidently respond to interview questions. *
  - I have reflected on how my past experiences can shape my future career goals.

(* $p<.05$, *** $p<.001$)

“With this event I truly have been touched and have seen that as a Latina in the workforce I can succeed!”
Quotes

I hope to gain...

• “I hope to gain more insight into life as a Latino professional after college and gain any information that can help me moving forward.”

• “Connections with people who have been in my shoes before.”

Most valuable part of Conexiones...

• “Networking is about creating bonds, and it is about being yourself not selling yourself”

• “Be confident! Put your experiences out there.”
Reflecting on Original Study Questions

• Can an increase in students’ self-efficacy for engaging in networking be observed as a result of participation in Conexiones?
  ✓ Yes, we saw statistically significant increases in self-report responses

• What do students learn as a result of participating in Conexiones?
  ✓ Career readiness skills

• What is the value of networking events specifically tailored to underrepresented student groups?
  ✓ Students report gains in career development (e.g. efficacy)
  ✓ Students report personal relevance and significance of seeing “someone like me”
  ✓ Gain confidence and real life experiences

• We have 4 programs like this at Illinois, come to our presentation at 10:00am 5th floor Cadillac to learn more
How We Used the Findings

• Demonstrate program value
• Support continued grant funding for this and related programs
• Advertise future Conexiones programs to students, alumni, and professionals
2016 John Steele Grant

Career Competency and Self-efficacy Development for Paraprofessional Student Employees in Career Services
The Need / Problem

What We Know

Paraprofessional programs have long existed in career services with a reputation for being “invaluable” to offices they serve (Lenz & Panke, 2001).

Students bring

• Specialized expertise
• New ideas and energy
• Peer-to-peer connections
• Additional staffing to extend the reach of services
• And, all of this is at a lower cost than hiring additional full-time staff (Freehan & Wade, 1998; Lenz & Panke, 2001; McDaniels et al., 1994)

Students paraprofessionals gain “valuable learning experiences” resulting in leadership skills, empowerment, and an improved sense of self worth (McDaniels et al., 1994)
The Need / Problem

What is Missing? What is our Gap?

The paraprofessionals literature is quite dated.

Past understandings do not clearly connect with the learning outcomes and competencies language of today’s higher education environment.

Outcomes and competencies have rarely been measured or assessed.
Study Purpose

Purpose

To update dialog about the value of paraprofessional programs by tracking students’ experiences over one academic semester, examining career readiness competency development as defined by NACE.

NACE Career Readiness Competencies (2017)

- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communications
- Teamwork/Collaboration
- Digital Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/Work Ethic
- Career Management
- Global/Intercultural Fluency
Research Questions

1. Can we observe an increase in perceived career decision self-efficacy across the academic term as students serve as career services paraprofessionals? (Relates to career management)

2. When students reflect on their on-the-job experiences, how do they demonstrate career readiness competency development?

3. Based on student reflections of on-the-job experiences, what potential areas can we identify to enhance student paraprofessional training experiences?
### Study Design: Data Collection in Spring 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>25 undergraduate and graduate paraprofessionals providing direct career planning services to college students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week before semester begins:</td>
<td>Pre-survey with Career Decision Self-efficacy Scale (Betz &amp; Taylor, 2001) &amp; demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks during semester:</td>
<td>Respond to brief, weekly writing prompts related to NACE career readiness competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13 of semester:</td>
<td>Post-survey with Career Decision Self-efficacy Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q1: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Findings

What is Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE)?

An individual’s degree of belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions (Taylor & Betz, 1983)

The CDSE measures five subscales of related behaviors:

- accurate self-appraisal
- gathering occupational information
- goal selection
- making plans for the future
- problem solving
Q1: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Findings

Cohen’s d effect sizes: CDSE All d=0.40; SA d=0.42; GS d=0.11; Plan d=0.50; OI d=0.48; PS d=0.32

n = 17; *p < .05; ** p < 0.01
Q1: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Interpretations

Recognize Limitations:

- Small sample (n=17)
- Statistically significant findings, with small to moderate effect size
- But are they practically significant? What does a 0.3 increase in CSDE Total Score really mean?

Take it in with a healthy dose of caution!

That said, there are some intriguing ideas here:

- Note how high even the pre-test scores are. Not much room to grow. What does that say of this group?
- Note that being in the career services environment, scores stay high and/or grow, despite potentially encountering new developmental challenges (see Makela, 2011)
- Note the areas of growth in self-appraisal and planning. These are areas that our paraprofessionals most often share with peers. Perhaps strengthening what we teach?
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Findings

As defined by NACE (2017):

Self and Options Knowledge
- Identify and articulate skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals

Job Search Knowledge & Skills
- Navigate and explore job options
- Understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities

Professional Development / Lifelong Learning & Growth
- Identify areas necessary for professional growth
- Understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Findings

Our “Career Management” Prompts for Brief Reflections:

- **Week 6:**
  What do you want to learn, or what additional skills do you want to build, during your work at The Career Center?

- **Week 12:**
  How has working at The Career Center impacted your own career path?
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Findings

Self and Options Knowledge

“Working at the Career Center has impacted my own career path by giving me the skills to interact with all different types of people through [Career Drop-in Advising]. Since I am going into HR it is important to be able to connect with people from all paths of life.”

- Participant 5: Female Graduate Student Paraprofessional
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Findings

**Self and Options Knowledge**

“Working at the Career Center has impacted my own career path by giving me the skills to interact with all different types of people through [Career Drop-in Advising]. Since I am going into HR it is important to be able to connect with people from all paths of life.”

- Participant 5: Female Graduate Student Paraprofessional

**Job Search Knowledge and Skills**

“Working at TCC has helped me become more confident in my abilities for finding a job... Working at TCC has opened my eyes to the fact that a career isn't only about your academics, but also about how you present yourself to the world.”

- Participant 16: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Findings

Self and Options Knowledge

“Working at the Career Center has impacted my own career path by giving me the skills to interact with all different types of people through [Career Drop-in Advising]. Since I am going into HR it is important to be able to connect with people from all paths of life.”

- Participant 5: Female Graduate Student Paraprofessional

Job Search Knowledge and Skills

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- Participant 16: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional

Professional Development / Lifelong Learning & Growth

“I think I've gained more knowledge of professional development through the Career Center... Before working here, I don't think my communication, public speaking, professionalism, and teamwork skills were as good as they are now. These are skills I often speak about and convey in interviews. Beyond that, they are necessary skills to perform well in a workplace setting. I think the fact I've extensively developed such skills speaks to how the Career Center impacted my career path.”

- Participant 15: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional
Q2: Career Readiness Development: Interpretation

Alignment of student paraprofessional reflections with NACE Competencies

- Evidence of learning outcomes in the students’ words – documentation of experience beyond staff assertions and anecdote
- Updates our understanding of the career paraprofessional literature
- Provides helpful material for recruiting and communicating expectations to new paraprofessionals
Q3: Enhancing Paraprofessional Training: Findings

Career management themes in development as staff explore findings this summer:

- Boundaries of the paraprofessional role
- Communicating the value of working as a paraprofessional at The Career Center
At first, a student just asked for a review [of a business card that he had created] and after discussing it in the context of him using it for networking purposes (e.g., the causal contact or at a career fair), there was a slight pause from him. Upon me asking him, if there was something else such as a further question, he then asked me if using the “I” image violated legal statutes or rules.

As I could not answer, we visited the UIUC Document Services website and the UIUC public Affairs website, where there is language concerning official images. I encouraged the student to contact both of these resources to gain a solid understanding of his concern of potentially violating any legal or academic institutional rules.

- Participant 6: Male Graduate Student Paraprofessional
Q3 Example Theme: Boundaries of the Paraprofessional Role

Intending to be Helpful, But Over-step Boundaries

“When a student came in and was studying Psychology and Communications, I instantly asked them if they were going into Human Resources and were thinking about going to the Labor and Relations school here and U of I. The student looked at me like I had three heads and had no idea what Labor and Relations was and they were just going to get a job fresh out of college working in communications and I told them to look into HR. I do not know if this student is actually going into HR, however, I hope that they just researched the idea of going into HR.”

- Participant 11: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional
Q3: Enhancing Paraprofessional Training

Identifying Knowledge and Experience Gaps

“I want to learn more about the pre-health route so I can offer better advice to the students.”

- Participant 3: Female Graduate Student Paraprofessional

“I would like to hear what [the Assistant Director for Career Services for International Students] would say about this international education & skills resume translation.”

- Participant 6: Male Graduate Student Paraprofessional

“I wish that we learned more about cultural competency in this position... When students of color and queer students are the people who have the hardest time finding jobs because of discrimination, how is it that we don’t receive the proper training to be able to assist them?”

- Participant 19: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional
Q3: Enhancing Paraprofessional Training: Interpretation

New example scenarios for training addressing:

- When to seek help from staff or online resources across campus
- “What not to do”

Enhanced training around referrals

- Rephrasing “I don’t know” to “Let’s figure that out” / Demonstrating problem solving
- Providing additional training and resources on:
  - Active listening
  - Probing questions to understand student needs
  - Strategies for making referrals
  - Referral sources / lists of campus “experts”

- Providing clear guidance on boundaries of paraprofessional training and experiences. For example...
Q3: Enhancing Paraprofessional Training: Interpretation

Reminding ourselves as career services staff that student paraprofessionals come to us with different goals and developmental perspectives.

“I wish that we learned more about cultural competency in this position... When students of color and queer students are the people who have the hardest time finding jobs because of discrimination, how is it that we don’t receive the proper training to be able to assist them?”

- Participant 19: Female Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional

“Every day you will experience an interaction with someone who has a different identity than yours. Identity really does not influence how I act or communicate with the person because ultimately they are there to seek help with their professional development. It should not play a factor when communicating with an individual and therefore it does not influence my communication approach or effectiveness.”

- Participant 22: Male Undergraduate Student Paraprofessional

One way to improve our communication with students may be sending a clearer message that: “We train for foundational skills, defined as...”
## Project Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale – Permission to Use; Pre and Post 50 administrations</td>
<td>$120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Remuneration</td>
<td>$810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Survey: 27 Participants, $1 per administration</td>
<td>($27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Survey: 27 Participants, $5 per administration</td>
<td>($135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Journals per Participant, 27 Participants 300 Journals at $2 per completion</td>
<td>($648)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual SPSS Software License</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bonus: Another Project Budget Example

Budget designed for the 2015 Steele Grant Project assessing long-term outcomes of the *Career Certificate-International Job Search Group* via one-on-one interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NVIVO Qualitative Data Analysis Software</td>
<td>$670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Remuneration</td>
<td>$40 - $60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift cards to the University Bookstore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription Fees</td>
<td>$270 - $290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brainstorming and Networking for 2017 Proposals
Let’s Brainstorm...

What might you submit as a...

- *Completed* assessment or research project (Shingleton Award)
- *New research* project (Steele Grant)

Might we have potential collaborators in the room?
How to Apply for the 2017 Awards Program
Application Process & Award Timeline

Apply on the Midwest ACE website

What you need to apply: project title, abstract, researchers

Anticipated Timeline

- **August 7th:** Applications open
- **October 30th:** Applications close
- **Mid-November:** Winner is notified & announced
- **November to July:** Winners work on research / prepare
- **July Annual Conference:** Winners present projects
Feeling Inspired Yet?

Join us in exploring research and assessment to enhance career services and recruitment practices.

Assessment & Research in Career Services (ARCS) Network

ARCS facilitates conversations among career services professionals who are engaged in assessment and research within practice environments. We share information and build collaborations to enhance career development programs and services, as well as to further the field of career development.

Join our listserv by sending an email to arcs-request@lists.illinois.edu
Thank you for joining us!

Stay in touch at:

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The Career Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
www.careercenter.illinois.edu/scholarship-and-innovation

MWACE Steele and Shingleton Grant Information  