

Career Services Quality Enhancement Program Impact Report

The actions of the Career Services/ Cooperative Education office and the mission of the QEP connect on many levels. The QEP seeks to enhance a student's experience at WCU through engaged learning in and out of the classroom. Students are encouraged to *synthesize*, that is, internalize, integrate and build upon their coursework and co-curricular activities as they progress through college making this experience a well thought-out, purposeful and well planned experience.

We connect to the QEP mission in the following ways:

- 1) From the beginning of their college experience, students are assessed regarding their interests, abilities, values and personality to better choose a major and career goal that meets their personal preferences. Career Services/Cooperative Education Office plays a critical role through career counseling in helping to determine these results.
- 2) A common concern among freshmen is major choice (purpose and values). Our professional counselors teach sections of transition courses with career exploration components. A service-learning requirement is often added to this class.
- 3) Second year students, or more specifically, students who have reached the 45th hour of their academic preparation and have not yet declared a major, may be helped in that decision through a focused Career Decision-Making Course also taught by Career Services/Cooperative Education staff.
- 4) In the second, third and fourth year of their college training, students may be required or strongly suggested to do an internship or co-op integrating their academic preparation with real world experiences. Career Services/Cooperative Education coordinates all of the co-ops at Western and several of the internships. Valuable learning comes from this hands-on experience. Students continue to synthesize this experience to their academic preparation through required writing and journaling activities. Career Services collects evaluations from all students who complete co-ops.
- 5) Additionally, job search activities and skills preparation enhance the third and fourth year. Finishing out his/her academic preparation, the student is beginning to look for full/part time job opportunities. Career Services/Cooperative Education offers multiple opportunities for students to: develop skills in resume, cover letter and references writing and practice interview skills both in front of a computer and in-person with an employer. Manners and etiquette are refreshed as students engage in networking with employers, staff and faculty in the etiquette dinners and networking reception.
- 6) Added value can be found in placing academic and personal information into the Education Briefcase (a computerized tool which can be used as a repository for personal and academic papers, journals, achievements, job search papers). The eBriefcase section which houses the student's personality testing information is created and written by the Career Services/Cooperative Education Office. A student's career development tasks are prompted through a Pathway to Intentional Learning module in the eBriefcase and are accompanied by directions for self-assessment and support through career services.
- 7) Additionally, students learn the value of working through on-campus non-work study program which is housed in the Career Services/Cooperative Education Office.
- 8) In an effort to offer a unique opportunity for students to integrate curricular and career experiences, observe and develop workplace skills, and network, we repeated in 2012 a highly-successful alumni networking day first made possible in 2011 by a QEP grant, during which current WCU students shadowed WCU alumni for a whole day on the job, after which we surveyed participants using an instrument designed to assess perception of competency gains based on QEP objectives (integration, purpose and values, and communication). A summary and some assessment data can be found here: <http://www.wcu.edu/12288.asp>
- 9) To further impact students through peer education, Career Services created a mobile Peer Career Mentoring program. We collect data regarding impact (numbers of students who benefitted from PCM services) which shows significant additional support is achieved in areas of student employment as well as researching majors (purpose and values) and resume and cover letter writing (communicating effectively).

All activities that Career Services /Cooperative Education plans, develops, and produces help the student to actively participate and learn about his/her chosen field. From entrance into the college to graduation, a student is able to utilize our services to better synthesize his/her academic and social college experiences towards career preparation and a fulfilled life.