

Taylor University

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## The History of Career Development at Taylor University

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The History of Career Development at Taylor University

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Career Development has undergone an evolution at Taylor University. The office has experienced three major transitions since the 1970s, namely its inception in the mid-70s, an overhaul in the mid-2000s, and a resurgence in 2012. For each major event, this paper will explore the historical context of the era and Taylor University's response, including the institutional climate and factors that affected change.

## **Inception**

### **Historical Context**

The early 1970s brought a paradigm shift to the field of Career Development, introducing the importance of career counseling as a necessary first step to placement services. (Sovilla, 1970) According to Cruzvergara and Dey (2014), "the self-actualization movement of the 1970s and 1980s continued to strengthen the counseling model in career services, which heightened the clinician identity among staff and shifted the director's profile from a placement manager to a counseling supervisor." Taylor University responded accordingly.

### **Taylor University's Response**

In 1974, J. L. Fritzche, Director of Financial Aid, drafted "A Proposal for the Establishment of a Full-Time Function for Career Planning and Placement within the Office of Student Affairs" (1974). In his proposal, Fritzche notes that most career development for students is executed by "concerned professors through their own private networks," and that this process "works chiefly for a few outstanding students." (1974, p. 1) At the time, a full-time person was responsible for providing placement assistance to education students; the responsibility of assisting B.A. students fell to Student Development, a service he referred to as "placement gymnastics." (Fritzche, 1974, p.2) Citing research from that era,

Fritzche suggest that it is the “responsibility of each college . . . to provide a competent counseling service and placement function as part of the educational system.” (1974, p. 5) He goes on to provide a framework for the creation of The Office of Career Planning and Placement, including specifics regarding job description, building requirements, and associated costs, which were around \$20k. (Fritzche, 1974) This proposal was denied.

In the following year, representatives from Taylor University came together to write a grant proposal for the Lilly Endowment. Entitled “Career Development in the Liberal Arts College,” the proposal stated:

Taylor University, as a representative liberal arts college, will establish a comprehensive model Career Development Program emphasizing life-long career planning. This program will serve prospective employees and employers by linking together such institutions as liberal arts colleges, churches, and employing agencies. (“Career Development,” 1975, p. 1)

The proposal committed to reviewing successful Career Development programs at other universities and taking an iterative approach to reduce costs and increase viability (“Career Development,” 1975) This proposal was also denied.

In 1976, Joe Romine, former faculty at Taylor and student of BSU at the time, wrote a thesis entitled “A Study of the Need for a Career Development Office for the Bachelor of Arts Student at Taylor University.” (1976) The study included alumni feedback indicating that graduates were in favor of an upgrade to career services at Taylor University. (“A Study of the Need,” 1976) Along with the proposals that came before it, these propositions became the tipping point that finally affected change.

In 1977, Student Affairs was charged with creating a proposal for a full-time career services professional. (Beers, 1977) In this memo, Tom Beers expressed concern regarding the impact on other areas of student programming. He also considered utilizing a new, highly qualified and interested employee named Lowell Haines to take on additional responsibilities in order to create more margin for support for career services. (Beers, 1977) By 1978, the office was up and running in the basement of Rediger. Led by Tom Nace, the goal of the office was to prepare “students to live a Christian life in whatever area of service God directs them.” (“Career Development,” 1978, p. 2) More specifically,

Career Development at Taylor strives to encourage students to understand, develop, and use their unique talents according to God’s will for them. The motto of the Career Development office is “Let our career be: Being God’s person, in God’s place, in God’s time.” (“Career Development,” 1978, p. 2)

The office implemented a four-year plan for students, encouraging freshmen to stimulate thinking about career planning, sophomores to develop career awareness, juniors to focus on career alternatives and seniors to strengthen job seeking skill and lean on the office for assistance with career selection. (“Career Development,” 1978) In a newsletter from the same era, women were encouraged to think outside the box regarding career exploration: “Attention Women: Major corporations (e.g. the auto industry) are hiring women to fill jobs traditionally given to men. Such jobs are high-paying and open routes into management.” (“Capturing Careers, n.d.”)

## **Overhaul**

### **Historical Context**

Due to their connection to the corporate pulse, Career Development offices are often some of the first responders on campus to economic and political changes in society. According to Cruzvergara and Dey (2014, p. 5), “the information technology and social media revolution of the 1990s and 2000s . . . transformed career centers into dynamic networking hubs that engaged hiring organizations in campus recruiting and facilitated networking between students and recruiters.” The researchers go on to note that career centers were feeling pressure to justify budgetary requests, finding less support from institutional stakeholders. (Cruzvergara & Dey, 2014) With an upcoming economic downturn, career development offices would need to bolster themselves for increased scrutiny and expectations. Taylor was no exception.

### **Taylor University’s Response**

In the early 2000s, change was brewing. Taylor University president David Gyertson was leading the charge:

In a late June 2003 memo to Wynn Lembright, Vice-President of Student Development, Taylor President David Gyertson called for an outside assessment of the university’s career development program. “Given what some of our recent alumni are facing in the job market and the coverage being given by the national media to the ‘tough job market for recent college graduates,’ we can expect increased scrutiny of our career planning and placement efforts.” He went on to say that “significant priority” should be given to this area in order to “develop a strategic

plan to move our program to one of the most effective in the CCCU and the region.”

(“Student Career Development,” 2004, p. 1)

In the fall of 2003, in response to this memo, a Career Development Task Force was created. The team was comprised of representatives from Butler, Cedarville, the University of Indianapolis and Taylor, and chaired by Gary Friesen. In the AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) spirit of continuous improvement, this task force set out to take stock of existing career services programs and services offered at Taylor, as well as conduct interviews of stakeholders. (“Student Career Development,” 2004) The interviews produced some interesting results. Per interviews with the president and provost, the team learned that all areas of the university were under review. Regarding incoming students:

We also learned that the majority of students came to campus prepared to “major in Taylor.” In other words, only around 40 percent showed up with a definite academic plan in mind, usually those interested in the fields of education and computer science. (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 1)

This discovery suggests an incoming population in definite need of career counseling. In order to best meet the needs of these students, “they (administration) want a new, “cohesive, systematic plan” for the future that parents of prospective TU students, as well as students themselves, can grasp onto and feel comfortable in supporting with their tuition dollars.” (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 1)

Interviews with the Wynn Lembright, the Vice President of Student Affairs, underscored his

conviction that a “proactive stance” was needed. He wondered out loud whether career development should not take a more active part in the institutions

recruitment strategy, explaining to prospective students and their parents the link between what the world needs in the way of educated and skilled individuals and how TU can help prepare students to meet those needs. He also suggested that the CDO could or should be proactive in helping to craft curriculum and course offerings and serve as a consultant to faculty, as well as students. (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 1)

Walt Campbell felt the CDO (Career Development Office) was not up to par with other areas of Student Affairs. Skip Trudeau, who had recently been appointed to succeed Walt Campbell, was quoted as saying, “whether the CDO at Taylor University was “broken or not,” there is a perception that it is.” (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 2) He felt that career development was a natural way to connect Student Affairs to academics and should be a “flagship program on campus.” (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 2) Student Development directors indicated they felt the CDO was hard to find and that the layout and staffing choices made the office unapproachable. Students were also not aware of the services offered by the office. (“Audit Interviews,” 2004) Parents requested that the CDO educate them on how to “help communicate to their children the importance of early and continuous career planning and preparations.” (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 5) They also indicated they would be willing to help students connect to opportunities. Alumni expressed the need to “help professors better understand the purpose of college,” perhaps suggesting that they felt professors were too idealistic about a liberal arts pursuit. (“Audit Interviews,” 2004, p. 7) Across the board, lack of awareness, poor location, and the perception of a problem were common themes. The task force concluded with recommendations to add staff to the CDO, provide a more prominent location, improve

office promotion, incorporate new software and streamline data management. (“Final Report,” 2005)

In the 2005-2006 Year End Report to Skip Trudeau, Dean of Students, from Larry Mealy, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Career Development (2006), Larry recounts the CDO’s move to the student union, an appointment of additional staff and an office name change to the Pro Shop. While progress was made in the recommended direction, the report suggested the budget was not sufficiently increased to meet recommended changes. (Mealy, 2006) During this season, Kim McGary recalls visiting Cedarville in an attempt to model Taylor’s CDO after their office, and utilizing grant money from Leland Boren to purchase Career Direct, a career assessment directed at freshmen (personal communication, November 19, 2018). While commendable, Kim did not feel these efforts had the desired return on investment.

## **Resurgence**

### **Historical Context**

In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the pursuit of vocation became a hallmark of higher education. In a way, it was a return to a more traditional model. This shift was fueled in part by the Lilly Endowment Program for Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV). (“PTEV,” n.d.):

In May 1999, Lilly Endowment Inc. invited a group of outstanding colleges and universities to design programs for this initiative. Schools were asked to establish or strengthen programs that 1) assist students in examining the relationship between faith and vocational choices, 2) provide opportunities for gifted young people to

explore Christian ministry, and 3) enhance the capacity of a school's faculty and staff to teach and mentor students effectively in this arena. ("PTEV," n.d.)

In all, 139 institutions, many from Indiana, received generous grant money to fuel this initiative. The "theme of life purpose, or "vocation" in the language the project drew from the religious language of calling, was the way the Lilly effort sought to give focus to the often-diffuse collegiate efforts to "educate the whole student." (Sullivan, 2014) The renewed emphasis on vocation fueled new initiatives for many career development offices. Taylor would come to benefit greatly, though indirectly, from this initiative.

### **Taylor University's Response**

In 2012, Drew Moser had just finished up his PhD coursework. Looking for a new opportunity outside of residence life, he was encouraged by Steve Morley to apply for the Director of the (then) Pro Shop. (D. Moser, personal communication, November 9, 2018) Through conversations with Skip Trudeau, he learned that Student Development was looking to take the office in a new direction. Moser had significant experience studying vocation, and indicated he would build the office on a vocation platform. Skip was in favor of the vocation approach, and Drew was appointed the new director. (D. Moser, personal communication, November 9, 2018)

According to Kim McGary, Moser was careful and thoughtful about the changes he instituted in the office. (personal communication, November 19, 2018) Drew knew he wanted the office to be more proactive than reactive, and it needed an image boost. Changing the name to the Calling and Career Office (CCO) was a strategic step to emphasize a focus on vocation. Moser then leveraged his "street-cred" as the former hall director of Samuel Morris Hall, using his connections to encourage students to attend CCO events. He

noted that the office had a large budget for paying student workers, but the students were given primarily clerical tasks. Moser recognized an opportunity to transform these roles into student leadership positions, providing meaningful work and internship opportunities for students, and attractive alternatives for former PAs. (D. Moser, personal communication, November 9, 2018) The CCO had been previously identified as a focus of AQIP action projects. Moser leveraged the name recognition of AQIP to gain an audience with every department on campus on a yearly basis in an effort to share pertinent data from the CCO's annual report and help get the CCO back into the classroom. (D. Moser, personal communication, November 9, 2018) Overall, he cites his proudest accomplishments as hiring Jess Fankhauser and Jeff Aupperle. Fankhauser got to work organizing First Destination data and is credited with the caliber of the current CCO annual report. Aupperle headed up the Promising Ventures grant from the Lilly Foundation. The office continues to benefit from the grant's momentum and Aupperle's leadership.

### **Conclusion**

Career Development has undergone an evolution at Taylor University. From its inception, to its overhaul, and finally its resurgence, the Calling and Career Office has ebbed and flowed with the cultural tide and has weathered the storm. The current office exists to connect students to people and experiences that equip them to live a faithful response to God's call. The office encourages students to employ risk, collaboration, imagination and truth to reconcile what they believe, who God has created them to be, and the opportunities He's placed before them. The commitment to vocation lives on.

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