

# Epilogue

## There Is No Need to Go It Alone: 10 Reasons to Visit Your Campus Career Center

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*Refusing to ask for help when you need it is refusing someone the chance to be helpful.*

Ric Ocasek

The idealistic part of me would love to believe that *Career Wisdom for College Students* has answered every possible question you could ever have regarding your future career. But then there is the realistic part of me, as well as the skeptical part of me, that gets incredibly irritated when any career success book claims it can solve every single problem of every single reader, as though we are all mindless robots who merely need to have the right buttons pushed to determine which career path to take, and why and how.

Well, we are not robots. This is not the era of *The Jetsons* (although sometimes it feels like we are getting closer). We are humans with brains and emotions, and each of us faces different circumstances that profoundly affect our career exploration and decision-making activities. No book—no anything—could possibly cover career development in both the breadth and depth necessary to fully address *your* particular career issues, *my* particular career issues, or *anyone's* particular career issues. Books can make a solid contribution—and I certainly hope I have accomplished at least that much in *Career Wisdom for College Students*—but they are not enough.

Fortunately, when you are a college student, help—free help, no less—is readily available to you at your school's *career center*

(which may go by one of several names, such as *career development center* or *career services office* or *placement office*). Never heard of it? You are not alone. Many college students have no idea of the campus career center's existence; many others have only a vague memory of the career center from an on-campus tour or summer orientation, and have long forgotten the details of what the center has to offer. And that is a shame—because as many recent (and not-so-recent) college graduates will tell you, the career center is by far the most useful resource on your campus when it comes to helping you envision and achieve your future career goals. In fact, it is not a stretch to say that, on some campuses at least, the career center is the most important and valued student service period. Perhaps that should not be surprising given the results of a 2004 *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey, which found that most college students today go to college primarily for career-related reasons.

So if—make that when—you have career-related questions and concerns that go beyond the scope of this book or any other resource, head for your school's career center. If you need a reason, I will give you 10:

**It Is Staffed by People Who Are Professionally Trained to Help College Students with Career Issues.** Most campus career counselors (who usually call themselves *career services professionals*) hold master's degrees in counseling or a closely related field, and many have additional educational background that focuses on college student development issues. Moreover, some campus career counselors have worked in the corporate or nonprofit sector as well, so they can give you a sense of what to expect in the real world of work, especially when it comes to key job-search activities like preparing résumés and cover letters and getting ready for interviews.

**Its Employees Work Closely with the Employers Who Will Someday Hire You.** Career services professionals are very well informed on employment trends, in great part because they are talking with employers—in person or on the phone—practically every day. They also keep up on career-related trends through their professional reading and involvement in professional organizations. Careers are their career, and they can pass some of their considerable knowledge on to you.

**It Is the Best Place on Campus to Crystallize Your Future.** One of the many misconceptions career centers must fight is the notion that they are the place to go only when you are about to start your job search. Most career centers also focus extensively on career planning issues—helping you learn more about yourself (e.g., your interests, skills, values, personality), what is out there in the world of work, and even how you might put certain majors to career use (in answer to the common question, “What can I do with a major in \_\_\_\_\_?”). In other words, the career center can help you not only with “How will I get there?” questions but also with “Where am I going and why?” questions.

**It Is Stocked with Career Resources, Whether in Print or Online.** Among other things, most career centers offer job and internship listings, information on careers you might pursue with various majors, information on specific companies and organizations, and even (in some cases) information on the jobs and salaries of past graduates from your school. Many career centers also house libraries filled with books and periodicals that address various career concerns. All of these resources will help you learn more about the employment possibilities that exist in the world of work and which ones might fit you best.

**The More Known You Are to the Career Services Staff, the Better the Chance a Staffer Will Refer You to an Employer.**

Let us be clear here: It is not a campus career counselor's job to "get" you a job. Nor is it ethical for him or her to play favorites among you and your fellow students. But picture yourself as a campus career counselor for a moment. If you saw a student in your office once a week learning about the field of, say, marketing, wouldn't you be more likely to at least mention that student to a company you know of that is looking for a marketing intern or full-time employee? Needless to say, it does not hurt for you to be in the back of a campus career counselor's mind when he or she is working with employers looking to fill positions.

**It Offers Seminars, Workshops, and Courses That Will Lessen Your Anxiety and Confusion.**

Even the smallest campus career centers offer seminars and workshops, along with for-credit or noncredit courses, where you can learn about the entire range of career issues that will impact you during and after college. One of the nice side benefits of attending these programs is that you meet other students who share your worries. Whether you are a freshman or a senior, you are not alone in your anxiety and confusion about careers. By participating in your career center's programs, you will meet peers who are in your shoes. You can then help each other by tossing around career ideas, critiquing each other's marketing materials (i.e., résumés and cover letters), and perhaps even making each other aware of companies and organizations that might be hiring college students or new grads for internships, co-ops, or entry-level jobs.

**It Can Connect You with People Who Can Offer Information, Advice, Opportunities, or All Three.** Some campus career centers have elaborate databases of alumni who have offered

to serve as career resources to current students like you. Some career centers bring alums and others to campus for career fairs, mock (practice) interviewing events, career exploration events, and more. Practically all career centers work with a core group of employers who have internships, co-ops, or jobs to fill. You can connect with all of these people quite easily by simply visiting the career center.

**It Uses Technology to Meet Your Needs.** Most campus career centers have now automated their job and internship listings so that they are available online. But that is not all: the cutting-edge career center of the mid-2000s also offers webinars (Web-based instructional seminars), podcasts (audio or video broadcasts covering career issues), listservs (electronic “discussion” forums), electronic newsletters, and live-chat question-and-answer services.

**It Offers Career Assessments of All Kinds.** Practically every career center in America offers pencil-and-paper or, increasingly, online versions of interest inventories, abilities and skills tests, and personality assessments. As I cautioned earlier in the book (see *This Is a Test; This Is Only a Test*, p. 11), no career assessment is going to “tell” you what you “should” be when you grow up. But many of them do a fantastic job of helping you understand yourself better and giving you career ideas to explore in depth.

**You Are Paying for It!** If you can think of no other reason to use your school’s career center, consider the thousands of dollars flying out of your pocketbook each semester and into the coffers of your college or university. Your tuition and fee dollars help to pay for campus career counselors’ salaries as well as all of the equipment and resources in the career center itself. In other words, you help fund the career center and

everything it has and does—so you might as well take full advantage.

Most campus career counselors (myself included) go into the narrow field of career services and the broader field of career development because they genuinely want to help people like you who are wrestling with career issues of some sort. Often, campus career counselors (me included) struggled with career issues themselves, especially in the years during and immediately after college. To say they empathize with your situation is often a considerable understatement. But you will not benefit from their passion and expertise if they do not know who you are. And they will not know who you are unless and until you stop by to introduce yourself.

So put down this book and head for your campus career center. You have already invested some of your (or someone else's) money in this valuable resource. If you invest your time and energy in it as well, you will earn an outstanding return: the career wisdom that leads to future success and happiness.