



Round 1 TAACCCT Career Coaches Findings & Observations

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Heather McKay



Heather A. McKay is the director of the [Education and Employment Research Center](#) at the School of Management and Labor Relations. In this capacity, Heather conducts research and evaluations on community college programs, state and federal workforce development systems and education and workforce policies. She currently directs a Lumina Foundation for Education grant to incorporate education towards degree completion in the workforce development system. She is also evaluating three consortium Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants across five states. Additionally, Heather runs the Obama-Singh Knowledge Initiative grant at Rutgers, looking at education and training in India.

Renée Edwards



Renée Edwards is a research project manager for the School of Management and Labor Relations' Education and Employment Research Center, Rutgers University. She is a doctoral candidate in the School of Politics, Philosophy and Public Affairs at Washington State University. Edwards specializes in policy implementation and evaluation and applies this to research in workforce development, higher education, and feminist policy analysis. Edwards is originally from the west coast (Washington and Alaska) and moved to the east coast in 2011.

Laura Aycock



Laura Aycock has over ten years' experience in job training working with populations from youth, to women with limited to no job skills, to adult learners in college. Her expertise includes career exploration, soft skill training, resume development, mock interviews, and facilitation of workshops focused in all areas of career development.

In an effort to gain more education and pursue other career interest, Aycock pursued her M.S. in Organizational Development with a focus in Human Resource Management from Colorado State University-Global Campus. Additionally, she hold a B.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in Child Family Social Services.

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COETC Grant

- Colorado Online Energy Training Consortium
- Round one TAACCCT grant
- Three years
- \$17.3 Million
- 15 colleges



Grant Goals

1. Enhance energy related programming in the state through curriculum development, technology and mobile learning labs
2. Complete redesign of developmental education in the state
3. Increase student retention
4. Facilitate student transition from degree/certificate to a job

Career Coach Role

1. Guide students through career exploration and present energy training opportunities
2. Advise and support students as they completion the developmental education needed to succeed in the energy programs
3. Help students navigate the college's process
4. Provide referrals and support for non-academic issues

Report Contents

- Institutional placement of coach
- Integration of the coach role within the colleges
- “Intentional or intrusive advising”
- Function and impact of coaches across COETC consortium

Data Collection

- Qualitative and quantitative data including:
 - Electronic Student Case File
 - Coach Forums
 - Interviews with Project Leads
 - Interviews with Coaches
 - Interviews with Students
 - Surveys
 - Document Review

Recruitment and Qualifications

What kind of skills were required?

- College degree
- Two years of professional experience
- Interpersonal and problem solving skills
- “attitude and optimism to inspire confidence”

Who are they?

- All coaches had a Bachelor's degree
- Five had one or more Master's degrees
- Variety of fields: psychology, counseling, education, communications, English, human resources, management etc.
- Some had been non-traditional students
- Some had experience at a workforce center

Integration in Colleges

- Integration was a challenge at some colleges:
- To what extent did the career coach position duplicate or even undercut what was already in place?
- What were the benefits and costs of real integration – institutionalization?
- What was the most effective way to utilize the coach?

Where did the coaches end up?

- It depended on:
 - How the college viewed the coach role
 - Where there was space
 - Who the coach was serving
 - The structure of the colleges student services

Some examples of coaches at energy colleges:

- NJC – Counseling services suite
- 3 coaches in Energy departments
- Some go between multiple campuses

Placement Matters

- Most coaches said location was important
- Coaches near energy programs described their location as being/having:

“strategic and purposeful”

“increased visibility, student access and interaction”

- Office placement and the type of space also mattered to the coaches role.

Advising

- Literature shows that advising makes a difference for students.
- Advising differs from -- ad hoc advising at registration to “intentional” or “intrusive” advising.

Intentional advising is:

- Pro-active, action oriented interaction with students.
- Academic and career goals are identified and set.
- Involves assisting and supporting student success including non-academic issues
- Preventative actions

Advising in COETC

- All 15 coaches provided some kind of academic advising
- Coaches involvement with students began in a variety of ways. Often depended on placement and integration within the college.
 - Mandated vs. voluntary
 - Coach as a teacher (AAA or DE course)
 - Advisement part of course requirements

Coaching Students

Coaches worked with students in a variety of ways:

- Reviewed Accuplacer scores – discuss placement and options
- Course load decisions and registration
- Changes to course load post registration
- Goal setting and tracking student progress – academic advising, soft-skill development and career advising
- Identifying academic risk – using early alerts, working with students on academic probation
- Participation in college/program orientations

Coaches helped to:

“determine the causes of poor academic performance and identify proactive steps to engage in”

Career Counseling

- Focus of career counseling differed at energy and non-energy colleges
- At energy colleges – students (for the most part) had decided on a career path.
- Resulting in students needing limited career or academic advising
- At some colleges faculty rather than coaches provided career related information

Primary Career Advising Areas

1. Advisement about possible career pathways:

Literature shows that commitment to educational and career goals is a strong factor in completion

In COETC career pathways advising involved:

- Finding alternatives pathways for students (maybe could not pass algebra what next?)
- Talking about jobs in the region
- Arranging ways to meet with industry (career fairs etc.)

Primary Career Advising Areas

2. Job readiness and job searches

In COETC coaches focused much of their attention on job readiness activities.

Activities included:

- Workshops and individual sessions (RRCC – A Game)
- Resume and cover letter writing
- Interview skills
- Proactive job searches - “personal marketing strategies”

Primary Career Advising Areas

3. Internships and job placement

Coaches at several COETC colleges were active at helping students identify internships.

Activities included:

- Networking with local employers (advisory boards or outreach activities)
- Connecting with HR and shop stewards
- Helping students to overcome barriers to employment (transportation, police record)

Promising Practices

- Orientation and training
- Supervision
- Early-alert systems
- Coaches as classroom instructors
- Mandated Coach advisement
- Learning style assessments
- Workforce Centers

Challenges

- The title “career coach”
- Ambiguity of the role
- Caseload Size
- Delayed launch of online and hybrid programs
- Competition for students
- Documentation of work with students
- Activity logs
- Gender
- Time limited position

COETC Career Coach

Laura Aycock

Water Quality Career Coach
Red Rocks Community College

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Laura is also the Career Coach at RRCC for Colorado's round three grant CHAMP!

Discussion Questions

- **In what ways are you integrated into the college's services to students?**

- **How do you recruit students to the programs and/or caseloads? What are the best strategies/activities to date?**

Discussion Questions

What patterns are you seeing with your interactions with students?

- career advisement
- academic advisement
- job readiness
- environmental /social/non-academic issues that are intruding on student success, e.g. childcare; balancing home, work, and school demands; medical issues; domestic violence; transportation; and inadequate housing and homelessness?

Discussion Questions

Is your caseload target being reached? Were they realistic from the start? If not, what would be more realistic re total caseload counts?

What skills have you found are critical for you to do your job?

Read the Report

Find this report and others on the COETC grant at our website:

<http://smlr.rutgers.edu/eerc/coetc>

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