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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of a recent interview with Barbara Efird, the Director of Career Services at William Peace University (WPU). Barbara is a Licensed Practicing Counselor (LPC). The interview took place on June 15, at 10:30am in the morning at WPU. Eight questions were asked of Barbara. Those questions were; (1) "What is the Mission of the Career Services Department at William Peace University?"; (2) "What is the organizational structure?"; (3) What is the financial structure?"; (4) What is a general description of the clientele served by your department?"; (5) What services do you offer students and families?"; (6) How do you market your services to the potential students, the current student body and families?"; (7) What is a general description of the department's personnel?"; and finally, (8) What is your current level of career satisfaction and what are your sources of frustration?" The following paragraphs accurately represent the information I obtained from this interview.

#### **What is the Mission of the Career Services Department at William Peace University?**

Barbara identified three core elements to their mission. The first is to assist students and alumni of William Peace University to define their personal career goals. The second is to help students and alumni learn how to obtain their goals. The third is to provide opportunities, services and technology that assist students and alumni in their transition to further education and or employment. These mission oriented services are provided post graduation and can be accessed throughout their career.

#### **What is the Organizational Structure of Your Department?**

There is no obvious structure to the Career Services Department at WPU as it is managed and facilitated by Barbara, and an associate director. However, upon further inquiry, Barbara did explain that she and the associate director report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The

Vice President of Academic Affairs then reports to the President of the University. The President of the University reports ultimately to the Board of Trustees.

### **What is the Financial Structure of Your Department?**

The financial structure of the Career Services Department at WPU is founded upon an annual budget. In addition to funds made available by the university, Barbara explained that companies often donate funds and “in-kind services” to their Career Services Department. Barbara was very careful to explain that there is no *quid pro quo* in this arrangement, but companies do benefit from a marketing perspective. Barbara explained that another potential benefit of such a donation is access to eager interns from the university. Another important fund source for the Career Services Department comes from grants, written by Barbara.

### **What is a General Description of the Clientele Served by Your Department?**

The next question I asked Barbara had to do with the clientele served by her department. She explained that the average client she saw were college students between the ages of 18 and 22. The student body of William Peace University is 70% male and 30% female. It is also 60% white and 40% diverse. The socio economic status of the student body is varied across a broad spectrum. At one of the spectrum is a Pell Grant recipient, and on the other end is a student whose parents write a check to pay for their tuition in full.

The primary presenting concerns identified by Barbara were choosing a major, choosing the correct program, indecision regarding career path, anxiety, and family conflicts. She mentioned that she has seen parents withdraw support from students over these kinds of conflicts. The Career Services Department does not diagnose.

### **What Services are Offered to Individuals, Families and the Community?**

The next inquiry I made had to do with the kinds of services that are provided by the Career Services Department. Barbara provided me with a comprehensive list of these services. They are (1) counseling for the student body, (2) technology, (3) job postings, (4) electronic

resume templates, (5) job fairs, (6) workshops, (7) networking events and (8) access to alumni networks. One such event sponsored by the Career Services Department which I found to be particularly exciting and pragmatic was an annual etiquette dinner, where students are trained in proper decorum. Most services are directed toward assisting students and alumni advance their careers, but they do engage in preventative services. Their primary modality of prevention is education.

### **How Does Your Department Market its Services?**

I also inquired about how the Career Services Department marketed their services to the student body and alumni. Barbara shared five different approaches. The first was emails disseminated to the student body. The second was social media. The third was through the faculty. Barbara mentioned that they depend on the faculty to direct student to their department if the opportunity presents itself either in class or in conversations with students. The fourth modality was posters hung around campus. The fifth and final modality is through the advising process. Student advisors will often direct students to the Career Services Department when appropriate.

### **What is a General Description of Your Department's Personnel, Including Employees' Backgrounds and Areas of Expertise?**

The Career Services Department at WPU consists of two university employees. The first is Barbara Efird, an LPC who specializes in career counseling and assessment. She earned a Master's degree in Counselor Education from NC State. She is a nationally certified counselor, and a nationally certified career counselor. Barbara is also MBTI and EQI certified. They also employ an associate director. I was able to ask about what a person with Barbara's experience and qualifications could expect to earn in a university setting. She said that the range was anywhere between \$55,000 and \$75,000 annually.

What is Your Degree of Job Satisfaction and What are Your Sources of Frustration?

The final question I asked Barbara concerned her current level of job satisfaction and her greatest sources of frustration. Her immediate reply was that her current position is a “great job.” She said this without any hesitation in her voice. Her face brightened as she spoke of helping people manage some of the most difficult and stressful transitions in life. Despite being insufficiently staffed and funded much of the time, she was very clear about the rewarding nature of her work. She identified her greatest source of frustration as an emphasis on placement rates, which can be a misleading measurement for success.

Barbara and I also spoke about burnout. She very helpfully suggested several ways to avoid burn out in a role like the one she occupies. The first piece of advice was to maintain a lifestyle of learning. The second was to be realistic. The third was to embrace technology. The fourth and final piece of advice was to acknowledge that there is a learning curve and that adaptive skills are necessary to develop.

#### Conclusion

I found my time with Barbara to be insightful and encouraging. I was excited to have the opportunity to have a first person account of what it would be like to be a career counselor in a university setting. I do not see myself being a counselor who specializes in career counseling. However, I am grateful to have had the chance to understand the valuable role career counselors play in human growth and development.