Everyday Career Influencers:
Conceptions of Higher Education Professionals in Student Career Development

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Who is responsible for career development?

What is a career centre?
Comprehensive career needs survey (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002)

Public perceptions about career development (Environics Research Group, 2011)
Career Influencers (CIs)

“Individuals who informally provide career-related advice, guidance, and/or counselling.”

- Community helpers (Redekopp & Austen, 2015)
- Definitions of career advising, guidance, and counselling (Hiebert & Borgen, 2002)
- Student engagement cycle (Bontrager, 2004; Fee & Forsyth, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aboriginal services coordinator</td>
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<td>other (fill in the blank)</td>
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If I were to seek career help from someone at KPU tomorrow, I would meet with a/an…

- aboriginal services coordinator
- academic advisor
- admissions advisor
- alumni services officer
- assessment and testing coordinator
- career services advisor
- counsellor
- disability advisor
- financial aid and awards coordinator
- instructor/professor
- interfaith centre staff
- learning strategist/facilitator
- librarian
- orientation leader
- recreation coordinator
- registrar’s office staff
- student club executive coordinator
- student life coordinator
- student recruiter
- student society staff member
- university administrator (e.g., dean, department chair)
- volunteer services coordinator
- other (fill in the blank)
During my time as an KPU applicant and/or student, I have already sought career help from a/an…

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During my time as an KPU applicant and/or student, I have already sought career help from a/an…
## Shortlist of Participants

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Shortlist of Participants

- Academic advisor
- Instructor/professor
- Learning strategist/facilitator
- Career services advisor
- Orientation leader
- Counsellor
- Registrar’s office staff
- Financial aid and awards coordinator
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Research Method

- 15 participants in staff, faculty, and administrative roles
- Purposive, snowball sampling
- Two-part interview
- Used grounded theory components

- academic advisor
- career services advisor
counsellor
- financial aid and awards coordinator
- instructor/professor
- learning strategist/facilitator
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- university administrator
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Research Question and Subquestions

How do post-secondary education professionals conceive their influence in student career development?

• How do they see their role as having an impact on student career development?

• How do they see themselves as individuals as having an impact on student career development?

• How do they conceptualize the term “career”?

• What resources and/or competencies do they believe are important in furthering their impact on student career development?
1. Influencers see **their role** impacting student career development by performing these functions:
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The extent to which influencers exercise a particular function hinges on:
- their role
- their experience/training
- the type of request
- their relationship with the student/stakeholder
“The influencer cultivates relationships with external organizations and agencies to enhance student career success”
Consider career activities influencers can facilitate, versus activities that require referrals.

Anticipate referrals and provide suitable support.

Empower and recognize influencers’ contribution.

Implications for Practice
2. Influencers see themselves impacting student career development by sharing their life story and by demonstrating personal attributes that promote meaningful interactions and relationships.
Career is “the constellation of life roles an individual plays over his or her lifetime. It’s one’s ‘life story’.”

(Magnusson, 2014)
Jacques’ Constellation

Lifelong learner

MA in Education

Instructor of professional designation

Former manager

Assigns professionalism mark

Supervisory experience

Industry connections

Facilitates and promotes networking

Instructor & Case Competition Coach

Sports coach

Has a competitive spirit

Hockey player
Angelica’s Constellation

**Transition Programs Coordinator**

- Failed first semester as a Science student at a large research university
- Transferred to a regional university & pursued a Business major
- Applies learning from entrepreneurial leadership program to develop transition curriculum
- Shares experience of failure and exploration with new students and paraprosfessionals
Influencers exhibit personal attributes such as being...

Approachable

Authentic

Empathetic

“A natural coach”

Vulnerable
Implications for Practice

Encourage influencers to integrate their life roles, whenever and wherever appropriate.

Help influencers recognize the role of happenstance in their lives.

Teach students to identify CIs by seeking the five personal attributes.
3. Post-secondary education professionals conceptualize the term career as:

- as an instrumental purpose
- as a progression from one job to the next
- as a way of learning
- as a way of living
- as a means to contribute to society
“If you were truly in a career that’s right for you, you’re in the zone the whole time and then when you fall out of it, it’s probably time to think about if this is what I want to do or how do I get back…that’s the importance of career…having something that can become a joyous lifework” (Jan, a dean)
as a way to make ends meet
as a series of progression from one job to another
as an expression of one's skills and knowledge
as an ongoing pursuit of meaning and happiness
as a mean to contribute productively to society

Implication for Practice
Provide opportunities for professionals to engage in regular reflection
4. **Furthering influencers’ impact on student career development requires professional development***

Career development theories

- Having career conversations during appointments

Career practices related to roles

- Finding and interpreting LMI to inform advice
- Networking with potential employers and organizations

*PD to be supported and accessible

- Giving application feedback

Formal: CDP certification, industry practicum

Informal: Community of practice, job shadowing
4. Furthering influencers’ impact on student career development requires institutional commitment.

- Invest in current initiatives and incentivize new ones.
- "Walking the talk".
- Help professionals help students.
- Career success in key documents.

Current programs to consider alignment with institutional mission and priorities.

Faculties to incorporate career-themed outcomes in curricular and co-curricular learning.
Concluding Thoughts

Who is responsible for career development?

What is a career centre?
Concluding Thoughts

career development is everyone’s responsibility

What is a career centre?
Concluding Thoughts

career development is everyone’s responsibility.

the institution becomes the career centre.
Thank you!
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cxin@sfu.ca