



FINDING THE FUTURE

By Anne Baber

Leaving it all up to fate, believing “it’s all in the cards,” is one way to find a career. But students are discovering better ways to plan their life’s work at the Career Information Center.

Barbara began studying Russian in the third grade. Now, a junior majoring in Russian, she’s wondering what kind of job she can get after she graduates.

Jack calls himself “the typical Jack of all trades, master of none.” He likes too many things. He’s a veteran and has been a disk jockey. Now, at 27 and back in school, he thinks it’s time he made up his mind.

More than 3,200 students have dropped by the Career Information Center since it opened in November 1972.

“We don’t dare advertise,” center coordinator Bob Hansen says. A year ago, the center tried to find out how many students needed and wanted career planning help. A brochure offering individualized career information was placed in 1,000 dorm mailboxes. In a week, more than 400 students, about equally divided between the sexes, had responded. The center’s staff of volunteers, interns and graduate students in counseling was overwhelmed.

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With the current economic slump, students are increasingly worried about getting jobs and making “the right” career choice.

Dr. Joseph Johnston, director, says, “There’s been a shift back to practicality. Today’s student is concerned about what he can do with his degree. He wonders if he can get a job.”

Word of mouth advertising and an occasional modest ad in the Campus newspapers are sufficient to encourage nearly 200 students a month to find the center. It’s just off Francis Quadrangle on the second floor of the Counseling Center in Parker Hall. Inside CIC’s one room, you feel as if you’re in a filing cabinet. Colorful booklets, pamphlets, 2,000 college catalogs, posters, brochures and test materials line the walls—floor to ceiling—and overflow on tables

and racks. All the resources are open, and the friendly, overstuffed room invites browsing.

When George came by, he knew just what he was looking for. A staff member helped him find out what graduate schools offer degrees in oceanography.

Other less certain drop-ins can fill out a career search form requesting information. It’s just three lines: name, address and career interest. The staff promises to have information about the student’s career choice within 10 days.

Mizzou’s Career Information Center helps students find out about themselves, too.

“We try to keep everything hassle-free,” Hansen says. “Nobody has to give his name. It’s very informal. People can sit on the floor.”

In fact, the floor may be the only spot available. There is just one table with a few chairs around it. Often grad students are working there on students’ career search packets. This information is collected by hand, a process that takes from two to four hours and involves seven or more sources. The completed career search packet includes a definition of the career, the job outlook for the career in the next decade and the name of a person on Campus who has volunteered to discuss the career with students.

Occasionally the CIC’s services go even farther. Margaret wanted to “stop out” of college for a year to be a doctor’s assistant in a rural community. She hoped the experience would help her decide if she does want to be a country doctor. The center’s staffer helped her arrange to “try on” her proposed career. Other students are told about Campus or community volunteer jobs that will help them gain insight into their chosen, or tentatively chosen, work.

Students also can sign up for a career exploration group. More than 60 did last semester. Before the group begins, each participant takes two tests: a personality inventory, which will help him match his personality with a career; and an occupational interest inventory, which helps document what kinds of careers are attractive to him. The staff also does a career search packet for each group member.

The students like the groups. Being with others is more comfortable and is not as intimidating as the one-to-one counselor-client relationship. CIC tries to separate its image from the Counseling Center's. Some students hesitate to come into Parker Hall, which they associate with the Counseling Center, where "mixed up or sick people go." Hansen wishes the CIC had a separate location in a convenient, easy to find place on Campus, "because we think of career counseling as preventative, not therapeutic."

In the groups, students get acquainted, focus on and talk about their values, and learn techniques for making decisions. They talk about the personality

Students confront their day-dreams with a "fantasy trip" into their own futures.

test and interest inventory test they took. And finally, they take a "fantasy trip."

"It is six years from now. You are waking up and getting dressed for work. . . . You arrive. Where are you? Are you supervising others? Who is your boss?"

"The 'trip' elicits feelings about lifestyle which are important in making a career choice," Nancy Garfield, a PhD candidate and group leader, explains.

If the fantasy is too unrealistic—Dr. Schweitzer in Darkest Africa, Marilyn Monroe—the student often comes down to earth with a bump and comes to grips with real career planning.

The group exercises helped Barry figure out that he wanted photography for a hobby and math for a vocation. He'd felt they were conflicting career interests. Another photographer with a passion for biology found out how she could combine her interests into one career. One group, just for education majors, helped them discover alternatives to teaching, currently an overcrowded field.

Since the center is so small, Hansen is working on ways to take the programs and services to students in the dorms, Greek houses and at the Women's Center. He envisions mini-career exploration groups that would take only a couple of hours after supper.

The CIC also works with placement offices around Campus to present how-to-get-a-job workshops. At a recent Ag School workshop, Hansen video taped stu-

dents being interviewed by real interviewers and then told students how to improve their interviewing techniques. "It's easy to see what you are doing wrong, when you see the tape and there you are banging your foot against the table nervously," one aggie said.

Students can request help with resumes or a mock interview taping session at the center. "This helps fill the void of no central Campus placement office," Hansen believes.

A recent allocation from Development Fund unrestricted gifts from alumni and friends will allow the center to begin to expand its services by computerizing. By June, students will be able to come to the center and "ask the computer" for information about more than 450 careers. The individual student's printout will include everything now in the hand-done career search packet. But the computerized career search will be faster. Dick Nelson, who is in charge of the computerization, hopes eventually to be able to give a student the name of an alumnus with whom he could discuss his career.

The speed-up in service is crucial. Of all the people who go to the Counseling Center, 60 percent have career problems. "The more we publicize our ser-

Using alumni gift money, the center is computerizing to give more students information.

vices, the more the need surfaces," Nelson says.

"I think we are doing all that we can do with our limited resources," Johnston says. "Education should help make people independent. It should give them the capacity to direct their own lives and make their own decisions. That's what we are trying to do at the Career Information Center."

And what about Barbara and Jack? Barbara is still participating in the first all women's career exploration group. She feels less worried and "more able to live with the indecision."

And Jack is majoring in journalism. "I decided that was one field where it didn't matter if you were interested in everything. In fact, it's an asset," he says. □