

OHIO COLLEGE USES CAREER COACH TO ATTRACT AND ASSIST STUDENTS, JOBSEEKERS

The pathway to a better career is leading an increasing number of students and jobseekers straight to their local community college's doorstep (or better yet — website). As a result, colleges are looking for ways to effectively "expand" their student services to meet the demands of expanding enrollments. In many cases, these students are looking for better information on programs and how those programs relate to careers. So the task of the college is to build sites and systems that help students do this quickly and easily — which is a task that is easier said than done. How do colleges build these systems, what data will they use, and what should be included?

"NOW WE CAN SHOW [STUDENTS] THAT THERE ARE JOBS OUT THERE ONCE THEY GRADUATE."

—BETTY WELLS,
VICE PRESIDENT OF INSTITUTIONAL
ADVANCEMENT,
NORTH CENTRAL STATE COLLEGE

A good example of how one college has tackled this problem comes from North Central State College in Ohio, which recently placed a new tool, called Career Coach, on the college's website to help local students and jobseekers quickly locate careers in the area — and to see how the careers line up with the educational programs the college offers.

Since implementation, the college has already started to reap some nice rewards. A detailed case study is included below.

If you would like to learn more about how Career Coach can help your college serve students, drop Rob Sentz an email (rob@economicmodeling.com) or give us a call (208.883.3500).

USING THE COLLEGE WEBSITE

In a day and age when students live online, a college's website really matters. According to 2010 study by higher education consulting firm Noel-Levitz, "92% (of prospective students) said that they would be disappointed with a school or remove it entirely from their lists if they didn't find the information they needed on the school's Web site." Leaders at North Central State College (NC State) are aware of the trends, and already they are seeing positive results after placing Career Coach on the college's site in late September. In fact, just two days after going live with Career Coach, a North Central State admissions representative could already see a difference with students. "Everyone has been very impressed with all it has to offer. I had two students who came in early for their admissions appointment and were undecided on a career so while they were waiting for the recruiter I set them up on one of the rotunda computers to look at Career Coach. They both found it very helpful and interesting. I have heard a lot of very positive comments from our students. I think this is really going to be a great help to our students/alumni."

The simple-to-use resource from EMSI allows students and local jobseekers to browse jobs, pertinent career information, and training that is linked directly to NC State's programs. The program information inside Career Coach is customized in collaboration with the college's enrollment development team. Deans, program chairs, and staff from the admissions, marketing, career services, and institutional research departments offered input to ensure users are informed about the education and training related to specific jobs. Said Betty Wells, the college's Vice President of Institutional Advancement, "Now we can show [students] that there are jobs out there once they graduate."

HOW NORTH CENTRAL STATE IS USING CAREER COACH

NC State's career development office has used Career Coach in the early stages in four particular ways: to attract prospective students, enhance its "first-year experience" curriculum, serve dislocated workers, and strengthen career workshops.

1. Prospective Students: The career development office provides career counseling services to prospective students, current students, and alumni. Prospective students seek information about how training pays off in terms of employment outlook and salary. Prior to enrollment, prospective students seek data about the local job outlook/demand and salary by job title. Prospective students also seek information about NC State degree and training options before making a decision to enroll.

According to Wells, "Career Coach allows NC State's career development coordinator and academic advisors to share local job demand and salary information by county or region. A better understanding of the local labor market allows a prospective student to feel more confident about their career choice — or learn about high growth in-demand career areas emerging in the college's tri-county service area. Thus, it positively impacts enrollment."

2. First-Year Experience: During the 2010 fall quarter, 593 new students enrolled in NC State's FYE Orientation and College Survival Skills courses, which have adapted to combine Career Coach into the curriculum. Each FYE student completes a "Career Project" that consists of 20% of the overall course grade. The career project involves career assessment and labor market analysis. Students must choose a career path to research and write about.

In years past, the college utilized the Ohio Occupational Outlook Handbook data to provide job outlook information in Ohio. Career Coach now allows students to define the geographical region around the Mansfield area by seeking data 15 miles, 25 miles, or 50 miles from home.

Observed Wells, "State job outlook data is helpful, but Career Coach allows students to research and define our area to access job market data, salary information, educational information matching career interests and job leads. Thus, the Career Project report is improved through the provision of meaningful local data and students walk away with quality career information that helps them make informed career choices."

3. Dislocated Workers: As NC State responded to the large number of dislocated workers through its Response Team, the career development department used EMSI's data tool, Analyst, and Career Coach to assist dislocated workers. The Response Team connected with dislocated workers in three ways:

- On-site at closing plants;
- Referrals from the local OneStop Employment & Training Center;
- Small group workshops formed by Career Development on campus and at the local Richland County OneStop.

Career Coach allows clients to research careers that closely match their background and previous employment. It suggests careers that dislocated workers may want to explore and shows what training is available once they have found an occupation that is interesting.

Most helpful for dislocated workers is the job postings area that provides up-to-date job postings in the college's defined region. According to Wells, "This is extremely important for dislocated workers that need to provide the local TAA Training Representatives job leads prior to enrollment. Funding sources in our area require dislocated workers to prove that a career choice is "in-demand" in our area. Job leads need to be provided in order to receive funding. Career Coach allows dislocated workers to do their homework about various career choices."

4. Workshops: With the large increase of dislocated workers seeking career counseling, NC State's career development department created career workshops. Referral sources continue to increase for these workshops, including from the local OneStop and even local attorneys serving clients going through bankruptcy.

In September 2010, Career Development opened a new Career Resource Center with several computers with open access to Career Coach and services such as resume assistance. Career Coach is the main tool utilized during workshops assisting workers in transition. In the summer of 2010, Career Development served well over 100 students in workshops and created a database to track each prospective student and the notes and referrals to additional resources.

A QUICK TESTIMONIAL

North Central State College also gathered this on-the-ground example, which should be helpful in demonstrating how easy it is for students to connect with the college via Career Coach.

Julie Krebs completed an automotive tech program at Pioneer Career and Technology Center in Shelby, Ohio, before coming to NC State Career Counselor Troy Shutler looking for a new career path. Shutler and Krebs walked through Career Coach and explored several different options.

Once she had access to the right information, Krebs was able to better make an informed decision.

"After using Career Coach today and talking with me," Shutler said, "she is very strongly leaning toward NC State's Mechanical Engineering Technology program. She used Career Coach to better understand the salary and training requirements. We talked about both new and replacements jobs and ran lots of data."

"Career Coach helped her make a decision to enroll — today," he concluded.

ABOUT EMSI

Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI) is a professional services firm that offers integrated regional data, web-based analysis tools, data-driven reports, and custom consulting services. EMSI has served thousands of workforce, education, economic development, and other policy professionals in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom, and the company's web-based Analyst research and analysis tool is used by over 2,500 professionals across the U.S. For more information, call (866) 999-3674 or visit www.economicmodeling.com.