



## How SUS Career Services Impact Student Success

October 30, 2019

### SUS Career Centers:

- **Engage with students early on** and **frequently** to develop career plans
- **Collaborate with faculty** to embed career frameworks in curricular offerings
- **Support** students with degree and career choices by **sharing salary** and **potential employment options**
- **Prepare** students for the **professional work environment** by providing **soft skill** training, assistance with **professional attire**, and **internship opportunities**
- **Connect** and **partner** with **employers** to ensure graduates are prepared to **meet workforce needs**
- **Assist** students in **securing employment** after graduation through **online platforms**, connecting students with **mentors**, and **career fairs**

### Introduction

All of the universities in the State University System (SUS) offer career services to students and alumni. Career services have evolved over time and continue to change to meet the needs of today's students, technological advancement, workforce demands, and campus culture. Services provided by the SUS Career Centers support multiple metrics in the Board of Governors 2025 Strategic Plan and Performance Based Funding model, including increasing the percentage of graduates who continue their education or are employed and the median wages of baccalaureate graduates. As a result, career services are very much embedded in the culture of each of the SUS institutions and have faculty and staff supporting their mission throughout academic departments, in the classroom, advising, student housing, and other student support services.

The organization of the career centers varies by institution, with some institutions having a central office and others having multiple offices across campus. For example, the University of South Florida and the University of West Florida use a central office with units focused on specific functions such as professional and career development, experiential learning, employer relations and engagement, and community engagement and partnerships. In contrast, Florida International University, Florida State University, and the University of Florida utilize a central office with satellite offices within academic units across the campus, as well as career liaisons who serve specific academic colleges by providing customized career readiness programs,

## **Career Services and Student Success**

resources, and connections to businesses and organizations specific to each discipline. The University of North Florida has career centers dedicated specifically to individual colleges, and at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, colleges and schools assist with career counseling.

### **Early Contact & Engagement**

Career centers work with students when they first arrive on campus to assist with degree and career exploration. SUS institutions are proactive in engaging students during freshman orientation or first-year experience courses to begin conversations on career exploration and the types of services the career center offers. A common activity is an assessment to determine how student values, interests, and personality type relate to academic areas and career fields. This allows students to learn about career opportunities, job outlook, and salaries. At Florida Atlantic University, 98% of all incoming 2018-2019 first-time in college students completed the Major Knowledge Interest Assessment that links majors to potential career opportunities and provides students information on employment projections and earning potential. Florida A&M University requires all first-time in college students to complete career assessments upon admission to the university so that academic advisors can assist students with degree planning. Other institutions reported requiring students to develop a career action plan-early on to inform academic advising.

In addition to working with students, career centers train faculty to include career topics in coursework. For example, at the University of South Florida, the career center developed Career Readiness Badging used by faculty in courses that allow students to connect their in-class, extra-curricular, and co-curricular experiences to the world of work. Faculty at Florida Gulf Coast University have integrated resume reviews and mock interviews as part of select courses.

### **Support Degree & Career Choices**

Every career center is working to move the needle on wages by providing salary information to students as part of degree exploration, new student orientation, and academic advising. Institutions connect students with salary projections from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics that lists salary by occupation and by state and/or city. Florida State University also offers a salary and job negotiations module that includes occupational salary comparison, job offer evaluation worksheet, personal salary range worksheet, and a benefits checklist. At the University of Central Florida, the career center staff inform students about major and career choices, job outlook, and salaries based on information from alumni and first-destination surveys. Additionally, Florida International University has a job-shadow program for students and alumni to connect with employers, community partners, and professional alumni to observe and learn about professional roles related to majors and industries of interest. At the University of West Florida, the career center hosts a career road trip that transports students to a local employer to learn about the company and real-world application.

### **Prepare Students for a Professional Work Environment**

Career centers also work to enhance student employability skills or soft skills. Examples of soft skills that career centers focus on include effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, work ethic, time management, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Most institutions offer multiple workshops throughout the year on how to enhance soft-skills. At Florida Polytechnic University, the career center offers a series of workshops designed to help students develop employability skills, including dressing professionally, personal branding, personal marketing, and networking. The University of Florida has a “See Yourself in STEM” Program that prepares students who identify as underrepresented to be successful in STEM careers by developing soft skills, learning ways to acquire additional technical skills, and participating in a series of workshops and employer panels. The University of West Florida has an etiquette dinner that is hosted by employers and allows students to learn proper interviewing etiquette. Many career centers also offer a professional clothes closet program providing students with free professional attire for career fairs, interviews, and events. Several institutions partner with JC Penney for Suit-Up events, which allows students discounted prices on professional attire.

Another major activity of career center staff is to be involved either directly or collaboratively with student internships, with many institutions having a dedicated internship coordinator or team. The career center staff, internship coordinator, or team support students with researching and identifying opportunities both on-campus and off-campus, preparing application materials and moving through the application process, attending networking events and career fairs, preparing for the interview process, and negotiating and accepting offers. Many internship programs require a student to be enrolled in an academic internship course, while other students secure internships independent of an academic course. Florida State University’s Experiential Recognition Program allows students to self-select their recognition option either as a transcript notation or as a co-curricular certificate. Florida Atlantic University offers an internship course for credit, and part of the curriculum in this course includes career readiness skills and a supervised experience related to the student’s major or career interests.

### **Connect & Partner with Employers**

Career center staff proactively connect and partner with companies and organizations that may provide internship opportunities and full-time positions upon graduation. SUS institutions reported that as part of this engagement, employers respond to surveys and provide other forms of feedback regarding the skills that they are seeking from graduates. Career centers have programs in place to support specific employers in their regions. At the University of Central Florida, the College Work Experience Program is a collaboration with Lockheed Martin, who hires more graduates from UCF than any other university in the United States. The University of Florida hosts an annual employer summit each year, which covers best practices to secure graduates for employment.

Every institution also holds career fairs throughout the year. These include general career fairs, which are open to all students and specialized career fairs, which are college- or department-specific. Throughout 2017-2018, eleven institutions held multiple career fairs. Participation by businesses and organizations in the career fairs vary by institution, but overall career centers hosted over 4,000 businesses and organizations in 2017-18. Table 1 shows the total number of businesses that participated in career fairs across the System during 2017-2018.

**Table 1: Employer Participation in Career Fairs Across the System During AY 2017-2018**

| Types of Career Fairs          | Business & Organization Participation* | Student Participation |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <b>General</b>                 | 4,220                                  | 45,048                |
| <b>Industry/Major-Specific</b> | 2,238                                  | 15,484                |
| <b>Virtual</b>                 | 196                                    | 3,450                 |

Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions, March 2019.

\*The same employer may have participated in career fairs at more than one institution and/or more than one type of fair.

### Secure Post-Graduation Employment

To assist students in securing employment, career centers utilize an enterprise system that provides students with easy access to career preparation tools and job opportunities. Ten SUS institutions use the platform *Handshake*, and two institutions utilize *Symlicity*. *Handshake* and *Symlicity* allow students to build profiles that highlight their academic accomplishments, various types of skills, and extracurricular activities. Both systems also enable students and employers to connect. Employers can post internship and job opportunities and students can apply for the positions directly through the system. Across both platforms, over 380,000 students and graduates maintain accounts, and in 2017-2018, nearly 400,000 active listings were posted.<sup>1</sup>

Career centers also work with students to secure post-graduation employment by providing support and connecting students to professional mentors. For example, at New College, students participated in the American Association of University Women (AAUW) certified salary negotiation workshop to better understand how to negotiate starting salaries. Florida International University connects students with professionals in the student’s career area of interest to review their resume and provide interviewing and networking tips. At the University of North Florida, students in the college of business can connect with employer mentors who provide students with career advice, internship opportunities, post-graduation employment, and assist students with building a professional network.

Career centers also provide students with on-campus resources and opportunities to help them secure post-graduation employment. FAU has interview rooms on campus that provide employers the opportunity to interview students and alumni in-person or via Skype. At UCF, in

<sup>1</sup> Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions, March 2019.

the spring of 2018, Florida Hospital offered 80 students jobs while on-site, and Orlando Health offered 14 students jobs while on-site. New College provides opportunities for employers to lunch with students on-campus to facilitate networking and recruitment.

### Student Utilization of Services

Each career center is working to build a campus-wide culture that is focused on career readiness and employability. In addition to providing in-person, walk-in, and online appointments, and services that include career workshops, resume writing, mock interviewing, and on-campus interviewing, career centers also provide a number of outreach programs. These include presentations to campus clubs and organizations, career topics in course curriculum, faculty partnerships, employer-based workshops, and staff training for resident assistants, among others. While Table 2 provides an overview of the types of services and events that SUS Career Centers provide, other campus outreach efforts (like those mentioned above) are not included in the counts, which may cause student utilization of career services to be underreported and this may vary greatly across institution. The career centers are working to collect more and better information regarding student utilization of services.

**Table 2: Career Center Utilization Across the SUS During AY 2017-2018**

| Service/Event                     | Students Served |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>In-Person Appointments</b>     | 40,183          |
| <b>Online Appointments*</b>       | 6,030*          |
| <b>Resume Referrals</b>           | 8,060           |
| <b>Mock Interviews</b>            | 2,277           |
| <b>On-Campus Interviews</b>       | 11,592          |
| <b>Career Workshops</b>           | 109,178         |
| <b>Student Life Skills Course</b> | 1,215           |
| <b>Soft Skills Workshop</b>       | 26,866          |
| <b>Internship Assistance</b>      | 7,876           |

Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions, March 2019.

\*More institutions offer online appointments; however, student participation is not tracked.

### System Engagement

As a system, the directors of the State University System career centers collectively form the Florida Career Centers (FCC) consortium. The FCC facilitates the exchange of information and best practices to enhance career readiness for the benefit of the students and alumni of the SUS institutions. The FCC also sponsors an annual Statewide Job Fair, which is held at the University of Central Florida. The job fair attracts over 150 employers and 1,800 students and alumni seeking full-time, professional positions.