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National Survey Finds Graduates are 'Academically Prepared, But Not Marketplace Ready'

*Lack of motivation and job search skills cited as barriers –
College career centers offer tips to succeeding in today's competitive job market*

DOWNERS GROVE, Ill., September 13, 2012 – As more than 12 million Americans remain unemployed¹, a national survey finds recent college graduates – the one group which stands to potentially best compete in a highly-competitive, tech-savvy job market – are among the least prepared to find work. The survey, *Effectively Counseling Graduating Students*, was conducted by the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](#) (NACE) on behalf of the [Career Advisory Board](#), established by [DeVry University](#). Among its findings, more than half (56 percent) of today's university and college career center directors cite students' lack of interest in formal career preparation and professional development as barriers to successfully finding a job.

According to the Associated Press, approximately 1.5 million, or 53.6 percent of bachelor's degree-holders under the age of 25 are jobless or underemployed in the United States². The NACE/Career Advisory Board survey found the biggest obstacle for students in finding a job after graduation is their unrealistic expectations of the amount of effort and motivation it takes to get a job. Specifically, students need to be prepared to convey to employers that while they have the academic knowledge and degree, they also have started developing skills in teamwork, time management and communication.

"Students are missing an opportunity to benefit from the full range of services career centers provide while they are still in school. College and university career centers offer tools and coaching to empower students to succeed in their job search. They are more than just job placement centers," said Alexandra Levit, business and workplace consultant and Career Advisory Board member. "In today's competitive employment landscape, the interview coaching, job search guidance and even simple 'resume review' that campus career centers provide can make the difference in getting their first job."

¹ The Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The Employment Situation," July 2012.

² The Associated Press, "Half of recent college grads underemployed or jobless, analysis says," by Hope Yen, April 23, 2012.

The survey found that students have a poor understanding of how to properly conduct a successful job search and also lack some of the tools and skills necessary to locate and acquire a job. These factors contribute to students not utilizing their school’s career center or skipping this resource altogether. Career center directors can help guide students in going beyond standard searches and online resume submissions to more active job search tactics, such as informational interviews, networking events and resume reviews.

Other key findings include:

- More than 47 percent of career center directors view lack of motivation as a major barrier for recent graduates; with 35 percent ranking it as number one
- Fifty-six percent of career center directors felt students did not have resumes ready to show employers

Advice for future graduates

An overwhelming majority (80 percent) of the career center directors believe individual student career coaching is the most effective resource available for students. Here are tips that both NACE and the Career Advisory Board recommend college students consider before starting their job search:

- **Expand network.** Conduct informational interviews with mentors in their mid-twenties who can provide advice on how to most effectively position their background and experience in a specific field.
- **Customize resume.** Review sample resumes in their desired field and craft them in a way that will interest an employer immediately. Also, customize the resume with keywords from their target position’s job description.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** Rehearse quickly and succinctly communicating results from past jobs or internships, always asking: “why was this organization better off because I worked there?”
- **Seek guidance.** Practice interviewing with a coach or career services professional to learn the appropriate level of formality and insightful feedback on what skills and experience to emphasize as well as do’s and don’ts.
- **Show enthusiasm.** Present themselves as can-do enthusiastic employees who are humble and eager to learn.
- **Consult resources.** Review expert materials on transitioning from college to career including books, articles, DVDs and blogs. Learn how to convey the right first impression, understand expectations, acquire important transferable skills, manage stress and negativity, and add value to organizations.

“The Career Advisory Board research raises the need to get college students motivated to pursue their college career center resources,” said Ed Koc, director of strategic and foundation research, National Association of Colleges and Employers. “In a competitive job market, new graduates must be prepared to present themselves in a way that translates their academic accomplishments and knowledge to the skills and experience employers are seeking.”

To read the full NACE/Career Advisory Board report *Effectively Counseling Graduating Students*, visit: www.careeradvisoryboard.org. The survey was conducted in summer 2012.

About The Career Advisory Board

Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is a panel of leading career experts and authors from business and academia who provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates proprietary research and commentary, and creates tools, insight and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from Cisco, DeVry University, IBM, LinkedIn, McDonald’s USA, LLC, and Microsoft Corporation as well as nationally-recognized career experts. For more information, visit www.careeradvisoryboard.org.

Survey Methodology

The *Effectively Counseling Graduating Students* survey was conducted online to identify issues and potential solutions to the problem of most effectively counseling students to enter the workforce. The survey was conducted within the United States by National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) on behalf of the Career Advisory Board from June 21 – July 18, 2012 among 593 college career center directors across all sectors (two-year private, two-year public, four-year private, four-year public and for-profit institutions) who are members of NACE. For a full methodology, please view the full research report at www.careeradvisoryboard.org.

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