

# **The Job Search: An Investigation of Students' Feelings Toward Post-Graduation Plans**

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## **Abstract**

The recent economic crisis has exacerbated the often-challenging transition from college to the workforce and is prompting many colleges and universities to assess and expand the career services they offer students. Using a random sample survey of undergraduate students at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest, our study examines students' feelings about the job and career search, their use and assessment of on-campus job- and career-seeking services, and their desires for specific job- and career-seeking services, including those not currently offered on their campus. We tested the hypothesis that on average, the more a student has used job- and career-seeking resources at their school's career resource center, the lower their anxiety score will be.

## **Introduction**

College is a challenging time of discovery and growth. One of the many stresses for college and university students is the looming onset of adult responsibility and roles. The last ten years have seen a wealth of research on young adults and the traditional markers of the transition to adulthood (Brown 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2008; Henig 2010; Ray 2010). Many of these traditional markers—completion of education, financial independence, leaving parents' home, getting married, and having a child—are being delayed and sometimes dismissed as young adults choose to proceed to graduate school, spend time traveling, do a year of service, or choose lives that do not include marriage and a family (Goodwin and Jasper 2008). This period of life, during which “20-somethings” wrestle with societal norms of adulthood and the desire to strike out on their own path, has been termed “emerging adulthood” (Henig 2010). We set out to explore college students' use of job- and career-seeking resources during emerging adulthood.

## **Review of Literature**

Research on emerging adulthood has been somewhat controversial, for some claim “emerging adulthood” is a distinct developmental life stage (Arnett 2004; Henig 2010) while others claim that it is a phenomenon relative to “economic opportunities, sexual mores, and current cultural standards for the appropriate timetable for growing up” (Ray 2010). Other

literature has specifically explored the transition to post-college life, college students' struggles with the post-college decision-making process, and what institutions are doing to mediate those struggles (Brown 2004; Lucas and Berkel 2005).

Within this research, there are several subtopics still unexplored. Some have included career decision-making (Kiener 2006) and perception of barriers (Luzzo and McWhirter 2001; Swanson and Tokar 1991), college students' vocational discernment (Banning, Dik, and Hunter 2010; Duffy and Sedlacek 2010), skill building (Kemp and Seagraves 1995), and career exploration and self-efficacy (Eunjoo and Gysbers 2007; Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, and Platt 2010). However, the scholarly literature lacks detail and depth in regards to resources offered by institutions of higher learning for students actively seeking jobs or careers. We hope to address this gap in the literature by examining students' use of and attitudes toward job- and career-seeking resources offered at a small Midwestern liberal arts college.

Making the transition from college to work proves difficult for many students as it requires the transformation of study skills into work skills. Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) elucidate the fact that students are not prepared for the culture and demands of the workplace. Some literature on employers' expectations (Liptak 2005; Palomares 2000) notes that employers expect professionalism, a well-developed resume, critical thinking skills, and responsibility. In addition, the workplace environment requires more than traditional career skills; employers seek personal and social competence (Liptak 2005).

Career centers on college campuses are intended to help students prepare for the job and career search process. They provide services such as resume critique, practice interviews, and networking connections. Although a variety of career services may be offered on campuses (Valentino and Freeman 2010), a lack of awareness of these services can prevent potential advisees from seeking career guidance. Lepre (2007) found that students were more likely to seek out career services once they were aware that such services were offered on their campus. Once students seek assistance, career counselors use a variety of approaches to

better equip individual students with skills necessary in the real world (Clark, Severy, and Sawyer 2004; Johnson et al. 2002). These techniques include holistic methods, which explore developing social skills, writing one's own narrative, and participating in a "career and life planning course".

The current economic downturn has created many challenges for students beginning their job and career search. Kolowich (2009) found that colleges have seen a 50 percent increase in career resource center traffic. In order to aid students in these difficult economic times, colleges have devised strategies to help students succeed in finding a job or career. Most strategies focus on networking and include, but are not limited to, using social networking sites, appealing to the loyalty of alumni, using immersion programs with alumni, and appealing to parents. Campus career resource centers are also expanding their services by utilizing social networking websites, matching students with successfully employed alumni, attracting companies to job fairs by waiving fees (Kolowich 2009) and generally shifting and evolving their strategies as more research about employer expectations is conducted and reported (Palomares 2000). Venable (2010) also lauds the expansion of career resource center availability through online services, noting the appeal to students who are unable to access campus career resource centers due to busy schedules.

Despite the increase of student traffic to college career resource centers, Anastasia et al. (1999) found that "professional development" services were only rated as highly important by first year female students as opposed to first year male students. First year male students expressed that specific employment skills were most important, while females believed that being aware of and having a wider range of services were most important, including having a career counselor readily available.

In addition to looking at gender, other researchers have found that there is a stigma associated with counseling in general. Ludwikowski, Vogel, and Armstrong (2009) observed that a negative public stigma associated with career counseling, specifically a stigma against

seeking help, could impact the number of students who choose to seek career services.

Countering the possible stigma associated with seeking career services, anxiety may add to the pressures of job- and career-seeking, motivating students to seek out career counseling services (Eunjoo and Gysbers 2007). Career counselors are best able to address the anxiety of job- and career-seeking students by having the right strategies to assist them (Gati and Amir 2010).

Because the literature has not specifically addressed students' use of particular job- and career-seeking resources, we hope to examine whether students use job- and career-seeking tools offered by their institutions and its relationship to students' self-reported anxiety about post-graduation plans. In particular, we hypothesize that, on average, the more a student has used job- and career-seeking resources at their school's career resource center, the lower their anxiety score will be.

## **Methods**

We conducted survey research at a small liberal arts college in Minnesota. In preparing to construct our survey questions, we conducted a one-time focus group with eight students, all of whom were seniors.

The college where we conducted the study recently examined how the students feel about their transition to post-college life and how the college can help with that transition. The project in development aims to help students exit the institution with a concrete and plausible plan for meaningful work and financial independence. Our survey was designed, in part, to help the program committee develop a plan of action.

Our specific research topic, *job and career seeking*, is a part of this larger survey project, and is most applicable for senior students who are beginning the post-graduation planning process. Although our sample included students from all class years, we controlled for first-year and sophomore responses for some of our analyses in which underclassmen responses would not be as pertinent.

Eunjoo and Gysbers (2007) assert that anxiety can be a strong motivator for students to seek out institutional career counseling services. To assess *students' anxiety* we asked several questions about students' feelings concerning the year after graduation. Questions addressed students' levels of *anxiety*, *confidence*, and *uncertainty* about their long- and short-term plans, including their possible employment or continuing education situation. We measured *seeking job and career help* through questions that addressed students' use of career services and when students begin the job- or career-search process; these questions were also asked about students' continuing education plans. We also questioned students about what *job-seeking services* they had used and how helpful they found them.

There is a dearth of scholarly literature concerning *job- and career-seeking services* for college students, although career counseling itself has been studied. We based our survey questions on the specific resources offered at the college at which we conducted research, i.e. resume critique, cover letter writing, assistance with networking, interview preparation, workshops, and job fairs. We measured student use of these resources with eight questions. The questions specifically inquired about whether students have begun a job search or if they plan to, students' desire for help with their job search, whether students had sought services for their job search at the institution's career counseling center, what motivated them to seek job services at their institution, and students' plans to use the job-seeking services the college offers in the future. We assessed the pursuit of graduate studies in a similar fashion.

We worked to achieve validity in a variety of ways. In order to ensure that our survey questions truly measured our constructs (i.e. content validity; Neuman 2007), we had three other research groups check our survey to assess that our questions addressed our constructs of *anxiety* and *job and career seeking* by completing our survey and commenting on it. The comments we received helped us form our questions to better focus our findings. Our first four survey questions addressed all aspects of our *anxiety* construct (Neuman 2007). Our other

questions address the full definition of our construct of *job and career seeking*, again ensuring the content validity of this construct.

In order to make certain that the conceptualizations of our central constructs were correct (i.e. face validity), we refined our central concepts as a research team through discussion, consulting with our professor, and conducting a focus group. By thoroughly discussing our constructs and questions, we ensured that we addressed all aspects of our concepts' definitions (Neuman 2007). Our focus groups, as well as our professor, helped us further conceptualize our central constructs and form our survey questions.

We worked to achieve reliability (the ability of our survey to give consistent and generalizable results) in four ways. First, we clearly defined our important concepts (Neuman 2007). On the survey we defined *job* as "something one does to earn money. It can be a vocation or lifetime job, but it does not have to be." To ascertain each respondent's approach to a job, we asked specific questions about confidence and certainty in finding a job. Next, we measured at the most exact level we could (Neuman 2007) by using exhaustive and mutually exclusive scales when measuring. We used multiple indicators of each variable, including the usefulness of the school's career resource center tools. By asking about separate career resource center tools, and measuring each resource's perceived *helpfulness* to students, we created multiple indicators that ensured we encompassed the entire content of our concept (Neuman 2007). Finally, we administered pilot tests to the members of the other cohort of our course; we asked for their feedback and received a sample data set for our information.

We conducted an electronic survey of 777 students. The survey was administered to a simple random sample of students in order to most accurately represent the entire population. We received 292 responses to our survey, yielding a response rate of 37.6 percent. The respondents were 36.3 percent male and 62.3 percent female, and 1.4 percent did not state a gender. Of our respondents, 25 percent were seniors, 20.9 percent were juniors, 28.1 percent were sophomores, and 24 percent were first year students. Respondents reported a variety of

majors, but the most common were in the natural sciences and math (34.6 percent). Our sample did not include our focus group members or classmates because their intimate relationship with the survey could skew the results. In order to circumvent this ethical issue, the third party that compiled our simple random sample of 777 excluded those people.

Going further, we phrased our questions in a way that would not eliminate options, force only one answer, or exclude someone from answering. We sought to achieve the truth from our respondents, not answers that would skew our results. We achieved this by administering a pretest and leaving our questions value-neutral.

Our research called our attention to the ethical issue of privacy. It was necessary to protect the identity of our respondents; anonymity ensures that their responses cannot endanger or harm them. We ensured anonymity by having a third party select the simple random sample and by having no name or identifying information attached to the responses in the online survey.

We also informed our respondents that by completing the survey they were giving their consent for the information to be used, and that they could stop at anytime or skip questions they felt uncomfortable answering. Informed consent is essential to ensuring that no one is coerced into taking the survey. Lastly, before we administered our survey we applied for and received approval from our institution's review board to further ensure that administering our survey was completely ethical.

## **Results**

We set out to examine students' use of job- and career-seeking resources and students' self-reported anxiety levels about post-graduation plans. In addition, we examined whether or not students' anxiety scores were better predicted or were related to such things as class year, major, gender, perceived ease of use of the career resource center, and use of particular job- and career-seeking resources.

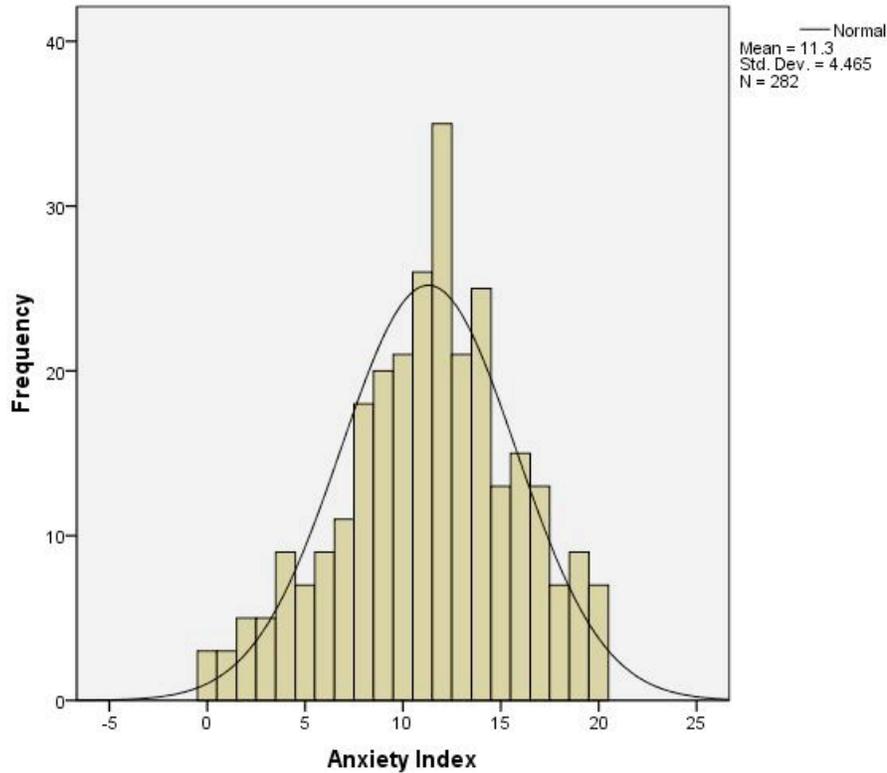
Approximately 44.2% of respondents (129/282), or nearly half, indicated that they had never used their school's career resource center, and approximately 53.8% (157/282), a slight majority, indicated that they had at some point used the career resource center. In addition, approximately 29.1% of respondents (89/282), approximately a third, indicated that they had used "job- and career-seeking resources" at their school's career resource center, while 67.5% (159/282), about two-thirds, indicated that they had not used job- and career-seeking resources.

To measure students' anxiety about their post-graduation plans, we created a five-question index using indicators of confidence about short- and long-term plans, uncertainty, and anxiety (see Table 1). Higher scores on the index indicated a higher level of anxiety about post-graduation plans, while a lower score indicated a lower level of anxiety. Respondents' anxiety was measured on a scale from 0-20. The mean score of respondents was 11.30, while the median and mode were, overall, 12. The mean of 11.30, slightly above the "neutral" score of the midpoint (10), indicates that respondents tend to be slightly anxious about post-graduation plans. The distribution was fairly normal, with a skewness of -.274 and a kurtosis of -.243 (see Figure 1).

**Table 1: Components of Anxiety Index**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. When I think about the year after graduation, I feel anxious about my employment or continuing education situation.	4.3%	11%	11.3%	<b>38.3%</b>	35.1%
2. I feel confident about my short-term plans for the first year after graduation.	13.8%	25.5%	22.0%	<b>29.1%</b>	9.6%
3. I feel confident about my long-term plans for after graduation (for beyond the first year).	11.7%	22.0%	20.9%	<b>30.1%</b>	15.2%
4. When I think about the year after graduation, I feel uncertain about my employment or continuing education situation.	9.2%	13.1%	14.2%	<b>40.8%</b>	22.7%
5. I feel behind in my planning for my employment or continuing education after graduation.	11.3%	<b>27.7%</b>	27.3%	20.6%	13.1%

**Figure 1: Index of Students' Self-Perceived Anxiety about Post-Graduation Plans**



For the respondents who had used job- and career-seeking resources, we asked which specific services they had used. Students most frequently used resume critique, the online alumni directory, and the career resource center email alias (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Respondents' Use of Job- and Career-Seeking Resources**

Career Resource Job-Seeking Service	Percent of Respondents Who Found Service to Be Somewhat or Very Helpful	Percent of Respondents Who Had Not Used Service	Percent of Respondents Who Had Used Service
<b>Resume Critique</b>	<b>95.7%</b>	<b>50.5%</b>	<b>49.5%</b>
Cover Letter Critique	92.3%	74.8%	25.2%
Meeting with Professional Staff	85.7%	59.2%	40.8%
Interview Skills Workshop	72.2%	82.5%	17.5%
Interview Practice	87.6%	84.5%	15.5%
<b>Online Alumni Directory</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>48.5%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>
Career Network for Students	87.5%	56.3%	43.7%
<b>Email Alias</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>37.9%</b>	<b>62.1%</b>
Networking Fairs	52.9%	83.5%	16.5%
Job Fairs	42.8%	79.6%	20.4%

**Hypothesis:** *On average, the more a student has used job- and career-seeking resources at their school's career resource center, the lower his or her anxiety score will be.*

We compared the mean anxiety scores of those who had and had not used job- and career-seeking resources at the career resource center with an independent samples t-test. The test showed that those respondents who had used job- and career-seeking resources had a mean anxiety score of 11.14, while those who had not used job- and career-seeking resources had a mean anxiety score of 11.41. We found that the difference in these two means was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Thus, we can conclude that use of job- and career-seeking resources and students' self-reported anxiety levels about post-graduation plans are not related.

Because we rejected our hypothesis, we performed additional testing to see if other factors were better indicators of students' anxiety levels. First, we examined whether class year was a better indicator of students' anxiety, using a Spearman's rho test for correlation. The results indicate no relationship between students' anxiety and class year ( $p > .05$ ) (See Table 3).

**Table 3: Spearman's rho Test for Anxiety and Class Year**

	Spearman's rho
Correlation Coefficient	-.075
Significance (2-tailed)	.210
N	280

We also tested whether or not categories of different academic majors were a predictor of students' anxiety. We grouped majors into seven categories: Natural Sciences and Math, Social Sciences, Humanities, Fine Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, Undeclared, and Miscellaneous. Of the respondents, 34.6% (101) were Natural Sciences and Math majors, 15.15% (44) were Social Sciences majors, 16.8% (49) were Humanities majors, 8.2% (24) were Fine Arts majors, 3.1% (9) were Interdisciplinary Studies majors, 16.4% (48) were Undeclared, and .7% (2) were Miscellaneous majors. Using a Pearson's Chi Squared test, we found that

category of academic major is not a significant predictor of anxiety ( $p > .05$ ). However, the low number of respondents for each category may have influenced our results. With more respondents, we may have found a significant relationship.

Using an independent samples t-test, we compared mean anxiety index scores for males and females. The mean for male respondents was 10.39; the mean for female respondents was 11.83. The difference in scores of males and females was found to be statistically significant ( $p=0.009$ ). This indicates that the difference in anxiety scores for men and women can be generalized to the overall student population at the studied institution; it cannot, however, be generalized to all college students (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Gender and Anxiety**  
Group Statistics

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Anxiety Index	Male	104	10.39	4.361	.428
	Female	178	11.83	4.452	.334

Looking for other indicators, we compared the mean anxiety index scores of students who perceived that the school's career resource center easy to use, and those who perceived it to be difficult to use. Using an independent samples t-test, we found that the difference in mean anxiety scores for these two groups was statistically significant ( $p= 0.002$ ). Those who agreed that the career resource center is easy to use had a mean anxiety index score of 10.43, only slightly above the "neutral" midpoint, whereas, those who disagreed that the career resource center was easy to use had a mean anxiety index score of 13.90, several points above the "neutral" midpoint. Because the difference in means is statistically significant, we can generalize the relationship to the overall student population at our institution of study: students who think that the school's career resource center is easy to use tend to have a lower anxiety score than those who think it is difficult to use.

We also wanted to see if there was a relationship between students' use of particular job- and career-seeking resources and anxiety index scores. Using independent samples t-tests, we compared the mean anxiety index scores for those who had utilized or not utilized each job- and career-seeking resources (see Table 2). Of the ten job- and career-seeking resources, only resume critique was related to anxiety index scores ( $p = .023$ ).

Because gender was a significant indicator of anxiety level, we ran a multiple linear regression model statistically controlled for gender. In this model, we compared each variable simultaneously with the anxiety index. The model showed that perceived ease of use of job-and career-seeking services ( $p = .007$ ), general frequency of use of career resource center services ( $p = .05$ ), and use of the resume critique resource ( $p = .028$ ) are better predictors of anxiety than gender (See Table 5).

**Table 5: Multiple Linear Regression Model for Anxiety**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient	T-Test	Significance	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
(Constant)	18.051	4.761	.000	10.479	25.623
Gender	-1.157	-.920	.361	-3.667	1.353
<b>Ease of Career Resource Center Job-Seeking Services</b>	<b>-3.809</b>	<b>-2.772</b>	<b>.007</b>	<b>-6.554</b>	<b>-1.065</b>
<b>Use of Career Resource Center Services</b>	<b>1.360</b>	<b>1.994</b>	<b>.050</b>	<b>-.002</b>	<b>2.723</b>
<b>Resume Critique</b>	<b>-3.164</b>	<b>-2.249</b>	<b>.028</b>	<b>-5.974</b>	<b>-.354</b>
Cover Letter Critique	.746	.534	.595	-2.044	3.536
Meeting with Professional Staff	.890	.696	.489	-1.663	3.442
Interview Skills Workshop	-1.300	-.712	.479	-4.947	2.347
Interview Practice	-1.120	-.525	.601	-5.378	3.138
Online Alumni Directory	1.943	1.541	.128	-.576	4.461
Career Network for Students	.665	.554	.581	-1.730	3.059
Email Alias	-1.290	-1.005	.319	-3.853	1.274
Networking Fairs	-.144	-.091	.928	-3.307	3.019
Job Fairs	-.110	-.076	.940	-3.015	2.794

With these three significant variables, we performed another linear regression test to see which of these was the most indicative of anxiety level. This second linear regression revealed that the perceived ease of use of job- and career-seeking resources was the most indicative of

anxiety level ( $p=.004$ ), followed by the use of the Resume Critique resource ( $p=.012$ ) (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression Model for Reduced Statistical Control**

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	T-Test	Significance	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
(Constant)	17.930	5.385	.000	11.297	24.563
Gender	-.520	-.458	.648	-2.778	1.739
Ease of Career Resource Center Job-Seeking Services	-3.846	-2.962	.004	-6.432	-1.259
Use of Career Resource Center Services	1.206	1.950	.055	-.026	2.438
Resume Critique	-2.883	-2.585	.012	-5.106	-.661

When compared to other variables in the multiple linear regression model (Table 5), the relationship between frequency of general career resource center use and anxiety index score was significant with a positive unstandardized coefficient of 1.360 ( $p= 0.050$ ). However, there was no statistically significant relationship ( $p>.05$ ) when the relationship was tested independently of other variables using a Spearman's rho test for correlation. This lack of relationship was also confirmed in the reduced multiple linear regression model comparing Gender, Ease of Career Resource Center Job-Seeking Services, Use of Career Center Services, and Resume Critique (Table 6).

Finally, we performed Spearman's rho tests for correlation of the anxiety index and the variables of perceived ease of use of job- and career-seeking resources and the use of the resume critique resource. Both had a negative correlation with the anxiety index. Perceived ease of use of job- and career-seeking resources had a correlation of  $-.274$  ( $p= .008$ ), and resume critique had a correlation of  $-.385$  ( $p=.008$ ). This data suggests that when students perceive the career resource center to be easier to use, their anxiety index scores tend to decrease. Also, students who have used the resume critique resources tend to be less anxious than those who have not used this service (see Tables 7 and 8).

**Table 7: Perceived Ease of Use of Career Resource Center and Anxiety Level**

	Spearman's rho
Correlation Coefficient	-.274
Significance (2-tailed)	.008
N	94

**Table 8: Resume Critique and Anxiety Level**

	Spearman's rho
Correlation Coefficient	-.385
Significance (2-tailed)	.008
N	45

## Discussion

We tested the hypothesis that students who are more anxious about job and career plans after college are more likely to seek out job- and career-seeking services offered at their institution. Our data did not support our hypothesis; we did not find a statistically significant relationship between students' anxiety level whether students have used the institution's job- or career-seeking service. Literature was lacking on this subject. However, we did find statistically significant relationships between students' anxiety level and other factors. We found that females tend to be more anxious than males about their post-graduation job and career plans. These findings were consistent with previous literature that found that females have more of an investment in their post-graduate job and career plans, in that they rated "professional development" services as highly important, while their male counterparts did not (Anastasia et al. 1999).

We also found significant relationships when comparing some aspects of career resource center usage with anxiety level, as exemplified in our linear regression model (see Table 5). The data suggests that as the number of times students have used the career resource services increases, their level of anxiety increases. Although this relationship was not

present when anxiety was compared to general career resource center use independent of other variables, it is still interesting to consider. Previous research found that anxiety can motivate students to seek help from career counseling services (Eunjoo and Gysbers 2007). If anxiety propels students to seek help, one can infer that students with more anxiety are more likely to seek out these services. We speculate that the use of the career resource center does not increase anxiety, but those who have more anxiety are more likely to seek help. Lepre's 2007 study is also helpful in examining this relationship; she found that students are more likely to seek out career services once they are aware that such services were offered on campus. Students perceive career counseling services to help in planning, and the more anxious the student the more the student may seek the services offered.

There was a significant relationship between anxiety and perceived ease of use of the career resource center. Our data suggests that students who perceive the career resource center was easy to use had lower anxiety than those who found it difficult to use. This is an intuitive relationship, in that students who believe the career resource center is easier to use tend to use the career resource center more often, which will decrease their anxiety level. We found this to be the best indicator of respondents' anxiety. There is a dearth of literature about this relationship.

The specific job- and career-seeking service that had a significant relationship with students' anxiety level was resume critique: overall, students who have used resume critique have significantly lower levels of anxiety than students who have not used this service. We believe that this relationship shows that students benefit from having help on specific aspects of the post-graduation planning process. If a student can feel secure and proud of their resume, he or she can feel less stressed about the process as a whole. Previous research has not focused on how specific aspects of the career- and job- seeking process can alleviate anxiety.

We were surprised that our hypothesis (students who are more anxious about post-graduation plans are more likely to utilize job- and career-seeking resources) was not supported

by our research. However, in looking at the significant relationships that we did find, we believe that our data may have been affected by students not knowing about or not using career resource center services that are available to them. Only about one-third of our respondents used job- or career-seeking services. Students who used the career resource center more often, found it easy to use, or used specific services like resume critique all had lower levels of anxiety than those students who did not use the career resource center. We believe that using the career resource center *does* lower students' anxiety levels. Our hypothesis, nonetheless, was not supported because of the small number of respondents, 157, who have used the career resource center. Also, students with more anxiety may return to the career resource center more often in an attempt to alleviate their anxiety. With continued use of services like resume critique, we believe that they may have lower levels of anxiety about their post-graduation planning process.

## **Conclusion**

Our study examined the relationship between use of job- and career-seeking services and students' anxiety level about their post-graduation plans. We did not find a significant relationship between students' anxiety level and whether students have used the institution's job- or career-seeking services. We found that students who use the career resource center more tend to have higher levels of anxiety than students who use the career resource center less. We cannot determine causality, but we speculate that students with more anxiety seek out career services more often than those with less anxiety in an attempt to alleviate anxiety. We do not believe that use of career services causes anxiety.

Students who believe that the career resource center is easy to use had lower levels of anxiety than students who believe the career resource center is difficult to use. Students who use resume critique tend to have lower anxiety levels than students who do not use resume critique. We also found that female students are more anxious than their male counterparts, which is consistent with previous literature (Anastasia et al. 1999).

One limitation of our research was the low response rate to our survey. Due to the low response rate, 37.6%, the results we obtained may not be representative of the population of the college as a whole. Our respondents were representative of the population in terms of race and class year; however, many more women responded than men, which was not representative of the institution's population. Distributing the survey to more students could enable us to increase our response rate, thus giving us more representative and generalizable data.

Our survey was primarily composed of contingency questions, which meant that a majority of respondents were asked to skip questions purposely. This significantly lowered the response rate to certain questions. An increased response rate to our general survey would have helped increase the number of respondents for our contingency questions.

We had a limited amount of space in which to ask questions. With more space, we would have been better able to comprehensively address the issues in question. Our research was also a cross-sectional study of students at a small institution in Minnesota, so we could only measure students' perceptions and attitudes at one point in time. The demographics of the institution, in which the vast majority of the student body is composed of white/Caucasian students, suggests that the results of the study would not be generalizable outside the institution because we did not have an ethnically or racially representative population. The survey was distributed at the beginning of fall semester, suggesting that many students had not yet begun to think about post-graduation planning. To counteract these limitations it would be best to distribute the survey at multiple times throughout the year, over a number of years, and at a variety of higher learning institutions to fully gauge students' anxiety about post-graduation plans.

The strengths of our research include its validity. We achieved validity through the use of focus groups and the peer review process. Our research was timely and addressed a program

being developed currently for the institution at which we were studying. We had an ethnically representative sample of the institution, as well as one that was representative of class year.

Besides addressing the limitations in our current study, future research should address what colleges are offering as job- and career-seeking services and how helpful they are. By investigating what colleges offer, future research can explore the relationship between specific resources and the relationship to anxiety about post-graduation plans.

Also, investigating how job- and career-seeking skills are incorporated in the classroom and students perceived anxiety levels would aid higher learning institutions in programming and curriculum building that address students' concerns with post-graduation life. Future research may investigate what aspects of resume critique aid in lowering student anxiety and expand those to other resources offered by the career resource center.

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