

College to Work Transition in America

Naoyuki OGATA*

This paper is a brief report about the college graduate employment system in America. As part of the process where a requirement of relevance of higher education to work is stronger, occupationally oriented contents of higher education become useful objectives and an internship system is beginning to be introduced in Japan. It seems that one of the models to aim at is the American system. However the system of college graduate employment in America is little understood in Japan. In America the employment system and the higher education system are strongly connected with each other; the nature of the connection regulates the contents of the curriculum and the function of career services. America has a very diversified higher education system. Therefore it is difficult to generalize and that should be avoided. However, we can attempt to provide an outline of the system with the intention of establishing a blueprint.

We introduce the process by which students find and get jobs and the function of career services at New York University is presented as an example. Career services are very important in America. The frequency of utilizing career services is very high and also career services are most helpful to students searching for jobs (Collins 1998).

College graduate employment system

It is useful to explain internships before presenting the process of getting a job, because internships offer a valuable link in the transition from college to work in America.

Internships

Many students experience internships or part-time jobs mainly during their sophomore or junior year. Internships are on-the-job learning opportunities for students to link the classroom with a workplace.

Though the effects of internships toward substantial job performance are not necessarily proved (Taylor 1992, Scannell and Simpson 1996), they are becoming increasingly important for both students and employers. From the students' point of view, internships help them apply for a permanent job, develop work-related skills and networking, and give them a chance to try out their chosen career. In fact, a survey of graduating students reports that those who participate

* Assistant Professor, R. I. H. E., Hiroshima university

in internships have better opportunity than those not having them in obtaining job interviews, numbers of job offers, and better starting salaries (Kaman and Kretovics 1999). From the employers' point of view, internships give them realistic information about how well the student works within the organization. That means internships provide a way to prescreen candidates. There is no constraint between employers and interns. The primary reason why the companies offer internships is to provide a return to the students, community, and their alma mater (Brocks and Greene 1998). In reality, however, especially in the case of for-profit organizations, employers extend offers for full-time employment to 55% of their interns (Brocks and Greene 1998). They clearly use internships as a recruiting source. Interns also offer fresh perspectives and complete projects for which staff members never seem to have the time.

Students get information about internships through career services at each university, books, and the Internet. The kinds of information students utilize are weekly earnings, the field the job is in, duration (how many weeks and which season), and pre-requisites of schooling (undergraduate or graduate level). Because internships are work experiences before finding full-time jobs after graduation, the main required qualities and skills for interns are enthusiasm and interests, communication skills, and professional maturity (Brocks and Greene 1998).

The way of applying for internships is similar to that for jobs after graduation. The detailed process of seeking employment is described below. Briefly the sequence is as follows. Before starting to search for internships, students do self-analyses identifying their interests, skills, and values. After that, they send a resume and a cover letter and have an interview. In the case of internships, the period between sending resumes and getting replies is around two weeks, shorter than that for the job students seek after graduation. In many cases only one interview is needed.

The way of getting information and finding a job

The main route to get job information is through reading and networking. Networking is different from connections because it requires informational interviews. The purpose of networking is to get information, not to get a job. Therefore anyone such as friends, parents, relatives, teachers, and career counselors will be useful initially. Through networking students access more realistic and informal valuable information they can't get in a formal way. The sort of information they obtain is: more detailed nature of the work, such as responsibilities of workers, the work environment, and frustrations; lifestyle considerations such as travel, relocation, and flexibility of working hours; and future prospects such as job training, career ladders, and income.

The resources for finding a job are varied. The most popular one is accessing career services at the university. Of course the quality and quantity of job listings vary with the type and

efficiency of the career services and the geographical location of the campus. Other resources are the use of networking, help-wanted advertisements in newspapers, magazines, or the Internet, and employment agencies. Though the number is small, it does happen that some students start their own businesses.

The process of job hunting 1: resume and cover letter

The starting time for a career varies according to the graduating time. People who graduate in May start their career from mid-May to August and those who graduate in December begin from January to May. The recruiting season is from fall to spring. The length of time for selection is from four weeks to six weeks and it takes longer than in the case of internships.

At first, students send a resume and a cover letter to the company. The main purpose of a resume is to get an opportunity of interview. Generally speaking, the length of a resume is one page. A resume is a summary of the applicant's abilities, accomplishments, and experiences. Therefore the contents are as follows: name, address, phone number, education, experience, activities, skills, and interests. It is not required to give information about age and sex.

For employers the two most important prescreening criteria are major subjects studied and work/co-op experience (Allen 1998). Though the requirements for major and skills vary between industry sectors and organization size, the important point is to write down the information that is related to the job because what employer seeks is job-relevant knowledge and skills. This means that in the case of sending a resume for a different type of job, a different type of a resume is needed. In a survey inquiring into the importance of student participation in activities outside the classroom, the employers place job-related work experiences the most important. The second is a leadership role in a student organization. This is more important than work experience not related to the job being sought (Reardon, Lenz, and Folsom 1998).

Some specific information needs to be included in each of the sections of the resume. The first is education. The test score is often skipped because it is rare that an employer uses it as a hiring decision. If the GPA is above 3.0, it may be well to note it on the application. In general, students list their minor/major and any additional coursework taken because (especially at the undergraduate level) it is often the case that the major is not necessarily connected to the job. Next is experience. This will include paid employment, internships and volunteer work. An essential point is to note not what applicants did but how they did. What an employer deems important are results and accomplishments of experience. The third is activities. Although leadership skill is required more at managerial than at entry level, if the job requires such skill, the activities of club memberships, community service, and participation on athletic teams can be a crucial point. The last point is skills. The main focus is on computer skills and

languages. Ordinarily, for computer skills, both the hardware and software that students can handle should be filled in and for language, fluency is the key point.

If we compared a resume to a tree, a cover letter would correspond to a forest. The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce students themselves to the employer, to express why they are interested in working for the organization, to emphasize how the qualifications they have acquired can contribute to the organization and to ask for an interview. A common traditional way is to send a cover letter and a resume at the same time. But in the case of sending a resume on-line (i.e. through the Internet), in some cases a cover letter isn't required.

The process of job hunting 2: interview

If a resume is successful, the next step is an interview. The interview is the most important part of the employment process. Of course it is true that those who submit a fine resume may get interview opportunities more easily. But it is often the case that applicants with impressive resumes are rejected on the basis of a poor interview performance. Perry and Goldberg (1998) indicate interviewing skills have a greater influence than academic background or work experience on the likelihood that students would be invited for an on-site interview and get a job offer. One estimate suggests that the average percent of candidates interviewed who receive offers is about 20% (Allen 1998).

Often there will be more than two interviews. The first interview is for screening and it is rare to get a job at this stage. It is said that an easy hire decision means an easy fire decision later. Therefore the time taken by a first interview is short and the questions are brief. At the first interview, usually someone in the human resources section is an interviewer. The second interview is likely to be longer, and more detailed questions will be asked. The interviewer is likely to be one of the managers. At the last stage of the interview, or at the executive level, most decisions are based on fit. After every interview an applicant should send a thank-you letter to the employer: The purpose is not only to thank the interviewer but also to show enthusiasm and interest and to give him or her a good impression.

The popular style for an interview is a one-on-one interaction. In addition, there also exist group interviews which may take various forms: one candidate with a panel of interviewers, several candidates with one or more interviewers, and one interviewer with a group of candidates. The first one is also called the board/panel interview. The last one means that each candidate is judged on creativity (originality of answer is required), leadership, and teamwork.

Though it is difficult to generalize the contents of questions, basic questions may cover the following topics: college experience, applicants themselves, work-related experience, future career prospects, lifetime objectives, and the organization itself. The format of the interview

may take various forms, Tullier, Haft, Heenehan and Taub (1997) give five examples: structured, unstructured, conversational, confrontational, and sales pitch interviews. The confrontational interview is called the stress interview and this is used to check whether the candidate is able to deal with a high-pressure job. The OCS (1998) indicates two new trends for interviews. One is a behavioral interview when the interviewer asks candidates to describe a particular situation in their past and how they learned from it. The other is a situation interview when candidates are asked how they respond to scenarios of common work situations that arise on the job.

It sometimes occurs that students take tests relating to basic skills or specific skills during the interview. Though psychological tests are also sometimes taken, there are usually restricted to senior level jobs that require a personality fit with the job and the corporate culture. Inquiring about salary and benefits is also possible during the interview but it is usually recommended that this be left to the end of the interview process, namely after getting a job offer. But very little salary negotiation room is left to a recent graduate because most of them apply for entry-level jobs.

It occurs frequently that students get more than one job offer. In America this is not considered to be unethical. It occurs naturally that a company fired people within a short time, it seems rather desirable to select a best-fit job for applicants among plural job offers. Allen (1998) reports that the average percent of offers accepted is 50-60 % and employers give job candidates an average of two weeks to accept or reject job offers. If a company withdrew a job offer that had been made, this would be considered unethical and a company doing this would be thought to be no longer dependable.

On-campus recruitment

One of the much used employment systems is the on-campus job recruitment system. Companies arrange to visit college campuses for the purpose of recruiting graduating seniors. There are also arranged on-campus interviewing, career fair participation and so on. Whether or not a company decides to visit college campuses depends on various factors such as the size of student body, geographic location, and academic reputation of the school. By utilizing on-campus recruiting, companies have a means of tapping into a strong pool of potential new employees. The on-campus recruitment system is also very convenient for students because most of the employment processes such as contacting companies and arranging interviews are carried out through the career center. All students have to do is attend seminars about that program, seek a job among the lists of employers who register for the program, submit a resume to the program office, and wait till the employer informs the office of the date and time of the interview. The career center sends collected resumes to the company and the company sorts

through resumes and pre-selects a group of students to interview.

In the survey of recruiters conducted at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (R. M. Greenberg 1997) the substance of the on-campus recruiting system is described as follows. It is rare that students can get an offer only by on-campus interviews. A campus interview is very selective and more than 40 % campus interviewers indicate that only 15% of the applicants are invited to company visit for the next interview. Because the main screening process is finished at the stage of the campus interview, more than 50% of those selected get an offer; and 41% campus interviewers indicate that they will employ more than 80% of those receiving offers. Most employers (70%) arrange individual company visits rather than group visits. Half of employers (52%) engage in testing such as drug testing, psychological profiles and aptitude tests during the company visits and the majority of companies take the opportunity to discuss salary and benefits during company visits.

The function of career services: the case of New York University

Overview

In American higher education, the function of the career services is divided into two. One is to facilitate the career development of students and the other is to provide direct assistance in the placement of students into specific jobs. Historically there existed a counseling office that was responsible for career planning and a placement office that focused separately on the specific job finding skills. But as the placement role became necessary for the process of career development, the functions of counseling and placement were combined (Herr, Rayman, and Garis 1993).

According to NACE's career service survey conducted in 1997 (Collins 1998), many career centers adopt the name of career services as their office title (40%), because their main function evolved from a limited placement service to a broader and comprehensive career support of students. Most of them have a centralized office (87%) and they are organizationally a part of student services or student affairs (78%). Though the number of staff or professional staff varies by enrollment size, the number of career services having only a director is few (3%) and many of them have associate or assistant directors, counselors, coordinators, technical professionals and so on. Most of the career services professionals have at least a master's degree. The average annual operating budget is \$169,586; less than 1% of the total institutional budget is allocated to the career service on average. They offer various services (Table 1) and the number of career services offering cooperative education, internship and other experiential education program are drastically increasing over the past twenty years (26% in 1975 and 73% in 1997). The use of the technology in providing career services is also rising in parallel with the

spread of the Internet. 69% of institutions have their own WWW page for students and 20% of them have online registration for use of the career office's services. On average in each career office, the number of students counseled per year is 1300, that of students participating in on-campus recruiting per year is 554, that of interviews conducted on campus for post-graduate employment is 1714, that of workshops presented annually is 98, and that of seminars is 41. The average percentage of the graduating class that uses a career service office is 70% and that of obtaining a job through on-campus interviewing is 24%.

Table 1. Services Offered Through Career Services

Career counseling (individual and group, combined)	Campus interviews for other than full-time employment
Career counseling (individual)	Site visits
Campus interviewing	Computerized candidate data base
Occupational and employer information library	Consortium programs
Workshops	Vocational testing
Career/job fairs	Advisory boards
Placement of graduate into full-time employment	Resume booklets
Placement of alumni (alumni services)	Placement of undergraduates into graduate school
Campus interviews for full-time employment	Academic counseling
Resume Referral	Consultation
Cooperative education, internship, other experiential education program	Video interviewing
Computerization/technology	Career planning or employment readiness course for credit
Placement of students into summer or part-time employment	Career planning or employment readiness course not for credit
Job development	Internet registration
Statistics and Research	Dropout prevention and counseling
Career counseling (group)	Scholarships
Credential service	Transfer of associate degree students to four-year institution
Graduate/professional school advising	
Student employment (summer, part-time)	
Community outreach	

Source: Collins, 1998, p. 52.

Organization of the Office of Career Services in NYU

The Office of Career Services (OCS) in NYU is founded for the purpose of providing the career counseling and placement assistance to undergraduates, graduate students and alumni. Today it has nineteen full-time staff members and all of them have masters' degrees related to career counseling or some related subjects. The staff consists of one director, one associate director, two assistant directors, two senior career counselors, five career counselors, one student employment specialist, one recruitment coordinator, one assistant to the recruitment coordinator, one employer service coordinator, one systems administrator, one secretary, one administrative aide, and one receptionist. Besides these, the OCS employs two graduate assistants as part-timers.

Seminar

The OCS offers various seminars to give students a comprehensive understanding of career planning and job hunting. Seminars are conducted all through the year. For example, in January and February in 1999, 27 seminars were held. The seminar covered more than 10 topics: "Planning Your Career", "Resume & Cover Letter Writing", "Interviewing Skills", "New Professionals in the Workplace", "How to Choose a Major & Career", "How to Make the Most of Your Part-Time Job", "Careers in Focus for Liberal Arts Students", "Job Networking Skills", "Job Search and Internet Resources", "On-Campus Recruitment", "Work Abroad Orientation", and "Job Search Strategies for International Students".

Each seminar lasts for about an hour and a reservation is needed to participate. Most of the attendants are undergraduate students. Though the style of the seminar varies according to the number of attendants and the topic handled, in general, an instructor who is a member of the OCS staff explains the point briefly at first, then each student is able to ask questions. It is common that after a seminar, individual students will seek to ask the career counselor about their specific interests.

The career counseling service for students is very important. By making an appointment, students can discuss their individual needs and goals with a career counselor at length. The OCS also offers a mentor network program. The mentors are experienced professionals and many of whom are alumni of NYU and help students explore their careers. They serve as mentors voluntarily and receive no pay. Now there are over 400 of them.

Employment assistance

The OCS offers over 5000 internships and summer job opportunities to students. Students can meet employers at the part-time job and internship fair held in September and the summer job and internship fair held in February. Special internship resume collections are another service and this enables employers to recruit students for internships and conduct interviews at the OCS site.

The OCS also offers an on-campus recruitment service that provides graduating students seeking full-time employment after graduation the opportunity to be interviewed by an employer on-campus. Over 700 employers visit the OCS each year. Their target students are graduating in either January, May, or October. On-campus recruitment was held in fall (fall interview season is from September 23 to December 1) and spring (spring interview season is from January 26 to April 22) in 1988-99 year because the employment season differs among industries. Financial, accounting, management, marketing, and technical companies tend to employ students in spring; and communication, nonprofit, education, and media do so in fall. From 35% to 40% students get their jobs through on-campus recruitment. The Student

Employment and Internship Center mainly carries these functions.

In addition, employment bulletins which list over 20,000 full-time employment opportunities (fees required) are mailed to second semester seniors, graduate students, and alumni.

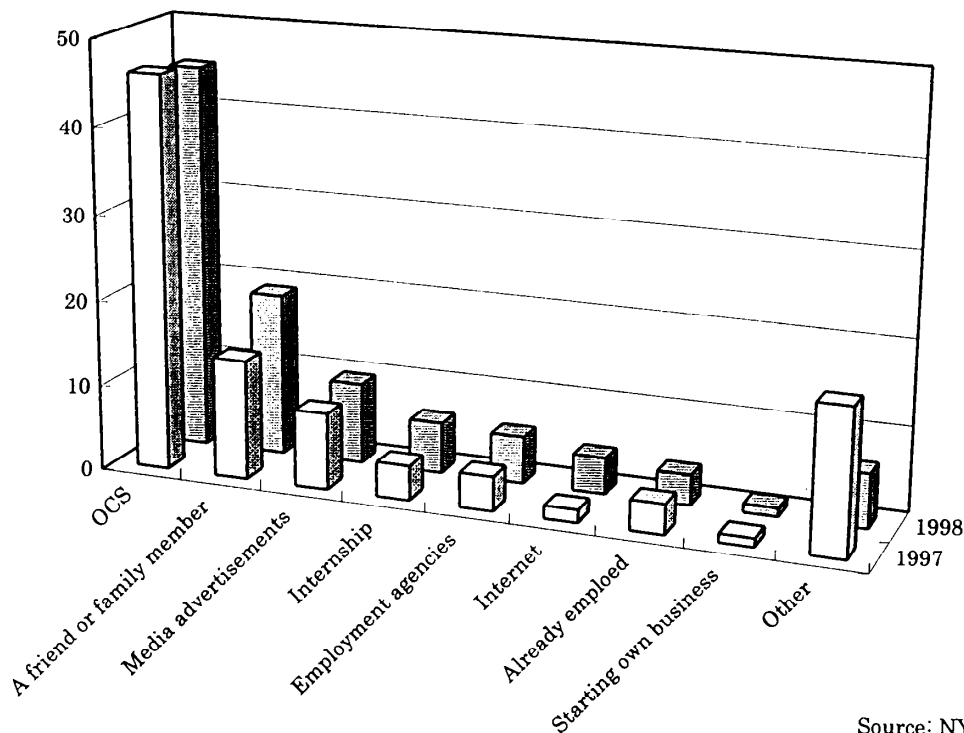
Another important and recently most powerful employment assistance for students is NYU Career-Net. This is an on-line system and allows students to search for on- and off-campus jobs and internships. In the case of searching for part-time jobs and internships, users can select items from a large number of categories as follows; 17 part-time categories, 26 kind of computer skills, 5 types of hours per week, 6 job types, 13 locations of the company, 132 major/minor options, 3 pay per hour types, 3 time of day/week options, 3 time of year options, 5 types of typing wpm, and 6 required year levels. In the case of searching for full-time jobs, users can utilize categories as follows; 9 full-time categories, 26 kind of computer skills, 4 required experience types, 13 locations of the company, 123 major/minor options, and 8 annual salary ranges. And students can get company information drawn by selected keywords. The contents of information are generally the company name including URL, job starting date, application deadline date, required qualification and job responsibilities, and the way of submitting a resume (Table 2).

Table 2. The Contents of NYU Career Net: Full-time Jobs

Full Time Categories (9 items)		
Business Related		Human Services
Health & Science		Social Science
Computer Science/Info Systems		Teaching
Education Administration		International
Arts & Communications		
Computer Skills (26 items)		
Windows 95	DBASE	Macintosh
Perl	Access	IBM
Oracle	Word Perfect	PL/SQL
XBase	C++	Solaris
Visual Basic	C	FileMaker
Windows NT	HTML	Photoshop
Java	Lotus 1-2-3	PageMaker
Quark	Excel	SunOS
4th Dimension	Microsoft Word	
Experience (4 items)		
4-6 years	Entry Level	
1-3 years	7 years +	
Location (13 items)		
Brooklyn	Tribeca	
Long Island	Upstate NY	
Manhattan	Various locations	
New Jersey	Westchester	
Queens	White Plains	
Staten Island	Bronx	
Tri-State		
Salary (8 items)		
> \$50,000	\$34,000-\$37,000	
\$46,000-\$49,000	\$30,000-\$33,000	
\$42,000-\$45,000	\$26,000-\$29,000	
\$38,000-\$41,000	< \$25,000	

Source: NYU Career Net.

Figure 1. Means of Finding Employment



Source: NYU OCS,
Placement Survey in
1997 and 1998

Graduates' survey: employment conditions of NYU students

The OCS has conducted a graduates' survey since 1992. The target population is bachelor's degree recipients in either January or May in the concerned year. An outline of the survey for the 1997 and 1998 years is given below.

In NYU, the OCS has a very important function for graduates' employment. Over 80% recipients answered that they utilized the OCS's programs and services. In addition, about half of the recipients answered that they obtained their job position directly through the resources of the OCS; this makes it biggest means of finding employment (Figure 1). The rate of locating their job from the Internet is still low, but is getting higher gradually. A majority of students - 56% in 1997 and 71% in 1998 - received at least two or more job offers and have a choice of positions.

The rate of full-time employment for those completing bachelor's degrees is 87% in both years; the number of proceeding directly to a graduate program is not so large. Most of the bachelor's degree recipients seek to establish their careers first. However this doesn't mean a low demand for graduate education. Of those not currently enrolled in post-graduate academic programs, more than 80% are planning to pursue a graduate degree in the next few

years. This suggests that graduate education has established a firm place as a continuing education system. After they get a first job, they utilize part-time or full-time post-graduate academic programs, upgrade their skills or get new work related knowledge and transfer their job or occupation.

One of the recent biggest concerns for students and their parents is the employment value of university from a cost-beneficial point of view. The OCS's survey also reflects this situation. At first it shows NYU students earn among the highest starting salaries in the country - \$6375 in 1997 and \$5985 in 1998 above the national average annual salary for new graduates. It also reports which fields offer the best prospects for employment and which jobs pay the highest salaries (Table 3).

Table 3. The Relationship Between Major and Salary

Major	Mean Salary			
	NYU Graduates		National Average	
	1997	1998	1997	1998
Finance	\$41,000	\$44,000	\$31,500	\$38,700
Psychology	\$28,000	\$31,000	\$23,430	\$25,499
Accounting	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$32,100	\$32,872
Economics	-	\$42,000	-	\$34,043
Marketing	\$31,000	\$37,000	\$28,950	\$29,148
Politics	\$31,000	\$33,000	\$28,170	\$28,736
Nursing	\$43,000	\$46,000	\$32,985	\$33,077
English	\$27,000	\$30,000	\$24,150	\$27,608
Journalism	\$26,000	\$26,000	\$23,625	\$24,616
Communications	-	\$29,000	-	\$25,938
Biology	-	\$34,000	-	\$26,885
Computer Science	\$42,300	-	\$37,335	-
Information Systems	\$42,000	-	\$36,040	-

Source: NYU OCS, Placement Survey in 1997 and 1998.

Conclusion

The resources available for writing this paper are limited. It is based largely on interviews with faculty and career counselors at New York University. Moreover, it lacks detailed of the national level of statistical data about the process of college to work transition. Therefore this paper does not offer enough information to provide a full picture of the college graduate employment system in America. However at least we may be able to indicate some important aspects.

There are two indispensable points to establish the relevance of higher education to work. One is to clarify what kind of knowledge and skills are required in the world of work. The other is to know which type of job related knowledge and skills students acquire through higher education. However neither of these two points are fully achieved. What do perform

important functions in this situation are internships and the career services.

College students are able to obtain work-related experience through internships. And one more important function we should not overlook is that college students can experience in advance of graduation the process of finding and applying for jobs. At the same time employers know which type of college students can execute what kind of job and they can also use internships as a means of powerful prescreening.

The career services support various kinds of students' job-hunting process. In addition to giving job information, they have two important functions. One is arranging on-campus opportunities for students and employers to meet with each other and arrange interviews. The other is career counseling. Many career services have professional career counselors who advise students' job prospects.

In comparison with the Japanese case, we may conclude that the contents of higher education in America are more occupationally oriented and companies also employ college graduates on the basis of professional knowledge and skills. But what we should never overlook is the relation between higher education and employment system in America is powerfully supported through the functions of internships and career services.

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アメリカにおける大学から職業への移行

小方直幸*

雇用環境や仕事観の変化に伴い、我が国における大卒者の就職は転機を迎えている。就職協定が廃止され、就職活動が多様化する一方で、職種別採用や通年採用が導入され始めている。それと連動して、在学中の職業経験の意義が注目され、インターンシップの導入も進みつつある。こうした大卒者の就職を考える上で1つのモデルとみなされているのがアメリカである。本稿はその基礎資料として、アメリカの大学生の就職プロセスを概観し、大学生の就職支援の点で重要な機能を果たしている、大学のキャリアサービスの実体について事例的に報告したものである。

アメリカの大学にはオンキャンパス・リクルートという制度が存在するものの、自己分析に始まり、履歴書による書類選抜を経て、面接で就職が決定するという、採用のプロセス自体は日本と変わらない。だが我が国のような一括採用ではなく、職種別の採用であるため、各職業に直結した専門分野や職業経験が重視される。とはいえ、学士課程レベルで十分な専門的知識・技能が獲得されるとはいえず、日本の新規学卒者に相当する卒業生の応募先は、通常エントリーレベルの職種で、給与に関する交渉の余地もそれほどない。その意味でも、職業紹介だけでなくカウンセリング機能も兼ね備えたキャリアサービスが果たす役割は大きい。スタッフの多くは修士以上の学位を有し、サービスの内容も多岐にわたる。そこには、単に大学教育の補助あるいは大学教育へのフィードバックにとどまらない、確固とした地位と機能を見いだすことができる。

*広島大学大学教育研究センター講師