

Demystifying Career and Professional Development Services

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Hello all! My name is Bethel Sishu, and I am a current second year at UO, studying Planning, Public Policy, and Management, along with a Black Studies Minor. I am also a first-generation college student and a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants. Today I would like to focus on professional development and career opportunities, and what ideas the task force may hopefully be circulating. Since this is a written statement, I cannot start with a string of questions, so I'll begin with a tangent. This January I began working at the University Career Center as a Peer Coach, where we are advertised as the student's first interaction for assistance on resumes, cover letters, and job searching tips, and my colleagues and I were excited to bring the student and BIPOC perspective to the career services table. But in the University Career Center, there is almost a ritual to how career services and professional development go about, one that is not necessarily wrong but does not focus on inviting students who may need it most. Of course, I am not the only student or staff to notice this, but the importance of career and professional development goes overlooked until most students' final term, or they never know of its importance, let alone campus resources. In fact, outside this job, I have only heard about the University Career Center twice in my two years of attendance, and yet our mission is centered around helping all students and enabling them to succeed.

Without this job, I would not understand the importance of connections, nor the 'right' kind of language, along with its pervasiveness in career service. Receiving an education is a challenge and without the right career support, I can see my identity falling into that gap. It is overwhelming tackling both and widens the gap for students who don't have support or the means to maneuver these challenges.

So, when providing support to underrepresented communities has the task force considered the career and professional development support gap? To what capacity can the task force support and influence career centers across Oregon colleges? How do these career services, such as networking with employers, or interview preparation, if inclusively approached, may help underrepresented students to cope with the imposter syndrome experienced while in college and beyond?

Follow-up Question after response...

The notion of professionalism is centered around classism and whiteness across the United States, so what policies (not recommendations or guidelines) surrounding DEI will the task force have in the decision-making room? Will the students who will be influenced by a consistent part of this decision-making process? What efforts are you placing towards integrating underrepresented groups and professionals' opinions on this as well?

I ask these general questions because efforts to bridge the career services and professional development gap should be sustainable and equitable. Since career services are the topic at hand, my education and general observation have demonstrated to me that classism and whiteness exist in all professional spaces, so self-reflecting, creating goal orientated solutions, and stopping the cycle are just as important in your overall work. (Please restate the questions above if needed!)

Thank you for your time and if anyone would like to continue this conversation, please feel free to contact me at bethels@uoregon.edu!