Effective Career Services Practices: The Case of Canadian Business Schools

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Abstract

Perceived quality of a business school education is closely tied to student satisfaction with Career Services throughout the course of study. This is true for two reasons. First, students seek assurance that their educational investment will result in a secure future. Second, students often use business school ranks published in high profile magazines and newspapers such as Canadian Business, U.S. News and World Report and Financial Times. A significant percentage of the weight in business school ranks depends upon student and recruiter perceptions of the school's career centre (CC). In this key informant study, practices used by Canadian business school CCs are reported and presented in the context of theory of best practices and studies of CCs in the US among top performing schools. The results are meaningful because of the relative youth of CCs in Canadian business schools. We find that despite their relative inexperience, rapidly increasing demands, and limited resources, that practices used by Canadian business school CCs are in line with the most successful CCs in the US and consistent with theory of effective practices. Structured telephone interviews were conducted with fourteen directors of CCs in Canadian business schools. Through an analysis of the interview text, five essential themes of the career centre practices emerged. These essential themes are (1) Relationship Management, (2) Comprehensive Student Support, (3) Corporate Outreach Activities, (4) Continuous Quality Improvement, and (5) Technology and Facilities.

Introduction

As economic uncertainty rises, graduating students increasingly consider the marketability of their degree (Brathwaite, 2003) when selecting a business program. Business school rankings published in high profile publications such as *Financial Times* and *Canadian Business* are often used as a tool in selecting a business program. One of the most important determinants of rank is student satisfaction—in particular, satisfaction with the Career Centre (CC). A review of 6 of the top business school ranks *(Canadian Business, Wall Street Journal, The Economist, Financial Times, Business Week, and US News and World Report)* finds that at least one determinant of rank and an average of 57% of the rank calculation are associated with career services. In fact, student satisfaction with career services ranks second only to the quality of faculty in required courses among factors influencing overall student satisfaction business programs (AACSB Report, 2001).

Historically, university level career services have served business schools students. However, since career services have such an impact on school ranking, reputation, and student enrollment, we suggest that strong career service support dedicated to their own students is a strategic activity for any business school. In the U.S., and more recently in Canada, an increasing number of business schools have established dedicated Career Centres (CCs) to serve their students. The 30 highest ranking business schools world-wide in the 2002 *Financial Times* top 100 schools all have a dedicated career centre.

Analyses of effective practices at top performing career centres (e.g., AACSB (2002 and 2001) have been conducted in U.S. schools, and provide a benchmark for analysis of Canadian CCs. In these studies, four years of data for 168 schools was used to identify 5 top-performing MBA schools (2001) and 184 schools to identify 3 top performing undergraduate programs. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of interviews with stakeholders, students, alumni, faculty, recruiters and CC personnel in MBA programs (2001) revealed 6 effective practices that distinguish exemplary CCs from their counterparts:

1. Coherent business strategy
2. Relationship management.
3. Comprehensive student support
4. Corporate outreach activities.
5. Continuous quality improvement
6. Staff resource development systems

Similar analysis for undergraduate programs (2002) did not reveal effective practices, although the following key findings were reported:

1. Student satisfaction with a CC is the second strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with an undergraduate business program.
2. A strong link exists between high admissions standards and high levels of student satisfaction with CC performance.
3. A link exists between CCs with staff and resources dedicated to business students and high levels of student satisfaction.
4. Schools that view the CC as integral to achieving their mission tend to have higher levels of student satisfaction.
5. The quality of CC infrastructure, such as technology and facilities, influence the level to which undergraduate business students are satisfied with its performance.

These practices and findings reflect changes in career service offices at the university level over the past 25 years, who have shifted toward core activities focused on students' desire for work experience in their chosen profession prior to graduation, and eliminate some services that are no longer necessary (McGrath, 2002). There has been a significant increase in cooperative education, internship, and experiential education, from 26 percent in 1975 to 78.3

percent in 2000 (Nagle and Bohovich, 2000).

Data and Methodology

Sixty Canadian business schools were drawn from Erkut's (2002) study of research productivity in Canadian business schools. Websites were examined to identify schools with a CC dedicated to their own students. Forty-nine of the 60 business schools have their own websites, and from these sites a preliminary summary of web-based and in-house services offered was developed, and 18 schools were identified as having a dedicated CC. Schools without their own website were contacted by phone and 2 of them confirmed the presence of a CC. Tables 1 and 2 present the business schools with a dedicated CC and those without (respectively).

All schools in Table 1 were invited to participate in the study, and fourteen agreed to be interviewed. Table 3 presents a summary of characteristics of these schools.

A 30 minute structured telephone interview protocol was employed and telephone interviews were conducted with the director of each participating CC or a designate[1]. Interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software. Five essential themes emerged, all of which align with effectives practices identified in top U.S. schools:

1. *Relationship Management:* building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders, namely students, employers (recruiters), and alumni.
2. *Comprehensive Student Support:* delivery of continuous, relevant services to undergraduate and MBA students and alumni.
3. *Corporate Outreach Activities*: participation in a number of diverse activities off-campus, complemented by events such as career fairs and information session sponsored to attract recruiters on-campus.
4. *Continuous Quality Improvement:* improving services through the use of informal and formal feedback mechanisms.
5. *Technology and Facilities:* leveraging technology by offering comprehensive, interactive web services for all stakeholders. High quality

Table 1: Canadian Business Schools with dedicated CC

Brock University, Faculty of Business
Concordia University, Faculty of Commerce and Administration
Dalhousie University, Faculty of Management
HEC (Université de Montréal),École des Hautes Études Commerciales
McGill University, Faculty of Management
McMaster University, DeGroote School of Business
Queens University, School of Business
Saint Mary's University, Frank H. Sobey Faculty of Commerce
UBC, Faculty of Commerce
Université du Québec à Montréal, École des sciences de la gestion
University of Alberta, School of Business
University of Calgary, Faculty of Management
University of Lethbridge
University of Manitoba, I. H. Asper School of Business
University of Ottawa
University of Toronto, Rotman School of Management
University of Victoria, Faculty of Business
University of Western Ontario, Richard Ivey School of Business
Wilfrid Laurier University, School of Business and Economics
York University, Schulich School of Business

Table 2: Canadian Business Schools without dedicated CC

Acadia University, Fred C. Manning School of Business*
Algoma University College, Department of Business Administration
Athabasca University, School of Business
Bishop's University, Williams School of Business and Economics
Brandon University, Business Administration
Carleton University, Sprott School of Business
Kings University College, Department of Commerce/Business
Lakehead University, Faculty of Business
Laurentian University, School of Commerce and Administration
Laval
Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Business Administration
Mount Allison University, Department of Commerce
Mount Saint Vincent University, Business & Tourism Department
Royal Military College of Canada, Dept of Business Administration/Administrative Studies Program
Royal Roads University, Management Programs Division
Ryerson Polytechnic University, School of Business Management
Saint Francis Xavier University, Gerald Schwartz School of Business and Information Systems
Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Business Administration
Trent University*
Trinity Western University, Faculty of Business and Economics
U du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Département d'administration
Univ of New Brunswick at Fredericton, Faculty of Administration
Université de Moncton, Faculté d'administration
Université de Sherbrooke, Faculté d'administration
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Département des sciences économiques et administratives
Université du Québec à Hull, Département des sciences administratives
Université du Québec à Rimouski, Département d'économie et de gestion
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Département des sciences de la gestion et de l'économie
Université Sainte-Anne, Département des sciences administratives
University College of Cape Breton, School of Business
University of Guelph, Faculty of Management
University of New Brunswick., Faculty of Business
University of Nipissing, School of Business and Economics
University of Northern British Columbia, Faculty of Management
University of Prince Edward Island, School of Business*
University of Regina, Faculty of Administration
University of Saskatchewan, College of Commerce
University of Waterloo, School of Accountancy and Dept of Management Science
University of Windsor, Faculty of Business Administration
University of Winnipeg, Department of Business Computing and Administrative Studies
   *Undergraduate program only

physical facilities optimized recruiters' time on campus.

Two notable differences in the findings from our study and those from the AACSB (2001) emerge. It is not obvious whether Canadian business school CCs have developed a coherent business strategy, or that there are staff resource development systems in place. It may be that the relative youth of Canadian CCs is the main reason for the absence of these characteristics. One could argue that in the organizational life

cycle, that these are activities associated with mature organizations. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address this question.

Effective Practices in Canadian Business School CCs

Results from interview and website analysis indicate that four practices correspond to MBA effective practices in the U.S. (AACSB 2001) – relationship management, comprehensive student support, corporate outreach activities

Table 3: Characteristics of the Participating Business School CCs

Size of CC (number of employees in CC)	1-3 personnel	4-6 personnel	7-9 personnel	10-13
	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)
Size of Business School (Undergrad & Graduate student enrollment)	**<1000**	**1000-1999**	**2000-2999**	**3000 +**
	2 (14%)	4 (29%)	4 (29%)	4 (29%)
Size of Full Time MBA Program (Student enrollment)	**< 150**	**150-299**	**300-449**	**450-600**
	6 (46%)	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)
Ratio of all business students to CC Staff	**< 200:1**	**200-399:1**	**400-599:1**	**600+:1**
	2	6	3	2
Primary Organization of CC[1]	**Functional**: By CC job function such as "admin", "counselor", etc.	**Industry Segment:** By industry sector such as financial services, high tech, manufacturing, etc.	**Sector:** By area of specialization such as: marketing, HR, finance	**Program:** Primarily by program - Undergrad vs MBA
	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	6 (42%)
CC Funding Source	**100% University**	**100% Student Fees**	**Combination: Student Fees & University**	**Combination: Mainly University + Corp Sponsorship**
	6 (50%)	2 (16.5%)	2 (16.5%)	2 (16.5%)

Source: Interview data and Websites
[1]This represents the primary organization of the CC, as indicated by the respondents during the telephone interview (12 respondents). However, many of the CCs were matrixed (i.e., organized along 2 or more of these lines).

and continuous quality improvement. Our fifth category, technology and facilities is consistent with undergraduate practices in the U.S. (AACSB 2002). We consider this a key finding because all fourteen participants leverage technology effectively to optimize CC service delivery, and because a direct link to student satisfaction has been found: "the quality of [career centre] infrastructure, such as technology and facilities, influence the level to which undergraduate business students are satisfied with its performance" (AACSB, 2002, p. 3).

Practice 1: Relationship Management (*Students, Recruiters and Alumni*)

All participants in our study indicated that effective relationship management with various stakeholders and clients, students, alumni, and prospective employers and recruiters, is key to success. The report on CC practices for MBA students by AACSB (2001) finds relationship management as central to exemplary CC performance. The customer relationship management (CRM) approach "encourages symbiotic relationships" (Fayerman, 2002: p. 58), and is a strategy that must be synchronized with the customer life cycle (CLC), defined by Meta Group (2000) as having four main elements: engage, transact, fulfill and service. Applied to the CC environment, these stages can be de-scribed as:

• *Stage 1: engage*. Initial client awareness is created via advertising or marketing activities. This creates basic awareness, which results in client interaction with the CC.
• *Stage 2: transact*. Actual transactions occur, such as a student registering for a workshop or signing up for an interview with an employer, a recruiter visit to the campus for interviews or a graduate searching for information on job openings.
• *Stage 3: fulfill*. Customer transactions are complemented by an institutional response, such as conducting the workshop, arranging interviews with prospective employers or inviting alumni to CC events.
• *Stage 4: service*. The institution continues to support clients, including students and alumni, by providing and processing information, or resolving issues on an ongoing basis.

The CC key informants reported a wide variety of activities that synchronize with the customer life cycle. Respondents in our study viewed their relationships with *students* as a continuous process that must begin as early as possible. All participants reported that getting to know their students was a top priority. The relationship can be compli-cated—not only are students viewed as a client of the CC, at the same time they are a product whose quality is 'sold' to employers. This corollary relationship motivates much of the long-run relationship building strategy practiced by our participants. The following practices were identified.

Orientation Sessions & Classroom Visits (CLC Stage 1) – Participants emphasized that getting an early start on building student relationships was critical. Seven respondents reported that CC staff conducted classroom visits at the beginning of the school year to introduce their services and gain exposure with students. Special orientation sessions such as "Open Houses" or "Career Breakfasts" were mentioned by 4 schools.

One-on-one meetings (CLC Stage 2) – Eight respondents mentioned individual meetings or personal coaching to become better acquainted with their students. Ability to support individual relationships depends on the size of the student population served; while some knew all of their students on a first name basis and had an "open door policy", others were able respond only to *requests* for meetings. All 14 participants reported that individualized coaching or counseling was a service available to students, on their web-site or face-to-face.

Partner with Student Associations to Organize Events (CLS Stage 3 and Stage 4) - To get better acquainted with their students' experience and interests, and to help them connect with employers, 5 schools reported that CC staff participate in student activities and frequently collaborate with student associations in hosting events. This activity allows CC staff to cultivate student relationships, build alliances with employers and gain greater insights into industry needs. Events such as receptions for alumni and/or employers, regular workshops on topics related to job search, or invited speakers and student "question period" are among the most frequently mentioned by the study participants.

The CC has a unique role in linking students with *employers* and *recruiters*. For successful CC activities and programs, cooperation and participation of employers is essential. Not only are they a 'client', but they can be instrumental in CC activities that promote career development. Employers can be a valuable resource for career counseling. Insights gained from interaction with employers add reality and credibility to CC staff assisting students with career concerns. They may participate in campus recruiting and career job fairs, serve as speakers, establish or coordinate internships and host student or faculty visits to their companies. At the same time, employers can raise their own visibility on campus (McGrath 2002).

Respondents at Canadian business schools reported that their relationship with recruiters is built upon mutual trust. They see their role as consistently delivering top quality students and providing top quality service throughout the entire customer life cycle. In return, employers provide feedback to CC staff on their recruitment needs, the current business marketplace, and their satisfaction with recruits. Recruiters participate in a variety of activities organized by CC staff: career and job fairs, workshops, open houses or breakfasts, or student association events.

Two themes related to relationship with recruiters and employers emerged from the interviews:

Strong Customer Service Orientation (CLC Stages 1-4) – Participants emphasized the need to build trust with recruiters by consistently delivering on promises. They recognized the need to stay in frequent contact, to understand employer needs and to provide exceptional follow-up, from providing a strong pool of candidates to streamlined processing of resumes, coordination of interviews, and post interview support.

Use of Relationship Managers (CLC Stages 1-4) – A number of organizational models are used to facilitate relationship management between CC staff and recruiters as well as between students and recruiters. Half of participants reported that their staff are primarily aligned to particular programs (i.e.,

undergraduate or MBA) to meet the different needs of those two groups. Secondary alignments included geographic, or functional (e.g., counseling and business development), or sectoral (e.g., finance, marketing, HR, etc.). One of the respondents described the CC organizational structure as aligned by industry sector, (manufacturing, financial services, high technology, etc.), in which relationship managers develop expertise in particular industries and long term relationships with certain companies within those industries. Irrespective of their primary alignments, CCs are organized to best meet their clients' needs and to foster the development and maintenance of strong relationships.

Alumni are one of the most important stakeholders for participating CCs, not only as products of the institution and clients of the CC, but also as important links in the recruitment process. Nine of the participant schools mentioned in interviews or on their websites the importance of establishing and maintaining formal links with alumni through special programs or events. A reliable, active alumni database is considered to be a critical tool in developing and nurturing a relationship with alumni. To promote alumni involvement, 90% of the respondents reported that career services are available to alumni at no extra cost. At some schools, alumni career services are limited to a particular time period after graduation, or restricted to certain services, and at other schools there was no limit. CC staff and recruiters are frequently alumni themselves, which offers synergies in terms of student and alumni relationship building.

Formal Alumni Programs (CLC Stage 1) –Five schools offer formal mentorship programs, whereby students are linked up with alumni who can provide career advice and practical insight into working in a particular field and/or industry.

Alumni Outreach (CLC Stages 1-4) –An additional 4 respondents offer alumni programs or events. They take a proactive approach, contacting alumni and fostering alumni relationships. For instance,

alumni are personally invited to speak at company information sessions; they are contacted for business development activities (as "door openers" to targeted companies); and they are key participants in other networking events.

Practice 2: Comprehensive Student Support

Participants reported that a wide range of services are offered to support students throughout the entire career planning and job search process. They offer a full suite of services rather than just placement. Starting with an early self-assessment, CCs assist students in identification of career goals, preparation and improvement of resumes, conducting company research, practicing their interviewing skills, and negotiating an offer.

Student Self-Assessment – Six respondents reported that students are advised to undertake skills self-assessments as the first part of their career development activities. These self-assessments are mainly available on-line and assist students in identifying "what they want to do after they graduate".

Job Search Skills – To improve the placement success of their student clients, all respondents offer workshops or seminars on job search skills: resume writing, job search strategies, interviewing skills and networking pertinent to business school graduates. Some schools employ technologies such as videotaping to practice mock interviews with the students. Others invite recruiters to their workshops to address specific topics. At one school, an executive search firm speaks to students about their approach to sourcing and placement. Common to all, however, is the availability of additional support, as required, through individualized coaching or one-on-one counseling.

Skill development training and assistance is sometimes delivered in more informal settings (such as Brown Bag Lunches) or on-line. At four schools, special provisions are made for international students. To assist the students through their career transition, these CCs offer spe-

cial workshops, assist international students in obtaining their employment authorization, and facilitate relationship building with employers, both here and abroad.

Job Postings – When asked about the services offered by CCs to assist students in identifying job openings, the most frequent response was "job postings" (9 respondents). However, a review of the CC websites indicate that, in fact, 12 schools offer this service for employers and 11 offer on-line search capability for students, to facilitate finding a "match". Four participants mentioned that they perform informal "matching" by emailing job opportunities to particular students or actively searching for opportunities. One of these participants described their role as similar to a recruiting company, whereby they perform direct matching for employers by screening candidates and recommending the best ones to meet the requirement. Two other respondents reported that they did not provide this service out of respect for fairness and confidentiality, stressing that it is up to the employers and the students to make their own decisions.

Recruiting and Interviewing Process – On-campus interviewing is a very common, popular and expected function of university career services (McGrath 2002). Career and job fairs provide a way for CCs and employers to work together to mutual benefit. Career fairs are characterized as events open to first year to fourth year students to help students find out about various job opportunities. The purpose is for employers to provide career information rather than seeking to fill current openings. Job fairs target graduating students.

Staff in all participating CCs facilitates the selection and interview process. Respondents reported that students appreciate the opportunity for on-campus interviews as it offers a convenient way to meet with prospective employers and minimizes their time away from classes. Employers also find this process to be useful, as they have

access to a number of interested and qualified candidates (McGrath, 2002).

Special Events – In addition to workshops provided for students to hone their job search strategies and skills, all participating CCs host a number of special activities that support students in their career planning and job search. Worthy of mention are events such as Open Houses and Career Breakfasts, (frequently during orientation), Job Fairs, or dedicated networking opportunities such as Employee Panels, (sometimes co-hosted with the University CSO), MBA cocktail parties with employers, or company information sessions.

Practice 3: Corporate Outreach Activities

All CC participants reported outreach activities to connect with the business community. These events fulfill a variety of functions: CC staff promote their students, their school, and their services, nurture existing client relationships, develop new business, and increase their understanding of the ever-changing marketplace.

Business and Community Association Membership – CC staff increase their exposure to the external market through active membership of industry and community associations. Eight respondents mentioned their involvement in organizations as a key way to improve their networks. A common practice is to invite students to accompany them to association meetings and facilitate the student networking process as well. Associations commonly mentioned include local Chambers of Trade or Commerce, Institute of Chartered Accountants, Canadian Marketing Association, or other industry or professional groups.

Networking Events: Business school CCs host events aimed at bringing prospective employers together with students. Staff partner with student associations to co-organize targeted events such as dinners where they can network with employers and students and facilitate relationships between them. Eleven of the participants offer ca-

reer days to attract employers to campus, which provide mutual benefits to both employers and CCs. The former may enjoy increased name recognition and publicity for both his/her company and profession, and the latter may also benefit through increased visibility to students. Other "connecting" events which bring together employers and students include: receptions, cocktail parties, breakfasts, information sessions, and golf tournaments. Thirteen CCs invite employers to campus for company information sessions. Two schools organize employer site visits.

Marketing a Strong Product – Participants reported that the products they 'market' are the school's reputation and its students. Five participants identified the necessity to "market students to employers". In addition to the techniques such as leveraging alumni contacts and hosting events already described, strategies include 'cold calls' and events organized on the employers' 'turf'. Two of the participants indicated that taking students to these events is an effective way to facilitate networks for both the students and the CC with employers.

Practice 4: Continuous Quality Improvement

Peppers and Rogers (1999) argue that one of the most significant components of the CRM theoretical framework is the process of identification, differentiation, interaction and customization. The collection of data about customer needs and preferences is essential to tailoring future delivery and communications (Fayerman 2002). CC performance can be monitored through a variety of integrated feedback systems. Quantitative data can be collected on measures such as the number of recruiters visiting campus, percent of students with job offers and jobs by a certain date, graduates average starting salaries, etc. Input can also be sought from students, through internal student satisfaction surveys, focus groups, and feedback on workshops and events. These results can be benchmarked against others by monitoring third-party survey results.

Continuous quality improvement is a key criterion in differentiating top performing CCs from their counterparts studied by AACSB (2001). Exemplary CCs used a number of feedback systems, (including AACSB benchmarking data), to identify weaknesses, develop and implement appropriate interventions, and assess the success of their efforts.

Several of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of continuous improvement in their CC. Two respondents described specific, systematic mechanisms that were used to collect feedback from employers to improve customer service. A third mentioned that this feedback is bi-directional—while the CC collects performance data from recruiters, they also provide feedback to them as they are interested in knowing more about students' perceptions of their companies and approach to recruitment. Given the number of respondents who reflected on feedback mechanisms and the relative paucity of data collection for analysis, the commitment of Canadian CCs to continuous quality improvement exists but is not yet fully developed.

Practice 5: Technology and Facilities

Client career services historically have relied on on-site delivery at the Career Centre (Mackert and McDaniels 1998). However, funding constraints and rapid changes in technology have facilitated greater flexibility in service delivery, most notably the use of the computer to provide services to customers. By 1993, a U.S. survey of career centers by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reported that 94 percent of respondents used computers in providing services to customers (Mackert and McDaniels 1998). The Internet has become a reliable medium for service delivery and new service opportunities continue to appear.

Technology has been extensively incorporated into university career services operations and by employers recruiting students. Career counselors use computer software to help students in self-assessment and career information searches. Students typically conduct the preponderance of their research on employers electronically, and employers

have recognized the importance of attractive and informative web sites. The management of the entire campus recruiting process is often handled electronically, and some employers require all applications for employment to be submitted on-line (McGrath 2002).

Technological advances are one of the most significant transforming influences on the future of career services (Mackert and McDaniels 1998). Convenience is the overarching advantage, with information available 24/7 from anywhere in the world from a computer with an Internet connection. Students and other users can take advantage of easy sorting and searching capabilities that make specific career information easily accessible. Career Centre staff can update the website easily, without paper or printing costs. Costs are also lowered because there is a reduction of repetitious tasks and client reliance on CC staff, so staff time is freed up for other activities.

In fact, the influence of the Internet is not so much on the content provided to clients, as it is a tool for decentralization that changes the way we think about how things are done (Miller and McDaniels, 2001). Since clients can do some of the work without the help of CC staff, they get a sense of ownership of their progress.

In addition to the potential for maximum quality service through web-based utilities, there are some considerations that are more relevant today as more and more CCs offer services on the Web. Fewer walk-in students is a consequence of a website (Davidson 2001). Although technology has made it easier for students to communicate with employers, it has also required a significant investment on the part of career services in terms of equipment and staff with technical expertise (Nagle and Bohovich, 2000). The results of our study indicate that participating CCs have clearly made that investment.

Our review of participating CC web-sites finds that all participants leveraged technology effectively by offering comprehensive, interactive web services for students and recruiters. Recruiters and students can reach the CC web-site either directly through the school's homepage, or through a link

provided in the university's Career Services menu or Student section. The available services are well documented on the sites.

Quality Facilities – All of the participants realized their critical role in facilitating the interview and selection process for employers. A big part of this role is providing top notch facilities, to streamline the recruiting process and make a good impression on behalf of the university and the students. Thirteen schools have interview rooms (identified on the web – see above), and 3 have the capability for video-conferencing.

Conclusions

In an increasingly competitive field, business schools in North America are responding to student demand for quality career development and placement services. In two studies of business school CCs in the U.S., AACSB identified top performing programs, examined the practices used by those career services offices (CCs), and identified several effective practices at both the MBA and undergraduate levels. The results of the key informant study described here were undertaken to understand and describe the practices used by Canadian business school CCs and determine whether these practices are compatible with current theory and best practices, represented by those used at top performing business schools in the U.S.. Structured telephone interviews with fourteen key informants revealed five essential themes of Canadian CC practices emerged: relationship management, comprehensive student support, corporate outreach activities, continuous quality improvement, and technology and facilities. These themes align closely with AACSB assessment of effective practices in top performing schools in the U.S.. This result is important because in the U.S. study, only top performing schools are examined. In this uniquely Canadian study, business schools with their own CC were invited to participate. Also, the study sample included 14 schools, whereas the U.S. studies included 5 in the MBA study and 3 in the undergraduate study. Interesting questions to pursue include whether these practices can be consid-

ered effective or best practices in Canada, and whether the absence of a comprehensive business strategy and staff development program are a function of the stage in the organizational life cycle that Canadian CCs find themselves.

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