Chapter 9
Implementing Virtual Career Counseling and Advising at a Major University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this case study, the authors discuss the implementation of online career advising and planning services at a major university. Using externally hosted chat software, the office of career services designed an interactive, student focused, online resource for students and alumni. Implementation required researching best practices, establishing a reasonable budget, training staff, and marketing this service to the university community.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1655-4.ch009

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INTRODUCTION

With college students using the Internet to meet a variety of professional and personal needs, college campuses are seeking ways to enhance their student services by using emerging technologies. In this case study, the authors discuss the implementation of online career advising and planning services via synchronous chat sessions. Given the constraints concerning vendor selection, procurement issues, software implementation, and limited budgets, it was critical for the career counseling team to find a robust, secure, and affordable software platform to meet their needs. It was important that this software and service appeal to students as they sought personal career development. The team considered existing practice standards to guide the implementation of this innovative student service. With these elements in place, the authors discuss the process of launching an online career planning and advising program and the resulting challenges that emerged.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Anonymous South University (ASU) is a major metropolitan research university serving over 28,000 students. As one of the fastest growing universities in the State, and the second largest component in the University System, ASU has experienced tremendous expansions in student enrollment, research funding, and faculty recruitment over the past decade. Accordingly, the university plays a major role in the regional economy, producing over $800 million USD in annual business activity (ASU Public Affairs Office, 2008). Moreover, ASU employs over 6,500 individuals and invests over $200 million annually USD in employee salaries. The university is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution and is a national leader in utilizing historically underrepresented businesses (HUBs), investing over 17 million dollars in HUBs annually. With a focus on research, teaching, and community involvement and transformation, the university strives to provide opportunities to individuals and communities from underrepresented backgrounds while becoming a first choice for all students across the state and nation.

Student Services

To oversee this sizeable workforce comprised of a mix of academic professionals, trade workers, and student support staff, the university is lead by a President and six vice-presidents who direct specific components of the university. Student services focusing on personal development, career and lifestyle planning are under the auspices of the Vice President for Student Affairs. As such, several departments
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