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Great Libraries Open Doors: Collaborating with Career Services to Support Library Employees at James Madison University

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Great Libraries Open Doors

Collaborating with Career Services to Support Library Employees at James Madison University

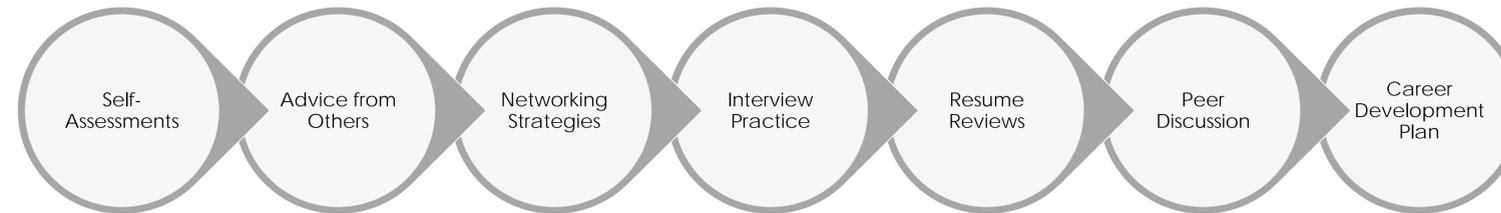
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"Just as JMU prepares students to be successful and engaged in a global society, JMU Libraries prepares its employees to be successful in the global marketplace."
 -JMU Libraries' Principle of Employee Development

The Program

Through a partnership with the university career services office, our mid-sized academic library developed and implemented an immersive program focused on employee-participants' career goals. The blended program of 11 sessions included:



THE NEED
 2014 and 2016: Libraries' employee survey indicates only 24-28% satisfaction with opportunities to advance.

PLANNING
 June 2016: Library leadership articulates a new Principle of Employee Development. Brainstorming for a career development program begins.

PROPOSAL
 September 2016: Program proposal is presented to and approved by Library leadership.

Participant testimonials:

"Participating in the Career Cohort really validated for me that I was doing the right things to move up in my career."

"I would have never done any of what I have if it weren't for the cohort. The group was very supportive and provided input with no judgement."

"The Cohort has made me think hard about my attitude toward career path moving forward."

"The Career Cohort program rejuvenated me and was the catalyst for me to take a class to further my career goals."

"Knowing more about my personality, strengths, and weaknesses will surely make me more realistic when approaching other opportunities."

"The program provided me a perfect venue for reevaluating and executing my career goals."

We asked participants to what extent these activities helped them develop a career plan.

Green is "a great deal", beige is "some", and grey is "not at all".

Activities participants found most helpful:



Challenges

Running a semester-long program is similar to teaching a class.

Unlike a class, you won't be grading.

The discussion board wasn't as effective as we had hoped for online discussions.

A cohort size of 8 led to more conversation than a size of 5.

Participants don't tend to prioritize time for career development.

Lessons Learned

Be prepared for the time commitment.

Be prepared to motivate through encouragement rather than grades.

Use the discussion board for announcements and quick news. Use the in-person session for sharing and problem solving.

Market the program in a variety of ways and hold every 2 years to yield a cohort of about 8.

Have group discussion about how to prioritize and embed career development moving forward.

IMPLEMENTATION
 February-June 2017: First Cohort
 8 participants (1 faculty, 5 staff, 2 part time)

February-June 2018: Second Cohort
 5 participants (2 faculty, 1 staff, 2 part time)