Denise Dwight Smith

As the new director of ODU's Career Development Services, I am pleased to offer you greetings. My name is Denise Dwight Smith, and I have over 30 years of experience in the career development, career counseling, and college relations field at a variety of institutions and organizations, small and large.

We are excited about the changes being made in the former career management center to help students and to partner with academic and administrative units to actually increase student success. While we offer college-based services, our career counselors and coaches also staff the main office on the second floor of Webb. Please feel free to stop by or e-mail me at DDSmith@ODU.edu.

The former career management center at Old Dominion University is taking on new shape and new responsibilities in helping students and our collaborative partners succeed. It is part of the SEES division (Student Engagement and Enrollment Services), and as such, it is dedicated to student success, student retention, and timely graduation.

Our approach is focused very much on the developmental educational model and is carried out by our staff who possess strong career counseling and coaching skills. We assist all undergraduates, graduate students, and recent alumni in all stages of career decision-making and planning. The main center remains located in the second floor of the Webb Center, and we also have college-based liaisons in the majority of the colleges.

Career Development Services, which we call CDS, provides tools -- not only for students and advisers but also for faculty -- in helping students with their career development, internship, and job search needs. We also assist in the coordination of the CAP (the Career Advantage Program) which is internship and co-op based model. Overall, Career Development Services is designed to assist students with their career decisions, with gaining internship and related experiences, and with their skills readiness for the competency-based world of work.

The new vision of the center is to be a leading model in providing comprehensive career development services for both student and employer success, in accord with national standards, and with emphasis on integrative learning and technology. CDS is affiliated with the NACE, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, from which it has received several awards. I’m proud to say that I have served as its past president. We are members of the Society for Human Resource Managers, the National Career Development Association, and the National Society for Experiential Education, among other professional groups whose standards
we follow. In carrying out standards for the field, it is also important that we be aware of the state and federal employment laws that we share with our constituents.

The mission of the center is to engage ODU students in learning and integrating timely career development processes and skills for their career success. The second key element is to link employers (over 8000, and 50 key ones), alumni, and ODU community members in achieving their desired career decisions, job internships, and post-graduation outcomes. This of course also enhances the University’s connections and its progress towards goals.

The goals outlined in the five-year career development services strategic plan support the SEES division goals and the ODU goals by focusing on engaging students in early career exploration and reflection, increasing their involvement in employment and experiential opportunities, and enhancing students’ and recent alumni’s abilities to be more competitive in pursuing their career fields of interest. We will do this through direct service, outreach, and partnerships. CDS staff members also focus on expanding employer connections and opportunity leads, and we maximize career services delivery, placement career outcomes, resources, and organization.

Many new initiatives are underway in this inaugural year for the enhanced and repurposed Career Development Services. Early on, we expect student engagement in a new 7-in-4 Monarch Career Success model, and we are continuing to the revise the Career Advantage internship program. The 7 career step model provides critical steps at each stage of career development, planning, preparation, and employment processes that will help ODU students throughout their four years and beyond to be successful in integrating their academic, co-curricular, and experiential learning. We also hope this will provide a context for you to share with your students the steps that they need to follow in order to be successful. Other new initiatives include a comprehensive first destination survey to gather career outcomes (job locations, salary averages, graduate schools attending) to be shared with the colleges; workshops and sessions focused on career decisions; your values and you; employer office hours; research on international student needs; and expanded Web and self-assessment resources.

Additional new initiatives include the offering of a variety of career-related topics through distance programming and the use of videos, the acquisition of new interview preparation and other career content tools for students; an exploration of using the CPCS or career inventory to begin to measure students’ career confidence; a money, majors, and careers educational information piece; career counseling special professional development sessions; and a review of the internship process. We also recently completed a CAS standards review of the office. We are also excited about the new skills website for students that will help them with
understanding the importance of skills and ways to identify their own. Watch for further programming on “Got Skills?”, which is being developed by a collaborative team.

The 7 in 4 Career Development Model touches on all of the key career development processes that students need to undertake. While we recognize that this is not a linear process, there are ideal steps that need to build upon one another in the phases of career decision-making, career planning, career outcomes, and reassessment.

The goals of the 7-in-4 model, first being developed for the undergraduate population, follow these steps:

Step one is a commitment to learning and exploration, including the identification of key objectives for the college experience and commitment to learning and exploration;

Step two is a self-assessment internal exploration process which includes values and skills clarification and identification;

Step three is an external exploration of careers which involves research: job shadowing, informational interviewing, and also further literature research.

This information is then used in Step four to focus on narrowing in on career decision-making and goal implementation, which is also carried out the skills readiness testing phase, with experiences gained through internships, part-time jobs, research, and the like.

Step five is skills readiness and gaining experience, while step six is planning and preparing for selected areas of interest in post degree planning, and step seven is staying connected to the University to provide career outcome information and the reassessment of goals.

Some of the tangible and intangible outcomes for students in the model include

Setting personal goals for success;

Having a better understanding of how personal, academic, and career goals are related as well as gaining a better understanding of how careers and majors are related;

Possessing an increased base of career knowledge and having identified workplace skills that will make them more prepared; identifying five top organizations of interest; and becoming
aware of and feeling confident of ways to use online research resources for searches as well as for reporting career outcomes.

Students are asked to reflect on their experiences throughout, and are prompted to use a commitment contract, to identify top 10 skills and top 10 work values, to complete informational interviews, to identify broad industry interests and positions of interest, to identify their readiness skills, and to identify the things that they wish to improve on, to obtain 2 to 3 internship research, leadership, study abroad, or volunteer experiences, to carry out graduate or job search plans, as well as to understand what is expected for a successful transition.

We look forward to expanding and enriching our collaborative programming for students and we hope that you will share the 7-in-4 model with students. We also hope that you will integrate into your syllabus ways in which students can better understand which skills they gather from your courses, and that you will help to develop a culture of students thinking about personal skills, attitudes, and characteristics early on that will make them better prepared for citizenship, careers, and post-graduation experiences. They need to start working with the career development services during their first semester at ODU.

We look forward to referrals, collaborative programs working with employers, and the sharing of data and outcomes information, and we will also continue to provide training, consultation, and administrative support for experiential learning through CAP. Historically, we know that over 70% of our students participate in valuable experiential learning opportunities. Lastly, we will provide valuable internship and practicum experiences for students interested in higher education and career services, as well as collaborative research ventures.

The key services and programs offered range from the model itself to the “Got Skills?” website, to self-assessment tools, career counseling and coaching, the LEAP program and other student employment programs, and service programs such as America Reads. College-based services and collaborations, majors fairs, a variety of career interest testing, a reality check series...

...graduate professional school preparation assistance, employer consultation, CareerLink - the careers and jobs database, and special events for unique populations. We look forward to partnering with you on these and other services to help support your department, your college, and especially your students, who need to be best prepared for success.

Again, if I can help you in any way, I welcome you to contact me.

I welcome you to Old Dominion, and I look forward to making your acquaintance!