

# 2022

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## Career Centre Resources, Services and Metrics: A pan-Canadian benchmarking survey.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented by:

**prepped**<sup>TM</sup>



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's no secret that the top reason students choose to pursue post-secondary education is to enhance their employment prospects. In fact, according to the 2022 Brainstorm Career Interests Survey of more than 20,500 Canadian college and university students, a 61.2% reported "to prepare for a job or career" as one of their primary motivators. The next most selected motivator, "to increase my knowledge in an academic field" was a distant second at 37.8% (Brainstorm Strategy Group, 2022).

Campus career centres first appeared as fee-for-service offices within the landscape of post-secondary institutions in the 1940's when the paradigm of who was able to attend university began to shift away from privileged, white males. Post-secondary institutions started opening their doors to women and visible minorities at the same time veteran's returning from service in WWII from all social classes were seeking re-training through higher education. By the early 1960's, career centres were part of the fabric of university and college campuses with the expectation that institutions would be responsible for providing employment services for students as post-graduate employment outcomes had become intertwined with the concept of higher education (Teal & Herrick, 1962).

However, even today, more than 60 years later, there is a lack of significant amount of objective, aggregate data available about how post-secondary career centres in Canada operate. The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) sought to address that gap through three surveys developed to provide current benchmarking data to career services leaders about three major areas:

- Financial, human, and spatial resources
- Services provided to students, alumni, employers, and other stakeholders
- Metrics collected and reported

This survey has been implemented three times in 2016, 2019 and 2022 providing the opportunity to investigate patterns over a six-year period and provide recommendations for practice. This executive summary provides a high-level overview of some of the key findings from the data analysis.

For complete findings and additional recommendations for practice, access the full research brief at [www.cacee.com](http://www.cacee.com).

## Methodology

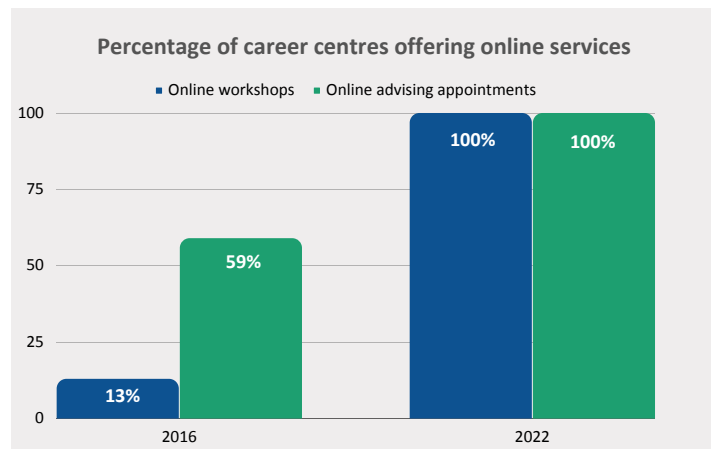
In June 2016, ten senior career professionals from across Canada, including members of CACEE's Evidence-Based Practice Committee, volunteered to serve as a panel of experts to review the survey draft and questions for comprehensiveness and clarity in two iterations of survey design. The 2016 final survey instrument had 158 questions and took about two hours to complete. By December 2016, respondents from 63 unique career centres had completed the survey. In 2019, the researcher planned to re-issue the research brief with updated data. A shortened version, 68 questions, was sent to the prior mailing list and updated contacts in collaboration with Brainstorm Strategy Group. Open-ended questions were removed to make the survey significantly shorter to complete. A total of 95 career centres responded to the survey. In 2022, the survey was launched again, in both English and French, this time with 132 questions including several open-ended questions. Many of the questions from the original survey were restored and both CACEE and the survey sponsor, Prepped, added questions to the survey. The open-ended questions were modified from the 2016 version to reflect current issues in career development. There were 39 respondents to the 2022 survey.

## KEY FINDINGS:

### COVID-19

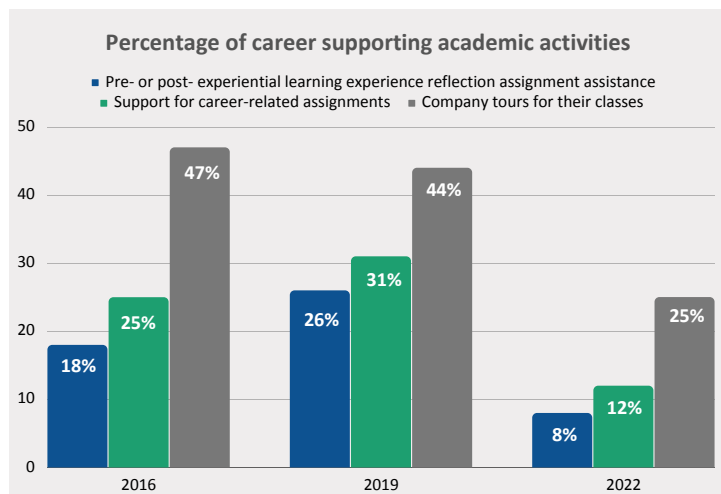
The most impactful event leading up to the 2022 survey was the disruption caused to the entire post-secondary system by Covid-19 beginning in March 2020. Survey respondents believe that Covid-19 will continue to have long-term impact on how career centres operate going forward.

This shift has resulted in a change of expectations around both working conditions for staff and the skill sets needed for career centre roles. Many centres reported significant staff turnover due to burnout and a focus on wellness to try to keep talented staff from leaving. They also reported updating their role descriptions for new hires to include a stronger emphasis on one-on-one coaching rather than event creation and management and increased competency in various technologies.



### Blurring of “career” and “academic”

The line between what is “career” and what is “academic” is blurring. The provincial level emphasis on work integrated learning and experiential learning is most likely one of the most significant drivers of this blurring. As an example, in 2016, only 18% of career centres were engaged with faculty to create pre- or post-experience learning reflection assignments. In 2022, that percentage increased to 47%. The same trend can be seen with other traditionally academic activities such as developing



career related assignments and creating experiential activities, such as company tours, for classes offered by their institution. Another indicator is the number of career centres who’ve developed learning outcomes for their programs and services. In 2016, only about one-third had developed them while in 2022, it had risen to half. Currently, the CACEE Competency Framework does not include curriculum design, teaching expertise, grant writing, or fundraising abilities. As the role of career centres evolves, the expectations for qualified professionals in this field will need to follow suit.

## Indigenization and EDIA initiatives

While some career centres reported significant results in incorporating Indigenization and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) focused initiatives into their work, most career centres are struggling with meaningful changes in this area. Only about a third of career centres reported providing either Indigenous cultural training or more generalized EDIA training for their staff. Despite institutional level commitments to these practices, and research suggesting that this training is essential in providing a safe learning environment for students (Jocas & Pilote, 2021; Ramji, Kines, Hancock, & McRae, 2021), career centres have not yet been able to embrace and address these principles in day-to-day practice.

| EDIA activities  | Percentage of career centres |
|--|------------------------------|
| Training for staff in EDIA issues                      | 36%                          |
| Partnerships with areas focused on EDIA initiatives    | 26%                          |
| Review of career centre hiring practices               | 18%                          |
| Updating employer guides with EDIA practices           | 16%                          |
| Representation on institutional level committees       | 13%                          |
| Career centre committee on EDIA issues                 | 13%                          |
| Hired career centre staff specifically focused on EDIA | 11%                          |

Additional focus and prioritization of work in this area is needed. To support students, career centres reported creating workshops, materials and services specific to diverse populations, encouraging participation in institutional level activities and events, and working to make their physical and digital spaces more inclusive. The most commonly reported equity-deserving group that received specialized services was International Students.

## Career centres are being better resourced

Career centres have seen an increase in resourcing – both financially and in staffing – since 2016. The average operational budget per student has increased by almost 50% to \$28 per student. Career centres also experienced a 33% increase in the number of professional staff which translated to a reduction in the professional staff to student ratio of 45%. Despite these changes, many career centres indicated that they are still under-resourced to meet the expectations from their institutions despite recognition that strong employment outcomes have a positive impact on overall enrolment.

|  | 2016      | 2022      | Change |
|--|-----------|-----------|--------|
| MEAN operational budget for all career centres             | \$110,842 | \$162,563 | 46.70% |
| MEAN operational budget per student for all career centres | \$19      | \$28      | 47.40% |
| Average number of professional staff                       | 9         | 12        | 33.3%  |
| Number of students per professional staff                  | 2315      | 1284      | -44.5% |

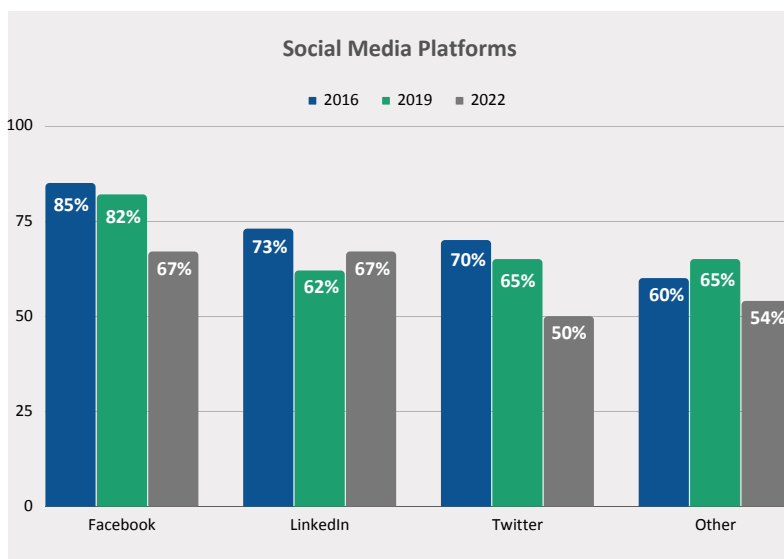
A related finding showed that grant-based funding was not prominent in 2016 as no centres reported using it as part of their budgets. However, in 2022, more than 30% of centres received at least partial support for their centre through grants. This trend emphasizes the value placed upon these services by external stakeholders.

Obtaining external grants through the identification, application for, and management of grant funded initiatives on behalf of the institution are emerging skills needed by career centre professionals.

## Career centre usage rates remain low

The second most frequently reported issue facing career centres was low awareness of career centre services. Career centres report an average of just 26% of students eligible to use their services take advantage of them. While unasked in 2022, in 2019, almost 40% of career centres reported student usage rates were an important consideration in budget determination. Usage statistics remain the most commonly collected data types for career centres. It is clear that awareness of services and the corresponding utilization of them is an important issue for career centres.

Social media is reported as the most popular way of promoting services to students. Facebook is still the most popular site among 18- to 29-year olds but it is being quickly outpaced by YouTube (Mulder, 2021). If career centres choose to use social media as their primary marketing platform, the potential to use video to convey authentic and engaging messaging to students about the value of career development services should be capitalized on.



## CONCLUSION:

This study provides just a few snapshots of the ever-changing post-secondary career centre landscape. As career centres answer the call for increasing accountability, more data is needed to get a better picture of the trends, successes, and challenges that they face. The release of this report is just a first step. Repeating this survey and analysis every three years, incorporating the learnings and trends identified, would provide more powerful information for career centres to use as benchmarks in their strategic planning processes.

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### About the research partners and sponsors:



CACEE is the leading authority on the post-secondary to career transition in Canada. The association provides a national voice, professional development, and networking opportunities to career educators and employers in their work supporting the next generation of talent.



Founded by HR professionals, Prepped's digital platform helps post-secondary students plan, prepare, practice and get feedback as their job searches progress.

## About the authors:

Dr. Christine Sjolander is currently Vice Chair, Academics for the School of Business at Capilano University and an instructor for Work Integrated Learning courses. While she is currently in a faculty role, she has more than 25 years experience in career services offices in both the US and Canada and is avid proponent for career development for all individuals. Her research interests lie with how post-secondary institutions function to support of student success and learning through both curricular and non-curricular activities.

Jugad Singh Dodd is a Research Assistant completing a Bachelor of Business Administration degree at Capilano University. He is a scholar at heart and enjoys working with likeminded individuals. His interests include research, analysis, investing and learning. Jugad plans to continue his education with a Master of Business Administration degree to gain further knowledge of the concepts surrounding business and be a positive role model for others.

For additional information, please contact the authors at [christinesjolander@capilanou.ca](mailto:christinesjolander@capilanou.ca).