WHAT CAN SUSTAINABILITY SCHOOLS LEARN FROM THE CAREER SERVICES OFFERED AT BUSINESS SCHOOLS

by

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Abstract

Increasingly, the importance of sustainability as a goal for different sectors in society is becoming paramount. Given the importance and urgency of this, the objective of this paper is to explore how we can strengthen both the training of graduates in sustainability schools, and also the increasing interest businesses have in hiring graduates with a sustainability skillset. We have focused on the history of and lessons learned by business schools, in creating a professional curriculum for learners to occupy influential roles in different sectors in society, with the aim to identify certain ways in which the field of sustainability can achieve improved job market outcomes for its graduates. Specifically, we have interviewed 22 career services teams of business schools in the USA and provided a set of five recommendations to the career services offices of specialized graduate programs for sustainability to improve professional outcomes for their students. These recommendations draw from the best practices of the career services offices of business schools that can be transferred to sustainability schools.

Introduction

The urgency of the climate change challenge has spurred a growth in specialized graduate programs in environment and sustainability. The skills and knowledge acquired during the program transcend academic boundaries and are in high demand in professional settings- be it corporations, nonprofits or the government sector. Senior members of organizations now need to understand the nuances of global warming and re-set their purpose and business model in order to avert a man-made climate catastrophe. Business and political leaders are realizing the gravity of the influential seats they occupy, and are devising policies and frameworks to mitigate some of the damages. However, a global challenge like climate change requires a holistic effort- and stakeholders at every level of an organization need to be well equipped with the tools to make responsible decisions for the planet, while being able to achieve their organizational targets. Against this backdrop, it has become more important than ever to develop robust career training opportunities for sustainability graduates during their time in the program, and position them as strong candidates in the job market. Thus, it becomes imperative to draw inspiration from the career services teams at business schools, to understand their best practices in creating a professional curriculum for their students, and in turn ensuring they occupy meaningful roles in their organization.

Before we dive into the specifics of the career services at business schools and their best practices that can strengthen specialized graduate programs in sustainability, it is important we revisit the history of business schools. The Second Industrial Revolution in the 1880s led to production of large quantities of manufactured items, thereby increasing the managerial and administrative complexity of the firms.[1] There was now a need to bring in salaried professionals managers who did not usually have an ownership stake in the firm - people who could manage the firm, sell the product, raise the capital required for growth, manage the finances and manage the operations.[2] It is then that the Philadelphia entrepreneur Joseph Wharton wrote a letter to the University of Pennsylvania in 1881 seeking the creation of a "school to prepare young men to assume control of the complex economy that was unfolding".[3] For Joseph Wharton, the need was clear - "to educate young men of prominent families for careers in government and business".[4] Up to that point business "education," to the degree that it existed, was all about training clerks. Now it was to be for the creation of leaders and managers.[5] The latest numbers from the AACSB (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), the primary accreditor of business

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[1] Feld, Steven (2003). MBA Career Services Offices- Form and Function.
[2] Feld, Steven (2003). MBA Career Services Offices- Form and Function.
[3] Raft, D (2003). Wharton: A History of Leadership.
[4] Hugstad, P.S. (1983). The Business School in the 1980s: Liberalism Versus Vocationalism. New York: Praeger Publishers.
[5] Feld, Steven (2003). MBA Career Services Offices- Form and Function.

schools, finds that [250,389](#) students were studying for an MBA worldwide during the 2020-2021 academic year. The majority of those students–155,996–are at U.S. business schools.

There was a clear need for business schools in America during the advent of the Second Industrial Revolution. This need could not only be met by devising a timely business school curriculum, but also creating career services teams that can well position the students as strategic decision makers in the firms. Perceived quality of a business school education is closely tied to student satisfaction with Career Services throughout the course of study.[6] 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.[7] A significant percentage of the weight in business school ranks depends upon student and recruiter perceptions of the school's career center (CC). As economic uncertainty rises, graduating students increasingly consider the marketability of their degree when selecting a business program.[8] 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.[9] 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.[10]

Today, there is a need for specialized graduate programs in sustainability to develop leaders that achieve the strategic and financial goal of their organization, while also ensuring planetary wellbeing. A consensus has developed that sustainability education should include a variety of capacity-building pathways that engage "head, hands, and heart".[11,12,13] The research paper titled

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[6] Elliott, Catherine and Maning, Linda M (2009). Effective Career Services Practices: The Case of Canadian Business Schools.

[7] Elliott, Catherine and Maning, Linda M (2009). Effective Career Services Practices: The Case of Canadian Business Schools.

[8] Brathwaite, A. D. (2003). Career Centers for the Future, Journal of Career Development.

[9] Elliott, Catherine and Maning, Linda M (2009). Effective Career Services Practices: The Case of Canadian Business Schools.

[10] AACSB (2001) Effective Practices: MBA Career Services, Effective Practices Report Series

[11] Bloom, B.S., Masia, B.B. and Krathwohl, D.R. (1964), Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, David McKay, New York, NY.

[12] Orr, D.W. (2002), "Four challenges of sustainability", Conservation Biology, Vol. 16 No. 6, pp. 1457-60.

[13] Sipos, Y., Battisti, B. and Grimm, K. (2008), "Achieving transformative sustainability learning: engaging heads, hands and heart", International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 68-86.

"Real world learning opportunities in sustainability: from classroom into the real world" introduces a simple model and three clusters of key competencies can be differentiated:[14]

(1) The strategic knowledge cluster integrates systemic, anticipatory, normative, and action-oriented competencies, which each include content and methodological knowledge.[15,16,17] The cluster includes competence in analyzing and understanding the status quo (current state) and past developments (history); creating future scenarios and sustainability visions; assessing current, past, and future states against value-laden principles of sustainability; and to developing strategies to move from the current state towards a sustainable future. Important in this cluster is competence in dealing with diversity of opinion, perspective, fact, preference, and strategy.

(2) The practical knowledge cluster involves competencies necessary for "linking knowledge and action for sustainable development" to bridge the "knowledge-action gap" (van Kerkhoff and Lebel, 2006). Implementation skills, a critical component of "Gestaltungskompetenz" (implementation competence), require hands-on experience in putting knowledge into practice, and thereby testing the validity and robustness of action-oriented (strategic) knowledge about sustainability transitions and transformations.[18] Experiencing the opportunities in and constraints of various decision-making contexts (e.g. government and business) with respect to sustainability activities is prerequisite to designing and implementing successful sustainability initiatives at any scale.

(3) The collaborative cluster involves competencies necessary to work in teams and in different knowledge communities.[19,20,21] This cluster includes competence in engaging with stakeholders establishing consistent vocabularies, and facilitating participatory research and decision making in collaboration with experts from academia, industry, government, and civil society. de Haan (2006) also argues for nurturing empathy and compassion in sustainability education. The motive

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[14] Brundiers, Katja & Wiek, Arnim & Redman, Charles. (2010). Real-world learning opportunities in sustainability: From classroom into the real world. International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education. 11. 308-324. 10.1108/14676371011077540.

[15] de Haan, G. (2006), "The BLK '21' programme in Germany: a 'Gestaltungskompetenz'-based model for education for sustainable development", Environmental Education Research, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 19-32.

[16] Grunwald, A. (2007), "Working towards sustainable development in the face of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge", Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning, Vol. 9 Nos 3/4, pp. 245-62.

[17] Wiek, A. (2007), "Challenges of transdisciplinary research as interactive knowledge generation – experiences from transdisciplinary case study research", GAIA – Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 52-7.

[18] de Haan, G. (2006), "The BLK '21' programme in Germany: a 'Gestaltungskompetenz'-based model for education for sustainable development", Environmental Education Research, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 19-32.

[19] de Haan, G. (2006), "The BLK '21' programme in Germany: a 'Gestaltungskompetenz'-based model for education for sustainable development", Environmental Education Research, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 19-32.

[20] Barth, M., Godemann, J., Rieckman, M. and Stoltenberg, U. (2007), "Developing key competences for sustainable development in higher education", International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 416-30.

[21] Sipos, Y., Battisti, B. and Grimm, K. (2008), "Achieving transformative sustainability learning: engaging heads, hands and heart", International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 68-86.

for solving sustainability problems stems from a sense of solidarity with people and the natural environment. It is difficult to imagine making the effort necessary to accomplish the goals of sustainability in the absence of that motive.

The goal of sustainability programs should be to place graduates in positions of leadership and responsibility in the corporate sector as the business sector accounts for [25% of the world economy](#), and [72% of the GDP in the OECD](#). A review of sustainability and ESG job boards, such as [Greenbiz](#), indicate corporate positions ranging from ESG Analysts to Sustainability Strategist and Director of Carbon Management. Another review of the [U-M Erb Job Board](#) shows similar results- there is a growing demand for positions such as Sustainability Program Manager, Climate Risk Analyst, and Circular Economy Standards Manager in the business world. Some of the key responsibilities and skills desired for these rules include:

- Leading the annual ESG/CSR report project.
- Conduct ESG materiality assessments, gap assessments, and benchmarking exercises to align clients with ESG standards and best practices in the market.
- Verify greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Greenhouse Gas Protocol Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3) following internal procedures and external standards and guidelines.
- Support renewable energy client engagements and participate in the targeting of new clients.
- Collaborate with member firms, including Advisory and Consulting, to execute work streams, such as valuation studies, tax equity modeling, and life cycle assessment ("LCA") studies.

Corporations and countries alike are announcing "Net Zero by 2050" goals implying that they aim to reduce their greenhouse emissions drastically over the coming decades to achieve net zero by 2050. This means that there is an obvious need for sustainability experts to be placed at the helm of this shift. While the sustainability curriculum is providing the learners with timely content and required coursework to succeed in further studies (e.g., PhD) or research endeavors, there is a need for the program to strengthen the job market outcomes for its graduates. Corporations in particular are seeking graduates with sustainability degrees to conduct greenhouse gas accounting, life cycle analysis of their products, report and disclose their emissions, and publish timely sustainability reports. There is a clear business case for sustainability and incorporating the essential elements of a business school- in terms of career services- will go a long way in positioning sustainability programs as promising professional tracks, besides just business school programs.

A number of universities have started making progress in this direction and are now creating sustainability programs with a focus on enterprise. In the UK for example, the University of

Oxford launched its new graduate degree program: [Msc in Sustainability, Enterprise and the Environment](#) in 2021. The objectives of the MSc are three-fold: (1) Develop a critical understanding of the nature, drivers and trajectories of climate change and economic development. (2) Examine the role of enterprise and its relationship to environmental and development challenges across a range of risks, technological innovations, investment opportunities and policy responses. (3) Enable students to integrate and apply their interdisciplinary knowledge, advanced methodological skills and science-policy-enterprise network to foster innovation and scalable progress toward net zero and sustainable development. Further, Imperial College Business School offers the [Msc in Management, Climate Change and Finance](#) and provides graduates with the interdisciplinary skills required in business on issues relating to climate change and sustainability. In the US, the momentum of combining business with sustainability is growing: The New School offers a two year master's degree in [Environment Policy and Sustainability Management](#), Duke offers a [Master of Environmental Management](#) degree and the [Erb Institute](#) at the University of Michigan offers a three year MBA/Msc dual degree graduate program at the Ross Business School and the School for Environment and Sustainability. It is clear that sustainability teams are becoming key to the corporate world. Thus, it is worthwhile to draw inspiration from the best practices of the career services at business schools and implement some of their practices at sustainability schools to achieve job market outcomes for graduates.

In this paper, we have interviewed 22 career services teams of business schools in the USA to understand their best practices that can be transferred to sustainability schools.

Methods

41 U.S. business schools were invited to participate in the study, and 22 agreed to be interviewed. A 45-minute structured telephone interview protocol was employed and telephone interviews were conducted with the director of each participating CC. An IRB approval was secured prior to commencing the interviews. The focus of the interview was on the career services offered to students in the MBA program. Interview transcripts were analyzed by the research assistant. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked the same set of questions (See list of questions in Appendix) about staffing, technology usage, support for students, and employer relations. Questions regarding staffing addressed the structure of their department and how duties were allocated. When discussing technology, interviewees spoke to what software their team used, both for data management and communicating with students and employers. In regards to student-facing services, interviewees discussed how they support students before, during, and after enrollment at their school. On the employer relations side, discussions centered on how they reached out to employers and kept them engaged.

Findings

A) Overview of Career Services Teams and Facilities

    1. Staffing Allocations

Career Service teams ranged in size from around 5 - 40+ full time equivalent staff members. Ratios were between 30 - 400+ students per career staff member. Programs that served undergraduate students tended to have more students per coach/staff member. All the programs had a director who supervised the career team and also assisted with coaching students. The hybrid model of in person and remote work was most prevalent, with the majority of staff in the office most days. A few programs had part time employees or contractors who coached students. Some programs had student workers who did administrative work or helped with operations. These were sometimes business school students and other times were students in relevant fields such as data scientists and communications or graphic design students. Career teams generally divided staff into 3 categories: career coaching, employer relations, and administrative or operations team members. Only in a few cases were employer relations duties also undertaken by career coaching staff. Of staff, about half tended to be career coaches, ¼ were employer relations focused, and ¼ were administrative.

Career Coaches worked with students either based on degree programs or based on the specific field or industry students were interested in. For example, many programs had coaches that only worked with MBA students while other coaches worked with each of the other specialized master's programs. Others aligned coaches to industries such as finance and banking, consulting, technology, and social impact. For programs serving undergraduate students, the undergraduates would either have their own coach or set of coaches, or share coaches with the specialty masters' programs. In some programs students were assigned to a specific coach who would keep track of their progress and meet with them or check on them regularly. In other programs, students were welcome to meet with the coach that they were most comfortable with or who had the most relevant area of expertise.

Employer relations staff generally were assigned to specific fields or sectors or, less frequently, to specific master's programs. Administrative staff performed duties aligned with data analysis, graphic design, communications, event coordination, and office management. Not all teams had administrative staff. These 3 groups work together to support students.

In addition to full time staff, career services also employed students as peer coaches. The number of student employees ranged from ~5-100. Peer coaches worked to provide resume feedback, job search support, and answer general questions about fields they worked in in the past. Most

of these students were second years, many having more extensive work experience prior to enrolling in graduate school. Some schools paid these students for their time, while others offered these students class credit. These students were generally supervised by specific career coaches and hours varied between 5-15 hours per week. In some cases, students were expected to have a peer coach review their resume before meeting with a staff career coach. Other programs had detailed curriculum that peer coaches would go over with their assigned student mentees each week. Less structured programs had open office hours during which students could meet with peer coaches. In one unique program, peer coaches hosted groups that lasted throughout the semester in which students met each week and supported each other throughout the job search process; groups were put together based on a shared interest i.e., tech consulting. Benefits of peer coaching programs included students feeling more comfortable meeting with peer coaches than staff coaches for certain questions and concerns. This type of arrangement allows the full-time career coaches to dedicate more time to industry-specific coaching as the student fellows help resolve most of the preliminary questions for the incoming batch. Students having more opportunities to meet with a coach at more convenient times or sooner than if there were only staff coaches. Peer coaches benefited from the opportunity to mentor and support their fellow students.

2. Office Space

Career services tend to be centrally located in their building to allow for easy access for students and to encourage walk in appointments. Career coaches tend to have their own offices since they most frequently have private/confidential meetings with students. When office space is limited, other career staff would share offices or work out of cubicles. Some programs used staff offices as interview rooms or group meeting rooms on days when staff worked remotely. Nearly all of the teams had rooms (~2-30) available for students to interview in and meet with employers. These rooms were technologically suitable for students to take remote meetings as well. Student peer coaches tended to work and meet with students for peer advising in the main common area of the office or elsewhere in public on campus. Some programs co-located undergraduate and graduate advisors, but not all. These offices also tended to be in close proximity to admissions and/or student services and advising.

3. Funding

Upper administrations are very supportive of career service teams. This support is largely due to the well tracked deliverables coming from these teams. Each program has clear metrics on employment outcomes for students which the school prioritizes. These outcomes impact the school's ranking and subsequent success. Many programs indicated that these metrics are what draw in prospective students. In addition to salaries and software costs, most programs had funding for career development training, especially for career coaches. Some required or

encouraged specific certifications and trainings such as motivational interviewing skills or administering personality tests. Funding is also available for travel to attend key conferences that staff members would often attend with students. Some programs had miscellaneous funding that could be used at the discretion of coaches and staff for things like getting lunch with an employer and a handful of students or hosting a guest speaker to teach students about giving an elevator pitch.

B) Services Offered

Each school offered a variety of services to students. These include one-on-one coaching appointments, group-level activities such as job fairs and workshops, careers-focused curriculum, and support prior to enrollment and after graduation.

1. Coaching Appointments

One-on-one appointments were done with students both remotely and in person, with students able to choose their preference. Nearly every school had open advising hours that varied from 1-2 times per week to daily. Some of these walk-in hours were offered remotely. Appointment wait times tended to be between a few days up to a week for non-walk-in appointments. Interviewees indicated walk-in hours made their office more welcoming and accessible to students. It also cut down on unnecessary emailing back and forth with students over questions that were more easily answered in person.

Career Coaches were either assigned to work with a specific master's program or to work with students interested in a specific sector or field. Most assigned students to a career coach upon entry into the program but allowed students to meet with another coach as was appropriate based on their interest. Their assigned coach was generally expected to connect with students at least once a semester to check on their progress on their job or internship search. Most schools offered undergraduate and graduate degrees, but only some schools merged their career advising departments. Many had separate teams of career coaches/advisors for these two distinct groups.

Of programs that tracked how/where students got job offers, most schools reported that the majority of students found positions through their career center while they also emphasized that it was primarily the job of the students to actively pursue career opportunities and to seek help as necessary. A few programs "required" students to have regular appointments with the career team and only a few limited the number of times a student could come in per semester. Many required students to have an initial advising appointment to meet their coach and discuss goals for their time at school.

2. Events & Workshops

Schools host a variety of events throughout the year to support students in their career development. Annually schools host a large job fair for students. On a more frequent basis the careers team hosts panels of experts or alumni to speak on a relevant topic, invites recruiters to speak with students, and put together their own workshops or webinars. Careers teams would either host their own workshops or invite an expert to teach students about topics such as salary negotiation or working in consulting, for example. These workshops tended to be planned far in advance with events strategically placed throughout the year to be most relevant to students. Fall semester workshops consisted heavily of preparation for searching for an internship. The careers teams also frequently partnered with active student organizations and student government to collaborate on events students were interested in. Other events included group working sessions, in which students would all work on applying for jobs and other professional development tasks together.

3. Integration into Curriculum

Career services varied widely in their level of integration into the curriculum. Generally, programs fell into 3 categories of integration. At low integration schools, career centered activities were entirely optional and not tied into academic or required coursework. Others had careers embedded into existing curriculum. Faculty would request the careers team to guest lecture or find a corporate guest to speak on a topic relevant to that course e.g., supply chain management. In more highly integrated programs, classes specifically dedicated to careers were offered. Career courses tended to be for only a small number of units (1 unit per semester) and were generally pass/no pass. Courses ranged from topics on professional development to lecture series with rotating experts visiting from various companies and fields. Faculty were not involved in student's career development outside of these specifically careers-focused courses.

4. Summer Work

Almost all programs expected graduate students to complete initial professional development activities prior to arrival on campus in the beginning of their program. This work was primarily done asynchronously on Canvas. Assignments included updating their resume, creating or updating their LinkedIn profile, drafting a cover letter and setting up profiles on the campus job board site. Some had additional online video content for students to learn key professional skills and meet the career service team. All programs emphasized the importance of this early work to prepare students for their internship search in their first semester of graduate school. Many programs had just recently built out this summer work and others mentioned planning to start assigning summer work in the near future.

5. Alumni Support

Most programs emphasized the importance of alumni engagement in connecting with employers. Most programs supported students up to 6 months after graduation, especially in cases where students had not yet found employment. After that time period, many programs offered lifetime career support so alumni could make appointments with a career advisor as needed. Alumni also maintained access to job boards and other resources. Programs that offered this emphasized it was only possible because of the size of their staff. Alumni would generally stay connected to the career coach that they had worked with while in school or would be referred to a coach in the alumni department.

C) Employer Relations

On the employer side, most career services teams have an employer relations team that builds employer relations, facilitates dialogue between recruiters and students, and shares feedback with employers at the end of the recruitment cycle. The approach to employer relations varies depending on the type of company the Career Services unit is working with. On the one hand, there are companies that have very predictable hiring with well-built out HR teams and recruiting teams. These companies are often coming to schools and building structured pathways for students to join their company. In these cases, the employer relations team is building close relationships with the recruiters, with alumni, and hiring managers. There is a clear structure and the career team's role is to keep that relationship close. These companies are interested in receiving feedback about their recruitment process and the career services team ensures that they communicate valuable feedback to the companies. For example, after the recruitment season, the employer relations team sits down with the employer to share student feedback with the recruitment process, and also collect information on employer experience and ways in which they can improve the process for them.

On the other hand, many companies have less structured recruiting processes. Such companies may only hire every other year and may not have a dedicated recruiter. For these kinds of employers, universities may employ the cold calling technique to build employer relationships where they share information regarding the degrees offered by the university and in turn learn about what kind of roles the company hires for. They also frequently reach out to alumni at companies that students may be interested in. Even when alumni are not directly involved in the hiring process, their presence can still be very helpful. Schools cited alumni as being a key part of connecting with employers. Once relationships with companies are developed, the employer relations team works all year round to develop and strengthen relations with existing and prospective employers. Teams track outreach and correspondence with employers to know when they need to reach back out and check in with an employer.

D) Technology

In terms of technology platforms, nearly all schools were using 12twenty as an all-in-one software for job postings, advising appointments, and tracking outcomes or program deliverables. Many schools also used Salesforce to track interactions and outreach with employers. Programs serving undergraduates tended to also utilize Handshake and Symplicity. For contacting students, programs generally used email newsletters to send out information about upcoming events and important information. Schools additionally used VMock, a platform for students to get AI supported help on drafting resumes and cover letters. Canvas was used frequently for summer work or career courses. Interviewees indicated having a primary platform that is able to serve most of their needs was ideal. Those serving undergraduates expressed frustrations that undergraduates generally used the university wide platform, Handshake, while their graduate program used a separate software.

One problem with using different platforms for undergraduates and graduates was that employer's job postings had to be posted in multiple locations depending on the audience. On the other hand, some programs preferred graduate and undergraduate job boards to be kept separate to make it easier for each group to navigate their respective job boards. The table below provides a breakdown of the platform for each function type-

Function	**Platform**
Job posting	GradLeaders/ Handshake/ 12twenty
Resume, Cover Letter review	VMock
Scheduling appointments	12twenty/ GradLeaders/ Salesforce
Employer tracking	12twenty/ GradLeaders/ Salesforce
Job outcome survey	12twenty
Signing up for events	12twenty/ GradLeaders
Regular communications	Weekly Email Newsletter
Free resources provided to students	MBA Exchange, Wall Street Prep, LinkedIn Premium subscription
Summer coursework	Canvas

Discussion

Traditionally, the career opportunities and employer pool have been different for business schools and schools for environment and sustainability. However, the growing momentum of the ESG movement is taking center stage in corporate settings, as reflected in the job postings and formation of ESG teams. Further, given the material implications of ESG on revenue and DEI efforts of a company, more and more stakeholders are demanding that corporate boards should consist of sustainability experts.[22] Sustainability is the number one topic on which investors want to engage the board of directors during shareholder meetings, and currently only 25% of board directors say boards understand ESG risks.[23] Thus, there is an opportunity for as well as responsibility of career services teams of sustainability programs to strengthen partnerships with corporate leaders and connect graduate students to them.

Our interviews with business schools suggest some direction that would be useful for programs related to sustainability as they explore professional development outcomes for their learners. There were several noteworthy practices employed by many of the schools that the researchers spoke with. Many schools are employing innovative best practices to improve employment outcomes for their students.

1. **Engage students prior to the start of their program.**
   Either optional or required work for students during the summer offers students the opportunity to get to know their career team, get ahead on professional development before getting busy with their first semester, and prepare for early recruiting in the fall. During the summer, once students have enrolled into the program, the career services team can share resume and cover letter templates with the students and require them to update their resume to align with the template before the start of the program. In addition, they can also offer enrolled students the option to drop in for resume feedback sessions to enable them to start uploading their resume for various opportunities in the summer itself. This helps spread out work for both students and career teams so that less is required during the fall semester.

2. **Plan ahead for workshops and webinars**.

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[22] Harvard Business Review (2020). The Board's Role in Sustainability. https://hbr.org/2020/09/the-boards-role-in-sustainability. Accessed October 15, 2020; EY (2022). Sustainability expertise must run deep and wide in modern boards. https://www.ey.com/en_no/board-matters/sustainability-expertise-must-run-deep-and-wide-in-modern-boards. Accessed 15 October, 2022.

[23] Rafi, Talal (2022). Why corporate boards need sustainability experts. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2022/07/20/why-corporate-boards-need-sustainability-experts/. Accessed October 15, 2022.

Most students follow the same general timeline for searching for internships or searching for jobs. Usually, the fall semester is crucial for preparing resumes and cover letters, and applying for summer internships or jobs. The spring semester is primarily for interviews, negotiating offers and securing an internship or job. Thus, aligning workshops with when they will be most useful to students makes efficient use of staff time so that students are not needing to come in for one-on-one career coaching. Students also feel more supported by their career services center when workshops are relevant and helpful to them in their job search.

3. **Engage alumni.**
   For specialized programs like sustainability, that are new but rapidly growing, tapping into the alumni network is of paramount importance. This enables current students to receive mentorship from alumni and also learn about professional opportunities in the sector they are working in. Organizing coffee chats with alumni every semester along with inviting them as panelists for job talks can be a meaningful way to strengthen relationships.

4. **Develop a peer coaching program.**
   These programs offer a variety of benefits to students and careers teams. Many schools cited the large amount of time and effort that it took to start up these programs but believe it to be well worth the effort. Peer coaches greatly increase the amount of support that students are able to receive from the career team and help to streamline the coaching process. These programs can especially be helpful for schools with high ratios of students to staff, that are unable to bring in more full-time coaches.

5. **Have a centralized software platform that meets multiple needs.**
   Schools are recently switching to using a single primary software (12twenty) to support all aspects of their department's work. Having one platform for job posting, recruitment outreach, resume and cover letter review as well as receiving updates for employer information sessions saved time and was convenient for students, staff, and employers. Programs that switched over to a new software tended to do so in the summer when work slowed down slightly and they had adequate time to adapt to a new platform.

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Appendix

Business School Career Services Questionnaire

Part 1: Introductions

1. What would you say your program's mission or main goals are?
2. How has your program and the services you offer grown or changed over the past couple of years?

Part 2: Space and Staffing

1. How many staff members work in Career Services? Are they full- or part-time employees? How many students are they serving?
2. How are staff duties allocated? Are staff assigned to a specific degree or cohort OR for example one for job readiness, one for internships, etc.?
3. Describe your office space layout and room capacity and availability? Do you have private rooms for confidential meetings? Do you have large spaces available for hosting workshops? Do you have interview rooms?

Part 3: Services Offered

1. How frequently do you recommend/require students to meet with your team?
2. How does the team support students *before/during/after* the program?
3. Does your team host workshops? If so, what is the format, frequency, and topics?
4. Are there career-preparation requirements that students must complete? Internship? Resume submission?
5. How does the careers team interface with faculty and other program staff? Are career skills embedded into the curriculum?
6. Are faculty advising students on career matters?
7. How important is the alumni base for recruiting students and/or putting them in touch with prospective employers? In what ways do alumni engage with students on career preparation, development, opportunities, etc?
8. What does your process look like for building relationships with employers and securing opportunities for your students with these contacts?
9. What type of support do you have from upper administration (Dean, Executive Board, etc.?)
10. 10.Do you have additional funding to support your career center? (Development Office, Grants, etc.)

Part 4: Technology

1. What websites/software do you use? E.g. for making appointments? Communicating with other team members? Reviewing resumes and posting jobs/internships? For resources like guides/templates for students?
2. What websites/software, if any, do you provide to students? Handshake? LinkedIn Premium?
3. How do you communicate with students? Do you send a newsletter? If so, what's in it and how often do you send it?
4. What is your assessment tool? How do you gauge students' satisfaction with the program? Student outcomes in regards to placement? Do students offer feedback or make specific suggestions/requests?

Part 5: Conclusion

1. Is there any information we can offer you or anything about our program you'd be interested in?
2. Are there any additional insights or resources that you'd like to share with us?

Referrals to others to reach out to (if applicable):

(Name) _____   (School/Dept.) _____