Illinois Guidance Counselors’ Knowledge and Perceptions of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Fields and Implications for Higher Education and Employers In the Agricultural Field

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INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to understand more clearly the role of Illinois school counselors (SC) in the guidance process and to identify support the Career and Technical Education (CTE) fields might provide school counselors to assist with their professional duties, a series of research projects were conducted. The initial two studies in this series sought to identify the knowledge levels and perceptions of school counselors about the career and higher education opportunities in CTE. This was followed by a two part study, first to assess knowledge levels and perceptions of school counselors about the career and higher education opportunities in CTE fields, and in the second phase, to use a consensus process to identify tools and methods to help educate the school counselors about opportunities in CTE.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Round 1 questionnaire asked seven open-ended questions. Question 1 generated eleven items for question 1, items for question 2, four for question 3, four for question 4, four for question 5, four for question 6 and three for question 7. These were used to generate the second round questionnaire which consisted of the seven questions, the items for each question, a five point rating scale (not important, slightly important, moderately important, very important, and extremely important) and a place for comments for each item.

School Counselors were generally aware of which Illinois Universities offering programming in Business, Health, and Technology. They were less aware of those offering Agriculture and quite a few were unsure of those offering FCS. This may be a function of the fragmentation of FCS program in Illinois universities.

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1 Participants interpreted techniques to mean information technologies, and many of the answers related to those careers. Attempts to segregate data based on industrial vs. information technology yielded an too small to be reliable.

Table 5. Ratings of the best methods to provide information to School Counselors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Methods we can help to provide information</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep an updated website*</td>
<td>0.0 8.3 25.0 41.7 25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send guest speakers*</td>
<td>0.0 8.3 58.3 33.0 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give printed literature (brochures, handouts, pamphlets, related to local activities)*</td>
<td>0.0 16.7 58.3 8.3 16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Ratings of the biggest obstacles for the guidance process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Biggest obstacles for the guidance process</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Times of availability possible</td>
<td>0.0 0.0 23.1 30.8 46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much paperwork*</td>
<td>0.0 0.0 23.1 30.8 46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low interest in agriculture</td>
<td>6.7 20.0 26.7 26.7 20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

1. SC often have stereo‐typical perceptions of jobs available.
2. SC in some cases are unsure of where higher ed opportunities are in CTE fields in Illinois.
3. SC struggle with time issues and lack of resources.
4. SC prefer workshops and seminars as their primary source of career and higher education information and training. Guest speakers, campus visits by counselors, and Career shows/ fairs for both students and counselors is felt to be effective.

Available of CPDU’s appears to be critical to future success of these efforts.
5. Websites, brochures, guest speakers, and reference people are all important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, previous work, and the literature, the following recommendations are offered:
1. Efforts should be made to provide workshops and seminars for CPDU credit at convenient times and locations.
2. Websites that bring together information about multiple programs would be welcomed. A clearinghouse of Agriculture program information from the universities and Community Colleges would be considered a welcome addition and many indicated this would be utilized.
3. Research should be undertaken to examine the high school students’ perceptions on careers in CTE.

SELECTED REFERENCES