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Purdue Profiles: Tim Luzader



Tim Luzader, director of the Center for Career Opportunities. (Purdue University photo/Andrew Hancock)

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Tim Luzader, director of the Center for Career Opportunities, says he loves his job for the variety and the sense of service he feels in helping students transition to the world of work.

The CCO assists students in their career decision-making and job search processes. With more than 12,000 students expected to receive individual assistance on a walk-in or pre-scheduled appointment basis, and at least that many involved in employer interviews hosted by the center, Luzader is proud of the CCO team's role in making a difference in students' lives.

What does your position entail?

Beyond the typical administrative duties of a department head including campus collaborations, budgeting and personnel planning, I engage CCO staff in strategic planning and establish direction for the center. That is, I help empower staff to effectively address the needs of students.

How does the CCO help students?

In addition to individual assistance, we give approximately 500 presentations each year on career and job search topics to groups across campus such as clubs, Greek houses, and residence halls. By invitation from professors, we can be added to course syllabi and present in classrooms on relevant career topics.

Most students are familiar with our robust website of resources, including CCO Express, a tool that the center uses to connect students and alumni with all types of employers. We also support the Purdue Career Wiki, a comprehensive online resource that helps students conduct career and job search-related research.

One particularly important role is the relationship we build with employers. Given our volume of activity, this is a major investment of time and resources that pays off very nicely for students. Employers routinely cite the CCO as being topmost among our contemporaries at competing institutions. They appreciate our effectiveness and efficiency in helping them to be successful in their recruitment efforts.

What is one student issue you are currently facing?

This is a campus with an extraordinary culture of employer recruitment. We are among the most heavily recruited campuses in the country. However, because of this culture, students in fields of interest that are not aggressively sought-after at job fairs may believe that they have chosen the wrong major, or that there are no jobs out there for them. Neither is true, and postgraduate surveys counter this idea. Instead, these students should employ an expanded job search strategy to find different ways to make those same connections. We can help students with their search and in their effort to make the right connections with potential employers

What improvements are being made to the CCO?

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Next summer, we will be relocating to Young Hall. Although the proximity isn't quite as desirable as Stewart Center, what we gain is huge. We will almost triple in space. This means we will have actual rooms for both career counseling and employer interviews. This upgrade in quality of space will enhance the experiences for everyone involved. We will also have "smart rooms" with technology to support long-distance interviews, webinars and workshops.

What drew you to career services?

I initially worked in my family's businesses and as a young adult became successful as a sales manager in a Fortune 500 company. However, I realized that just because I'm good at something doesn't mean I have to do it -- I wanted to make a meaningful contribution to others, and I was not fulfilling this desire in that sales position.

At West Virginia University, I gained an internship experience in career services and enjoyed combining my business background with being in a helping profession. Four universities and 31 years later, I still love what I do and found this career choice to be a perfect fit for me.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

My wife, Sally, and I enjoy traveling. We've visited 50 states and now experienced nearly as many countries. While most of my international travel has been during vacations, I've also had the privilege to travel abroad as a Fulbright grant recipient and as a Lafayette Rotary Club member. As a Rotarian, I get the chance to partner with people I respect to serve our community and the world.

How has your time abroad influenced the way you approach your career?

These experiences have given me context about what it's like to be an international student coming to the United States. I've become a lot more open-minded to everything from their religious beliefs to their feelings and opinions about daily matters; I can appreciate the difficulty of changing lifestyles to adapt to a new country.

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