Collecting Alumni Data:
What Works? What Doesn't?

CAIR Presentation

Megan D. Lawrence

Director of Assessment and Institutional Evaluation

November 18, 2009

Heald
COLLEGE

EST. 1863

About Heald College

- Private, ACCJC/WASC accredited
- Career-focused AAS degrees: Medical Assisting, Information Technology, Paralegal, Business
- Eleven campuses (CA, OR, HI)
- Central administrative office in San Francisco
- Quarter system
- Campus Career Services departments support graduate employment.
- Institutional alumni data tracked by Corporate Director of Career Services

Heald
COLLEGE
EST. 1863

Collecting Alumni Data: Goals

- Indication of mission statement effectiveness
- Employment rates accurately reflect student population; results are validated and verified.
- Benchmark to similar institutions
  - Aligned to methodology Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSCT)
  - ACCSCT's member institutions: Average rate of employment is 83; 13% standard deviation. Minimum 70% threshold. (Source: *ACCSCT 2008 Annual Report*, accessed online 11/12/09)

Determining Employment Rates: Methodology

<u># of Graduates Employed in Field of Study</u>

Total # Graduates – # Deferred

- Definitions aligned with ACCSCT
- Approved deferrals limited to:
  - Continuing education
  - Medical reasons
  - Moving outside the US
  - I-20 status; non-citizens
  - Military
  - Incarceration
  - Death

Heald
COLLEGE

EST. 1863

Tracking Alumni Data: Pre-Graduation

- ***Graduation Seminar*** Graduates complete the "Career Services Graduate Information Form." Supports data collection by
  - Obtaining up-to-date contact information
  - Obtaining alternate contact names
  - Confirming work status eligibility
  - Soliciting names of favorite instructors
- ***Career Services Exit Interviews*** Students deferring assistance sign "Employment Assistance Deferral"

Heald
COLLEGE

EST. 1863

Tracking Alumni Data: Post-Graduation

- Registrar confirms list of graduates 21 days after LDA.

- All graduates are entered on the <u>annual</u> "Employment Statistics Report" (ESR) and assigned an employment status:
  - Active
  - Employed (includes supervisor's name, phone #)
  - Deferred (includes deferral reasons)

- Annual reports close on March 31 of subsequent year.

Heald
COLLEGE

EST. 1863

Tracking Alumni Data: Validation

- Employment Statistics Report updated on a daily basis.
- Ongoing *validation* of employment: the process by which a graduate's employment is confirmed to meet internal criteria for being "employed in field of study or related." Sample "gray area" placements
  - Medical Assisting graduate: Veterinarian's Assistant
  - Business Administration graduate: McDonald's Manager
- Who? Campus staff, Directors of Career Services, and Corporate Director of Career Services.
- How? Professional judgment
  - Specific questions
  - The witness stand litmus test
  - Ask graduate

Heald
COLLEGE

EST. 1863

Tracking Alumni Data: Verification

- Quarterly verification of graduate employment statistics: Employments or deferrals are **verified** by a third party (someone not associated with a campus career services department) to confirm that graduate has worked in position for at least one full day after graduation and job title/employer are accurately reported.

- Who?
  - *Champion College Solutions* verifies employments.
  - Central Administrative Office staff verifies deferrals.

Heald
COLLEGE
EST. 1863

Employment Verification / Alumni Survey

- As part of employment verification processes, employers are asked to:
  - Confirm graduate's title
  - Confirm length of employment
  - Respond to brief survey questions mapped to institutional SLOs
- *College Champion Solutions* enters responses into online survey form during or immediately after making contact with employer.

Heald COLLEGE

EST. 1863

Use of Alumni Data

- Neither employment rates nor average salaries are published externally
- Current year's employment statistics are reviewed weekly by executive management
- Tracking of deferral rates, internship/externship conversions, self-placements, placements by program extracted from ESR for monitoring
- Annual results published by program in Institutional Factbook and used for program review.
- Annual employment statistics reported to ACCJC/WASC in annual report.

Heald COLLEGE
EST. 1863

Conclusion: What works? What doesn't?

- What works:
  - Favorite instructors or administrators contact graduates, not career services or IR staff
  - Third party auditors verify placements
- Challenges:
  - Locating graduates
  - Communicating importance of verification and validation
  - Labor intensive (48 employees in Career Services)
  - Element of professional judgment in employment validation

Heald COLLEGE

EST. 1863