

## **The Effectiveness of University and College Employment Support Services for International Students**

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**1. Abstract**

Universities and colleges in Canada provide support services to facilitate international students’ entry into the labour force. Universities and colleges across Canada have seen the number of international students grow over the years and societal pressures change. This research aims to better understand the needs of international students both while enrolled in a university or college and post-graduation when they begin seeking full-time employment and are within immigration processes. The main research question for Project #6242 is what factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of employment support services for international students provided by Trent University and other institutions in the area? The subsidiary questions include, i) What factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of support services for part-time employment provided by Trent university and other institutions for current international students?; ii) What factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of career-related employment support services at Trent University and other institutions in the area for international students after graduation?. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held with employment service staff at universities and colleges along with current and former international students at Trent to address these questions.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

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## **3. Executive Summary**

Employment services within colleges and universities have years of experience adapting to different cohorts of students within their institution. Through this experience, they have attempted to better suit their services to students' needs. Unfortunately, with growing political tensions and a worsening economy, international students seeking employment are pushed to the margins. This research project aims to get deeper insights into factors that contribute or militate against the effectiveness of employment support services for international students provided to them by their university or college within Peterborough and surrounding areas.

The project methodology begins with an extensive literature review which uses the framework of David Anderson, Phoebe Bergeron, and Herschelle De Mel's research conducted in 2023/2024 which looked at the retention of international students in Peterborough. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with support service staff/international alumni and a focus group of current international students to understand their perspectives on effectiveness of support services they use or offer. Lastly, the data gathered from these methods provides insights of experiences and narratives of both international students and support service staff. The goal of this study is to deliver perspectives on the needs of international students when seeking employment and the ways in which support services succeed or need improvement in assisting them. In so doing, this study will then be able to identify recommendations for support services where they can ensure a comprehensive model that better supports international students.

By analyzing the transcripts of the seven participants involved in the field research of this study, the project informs employment support services on the ways in which they can improve their services to better support international students during and after their studies. The themes used for this analysis are awareness, effectiveness, and ineffectiveness. These themes help identify what works and what does not for international students while enrolled in a university or college and after graduating, as well as what works and what doesn't for international students according to employment support service staff. Peer-centric events, and one-on-one appointments (like resume and cover letter critiquing) are the most effective in finding employment according to international students and employment support service staff. Ineffectiveness was collectively attributed to lack of staff according to employment support staff, but past and present international students collectively attributed ineffectiveness to the lack of knowledge support services have on surrounding legal documents and immigration processes. The recommendations provided below enforce the concerns of international students regarding their needs not being met. Specifically, the recommendations focus on themes of employment services self-assessing internal gaps, as well as ways in which they can expand relationships broaden awareness and foster community. Furthermore, employment support services rely on other universities and colleges in the area or elsewhere for inspiration on how to better assist student populations.

#### **4. Introduction**

Within the last decade post-secondary education institutions have experienced a significant increase in student enrollment. This also applies to institutions in central Ontario, specifically, Trent University, Ontario Tech University, Fleming College, and Loyalist College. Of that population an even faster increasing subset of students are impossible to ignore, international students. International students in Ontario face huge obstacles when completing studies in Canada and staying in the country afterwards. For example, the fees paid by international students doubled between 2011 and 2020 within Ontario (Usher, 2022). International students face other restrictions, for instance, to employment, their ineligibility for wage subsidy programs like Canada Summer Jobs, or on-campus university/college funded employment exemplify this (Renzetti, 2023). Political attitudes towards immigration have had a huge impact on international students' wellbeing across Canada. The Canadian federal government had generally supported

high immigration levels and international student enrolment; however, political trends have shifted to create a most hostile environment for international students (Venne, 2025).

The purpose of the report is to assess the effectiveness of universities' and colleges' support services for international students seeking employment in the region. It aims to provide strategic recommendations for employment support services at Trent University, Ontario Tech University, Loyalist College and Fleming College. First, the report will explain the research questions and methodologies of the research project. This section will include a discussion of limitations of the selected methods and caveats with respect to the findings. It also includes a literature review comprised of grey literature related to the topic. Next, the report will focus on the findings of the field work of the research project. This includes semi-structured interviews with employment support service staff and international alumni as well as findings from a focus group comprised of current international students. Lastly, the report will provide recommendations based on the findings of the literature review, semi-structured interviews and focus group.

## **5. Research Questions and Methodology**

### *Core Question:*

**Q1:** What factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of employment support services for international students provided by Trent and other universities or colleges in the area?

### *Subsidiary Questions:*

**Q1.1:** What factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of part-time employment support services provided by Trent and other universities or colleges in the area for international students while they are completing their programs of study?

**Q1.2:** What factors contribute to, or militate against, the effectiveness of career-related employment support services provided by Trent and other universities or colleges in the area for international students while completing their studies or after graduation?

### *Methodology:*

1. **Literature review:** This first component of the methodology was comprised of relevant grey literature; the framework was inspired by Project #6093. The purpose of the

literature review was to identify key barriers international students experienced while seeking employment and residency in Canada.

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** The next component consisted of six semi-structured interviews, four of the interviews were with support service staff from four different universities/colleges in the area (Trent University, Fleming College, Loyalist College, and Ontario Tech University). The other two semi-structured interviews were with two Trent University international alumni. These interviews were designed to address awareness of employment support services offered at their universities or colleges along with perceptions of their effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness. The interviews also asked for recommendations for improvement.
3. **Focus Group:** Furthermore, a focus group was conducted with two current international students. Again, the focus group discussion was designed around the three core themes of awareness, effectiveness, and ineffectiveness. The goal of the focus group was to ask international students to share their experience with support services in Canada focusing on their attempts in seeking employment through employment support services provided by their university. This discussion allowed recommendations and areas for improvement to be explored, providing a platform for international students to express their concerns.
4. **Data Analysis and Coding:** The last component of the research project was data analysis and coding to draw out key themes and patterns of responses across the semi-structured interviews and focus group.

The limitations of this methodology include:

1. **Acquiescence Bias:** respondents may tend to reply to positive or negative questions with corresponding answers. This can cause bias in interview results. This applies to both the semi-structured interviews and focus group as questions include the words “ineffective”, which can be considered negative, and “effective”, which can be considered positive. These words have different signifiers for different people (see *Appendix A* and *Appendix B*).
2. **Self-Assessment Bias** In the case of the semi-structured interviews with employment service staff, respondents were required to assess their own work, along with that of their colleagues and colleges (see *Appendix A*). It is reasonable to expect that a positive bias in results could ensue.

3. **Sample Size:** Respondents consisted of four employment support service staff from universities and colleges in the area, two international student alumni, and two current international students at Trent. This may limit findings.
4. **Participant Recall:** Some participants found it difficult to recall specific details about their experiences given the passage of time, specifically international alumni in semi-structured interviews (see *Appendix A*).

## **6.Literature Review**

The literature review is an input to a research project of Workforce Development Board (WDB) focusing on employment services for international students offered by universities and colleges in the Peterborough/Haliburton/Durham regions. This literature review is organised into the following sections: i) Context; ii) Transitioning into the Canadian labour market; iii) Resource Practicality: Navigating Support Services; iv) International Students Facing Communication Barriers; v) Conclusion.

### **6.1. Context**

In 2018 just over half (54%) of the international students that took the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) International Student Survey had accessed career services within their institution. Just under half (43%) of the same group said they were unemployed, and 56% of those who were unemployed said they had difficulty finding work. Multiple barriers were identified within this survey, both within and outside the control of support services (CBIE, 2018). A study done to examine the effectiveness of support services revealed that university service providers to international students lack the necessary training (Akbar, 2022). According to Project #6093, *Factors that Impact the Retention of International Students in Peterborough*, (Anderson, & et al., 2024). barriers outside the control of support services included: perceptions of international students as ‘cash cows’ for universities, and the requirement for 1560 worked hours to receive a work permit post-graduation. Barriers within the control of employment services included the practical use of the services as some deemed them confusing and difficult

to navigate (Anderson, Bergeron, De Mel, 2024). Following the approach of Anderson et al. (2004) this project will address barriers both within and outside the control of support services.

This research will focus on the campuses within the catchment area of the WDB, including Trent University (Peterborough campus), Fleming College, Ontario Tech University, and Loyalist College. Each institution offered different services, the most widely used ones across all locations appeared to be career advising/one-on-one support; access to job boards; employment skills workshops; internship and co-op opportunities; and online resources.

## ***6.2. Transitioning into the Canadian Labour Market***

International students are expected to gain an array of skills to enhance their suitability for pursuing employment. This involves multifaceted aspects including understanding of local paradigms, communication skills, knowledge surrounding competitiveness of employment opportunities, and so on. In Arthur (2022, p. 52) an international student expressed their concerns in this area: “Last month there [was] a Career Fair at this university...I asked about... recruiting students at the [company]. And she told me that they prefer students with better communication skills” ... “the important thing is that you could communicate well.”

Studies have shown that Canadian employers contribute to challenges of international students finding work. Barriers manifest in challenges surrounding language and cultural adaptability to Canadian workplaces. International students’ lack of Canadian work experience has provoked their concerns about their institution’s knowledge and training regarding the expectations of Canadian employers (Dauwer, 2018). Many international students face hardships when integrating into Canadian social structures. For many, English is a second or third language and interacting with support services from a university or college may be daunting. Students may also face new communication patterns which can affect their ability to network and connect with other students, professors, and potential employers (International Students Needs Assessment Report, n.d.).

General trends of racism against international students are extremely harmful, this can affect international students going into the Canadian workforce. Support services are typically very general as not all services include one-on-one interactions. It is important that international

students and their concerns are heard specifically ideas about what they find challenging and the way in which they overcome said challenges (Arthur, 2022).

### ***6.3. Resource Practicality: Navigating Support Services***

The government of Canada funds settlement services through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Services relevant to this study are employment services and language training, counselling, and so on. International students are not eligible for these services and therefore must utilize support services from their university or college, or in their community. However, public institutions are not required by the government to provide services tailored for international students (Akbar, 2022). Studies on barriers to employment in Canada mention the complexities of the Canadian immigration process (Green, 2018). An article by Kiernan Green, in *The Eyeopener* mentioned the lack of precise knowledge about immigration policies and that many rely on the Internet as a primary source to maintain their legal status (Green, 2018). According to the 2021 Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) survey, key challenges international students face includes the shortage of employment support services and legal barriers (Patrone, 2024). Documents that secure international students' legal status are said to be near impossible to fill out (Green, 2018). This issue is visible post-graduation as well. The lack of support services facilitating the transition from a study permit to a working permit has resulted in international students leaving Canada rather than staying.

It has been identified that many institutions are guilty of “frontloading” their services, meaning that pre-departure supports are at an all-time high but subsequently, the support drops. Career counselling was one of the least utilised services during students' time abroad, cited by only around 22% of respondents. By way of comparison, student wellness services fared highest at 80% while the least used service was language training, sitting at around 15% during their time studying (CBIE, 2023).

### ***6.4. International Students Facing Communication Barriers***

Career support staff in related studies have described struggles exemplified by international students when seeking one-on-one assistance from career services (Winkelman, 2018). They

claim that a student's language affects their confidence when communicating with career supports (Winkelman, 2018). Previous studies have shown students with weak English language skills are less likely to take advantage of networking possibilities, extracurricular activities, or social clubs. Investigations into international students' insecurities around support services prove that universities who prioritize diversifying their campus, who therefore spend more money on support services, reports lower levels of racial tensions than universities that don't (Poyrazli, 2007). As previously stated, some international students turn to the internet or their friends for resources. Such statements suggests that some international students don't feel comfortable going to support services (Green, 2018).

Employment services are typically generalized to all students within a university/college, and not tailored to specific groups (Tran, 2020). Each international student should be provided with resources specific to their needs as they all encompass varying cultural and financial backgrounds (Sachs, 2021). Recommendations have been made for universities and colleges to show more interest in their international students through constant communication and hands-on assistance. Once a student feels as though they are being heard this can then make them more open to suggestions and voicing their concerns in the first place (Sachs, 2021).

## ***6.5. Conclusion***

Overall, this literature review has provided examples of barriers international students face when using support services from their university or college. It has highlighted the following barriers: expectations about local knowledge and skills from Canadian employers, the practicality of support services and difficulties navigating them, and lastly, how international students don't always feel completely comfortable when explaining concerns or communicating with support services. Recommendations from the final reports of Project #6093 suggest that enhancing student support by assisting international students in making connections with local employers can be accomplished by improving Trent University's support services (Anderson, & et al., 2024).

## **7. Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews with Employment Support Service Staff**

Between January and March of 2025, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with four staff members of employment support services at universities and colleges in the area. This included Trent University, Fleming College, Loyalist College, and Ontario Tech University. These interviews provide insights about the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of employment support services for international students offered by colleges and universities.

As previously mentioned, just over half (54%) of the international students that took the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) International Student Survey had used employment services within their university or college (CBIE, 2018). This section of the report will analyze the ways in which employment support services makes students aware of their services and the specific ways in which they attempt to increase traffic to their services. The literature review identified how international students' experience barriers to employment that differs from domestic students. The findings of the semi-structured interviews aim to provide insights of what staff identify as effective or ineffective in relation to the services provided at the college or university.

### ***7.1 Awareness: Semi-Structured Interviews with Employment Support Service Staff***

When asked about awareness, half of the support service staff interviewed mentioned that international students comprise the biggest student demographic who utilise their services. This indicates that many international students at these universities or colleges need employment support services and are seeking assistance in finding employment. All four of the participants of the semi-structured interviews mentioned that students became aware of their institution's employment support services at orientation sessions. Orientation was not the only way in which students become aware of employment support services. All but one of the participants also mentioned relationships with other clubs, groups, or organizations and how these relationships helped foster awareness of the services offered. These relationships provided students with information on how to access employment support services. This includes on-campus events ran by other college or university organisations, students being referred to employment services

through other college or university organisations, in-class drop-in sessions by employment support services, and/or faculty informing students of employment services offered.

One career services staff stated when asked how students become aware of their services said, "...we do have long-standing relationships with some faculty as already, so, you know, we already have that in going into the classrooms, whether it's just at the beginning of the semester to talk about Career Services, or whether they're integrating the workshops and any assignments that we might have tied to those workshops into their program planning as well...". Three out of the four support service staff interviewed felt that classroom drop-ins, faculty support through integrating support services into their classes, as the most effective ways to increase student awareness of their programming.

### ***7.2 Effectiveness: Semi-Structured Interviews with Employment Support Service Staff***

"I would say for post-graduation, I would say one of the things that is really effective is having some sort of a forum or a mechanism for international graduate students to hear from their peers. What were some of their successes? What were some of their challenges?" This was the response of Ontario Tech University career services staff when asked about what services they consider particularly effective for students' post-graduation. Three out of the four support service staff mention hosting peer-centered events or mentoring programs All three respondents confirmed that they would either recommend such initiatives to students and/or that they deemed them effective in assisting students in finding employment.

When asked what services were most effective, all four employment support service staff cited one-on-one appointments. Specifically, they referred to capacity-building appointments related to resume writing, interviewing, and cover letter drafting. There was a collective tendency to speak about resume-related services. In addition to one-on-one appointments, these services include resume drop-in sessions, resume templates, resume tip sheets and resume workshops which critique, format, and support student resumes. These services were spoken of in light of student's initial interactions with employment support services as well as post-graduation needs. One support staff participating in the interview said, "It's usually a resume issue, but sometimes it can be like a difference in cultural norms in terms of how you connect

with employers or follow up with employers ... I think the mock interviews and the resume cover letter are still big pieces.”

### ***7.2 Ineffectiveness: Semi-Structured Interviews with Employment Support Service Staff***

Issues of capacity were central themes when ineffectiveness was discussed during semi-structured interviews with all four employment service staff participants. Furthermore, these discussions drew attention to the lack of staff with the ability to improve programming, advertise services to students on a broader level, build deeper relationships with other faculty/clubs/groups/organizations at the institution. Staff of one institution also spoke of capacity regarding physical spaces for employment support services: “We actually don't have like a physical building like other institutions do where it can say, "Here is actually the Career Center." We've moved location within the past couple of years too and right now we're like in a hallway amongst all other student services.”. Both physical capacity and capacity of staff can impact international student’s awareness, accessibility, and the way in which employment support staff can cater to their specific needs.

While workshops were said to contribute to the effectiveness of employment support services for international students there are some limitations. Three out of the four participants spoke of lack of participant engagement and/or attendance at workshops. Another limitation of the effectiveness of workshops is their inability to function in the summer months with their capacities being limited. Lack of foot traffic compared to the well supported and the busier workshops during the academic school year is another limitation. Some universities and colleges stated that they just cannot run workshops during these months because of these limitations. Support service staff at one institution said “Workshops I think can like create a good base, but to be honest, like our workshops have their enrollment, like it's just depends, but it's not always like the engagement isn't super high.... during the semester so like summer there isn't anything like that right? So if they're looking for a job it's like we can provide some coaching and support but there's not that like direct connection to.”

## **8. Participant Experience: Student Focus Group and International Alumni Semi-Structured Interview Findings**

Between January and March of 2025, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with two international alumni and one focus group with two current international students at Trent. These interviews and discussion provide insights on issues of awareness, effectiveness and ineffectiveness from the point of view of past users of employment support services.

The literature review provided examples of how international students can be pushed to the margins when using employment services. The findings of the interviews address this by asking students and alumni to identify ineffective services or other issues that may impact their employment search experiences.

### ***8.1 Awareness: International Alumni Semi-Structured Interview***

Both participants became aware of employment support services of their university or college through other organizations within their school. One participant discovering the support service through on-campus employment and the other through an event hosted at their university or college. This exemplifies the importance of relationships of employment services with other organizations within a university or college. Only one of the two participants knew how long they had access to employment support services post-graduation, which varies between each university and college.

### ***8.2 Effectiveness: International Alumni Semi-Structured Interview***

Both participants identified which services they used and thought to be effective or beneficial to finding employment. One participant said they found a job through a networking event hosted by the employment support service at their institution. The other said resume and cover letter support, resources and support regarding job search, and tip sheets were helpful to finding employment. When asked about which support services they found effective this participant shared that, “The ones that I found helpful were, there was a staff person who would review like resumes and cover letters and support you with that. So, I found that to be very helpful. She was

very, like she provided a lot of useful information and resources and would review my cover letters and resumes. So every job that I had applied for, I successfully got, I had usually met with her. They also had a lot of like tip sheets and so on that I had that I utilized as well.”

Both international alumni said they would recommend other international students to use their universities or colleges employment support services. One participant responded with caution when asked if they would recommend the services they used while seeking employment, “I would have recommended like the services that I had good connections with, but not necessarily the ones that I didn't. But for what it is now, I would recommend it.”. The other agreed they would recommend the support services to other international students as an advising platform.

### ***8.3 Ineffectiveness: International Alumni Semi-Structured Interview***

When discussing ineffectiveness both participants had different experiences where they felt let down by their university or college's employment support services. One participant had issues regarding accessibility, “it takes so long for them to get back to you on a certain thing that you've already moved on from it and you're already like better off before they've responded to your problem, right?”. The respondent was referring to the initial step of making an appointment with support services. Another theme identified by the same participant when asked about ineffectiveness of employment support services was the information gaps between services and/or clubs and groups. The participant said, “So if you reach out to one person, they're just going to say, go back to that person, go to the, go to another person. And then you're just like in this like weird mix of like just emailing people and then getting a response to say, go to email another person”.

The other participant had different concerns regarding ineffectiveness of employment support services. They stated that: “I found that the career counselor at the time was, she meant very well, but she, some of the things that she said was a little bit insensitive to immigrants. So there was one instance where she said something and it really affected me. And I, after that, I never went back to her services.” This experience speaks to the theme of training/capacity building for support staff about the particular circumstances of international students. Both participants exclaimed that, at some points of interacting with employment support services, they

felt added pressure when seeking employment, leaving their appointment for confused about their posed questions, or feeling hopeless about future employment.

#### ***8.4 Awareness: Focus Group with Current International Students***

A participant said they became aware of their university or college's employment support services through other organizations within the institution. This participant mentioned, "So I work at the college office, so they give us like all the resources that are available on campus just so that we can help students who come to the office.". The other participant said they discovered employment support services through social media. This participant said, "I think through social media, that's what I knew about career space. And also, I remember some professors like saying, if you guys need help, career space is there".

#### ***8.5 Effectiveness: Focus Group with Currently Enrolled International Students***

Services that participants deemed effective in assisting in seeking employment include interview prep, job resources, and post-graduation job searches. And both participants mentioned that they would recommend their university or college's employment support services to other international students. They affirmed the importance of resume reviewss, cover letters, summer job search, and interview preparation. When asked if they would recommend their university or college's employment support services to other international students one participant stated, "As much as they do have, like, some things they could work on, I think that it's very, very helpful to get like expert advice on your resume, your cover letter, like interview prep, what you need to be doing for sure.".

#### ***8.6 Ineffectiveness: Focus Group with Currently Enrolled International Students***

Regarding ineffective characteristics of employment support services, one of the participants replied after being asked about participant experience with employment support services., "it's just the attitude that you're giving to someone that needs help and support made me like, I felt mad after." The participant expressed that when interacting with staff they left feeling

unsupported and upset leaving the participant displeased with the services they made time for, discouraging them from reaching out for other forms of assistance. Why?

The other participant mentioned the lack of emphasis the employment support service staff put on prerequisites for employment in the region, specifically on the need for volunteer experience. They said, “I feel like if they did, like, a better job of encouraging people getting, like, a volunteer experience, and building up their resume from, like, earlier on in your degree, because I find that a lot of people get to their third year and fourth year, and they're like, okay, my resume has nothing.”, “So I feel like people who were born and grew up in Canada have, like, a bit more of an advantage when it comes to that whereas international students, like, they realize it later on in their degree where there isn't, like, too much time for them to catch up on that.”. The other participant enthusiastically agreed with this point, expressing their feelings of being further behind in extracurriculars than their Canadian counterparts.

Similar to findings of the semi-structured interviews with international alumni, both participants found that their university or college's employment support staff were unwilling or unable to assist with immigration processes post-graduation. A participant stated their opinion on how employment services can improve its supports for international students, “I think it will help to find like both sides of this story to be like, okay, like we can help international students by like giving them the resources for like certain issues that they might have, they're going to face. So, I think that will help to like, you know, to like to increase the support for us”. The other participant agreed with this statement. The other participant brought back their original point about staff directing international students at an earlier stage in their academic careers: “I have exams, I have this, I have that, and then now on top of that I have to think about planning for once I graduate and building up my resume and stuff like that where it's like a lot more pressure when they could have easily started doing that kind of stuff in their first year. And yeah, it would have been a lot more helpful that way.”.

## **9. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, a number of recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness of employment support services offered by universities and colleges.

The key themes that past and present international students have identified as reasons for ineffectiveness concern the lack of support in the summer months and lengthy wait times for services. These themes overlap with concerns raised by employment service staff about lack of staffing, therefore it is recommended that a needs assessment be conducted to better understand specific areas where staffing should be prioritized. A needs assessment could help identify areas where little training is involved and where it may be possible to incorporate student volunteers in less demanding positions. These roles can include organizing event logistics, creating content, or helping with administrative tasks. This would provide more capacity for staff to better tailor support to international students.

Concerns of the inner workings of support services/groups/clubs/etc. and their lack of connectedness to each other and the way in which those effects international students was something previously identified in *Factors that Impact the Retention of International Students in Peterborough*, Project #6093 (Anderson, & et. al, 2024). It was recommended that Trent University become more involved in local job board organizations throughout the city which is further supported by this study and employment support services are urged to train staff. According to international students' needs and understand the dynamics of employment and immigration processes. As well, this would provide a space where staff and organizers of related services can share their experiences and concerns of those they are supporting. In turn staff would have a better understanding of how to help international students with seeking employment resources. Training staff in supporting international students' needs can help with their attitudes towards international students and foster spaces of inclusivity.

Other recommendations include evaluating employment support services of other universities or colleges to gain perspectives of what works and what doesn't for specific cohorts of students. For example, as mentioned in the findings for semi-structured interview with employment support service staff, peer-centered activities proved to be effective for international students. Therefore, employment services for international students should prioritize peer-centred activities to see how it impacts international students seeking employment. This is another instance where provision of a space for employment services to come together and discuss their successes and areas for improvement would benefit all parties involved.

Lastly, an approach used at some colleges and universities is to provide students who use services a place to give feedback on their experiences within the support services. In recent years

this has been through email. It is recommended that a suggestion box be provided outside of the employment services or a physical survey given to students after using services. Urging students to participate in providing feedback in hard copy form was deemed to be more effective.

## **10. Conclusion**

The project aimed to provide strategic recommendations for employment support services at Trent University, Ontario Tech University, Loyalist College and Fleming College.

The central themes used for coding of awareness, effectiveness, and ineffectiveness helped to identify where employment support services can improve their capacities to support international students more efficiently. By analyzing transcripts of these conversations, some unique recommendations were provided, and some inspired by employment support services.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A Semi-Structured Interviews with Support Service Staff*

#### Intro

- We understand that your office provides the following services to international students.... Are there any other services which we have missed?

#### Awareness/Accessibility

- How does most students become aware of your services?  
*Probe:* Other than social media, how are your specific workshops advertised?
- In your opinion, how aware are students of the services you offer? And specifically, how about international students?
- Is there anything you would do differently to increase awareness among students, or not?

#### Effectiveness

- Of these services, are there any that you consider particularly effective in securing part-time employment for students? Why? And how about services which are less effective? Why?
- Of these services, are there any that you consider particularly effective in securing employment for international students' post-graduation? Why? And how about services which are less effective? Why?
- Are career services for international students different from those same services for domestic students?

#### Prompts

- How far in advance do students have to book an appointment to speak to career service staff?
- Do students prefer in person or online services? Why do you think that is?
- Are there services you recommend for international students over others? Why?

#### Concluding questions

- Are there any services not currently provided that you feel would be particularly effective for international students seeking part-time employment while at Trent or not? Why? And how about career-related services?

- Are there any ways that (University/College name) could improve its services to increase effectiveness or not? ... how so?

***Appendix B Focus Group With International Students and Semi-Structured Interview with International Alumni***

Ice breakers

- What countries are you from?
- What are you studying?

Intro

- We understand that your institution (Trent) provides the following services to international students (Refer to Appendix A). Can you tell me which if any that you have used?

Awareness/Accessibility

- How did you become aware in the first place of career services at Trent?

Effectiveness

- Of these services, are there any that you consider particularly effective or ineffective securing part-time employment? Why?
- Of these services, are there any that you consider particularly effective or Ineffective in securing employment post-graduation? Why?
- **PROBES:** did you feel services fit your needs, and were coherent and useful?

Participant Experience

- Did you feel comfortable in interacting with staff at career services or not?
- Did you feel that the staff were aware of specific problems facing international students when seeking employment or not?

Concluding questions

- Are there any ways that Career Space could improve its services to increase effectiveness or not? ... how so?
- Are there any additional services not currently offered that you would think would be more effective than current services, or not?

- Based on everything you have said, would you recommend your institutions employment services to other international students or not? **Probe:** If not, how come? If yes, how come?

*Appendix C List of Employment Support Services Available at Each University or College*  
Ontario Tech

- Oshawa

- Career carnival (two-day event for networking skills and tools to succeed professionally)
- Employer networking opportunities (info sessions)
- Further Education expo (reps from institutions discuss further education options w students)
- iLaunch – annual conference to help new graduates launch their careers post-graduation
- Job fairs
- reverse career fair (grad students to pitch themselves to employers)
- get experience fair (connect w community organizations looking to recruit for volunteer opportunities)
- International Student Advisor – drop-in sessions and appointment, book an appointment
- Internships and co-ops (apply in student-life portal)
- Job preparation (Resumes and Cover Letter tips, tip sheets, one-on-one appointments, interview tips, job search 101, know your rights video)
- Spark path = free career app for Ontario tech students and alumni
- One-to-one support = career counsellors and employment advisors
- Workshops (academic job search, all about co-op, career development, conquering your workplace fears, exploring careers in education, interview, job search strategies, LinkedIn, mindfulness in career, networking, purpose driven career exploration, resume and cover letter, self-reflection for career decision making, transferable skills)

## Fleming College

- Peterborough, Lindsay, and Haliburton campuses
  - On Campus Job Board
  - Local Community Job Board
  - National Job Board
  - Job and Experiential Learning Opportunities
  - Live Chat Employment Hub
  - Cover Letter and Resume Writing – Tip Sheets (Specific page for international students (resume tips), Instructions on how to build a resume, sample letters and resumes, student reference request form, resume checklist, action verbs tip sheet, references tip sheet, thank you note tip sheet)
  - Interview Skills (Tip Sheet, Q&A, Tips)
  - Networking – Video tips
  - Social Media – Personal Brand (webpage)
  - Labour Market Research – User Information Guide (provincial and government of Can)
  - Career assessment - webpage with models (Fleming Career Brand)
  - Career Development – webpage with models (Fleming Career Brand)
  - Drop-in sessions (every Monday)
  - Book Appt

## Loyalist College

- Belleville, Bancroft, and Port Hope campuses
  - Immediate job search page
  - One on one advising for students (resume and cover letter, interviews, networking and hidden job market, planning career path)
  - Mock interview sessions
  - Online job board
  - International student F Q and A
  - Have job boards for after graduates that involve their program

## Trent University

- Peterborough and Durham campuses
  - Online resources = Career Resource tab (career workforce readiness guide, tip sheets and resume examples, quick tip YouTube videos, etc.), My Trent (Support tab, career space ... type focus personality assessment career cruising, big interview section, etc.)
  - “How Can We Help?” Answers Questions like ..... What can I do with my degree? What are my career, work and educational options? How do I find a job? How do I write a resume, prepare for interviews, and connect with employers? How do I articulate my skills and the value of my degree to an employer? Should I continue my education beyond Trent?
  - Career Advising/Resume Critique
  - Video on How to Navigate The Student Experience Portal (Appts, Job Board, Events)
  - Workshops (Career Planning and skills, Resume and Cover Letters, Jobs search strategies and Professionalism, Interview Skills, Career Possibilities Event)
  - Post Graduate Certificate students in career development
  - Career Development model (cycle of knowing your value)