SELLING STUDENTS: THE RISE OF CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTERS

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ABSTRACT

This study documents a new case of the further commercialization of the university, the rapid adoption of corporate partnership programs (CPPs) within centralized university career services departments. CPPs function as a type of headhunting agency. For an annual fee they facilitate a corporate hiring department's direct access to student talent, allowing the company to outsource much of its hiring tasks to the university career center. CPPs are a feature found predominantly, though not exclusively, on campuses where there is a highly rationalized logic around the economic benefits of academic science. Further, CPPs represent a commercialization of practice that is in tension with the student-development mission of traditional career counselors. Using an inhabited institutionalist approach, we show how the models differ and how staff on each side attempt to negotiate their competing roles in the multiversity environment. We also discuss some of the potential impact

on students, on the career services profession, and on college-to-work pathways.

Over the past several years, scholars have documented the unmistakable shift toward commercialization in colleges and universities (Bok, 2003; Morphew & Eckel, 2009; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). This adoption of a more corporatized logic – in the sense of coming to see parts of the university in terms of their contribution to the bottom line, rather than to some non-financial mission of the university – has occurred on multiple fronts. Campuses sell academic research to companies, curriculum to students, as well as a variety of other products and services originating from units across campus.

A new and growing formulation, which we explore in this paper, is universities' increasingly common view of students as a product for sale to prospective employers. Such is the case with corporate partnership programs, or CPPs. Since the early 2000s, CPPs have proliferated in university career centers, particularly on campuses with significant academic science profiles. Sharing several features of the Industrial Affiliates Programs first studied by Berman (2012), CPPs are an organizational form that serve as a type of headhunting agency, selling access to students to corporate hiring departments that are willing to pay universities' set annual fees. This creates semi-exclusive hiring arrangements between a university and its corporate partners – a new model that is at odds with the decades-long professional orientation of career centers. Whereas career centers have traditionally been student-focused, providing career counseling and job search skills for students to lead their own job searches, CPPs attempt to directly deliver students to a small portfolio of companies willing to pay rents to the career center. This commercialization of practice is in tension with the student-development model of traditional career counselors.

In this study we use a mix of methods. First, by searching the internet and contacting career centers, we track the spread of CPPs nationwide.

Then, using an inhabited institutionalism approach, we employ field observations and interviews to show how the two career services models differ and how career services staff on each side attempt to negotiate their competing roles in the multiversity environment – particularly as the CPP model continues to expand.

CPPs bring benefits to their host campuses (e.g., revenue, social capital with firms, streamlined hiring processes), but if left unchecked, CPPs also have the potential to increase inequality across campuses by fixing hiring opportunities reflective of campus/firm agreements. Students from campuses lacking such an arrangement may find their job applications locked out of preferred candidate pools. CPPs may also create additional hurdles for startups, non-profits, and smaller firms by providing a small handful of elite companies – willing to pay CPP fees – with privileged access to top student talent.

LITERATURE

Higher Education's Evolving Commercialization

In her book *Creating the Market University*, Berman (2012) charts the multi-decades process by which research university administrators and faculty increasingly have treated academic science as a product for economic gain. This change in orientation toward science has been accomplished largely through deregulation via the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which allowed universities to patent inventions made through federal funding. In her account, Berman notes that faculty entrepreneurship quickly exploded, aided by the creation of tech-transfer offices on university campuses, as well as through university industry research centers. Colyvas and Powell (2007) show the growing institutionalization of scientific entrepreneurism among faculty at Stanford University over many decades – a sort of ground zero for the phenomenon. They quote a faculty member stating that to be considered a successful faculty member at Stanford today, it is an unwritten rule that one must start a company (p. 255). Rhoten and Powell (2010) map the shift of the U.S. university from being centrally land grant institutions, to federal grant-dependent, to being fundamentally patent-granting institutions.

Commercialization processes have taken place by somewhat different strategies on teaching-centered campuses. Brint and Karabel (1989)

illustrate how community college leaders, over several decades, have voca-tionalized their curriculum to serve the needs of the local labor force. Kraatz and Zajac's (1996) survey of 600 four-year private liberal arts colleges shows how students, beginning in the 1970s, gradually replaced a largely humanistic set of values with utilitarian drives for financial success. They also demonstrate how colleges reacted: Nearly all of the colleges in Kraatz and Zajac's sample professionalized their curricula in response to student consumers – in large part, through the creation of new majors more clearly linked to vocational pathways than to the liberal arts and sciences. In a later paper, Kraatz, Ventresca, and Deng (2010) map the emergence of the enrollment management office, which unites admissions and financial aid into the same unit. Although this is a seemingly prosaic organizational form, tying admissions and financial aid to one another changes the logic of admissions from a need-blind search for academic potential, to one that makes admissions decisions with the additional motive of ensuring that each new cohort can afford rising tuition rates. Davis (2016) and Kezar (2010, 2012) summarize the literature on the shift toward the use of contingent faculty labor, a practice that is more pronounced on teaching campuses and which erodes the power of faculty to resist various types of commercialization.

What is more, the trend toward the commercialization of higher educa-tion is not confined to the United States; international examples abound (see collection by Brown, 2011). For example, studies range from animating students' expectations on the career return from their degree in the United Kingdom (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009) to undergirding adminis-trators' bottom-line conscious practices in Kenya (Munene, 2007). One text (Brown & Carasso, 2013) has the telling title, "*Everything for Sale?*" Even business scholars have identified the trend as amounting to an international "ethical crisis" (Natale & Doran, 2011). While we are agnostic on the mor-ality of the shift, what is clear is that this growing commercialized logic is not just a local phenomenon.

Commercialization of the university takes place in multiple forms. Slaughter and Rhoades (2009) illustrate this well, from the patents and copyrights discussed above, to interlocking boards between campuses and firms, to sports contracts and trademarks, to educational markets, and more. Corporate partnership programs represent yet another evolution in the spreading commercialization across units of the university. Table 1 gives examples of these logics and the organizational features that typify them. As seen on the table, selling students to corporations is the logic embodied by CPPs.

Table 1. Example Formations of University Commercialization Logics.

Logic	Product	Consumer	Organizational Examples	Example Scholarship
I.	Scientific research	Corporations	Tech-transfer offices; industry affiliate programs	Berman (2012)
II.	Curriculum	Students	Vocational and professional programs; enrollment management departments	Brint and Karabel (1989), Kraatz et al. (2010)
III.	Services	Community	Event ticket sales	Kahn (2007)
IV.	Curriculum	Corporations	Corporate universities	Rademakers (2014)
V.	Students	Corporations	Corporate partnership Programs	*Present Study*

Multiversities: Home to Multiple (and Competing) Organizational Logics and Forms

While the move toward a logic of greater commercialization in higher education has taken root as an organizational realignment in a range of college and university settings, its emergence does not mean that it has simply replaced all other possible organizational logics. Faculty continue to create knowledge for knowledge's sake and for the social good, and students continue to be educated in areas designed to both create more beauty and lead them to become better citizens. Indeed, no formal organizational system is home to one all-encompassing organizational logic. Most – perhaps all – large organizational settings contain competing ideologies, values, interests, and mythologies (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). While early statements of new institutional theory – the dominant contemporary approach to organizational theory – generally favored a picture of a single hegemonic cultural script dominating action within an institutional field, today's scholars working in the tradition acknowledge multiplicity in organizational ideologies (Scott, 2015). Some logics may be dominant in an organizational setting while others are submerged (Binder & Wood, 2013; Bok, 2013; Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003), but each of these logics has the potential to drive action. Different units within universities, and stakeholders both on and off campus, emphasize various missions differently. More than 50 years ago, Clark Kerr famously coined the term *multiversity* to refer to the varied and conflicting interests in this "inconsistent institution" (2001 [1963], p. 14).

Scholars often have viewed such competing ideologies to be a net negative, since the presence of multiple logics threatens to lead to fragmentation (Hallett, 2010; Kraatz et al., 2010). Yet inasmuch as competing ideologies may have harmful effects, some scholars have come to recognize their

potential positive consequences. Kraatz and Block (2008) show that "institutional pluralism," or the situation in which competing logics or missions/mythologies co-exist, may improve an organization's legitimacy claims and, therefore, survival. Organizations that successfully embody multiple values to a varied set of stakeholders may appear to be more legitimate than are organizations that embody only one logic. A university that is successful at both teaching and research, for example, may obtain greater legitimacy among its varied stakeholders. Or, in the case of this paper, a career center that can pursue multiple types of activities and goals – delivering students to corporate portfolios *and*, more traditionally, helping them craft their own career goals – may have improved results.

Yet while many logics may exist on a given campus or in a given unit (and the claim of greater survivability is an empirical question), we should not expect organizational actors to hold each cultural logic equally or statically (Binder, 2007; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). Scott (2015) describes universities as "layered and multiplex affairs, containing both dominant forms and challenging actors, shared and contested values" (p. 38). Organizational actors do not embrace new forms seamlessly, without contestation. When deinstitutionalization of logics occurs – when the legitimacy of one organizational practice erodes, and another stands to gain (Oliver, 1992) – actors experience considerable turmoil (Hallett, 2010). Oliver outlines the conditions under which such a process is likely to take place – from increased external scrutiny, to shifting sources of funding, to changing consumer preferences. These are precisely the conditions that traditional career services offices have faced in the past decade. Out of such conditions, CPPs have arisen.

Rise and Spread of Corporate Partnership   Programs

The corporate partnership programs we study in this paper are one of the newest organizational features in the rapidly commercializing American higher education system. In initial interviews for this project, we discovered that CPPs were created just a decade ago, with the first of them established at Stanford in 2003. These programs do not share uniform nomenclature across campuses: Multiple titles exist, usually starting with "corporate" or "industry," and they also include terms such as partnerships, alliance, ventures, engagement, outreach, and networks. CPPs are located in centralized university career centers at both private and public universities, and function to connect corporate clients to a campus's students and recent

graduates by creating structured recruitment networks. Whereas the field of career services traditionally has been oriented to helping students develop their individual pathways through college and beyond (Rayman, 1999), today, an increasing segment of career service units on campus are oriented to forging partnerships with corporate firms. This is not wholly unlike structured recruitment processes that have existed for the past three decades on Ivy League campuses geared toward finance and consulting sectors (Ho, 2009; Rivera, 2011), but CPPs introduce practices that are more routinized and widespread than what has previously been documented for a small number of professions.

The existing campus feature that CPPs most closely resemble are Industrial Affiliate Programs (IAPs), found almost exclusively in engineering and applied science departments at research universities, and which sprang up on campuses shortly after World War II. As Berman (2012) illustrates, university staff in IAPs charge fees to corporations in exchange for a collection of services in return – chiefly, various access points to faculty research. IAPs – such as those at Stanford, MIT, Caltech, and the University of Pennsylvania – are able to consistently draw large annual fees (regularly in the tens-of-thousands of dollars annually per client) from their industry affiliates, while many of these schools' competitors have a much more difficult time making connections with corporate firms. After their initial emergence, IAPs subsequently plateaued, but thanks to the increased corporate investment in research following the Bayh-Dole Act, the prominence of IAPs grew once again, well into the 1990s when Berman's historical account ends. IAPs are alive and well today, still almost exclusively found in STEM disciplines, and at institutions with strong tech-transfer practices.

CPPs adopt many features of the IAP model; indeed, the services are so similar that specialists in both areas share a single professional organization, the Network of Academic Corporate Relations Officers, or NACRO, founded in 2006. But whereas IAPs have a research-based focus in specific applied academic departments, CPPs direct their activity to a hiring-based focus in centralized university career centers – predominantly, though not exclusively, trying to place undergraduates.

CPP staff members are tasked with coming up with as many ways as possible to turn functions of the university into products or services. These bundles of services typically come with a "menu," complete with a tiered set of purchase plans available to firms. Most of the menus offer one-to-two dozen services, with streamlined access to student hiring as the chief service. For lesser-known companies, the services include strategies to

establish greater brand presence on campus, in hopes of making the company a highly prized work destination for students from that school. This could include simple things such as preferential placement at career fairs or various logo-placements around campus, to more complex strategies such as hosted events or companies' direct access to specific student clubs. Other firms may be more interested in introductions to faculty and researchers which CPP staff can help facilitate, or access to campus facilities or equipment they may find useful.

While surveying the offerings of a single CPP is fairly simple (since most programs have an online presence), information concerning their origin, spread, and potential contestation within career services offices is not as readily available. What does the adoption pattern of this organizational form look like, and to which campuses have CPPs spread? How do career services staff members understand and navigate this new organizational form? Do multiple internal logics compete within career services units that have CPPs, and if so, which logic dominates under current conditions of the commercializing university? As commercialization processes are met with evolving forms of rationalization across various organizational subunits, what happens to staff who do not embrace the "new normal": How do they negotiate and make meaning out of potentially conflicting tasks? In the sections below, we address these questions in turn.

DATA AND METHODS

To map the origins and adoption patterns of CPPs in universities across the country, we initially inventoried the 60 U.S. campuses in the prestigious, invitation-only Association of American Universities (AAU). The AAU represents a clearly defined sample of leading higher education institutions across the United States, all of which fit the multiversity model.[1] In most cases, an in-depth review of the career services website of AAU members was enough to determine whether a campus had a CPP or not. If it did, the website often included a copy of the "menu" of buy-in options and, frequently, a list of current corporate partners. In a few cases, we could not verify the presence of a CPP on a given campus, and we sent emails to the career centers to inquire.

As shown in Table 2, we found that of the 60 AAU campuses in the United States, 33, or 55 percent, have a CPP. Of the 33 campuses across the country with a CPP, 23 of them list their corporate partners publicly.

Table 2.   AAU Campuses with CPPs in Their Career Centers, 2014.

Region	Campuses	Number(%) with CPP	Campuses with CPPs	Campuses without CPPs
West	13	11 (85%)	Stanford, USC, U of Arizona, U of Colorado-Boulder, U of Washington, U of Oregon, UC Berkeley, UCSB, UCLA, UCI, UCSD	UC Davis, Caltech
Midwest	16	6 (38%)	U of Kansas, U of Iowa, Washington U-St. Louis, Purdue, Northwestern, Case Western Reserve	U of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Iowa State, U of Missouri-Columbia, U of Chicago, U of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, U of Wisconsin-Madison, Indiana U, Ohio State, Michigan State, U of Michigan
South	13	8 (62%)	Texas A&M, U of Florida, Tulane, Georgia IT, Emory, U of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, U of Maryland-College Park, U of Virginia	U of Texas-Austin, Rice, Vanderbilt, Duke, Johns Hopkins
Northeast	18	8 (44%)	Carnegie Mellon, U of Pittsburgh, U of Rochester, Rutgers, New York U, Stonybrook U SUNY, MIT, Brandeis	U of Buffalo SUNY, Cornell, Pennsylvania State, U of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Columbia, Yale, Brown, Harvard, Boston

Fig. 1 is a network visualization of these campuses and their corporate partners. As depicted in this figure, low network density is due to the fact that most of the companies have only one or two campus partners, indicating semi-exclusive arrangements. Very few companies have a strategy of partnering with multiple campuses across the country. Most firms appear to have hiring needs that can be satisfied via structured relationships with only one or a few core campuses.

Table 2 indicates that the concentration of CPPs is densest in California, with all but two of the state's AAU-affiliated universities having already
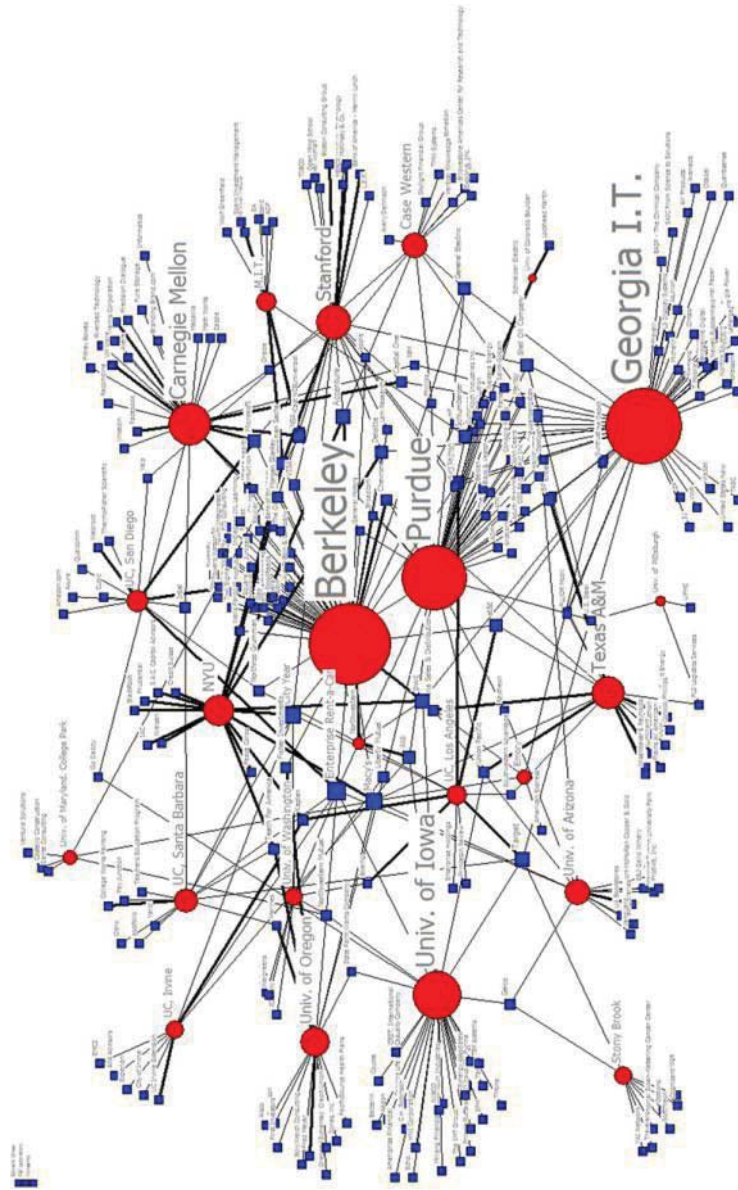
Fig. 1. AAU Campuses (Circles) and Their Corporate Partners (Squares); Top Tier Partnerships (Thick Lines), Lower Tier Partners (Thin Lines).

established a program. Due to this density and the fact that our initial research revealed that the first CPP emerged at Stanford, we decided to make California the focus of this study. We were interested to find out whether CPPs are located predominantly in Research 1 universities (such as those included in the AAU) or if they had spread to lower tier campuses across the state, as well.

To minimize variation in institution types, we focused exclusively on four-year non-profit colleges in California, both public and private, which offer comprehensive undergraduate programs. Thus, we excluded campuses with more narrow offerings, such as UC San Francisco (a medical campus) and the California Institute of Technology (a highly specialized science and engineering campus). Each of the campuses falls into one of three mutually exclusive groups: the public, highly selective University of California system (such as UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara); the public, less selective California State University system (such as Cal State Long Beach and San Francisco State), or the private Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) which represents both highly selective and less selective private institutions. Use of the AICCU allowed us to exclude the hundreds of vocational academies in the state, which often bill themselves as colleges. All AICCU campuses are regionally accredited, non-profit, and degree granting.

Of the private AICCU campuses that met our criteria, two are clear multiversities (Stanford and the University of Southern California), 21 are non-sectarian liberal arts campuses (for example, Claremont McKenna and Soka), and 30 are religiously affiliated liberal arts campuses (such as the University of San Francisco and Pepperdine). This left us with four categories to examine for organizational density of CPPs: 10 multiversities (the eight comprehensive UCs, plus USC and Stanford), all 23 CSUs, 21 liberal-arts campuses, and 30 religiously affiliated campuses. Fig. 2 shows the percent of campuses that have CPPs for each of these institutional types.

As seen in Fig. 2, 9 of the 10 top-tier research universities in California that include comprehensive undergraduate programs have built a CPP. UC Davis is the sole University of California campus without one. In an email exchange to understand the reasoning for not having a program at UC Davis, we learned from a staff member that the career center is currently in the process of planning for the launch of a program. Thus the UC Davis campus is more a late adopter than a negative case. But even if campus leaders do not establish a CPP at Davis, there is still a 90 percent saturation of CPPs among the top-tier multiversities in California.
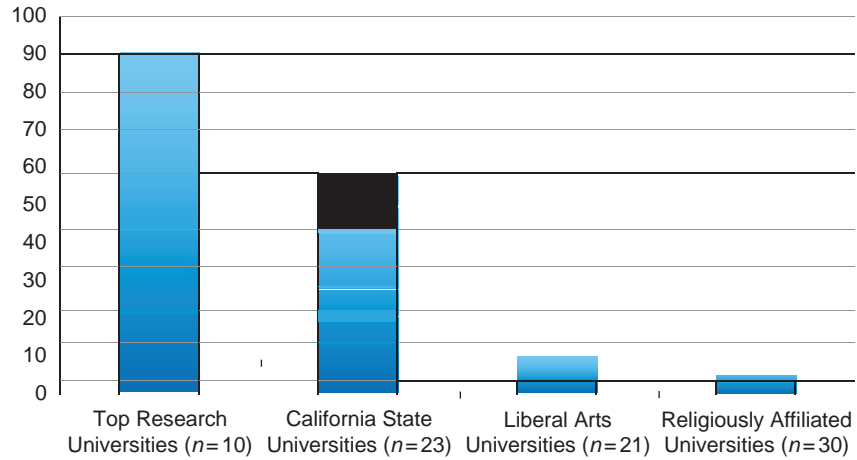
Fig. 2. Organizational Density of CPPs in CA: From "Multiversities" to Liberal
Arts Campuses, Number and Percentage.

Private liberal arts campuses show an equally strong – albeit opposite –
pattern. Among the 30 religiously affiliated liberal arts campuses in the
AICCU, only two campuses (6.7 percent) have a CPP. Among the 21 non-
sectarian private liberal arts colleges, again, only two campuses (9.5 percent)
have a CPP. Of the 23 California State University campuses the outcome
was split, with 13 campuses (56.5 percent) having CPPs.

As these findings show, CPPs are not being adopted uniformly across
regions of the country, nor by type of institution. They have a greater orga-
nizational density in the West, and are most common in large, decentra-
lized, research-oriented multiversities. As Table 2 indicates, many of the
Northeast Ivies do not have CPPs, perhaps because their historically struc-
tured recruiting practices have functioned in parallel ways without   the
more explicit programing. Thus the greater isomorphic density   of   the
feature in the West, driven by Stanford's lead and the near-uniformity of
the UC system, makes California an ideal target region for understanding
this phenomenon at a qualitative level.

Fieldwork in Career Services Offices

In addition to exploring where and in what types of institutions CPPs
have een adopted, we wanted to understand how ground-level staff and

Table 3. Summary of Interviews and Field Observation at Each Site.

	Interviews - CPP Staff and Related Administrators	Interviews – Career Counselors/ Advisors	Interviews – Students and Alumni[a]	Field Observations
UC Public University	5	3	3	Approx. 50 hours
Elite Private University	7	4	29	Approx. 5 hours
Campuses without a CPP	0	4	0	0
Total	12	11	32	Approx. 55 hours

[a]Alumni are all within two years post-graduation.

administrators make sense of these programs and negotiate between the traditional logic of career services and the rationalized commercial logic of corporate partnerships. We selected two California campuses as case study sites, both of which are members of the AAU and are among the universities with the most highly established CPPs. Our two campuses – with pseudonyms – are UC Public University and Elite Private University. We conducted a total of 23 university staff interviews at these two universities, including traditional career counseling staff, staff affiliated with the CPPs, and with administrators having oversight of student career-guidance functions. The data from the two case study campuses come from a mix of interviewing and field observations. However, more extensive field observations were made at UC Public University in the Career Services Center office and at career-related student events, which gave us insights to guide more streamlined data collection at Elite Private University, where we also conducted additional student interviews. See Table 3 for a breakdown of interviews and field observations across each site.

At UC Public University, during Spring and Summer 2014, we conducted more than 50 hours of field observations and unstructured interviews in the career center office, at career center activities (such as career fairs and workshops), and with student recipients of career counseling. We then conducted eight additional semi-structured interviews, split between traditional career counselors and CPP staff. We also conducted three very recent alumni interviews. Observations of the CPP staff included listening

to sales calls to prospective companies, a review of "pitch materials" (including slide shows and printed items to give to potential corporate clients), observing "brag boards" (where staff progress in recruiting companies is charted), attending a monthly team meeting, review of new staff training materials, discussion of logarithms used to pick prospective companies to go after, and so on. We typed up field notes immediately after leaving the field. We recorded most interviews, but when recording permission was not granted, we relied on hand-written note-taking.

At Elite Private University, during Summer and Fall 2014, we conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with relevant staff, faculty, and administrators in and out of the career center. These interviews were conducted in both face-to-face settings and over the phone. We conducted another 20 student and 9 recent alumni/ae interviews at Elite Private University as part of a larger project, which included information regarding the use of the career center and other career advising services. While the scope of this paper is focused more on campus staff than on students, the student perspectives were useful to confirm the impact of the various programming efforts discussed in this paper on the development of their career choices. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for patterns.

Our two case study campuses have many features in common, especially their Carnegie Classification as RU/VH, or Research Universities with Very High annual research output. Both engage in significant tech-transfer activities and both have industry affiliate programs. Both have comprehensive undergraduate programs with many thousand students. For the purposes of this study, their similarities are more pronounced than their differences. However, the status of one campus as private and the other as public shows that the logic of the CPP has diffused across the private/public divide in highly selective universities in similar ways.

Finally, we purposively selected four interviews at universities without CPPs (two public, two private), to better understand why some career centers have chosen not to build a CPP. These interviews were also useful for getting counter perspectives on the CPP model. This was particularly important since the non-CPP career center staff in our two primary cases – mostly career counselors – were reluctant to talk freely about their views of the CPPs that had sprung up on their campuses, and access to additional interviews was limited. This was understandable, as interviews with career center directors revealed that previous staff had been replaced when they resisted the CPP model inside the career center. We will cover this finding in a later section.

FINDINGS

We discuss our field observations in two major thrusts. First is how CPPs further advance a commercialized logic in higher education. We discuss this, initially, as a feature of their isomorphic similarities to IAPs, and then in the way they bundle services and students to sell to their corporate part- ners in hopes of becoming "core" campuses to those corporations. Next, we show how CPP staff and more traditional career counselors co-inhabit career services centers and must navigate the professional tensions that exist between them.

Isomorphic IAP and CPP   Features

Organizational innovation does not take place in a cultural vacuum but, rather, reassembles existing cultural resources in new ways (Becker & Knudsen, 2009; Sewell, 1992). As gleaned from our interviews, staff in CPPs draw on organizational logics from other campus departments, such as modes of recruitment from human resources departments, multi-tiered buy-in levels from advancement offices, and alumni tracking in targeted prospective companies from alumni associations. This was highlighted by the fact that many of our interviewees working in CPPs had professional backgrounds in one or more of these fields. Others had sales backgrounds outside of academia.

But the organizational form that CPPs most closely resemble is that of Industry Affiliate Programs (IAPs), which exist primarily on campuses engaged in large amounts of tech-transfer activities around academic science. At institutions best positioned to capitalize on academic science, tech-transfer offices are of central importance (Berman, 2012). Between 1980 and 2000, alone, the number of patents assigned to American univer- sities increased "more than 850 percent" (Powell & Owen-Smith, 2002, p. 109) and have continued to proliferate. Both of our case study campuses are highly engaged in the economics of academic science. During a field observation at a science-geared career event hosted by an IAP at UC Public University, an executive-level administrator told a group of students that undergraduate education was only 11 percent of the university's overall budget, dwarfed by the amount spent on research, which is "the real business of the university" (Sal, Administrator, UC Public University). Elite Private University's engineering department alone boasts over

30 separate IAPs. One of its most popular IAPs, which we have given the pseudonym Technology Agora, lists nearly 115 corporate partners in Fall 2014. Each corporate partner pays more than $20,000 annually to partici- pate, a sum nearing $2.5 million – going to a single academic department.

We identify a link between these two features. Where a significant amount of tech transfer has taken place, competition can be fierce for access to university patents. IAPs create strategic advantages for client companies. Where IAPs exist, their cousin feature, CPPs, are less culturally anomalous to the campus as a whole. IAPs act as a precedent-setting orga- nizational form, perhaps explaining why CPPs originated in, and dominate on, RU/VH campuses. Furthermore, the career center-based corporate relations officers who work in CPPs have jobs that are similar to the corpo- rate relations officers who work in IAPs.

The half-dozen CPP staff at UC Public are organized by industry sectors and related majors, such as biotechnology, computer science, finance, and non-profit sectors. At Elite Private, five staff have explicit roles dedicated to building corporate relationships around the corporate partnership pro- gram, and multiple others have indirect roles at cultivating networks with employers and alumni. The designated team members are also broken into broad industry areas: entertainment, startups, business and consulting, STEM, and healthcare professions. Within the industry area to which designated staff members are assigned, they must target and attempt to recruit partner companies in their sector. These staff must be knowledge- able about various faculty, programs, clubs, and research on campus relevant to their sector, since a major part of their service is to offer introductions and access to resources that corporate clients may be inter- ested in. Having first access to university patents is a privilege with signifi- cant consequences in quickly evolving fields like high tech and bio-tech. One CPP staff member at UC Public, named Kenton, whom we were able to shadow at the career center said, "If [our corporate partner] gets first access to a new technology, they have market advantage, and that can mean so much more [than the cost of paying our fee]."

In addition, on both campuses, CPP staff are well aware of the work going on in the multiple IAPs around campus. While individual IAPs are designed to focus on specific departments, the CPP program as a whole attempts to represent the entire student body. CPP staff sometimes call meetings with various IAP staff members to coordinate which corporate entities each unit is actively soliciting, as they can easily find themselves try- ing to seek annual fees from the same companies. One CPP staff member at UC Public University said, "If [Company X] wants to go with [IAP Y]

that's fine; it may be better for them if they just want that one type of student. But I am trying to help [Company X] understand that I am the gateway for hiring access to *all* of our students of *all* kinds. And I can just offer them more" (Ricky, UC Public, Corporate Relations Officer).

Conflict apparently does occasionally break out over IAP and CPP jurisdiction, as illustrated by a phone call we made to a Midwestern university to ask why its career center no longer has a CPP. This interviewee told us that there had been tension between corporate relations staff in the CPP and corporate relations staff in a high-grossing IAP, both soliciting some of the same companies. When the career center director subsequently left, for reasons our interviewee did not state, the CPP was suspended until the new director could determine how to negotiate the impasse.

While there is an overarching logic governing CPP practice, there is variability in how staff members get the job done, depending on their assigned industry sector. A notable difference in role existed for one CPP staff member at UC Public who was tasked with developing the non-profit and public sector network. The majors she most commonly tries to place hail from departments that do not have IAPs. As a result, she reported that she enjoys some advantages because "I don't have to worry about any red tape" – meaning she does not have to worry about negotiating with IAPs for prerogative, unlike her colleagues working with bio-tech and computer science companies. But at the same time, she said, "It cuts both ways, because it can be a challenge to decide who to go after. It's wide open, [since] there's not always obvious employers to link up with who need another psychology student" (Lauren, UC Public). Thus, while CPPs are similar to IAPs in many ways, borrowing from their repertoire of activities, the broader focus of CPPs on getting students of *all types* placed is a key distinguishing feature.

Becoming Core and Bundling "Non-Specialty" Students

In much the same way that Rivera's study of elite law, banking, and consulting firms reveals preferential hiring from "core" and "target" universities (Rivera, 2011, 2015), CPP staff also distinguish between different types of relationships with employers. These labels are so well recognized, in fact, that one staff member corrected his interviewer's use of the terms by saying, "No, we are not trying to make Microsoft a core company *to us*. We are trying to become a core university *to them*" (Kenton, UC Public). Staff like Kenton described a "target" university as one where a company

has an existing relationship with the university, and/or maybe a lower tier corporate partnership with the career center. But typically, that company is only looking for "specialties," or a certain type of student on campus, for example, chemical engineering majors. When a university is a target university for a particular corporation, there is typically a history of hiring by that corporation, and several well-placed alumni advocates within the corporation. Being a target is good, however the real goal is to become a core university.

Core status is achieved when the company not only hires specialties, or students with specific technical expertise (which may have drawn the corporation to the campus in the first place), but when the company also agrees to hire "talent" (students) whom CPP staff refer to as "non-specialty." Non-specialty students work in the units of the company requiring less scientific expertise, such as business development, management, accounting, human resources, or marketing and advertising. Employers can seek such employees elsewhere, of course, but because of the university's achieved core status, the company focuses its hiring – for all majors, in all of the firm's divisions – on the partner campus. Kenton, of UC Public University, continued his earlier thought and said, "When they hire non-specialty, it shows their loyalty to our campus."

This bundling of students is an important way to increase student recruitment beyond just specific niche areas. It is also seen as a good way to increase hiring of the harder-to-place humanities and social science students. Teri, from Elite Private University, said that her school's CPP was "lending a helping hand to the humanities" by "increasing the employment chances of philosophers and artists" (Teri, Elite Private). Although CPP staff on both campuses say they celebrate students who pursue less obviously employable majors, they also are faced with a more daunting task to place them. They believe that such students enjoy better opportunities because of their office's cultivation of strong alumni networks with key companies. Jane, responsible for recruiting companies that will hire social science students at UC Public said, "Even the psychology majors get preferential hiring at say, [Company Y]" because those students "happen to be from one of the core universities where [Company Y] goes for their electrical engineers" (Jane, UC Public).

Granting access to student clubs to CPP corporate clients is an additional common form of bundling students for companies. In one section of a PowerPoint slideshow designed for potential corporate clients, CPP staff demonstrated how their office can help companies strategize the best way to reach students in clubs, such as through visits, hosted events, guest

speaking, and re´sume´ drops. The slideshow – customized to each company – includes a slide listing the number of clubs that could be relevant to the employer. In one case we observed, the potential client was a bank, and CPP staff had identified 48 out of the more than 500 campus clubs that the bank might be interested in. Not only were economics and finance-related clubs under consideration, as might be expected, but also ethnic and gender based clubs – none directly related to finance. The UC Public staff member presenting the slides explained that companies sometimes have a hard time balancing their diversity ratios. To help, he was offering the bank access to clubs such as the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), the Society of Black Engineers (SBE), and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE). Though the students in these clubs were probably engineering majors, Kenton told the bank it would likely be successful at attracting some of them to his sector if it offered junior-year paid internships that could be converted to job offers early in students' senior year.

Additionally, when we posed the question of why companies are willing to pay annual fees for customized and streamlined recruiting services when they might just hire through their own HR offices, one team member opened the PowerPoint slide used to pitch clients who asked the same question. The slide contained data from the 2012 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey, by NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers). It showed how much the average company spends to recruit one person, by size-of-company, ranging from $7,645.28 (for a company with fewer than 500 employees) to $2,885.68 (for a company with 20,000 + employees). The slide, titled "ROI on Partnership," was the part of the pitch presentation used by CPP staff to explain why it was cheaper for companies to do the majority of their hiring from the university rather than through other channels. Because they were a "one-stop recruiting shop," they could lower firms' cost per hire, effectively "paying back" the company in savings, the costs of the annual partnership fee (James, UC Public). The more they hired from the campus, the higher their annual savings by outsourcing many features of their hiring process to the university career center. Several of our interviewees explained that this was just the tip of the iceberg, because if their efforts and connections also helped a company get first access to cutting-edge research, it could mean untold amounts in gains with a new product to market, plus the prestige of being associated with the university.

In short, CPP staff are committed to helping corporate clients get whatever potential hires, or introductions across campus, they need. This bundle of services then provides an incentive to the corporate partner to hire a

bundle of students – specialty and non-specialty alike – thereby making the university a core campus. This effort to become core, which is the chief work of CPP staff, is significantly different than the role of the career counselors who also work in the career center.

Career Services Mission Contested: Tension between CPP Staff and Career Counselors

In addition to support staff, events coordinators, and administrators, career centers on our case study campuses are divided into two main groups of staff: CPP staff and career counselors. Professionally and ideologically, there are divisions between these two groups of staff members. At UC Public, where we conducted field observations, even the architecture of the building reflects the separation of these two groups. The first floor houses the career counselors, a workshop room, a student resource library, and peer counselors (students on work-study, well-versed in career center resources). The second floor houses the CPP staff, corporate-sponsored interview rooms with prominent corporate logos, and the brag-board where news of progress on key metrics is posted (such as new companies that have joined the CPP, or existing partners making a significant batch of recent hires). The administrative offices for the career center and alumni outreach office are also on the second floor, as well as a large digital screen rotating the logos of unit's corporate partners. Various support staff and event staff are distributed between both floors. Each floor also includes a separate front desk and reception area. This physical separation creates a sense of distance between the two groups, with the salutary effect of minimizing tensions as staff operate with largely different logics and reward structures in day-to-day practice, but with the potentially negative effect of prioritizing one group over the other. The first floor is the domain of students and counselors; the second floor, the domain of administrators, fundraisers, and corporate relations officers (i.e., the CPP staff). Both campuses have a greater number of career counselors than corporate relations officers, but the number is nearing parity with additional hires on the horizon, according to our interviewees.

When asked to describe the activities of his CPP staff, the director of the career center at UC Public University expressed great enthusiasm:

> What's different and innovative about this place is that we've now taken that whole function of alumni outreach, taken that model, and brought it into the employee

> relations realm where, instead of being a career services center that's just reactionary to the employers that are coming in – which is the place that we've been probably since the center was founded – we are now staffing to the place where we're dictating who our portfolio companies are going to be. Who do we want recruiting our students? And equipping an outbound team to go get those companies to come in. (James, UC Public University)

As can be seen in this quote, the career services director draws a bright line between what is new and exciting in his world on campus (creating more entrepreneurial ties to the local, regional, and national labor market) versus what is old school and passe´ (traditional logics governing career services).

Elite Private University administrators show similar pride in their sense of innovation, relative to traditional career services practices. The director of the career services center named a handful of campuses making similar changes, and shared his desire to inspire still more universities to adopt the model:

> [Private Elite] is really on the cusp of just completely changing the field. I care deeply about our field of career services being elevated to a newer level .... We're no longer in a straight-out counseling model, and many universities still have that .... Maybe it will give them the wakeup call that they have to change. Otherwise they're going to be a dinosaur, if they're not already. (Pierre, Elite Private)

To this administrator, a campus that does not embrace the CPP model is outdated. Several lower level CPP staff at both institutions expressed similar ideas. They see their work as creatively responding to various needs the campus faces. One CPP staff member at UC Public University added that her work helped assuage parents' concerns around high unemployment rates in the wake of the recent recession, because "if a parent calls, we can point them to our list of [employer] partners who have made a real commitment to hiring students just like their kid" (Jane, UC Public). CPP staff point to one other benefit of their model. Fiscally, they say, the CPP adds additional revenue annually, but it is also an act of cultivation of *future* potential alumni donors. James (UC Public) explained that when students get jobs under the old model, they feel that they landed it personally, "despite" the university. But if the university largely lands it for them through its network of CPP partner firms, students feel that their professional success was launched "because" of the university – inspiring longer-lasting positive regard for the campus.

Not all career center staff view the CPP model with equally positive lenses. The career centers at both of our case study schools house career counselors who remain committed to the traditional mission of developing students to conduct their own job searches. These staff members – whose

numbers are decreasing on each of our campuses – are not convinced by the new emphasis on corporate clients, and they worry that the CPP model is connected to an economic development philosophy that favors market-place rewards, rather than the holistic student-development model into which they were professionalized.

This distinction is real on both of our case study campuses. One counselor at UC Public emphasized, "We are not just trying to help them find jobs when they graduate, but to know themselves and uncover their own passions and strengths so they can investigate multiple careers over their lifespan" (Kim, Career Counselor, UC Public). Kim went on to say that while innovations are needed, they would be better focused on new delivery models of student advising – such as more group counseling. At Elite Private, Nancy, a long-term career counselor shared innovative ideas she thought would be useful, among them an expanded mentoring program so that students can try out a series of different fields early on. Another is the use of automated technologies to help the career center send individualized communications to students, in hopes of staying in better contact with them through their time on campus. She reported that she is pleased that her office had begun a program to meet with students in their residence halls. Each of her ideas for career center changes clearly center on student development, rather than corporate cultivation.

In keeping with these quotes, staff who hold to the more traditional model of career counseling on our case study campuses expressed skepticism about developing more structured corporate ties, but were careful not to overtly criticize CPPs. This is in contrast with far more derisive staff on other campuses without CPPs, who charged that the CPP model turns career services into "wind-up, coin-operated vending machines" (Kelley, Career Services Director, liberal arts Catholic University). Kelley believes that the reward structure of CPPs on other campuses lead career centers to place too much emphasis on large companies that can afford the fees, to the detriment to student career opportunities at smaller firms. Another career center staff member at a public university without a CPP echoed the sentiment, saying her university would not want to "give unfair advantage to some companies over others" (Cameron, East Coast State University).

Despite the more careful tone of the counselors at our case study sites, this conflict has created considerable turmoil at both UC Public and Elite Private universities. Such conflict, though, seems to be subsiding as the CPP logic has largely won the day, thanks to administrator support. The career center directors acknowledge that the shift in organizational priorities threatens staff who continue to focus on the traditional

student-development/counseling model. The director at UC Public University mentioned conversations he has had with other career center directors who realize that, "Trenches are being dug because there's fear of what will happen one way or the other" (James, UC Public). According to Elite Private University's career center director, these fears are not unfounded. He recounted:

> There are clearly some characters who are very resistant because they philosophically don't agree with the direction. And if that's the case, I mean if you can't convert them, then often what happens is they have to find another opportunity elsewhere where they can find that – philosophical alignment …. They are not bad people, but this model that we're creating is not for everyone …. (Pierre, Elite Private)

Pierre, himself, has fired multiple staff in the shake-up.

Career services professionals have been skeptical of the logic upon which the CPP model is based since the 1990s, when they warned in professional journals of the coming trend. Leaders cautioned that the model would tempt universities to both solicit corporate support to generate external funding (Rayman, 1999) and create programs that focus more attention on facilitating corporate recruitment of students than on preparing students to lead their own job searches (Wessel, 1998). Both of these practices were seen to detract from providing high quality, student-focused career services. Yet when packaged specifically as CPPs in the 2000s, echoing the cultural organizational form of IAPs, and driven by administrator support – especially after the recession – the model has been able to swiftly sweep into the field in the past 15 years. Nevertheless, it represents a point of contention between those who seek to conserve a focus on cultivating students' self-awareness of their strengths and professional desires, vocational curiosities, and job search skills, on the one side; and those who see a brighter future in cultivating networks of employer relationships. The second option entails becoming a target school for employers, or even better, a core university.

CONCLUSION

CPPs address multiple challenges faced by universities, chief among them to increase the employability of graduates and to subsidize the cost of career services through its own revenue generation. Secondarily, CPP staff see their programs as potentially increasing the confidence of parents when helping their children choose between schools, and potentially cultivating

future alumni donors who as student job seekers may have benefited from CPP networks. At a day-to-day level, CPP staff are focused on tracking alumni leads to determine which companies to pursue and solicit, in hopes of becoming a core campus to them, with annual high-volume student recruitment. While this type of core-campus preferential hiring is nothing new to elite Ivy League schools and their peers, the CPP makes the process more explicit and rationalized in an attempt to bring the patterns of hiring preference down from the handful of most selective institutions to the next tier of elite school selectivity. There are advantages to the CPP model – including for students who are not in STEM fields – but dysfunctional consequences may arise from these arrangements as well.

Future scholarship on higher education will gain from investigating the ways that these commercially oriented CPPs are transforming the cultural understandings of the career services profession. Career services has long had a student-development emphasis, whereby staff use one-on-one counseling, assessment instruments, job fairs, and skills workshops to develop student self-awareness and ability to conduct their own job searches. The new corporatized model places the emphasis less on cultivating the student and more on cultivating university-company networks of alumni and hiring professionals. The old model is seen to fail students in times of higher unemployment or to reach students too late in their college careers to be of much help. The new model is still unproven in its effects, both manifest and latent. Both models have their strengths and weaknesses, but whether they ultimately prove to be contradictory philosophies or complementary supplements will be seen as the campus realignments continue to play out. While the two cases in our study are home to staff devoted to both models, the CPP model currently appears to be the dominant logic, in large part driven by the directors at each career center, with the explicit blessing of their respective campus presidents.

At UC Public University, career counselors are physically separated from CPP staff in the building where they worked; thus, most of the day-to-day negotiations over how to achieve their disparate goals are insulated from one other. At Elite Private University, multiple counselors resistant to the new model have been fired; simultaneously, a dozen new staff members at the time of this writing are in the process of being hired to further develop the CPP and employment networks.[2] While it is unlikely that the traditional career counselor job will disappear completely from either campus, professionals working under this model no longer enjoy the dominant perspective in the career services center unit in our two case studies. An inhabited institutionalist lens (Binder, 2007; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006)

is useful for understanding these negotiations. Once top administrator support began to drive the change of the career center model, traditional career counselor opposition was largely tempered. As our data indicate, the remaining resistance appears more as ambivalence and faint praise of the changes. Some counselors show light subversion by trying to brainstorm new initiatives to show they are not out of date, but their changes focus on alternative delivery methods of counseling services to students and do not include links with corporate partners.

Further research could uncover if middle-tier institutions that adopt CPPs – such as the California State University campuses depicted in Fig. 2 – reap much reward, or if there is a carrying capacity that is exhausted by the leading universities, such as Berman (2012) found with IAPs. Are middle-tier university CPPs equally effective, even if perhaps more focused on localized markets, or is the adoption of the CPP feature primarily the result of mimetic isomorphism, imitating career centers perceived as more prestigious (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), but achieving few actual results for students?

Researchers could also try to understand the effectiveness of CPPs at leading universities in terms of increasing actual rates of student employment. Do the corporate partnerships and semi-exclusive hiring pathways really shrink the percentage of students who graduate and cannot find work, all else being equal? Or alternately, does it result in restricting the number of companies students end up in, with more students funneled to corporate partners? In a similar vein, do CPPs significantly alter the type and size of employers the university most often engages with? CPP staff have clear incentives to go after larger firms with both the resources to pay annual fees and the likelihood of needing to make several hires per year. If CPP programs continue to grow and spread, they will need intentional efforts to attract smaller firms, startups, and non-profit organizations, or else they risk further privileging the already most resourced firms. For example, Elite Private University is attempting interventions such as a specialized startup career fair, a new nonprofit career fair, and has plans to pro-rate CPP fees by firm size. Further research should evaluate if such efforts effectively offset the risk of CPPs exacerbating unequal access to student talent in favor of a few elite companies. If so, similar best practices might be adopted by CPPs at other campuses.

Our research also has implications for college to work pathways. Sharone (2014) shows that U.S. job seekers, more than in other countries, tend to rely on characteristics outside of simple skill qualifications when seeking employment. CPPs potentially exacerbate this for right-out-of-college

job placements. Elite firms in such fields as finance and consulting have long had semi-exclusive recruitment practices with the most elite colleges (Ho, 2009; Roose, 2014). Rivera (2011) shows that elite firms develop a short list of target and core schools, and that any who come from outside campuses are not considered as seriously, if they are considered at all. CPPs also appear to create semi-exclusive arrangements, as highlighted in Fig. 1, which may have the unfortunate effect of extending Rivera's findings to the next tier of campuses and companies. This has implications for reifying inequality if students who attend smaller liberal arts colleges or mid-tier state schools that lack CPPs cannot get their applications taken seriously by prospective employers of choice, for jobs for which they are otherwise well qualified.

NOTES

1. There are 62 AAU members, two of them in Canada. We included only member institutions in the United States.
2. This information is contained on the university's organizational chart.

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