

Districtwide Career Fair Debrief March 2023 Meeting Notes

This meeting was held at the request of all four colleges to review how the fall 2023 Districtwide Career Fair went and to talk through opportunities for improvement.

The long-term goals associated with this convening are to

- Equitably improve employment outcomes for all students districtwide
- Increase collaboration and communication across colleges on career events and activities for students (General events, occupation-specific events, subject area specific events, etc.)
- Expanded access for all students to career fairs/events

The fall 2023 Districtwide Career Fair was the first in-person districtwide fair and was hosted by Mesa College. During the Debrief Meeting ([see agenda here](#)), meeting participants expressed appreciation for the amazing work that went into making the fall event a success and deep gratitude for the Mesa College who not only hosted the event, but also led the planning.

- Approximately 500 students participated in the fall event
- Over 84 employers attended
- 400 free lunches were served
- Over 122 students received free professional headshots.
- In addition to day-of activities, colleges coordinated career fest events (online and onsite workshops) leading up to the event – these pre-event workshops were designed to help prepare students to make the most of the career fair.

Key Takeaways from the Debrief Meeting

- Each college faces capacity constraints and is at different points in infrastructure development – not everyone is able to host or lead such a large event. However, each college can participate and expressed interest in doing so (even if you can't host, you can engage, help with planning and promotion, and ensure your students have access to the event)
- Commitment from senior leadership is needed to ensure each college – and all students – are able to participate/get the most out of the event
- Consistent representatives from all four colleges needed
- Expectations of participation need to be clearer – representatives on the planning team need to ensure their college is fully aware of the event
 - Provide updates and insights into college-specific efforts - Bring local efforts, challenges, opportunities, and practices to the group
 - Serve as a resource for your college on the event – Bring back and connect information to local efforts, local committees, college leadership, etc.
- Interest expressed in Career Center leads meeting more regularly to ensure communication across colleges on smaller events and to support collaboration on occupation specific/subject area specific events
 - Smaller events engage faculty more and provide more direct relationship building with employers for specific industries/sectors at a time

- There is interest in holding a second districtwide career fair - Decision needed as to whether or not a districtwide career fair will be held in the fall or spring; meeting participants mentioned spring may be a better time to hold the next districtwide event. Career Center leads to regroup and confirm next steps

Next Steps:

- Meeting Notes will be discussed at the Districtwide Career Services and Job Placement Committee.
- Career Center leads will be encouraged to decide, prior to the end of this spring semester, whether to hold a fall 2023 or spring 2024 districtwide career fair and what kind of support structure is needed to increase communication and collaboration on districtwide subject-specific/occupation-specific career events.
- College-specific Senior leadership is encouraged to engage Career Center leads on discussions around capacity constraints and support for districtwide collaboration

Additional Discussion Highlights

- Increase awareness and engagement by college leadership
 - Participating in a districtwide career fair is a big commitment for all colleges (not just the host college)
 - Support is needed to ensure all students get the most out of the event
- Re-set expectations for participation – each college to engage local facilities to help with set up (not just the host college)
- Increased commitment to timelines and communication/decision making needed to better ensure events from all colleges are included
 - Each college to pre-plan local events and meet marketing deadlines to be included in promotions
 - Commitment to timeline(s) needed to better ensure everyone is on the same page and prepared
- Engage employers before engaging students – promote employers to students
- Increase intentionality around employers – work to ensure a broad representation of industries and job types
- Engage ERLs from all four colleges to help curate employers
- Increase district engagement needed for promoting event to all students
- Transportation challenges need to be addressed – to better ensure access for all students from each campus
 - Explore MTS Partnership
- Engage faculty and staff outside of Career Center roles – expand engagement beyond career centers and take a whole-campus approach to the events
- Improve data collection and tracking with use of handshake
- Hold walkthrough with all roles to ensure everyone is better prepared for the day
 - Will help with layout discussions, check-in locations, etc.
 - Will help increase collaboration on flow of the day, set up/layout, and delivery of activities
 - Provide training for staff working onsite (day of)
- Interest expressed in capturing intent of student participants

For a full list of topics explored, see [agenda](#).