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NACE
Note from the editor

The new academic year has commenced with its annual avalanche of surveys and league tables. For the sector it is business as usual, however this time around higher education is at the forefront and the word on everyone’s lips is ‘employability’.

Definitions do differ but everyone agrees that it is important – and that universities are under pressure to deliver it. Graduate employability has been talked about in this year’s party conferences and it is a central message of university league tables. In this issue of GMT we ask: how do universities engrain employability? And should they even have to?

Our interview with AGCAS’s President Elect Dr Paul Redmond sets the theme with a discussion of graduate employability in the year 2012, whilst Yes Minister’s Director Dr Floyd Millen introduces his ‘agents of social change’ in GMT’s now regular comment column. Next, in fascinating article informed by his recent IPPR research, Will Straw looks at the UK HE sector through the lens of globalised politics.

In ‘Graduate employability in the new era’ Judy Smith explores why it is now essential to invest in building strong relationships between HEIs, students and employers – whilst Keele University’s Sally Findlow follows with a trans-regional look at the ‘point’ of HE.

Finally in this issue we bring you an exclusive research article on disabled graduates’ employability and careers service engagement.

The online edition of GMT has one additional feature – an exclusive introduction to the workings of NACE, as told by its director of communications. The article aims to showcase a robust example of good associational practice from outside our borders.

I do hope that you enjoy this fresh autumnal edition. Please keep your comments and suggestions coming in; for I need not say how important it is to keep the debate alive.

Aphrodite Papadatou
News In brief

• HESA in the news
The class of 2006/7 is in the spotlight: According to the new Longitudinal DLHE, graduates in a recession did a little worse than those who were not in a recession (September)

Higher Education Statistics for the UK 2011 – it shows that the number of overseas students coming to the UK has risen dramatically in the past five years (September) www.hesa.ac.uk

• This quarter’s best picks from OECD
The 2011 edition of Education at a glance: OECD indicators shows how the crisis has reinforced the importance of good education (September)

The latest Employment Outlook – it advises that governments must act on rising long-term unemployment and youth joblessness (September) www.oecd.org

• UKCES on careers and information guidance
Helping individuals succeed: transforming careers guidance – it summarises a number of reports produced for UKCES by iCeGS. IER, and others (August) www.ukces.org.uk

• UUK, ‘steaming hot’ off the press
Efficiency and effectiveness in higher education: a report by the Universities UK Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group – it does what it says on the box (September) www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

• Higher Education Academy newsfeed
The report of the Academy’s Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2011 shows the highest overall experience ratings since the surveys began (September)

HEA’s new report, The value of reuse of open educational resources, highlights the need to support learners and academic staff alike in the referencing and reuse of online resources (September) www.heacademy.ac.uk

• CBI reports...
That the road back to long term growth will be rocky but employers are ready to meet the call for better skills and a more competitive workforce; according, at least, to Business investment in skills – the road back to growth… (August) www.cbi.org.uk

• The financial returns of a degree...
Still ‘going strong’, says a new report by the Resolution Foundation: Snakes and Ladders shows that the pay gap between graduates and non-graduates widens with age (September) www.resolutionfoundation.org

• ‘Hot’ BIS launches
New Challenges, new chances: next steps in implementing the FE reform programme; the latest consultation offers both challenges and opportunities (August)

New technical consultation: a new, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the HE sector. The consultation follows June’s HE White Paper (August) www.bis.gov.uk

• Universities are paramount
HEIs are essential for growth, as University Alliance’s new report, Growing the future: universities leading, changing and creating the regional economy, makes very clear (September) www.university-alliance.ac.uk

• Student satisfaction remains high...
Is what the results of the 2011 National Student Survey show. This year overall course satisfaction rates for those studying in UK HEIs and FECs are pegged at 83 per cent. Good going (September) www.unistats.direct.gov.uk

• What’s new at HECSU
The much anticipated 2011 edition of What Do Graduates Do? is launched in November. You heard it here first

The new Real Prospects 2011 report explores how this year’s graduates have succeeded in negotiating the graduate labour market. It is available to download now

HECSU is currently completing a report on regional graduate employment and how the recession has affected it – to be launched later this autumn. Stay tuned

And finally, a call to arms… Futuretrack: the final and most important stage where we track graduates’ progression into work is about to happen. To find out more contact HECSU Research Director, Jane Artess at j.artess@prospects.ac.uk www.hecsu.ac.uk

To subscribe to the GMT e-newsletter go to www.prospects.ac.uk/gmtregister
Discussions on student employability are now more ‘en vogue’ than ever before. GMT explores the issues and challenges brought on by fast changing higher education and technology landscapes with an exclusive interview: AGCAS’s new President Elect, and one of the best known experts and public figures in the field, Dr Paul Redmond, talks to Aphrodite Papadatou about graduate employability in the year 2012 – and beyond.1

AP: The recent higher education white paper reinforces governmental concern for employability. How will this affect the provision of undergraduate degrees? Will some disciplines where employment rates are low become ‘extinct’?

PR: I think the sector is going through a phase where it is asking itself big questions like ‘what is higher education for?’ and often answers to these are shaped by instrumentalist concerns – such as all university courses should contribute to the economy.

In some ways, this is fairly recent idea, but it has now become so mainstream to be almost ubiquitous. This strikes me as being a pity. Not only does it challenge the idea of the university, even economically, it doesn’t make sense. We need the artistic skills of the arts and humanities to innovate and produce future technology – think for example of the iPad: technology meets art and design. The only reason why early Apple computers offered different fonts was because Steve Jobs, prior to being thrown out of university, had been on a calligraphy course. To be ‘employable’, you need a range of skills and attitudes – creative thinking is one of them.

I think one of the reasons we get so muddled about this is because words like ‘employability’ are so easily confused with ‘employment’. People tend to think the two words are interchangeable, when in fact, this isn’t always the case. Employability is a highly dynamic concept – it denotes a progression and a certain amount of self-sufficiency. Being in ‘employment’, on the other hand, is static; it’s about being paid to do a certain job. For understandable reasons, the graduate job market is preoccupied by the rhetoric of ‘getting a job’ – but getting a job is only part of employability!

A few years ago, I did some presentations to managers at Lehman Brothers. When they went out of business I kept in contact with several of their senior investment bankers. What struck me was how quickly these people were back in employment – in some cases, they had been offered jobs within hours of being made redundant. Forget all the rhetoric about ‘transferable skills’: to me, that’s ‘employability’ – the ability to find employment at the same grade, in the same line of work, whenever and wherever you need it!

Decent higher education should produce ‘employable’ graduates, regardless of subject of study or academic discipline. Employers know this, which is why when recruiting, so few of them specify academic disciplines. What they want is bright, enthusiastic, motivated and sparky graduates – people who can get things done without causing mass walkouts or criminal lawsuits. One senior banker told me recently, “You know, banking today isn’t technical – you don’t need a calculator. What you need is to be good with people, good at seeing things from other points of view.”

AP: Should employability be embedded in undergraduate curriculum, and is certification a good thing?

PR: At Liverpool, we think of employability as residing in three dimensions: curricular; co-curricular; and extracurricular. As such, different academic subjects can approach employability according to the...
constructs and conventions of their own curricula. For some, this might be employability modules; for others, visits to employer premises, or visiting speakers. What matters is that students on enrolment are clear about what their employability entitlement is – how their degree subject will approach employability. Alongside this, it’s essential that students have access to co-curricular employability opportunities – things they can do as part of their studies, without necessarily receiving academic credit. For example, learning to give presentations or work in teams. Finally, students need lots of opportunities for developing employability skills through extracurricular options – these can be offered by the careers service, the student union, or even arranged by the student herself.

What we are working towards in Liverpool is to embed an expectation that students should be constantly developing a certain set of employability skills, all gained within the space of the three dimensions discussed earlier.

**AP:** Whose responsibility is it to ensure that graduates are employable?

**PR:** My view is that responsibility is shared or owned by students and universities – it’s a joint effort, a joint commitment. Ultimately, however, I think it’s the responsibility of the student. Universities offer fabulous opportunities for students to develop their skills and experience – all they have to do is join in. As Woody Allen said, “Anything can happen when you turn up for work.” The same goes for higher education.

Since the credit crunch, parents are becoming increasingly active in terms of taking responsibility for their son or daughter’s employability. I’ve come across lots of stories of parents ‘trading’ internships between themselves, organising work placements, turning up to job interviews, even liaising with employers in a bid to renegotiate their child’s starting salary! In articles I’ve written, I refer to such parents as “helicopter parents”. These are parents who actively take on some (or a lot) of their offspring’s responsibility so as to provide them with what they think is the best possible life chances in adulthood. At university level we increasingly see them on their own at careers fairs for students. What I find fascinating is how comfortable ‘Generation Y’ students are with this level of parental involvement. Other generations might have found the idea of parents getting involved in the career process horrifying; Generation Y seems to welcome it – in fact, some of them seem to be in the process of outsourcing the career search process to their folks!

From a sociological perspective, it’s interesting to speculate about why this is happening – and why now. Primarily, these are ‘Baby Boomer’ parents, who have to some extent ‘decoded’ the job market. They’ve figured out how employment markets ‘work’, how educational ‘capital’ can be maximised through contacts and strategic alliances. Armed with this ‘knowledge’, they are in a poll-position to take it upon themselves to ‘fast-track’ their offspring through the early ‘qualifying’ rounds of the job market.

Of course this is often and largely a middle class phenomenon, and as such raises questions of social mobility and equality. After all, what happens if your parents don’t know people who can offer you internships? As competition for graduate credentials intensifies, the phenomenon seems to be on the rise. Note, for example, how even in schools, work experience is becoming increasingly important.

**AP:** There is currently fierce public debate about students becoming ‘consumers’ of HE. Do you think their behaviour will really change?

**PR:** I suspect that ultimately, students will always be students! Some things never change – even with an economic downturn. Throughout the last century, the UK higher education system underwent lots of changes, but, on the whole, students’ attitudes to life have remained consistent. The same students want to have fun; they want to enjoy themselves; they want to make the most of higher education; they’re full of enthusiasm, full of excitement, and determined to have a good time! (This of course is why it’s so rewarding to work with them). Every September I give a talk to first-year students and every year they tell me how fantastic it is to be at university and how much they are looking forward to the whole experience. Even with the hike in tuition fees, I still expect student attitude and behaviours to remain the same.

That said, I think – or hope – that students will be more tuned in to what they’re being offered. After all, going to university represents a significant long-term investment.

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AP: Audiences across the country now know about Generations ‘X’ and ‘Y’, least not because of your engaging speeches and work with the national media. What is the post-2012 generation?

PR: The next generation will be known as the ‘Millennials’, or ‘Generation Z’. These people are actually going to be very fascinating to work with because in some ways, they have grown up in a very different economic and technological climate to us: cyber-space has always been a fundamental part of their awareness. Some commentators call them ‘digital natives’; for them technology is a way of life: strictly speaking, it’s not even technology (if it’s existed before you were born, it’s not actually technology – it’s furniture).

What we know is that they’re the most globally connected generation, but also, in other ways, the most isolated. This is a generation that will have ‘friends’ dotted digitally around the world, but who don’t know their neighbours. Thus the Millennials will be very difficult to engage with, particularly in education.

The challenges of communicating to the Millennials will be immense. Recently, while watching a Formula 1 grand prix, I was struck by a commentator who said that the producers were aiming to make the TV coverage of the race as good as PlayStation’s coverage. The virtual is now better than the actual. The digital natives have taken over the on-line asylum!

AP: Do you think that graduate recruitment is going to change?

PR: Yes definitely; I think it will change for a number of reasons. First, since the recession, employers have had far less money to spend on recruitment, and across all sectors, budgets have been cut. I suspect that the era when employers invested heavily on building up a strong campus presence is… well, perhaps if not over, but things are definitely more austere. But counter-balancing this is a greater savviness amongst recruiters for harnessing new tactics such as using social media and better targeted recruitment strategies to make better, more proactive use of careers services. I also think we’re beginning to see signs of organisations recruiting via internships – a development which has huge implications for both universities and students.

The impact of social media is only just becoming understood. In the future, employers, careers services and graduates will all use social media as an integral part of the recruitment process. The so called ‘Facebook revolution’ could not possibly escape our sector – we will see social networking sites being increasingly used in graduate recruitment alongside more traditional methods. However, it’s not all good news. Students have to understand the risks involved in social media, how on-line profiles can be easily become self-destructive if not correctly managed. You have to be very careful about what you disclose about yourself on-line, and we shouldn’t assume that ‘digital natives’ automatically know the protocols and boundaries. Ultimately, this could wreck a future career, even before it’s begun.

AP: You have recently done some work on unpaid internships. What did you find and what is your message to employers?

PR: Actually this is part of the work I do with AGCAS. At AGCAS we have a very clear-cut position on internships: We do not support unpaid internships – and I believe many of the careers services are now following this line.

AP: Can you tell us more about AGCAS’s recent work on impact of university careers services?

PR: I am currently leading a group of heads of careers services looking at impact measurements – a very big and interesting issue! Traditionally, when trying to assess the impact of careers services, heads have looked to destination data. The problem is, this is rarely a reliable measure (after all, job markets can go up or down). Our group has been trying to look at other measures – for example different levels of audits; different ways of working with management; different ways of working with students etc.

We have now developed a series of indicators to help careers services measure impact. It is absolutely fascinating work, and raises very interesting issues about what it is that we do. From a management point of view it raises questions like, why do you invest in resources? What has the highest rate of return? Who is the key stake holder of careers services?

This group has enabled us to rethink impact, and we have come up with some really interesting, challenging...
ideas. We have so far road-tested the new impact measures in Warwick, and we gave a full presentation at the AGCAS Biennial this autumn. We have developed a series of exercises to actually help practitioners measure the impact of their career services. For example, we think about the impact of group sessions – how do you cost a talk on CVs to a group of fifty students? How cost effective and meaningful are they?

These are the things we have been thinking about, and we have come up with different ways of measuring and evaluating them. There is a resource already up on AGCAS’ website, but people will be able to find out more about it in our next Biennial.

**AP:** What are your priorities at AGCAS next year?

**PR:** Higher education and careers services are both going through immense change at the moment, so I think our priority now is to help careers services respond to changes that are taking place at their universities. Our priorities are to lobby Government as effectively as possible and to represent our members effectively – all while remaining at the cutting edge of Careers Information Advice and Guidance. We will keep developing and providing the best careers advice and information support to our members; and we will remain in effective communication with our partners, such as Prospects and AGR, to achieve all this.

**AP:** Finally, outside the remits of AGCAS duties, what intrigues Paul Redmond now? What are you working on?

**PR:** I’m continuing to work on my generational research, particularly in terms of how different generations in the workplace can work together more effectively. I’ve noticed that in many organisations, a ‘conversation gap’ exists between members of different age cohorts. Partly this is because of the way the different generations communicate; it’s also because of very different aspirations and expectations. I’m working on a new publication called ‘Generally Speaking’ which is all about helping managers and new graduates develop effective mentoring partnerships – by doing something very radical. Talking to each other!

I’ve also got another book coming out in January. It’s aimed at helping parents understand the graduate job market. The book follows on from my 2010 publication, ‘The Graduate Jobs Formula’, which has been selling really well.
Free to comment

Higher education and social cohesion

Agnets of change

Director of public affairs thinktank Yes Minister, Dr Floyd Millen takes a look at the role of higher education, its institutions and its students in creating socially cohesive societies. He comments exclusively for GMT.

I have not approached this from an ideological position; neither do I wish to present an all-encompassing and exhaustive appraisal, exposé or analysis of the wider picture in which we find our education system, our students or our public finances. Instead, I write in the knowledge that our education system is changing and that our economy is bumping precariously along the bottom – and with it, access to scarce resources is becoming scarcer.

It is with this backdrop that I see our higher education system and students as agents and catalysts for change. Here I will discuss the impact of higher education institutions (HEIs) in relation to social cohesion, economic growth and the reciprocal nature of the social contract vis-à-vis the citizens’ obligations and rights.

HEIs as agents of growth

If we only view higher education through the prism of the impact HEIs have on the lives and the life chances of graduates, then we fail to see the wider impacts which these institutions actually bring. We do indeed know that having a degree will see graduates earn an extra £132,000 over their lifetime but in these straitened times it is worth considering the direct financial impact that HEIs have on local businesses, SMEs, and considering how their presence has affected local trade and commerce. From 2008-2011 I have been a member of the ESRC’s Research Committee. I sat on the ESRC’s Funders Group which oversaw an initiative looking at the ‘Impact of Higher Education Institutions on Regional Economies’. What has become clear to me is that the demand-side impacts are self-evident. The steady growth of HEIs and the burgeoning growth in student numbers have increased the demand for (local) goods and services. Anecdotally, many of us can cite towns which have been rejuvenated due to students and universities. Over the last 20 years UK towns have seen a huge expansion in rental housing market, fast food outlets, and internet, software and telecommunications services.

Unfortunately, with the recession, increased cuts and the potential lower numbers of UK students entering university all of this is very likely to change, and we may begin to see the ripple downward effect on local business and enterprises. Indeed if we – as the UK’s growth agenda indicates – must prioritise the stimulation of regional economies then surely we have to begin by supporting university expansion and supporting those seeking to study, and not arbitrarily inhibit access to higher education.

By contrast the accusation now is that we have an increasing supply of graduates who are ill-equipped with the skills and qualifications that employers need

If however, we primarily view education from the perspective that learning is good ‘for learning’s sake’ and (quite rightly) that the benefits cannot always be measured in pounds and pence, then by definition, our approach, our considerations and our conclusions will take us to a different place. The above viewpoints explain why protagonists on either side of this debate become entrenched and polarised about the role of higher education, their institutions, their position, who pays when and how much.

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1 The figure comes from OECD’s Education at a Glance 2011 report. You can access it at www.oecd.org
coming into a shrinking job market. I believe that this accusation misses the point about the social and ethical value of an education: we must never forget that higher education is an investment in human capital which brings wider benefits and serves to further cohere and integrate individuals into society.

**Agents of social cohesion**

When viewing the wider impacts through the looking glass of social cohesion we are bound to ask questions about what social cohesion – and the presence or absence of it – is; what are its impact on our relationships to each other and to institutions; and to what degree do these relationships assist or inhibit our participation and social cohesion.

What we do already know is that a sense of belonging, fellow feeling, reciprocity and (crucially) access to scarce resources all have a direct impact on how (and if) we cohere. Encapsulated within any sense or notion of belonging is reciprocity. An individual can barely be committed or be said to truly belong to any community – be it political, social or economic – unless that community is also committed to them. Social mobility is therefore about rights, responsibilities, risks and rewards: who is giving to whom, when and how.

For access and opportunity to be tangible, the possibility of routes to progress thus needs to be reflected in the structures, policies and conduct of the political, social and economic system. Without clear and accessible routes to progress people will feel alienated and disengaged. However, with countervailing and conflicting interests and varied influences, communities and individuals are vying for their place. In these instances it is easy to conclude that there is little social cohesion if our lives perpetually collide in a continual search for equilibrium.

I would however support the opposite viewpoint and conclude that such collisions do not reflect a broken, but a changing society. When viewed in this light, the recent student disturbances are not incongruous to social cohesion, but they are in fact robust examples of the very making of cohesive societies which ultimately operate within the rule of law and within the confines of society’s mores. If there is to be a smooth and effective exchange of rights, responsibilities and obligations, the relationship between the citizen and the state requires reciprocity of action – not just theoretically but practically. If the expected reciprocity is not maintained and there is perceived marginalisation, the question which then arises is how obligated can we expect the marginalised to be?

**Ensuring routes to progress**

Our technological age may have increased opportunity, but access points to these opportunities have actually narrowed. It is therefore important to entrench a wider social understanding and knowledge of how to access and utilise those channels. Without transparent inroads, the likelihood of progress is very limited. Social cohesion is not just about money – it is about routes to progress.

As things stand, and with a growing number of well-qualified young people fighting for diminishing job opportunities, there is a danger of widespread disillusionment and growing conflict over how educational opportunities are distributed and over the value of those opportunities in the market place – both bode ill for social cohesion. It is up to us to ensure that opportunities are equal and real.

Remember: Students and higher education institutions are agents of change in more ways than we may initially think. We need to make sure that they are not stifled.

To find out more about *Yes Minister*, visit [www.yesminister.org.uk](http://www.yesminister.org.uk)
IPPR’s Associate Director Will Straw looks at UK higher education through the lens of globalised politics. In contextualising recent UK HE policy within an evaluation of global economic power shifts, the author concludes that UK higher education is a major service asset which needs to remain at the top of its game and maintain its traditional export power at all costs.

Introducing the new globalised regime
The continued fallout from the 2007-08 global financial crisis has shown clearly how economic power is shifting from west to east. While most advanced economies experienced a recession of some kind, many developing countries continued to grow – buoyed in many cases by significant stimulus packages. In their latest report, the IMF projects that advanced economies will grow by 2.2 per cent in 2011 and 2.6 per cent in 2012 compared to 6.6 per cent for emerging and developing economies this year and 6.4 per cent next.

China, in particular, stands out as an economic behemoth outperforming all others. It has grown at around 10 per cent a year for 32 years and now boasts the world’s second largest economy. Measured in terms of purchasing power parities, China may overtake the United States in economic size within five years. The country is now the world’s largest exporter of goods and the second largest importer. It contributed a staggering 18 per cent of global growth in 2009 – more even than the US.

The good position of the UK
These extraordinary figures are viewed by many in the West as a threat to the current levels of prosperity. But globalisation is not a zero sum game and the rise of China (and the rest) presents a huge opportunity for the UK. McKinsey predict that annual spending by the global middle class will rise from $6.9 trillion today to $20 trillion over the next decade. Much of this will come in the form of increased demand for consumer goods such as cars, household appliances, and electronics where Britain is poorly placed. But some of this increased demand will be met by services too.

The UK currently runs a trade deficit, with imports outpacing exports by around £50 billion per year – just over 3 per cent of GDP. But this masks a markedly different performance between goods and services. While Britain runs a huge deficit in relation to goods, it runs a modest surplus on services. Indeed, the value of services exports grew twice as fast goods exports from 1998 to 2008 and the UK is the second biggest exporter of services after the USA.

A globalised service asset: UK HE in demand
An important part of this growth has been due to higher education. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are worth £59 billion to the UK economy annually and are a major export earner. Last year they brought in £5.3 billion or around 3 per cent of all services exports. Through their international activities, these universities are one of the UK’s fastest growing sources of export earnings with the number of students coming to the UK growing fast. In 2008-09, there were just under 370,000 foreign students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate level degrees at UK universities – up 16 per cent over five years. Reflecting wider shifts in the global economy, the top two countries of origin for these students are China and India. In 2008-09, over 47,000 came from China while 34,000 came from India. In 2007, the UK was the second top destination for international students after the US. And while the US had slipped back from providing a quarter of all international places in 2000 to 19.7 per cent in 2007, the UK had held firm with 11.6 per cent. Meanwhile, Universities UK is quite rightly encouraging Britain’s universities to export their HE provision to these countries and others by setting up campuses overseas.

The reason for this strong performance is clear. The UK is home to three of the world’s top ten HEIs and 29 of the top 200 as judged by the Times Higher Education Supplement. Only the US, which dominates the list, does better.

1IPPR is the Institute for Public Policy Research and is the UK’s leading progressive thinktank.
Attracting international students: risks and challenges

Nonetheless Britain’s status as a leading destination for international students is under threat and faces four key risks. First, Britain’s HE performance against international standards is slipping. As recently as 2008, the UK had four universities in the top 10 while in 2007, Cambridge and Oxford were tied for second place with Yale. Those ancient institutions have slipped back to 6th and 4th respectively while University College London has fallen from 7th to 17th.

Meanwhile, despite large increases in higher education enrolments, average increases elsewhere mean that the UK has slipped to mid-table in the OECD’s rankings and is now below the average.

Second, the Government’s tighter visa regime is likely to reduce the number of students coming to the UK to study. The UK government proposes reducing net migration from its current level of around 240,000 to “tens of thousands”. The burden of this reduction is likely to take place through restrictions on non-EU work, family, and student migration. The Migration Advisory Committee has suggested that to achieve their target, net migration via student routes will have to fall by almost 88,000 a year by 2015.

Analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research shows that even halving the number of student visas from outside the European Economic Area will only reduce net migration by about 40,000 to “tens of thousands”. The burden of this reduction is likely to take place through restrictions on non-EU work, family, and student migration. The Migration Advisory Committee has suggested that to achieve their target, net migration via student routes will have to fall by almost 88,000 a year by 2015.

Third, Britain’s total spending on higher education lags many other countries in the rich world. While spending rose from 1 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 1.3 per cent in 2007, it is still below the OECD average of 1.5 per cent. Indeed, the US, which unsurprisingly tops the list, spent 3.1 per cent of GDP.

And while overall expenditure has risen, public spending has fallen. According to the OECD, the UK government spent 0.7 per cent of GDP on higher education in 2000 but just 0.5 per cent in 2007. This represented a fall in the share of HE funding contributed by the state from 68 per cent in 2000 to 36 per cent in 2007. This trend is set to continue with all of the additional tuition fee income following the Browne Review being used to replace cuts to the government’s overall higher education budget. The 2010 spending review, for example, outlined cuts to teaching budgets of 40 per cent with public support for arts and humanities cut to virtually zero. It will be unclear until the new fees regime has had time to bed down whether the increased fees are enough to cover the government cuts.

Fourth, and related, there is a danger that the lived experience of international students in the UK goes backwards. Even before the government’s recent reforms, the student visa regime placed huge strain on the experience of students looking to earn a degree in the UK. Those coming from outside the EU are expected to prove independent means by showing that they have over £7,000 in a bank account and to pay an administrative fee of at least £255 for the privilege of gaining a visa. Making this system more onerous is likely to harm further the impression that international students have of the UK as a place to study.

International students may also find that their facilities are squeezed as universities respond to increasingly assertive domestic students who have to pay fees of £9,000 per year. In many universities, international students are already treated like second class citizens in relation to student accommodation and facilities. There is a grave risk that this will become the norm. If allowed to flourish, higher education can continue to become an important part of the UK’s economic response to globalisation. The UK’s universities are second only to the US and attract thousands of students every year from China, India and many other countries around the world. These trends will continue so long as the UK remains a welcoming place for students from around the world. The great concern is that the government’s new student visa regime and its funding reforms, in particular, place this opportunity under severe threat.
Attracting international students: risks and challenges

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Analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research shows that even halving the number of student visas from outside the European Economic Area will only reduce net migration by about 40,000. This is because seven in ten students return to their country of origin after completing their degrees (and so don’t show up in the net migration figures). Much of this anticipated squeeze will undoubtedly fall on countries where growth is expanding most rapidly. The only hope is that the government abandons its unachievable target when it realises the damage it is placing on our HE sector.

Third, Britain’s total spending on higher education lags many countries in the rich world. While spending rose from 1 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 1.3 per cent in 2007, it is still below the OECD average of 1.5 per cent. Indeed, the US, which unsurprisingly tops the list, spent 3.1 per cent of GDP.

And while overall expenditure has risen, public spending has fallen. According to the OECD, the UK government spent 0.7 per cent of GDP on higher education in 2000 but just 0.5 per cent in 2007. This represented a fall in the share of HE funding contributed by the state from 68 per cent in 2000 to 36 per cent in 2007. This trend is set to continue with all of the additional tuition fee income following the Browne Review being used to replace cuts to the government’s overall higher education budget. The 2010 spending review, for example, outlined cuts to teaching budgets of 40 per cent with public support for arts and humanities cut to virtually zero. It will be unclear until the new fees regime has had time to bed down whether the increased fees are enough to cover the government cuts.

Fourth, and related, there is a danger that the lived experience of international students in the UK goes backwards. Even before the government’s recent reforms, the student visa regime placed huge strain on the experience of students looking to earn a degree in the UK. Those coming from outside the EU are expected to prove independent means by showing that they have over £7,000 in a bank account and to pay an administrative fee of at least £255 for the privilege of gaining a visa. Making this system more onerous is likely to harm further the impression that international students have of the UK as a place to study.

International students may also find that their facilities are squeezed as universities respond to increasingly assertive domestic students who have to pay fees of £9,000 per year. In many universities, international students are already treated like second class citizens in relation to student accommodation and facilities. There is a grave risk that this will become the norm. If allowed to flourish, higher education can continue to become an important part of the UK’s economic response to globalisation. The UK’s universities are second only to the US and attract thousands of students every year from China, India and many other countries around the world. These trends will continue so long as the UK remains a welcoming place for students from around the world. The great concern is that the government’s new student visa regime and its funding reforms, in particular, place this opportunity under severe threat.

To find out more about IPPR visit www.ippr.org
A strong relationship between higher education institutions (HEIs), students and employers is crucial to ensuring employable graduates and a high quality student experience. The reforms proposed in this article by graduate employability expert Judy Smith encourage closer collaboration between HEIs, employers and students for the successful development of the sector.1

A complex but crucial relationship

The ambition of the current coalition government is to encourage employers to take a more active role in the experience of students in higher education. How the current reforms will encourage closer working between institutions, employers and students is not wholly clear when such partnerships require active development, and when HEIs take variable approaches to building and maintaining links with business.

Each element of this relationship requires time and energy to explore so an institution can make the most of the opportunities available to it in a way that will 1) benefit the business of providing higher education; 2) benefit the institution’s customers such as individual students seeking (and maintaining) graduate employment; 3) support academics in their approach to teaching and learning; 4) provide support to the position of businesses and employers in an increasingly competitive UK and global economic context.

Understandably there is internal pressure within institutions for deciding which element to develop first. For many HEIs it means more of the same – perhaps with the addition of building on and sharing good practice across an institution. For others a decision may be made to leave some elements alone and instead concentrate on one aspect only. HEIs should be encouraged to be as creative as possible with the whole range of opportunities presented to them but take a strategic and cross-institutional approach.

Customising approaches

The development of a closer working relationship between institutions, employers and students is a worthwhile ambition but the realities of making an impact across a whole institution, and for the benefit of all students, is a big challenge. One thing is for sure – there is not one approach that applies to all institutions. Developing relationships with employers is multifaceted and requires a variety of approaches in response to the variety of employers, businesses and skills sectors in the UK.

For some institutions the focus of their relationship with employers is on research, innovation and knowledge transfer, and less on how curriculum can be jointly developed or student employability developed. This may make economic sense for such institutions but it is important that those who develop relationships that bring innovations to business and industry reflect on how to share the benefits with students. As such the link between this work and the employability development and competences and skills of students may be less easy to demonstrate and requires detailed attention from those involved. It means that those who are negotiating and working with the employers look beyond the immediate benefits of research opportunities and the creation of new products, to exploring how their students can benefit from the relationship. For example this can be achieved through the enhancement of knowledge by adapting curriculum to reflect the application and transition of learning from the research.

Developing meaningful employer engagement

So, how can HEIs involve employers in the HE offer? There are many advantages in Faculties and programmes developing their own relationships which have real meaning for the academics and students involved. Equally building closer working relationships between businesses and employers at a more local level can be helpful for supporting employability development, as well as working with employer groups and brokers such as sector skills councils, professional bodies and larger corporate businesses. At the local level institutions can – through bringing flexibility to their QA systems for programme accreditation, validation and modifications – develop curriculum content that meets local employment needs and provides knowledge and skill to their students. This

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1Judy Smith is a freelance consultant working with institutions on employability, employee learning, access and progression. She has previously worked for the Higher Education Academy.

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work can be complex and time-consuming and requires senior management, academic and support staff buy-in.

HEIs need to be accessible to employers. Establishing mechanisms and processes to foster employer engagement and developing key people across institutions (who have a strategic awareness of the institution’s approach and where the entry and tipping points are) is very important for producing meaningful relationships. Developing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for academics and support services staff on this topic is crucial. Meaningful relationships also include exploring and developing the aspects that are mutually beneficial. Ultimately the experiences that are developed in partnerships with employers for the benefit of students, academics and curriculum development are important elements in making an HEI successful – and may have important repercussions in the data to be presented to the public as part of the Key Information Set (KIS). It is worthwhile therefore taking the investment seriously.

**Engaging those that matter**

Undoubtedly students themselves must be considered active partners in the relationship at stake. Academics sharing new research and developments in industry need to explore with students some of the implications for businesses, and how their own skills and knowledge may be in demand in any future or changing industry as a result of these developments. This may help students develop ‘commercial awareness’ - that particular skill set employers complain graduates lack. A curriculum that reflects industry needs can also be advantageous when students are looking for placements, as their preparation to make the most of that opportunity can be enhanced.

There is also a need to move away from the popular image that all students are aged between 18-25 years with limited employment experience. This is a false perception which is often perpetuated by the media and which employers seem to have ‘bought into’. In many HEIs half of the students fall into the over 25 years age range and many have extensive employment experience. Indeed many attend HE to enhance their existing skills and knowledge for future employment and professional development. The tacit knowledge of these students should be recognised more and drawn on for the benefits of all students by teachers of HE. This can be made more achievable if a curriculum is developed that recognises the need for this.

There is a real need to involve students more in understanding how the curriculum has been developed; where elements of the curriculum can enhance future employability; and how the learning outcomes of a programme, module or unit can support student skills and competence development and lead to better employment prospects.

When employers have participated in curriculum development they understand the outcomes for graduates. Equally when students have a more implicit understanding of their learning and become active participants in the learning process they are better placed to articulate to employers their employability.

**Let’s be creative**

HEIs are independent organisations, as the recent White Paper on higher education reforms makes clear, and as such they can develop their approach to teaching, learning, research and curriculum development in line with their own organisational missions. This may be the most opportune time available to us to really work closely with the range of businesses and employers for the benefit of students. Being creative in approach does not mean the loss of academic credibility or the passion for a subject that has less direct links with employers. Rather it can provide an opportunity to be innovative with the curriculum; to demonstrate the value of higher education to employers and to students in support of their future employment and help academics build relationships that may lead to new research opportunities and the development of new knowledge.

There are many excellent examples across the field of this work already happening. It is important that all routes are explored by HEIs. Finally it is important to take into account that relationships with employers and indeed with students require commitment and effort to build and flourish. For this reason the HE sector needs to make clear that this policy will take time to develop.
GMT research

What is the point of a university education
A trans-regional reflection

In her exclusive article for GMT Sally Findlow makes an important trans-regional juxtaposition to consider the purpose of higher education from both providers’ and students’ perspectives. Drawing on her research in the Gulf and her teaching in the UK, she takes these two very different knowledge economies to put the question at hand in global perspective.

Poles apart: conflicting perceptions

Post-compulsory education has always been split between learning about and learning how. When the divide between universities and polytechnics was removed in 1992, this split was brought to the heart of university business. Different academic ‘tribes’, with distinct ‘knowledge regimes’, interests and alliances and ways of understanding value and meaning were now supposed to be part of the same business.

The subsequent introduction of associated agendas – employability, public-private partnerships, widening participation – further intensified concern about the value of a higher education in terms of how it prepared students for taking part in society. Non-traditional students more governed by considerations of risk needed reassurance that their investment would be safely ‘returned’.

But students were no longer the only stakeholders. The rise of academic capitalism has rendered higher education an investment commodity, by non-student stakeholders, with the role of governments moving from being providers to fund-holding intermediaries between higher education and corporate investors.

There is correspondingly less attention to the things that make higher education a ‘public good’, or public policy, matter. Degree programmes instead have to make a case, above all, for their economic benefit to all parties. In the UK, major policy documents reflect the extent to which businesses and consortia are consulted on curriculum – as universities compete to appeal to the markets, but also as a necessary condition of co-funding and collaboration. What matters is that graduates should have the right skills for immediate employment. The re-branding is exemplified in the 2009 White Paper from the Department of Universities, Innovation and Skills, ‘The Learning Revolution’, where higher education is referred to only as a part of the national infrastructure for providing informal, flexible, lifelong learning directly linked to the labour (and non-labour!) market.

This response is not exclusive to the UK but is experienced in other Anglo-Saxon countries that have seen the challenges as declining economic reserves, student (and more general) consumerism, changing job markets and crises of social inclusion-exclusion. The United States’ established acceptance of higher educational commodification represents one extreme of a response that seeks to balance competing visions of higher education’s purpose. Australia’s response is on a level with the UK’s: partial conflation of ‘education’ and ‘training’, overhauls in funding regimes, and widening participation and inclusion initiatives while attempting to hold candles simultaneously for excellence, ‘the student experience’ and many distinct agendas that go by the ambiguous title of ‘internationalisation’. A slightly stronger vestige of social contract only marginally mitigates a similar overarching emphasis on innovation, work, export and economic competitiveness.

1 Sally Findlow is Programme Director at Keele University’s Teaching and Learning in Higher Education School of Public Policy and Professional Practice.
2 Becher & Trowler, Academic Tribes and Territories
3 Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, ‘Changing Knowledge Regimes’
4 Williams, ‘State finance of higher education’
5 ‘Transforming Australia’s Higher Education system’, p.7.
Academics and ideologues in these countries argue that such marketisation de-values higher education, that ‘skills-talk’ is a dishonest way of masking the impossibility of real change and improvement,6 that it is ‘killing thinking’,7 and that competition on contested grounds is morally degenerate.8 But these criticisms are deemed anachronistic. Social sciences are ‘re-branding’ themselves, and humanities and philosophy departments are threatened with closure on the grounds that their value is opaque and numbers unsustainable. These subjects are increasingly seen as indulgent luxuries, for students removed from the need to make ends meet.

**The impact of global instability**

Bring fees and their inexorable rise into the equation and these questions loom larger. But perhaps not entirely in the way you’d think. A fatal flaw in academic capitalism is its lack of clarity over what exactly, or who, the ‘product’ is – the student? the skills? the knowledge? the certificate? And who exactly the ‘buyer’ is – the state? the student? Thus fees-related discussion about the value of a degree has heralded a surprising argument: that if students are paying ever more, they want something over and above mere ‘training’ for jobs that need filling. So fast does the job market change that paying for a degree that prepares you for a job that might not be there by the time you have graduated can seem very shortsighted.

So on one level students may seek a higher education that equips them for tomorrow’s jobs as well as today’s. But they might also want to be equipped for a world undergoing rapid socio-political change. That is, one that transmits non-utilitarian knowledge for its own sake. Russell points out that far from being ‘useless’, knowledge with no immediately obvious utilitarian function promotes that vital long view, a broader perspective, balance and wisdom that helps both society and individuals function better.’ The social function of education isn’t just about preparing for a job, today’s or tomorrow’s. ‘Social mobility’, too, is about wellbeing and the ability to make choices as much as it is about employment.

If an unstable economic and political environment reminds us of this, might it not be beyond imagining that we will see a return to a form of higher education whose main reference point is something more than economic utility? Considerations such as these have re-ignited discussion of the ‘public good’ nature of higher education in a way that calls up the United States’ ‘civic education’ programmes, but without their insular and dogmatic undertone, and more squarely addressing the dynamic nature of our global future. Arguments for the building of cultural and intellectual capital through higher education invoke something closer to Friere’s ‘conscientisation’, endowing through ‘problem-posing education’ a sense of oneself in relation to the rest of the world, challenging hegemonic wisdom and facilitating policy change,10 as a way of producing good global citizens who can help promote political, geographical and economic sustainability. These ideas echo some from Butler’s radical post-war educational reforms, and those brought about in higher education by the Robbins Report. But time and again, especially in times of unrest, governments are reminded that conscientisation and political enlightenment also carry dangers: “One should take care to prevent the masses from learning to read”.11

However, and this is the paradox, if conscientisation is to be a major function of higher education, the notion of students or indeed anyone else as ‘stakeholders’ (one of the main arguments for raising fees) is highly problematic. ‘Investing’ in something where you might end up somewhere you had never expected makes ‘stakes’ meaningless.12 Yet the recurrent voice of protest runs through student discussions blogs: “We want a real university experience if we are paying £9,000.”

**A comparative snapshot: the small Gulf states**

These questions about what students think they are getting from university are equally critical for different but related reasons in the small Arab Gulf states. The Gulf is a region of recent developmental states, rich in natural resources, but lacking an established knowledge economy. On acquisition of

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6 Blake, Smith & Standish, *The universities we need*
7 Evans, *Killing Thinking*
8 Marginson, *Prospects of Higher Education*
10 Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum
11 Michael, *Official Knowledge*
12 Williams, *State finance of higher education*
both wealth and political autonomy each state established higher education systems to fulfil three overriding functions: symbols of newly acquired nation-statehood, windows into the outside world of ‘knowledge’, and to train indigenous workforces. Continuing major investment has perpetuated and further fragmented this vision, with competing foci on internationalisation and meeting substantial local workforce needs (rather different than the UK model of enabling students to compete for the few jobs available!).

Breaking this down reveals a tension between the continuation of education’s traditional role as regional mediator of social and political consciousness, and rampant academic capitalism of three main kinds. First, development is seen overwhelmingly in terms of increase – of outside investment, number of institutions and number of graduates. The under-regulated proliferation of multifarious types of higher education institution means that vast numbers of people continue to higher education and there are, overall, relatively few financial or academic barriers to finding somewhere to go to for a university education; the right of high school graduates to a higher education is enshrined in some national constitutions. Second, governments have bought wholesale into the ideology and practice of selling higher education as if it were real estate; it is said to be “recession-proof”, hence the emergence of ‘branch campuses’ – enterprises where private foreign providers are sponsored by local business and receive government licences. Third, there is little sense of governance informed by a sense of agreed purpose, public good, or public ownership. State governance has reduced to providing resources for investors, keeping an up-to-date educational database, and providing educational ‘services’.

Yet, or perhaps because of, these factors higher education is highly valued by Gulf nationals as a ‘continuation’ of education. In this the region is congruent with the rest of the Arab world, where a recent survey (the Third Arab Youth survey) found that 63 per cent of school leavers planned to go on to higher education. And there’s a strong underlying sense of social contract – indebtedness to national governments and a commitment to paying back to society.

The link between higher education and work, however, is more tenuous than governments, providers and sponsors would like. In a region where women form a substantial majority of the student population, low female graduate employment (rates of 40 to 50 per cent are presented as a success) is attributed to social attitudes and economic conditions that make work more of a lifestyle choice than an economic necessity. And, as those same women would say, men can get jobs without a degree anyway. So economic capital isn’t all students are looking for from higher education. Students want something more, and have from the start. But probing a little reveals that the extent to which acquiring knowledge is seen as an obviously valid objective, which of course has a social dimension. Asking some Gulf graduates recently whether higher education was felt to be more for society or individuals produced this stock answer:

“… If you have educated individuals you will have an educated society. If you are seeking economic and cultural development, you must have educated citizens who can develop it and enhance it.”

But as well as duty, higher education continues to shape critical or political consciousness. It might not be what students intended to get out of higher education, but like my UK students, they become critically transformed, see things from a broader perspective. Regarding, for instance, the role of religion in governing how to live, as one student explains:

“This whole dynamic view of Islam is quite new to me, you know. That was part of the transformation that I went through.”

And while Gulf students appreciate the apparently vast range of higher educational choices on offer, they lament the fragmented nature of higher education provision and its commodification, which they see the same critical eyes as they are challenging state control of personal and political freedoms.

It may be a reasonable over-generalisation to say that while most UK students think they are buying the prospect of greater economic capital as the end-point of university, the conscientising, knowledge-for-its-own-sake purpose of university ranks more highly among Gulf students. This difference – financial liberation on the one hand, ideological and political liberation on the other – may be due not only to different economic conditions, but also to what these students think they were promised when persuaded to go to university, and to what they have learned while
there. The example of the Gulf provides a cautionary
tale, a salutary reminder that knowledge is power and
that it is not possible to predict to what end this power
will be applied.

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Cardiff University’s Laura Williams outlines the findings of her yet unpublished PhD research thesis looking at disabled graduates’ engagement with university careers services. Her evidence points to a set of practical recommendations about developing alternative paths of engagement through decentralising careers services.1

The concept of career is evolving, jobs for life are no longer commonplace and the dearth of graduates means that there is more competition for fewer graduate level jobs. The culmination of these trends means that graduates have to consider their career path earlier and revisit their decision on a frequent basis, a change which warrants academic research.

Research aims
Research exploring the career paths of disabled graduates was conducted as part of a PhD thesis exploring the transition from higher education to the labour market for disabled graduates. In particular the research focused on careers, workplace adjustments, legislation and the benefit system. While work on disability is growing in popularity, the combination of employment and disability is scarce. This, coupled with the growing importance of gaining knowledge about graduate experiences in a changing higher education market, highlights the importance of this research.

Today careers services provide plenty of information and resources with which students can engage. The importance of early career planning while at university is paramount, usually leading to more successful labour market engagement (Purcell et al, 2005). It has been shown, however, that different categories of student engage in different ways, and to different extents with the careers service. The present research used interview to explore disabled graduates’ experiences of careers services at university.

Impact on social mobility
The research found various methods in which the participants undertook career investigation. Some participants chose not to take up careers support for two main reasons. The main rationale provided was that they generally ‘could not be bothered to think about careers’ and were instead focused on getting their degree. Secondly, accessing the careers service was viewed as unnecessary because the graduates were already decided upon their future career path. Those participants who failed to engage with the careers service utilised family and friends for advice. When questioned why they chose this method the usual response was that family and friends understood their impairment and knew their capabilities. The implications of using family and friends as support for entering the labour market are negative for equal opportunities; those students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have access to influential personnel in large companies and therefore less likely to make the right contacts.

Tailoring needs
For those students and graduates who do not access the careers service the possibility of mainstreaming provision through inter curricular courses and talks has potential. Building in careers information and planning into degree courses means that the student does not have to take ‘extra’ time to consider future employment. This is particularly pertinent for disabled graduates as the research found that they often have a greater number of tasks to juggle and finding the time and energy for extra activities, however fruitful, is limited.

A few participants from the sample voluntarily attended careers sessions while a student and graduate. The majority, who attended, however, did not find the careers service useful. Poor careers information and support was a common problem among the sample. The disabled graduates often felt that careers staff did

Laura Williams is Doctoral researcher at the Business school of Cardiff University, HRM Dept. Out of the frying pan and into the fire? Disabled graduates’ transitions from higher education to the labour market is the full title of her PhD thesis, which is due for completion in September 2012, and will be available from the Library of Wales and Cardiff Library on completion.
not have knowledge of the support they would be entitled to in the workplace, or how to help them manage their disability and employment. This finding was enhanced when careers advisors were interviewed. The majority of careers staff were not aware of specialist disabled graduate schemes, such as the Scope Graduate Leadership Scheme. While some knew where to find out the information the graduates needed, others seemed more reluctant to seek out information.

Empowering graduates
While the graduates reported lack of support from the careers service, careers staff also found graduates lacking. A major issue that all careers advisors reported was that students and graduates were unaware of their skills and how to take the step of converting their grades into marketable skills for employers. In terms of disabled graduates, careers advisors reported that disabled graduates often had ‘more’ skills as they were used to juggling studying and managing their impairment simultaneously; their challenge was then to ensure these skills were marketable to employers. Often the careers advisers would give advice about disclosure and how to ‘spin’ their impairment, to make it seem advantageous to a potential employer.

Decentralising the careers service
The trend which decentralises the careers service may help to address some of the concerns of disabled students. To meet the needs of disabled students, career services have provided mentoring schemes, leadership programmes and web based resources especially for disabled students (AGCAS, 2009). The increased use of the internet by larger employers and net based Personal and Professional Development (PPD) sessions will improve accessibility for disabled students. The integration of careers information into the core of degree courses which would remove the need for disabled students to access it as an extra circular service, is also a positive step.

It is not yet possible, however, to ascertain the impact such measures would actually have on the usage of careers services by disabled students. More significantly still, is the need to address the lack of knowledge among careers staff and poor skill marketability of graduates. Given the current economic climate and the changes to higher education, the importance of career planning is augmented – especially for disabled graduates who already have a lower employment rate than their non-disabled counterparts.

This is of greater importance as research has shown the positive impact careers service engagement has upon a students’ career. If disabled students and graduates are not able to benefit from this service, then they are at a distinct disadvantage in the labour market.

References:

Introducing

NACE

The American way

Mimi Collins’ article into the workings and purpose of NACE provides an essential insight into one of our sector’s best associational practice examples. In the light of recent changes in the UK, it is now more important than ever that we take tips from long established practices elsewhere.1

About NACE

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is the professional association for more than 5,000 college career services professionals at nearly 2,000 colleges in the United States and nearly 2,500 HR professionals who recruit new college graduates for their work forces. Higher education careers advisors and graduate employers are our primary constituencies, nonetheless membership is open to anyone interested in the employment of the college educated.

No doubt our mission at NACE is to facilitate the employment of the college educated through providing a variety of products and services to our members; however we believe that NACE’s greatest value is in bridging the college campus and the world of work through connecting members and enabling them to develop their professional network.

Indeed providing opportunities for our members to connect underscores many of our products and services, for example through networking-focused events and professional development programs – conferences, workshops, webinars and other learning experiences – for careers services and HR practitioners. We also foster ongoing connection, virtually, through a listserv and through social media outlets, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. In addition we provide all involved parties with an ethical framework through which they can work together: the NACE Principles for Professional Practice.

Finally, NACE has a strong research purpose. This includes the forecasting of trends in the job market; the tracking of legal issues in employment, the job search, and hiring practices; and the provision of professional standards and benchmarks to our sector.

NACE Research

Research is a primary emphasis for NACE. It is currently focused on three key areas: 1) hiring outlook and demand for new college graduates; 2) benchmarks for careers services and HR professionals to use in gauging the success of their operations; and 3) college student outcomes, expectations, and attitudes related to the job search, careers, and employment.

Our research, in the form of reports, is produced at set times throughout the year with the help of the following survey tools:

Job Outlook
At the beginning of each recruiting season (between August and September) we poll our employer members about their hiring intentions for the year through our Job Outlook survey, and we re-survey members in the spring regarding their hiring for the year to update earlier projections. In addition to hiring projections, the Job Outlook survey looks at preferences in candidate qualifications, salary and compensation plans, recruiting methods, on-campus activity, and other issues related to recruiting and hiring. We share details from the surveys with our members through detailed reports, and provide highlights to the public and media.

Salary Survey
Published in January, April, and September, our salary report captures starting salaries for new college graduates in more than 70 disciplines. The report is available to members and subscribers, and highlights are provided to the media.

Benchmark Surveys
At NACE we also provide three benchmark surveys of our members – the Career Services Benchmark Survey, the Recruiting Benchmarks Survey, and the

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1Mimi Collins is Director of Communications at the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

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Internship & Co-op Survey. These surveys allow participating members to compare their operations to those of their peers, and provide information they can use to lobby for additional resources. The Career Services Survey, for example, polls members about their services, staffing, and budgets, while the Recruiting Benchmarks Survey tracks specific measures, such as interview-to-offer rates and offer-to-acceptance rates, as well as operational details such as budget, staffing, and recruiting methods. We also survey our employer members for the Internship & Co-op Survey. Similar to the Recruiting Benchmarks Survey, this survey looks specifically at internship and cooperative education programs and tracks such things as recruiting methods, offer rates, conversion rates, salary and compensation plans for interns and co-ops.

Student Survey
We conduct an annual survey of college students across the United States to gauge their expectations and attitudes about the job search, careers, and employers and to gather early information about the employment outcomes for the class. In 2011, more than 50,000 students – including approximately 20,000 graduating seniors – took part. The survey report, based on responses from seniors, highlights student attitudes about what they seek in an job and an employer, tracks their post-graduation plans and what resources they used in their job search, and provides an early look at how the class did in the job market.

Custom research
In addition to these annual studies, we research emerging and critical issues and undertake custom research. Popular topics include demographic information for selected schools (used to assist organizations in identifying which schools to focus their recruiting efforts on) specialised salary reports; and custom cuts of benchmark data to provide for comparisons among organisations along specific parameters.

Education and professional development
A critical concern for NACE members is building their professional expertise. We address this need through a mix of virtual and face-to-face options. While both types of learning events provide skill-building, the face-to-face options also enable members to expand their professional network. Currently these include an annual conference, one-and half-day workshops, the Management Leadership Institute for Career Services Professionals, and roundtable discussion forums for HR professionals. In addition, in 2010 we added “Face2Face” meetings – half-day events focused around a specific hot topic, e.g., social media, diversity, internships, with networking built into the program. In 2012 we plan to introduce a two-day “mini-conference” for HR professionals which will be focused on specific topics.

The NACE annual conference is considered the premier learning and networking event for career services and college recruiting professionals in the United States. This four-day event is held in a different city each year, and typically features keynote speakers, workshops, and networking events. In 2012, the conference will be held in Las Vegas.

In addition to formal educational programs we offer our members the “Mentor Program.” This program, now in its second year, pairs a seasoned professional with someone new to field; the “peer-to-peer” approach is designed to help young professionals gain expertise, learn from the experiences of others, and provide another avenue for passing on best practice processes and procedures.

A voice of the profession
In recent years at NACE we have increased our emphasis on advocating on behalf of our members on issues relevant to the career planning, development, and employment of the new college graduate. To date our advocacy efforts have included issuing a position statement to the U.S. Department of Labour (DOL) on the cap on H-1B visas; offering recommendations to the federal government’s Office of Personnel Management on a special program designed to attract talent to the federal work force; and, most recently, providing the DOL with input on the issue of unpaid internships. Our recent advocacy role is an important part of how we serve our members by providing them with a “voice” in the national dialogue.

To find out more about NACE, visit www.naceweb.org
Launching HECSU Research Services

You will be familiar with HECSU’s role in commissioning research projects such as the Futuretrack studies and supporting practitioner research through initiatives such as PROP (Putting Research Outcomes into Practice) but you may be less familiar with HECSU’s work in carrying out research and development work.

In recent months, for example, HECSU has conducted bespoke, investigative projects on behalf of BIS, the Institute of Chemical Engineers and Bath Spa University. Some of the work we do is to meet a specific need (e.g. a recent ministerial briefing paper) and does not always find its way into the public domain but much of our work is published.

During the summer of 2010, we produced a report for Foundation Degree Forward, using Futuretrack data to examine the experiences of full-time Foundation degree students, entitled *Students’ experience of full-time Foundation degrees* as a partner to Claire Callender’s *Career Decision-making and career development of part-time Foundation degree students* and also report for Universities UK entitled *Changes in student choice and graduate destinations* which we recommend to you as it includes, amongst other things, that the number of graduates becoming careers advisers is the same in 2008/09 as it was in 2005/06. You might need to know that! We are currently working on a study of post-doctorate progression into research work for Vitae and the uses made of Longitudinal DLHE for HEFCE.

As the post-recessionary public sector cuts begin to bite, we have decided to launch a new facility to higher education careers services that we are calling **HECSU Research Services**, which comprises a commitment to all our careers service members, to provide them with support to investigate the key questions they face. This support might take the form of:

- help with questionnaire or research project design.
- investigations of data sources (e.g. DLHE data).
- surveys of student groups, employers, academic staff.
- reviews of literature or service processes, etc.

The resulting reports can be made publicly available or remain confidential to the institution or service commissioning the work. The commitment includes that **HECSU Research Services** will be either free of charge or attract a modest fee to cover our costs, as appropriate.

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