

# BENCHMARKING UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTERS

Best Practices of University Career Centers  
Around the World

Columbia University | School of International and Public Affairs  
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## INTRODUCTION

The *Benchmarking University Career Centers* report is the second of three deliverables in the scope of the Spring 2020 Economic Political Development Workshop, *Strengthening Career Centers for Better Employability of Tunisian Youth*, a partnership between the Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (Columbia|SIPA), and Education for Employment Tunisia (EFE-Tunisia).

This report has two main goals. First, it presents an extensive list of best practices identified by our research on career centers all over the world. Second, it introduces a benchmarking research tool called *Performance Assessment Rubric (PAR)*, specially developed for EFE-Tunisia, that permits comparing career centers around the world and will allow EFE-Tunisia to measure the processes and performance of the 149 Tunisian career centers which composes the *Career and Competency Certificate Centers Network (4C's Network)*.

The Report is divided into five sections, including this introduction. The second section elaborates on both the study rationale and the methodology applied in the benchmarking research. The third section explains a developed tool, the Performance Assessment Rubric, which quantitatively presents a set of initial results from interviews conducted with career centers from Brazil, France, Morocco, and the United States. The fourth section identifies and describes a number of best practices adopted by effective career centers around the world. These findings are presented in three main areas: Governance and Capacity; Access to Opportunities; and Student/Alumni/Community Engagement. Finally, the fifth section discusses conclusions from the benchmarking research, limitations to the study, and outlines the next steps for EFE-Tunisia to improve the career centers that compose the 4C's network.

## METHODOLOGY

The first objective of this report is to provide examples of operational best practices implemented in university career centers across the world. In addition to this, we also created a quantitative tool called Performance Assessment Rubric that measures the effectiveness of practices within a career center thus aiming to gauge the quality of such centers. This section discusses the methodologies involved in both efforts, including the rationale adopted for country selection, the research strategies used for benchmarking best practices, and finally, the design of the Performance Assessment Rubric.

### RATIONALE FOR COUNTRY/ CAREER CENTER SELECTION

Six countries were selected for in-depth research and analysis so as to identify best practices in career centers. We did not select our sample of career centers solely on the basis of global university rankings since this would have biased our sample selection towards American or European institutions. Moreover, we wanted to ensure that best practices from a variety of contexts were represented.

#### *Country selection*

We chose the United States, France, India, Egypt, Brazil, and Morocco to provide a broad spectrum of countries from which to draw examples of best practices for career centers. These countries were chosen based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historical origin of career centers in North America and Europe;
2. The similarities in the historical context of education systems with that of Tunisia;
3. Demographic similarity with Tunisia; and
4. The availability of data about top-ranking career centers or university data for specific global regions.

## *Career center/university selection*

After we selected our countries, we used national data to discover the top-ranking university or career centers within the country. We used mixed methods - quantitative analysis of publicly available data as well as interviews with local informants, including graduates from universities in various selected countries. For example, we asked students which institution in France had the most advanced career center and the team was guided towards The Paris Institute of Political Studies.

## *Country details*

### **Brazil**

Among the top ten universities in Latin America, five are Brazilian universities, including the first ranked.<sup>1</sup> One of our team members interviewed both the career center director from the first ranked public university and the career center coordinator of a well-reputed private university. By combining both public and private benchmarks, we could have a more heterogeneous sample of best practices.

Institutions:

Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro</li></ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● University of São Paulo</li></ul>

### **Egypt**

Egypt has the largest employment market and youngest youth demography in the Middle-East. Given this, it is an interesting country to use as an example of best career center practices. Furthermore, the American University in Cairo (AUC) launched Employability and Career Development Center

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<sup>1</sup> "World University Rankings 2019 | Times Higher Education (THE)." n.d. Accessed March 3, 2020. [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/-1/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/-1/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats).

(ECDC) at Suez Canal University to help improve employment prospects among the educated.<sup>2</sup> In fact, AUC’s Career Center professionals, who are licensed by the National Career Development Association in the United States, collaborated with Egyptian institutions to help ECDCs “recruit, train and certify career-development.”<sup>3</sup> The ECDCs provide one-one consultations with students regarding interview preparation, resume review, and soft skills such as communication.

Institution:

Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The American University in Cairo</li> </ul>
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### France

France follows a similar academic system to Tunisia, but is at a more advanced stage of economic development. It was selected because Tunisian education was originally modeled after the French education system due to colonial ties,<sup>4</sup> and French culture continues to play a significant role in Tunisian society and within the education system. For example, French is the second most common language taught in Tunisian schools after Arabic.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Sciences Po has a hybrid financing scheme combining private and public funding to allow for greater flexibility in their educational model.<sup>6</sup>

Institution:

Public-Private hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Paris)</li> </ul>
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The primary institution chosen for this study was Sciences Po, which has locations in Dijon, Le Havre, Menton, Nancy, Paris, Poitiers, Lille, and Reims.

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<sup>2</sup> “AUC Launches Employability and Career Development Center at Suez Canal University.” n.d. Al Bawaba. Accessed March 4, 2020. <https://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/auc-suez-canal-university-497797>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Thelwell, Kim. 2019. “Seven Facts About Education in Tunisia.” The Borgen Project. August 3, 2019. <https://borgenproject.org/7-facts-about-education-in-tunisia/>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Tunisia, A. F. S. n.d. “Tunisian School System.” *AFS Tunisia* (blog). <https://afs-tunisia.org/tunisian-school-system/>. Accessed February 20, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> “Governance & Budget.” n.d. Sciences Po. Accessed March 4, 2020. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/en/about/governance-budget>.

## India

India has accelerated its economic growth at an impressive pace, ever since its independence in 1947.<sup>7</sup> It has a total population of about 1.3<sup>8</sup> billion and is a geographically and culturally diverse country with 22 official languages<sup>9</sup>. In the context of career centers, with a large population and significant diversity, India makes for an interesting case because it has come up with unique ways to use low-cost resources to contribute to career center functioning.

Institution:

Private	● Institute of Rural Management Anand
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## Morocco

Similar to Tunisia, Morocco has a high youth population of which 80 percent are unemployed.<sup>10</sup> Career centers were non-existent before the USAID Morocco Career Center program was implemented, which began in 2015 and ended in 2020. Similar to the Education for Employment Tunisia project, this project sought to help youth obtain employment by using a “systems approach” that connects youth, employers (private and public sector), educators, and relevant government institutions.<sup>11</sup> These career centers are designed to be a knowledge hub where resources are provided to educate youth on “employment trends, demand for skills, and opportunities to connect with the private sector.<sup>12</sup>” The USAID Morocco Career Center project involved several implementers such as Education for Employment-Morocco, International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), FHI 360, Ministry of

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<sup>7</sup> “This Is the Story of India’s GDP Growth.” n.d. World Economic Forum. Accessed March 4, 2020.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/india-s-remarkably-robust-and-resilient-growth-story/>

<sup>8</sup> “India Population 2020”. World Population Review. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/india-population/>

<sup>9</sup> Language..”Ministry of Human Resource Development, India

[https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/languagebr.pdf](https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/languagebr.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> USAID Career Center | Fact Sheet | Morocco | U.S. Agency for International Development.” 2019. August 9, 2019.

<https://www.usaid.gov/morocco/fact-sheets/career-center-increase-moroccan-youth-employability>. [Accessed 3 Mar. 2020].

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

National Education, Vocational Training, and Higher Education and Scientific Research, Office for Vocational Training and Job Promotion (OFPPT), and GoldenResources, all of which specialized in certain areas. For example, IREX was primarily involved in capacity building for career center directors/counselors via training, as well as organizing professional development study tours for Career Center staff. The Morocco program helped establish brick and mortar career centers and a Virtual Career Center, which is similar to EFE's anticipated pilot program, and provides insights into how to build centers from the ground up and how to establish baseline standardization for career centers that are relatively underdeveloped or non-existent.

Institutions:

The USAID Morocco Career Center Program, included physical career centers, located in Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers, and a Virtual Career Center.<sup>13</sup>

- Career Centers established in the original program:
  - University Hassan II in Casablanca
  - University Cadi Ayyad in Marrakech
  - University Abdelmalek Essaadi in Tangier
  - L'Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de promotion du travail (OFPPT)
- Additional career centers or satellite centers include:
  - Mohammed V University in Rabat
  - Ministry of Tourism
  - University Hassan I in Settat
  - Satellite center in Ain Chock
  - Satellite center in Mohammedia

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<sup>13</sup> Vcc.careercenter.ma. (2020). *Usaid Career Center / Le centre de carrière virtuel*. [online] Available at: <https://vcc.careercenter.ma/vcc/careercenter>. Accessed March 6, 2020.

- Satellite center in Larache
- Satellite center in Martil

### United States of America (USA)

The United States was chosen as a region of study because of its role in establishing professional career services. Career counseling was first established in the United States during the 1890s by Frank Parsons who believed in three key tenets to job placement “(1) knowledge of self, (2) knowledge of the requirements for success in different occupations, (3) matching these two groups of facts.”<sup>14</sup> Today, these tenets are very much embedded in career centers in the United States. Furthermore, career counseling is offered at the high school level and career centers are found in a majority of higher education institutions in the United States. Due to both the longevity and advanced development of American career centers, these institutions are highly developed.

Specific American career centers were examined based on the 2020 Princeton College Career Center Review,<sup>15</sup> Best Colleges for Career Centers Review<sup>16</sup>, as well as access to primary resources, including, for example, the Office of Career Services at the School of International and Public Affairs. The selected career studies include both undergraduate to graduate level and both private and public institutions.

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<sup>14</sup> “History of Career Counseling - IResearchNet.” 2016. *Psychology* (blog). February 7, 2016. <https://psychology.iresearchnet.com/counseling-psychology/career-counseling/history-of-career-counseling/>. Accessed February 11, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Best Colleges 2020 | College Ranking List | The Princeton Review.” n.d. Accessed February 11, 2020. <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings/best-colleges>.

Institutions:

Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New York University</li><li>● Northeastern University</li><li>● Wake Forest University</li></ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pennsylvania State University - Public</li><li>● Purchase College State University of New York<sup>17</sup></li><li>● Richmond University</li></ul>

## BEST PRACTICES BENCHMARKING

Since there is no universal standard or benchmark for the “best career center,” we developed a set of best practices based on desk reviews and interviews with career center directors, coordinators, managers and volunteers at the selected institutions. Initial desk research was conducted, particularly in the United States where there is an abundance of online information, to understand the capacity, infrastructure, and performance of these career centers. Information from the selected countries was entered into a data matrix that guided the data collection, with fields such as the type of institution, governance, capacity, highest valued activities, and technology. Based on this information, we developed an interview schedule. In order to ensure that qualitative and quantitative information could be collected in the form of interviews - from all the selected countries, but especially from career centers with limited online information - an initial set of interview questions was developed and tested on the School of International and Public Affairs Career Center at Columbia University to create baseline parameters for the operation of a full-service career center.

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<sup>17</sup> "Purchase College Career Development Center". *Purchase.edu*. <https://www.purchase.edu/offices/career-development/>. Accessed February 7, 2020.

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC (PAR)

The Performance Assessment Rubric was developed to capture quantitative information about career center processes that could be easily measured and scored. This was done so that the end-user of the PAR could easily identify specific information by career center to gauge which center has the most effective practices. For example, Pennsylvania State University was listed on the top ten list of US career centers<sup>18</sup> and therefore the Director of the Pennsylvania State University's School of International Affairs career center was interviewed; the responses were entered into the PAR to be scored. The next section consists in an in-depth explanation of the PAR's development and operation.

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<sup>18</sup> Writers, Staff. 2013. "The Best Colleges for Career Services." BestColleges.Com. May 2, 2013. <https://www.bestcolleges.com/features/best-college-career-services/> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2020].

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC (PAR)

The information gathered through interviews was used not only to identify specific best practices, but also to measure the effectiveness of the Career Centers. To capture this information and compare one career center to another, we developed a novel tool, the Performance Assessment Rubric (PAR). In this section, we explain the PAR's structure; how the scoring system works and how to use it. By the end of this section, we also present a set of initial results from the career centers selected for the purpose of this report.

### THE BROAD CATEGORIES

In order to establish a scorecard that can effectively inform the future work of the 4C'S Network career centers, we identified several broad categories of activity upon which we established our recommendations:

#### **Governance/Capacity**

The governance score aims to assess (a) the organization's capacity in terms of staffing, monetary resources, physical resources. (b) alignment with policy objectives (c) performance in light of those objectives (d) flexibility in resource development (fundraising). The Institute of Governance<sup>19</sup> defines governance as the manner with which "society or groups within it organize to make decisions." For the career centers, our goal is to assess their capacity to manage their activities portfolios, organize efficiently, and collect and act upon feedback.

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<sup>19</sup>Institute on Governance. (2020). *What is Governance?* | *Institute on Governance*. [online] Available at: <https://iog.ca/what-is-governance/> [Accessed 3 Mar. 2020].

### **Access to opportunities**

The access to opportunities score assesses the breadth of impact (e.g. how many students secure professional opportunities (internship, job, or interview) through the centers?), (b) the type of services provided by the centers (c) the networking opportunities linked to the centers (e.g. how many networking opportunities, such as job fairs, are provided to students). Providing professional opportunities is a core element or a career center value proposition. This is why it is critical to assess and compare each center's capacity in doing so, as well as understanding the underlying elements behind the capacity to provide those opportunities or not.

### **Student/Alumni/Community engagement**

The student and alumni engagement score gauge a career center's relationship with its students and alumni, as measured by the amount and quality of engagement a career center provides. These items provide us with both quantitative and qualitative measures for assessment, ultimately strengthening the credibility of the final scores and/or rankings.

## **THE SCORING SYSTEM**

The scoring system is a points-based system consisting of 100 points in total. The rubric is divided into three categories, each of which is weighed equally. Different weights may be assigned for each of the three categories. Each question has its own unique scoring method. Some are yes or no questions (0 or 1 point), particularly those relating to the presence of certain features. Others are on a scale, (e.g. 1-3 points). Of the scaled questions, some are qualitative (e.g. a question about outcome management assigns 2 points for digital management, 1 for manual management, and 0 for no management system), and some are quantitative (e.g. ratios of students to counselors). For the quantitative questions, we chose the scale depending on the distribution and standard deviation of the responses we receive. This allowed us to assign points reliably and consistently.

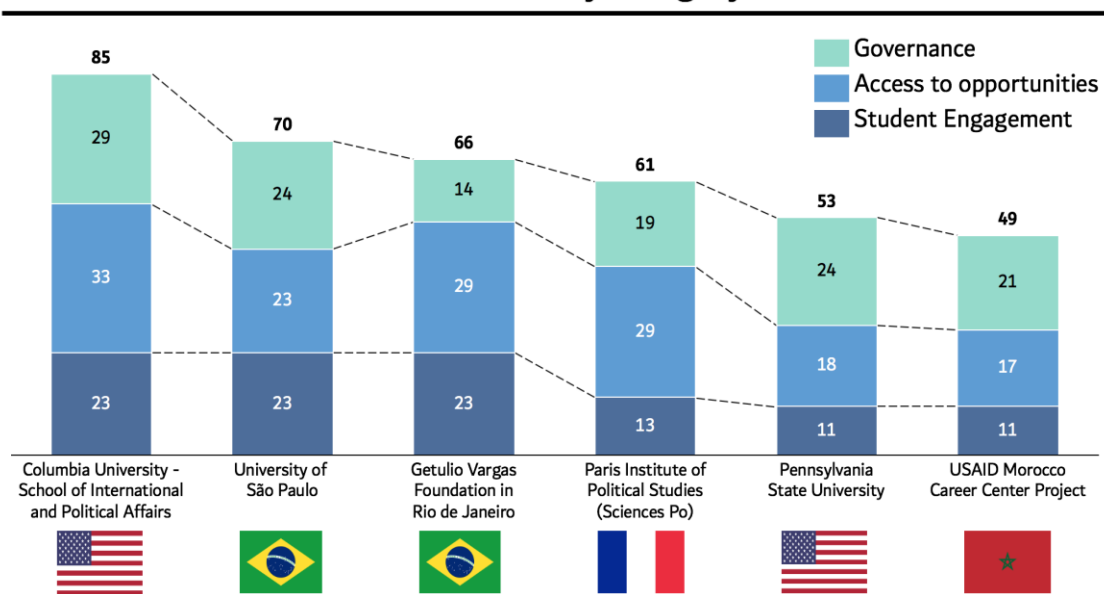
## HOW TO USE THE SCORECARD

The Performance Assessment Rubric, or PAR, is a fairly straightforward assessment test. The scorecard is designed to be user-friendly, meaning anyone with enough information regarding his or her career center can use it. The scorecard allows for individual categorical scores (e.g. governance, opportunities, and engagement), which helps highlight strengths and/or weaknesses within the career center.

## INITIAL SET OF RESULTS FROM PAR

PAR was tested on several universities around the world to compare performances in a standardized manner.

### PAR scores of reviewed universities by category










































Weighted totals	Columbia University - School of International and Political Affairs	Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro	University of São Paulo	Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po)	Pennsylvania State University	USAID Morocco Career Center Project <sup>20</sup>
Governance	28.6	14.3	23.8	19.0	23.8	21.2
Access to opportunities	33.3	29.4	23.1	28.9	17.6	16.7
Student Engagement	23.1	23.1	23.1	12.8	11.1	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>66.8</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>60.8</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>49.0</b>

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<sup>20</sup> Due to the PAR score being based on the general programme implementations for the USAID Morocco Career Center Program, this score may be underestimating the progress and advancement of the individual Morocco Career Centers. These career centers are significantly younger than the other career centers since they were established in 2015.

## **FINDINGS AND RESULTS (WORLDWIDE BEST PRACTICES)**

Based on information collected during interviews and desk research, the team organized findings based on three broad categories: *Governance and Capacity*, *Access to Opportunities*, and *Student/Alumni/Community Engagement*. Given below is a table summarizing the best practices found within each category and country examples. The following section provides details regarding each of these categories and further details of the country examples as well.

Categories	Subcategories	Best Practices
<b>Governance and Capacity</b>  	Staff management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Training</li> <li> Volunteer recruitment</li> <li> Responsibility allocation</li> <li></li> </ul>
	Funding strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Small grants</li> <li> Endowment fund</li> </ul>
	Monitoring and evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Digital management</li> <li></li> <li> Manual management</li> </ul>
<b>Access to Opportunities</b>  	Software & technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> School specific websites and applications</li> <li> Publicly available tools – Google Classroom</li> </ul>
	In-person services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Drop-in times, print and media resources</li> <li> Staff designated by specific experience and skills</li> <li> External consultants</li> </ul>
	Internships programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Graduation requirements</li> <li> Semester-long programs</li> </ul>
	Site visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Field trips, networking conferences, and focus group simulations during site visits</li> <li></li> </ul>
	Job fairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li> Annual business conferences</li> <li></li> </ul>
	Resident employer programs and employer sponsorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Employers partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Student/ Alumni/ Community Engagement</b>  	Student awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Introductory panel during the orientation period</li> <li> Professional development mandatory course</li> <li> Posters boards and online newsletter</li> <li> Application process to career center programs</li> <li> Student-run committees</li> </ul>
	Multi-stakeholder dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Lectures/panels by private and non-profits</li> <li></li> </ul>
	Mentorship program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Alumni-shadowing mentoring program</li> <li> Professionally-staffed mentoring center</li> <li> Career chats</li> <li> Alumni-based mentoring program</li> </ul>
	Alumni/community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Alumni Association and young alumni ambassador program</li> <li> Post-graduation engagement and survey</li> <li> Alumni as service providers</li> </ul>

## GOVERNANCE/CAPACITY

*Governance and Capacity* refers to the management and operations of a university career center. On the face of it, these aspects of a career center don't look like much (especially from a student's perspective). However, they play an integral role in a student's success in finding a job.

### *Staff management*

The team has identified three trends that tend to work for university career centers.

- Training - USAID Morocco Career Center Program, Morocco

Staff training by the career center itself is critical for success. For the USAID Morocco Career Center Program, all staff members received an initial onboarding training, bringing everyone up to speed on aspects such as mission statement, the functions of a career center, management tools, resources available to the student body, and services offered by the career center. Training also consisted of consistent professional development training throughout staff members' employment at the career center. These development sessions consisted of pedagogies and theories in career counseling, introduction to private sector engagement, and management of internship and job applications.

Recently, the Minister of National Education "has confirmed the Ministry's intent to generalize the career center model in all public universities in Morocco." Additionally, the Minister of National Education, Vocational Training and Higher Education have formalized the creation of a Career Center Central Coordination Unit, as recommended by the program. This Unit will include 9 staff, including a National Coordinator, three IT staff, a staff in charge of career services and training. At the Ministry level, the unit will support the sustainability and scale-up of the Career Center model and coordinate the work of the various central management committees.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Walsh, Abbey. Programme Officer at Education for Employment Global. Personal Interview. February 7, 2020.

- **Volunteer recruitment - University of São Paulo, Brazil**

In the University of São Paulo, we noticed that a significant number of staff members were well-engaged volunteers. This level of volunteer engagement seems to work well for this particular university in Brazil, since it allows volunteers to contribute significantly to the center as well as helping the volunteers themselves to develop their network and arrive closer to their own professional development goals. Many volunteers rely on the career center for networking purposes. Volunteers help career centers provide assistance to students, and in return form networks consisting of students, alumni, and professionals.

- **Responsibility allocation - Multiple Universities, United States and India**

Allocating responsibilities to specific staff members increases effectiveness by creating specialization. In the United States, many career centers have separate employer relations teams to help build a large network among employers in the private and public sector. These relationships require devoted time and travel. When the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) in New York began its career center, the Director was handling employer relations, advising, and management. This did not allow for the Director to focus on management and advising; therefore, the organization's structure now includes three advisors, one director, two employer relations employees, and three administrative staff. At Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) School of International Affairs, the Director at the Office of Career Services is the only employee that provides advising, event organization, and employer relations communications for 120 students. However, they have recognized the need for separate alumni affairs personnel; therefore, they are hiring someone to handle alumni affairs and track and facilitate engagement.

In Institute of Rural Management Anand, the institution follows a unique model for its staff. The university has a 'Placement Committee' that comprises 6 current students, who are elected as Placement

Committee members. These committee members are responsible for being the bridge between the student body and potential employers. A small administrative career center exists in the university; however their function is primarily administrative. The core role of providing students with opportunities is provided by this placement committee, which is headed by a professor who is a placement coordinator.

### *Funding strategies*

The area of importance under governance and capacity is funding strategies. Under funding strategies, the team has identified two trends that work for university career centers, beside public funding sources.

- **Small grants - USAID Morocco Career Center Program, Morocco**

Small grants to career centers can strengthen the capacity of career centers to plan activities and manage funds. As a part of the USAID Morocco Career Center project, all staff work with participating career centers apply for and carry out center-led projects through small grants. By the end of the project, all the pilot career centers were self-sustaining because the program had incorporated this into the project goals. For the career centers affiliated to a public university, it was negotiated with the state that staff would be paid, which ensured the center's financial sustainability.

- **Endowment fund - University of São Paulo, Brazil**

At the University of São Paulo, alumni and private sponsors created a non-profit organization to foster the university's mission. This organization established an Endowment Fund to financially support its activities. All the profits generated by the Endowment Fund are allocated to services for the university and its students. Since the career center is operated by the non-profit organization, the center receives resources directly from the Endowment Fund, and does not need to rely on any financial resources

coming from the government. Its financial independence not only represents a more sustainable business model, but also leads to greater flexibility in hiring external service providers. By having substantive resources available and the independence to allocate them, the career center is able to outsource all career development services, hiring experts to teach students about hard and soft skills, as well as organize events and job fairs.

### *Monitoring and evaluating*

- **Digital management - Multiple Universities, United States and Morocco**

The School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University uses software that captures utilization rates. SIPALink (the software used by SIPA) requires you to register for events and check-in at the event. The same method is used for registering for career advising sessions. This software can pull reports on how many current students or alumni use services at the Office of Career Services (SIPA).<sup>22</sup> Surveys are also administered after events such as site-visits that require long-distance travel at Pennsylvania State University and SIPA. In Morocco, career staff enter into a software system the attendance of students/users of center services and note the type of appointment. Staff also follow-up after events and administer surveys to find out utilization and effectiveness of services.

- **Manual management - Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil**

At Getulio Vargas Foundation in Brazil, the career center has one single full-time employee fully dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. This staff member manages and continuously updates the center's database using Excel. All attendees (students and alumni) of events and individual sessions are registered by this employee and updated in the database. The employee's data analysis gives parameters

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<sup>22</sup> Approximately 90% of the students use the Office of Career Services.

of general and individual engagement of each service provided by the career center and external providers. Also, three months after graduation, all graduates are interviewed by this employee in order to update their career status and understand how the career center helped secure employment opportunities. Although it is a time-consuming qualitative approach, this method provides important feedback to the career center.

## ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

Access to opportunities refers to the various services that university career centers could offer their students. These are services that would aim to enhance a student's employability in the job market and provide her with tools to secure a job.

### *Software and technology*

Several university career centers invest in software or use technology to help make their user experience more efficient.

- **School specific websites and applications - Multiple Universities, United States**

The School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University utilizes its online portal, 'SIPALink',<sup>23</sup> providing students access to career-related services such as job and internship postings, book appointments with the career center etc. SIPALink updates an average of 75 to 150 job postings per week.

Similarly, the University of Richmond uses an online database called "SpiderConnect"<sup>24</sup> that helps students and alumni search for employers recruiting on campus, apply for internships and jobs, and connect with the career center's services.

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<sup>23</sup> Sipa.columbia.edu. (2020). SIPALink | Columbia SIPA. [online] Available at: <https://sipa.columbia.edu/careers/career-resources/sipalink>. Accessed 28 Feb. 2020.

<sup>24</sup> "SpiderConnect - Career Services - University of Richmond." SpiderConnect - Career Services - University of Richmond, [careerservices.richmond.edu/students/programs-services/spiderconnect.html](http://careerservices.richmond.edu/students/programs-services/spiderconnect.html).

New York University has an employer website where employers can post jobs, participate in career fairs, arrange organization site visits or conduct on- campus interviews.<sup>25</sup>

Wake Forest University utilizes ‘The Handshake app’<sup>26</sup> which helps students to build their profiles, investigate work opportunities, and match their interests. The Handshake Application was first launched in 2014 and over 60 U.S. universities use this application, including Stanford University, Wake Forest University, and the University of San Francisco. This platform provides students with personalized matches for their career interests and available jobs. For example, students receive notifications that narrow job opportunities based on their previous work experience and employment goals. This application is also heavily used by company recruiters, and helps students access internships, and employment. For more information on the Handshake App, visit- <https://joinhandshake.com>.

- Publicly available tools, Google Classroom - University of São Paulo, Brazil

To share information and materials with the students and alumni, the Career Center uses Google Classroom. It is a free online software developed by Google to help manage academic environments. Instructors and students are able to share class materials, surveys, and make announcements such as job opportunities and save-the-date for events. The tool can be found here: <https://classroom.google.com/>

### *In-person services*

In-person career services are the facilities provided by career centers where staff interact directly with students to provide them with the support, they require to enhance their skills or increase their likelihood of securing a job.

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Accessed February 2, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Employers can post jobs by registering and instructions are located on this website: <https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/career-development-and-jobs/employers.html>.

<sup>26</sup> “Handshake.” Office of Personal & Career Development, [opcd.wfu.edu/get-ready/tools-for-connecting/handshake/](http://opcd.wfu.edu/get-ready/tools-for-connecting/handshake/).

- **Drop-in times, print and media resources - Pennsylvania State University, United States**

At Pennsylvania State University at both the undergraduate and graduate level, students start with a brief drop-in visit with a full-time career counselor who assists students with the following activities: interviewing, networking, internships and job searches, job shadowing opportunities, salary negotiation, and selection of an appropriate major. After an initial drop-in meeting, students have the option to sign up for individual counseling, which is more in-depth and provides students with a professional mentor throughout their university life. Pennsylvania State University also has a Career Library furnished with books, handouts, and other texts, videos, and numerous online information and analysis resources.

- **Staff designated by specific experience and skills - Getulio Vargas Foundation University, Brazil**

In the Getulio Vargas Foundation Career Center there are two staff members dedicated to conducting individual career development sessions with students. One employee is a psychologist and another has an academic and professional background in business. To illustrate how these complementary skills work, the psychologist leads personal advising and soft skills sessions, and the business person conducts sessions focused on resume reviews and mock interviews.

- **External consultants - Institute of Rural Management Anand, India**

In the Institute of Rural Management Anand in India, services such as soft skills training or interview training preparation is not done in-house but outsourced to external consultants who work with students, if there is demand for a particular service. In this way, expensive resources are drawn on as required, which helps in keeping overall costs low.

## *Internship programs*

Internship programs provide a means for students to gain first-hand experience of what it may be like to work in a particular position, at a particular organization. Some internship programs are a part of the curriculum or a degree requirement, while others are suggested parts of programs.

- **Graduation requirements - Pennsylvania State, United States; and Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil**

At Pennsylvania State University's School of International Affairs, an internship is one way to complete a capstone (final project) requirement for graduation as opposed to completing a thesis paper. As a requirement to graduate, about 75% of the students choose the internship program. Pennsylvania State University also has partnerships with organizations such as the Peace Corps that gives students opportunities to volunteer and gain professional experience.

At Getulio Vargas Foundation, among all departments served by the Career Center, the largest one in terms of students' enrollment - Management & Business Bachelor Degree - has a mandatory internship requirement. Students may obtain internship opportunities through the Career Center's connections with hiring organizations; all undergraduate students are required to have their internship experience approved by the Career Center. By being in touch with the Career Center to accomplish this process, the students become aware of the services provided by the Career Center, thus becoming regular users.

- **Semester-long programs – University of São, Brazil**

In the University of São Paulo, the flagship program is a one-semester capacity building program that trains students on both soft and hard skills to better prepare them for the labor market. By the end of the semester, all students get a summer internship position within partner organizations that sponsor

the program. This mandatory internship is an opportunity for students to apply their skills to a professional environment.

### *Site visits*

Site visits allow students to learn first-hand about potential employment opportunities and the organization's culture. Typically, the university works together with the employer to allow students to visit the employers on a specified day and attend talks by staff, or see the office facilities and spaces.

- **Multiple Universities, USA and Brazil**

By physical location, Pennsylvania State University is located away from most jobs linked to international development. A majority of employer relation and networking events for this program require field trips to New York, Washington DC, and Pittsburgh; the school offers these services at a minimal fee.

SIPA holds an annual Washington, DC Conference, which is a four-day networking event that includes panels, employer site visits, and social networking activities. Students travel from New York to the Washington, DC area to familiarize themselves with different organizations in the area, as well as connect with alumni and other professionals working in the region.

Both the public and private career centers in Brazil organize site visits to private companies, non-profit organizations, and public departments to connect students with employers. The goal is to present the work done by these organizations but also to give a sense of a professional environment to the students. One way is to include a job application simulation in these site visits. One career center did a simulation group dynamic during one visit, where the students had the opportunity to simulate their behavior during a focus group moderated by a human resources officer from the company. This kind of simulation enables students to apply their soft skills and be aware of behavioral expectations.

## *Job Fairs*

Job fairs are organized by universities or the private sector, where a host of organizations come together to talk about opportunities in their organizations and to network with students.

- Annual conferences - University of São Paulo, Brazil; Institute of Rural Management Anand, India; and SIPA, United States

In partnership with other departments within the university, the career center regularly organizes an annual business conference to engage students, alumni, faculty and employers. There are several thematic panels but also many networking activities. The size of this conference is important to maintain the career center's reputation as a profitable space of networking both for internal and external individuals. It is not only an opportunity for students and alumni finding job opportunities, but is also important for the consolidation of new partnerships to foster the career center activities as a whole, and fundraise resources for the Endowment Fund.

The placement committees in universities in India work several months in advance, in preparation for a job fair that is held for approximately a week. The committee ensures that a maximum number of employers are able to attend this fair. For example, the previous placement committee has a list of about 3,000 employers. The current placement committee reaches out to them, out of which a certain percentage respond and agree to come to the campus fair. Certain job criteria are collated for a particular employer and resumes matching the criteria are collected by the placement committee and then sent to the employer for further rounds of interviews.

At Columbia University's School of International Affairs, major job fairs such as the Ivy Sustainability Fair and Mailman Public Health Fair Columbia University are advertised, as well as virtual career fairs hosted by outside organizations.

## *Resident employer programs and employer sponsorship*

- **Employer Partnerships - Multiple Universities, United States**

At Purchase College State University of New York and New York University,<sup>27</sup> through the Development Employer Friends Program, employers select an event at the university to partner with and sponsor during the upcoming academic year.

At Northeastern University, there is a Resident employers' program,<sup>28</sup> in which employers maintain private offices on campus, making themselves available for appointments, Skype meetings, and drop-in hours to work with students one-on-one and help them shape their career plans.

## **STUDENT/ALUMNI/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Student/Alumni/Community Engagement section refers to how career centers manage their institutional relationship with students, alumni, and various stakeholders as well as how they connect their main customers - whether students or alumni - through mentoring initiatives. The goal here is to present best practices in four major strategies: Student Awareness, Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, Mentoring Programs, and Alumni Engagement.

### *Student awareness*

In order to become effective, the first step that should be taken by the career center is to guarantee substantial student awareness about all the services provided by the organization. Here we present strategies implemented by career centers to promote greater student awareness and engagement.

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<sup>27</sup> "Employers." New York University. <https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/career-development-and-jobs/employers.html>.

<sup>28</sup> "Northeastern University On Campus Recruiting." Employer Engagement and Career Design. <https://careers.northeastern.edu/article/on-campus-recruiting/>. Accessed February 2, 2020.

- **Introductory panel presenting the career center during the orientation period - Multiple Universities, United States; and Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil**

Several schools in the United States and the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Brazil mentioned that the Career Center Coordinator/Director holds a panel for each incoming class presenting the career center and its services.

- **Professional development mandatory course - SIPA/Columbia University, United States**

The School of International Affairs has a required Professional Development course that is credited and ensures a level of standardization of resumes based on the overall standards of the industry. It is a two-course sequence aimed to build a student's professional profile. The first part of the series includes a general course informing the student about the career services offered, resume and cover letter writing, and networking skills. The second part of the series includes a specialized course such as in "Negotiation in the Workplace" that builds on soft skills.

- **Posters boards and online newsletter - Multiple Universities, United States; and Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil**

Several schools in the United States and the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Brazil have posters boards to disclose information about events and career services. These posters boards are located both on campus and outside the career center offices. In addition, all the content from these flyers are also released to students by an online newsletter.

- **Application process to career center programs - University of São Paulo, Brazil**

In the University of São Paulo, student awareness is not a challenge at all. Due to the substantial perceived value of its flagship program, student demand for career center services is high. Therefore, the career center conducts application processes with the students to select those who will be able to enroll in professional development programs. The application process has two important side effects. First, it reinforces the high perceived value of career center services since the large uptake of applications is perceived as a factor of promoting awareness around the campus. Second, the positive feeling of being approved in an application process increases incentives and motivation of enrolled students to keep performing well during the entire program's cycle.

- **Student-run committees - Institute of Rural Management Anand, India**

Students themselves work as voluntary members in a Placement Committee. Because students are involved in the placement process, they have a direct stake in placing themselves and other students in jobs. Due to their high involvement in the process, all students in the university are aware of the services provided by the placement committee.

### *Multi-stakeholder dialogue - Academia, Industry, and Career Centers*

From primary and secondary research, the general consensus is that the success of a career center cannot rest solely on the career center, but rather this is a community effort. There should be dialogue and information sharing between students, academia, industries, career centers, and the community to align students' career objectives, skills, and job opportunities.

- **Lectures and panels by private sector companies and nonprofits - Multiple Universities, United States and Brazil**

At Pennsylvania State University and SIP/Columbia University, discussions are made between professors, industry, and the career center counselors to help match desired career with skills and

coursework that will help prepare the student for that career. For example, these discussions are facilitated at career panels and employer site-visits. SIPA also holds a series of New York City Career Panels where alumni panelists advise students on which courses to take for their particular field.

In the University of São Paulo, all capacity building sessions are outsourced by the career center since they have suitable and sustainable revenue sources coming from the Endowment Fund. The career center hires experts from academia and the private sector. They also provide space at the university for private companies and non-profit organizations that want to offer lectures or job panels.

In the Getulio Vargas Foundation, the Career Center engages with all university's departments in order to design an annual calendar, reinforce strategic partnerships, avoid overlapping of initiatives, and guarantee the general awareness about the career center services.

### *Mentorship program*

To support students and set them up for a successful career path, many universities have put in place mentorship programs. Mentorship is defined as the guidance provided by a mentor, an experienced person within a company or an educational institution.<sup>29</sup> The examples below provide a set of best practices with regards to mentorship program implementation.

- **Alumni-shadowing mentoring program - University of Richmond, USA**

The University of Richmond has developed and implemented a mentoring program that consists of shadowing activities.<sup>30</sup> The program, called “Spider Shadowing,” occurs during the winter and summer breaks where undergraduate students can spend half- or full-day job shadowing University of Richmond’s alumni. For the students, it is an effective and concrete way to learn about an industry, a career path, day-to-day workflow, and office culture. The University also offers peer advisors at the University’s

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<sup>29</sup>“Mentorship | Definition of Mentorship by Lexico.” n.d. Lexico Dictionaries | English. Accessed March 4, 2020. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/mentorship>.

<sup>30</sup> “Spider Shadowing - Career Services - University of Richmond.” Spider Shadowing - Career Services - University of Richmond, [careerservices.richmond.edu/students/programs-services/shadowing.html](http://careerservices.richmond.edu/students/programs-services/shadowing.html).

career office who are students that have received training on cover letters, resumes, and basic career services offered by the office. These peer advisors also help organize workshops on resumes, cover letters, and interviews, and career searching--really connecting the student body to the career service office.

- **Professionally-staffed mentoring center - Wake Forest University**

The Wake Forest University mentoring program provides to its students a mentoring center staffed by an experienced advisory team, a strong employer relations outreach program, and career coaches equipped to provide field-specific career development advice. The university curates a blog, accessible by university members and non-members to provide mentoring advice.<sup>31</sup>

- **Career Chats - Multiple Universities, United States**

Career chats are offered at many universities in the United States where alumni volunteer to speak with current students about career paths, their specific position, and etc. SIPA, Pennsylvania State, University of Richmond are some of the many career centers that facilitate this engagement. These chats allow the student to interact with alumni who are in the field and perhaps selected the same major or concentration. The alumni can not only advise students on course selection, but also connect them to employers for both internship and full-time employment.

- **Alumni-based mentoring program - University of Sao Paulo - Brazil**

After three to five years upon graduation, many alumni are taking leadership positions in their organizations, where they manage teams, requiring to use a new set of skills. This is why the University of Sao Paulo's career center has designed a specific program focused on these alumni. The program aims

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<sup>31</sup> "Wake University: Menotring Resource Center. <https://mentoringresourcecenter.tumblr.com/post/189591098260>. Accessed February 21, 2020.

to develop a set of skills, including abilities to transfer knowledge and manage human resources. At the end of the program cycle, these alumni will become mentors of students enrolled in the Career Development Program, the career center flagship initiative. During the semester, each one of the 70 students enrolled will be followed by one of the 70 mentor alumni. This one-to-one relationship is keen for the success of these initiatives and creates a long-standing networking environment for students, mentors and the career center as a whole.

### *Alumni/community engagement*

Alumni constitute one of the most valuable assets a university can have. Following their graduation, alumni often engage in initiatives and programs aiming to provide them with avenues to give back to their school. Furthermore, alumni often have extensive networks and represent a unique opportunity for universities to leverage those networks to benefit current students and improve their future career path. The initiatives presented below present a set of best practices for ways to engage alumni and leverage all that they can bring to the current student community.

- **Alumni association and young alumni ambassador program - Pennsylvania State University, United States**

Pennsylvania State has one of the largest alumni associations in the world. With such a large community of students and alumni, Pennsylvania State offers a comprehensive website with services accessible online by current students and alumni. The Pennsylvania State Alumni Association sponsors career panels, career and networking events, an online job search tool, alumni group events, and the Young Alumni Ambassador Program. The Young Alumni Ambassador program connects ambassadors to a network of alumni. The opportunity is open each year to five graduates who receive personalized career support. Ambassadors also serve as an insight resource to the University for the Alumni Association's affiliate group network and help educate groups on how to attract and retain recent alumni.

In order to foster an active and engaged community of alumni, most services offered to current students are also available to alumni. The career center engages alumni by asking for their participation in career panels and networking events.<sup>32</sup>

- **Post-graduation engagement and survey - Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

The university dedicates special efforts to maintain alumni engagement after graduation. For example, services provided by the career center are not only offered to current students, but also to alumni. Furthermore, three months upon graduation, the career center contacts all graduate students to check their employment status and to offer help for those who did not find a job yet.

- **Alumni as services providers - University of São Paulo, Brazil**

To establish a continuum in the alumni engagement with the school, part of the services offered to university students are also offered to university alumni. The career center has developed a specific capacity building and mentorship program aiming to support alumni throughout their professional career. Alumni are encouraged to join the career center as volunteers, which results in the career center being exclusively composed of alumni. Many alumni use the career center as a space for networking, and consequently engage with the career center through donation to the Endowment Fund that was established to financially sustain the career center's activities. Finally, many alumni become service providers to the career centers such as delivering paid courses and training to students who enroll in the career center's initiatives.

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<sup>32</sup> Link to the alumni association website:

[www.alumni.psu.edu/](http://www.alumni.psu.edu/);

Link to the Young Alumni Ambassador program:

<https://www.alumni.psu.edu/s/1218/16/interior.aspx?sid=1218&gid=4&pgid=5023>

Young Alumni Ambassador selection process and responsibilities:

<https://www.alumni.psu.edu/s/1218/16/interior.aspx?sid=1218&gid=4&pgid=5470>



## CONCLUSION

### REPORT SUMMARY

*Governance and Capacity, Access to Opportunities, and Student/Alumni/Community Engagement* were identified as the three broad categories in which we based our career center benchmark study and the Performance Assessment Rubric.

From the primary and secondary research conducted, staff management, training, organization structure, funding, and monitoring and evaluation were highlighted as important subtopics under *Governance and Capacity*. At this stage, it is worth highlighting that building a standardized training module and continuing education modules for employees (with or without administrative experience) would be an interesting recommendation for the 4C network to adopt to enhance capacity.

*Access to Opportunities* includes both digital and in-person services offered by career centers that help facilitate the student to build their professional profile. Among the identified best practices, employer site visits and career chats were found particularly helpful in exposing the student to employers, career positions, work culture, and demanded skills by the employers. Therefore, it is recommended that career centers help facilitate employer site visits, increasing students' exposure to organizations and the skills these employers are looking for in employees.

*Student/Alumni/Community Engagement* begins with making students aware of the affiliated career center and the available offerings at school orientations. Enhancing dialogue between academia, students, alumni, career center employees, and employers, will help build knowledge sharing and networks to better prepare students for their desired occupation and obtain employment, simultaneously utilizing career center and university resources more efficiently. Alumni engagement is essential to helping students connect to employers and familiarize themselves with the job market. Furthermore, by building an alumni/employer network, the region becomes more connected and thereby more informed of changes in the industry and in the academic setting. Building alumni engagement has been identified as a key

recommendation for Tunisian career centers to adopt because it is relatively easy to implement and can have a large impact on employment rate among youth. Alumni engagement can be facilitated through formal mentorship programs or informal activities such as career panels that are facilitated by the career center or university.

## NEXT STEPS ON THE SPRING 2020 ECONOMIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

As mentioned, this report is the second of three deliverables from the Spring 2020 Economic Political Development Workshop called Strengthening Career Centers for Better Employability of Tunisian Youth, a partnership between the Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (Columbia/SIPA), and Education for Employment Tunisia (EFE-Tunisia). The first deliverable was an in-depth diagnosis on the operational challenges among Tunisian career centers. Aiming to design future recommendations for solving these challenges, the first step taken by our team was researching benchmarks and collecting best practices from career centers around the world, thus consolidating this Benchmark Report. Going forward, we need to evaluate which of these findings can inform or be used as final recommendations to solve the challenges identified by the initial diagnosis. To measure the relevance and effectiveness of both the PAR and the best practices, it becomes necessary to promote some pressure tests with various Tunisian stakeholders.

## PRESSURE-TESTING THE PAR

The PAR was designed as a monitoring and evaluation tool that can be used to assess and compare career centers around the world and within the Tunisian regional context. To ensure its adoption and adaptability to the specific needs of the Tunisian context, it is necessary to test it on some of the Tunisian Career Centers within the 4C Network. These pressure-tests are one of the next steps that need to be taken by our team in partnership with EFE-Tunisia. By collecting feedback from these tests, it will become clearer which additional topics and other improvements should be introduced in the PAR to make it useful for both EFE-Tunisia and the 4C's Network. Therefore, after these tests and

further improvements, we recommend that EFE-Tunisia shares this tool with the entire 4C Network and establish a standard frequency of assessment in order to continuously evaluate the Tunisian Career Centers performance.

#### PRESSURE-TESTING THE BEST PRACTICES

The fourth section presents a set of best practices identified by our benchmarking research. To ensure that these findings can be adapted and adopted in the Tunisian context, thus becoming final recommendations, our team also needs to test them with several Tunisian stakeholders such as 4C's coordinators, funding partners, students and employers.

#### SPRING 2020 EPD WORKSHOP THIRD DELIVERABLE - THE FINAL REPORT

The third and last deliverable from the EPD Workshop will be a Final Report that consists on a set of final recommendations based on both the diagnosis and the benchmarking research. Following the two tests mentioned above, we would prepare a final report that encapsulates all the findings of the mission as well as the feedback received. Whenever possible, the recommendations will be modified according to the feedback received during the pressure-testing. The final report shall serve as a guiding document for future actions agreed upon and will include highlighted best practices from the benchmarking report, the PAR and instructions how to use it, and actions to be implemented by the 4C network.

## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEWS

1. Abbey Walsh - Program Officer at Education For Employment Global (EFE-Global) Washington, District Of Columbia
2. Grant Littke - Pennsylvania State University School of International Affairs Career Center Director
3. Meg Heenehan - Director of the Office of Career Services at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University
4. Miriam Keep at FHI360
5. Nabil Jadiri - Project Manager at the USAID Morocco Career Center program at EFE
6. Sarah Little - Program Director at EFE Global (EFE-Global) Washington, District Of Columbia
7. Cyriel Pelletier - International Career Center and Employers Relations Manager, Sciences Po Paris
8. Vyas Sreenivas- Former Placement Committee Member, Institute of Rural Management Anand, India
9. Beralda Lima - Coordinator of the Career Development Center at Getulio Vargas Foundation of Rio de Janeiro
10. Tiago Ziruolo - Director of the Career Center of the University of São Paulo's Polytechnic School

### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

In the USAID Morocco Career Centers project, all staff receive comprehensive training on the following topics:

#### *Initial Start-up Training:*

- Module 1: Introduction to the Career Center
- Module 2: Gaining Familiarity with Management Tools
- Module 3: Mastering IT tools
- Module 4: Basics of Communication
- Module 5: Communication Techniques
- Module 6: Mobilizing and Attracting Youth to the Career Center
- Module 7: The Youth Ambassadors Program.
- Module 8: Preparing for the Career Center Launch
- Module 9: Understanding the Employment Ecosystem
- Module 10: Delivering Key Career Center Services
- Module 11: Managing a Career Center

#### *Continuous Professional Development Training:*

- Module 1: Assessment and Feedback One Month After Career Center Opening
- Module 2: Review of Theories and Pedagogies in Career Counseling
- Module 3: Review of Management and Communication Tools
- Module 4: Introduction to Private Sector Engagement (Part I)
- Module 5: Preparation Of the Bi-Annual Review of Career Center Activities
- Module 6: Management of Internships and Job Officers
- Module 7: Delivering New Workshops for Youth (Part I)

- Module 8: Private Sector Mobilization (Part 2)
- Module 9: Delivering New Workshops for Youth (Part 2)
- Module 10: Mobilizing Stakeholders in the Career Center Ecosystem
- Module 11: Annual Assessment and Yearly Planning

Provided by Miriam Keep at FHI360.

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