Nursing Career Fair
Boston College Career Center
Assessment – Rachel Greenberg, Peter Hunt; Presentation – Peter Hunt

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
Each year, the staff of the Career Center collaborates with faculty from the Connell School of Nursing to discuss and act on the following recommendations:

Prior to the fair, several tools were offered to help students prepare for the fair — a live workshop and an online career fair prep video series on YouTube; emails with career fair tips; and CSON Alumni-in-Residence, who offered resume critiques and general advice.

ACTION ITEMS
Career Center staff met with faculty from the Connell School of Nursing to discuss and act on the following recommendations:

1. Given that half of the employers offer internships or summer jobs, junior (and even sophomore) nursing students should be more strongly encouraged to attend the fair.

2. Given that almost one in five students reported that they did not feel more confident in speaking with nursing employers, nursing students should be provided with more opportunities to speak with employers, perhaps through informal networking events with alumni.

3. Given the large number of students who indicated a need for networking contacts and job leads, a job search strategies workshop focused on networking could be valuable.

4. Given the low overall turnout, add elements to the fair that would attract students to the event — e.g. presentations, resume reviews, and/or networking with alumni. Hold the fair in The Heights Room and have presentations and Alumni-in-Residence going on in the Boston and Newton Rooms.

OTHER RESULTS
CHALLENGE - Student attendance at the fair was lower than expected. We don’t have data that tells us why fewer than half of the CSON seniors attended and why so few juniors and sophomores attended when 50% percent of employers listed summer opportunities.

LESSON LEARNED — Preparation activities cited most often as helpful were those provided by the Career Center and available online (online videos – 36% found these helpful; emailed tips – 56% found these helpful).

LESSON LEARNED — Employers in different industries may hold different ideas about appropriate dress and preparation for a career fair. While both our student survey and Career Center staff observations indicated that many students were underprepared and inappropriately dressed, the employers reported differently.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

METHODS
As students departed the event, we asked them to complete a quick survey on iPods in order to get the best possible response rate. We received 51 responses out of 61 event attendees.

LESSON LEARNED: Placing the iPods on stands would be a helpful way to reduce the number of staff hours for the event.

EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING
“Students developed networking skills and gained confidence in speaking with employers.”
- 82% reported feeling more confident speaking with employers after the fair.

“Students will gain an understanding of how to prepare for a career fair.”
- 56% of respondents met with a faculty member, career counselor or Alumni-in-Residence prior to the fair to discuss their resume or career fair strategies.
- 40% watched one or more career fair prep videos or attended a live prep workshop.
- On the down side, only 38% researched employers prior to the fair, significantly less than students reported at our other fairs.

“Students will be able to articulate the next career-related steps that are appropriate for their needs.”
- Though 62% indicated the need for networking contacts, only 36% placed “Instruction on how to network” among their top three needs; and only 24% placed practice interviews among their top three needs. Many of these students may not grasp the distinction between having confidence in one’s communication skills and needing assistance with learning the specific skills of networking and interviewing.