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CANADIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNSELLING SERVICES — HOW ARE THEY STAFFED?

ABSTRACT: Because little is known about counselling services in Canadian community colleges, the authors sent questionnaires to 179 post-secondary, non-university, educational institutions and received replies from 83. Data on numbers of counselling personnel, their educational level, salaries, counsellor-student ratios, support staff, and other relevant material are reported.

In view of the peculiar nature of the community college, one of its most important functions is to make comprehensive counselling services available to students.

Blocker, Plummer, and Richardson (1965) argued that counselling in community colleges is more important than in other institutions of higher learning. They see the justification for this as being "the heterogeneity of the student body, the variety and complexity of decisions which students must make, and the need for non-academic services which support and give purpose to the efforts of students (p.

239)." Counselling services are among the educational functions of a community college which Campbell (1971) regarded as fundamental. Writing about Canadian community colleges he contended that these services are essential to assist all students, regardless of age, in choosing careers and correcting deficiencies.

Another Canadian report referring to community colleges, (Alberta Colleges Commission, 1970) stressed that "the highest priority be placed on proper guidance, counselling, and instruction, so that the student's educational development will result in an individual serving both his own, his community's and society's needs (p. 23)."

In Canada, guidelines have been developed regarding how university counselling services should be organized (Hudson, 1973). Coupling these guidelines with similar documents from the United States (e.g. Kirk, 1971) a Canadian college can determine the minimum standard which it should maintain.

To date, however, the Canadian college wishing to assess its progress against comparable schools across the nation has had little against which to gage its status. Previous studies by Taber (1968), and Patterson (1972) have been either limited by a very small sample, restricted geographically, or confined to particular aspects of counselling services (Miles, 1973).

Unanswered are questions such as, "What kinds of services are offered, in what type of institutions and what are the characteristics of those who provide these services?" This study was designed to provide at least some of these answers for Canadian colleges. Most specifically this report describes the people who staff these services.

Sample

A 97-item questionnaire* was mailed to 179 colleges listed by M. Gayfer in *School Progress* (1972), Campbell (1971) and Fédération

TABLE 1
LOCATION OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

Province	N	%
British Columbia.....	7	8
Alberta.....	10	12
Saskatchewan.....	3	4
Manitoba.....	1	1
Ontario.....	28	34
Québec.....	29	35
New Brunswick.....	1	1
Nova Scotia.....	2	2
Prince Edward Island.....	—	—
Newfoundland.....	1	1
No answer.....	1	1

*Copies of the questionnaire and details of the research procedure may be obtained from E. F. Johnston.

des CEGEPS Annuaire (1973). Eighty-three colleges responded, representing a 46 percent return. Many of the colleges that did not respond were small branch operations of larger schools or colleges with no counselling program. It is estimated that when different colleges are considered, as compared to various campuses of one college, that the return percentage was 65 percent. This figure was made up of 84 percent of the Canadian anglophone colleges, 79 percent of the members of the Fédération des CEGEPS, and 31 percent of the members of Association des Collèges du Québec. Data is provided from each province in Canada (Table 1).

Table 2 indicates that the greatest percentage of the reporting colleges were two-year public community colleges (76 percent), with a small percentage from other similar types of schools — institutes of technology (12 percent), agricultural colleges (4 percent), and two-year liberal arts colleges (5 percent). The greatest percentage (59 percent) of the colleges had an enrollment of under 1500 (Table 3), with a small part-time enrollment of under 300 in 50 percent of the cases (Table 4).

TABLE 2
NATURE OF THE INSTITUTION

Nature	N	%
Two-year public community college.....	63	76
Institutes of technology.....	10	12
Agricultural colleges.....	3	4
Two-year liberal arts colleges.....	4	5
Other.....	3	3

Note: Because some items were omitted by some respondents, N is not consistent.

TABLE 3
SIZE OF INSTITUTION

Full-time Enrollment	N	%
under 500.....	16	19
500 — 999.....	17	20
1000 — 1499.....	17	20
1500 — 1999.....	3	4
2000 — 2499.....	4	5
2500 — 2999.....	5	6
3000 — 3499.....	7	8
3500 — 3999.....	6	7
4000 — 4999.....	1	1
5000 — over.....	5	6
No answer.....	2	3

TABLE 4
PART TIME STUDENTS

Number of Part-time Students	N	%
0.....	4	5
less than 50.....	16	19
50 — 99.....	5	6
100 — 199.....	10	12
200 — 299.....	7	8
300 — 499.....	6	7
500 — 699.....	4	5
700 — 899.....	4	5
900 — 1099.....	8	10
1100 or more.....	12	14
No answer.....	7	8

Counselling Administrators

Title. Administratively, the person in charge of counselling programs in the community colleges involved in this study is described by a variety of titles indicated in Table 5.

The most common title in Anglophone colleges is Director of Counselling Services, whereas the Francophone schools predominantly used the title Responsable du Service d'Orientation.

TABLE 5
TITLE — COUNSELLING ADMINISTRATOR

Title	N	%
Responsable du Service d'Orientation.....	17	24
Director of Counselling Services.....	9	13
Responsable du Service de Psychologie et d'Orientation.....	9	13
Co-ordinator.....	7	10
Aide Pédagogique Individuelle.....	4	6
Chairman Student Services.....	4	6
Student Affairs Officer.....	3	4
Counsellor-Registrar.....	3	4
Counsellor.....	3	4
Director of Student Services.....	3	4
Other — Chairman, Counselling Chairman, Human Resources Chairman, Student Services Director, Counselling & Health Services Director, Student Personnel.....	8	11

TABLE 6
COUNSELLING CENTER ADMINISTRATOR'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Level	N	%
No formal degree.....	0	0
Bachelor's degree.....	29	35
Master's degree.....	37	44
Beyond master's degree.....	10	12
Doctoral degree.....	3	4
Beyond doctoral degree.....	0	0
No answer.....	4	5

Education. Formal educational preparation for counselling administrators ranges from a bachelor's degree to a doctoral degree, as evidenced in Table 6. Sixty percent have obtained a master's degree or more, whereas 35 percent have only a bachelor's degree.

Areas of academic specialization were primarily in relation to guidance and counselling (49 percent) with some in counselling psychology (9 percent), sociology (8 percent) and education (8 percent). Table 7 reports the wide range of the other academic majors.

TABLE 7
AREA OF ACADEMIC SPECIALIZATION

Area	N	%
Guidance & Counselling (including Orientation) ...	32	49
Counselling Psychology.....	6	9
Sociology.....	5	8
Education.....	5	8
Business Administration.....	2	3
Finance.....	2	3
Counselling-Education.....	1	2
Rehabilitation Services.....	1	2
Commerce.....	1	2
Geography.....	1	2
Clinical Behavioral Science.....	1	2
Technology.....	1	2
Other (Philosophy, History, Animation).....	7	11

Salaries. Salaries for heads of counselling programs vary from under \$10,000 (13 percent) to over \$18,000 (18 percent) with the greatest percentage ranging between \$16,000 and \$18,000 annually (44 percent) (Table 8).

TABLE 8
ADMINISTRATORS' SALARIES

Salary	N	%
under \$9999.....	9	13
10,000 — 11,999.....	5	7
12,000 — 13,999.....	12	17
14,000 — 15,999.....	14	20
16,000 — 17,999.....	16	23
18,000 — over.....	15	21

Experience. Table 9 reports the number of years of experience that administrators have had in their present positions. Most administrators have had limited experience in their positions with 70 percent having four or fewer years in their present position.

Additional Duties. In addition to administrative responsibilities 28 percent of the directors indicated that they were also involved in counselling students. Over 25 percent spend 10 hours or more per week counselling. Seventy-four percent indicated that they spent time assisting with related activities such as financial aid, employment, admissions, and student activities.

TABLE 9
ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCE IN PRESENT POSITION

Years	N	%
less than 1.....	11	14
1 year.....	9	12
2 years.....	12	15
3 years.....	13	17
4 years.....	10	12
5 or more.....	22	28

Age and Sex. It can be seen in Table 10 that among the directors reporting, 73 percent were under the age of 45. Eighty-four percent were male. Most counselling directors are young males with only a minority of 8 percent in this chief administrative post being female.

TABLE 10
AGE OF ADMINISTRATOR

Age	N	%
under 25.....	3	4
25 — 34.....	27	38
35 — 44.....	22	31
45 — 49.....	11	15
50 or over.....	8	11

Counselling Staff

Numbers. Canadian community college counselling staffs tend to be small. Of the 200 full-time counsellors (not including administrators) represented in this survey, Table 11 reports that they tend to work in schools where there are two or fewer full-time counsellors (50 percent). Additionally, we find that there are only 29 part-time counsellors and that 90 percent of the schools employ two or fewer of this type of staff. In fact 65 percent do not have any part-time counsellors.

TABLE 11
NUMBER OF COLLEGES EMPLOYING
0 TO 9 OR MORE COUNSELLORS

Number of Counsellors	Part-time		Full-time	
	N	%	N	%
0.....	54	65	10	12
1.....	15	18	28	34
2.....	6	7	12	14
3.....	1	1	8	10
4.....	1	1	5	6
5.....	0	0	3	4
6.....	2	2	4	5
7.....	0	0	4	5
8.....	0	0	1	1
9 or more.....	0	0	4	5
No answer.....	4	5	4	5

Staff-Student Ratios. The ratio of counsellors to students recommended by Hudson (1973) was 1:500-700. Using the upper limit of this ratio we find in Table 12 that 63 percent of the colleges fall within this desirable range. However, at the other extreme it is reported that 28 percent of the services have a ratio of 1:800 or over and a full 19 percent with a ratio of 1:1000 or more.

TABLE 12
COUNSELLOR-STUDENT RATIO

Ratio	N	%
1:200.....	4	5
1:300.....	11	13
1:400.....	12	14
1:500.....	12	14
1:600.....	8	10
1:700.....	6	7
1:800.....	7	8
1:900.....	1	1
1:1000 or more.....	16	19
No answer.....	6	9

Education. Of the 200 full-time counsellors reporting their educational qualifications in this study, 37 percent have Bachelor's degrees, 62 percent Master's degrees and only 2 percent reported more than a Master's degree. Of those reporting an area of specialization in their studies, 60 percent specialized in areas relevant to counselling.

Salaries. Counsellor salaries range from \$8000 to over \$19,000, the majority (50 percent) are in the \$12,000 to \$14,000 range, as shown in Table 13.

None of the respondents indicated that there was additional pay for overtime hours worked.

TABLE 13
COUNSELLORS' SALARIES

Salaries	N	%
\$8000.....	5	2
9000.....	11	5
10000.....	24	12
11000.....	15	7
12000.....	40	20
13000.....	29	15
14000.....	29	15
15000.....	22	11
16000.....	12	6
17000.....	8	4
18000.....	4	2
19000.....	1	1

Age, Sex, and Experience. Counsellors in Canadian colleges are predominantly male (68 percent) and primarily in the 26-35 age range (Table 14). Experience is primarily limited to six or fewer years (53 percent) as reported in Table 15. However it is interesting to note that a full 17 percent have 10 or more years of experience.

TABLE 14
AGE OF COUNSELLORS

Age	N	%
21 — 25.....	16	8
26 — 30.....	47	23
31 — 35.....	54	27
36 — 40.....	32	16
41 — 45.....	15	8
45 and over.....	36	18

TABLE 15
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE - COUNSELLORS

Years	N	%
1.....	8	4
2.....	21	10
3.....	23	12
4.....	15	7
5.....	25	13
6.....	15	7
7.....	16	8
8.....	17	9
9.....	12	6
10.....	15	7
over 10.....	33	17

Tenure. Tenure is a benefit available to counsellors in only 6 percent of the institutions in this study.

In-Service Training. Eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated that counsellors are encouraged to participate in professional organizations and conferences. Sixty-four percent reported that expenses relevant to this participation are totally covered and an additional 24 percent said that they are partially covered. Table 16 shows the most prevalent professional organizations and the number of counsellors indicating membership or affiliation.

Only 6 percent indicated no membership in any professional association. The extent to which those claiming membership in professional associations are actively involved is undetermined.

Considering the question of in-service training programs for professional development it was reported that only 27 percent offer such programs on a regular basis.

TABLE 16
MOST PREVALENT PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	N	%
Canadian Guidance and Counselling Assoc.....	26	21
Québec Personnel and Guidance Assoc.....	24	19
American Personnel and Guidance Assoc.....	22	17
Ontario College Counsellors Assoc.....	17	13
Canadian University Counselling Assoc.....	8	7
University Career Planning Assoc.....	1	1
Others.....	28	22

Note: Not reported here: membership in la Corporation professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation du Québec.

Support Staff

Clerical. There does not seem to be any formula for determining the number of full-time clerical personnel needed in relation to the number of full-time counsellors in community colleges. As Table 17 indicates, the number of clerical staff varies considerably with a full 25 percent having no full-time support staff and the majority (48 percent) having only one. Only a small number of departments have the benefit of part-time help (29 percent).

TABLE 17
NUMBERS OF CLERICAL STAFF

Number	Full-time		Part-time	
	N	%	N	%
0.....	21	25	56	67
1.....	40	48	17	20
2.....	11	13	5	6
3.....	5	6	0	0
4.....	2	3	0	0
5 or more...	1	1	2	3
No answer..	2	3	2	3

Paraprofessional. Only 10 percent of the colleges indicated that they employed paraprofessionals as part of their counselling staff. As defined in the questionnaire, a "paraprofessional" is one who works in an assisting capacity to a professional such as a psychometric technician or counsellor aide.

The training or educational experience of these paraprofessionals varies from in-service training provided by the counselling department to a university degree. Their salaries range from \$6000 to \$8000 for full-time employment.

Peer Counsellors. The utilization of students in the capacity of peer counsellors is also not very prevalent among community college counselling services in Canada. Fully 90 percent reported that there was no peer counselling in their schools. Those who do use students in this capacity deploy them in activities such as: receptionist, student crisis center, drop-in centers, group facilitators, and behavioral modification programs.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study was a pre-requisite to the task of evaluating the staffing

of community college counselling services in Canada. Before an evaluation can begin we need to know what we are evaluating. Before we can begin to establish standards or recommend changes we need to know what currently exists. This study attempted to assess the present "state of the nation" for the staffing of counselling services in Canadian community colleges.

A recommendation derived from this study is the need for community colleges to assist their counsellors and directors to evaluate their formal academic qualifications. It can be assumed that the high percentage of staff with bachelor's degrees (37 percent) have had no formal academic counselling training. In question is whether staff trained to the bachelor's level should be considered a counsellor or paraprofessional. What is an adequately trained counsellor?

Also, it would appear appropriate for schools to seriously consider the implication of having counsellors with degrees in disciplines in no way related to counselling. In comparison it would be interesting to determine whether the academic departments are staffed in this way. We would guess not. Without appropriately qualified staff, counselling services run the risk of providing little more than an information clearing house.

If counselling is a profession, with all that this implies in terms of training, knowledge, and expertise, as well as requisite personal qualities, the effectiveness of counselling services will only improve as the level of professionalism increases among counselling personnel.

Of little encouragement in this wish for increased professional competence on the part of counsellors is the information that only 27 percent have regular in-service training programs. This figure does not, of course, encompass such relevant activities as reading of current literature in professional journals, conferences, workshops, courses, and seminars. The extent to which counsellors are involved in these activities is unknown. However the lack of in-service training reported is not reassuring in this regard.

If community-college counsellors could use more help, and it is doubtful that many would report that they could not (Patterson, 1972; Miles, 1973), they should be looking seriously at the use of paraprofessionals and peer counsellors. The trend for the use of this type of personnel has a good beginning in Canadian schools and in the literature (Le May, 1974) and may be the answer to large student-staff ratios and limited budgets.

Without a clear definition of counsellor functions, it is obviously very difficult to determine where the paraprofessional fits in within counselling services, and it is because of this that many counsellors are reluctant to include paraprofessionals as part of the counselling staff. Jealous of their professional territory, which belongs only to those "properly qualified," they regard the paraprofessional as an intruder; the real issue is "What is the nature of this 'professional territory'?" The authors are quite convinced that this difficulty could be resolved by developing a much clearer description of those functions which belong peculiarly to the counsellor and for which his training and experience best suit him. For example, in one of the community

college counselling centers with which the authors are familiar, counsellors assume responsibility for developing materials for publicizing counselling services, conducting information sessions for prospective students, organizing materials for a resource library, assisting in registration, and organizing times and places for various groups and workshops, all of which are immensely time consuming. All of these activities could easily be carried out by a paraprofessional, making the counsellor more available for more direct student contact. After all, if the job of the counsellor primarily is to counsel students, then this is where the major focus needs to be.

It is also clear that when the counsellor's time is absorbed by relatively non-counsellor functions, there is less time for such important matters as professional development and research, both of which, the survey indicates, are low priorities.

No doubt one of the problems faced by community college counselling services is lack of finances resulting in inadequate funds for salaries (Miles, 1973). It may be important for colleges to consider some new formulae for staffing counselling services. The present focus of 1:500-700 was designed for universities. Perhaps colleges should be considering a formula which incorporates counsellors, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

The variables involved in the development of such a formula would include, in addition to number of students, the nature of services offered by the counselling department, the services or those aspects of these services which fall within the counsellor's job description.

It is the recommendation of the authors that each community-college counselling service be headed by a person with no less than a Master's degree in counselling psychology or its equivalent. It is further recommended that a professional association such as the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association (CGCA), form a committee to examine the staffing issue in community colleges with a view to establishing clearly delineated roles for professionals and paraprofessionals in counselling services. The data in this report lead us to believe that paraprofessionals (those educated to less than a Master's degree in counselling, or its equivalent), should be clearly employed as paraprofessionals, and under the close supervision of counsellors until such time as they have achieved further formal education. This recommendation does not imply that these people cannot perform adequate functions in counselling services, only that their function be clearly defined, and that they be closely supervised as support personnel to counsellors.

Most colleges in Canada have only a small number of counsellors and our national geography dictates very few colleges being close to each other. It would seem appropriate for some organization to attempt to facilitate communication among community college counsellors. This need was confirmed by those college counsellors attending a presentation by the authors at the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Conference in Winnipeg in 1973. The authors recommend that this is a role CGCA or the Association of Canadian Community Colleges should explore.

RESUME: Parce qu'on en savait peu sur les services de counseling dans les collèges communautaires canadiens, l'auteur a fait parvenir des questionnaires à 179 institutions éducatives post-secondaires et non-universitaires. Il a reçu 83 réponses. L'auteur rapporte les données relatives au nombre de conseillers, leur niveau d'éducation, les salaires, la proportion d'étudiants par conseiller, le personnel de soutien et d'autres informations pertinentes.

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