Building Effective Relationships on Campus:

Personal Experiences and Wish Lists

By Jonathan Andrews, Rebecca Arnaud and Megan Field

Jonathan Andrews

BA English at King's College London and regular Disability Café attendee

I've used the careers service a handful of times during the past two years – more often, I've **visited the service to look over the pamphlets it has on offer, advertising jobs and graduate schemes for various companies.** On a couple of occasions I've also spoken to people in the careers office about applying for jobs, how to write an effective application, how to present myself and answer questions at interview etc., but **the careers service hasn't been my main source of advice for these questions.** Instead, I've looked over law firm websites and attended Open Days to speak to trainees, associates, partners and graduate recruiters, to gain an idea first-hand of what firms are looking for. Having visited a number of firms, I've then decided which I'd like to apply to, and am now focused on researching these firms, in preparation for making applications.

I've also used the disability office to search for careers, however they have not been greatly helpful. **The King's disability office is primarily concerned with caring for the immediate needs of students, not in securing them employment** – I learnt more about the schemes available from original research (e.g. Norton Rose Fulbright using the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, Reed Smith guaranteeing disabled applicants places on their 2013 and 2014 vacation schemes and Ashurst running a recruitment scheme with Prospects and the National Autistic Society) and from non-university events such as My Plus Consulting's 'Getting Investment Banking' and 'Open to Law' events than I did from the service. Often I would come to ask them about a scheme only for them to tell me that it was the first they'd heard of it!

However, I also get the sense that the disability office doesn't focus on employability schemes so much because there isn't a large enough budget (I don't know this for certain, but it's the impression I get). **And when it comes to helping disabled students, the office is incredibly helpful and always works to the highest standard. So perhaps, if firms were able to cover the costs of getting involved with the service, it'd be beneficial to cooperate with them.** As with any university, there are a large number of disabled students and the majority use the office. One thought might be to hold an event (e.g. a recruitment fair, or networking event along the lines of 'Getting Investment Banking' and 'Open to Law') with the disability service – **the service doesn't hold many (if any) events, yet given the number of students with disabilities there'd probably be high demand for it.** Also, I'm confident that, **if firms were to make the disability service (both at King's and elsewhere) more aware of their events, the service would be happy to promote them** through word of mouth, posters, social media etc.

And regarding funding… **under current government plans, universities will soon have to fund their own disability services rather than receiving a state grant.** This, naturally, will be hardest for universities with the most advanced services to accommodate – of which King's is one. **If firms had the budget, offering to partner with universities to finance some of the services would no doubt endear them to the firm and make future partnerships far more likely.**

Putting on my 'English Student' hat for a minute…. at King's and, most likely, other universities too, the Careers Office are always complaining that English Literature students rarely make use of their services. Indeed, I know only a handful of people on my course who've used it – and even they've

only used it once or twice. Yet the careers office themselves should take some of the blame here, since they don't really know how to effectively market their services to English students. Over the last two years I've only seen one event specifically targeted at us – titled 'How to Market Your English Degree', it received good feedback from attendees (I didn't find out about it until it had already happened, so can't speak from first-hand experience) but attendance was very low.

I think it might be a good idea for firms, law firms especially, to explore marketing themselves to English students – a large number of non-law lawyers are English graduates, after all, so there's clearly a market. Firms could do so through careers, but I personally think it'd be better to sponsor events like the large number of plays that university English and Theatre companies put on each year, than sponsoring careers. **Far more English students attend the plays than visit the careers office and to sponsor something like a play would demonstrate a clear message that the firm cares about promoting the creative industries.**

Additionally, **I'm a member of the King's Politics, Economics and History Societies, and much like among English students I've noticed a lot of members who are interested in careers such as commercial law, investment banking and other similar industries.** If any firms were thinking of specific societies to target, these would probably be the top three I'd recommend (though few History Society members are interested in investment banking etc. – they tend towards commercial law if at all).

And if you're interested in promoting diversity more broadly, there are loads of societies at King's, such as the Disabled Students Society, LGBT Society, Asian Society, African Society, Bangladeshi Society, Chinese Society, Islamic Society, Hindu Society etc. – there's a huge list! They often organise events and have partnered up with outside organisations on numerous occasions. From experience, a sizeable minority are interested in city careers.

And these groups almost all have social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin etc. profiles – and I'd imagine they'd be happy to promote events or schemes for firms if it helps their members find jobs. I ended up volunteering for the Government Legal Service based on seeing an advert they'd posted on King's Law for Non-Law Society's Facebook page – so students do take notice. And it's one of the cheapest ways to market your services – Facebook costs nothing up front, and the societies aren't going to charge!

I've noticed that, at King's, **the firms which have been most effective in marketing themselves have been those with a strong physical presence and who have representatives on-site.** Which is common sense, I suppose – people prefer talking to real people than reading leaflets, and it gives students the feeling that the firm has 'come to them' and makes working for them seem more convenient. Going further, though**, I've noticed that having a stall where reps sit stationary and wait for people to walk past doesn't actually work as well as having a single person placed strategically by a doorway or entrance to a building, who is personable and can talk to people coming in about the firm.** Teach First have used this tactic at King's, and it's massively increased the number of students who've heard about them and who are now planning to work for them. I know some may see this as too forward, but the fact is most students would probably appreciate this forwardness – in my experience, hardly anybody knows what they want to do after university!

Rebecca Arnaud

BSc Psychology Student at York and York's Welfare Officer 2014-present

York's career service, whilst well known among the students, is less well used than may be deserved. However when organised careers events do occur - such as job fairs etc - the turnout is much greater than when the service must be sought themselves. I myself used the service to investigate other areas of psychology or even marketing that my degree could be used to apply. Whilst I have not since used the service, the information given to me that day did help me - if only to confirm that the career I had in mind was indeed the one I wanted to chase.

However, the difficulty still when approaching students with careers advice is that many think it is something they need not think about until the future. This unfortunate downfall occurs in York's students like many others. Therefore it is important to encourage students early on to think about this. **Whilst working as part of the Junior Common Room Committee we try to take this into account** - not only as it can help all students but also it can get students involved who might otherwise not feel able to attend; students who would prefer a one on one service rather than an event they must attend.

Looking into support for those with disabilities or mental health problems, most of my experiences stem from the JCRC, or the disability network. **Throughout the year, many events, such as World Mental Health Day and Time To Talk run, to allow for not only the minimisation of prejudice against mental health issues but also for those who do suffer to meet up, share and interlink.** Furthermore, the student team run a night phone service - anonymous and allowing for noone to feel alone - known as NightLine. This allows for those who cannot access the counselling services, or doctor's easily or perhaps do not yet feel comfortable to do so to gain some form of help, and advice.

Yet more support is provided in the form of student tutors - students who work and live within a college of the university who make a first meeting or movement towards any help needed when an issue arises possible. There are also a number of students who work for the JCRC as part of a welfare team - to ensure that everyone is involved, that there are alternative events for those who may not wish to attend those that are possibly the 'mainstream' events. **The disability network also works hard to ensure that every student that wants to attend an event can.** To that end, one most recent and obvious change is that a club has been scrapped as a student night club as they have failed to carry out necessary changes to allow for wheelchair access and easy use of the areas inside for those that are less mobile.

Megan Field

MSc Student at Loughborough University and regular Disability Café attendee

Regarding university services, I used both the Disability Support and Career Support at Loughborough. As has been noticed by a lot of literature and research, I actually gained a lot of my advice from my disability coordinator since I didn't feel too comfortable with the careers service. This is primarily from my first experience with them when looking for my Industrial Placement during my course. **When I approached the careers service about what I should do regarding disclosure it was very much "don't unless you have to"...and this was solely for Dyslexia as I didn't even mention anything else!**

However, since 2011 when I had this session the careers and disability service is a lot more integrated now **and in 2013 in my final year, they hosted an 'Open Doors Careers Fair for Disabled Students'**. They offered great support, and people who came in to talk about a wealth of issues, and gained amazing feedback. **For me, this was the push that gave me the confidence to apply to disabled student specific recruitment events such as the EY Radical Employment Training where I met Helen.**

The careers fair had people come in to talk about Disability Rights and Legislation, specific talks by individuals in certain domains and how/what you need to do in those specific areas (for example, they had business and law, teaching, research, etc). They also had Remtek come in as well – a company that specialises in occupational adjustments and accommodation, such as ergonomic chair, specifically designed tech and have a huge amount of knowledge about a lot of conditions so unlike lots of occupational health resources which have the 'we'll just wing it' approach, they go into companies and really give the best assistance possible.

Although many may think that having a specific careers fair is segregating, in all honesty the support disabled students need and the different requirements are very far removed from your average careers fair and there is so much unknown when going into employment. This has definitely helped with that. The only issue I had was that it didn't have the same hustle and bustle of lots of companies - I think three specifically came in to talk to us about what they do and they diversity of employees they have. **If we had more Disability specific fairs and companies to attend with knowledgeable HR personnel, it would do absolute wonders.** I would think that most companies wouldn't think many would sign up but with the fair, there were 130-ish places and they filled out within days of opening the booking.

Unfortunately, they haven't been able to run it since because it was such a gamble and wholly funded by the services themselves. **If there were more sponsors who could see the potential, more people would be able to benefit.** I know that they hate not being able to run it every year because they received so much positive feedback from the students. But it is entirely down to funding...which annoys me because we have KPMG come in with Cash Cubes onto campus and other companies give away lots of merchandise and tat - all of which would be so much more helpful in funding something useful...