



Yale College Council  
Office of Career Strategy  
First-Year Resources  
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## INTRODUCTION

Yale's Office of Career Strategy (OCS) offers students a wide variety of resources including resume and cover letter advising, guidance in job and internship searches, and networking and interview preparation. Through its online Yale Career Link, OCS gives students access to years of Peer Networking Lists for Summer Experiences, allowing them to reach out to other students and alumni who share their interests. OCS sends out a weekly college newsletter filled with internship, fellowship, event, and job opportunities across all fields and catering to an array of interests.

Despite the tremendous amount of information and guidance accessible through OCS, a lack of engagement with the first-year class persists. The problem is not that first-years are unmotivated or disinterested, but that they are often unaware of the vast range of tools and assistance they can find at OCS. Even if they know about some of the services offered, first-years often express a difficulty in accessing them for a variety of reasons. In general, first-years are ambitious and eager to seek opportunities to improve upon their skills, deepen their interests, and challenge themselves with new experiences. This report will focus primarily on the factors that impede the first-year class's relationship with OCS and will offer suggestions to strengthen that connection.

## PEER INSTITUTIONS

Other Ivy-plus schools have approached the issues outlined above in a myriad of ways, but each solution's primary goal is to foster genuine relationships between first-years and the school's equivalent of OCS. Yale could consider the steps they have taken to improve the connection between the first-year class and OCS.

### **Brown University**

The CareerLAB organizes '[Project 2021](#),' a year-long series of programs and events specifically designed to engage first-years with the career center. Workshops are led by Peer Career Advisors (PCAs) who build personal connections with first-year students.

### **Cornell University**

In the spring semester, the Cornell Career Services hosts a '[Freshmen Career Fair](#)' specifically geared to introduce first-years to the tools and services available through the office.

### **Harvard University**

During Family Weekend, first-year students and their families are invited to the [Freshmen Family Open House](#), where they personally interact with the faculty running the Office of Career Services and are introduced to the center's resources.

### **MIT**

Through the Freshmen/Alumni Summer Internship Program ([F/ASIP](#)), first-years learn how to find and apply for internship opportunities. The program provides first-years with access to exclusive resources, like freshman-only job postings, as well as a weekly newsletter focused solely on first-year opportunities and events.

### **Princeton University**

In addition to the [Freshman Family Weekend Open House](#), where first-years are invited to learn about the workshops and other resources offered by Princeton's Career Services office, first-years are also welcome to speak with an advisor during '[Freshman Walk-in Mornings](#)' and seek advice about what to do specifically in the summer following their first year.

### **Stanford University**

The '[Frosh Winter Warm Up](#)' connects first-years with Stanford's Career Education Center as well as with their peers. Through a series of interactive events, students learn about the resources available to them and specifically how to get involved with research, searching for internships, and networking with other students.

The general trend across other leading schools is the organization of events designed to target the first-year class by placing an emphasis on relationship-building alongside career advising and other resources. First-years at Yale would benefit from similar programs, and the OCS would have a more productive relationship with them as a result.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

One of the primary barriers to OCS engagement with the first-year class is the fact that few first-years visit the actual OCS office, where many of the workshops and recruiting events take place. According to the Yale College Council Fall Survey, which polled over 1300 undergraduate students in late October 2017, **89.2%** of the first-

year Class of 2021 has never visited the physical OCS office for an advising appointment or to seek advice.

This result may be because the office is relatively far from Old Campus, where most first-years reside, or because first-years don't have enough time in their week to organize a visit. Many first-years even admit they simply don't know the location of the office. Though OCS advertises its open drop-in hours in its college-wide email newsletter, first-years often don't know how to use them because they're unaware of the extent of support OCS officers can provide. The core of the issue seems to be a lack of awareness of the resources offered by OCS among first-years.

The results of the Fall Survey also show that **79.7%** of first-years are not aware of the Peer Networking Lists for Summer Experiences, a resource provided by OCS to encourage and simplify networking with other students who share similar interests. Based on conversations with first-years, the perception is often that such resources are designed only for upperclassmen who have a specific career path in mind. And these resources, though online, are often quite difficult to find. Results from a focus group organized by Yale College Council show students find the Symplcity interface of the online Yale Career Link difficult to navigate, further impeding engagement with the resources provided by OCS.

Again, this lack of awareness and inhibited engagement should not be mistaken for a lack of ambition on the part of first-years. Based on the results of the Fall Survey, **73.6%** of first-years agreed or strongly agreed that they "would attend resume and cover letter workshops" designed specifically for their class, showing that they do, in fact, have a desire to take advantage of the resources available through OCS. Instead, the issue of awareness should be viewed as an effect of the limited publicity reaching the first-year class about such resources and events. In January of 2016, for example, OCS organized two workshops on Yale-coordinated Internships specifically intended for first-years and sophomores, but the events were not very well-publicized. Furthermore, the events required an RSVP for students to attend, possibly deterring students slightly interested in internships from attending. It should be noted that no data exists detailing the attendance at these events, but it is nonetheless clear that limited publicity is the reason so many first-years are unaware of the full extent of resources they may find at OCS.

Even when events are well-publicized and well-attended, like the CIPE Summer Opportunities Fair on November 10, 2017, some first-years expressed frustration at the absence of personalized advising. Though they praised the fair as a general

information session about some of the opportunities available for those seeking international experiences, some students claimed to have a hard time engaging with the representatives present. The emphasis on the need for engagement suggests that even though first-years are highly motivated, they also need to feel comfortable approaching new opportunities through a personal connection. As it stands, the first-year and OCS relationship lacks the element of personal, one-on-one connection.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Because first-years generally don't know the extent to which OCS can assist them in exploring their passions and preparing them for practical experiences, the solution to the issues explored above must involve publicizing its resources well. It must also place a focus on cultivating personal connections between the OCS office and the first-year class. To those ends, the Yale College Council recommends the following:

(1) The OCS should conduct first-year-only workshops on Old Campus in the Spring semester over a week-long period of time to allow all first-years the chance to utilize them and learn more about the resources. These workshops should include resume-writing lessons, a walkthrough of Symplicity and the resources to be found on the Yale Career Link, and guidance on how to search for internships, fellowships, jobs, and other experiences. According to the Fall Survey, **85.9%** of first-years would benefit from such first-year specific programming. Organizing these temporary workshops on Old Campus not only brings OCS resources closer to students, but it also serves to demonstrate their focus as part of a first-year-only program. Sometime early in the Spring semester would be the most ideal for such programming, as that would be around the start of the season of applications for summer experiences. Though some have suggested incorporating this programming into Camp Yale, it seems to be impractical because first-years are already overwhelmed by the number of orientation meetings and workshops they must attend. Therefore, the early Spring semester is the prime time for these workshops.

(2) A weekly first-year only newsletter should be sent out to the first-year students instead of, or alongside, the general newsletter currently sent out to students of all classes. Many first-years expressed difficulty finding opportunities open to first-years on the general newsletter, so much so that some have claimed they scarcely even check the newsletter any more. By making clear the audience of the first-year specific newsletter, students will feel more engaged with OCS because of the

opportunities directly presented to them. Moreover, a first-year specific newsletter could serve as an effective means of publicizing events designed with the interests of first-years in mind. Combined with the knowledge of tools and resources that first-years receive from the specific workshops, the publicity created through the newsletter would solve a large part of the issue of engagement between OCS and first-years.

(3) Provide a means by which first-years can remain personally connected with OCS. One possible solution is to assign first-years to faculty members at the OCS office who will act as a personal reference for any questions students might have, and who may guide them in the right direction. These assignments would work in the same way students are assigned to a personal librarian, and they would provide a relationship through which the student can discover opportunities relevant to his/her interests. Another potential solution would be the use of student ambassadors to OCS as a way of teaching students about the resources available by means of a peer relationship. If there is at least one ambassador in each residential college, then it may be feasible to organize a simple meet-and-greet to familiarize them with the first-years, who can then direct questions towards him/her. Regardless of the method, as long as a personal relationship is possible, then first-year engagement with OCS will improve.

## CONCLUSION

Given the necessity of securing professional experiences in order to build a compelling resume, students' sustained engagement with the OCS office is a highly important component of a Yale College education. This engagement must be cultivated from the start of a student's career at Yale. First-years have expressed their genuine interest in the resources offered by OCS, and the proposals outlined in this report are intended to remove the obstacles currently limiting their access. Though they are Yale's youngest students, first-years are passionate about their interests and future plans. Enabling first-years to explore their professional options with the services available through OCS should be among Yale's primary goals.