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Article 3

Green Jobs -What Do Counselors Have to Do With It?

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In 1971, Lawton envisioned the need for green counselors. These were professionals who were concerned about preserving the planet and the counseling profession. Today, a similar concern has emerged with the growing number of green jobs both nationally and internationally. As workers began to update themselves and attempt to compete in a rapidly changing economy, can counselors assist them? And what do counselors have to do with green jobs?

This paper will explore the definitions of green jobs, identify green job industries, share green job web sites, review green programs, and examine the role of counselors in counseling jobseekers for green careers. Counselor roles that will be highlighted are helping clients to locate web sites for identifying available green jobs, and locating career resources related to green careers.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2008), “green jobs ” are defined as positions of employment in “agriculture, industry, services and administration that contribute to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment” (p. 5). Green jobs play an essential role to reduce the use of energy, natural resources and water, to decrease the production of greenhouse gases, to reduce or eliminate waste and pollution, and to preserve and maintain environmental resources. According to the Green Job Act, which became effective on December 19, 2007, green jobs include energy efficiency, green practices in building construction and the addition of solar panels (2007).

Even though there is not a commonly accepted definition of green jobs, many of the definitions have commonalities. In particular, the definitions address the need to preserve the environment, identify jobs in primary industries, and highlight the use of green job titles.

The United Nations Environment Programme (2008) has taken the position that some green jobs, such as jobs within the recycling industry, do not promote decent work. Often jobs in recycling are dangerous, offer low incomes, and are hazardous to the environment. They have recommended that decent green jobs should offer work to reduce poverty as well as to protect the environment. This theme has also been advocated by Van Jones, founder of the Green for All Campaign who was interviewed by Morris (2007). He has called attention to the fact that many inner city neighborhoods have suffered with pollution. Van Jones has advocated for the use of green jobs to provide employment in the inner cities as well as to upgrade buildings in these communities.

In a U.S. Department of Labor publication, *Greening of the World of Work: Implications for O*NET-SOC and New and Emerging Occupations*, Dierdorff et al. (2009) maintain that the definitions of green jobs and worker functions must be merged and placed within an occupation and the definition must consider the impact of the green industry upon the occupation. The above actions must occur because the definitions of green jobs are too broad to be placed within occupational categories of the O*NET occupational database. In addition, many definitions of green jobs do not address its impact upon occupational requirements.

Thus Dierdorff et al., (2009) see green occupations as the greening of occupations. This term is defined as “the extent to which green economy activities and technologies increase the demand for existing occupations, shape the work and worker requirements needed for occupational performance, or generate unique work and worker requirements” (p. 11).

The green economy is defined as the “economic activity related to reducing the use of fossil fuels, decreasing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the efficiency of energy usage, recycling materials and developing and adopting renewable sources of energy” (Dierdorff et al., p. 8). The green economy is divided into 12 separate sectors. These are

renewable energy generation, transportation, energy efficiency, green construction, energy trading, energy and carbon capture and storage, research, design and consulting services, environment protection, agriculture and forestry, manufacturing, recycling and waste reduction and governmental and Regulatory Administration. (Dierdorff et al., 2009, p. 14)

O*NET has divided the green economy into 12 separate sectors which can be seen as related industries. Of all the sectors, renewable energy generation has had the largest growth and has experienced the most controversy. Government regulations and diminishing natural resources have led to enactment of laws that mandate that a specific amount of electricity be obtained from renewable sources.

Green job web sites are useful to counselors in identifying green jobs, apprenticeship programs, and educational programs at community colleges and universities. The Green Jobs Guidebook is an online resource that provides information on 250 plus green jobs in California, educational requirements, apprenticeship programs and community college programs. It can be accessed from <http://www.edf.org/cagreenjobs>.

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), which promotes career resources for teenagers and adults, has issued a brief, *Career and Technical Education Role with Green Jobs* (ACTE, 2008). The brief highlights a charter school in Chicago that has a curriculum dedicated to green environment and the Columbia Gorge Community College with a one year certificate program in renewable energy technology.

The Environmental Career.com is a web site that provides several resources and can be accessed at <http://www.environmentalcareer.com>. It was previously known as the Environmental Career Center and has changed its name to the Green Career Center (GCC). It is located in Hampton, Virginia and provides a national job bank for job seekers as well as a listing of employers. GCC also conferences both within the United States and internationally related to green jobs. Lastly, GCC publishes a National Environmental Employment Survey.

Green Career Central is a private web site for members who may be job seekers as well as career counselors and career coaches. It can be accessed at <http://www.greencareercentral.com>. In addition, the web site offers free sample articles for the general public.

The Sustainable Business.com is a web site that maintains a job bank for green jobs in the United States. It also provides a resource list associated with sustainable businesses such as agriculture, tourism, education, energy, transportation, waste reduction, and other areas. This web site also provides information on green consumer products and materials, and includes podcasts and feature articles. It can be accessed from <http://www.sustainablebusiness.com>.

The web site Environmental Jobs and Careers provides information on environmental careers in the United States and Canada, as well as positions in natural, green, and science areas. It can be accessed at <http://www.ecoemploy.com>. The web site also provides information on salaries from professional organizations as well as a link to the occupational Outlook Handbook, environmental programs within the military, U.S. Immigration and visa information, and a link to environmental jobs in the United Kingdom, free email, and sample resumes.

The Environmental Jobs and Careers Organization offers resources in Canada for employers, educators, students, and practitioners who may need certification information. Information is provided in English and French. In addition, potential employees can view jobs and employers can post jobs. The web site can be accessed at <http://www.eco.ca/portal/default.aspx>.

Good Work Canada is a web site that has been in operation in Canada since 2001. It provides information on green events, conferences, workshops, courses outings, and a job bank for job seekers and employers. It can be accessed from <http://www.planetfriendly.net>.

The most significant green jobs program at this time is the Recovery Act Competitive grants for green jobs training. On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama's signature set into motion the Recovery Act. The green jobs initiative of the Recovery Act included training and placement for job seekers in careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Training programs will be funded that focus on:

The energy-efficient building, construction, and retrofit industries; The renewable electric power industry; The energy efficient and advanced drive train vehicle industry; The biofuels industry; The deconstruction and materials use industries; The energy efficiency assessment industry serving residential, commercial or industrial sectors and; Sustainable products using environmentally sustainable processes and materials. (Federal Register, 2009, p. 30139)

The Pathways Out of Poverty Program was also funded by the Recovery Act and was intended for “unemployed individuals, high school dropouts, individuals with a criminal record and disadvantaged individuals living in areas of high poverty” (Federal Register, 2009, p. 30140). In addition to these individuals, the Recovery Act extended services to veterans and spouses of some veterans under The Jobs for Veterans Act (P. L. 107-28, Section 2). These individuals may need assistance in acquiring skills in literacy and job readiness. The green industries were seen as an opportunity for these individuals to acquire new skills and to obtain employment.

In addition to the green job training, and the Pathways Out of Poverty Grants, funding was provided under the Recovery Act for Energy Training Partnership Grants for employees in energy and environmental areas to upgrade skills and to provide training to the unemployed. Funding was also extended to State Energy Partnership Grants for state workforce boards to provide green job training, to state employment agencies to build databases on industries in energy efficiency and energy renewal while encouraging people to consider green jobs and the Green Capacity Building Grants for organizations to initiate training for entry positions.

The role of counselors in assisting jobseekers interested in pursuing green careers will be expanded with the O*NET Resource Center (2009) which explains the Green Economy in terms of 12 sectors with a description of each sector. In addition, a listing of green occupations, Green Increased Demand Occupations, Green Enhanced Skills Occupations and Green New and Emerging Occupations are also provided with descriptions. It would be helpful for career counselors and career coaches to become familiar with the Green Occupations of O*NET Resource Center as well as over 100 occupations that are going green. Other useful resources for these professionals include the web sites related to locating green jobs. Future resources from state employment agencies will include state labor market data on green industries when the Recovery Act grants are awarded according to the Federal Register (2009). In addition, counselors should be aware that the area of green occupations is continuously changing and that they will have to stay alert to the evolving changes in the field.

In answering the question of what do counselors have to do with green jobs, counselors will be actively involved in educating, counseling, and finding resources for job seekers pursuing careers in green jobs. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of green jobs, counselors will be involved in a continuous process of updating skills and resources.

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