

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN NONTRADITIONAL CAREERS

Recruitment Super Strategies

Introduction

WHAT IS A NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATION?

Nontraditional occupation (NTO) refers to occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.²

SUMMARY

When recruiting learners into NTO programs, it is important to use multiple forms of media to market to parents and learners since the decision to enroll in a career or educational pathway is often a family decision. It is crucial to dispel stereotypes held by instructors, parents, and/or the learners themselves regarding nontraditional occupations by raising awareness of nontraditional careers early in the recruitment process. Additionally, special consideration must be given to the messages sent by recruitment materials and activities. A goal of a recruitment strategy should be to promote a message that suggests to a student of an underrepresented gender that they can succeed in a nontraditional career. The message should be comprehensive and promote this idea among more traditional student populations, faculty, and college staff.

Gender equity issues pose a significant barrier to recruitment of students into NTO programs. Difficulties recruiting students into nontraditional careers are compounded by the fact that most learners do not picture themselves working in nontraditional fields; they need consistent exposure to materials and career exploration activities to stimulate their interests. In light of these barriers traditional awareness-raising recruitment methods are insufficient to impact career decision making.



DID YOU KNOW?

A study of more than 350 female undergraduates revealed that the influence of role models accounted for a significant variance in career choices, slightly more than for self-efficacy. The study cites work that ties the influence of role models to career aspirations, career choice, and attitude toward nontraditional careers.⁴

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Recommendations

CREATE RECRUITMENT MATERIALS AND PRACTICES THAT ADHERE TO EQUITABLE STANDARDS TO COUNTER GENDER EQUITY BARRIERS.

- Provide workshops, career fairs, career panels, and other events that highlight NTOs.
- Discuss local employment opportunities for those with training in nontraditional fields.
- Emphasize the potential earnings of nontraditional careers to learners and parents.
- Invite learners and parents to an NTO program site to eliminate misconceptions about CTE programs and nontraditional careers.
- Ask instructors and directors of nontraditional programs to share their expertise and insight on recruiting learners into NTO programs and retaining them.
- Include presentations from positive role models to creditably answer questions posed by parents and students.
- Create relationships with employers to provide accurate information and facilitate contact with potential speakers and resources.
- Design activities that include family members and encourage students to achieve educationally; this action is especially important for economically disadvantaged or underrepresented communities.
- Review all current material and processes to make sure they do not contain an inadvertently discriminatory message.
- Ensure that recruitment materials reflect a diverse representation of learners, including gender, age, race, and disabilities.
- Create relationships with employers to provide accurate information and facilitate contact with potential speakers and resources.
- Use promotional materials that feature photos and testimonials of current learners and graduates of CTE programs that are working in nontraditional occupations.
- Make adjustments to social media campaigns to reflect recommended practices. Social media is an effective way to facilitate word-of-mouth advertising with a source that is easily remembered and referenced in conversation.
- Educate counselors and faculty on bias, both personal and institutional, and ensure they understand the barriers for students seeking nontraditional careers.
- Present NTO programs to students of all genders.
- Provide services and recruitment campaigns that draw students to NTO programs but do not take actions that single them out; remember the goal is to establish gender equity as a norm without increasing a student's sense of isolation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Traditional methods that foster student's interest in a STEM career, like print advertising, site visits, demonstrations, etc., are not sufficient to prompt women to explore STEM fields. For women, self-confidence and efficacy in the field precede interest.

Allison and Cossette conducted a thorough review of academic literature on recruiting women into STEM careers and found that "A number of recruitment strategies focus on engaging young women's interest in STEM careers through interpersonal and/or hands-on experiences (for example, increasing women's self-confidence in STEM fields through cooperative and/or hands-on workshops)" are effective because, "for women, self-confidence precedes interests and career goals. Women must feel confident in their abilities before they will develop interest in a career."¹

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Recommendations

CREATE MARKETING MATERIALS THAT PROMOTE INTEREST IN NTO PROGRAMS BUT ARE EFFECTIVE FOR YOUR TARGET POPULATION.



- When using pictures of nontraditional students show them working – not just watching.
 - ✓ Include pictures with colleagues of another gender working as peers.
 - ✓ Include pictures with individuals in context to reduce stereotypes by displaying elements of their personality or identity that are not work-related (this process can help counter biases like those that claim women in nontraditional jobs lose their femininity or that men working in nontraditional careers are not masculine).
- For radio and TV advertising make sure to include nontraditional student voiceover.
- Use gender inclusive language, not gender neutral; you are actively seeking students of all genders.
- Include real world setting in promotional videos. Cover topics such as:
 - ✓ what it is like to be a man or woman and work in a gender-dominated field,
 - ✓ work/life balance,
 - ✓ support networks, and especially the role of family and peers in providing support. Support is a high priority consideration for women as they consider career options.
- Use press releases to let community know when you start a recruitment campaign geared towards nontraditional students or offer information sessions.
- Forward press releases to community partners to keep them informed of your effort.
 - ✓ Include material about information sessions and registration dates.
- Do not assume your audience knows what nontraditional careers are; use common language instead of professional terms like “nontraditional careers” in promotional materials;
 - ✓ If potential students do not recognize the meaning of language do not use it in recruitment efforts.

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Recommendations



- Create a section of your program's website that has specific information for students interested in NTO, include testimonials and success stories.
 - ✓ Also use this space to provide information that supplements lack of knowledge of career or educational norms and to create an understanding of the day to day experience of someone in the career.
- Role model advertising has proven to be effective.
- Create a second advertising campaign to target students who could benefit from pursuing a nontraditional career by advertising relevant benefits of NTOs.
 - ✓ Campaigns will need to vary depending on the specific target gender.
 - ✓ For women, major considerations are often the opportunity for higher pay and career advancement.
- ✓ For men, major considerations are often work life balance and job satisfaction.
- Contrast pay between traditional careers and nontraditional careers.
- Also include information about support services that are specifically relevant to those individuals seeking careers that are nontraditional for their gender.

SOURCES:

¹Allison, C.J., & Cossette, I. (2007). Theory and Practice in Recruiting Women for STEM Careers, Proceedings of the WEPAN 2007 Conference, Women in Engineering Programs and Advocates Network.

²Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act S.250, 109th Cong., 6 (2006) (enacted).
<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-109s250enr/pdf/BILLS-109s250enr.pdf>

³National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity. Nontraditional Career Preparation Root Causes & Strategies. Cochranville: National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, 2009. Napequity.org. NAPE. Web.

⁴Quimby, J.L., & DeSantis, A.M. (2006). The Influence of Role Models on Women's Career Choices. Career Development Quarterly, 54(4), 297-306

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Retention Super Strategies

Recommendations

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Nontraditional occupation (NTO) refers to occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.²

PRACTICE EFFECTIVE CAREER GUIDANCE TO CREATE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF NTOs AND PROMOTE THEIR BENEFITS. RETENTION STRATEGIES CAN BE BROADLY CATEGORIZED INTO THREE AREAS: ACADEMIC AND CAREER COUNSELING, ORIENTATION, AND SUPPORT SERVICES.

ACADEMIC AND CAREER COUNSELING

- Stress job security and job availability of nontraditional careers, especially for males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Include information about expectations of work-life balance.
- Inform students of actual on-the-job activities.
- Inform prospective students about pay rates and potential career progress.
- Prepare female students for the negative aspects of high-status, traditionally male careers including stress, scheduling, and physical demands.
- If lower pay is a concern for male students considering nontraditional careers balance discussion of pay with discussion of positive elements that may align with their values.
- Discuss values and social responsibilities related to career goals with male students to better understand the emphasis they place on different elements of a career and potentially discover if nontraditional careers may be a better fit for their goals.
- Each student's values are different; don't make assumptions based on gender stereotypes.



DID YOU KNOW?

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) promotes equity in education and the workplace through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. They tracked equal pay protections in all 50 states and rated Illinois as a “state with strong equal pay protections.” Yet, they remind that there is more work to be done. Closing the gender gap in nontraditional careers is one way to close the wage gap. Their website provides more information on state by state equal pay policies and protections.¹

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Remember supporting students in NTO programs is not just an equity issue; increasing enrollment in NTO courses is a powerful way to impact student's lives and represents an important service to the students and communities the college serves.

Provide mentors and positive role models.

- Include members of the target population in the faculty.
- Establish mentoring programs for students in NTO programs that connect them with those working in NTO fields.
- Ensure that mentoring programs fit the educational setting and student need.
- Consider alternate mentoring strategies. Internet-based contacts and connection to professional organizations may be viable options when face-to-face contact cannot be established.
- Include speakers and presenters in classes who can serve as NTO role models.

Ensure orientation adequately addresses the needs of nontraditional students.

- Provide a welcome correspondence at orientation with a list of resources or support services including services related to childcare, transportation, or partner organizations that are relevant to nontraditional students.
- Attempt to initiate hands-on experience as early as possible through facility tours.

Facilitate support groups.

- Include clubs that increase student engagement or interaction with professional organizations, peer counseling, and groups that involve like-minded peers in programs.

Train faculty and staff to consider issues related to NTO's.

- Train instructors and administrators to plan ahead for issues related to changing rooms or equipment sizes so the issues do not arise during course work.
- Train counselors to understand the relationship between the personal, professional, and cultural situations facing students in NTO programs.
- Drive cultural change by spreading awareness of NTO issues.



SOURCES:

¹ American Association of University Women, Kate Nielson. "AAUW Policy Guide to Equal Pay in the States." Policy Guide to Equal Pay in the States. Accessed August 17, 2016.

<http://www.aauw.org/resource/state-equal-pay-laws/>.

² Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act S.250, 109th Cong., 6 (2006) (enacted). <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-109s250enr/pdf/BILLS-109s250enr.pdf>

³ Hard Hatted Women. A Toolkit for Recruiting and Retaining Women in Nontraditional Positions. N.p.: Hard Hatted Women, July 2009. PDF. Accessible via <http://www.cewd.org/toolkits/CEWDHHToolkit.pdf>

⁴ West, Monieca. Opening Doors for Nontraditional Students. N.p.: Arkansas Department of Higher Education - Department of Career Education, 3 Apr. 2014. PDF. Accessible via: <http://www.adheperkins.com/resources/Nontrad.pdf>