



## Title III

# Center for Career Exploration and Development (CCED)/ Graduate School Preparation Program (GSPP)

Message from the Executive Director

## **Inaugural Year of Transformation, Innovation, and Workforce Readiness**

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The inaugural launch of the Center for Career Exploration and Development (CCED) at Central State University marked a transformative moment in the university's commitment to student success, workforce development, and post-graduate readiness. The CCED became a centralized hub for exploration, opportunity, innovation, and economic empowerment.

Built upon the university's historic 1890 Land-Grant mission and aligned with institutional strategic priorities, the CCED introduced a student-centered framework designed to prepare every Marauder to explore boldly, lead confidently, and serve globally. Through immersive programming, strategic employer partnerships, innovative technology, and intentional student engagement, the Center created pathways that connected classroom learning to meaningful careers, graduate school education, leadership development, and experiential learning opportunities.

Throughout this inaugural year, the CCED launched high-impact initiatives that elevated campus-wide visibility and strengthened career readiness culture across the institution. From Career Signing Day celebrations and Wealthy Wednesday employer engagements to graduate school preparation with Kaplan resources, internship expansion, student on-campus employment transformation, and NACE-aligned professional development programming, the CCED focused on developing career confidence and sustainable student outcomes.

Despite the complexities of building new systems, onboarding new processes, and transitioning student employment operations, the CCED remained committed to "Rigor with Grace." The result was a dynamic and resilient foundation that positions the university for continued growth, increased retention, enhanced employer engagement, and measurable student success.

This inaugural year was not simply the beginning of a department—it was the launch of a movement designed to transform the trajectory of Marauders for generations to come under the direction of:

- Executive Director, Lisa G. Dunn
- Director, Sidney Williams
- Program Coordinator, Tracy Watts-Coleman
- Career Specialist, James Myles Lacking



## **Section I**

### **Building the Foundation: Launching the CCED under Title III**

The Center for Career Exploration and Development was established under Title III to unify career development, graduate school preparation, workforce readiness, and experiential learning into one comprehensive student success ecosystem. The CCED embraced the “Marauder Career Compass” framework, helping students navigate career exploration through intentional guidance, skill development, and real-world experiences.

The Center reimagined career services as an institutional strategy rather than a stand-alone office. By integrating employer engagement, graduate school pathways, federal work-study development, internship readiness, and leadership programming, the CCED positioned itself as an economic empowerment zone for students and the university community.

The inaugural year included the development of:

- A four-year career readiness framework aligned with NACE competencies
- The “Marauder Career Compass” and “Dock” Pre-hire Certification branding initiative
- Student Advisory Board framework
- Expanded graduate school preparation services
- Career and internship readiness workshops
- Employer partnership pipelines
- Data-driven reporting and tracking systems
- Student employment operational systems utilizing Handshake and Banner
- Workforce development programming tied to retention and persistence

The CCED also introduced strategic visibility campaigns that increased student engagement and employer participation throughout the academic year.

## **Section II**

### **Student Success Through Innovation and Engagement**

The CCED launched dynamic and culturally responsive programming designed to meet students where they are while preparing them for competitive global opportunities. Programming emphasized confidence-building, practical workforce preparation, and experiential learning.

One of the most impactful initiatives was the reimagined Career Signing Day experience and March Madness Employer Tracking, an NCAA/NBA-style celebration where students publicly announced internships, graduate school acceptances, military commitments, and employment opportunities. The event elevated career achievement to the same visibility traditionally associated with athletics and entertainment.



Additional signature initiatives included:

### **Wealthy Wednesday Employer Series**

Weekly employer engagement experiences positioned outside the student cafeteria increased employer visibility and normalized professional networking in everyday student spaces.

### **The Marauder Career Compass Initiative**

Students engaged in exploration activities connected to career pathways, graduate school preparation, networking, interviewing, and leadership development using the Compass framework.

### **Graduate School Readiness Expansion**

The CCED broadened graduate school support services, including professional school preparation, admissions guidance, standardized testing resources, and graduate exploration workshops with increased exposure in the new CCED/GSPP suite in the university student center.

### **Technology and Innovation Integration**

Students gained access to modern career technologies, including:

- AI-powered resume and interview preparation tools
- Virtual employer engagement opportunities
- Handshake career platform integration
- Career pathway exploration resources
- Digital professional branding support

### **Measurable Highlights and Institutional Impact**

#### **Student Engagement Growth**

- Increased participation in career readiness workshops and professional development programming
- Expanded student utilization of Handshake services and employer events
- Increased visibility and participation through campus-wide engagement campaigns
- Strengthened graduate school preparation participation among upperclassmen

#### **Employer and Partnership Expansion**

- Expanded partnerships with corporate, nonprofit, government, and graduate school organizations
- Increased employer visibility through Wealthy Wednesday and Career Expo events
- Strengthened relationships with regional and national workforce partners
- Increased internship and experiential learning opportunities for students



### **Student Employment Transformation**

- Transitioned oversight of student employment operations to the CCED/GSPP
- Developed onboarding, training, and compliance systems utilizing Banner and Handshake
- Implementing supervisor training and workflow accountability processes
- Established strategic operational frameworks for federal work-study and student employment management

### **Institutional Alignment**

- Supported university goals related to retention, persistence, workforce development, and graduate success
- Aligned programming with NACE standards and career readiness competencies
- Expanded opportunities for first-generation and historically underserved students
- Strengthened campus-wide collaboration across academic and student affairs division

## **Section III**

### **Strategic Partnerships and Workforce Development**

The CCED strengthened partnerships with organizations and employers committed to student advancement and equitable workforce access. Through collaborations with corporate partners, workforce agencies, graduate schools, and professional organizations, students were exposed to meaningful career opportunities and professional networks.

Key partnership engagement areas included:

- Career and internship recruitment
- Graduate school preparation
- Leadership development
- Workforce readiness training
- Professional mentoring
- Experiential learning pathways

The Center also worked to position Central State University students competitively within emerging industries including technology, business, engineering, government, healthcare, agriculture, and communications.

## Section IV

### Looking Ahead: The Future of the CCED/GSPP

The inaugural year established a powerful foundation for long-term institutional impact. Moving forward, the CCED will continue expanding innovative programming, employer pipelines, student employment systems, graduate school preparation, and career readiness initiatives.

Future priorities include:

- Expansion of career pathway programming by academic major
- Enhanced data dashboards and student outcome tracking
- Increased employer-sponsored experiential learning opportunities
- Expanded graduate and professional school partnerships
- Advanced student employment certification training
- Continued integration of AI and workforce technologies
- Development of the “Marauder Docking Port” workforce training model

As the Center evolves, the CCED/GSPP remains committed to preparing students not simply for jobs—but for leadership, purpose, service, and lifelong success.

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The inaugural year of the Center for Career Exploration and Development/GSPP demonstrated the power of strategic vision, innovation, and student-centered leadership. Through collaboration, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to student success, the CCED has become a transformational force advancing career readiness, workforce development, and institutional excellence at Central State University.





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# CAREER SIGNING DAY 2026

*PT. 2*

The Journey continues! Join us as we celebrate the next wave of students stepping into their careers and graduate school!  
Celebrate our Marauders as they step into what's next!

University Student Center  
Suite 217 Landing

**THURSDAY**  
**MAY 7, 2026**  
**4:00 PM**

*Patricia*

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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

February 9-13, 2026

<b>09 FEB</b>	<b>CCED Open House</b>	11 a.m. - 2 a.m., University Student Center, Room 217
	<b>Payday Panel Party</b>	5 - 6:30 p.m., University Student Center Game Room (Lower Level)
<b>10 FEB</b>	<b>Personal Branding Workshop</b>	5 - 6:30 p.m., University Student Center, Room 203
<b>11 FEB</b>	<b>Mock Interviews</b>	10 a.m. - 3 p.m., University Student Center
	<b>Professional Headshots</b>	11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., University Student Center, Room 217
	<b>Employer Panel</b>	5 - 6:30 p.m., University Student Center, Room 203
<b>12 FEB</b>	<b>Elevator Pitch Competition</b>	5 - 6:30 p.m., University Student Center Ballroom
<b>13 FEB</b>	<b>Student Ambassadors Tabling</b>	11 A.M. - 2 p.m., University Student Center



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# NAVIGATE YOUR SUCCESS

Meet top employers and graduate schools all in one place!

**University Student Center, Ballroom**

This is your chance to explore career options, discover graduate programs, and build connections that can shape your future.

*Bring your resume, ask questions, and take the next step toward your goals.*

**DAY 1**  
**Oct. 1**  
**2-6 p.m.**  
Career Expo and Grad School Fair

**DAY 2**  
**Oct. 2**  
**9 a.m.-4 p.m.**  
Interview and pre-screening

Register today on Handshake

Business attire required  
Questions? Contact Lisa Dunn at [Ldunn@centralstate.edu](mailto:Ldunn@centralstate.edu)



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## CAREER READINESS WEEK

SCAN TO REGISTER  
REGISTER: <https://forms.office.com/r/kyMhHd1>  
For more information email: [twatts-coleman@centralstate.edu](mailto:twatts-coleman@centralstate.edu)

<b>MON 08</b> SEPT	<b>SUPERVISOR TRAINING</b> <b>STUDENTS - CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT</b>	11 A.M. TO 12 P.M. 12:30 - 2 P.M.
<b>TUE 09</b> SEPT	<b>CLOTHES THAT WORK - HOW TO STAND OUT IN A COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET MANDATORY FOR CLOTHING GIVE AWAY</b>	2 SESSIONS 4-5 P.M. TO 5-6 P.M.
<b>TUE 09</b> SEPT	<b>RECRUITERS FROM CINTAS &amp; DISNEY COLLEGE PROGRAM</b>	11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
<b>TUE 09</b> SEPT	<b>REAL WORK - BRING YOUR LAPTOP VMock &amp; Handshake</b>	4 P.M. TO 6 P.M.
<b>WED 10</b> SEPT	<b>RECRUITERS ON CAMPUS DISNEY COLLEGE PROGRAM &amp; CLEVELAND CAVALIERS</b>	11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
<b>WED 10</b> SEPT	<b>REAL WORK - BRING YOUR LAPTOP LINKEDIN TRAINING</b>	4 P.M. TO 6 P.M.
<b>THUR 11</b> SEPT.	<b>WORK STUDY FAIR - CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT</b>	11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.
<b>THUR 11</b> SEPT.	<b>INTERN PANEL DISCUSSION GETTING PAID...</b>	4 P.M. TO 6 P.M.

Central State University is an equal opportunity provider. If you need reasonable accommodation or interpretation or translation services to participate in this event, please contact: [twatts-coleman@centralstate.edu](mailto:twatts-coleman@centralstate.edu) at least 10 days prior to the event.

