



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

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 Manager, 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.

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.





CENTRAL
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 The Center for Career Exploration and Development

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**

Adams



 The Center for Career Exploration and Development

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

February 9-13, 2026

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





CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY | The Center for Career Exploration and Development

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



CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY | Center for Career Exploration and Development

CAREER READINESS WEEK

SCAN TO REGISTER
REGISTER: <https://forms.office.com/r/9rYVnHhEdJ>
For more information email: twatts-coleman@centralstate.edu

MON 08 SEPT

SUPERVISOR TRAINING 11 A.M. TO 12 P.M.
STUDENTS - CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT 12:30 - 2 P.M.
CHARLES S. SMITH HALL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, AUDITORIUM

CLOTHES THAT WORK - HOW TO STAND OUT IN A COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET 2 SESSIONS 4-5 P.M. TO 5-6 P.M.
MANDATORY FOR CLOTHING GIVE AWAY
CHARLES S. SMITH HALL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, AUDITORIUM

TUE 09 SEPT

RECRUITERS FROM CINTAS & DISNEY COLLEGE PROGRAM 11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER, OUTSIDE CAH

REAL WORK - BRING YOUR LAPTOP 4 P.M. TO 8 P.M.
VMock & Handshake
CHARLES S. SMITH HALL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, AUDITORIUM

WED 10 SEPT

RECRUITERS ON CAMPUS 11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
DISNEY COLLEGE PROGRAM & CLEVELAND CAVALIERS
UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER, OUTSIDE CAH

REAL WORK - BRING YOUR LAPTOP 4 P.M. TO 8 P.M.
LINKEDIN TRAINING
CHARLES S. SMITH HALL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, AUDITORIUM

THUR 11 SEPT.

WORK STUDY FAIR - CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT 11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.
UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER, FIRST FLOOR

INTERN PANEL DISCUSSION 4 P.M. TO 6 P.M.
GETTING PAID...
CHARLES S. SMITH HALL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, AUDITORIUM

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