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A Profile of Positions Advertised for Financial Aids: 1979-1983

by Jan M. Carlson

The material for this article was originally developed as a chapter in a doctoral dissertation in higher education at Oklahoma State University. The initial study examined over five thousand position advertisements, which appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* from 1979 through 1982. The advertised positions for 1983 were added to this study.

The rationale for the use of position advertisements was the prospective employer would list information in the advertisements felt to be most relevant to individuals seeking the positions. While the advertisements did not provide information relative to the skills and knowledge of the persons actually hired, they did indicate what the prospective employer sought in an employee.

This study was designed to examine three aspects of the positions advertised in financial aids. The first aspect was that information related to hiring in the financial aids area. These data included the month and year in which the advertisement first appeared and the location by state, and size of the hiring institution.

The next area analyzed was related to the nature of the position being advertised. Job title, degree requirements, years of previous experience desired, field of study, and salary information were included in this section.

The third aspect of the position advertisements studied was related to specific areas of skill, knowledge and job responsibility specifically cited in the position announcements. For the financial aids area, the following items of skill, knowledge, and job responsibilities were utilized:

- administration
- management
- budget
- writing communication skill
- oral communication skill
- knowledge of student development theory
- intercultural awareness
- financial counseling
- goal setting
- consultation
- leadership skills
- group skills
- training
- supervision
- programming
- advising
- computer knowledge
- knowledge of need analysis

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knowledge of financial aid packaging
student employment
knowledge of federal financial aid regulations

These items were not intended to encompass all areas of skill, knowledge, or job responsibility that appeared in the advertisements, but rather were used to allow for a contrast with other student personnel units and to give an overview for the financial aids area.

Methodology

The "Bulletin Board" section of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* was used as the source for the position announcements. *The Chronicle* was selected for this purpose because it provided the best single source for position advertisements in higher education.

In collecting the data for financial aids positions, three position titles were used; director, assistant/associate director, and financial aid advisor. Upon identifying the positions for financial aids, the position advertisements were analyzed to determine the following data. School size was determined by utilizing the *Educational Directory, Colleges and Universities 1978-79*. The state in which the advertising institution was located was noted, as was the month and year in which the advertisement was first placed in *The Chronicle*. When listed, salary information was included. In those advertisements where a salary range was given, an average salary was utilized.

The qualifications for the positions were listed as these appeared in the position announcements. These qualifications included degree sought by level and field of study, and experience required. The fields of study specifically listed in the advertisements were those used.

This information, plus an analysis of the specific areas of skills and knowledge presented in the previous section, were used for a profile of positions for financial aids. In this manner, information about positions advertised for financial aids as well as what prospective employers listed as important were developed.

Profile of Positions Advertised for Financial Aids

During the five years from 1979 through 1983, there were 891 positions advertised for financial aids in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Figure 1 shows the distribution of these positions by the year in which the advertisements appeared. The number of positions advertised in financial aids showed a marked increase during 1980 and 1981, however the number declined to the 1979 level in 1982 and remained there in 1983. It appeared from the information in figure 1, that hiring in financial aids has stabilized during the past two years.

Figure 2 shows the monthly analysis of the advertisements in financial aids. Almost 55 percent of the positions advertised appeared from March through July. This peak of hiring corresponds with the colleges and universities' need to fill staff positions prior to the beginning of the fall term. It is interesting to note that September shows almost ten percent of the advertised positions.

The analysis of the size of the institutions placing the advertisements showed that 85.9 percent of the positions advertised were at institutions with over 1,000 students. Almost 21 percent of the positions were advertised by institutions with enrollments from 1,000 to 2,500. Figure 3 shows the analysis of positions by school size.

Figure 1
Financial Aids Position
by Year Advertised
1979-1983

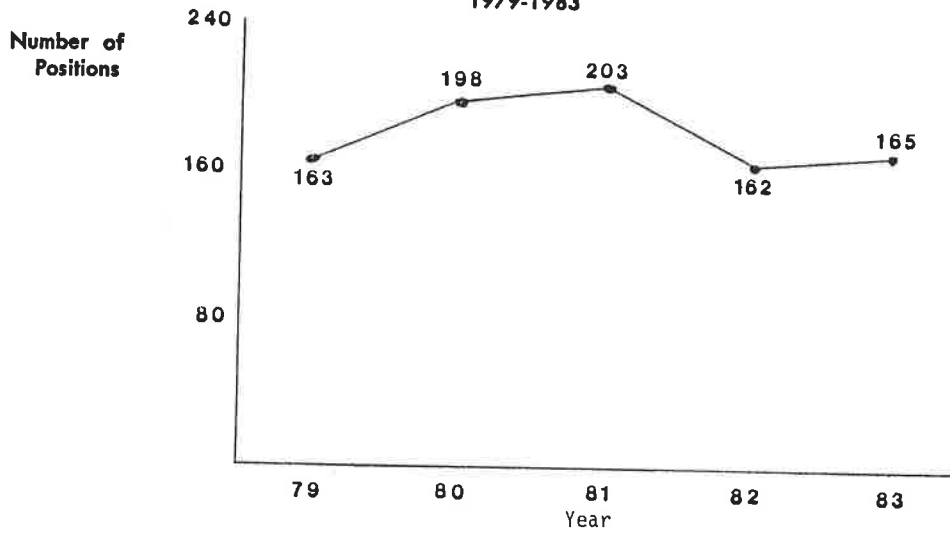


Figure 2
Financial Aids Position
by Month Advertised
1979-1983

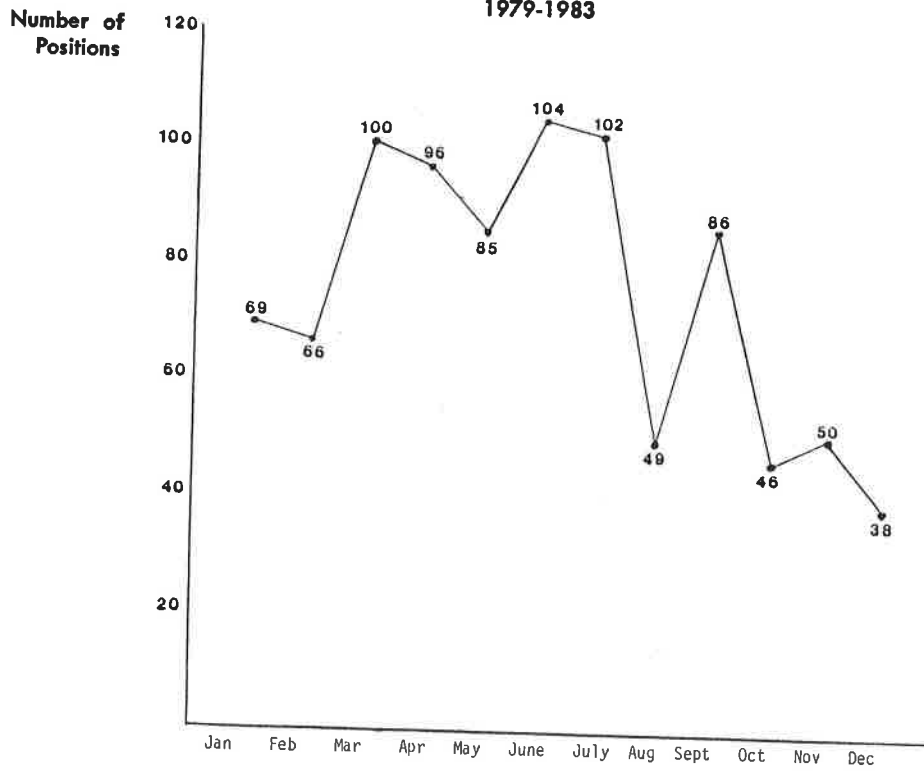


Figure 3
Positions by School Size

School size	Number	Percent
below 500	36	4.0
501 - 1,000	90	10.1
1,001 - 2,500	185	20.9
2,501 - 5,000	133	14.9
5,001 - 10,000	156	17.5
10,001 - 20,000	158	17.7
20,001 and above	133	14.9
	891	100.0

Advertisements were placed by institutions in forty-six states and the District of Columbia. Six states listed five or more percent of all the positions advertised. These were New York (11 percent), California (nine percent), Illinois and Pennsylvania with seven percent each, and Massachusetts and Ohio with five percent of the positions advertised.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of advertisements by position title. Over forty-five percent of the positions advertised were for directors of financial aids. This high percentage may be the result of the large number of institutions advertising. In these cases, the director may be the only professional staff member in financial aids. This would contribute to the large number of director positions. Another factor may have been that in hiring a director, the institutions utilized *The Chronicle* and a nation-wide search procedure, whereas in the selection of lower level staff, other local media may have been used.

Figure 4
Positions Advertised
by Title

Title	Number	Percent
Director	405	45.6
Associate/Assistant Director	297	33.4
Advisor	189	21.0
	891	100.0

The next analysis was that of position advertised by degree required. Over 80 percent of the position announcements did specify a degree requirement (see Figure 5). Slightly over 60 percent of all positions advertised preferred or required a masters degree. Only two percent of the positions called for a doctorate.

Figure 5
Position Title
by Degree Requirement

Title	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate
Director	88 27.9	215 68.3	12 3.8
Assistant/Associate Director	121 45.1	145 54.1	2 .8
Advisor	69 42.3	93 57.0	1 .7
	278 37.3	453 60.7	15 2.0

The information in Figure 5 would indicate that experience was of more importance in financial aids than was the level of academic training. This conclusion was supported by an analysis of position title and years of experience. This analysis showed that the mean for years of specified experience for directors of financial aids was 3.61 years. The advertised positions of assistant/associate directors had a mean of 2.40 years of experience, while financial aid advisors showed a mean of 1.92 years of experience.

The most frequently listed degree area in advertisements for financial aids was student personnel. Thirty-seven percent of the advertisements which specified an academic major listed student personnel. This was followed by business (24.8 percent), counseling (19.1 percent), and administration (11.0 percent).

Thirty-six percent of all positions advertised cited a salary. This analysis proved to be of interest in that for directors of financial aids, slightly over one-fourth (26.2 percent) specified a salary. This figure was 39.7 percent for assistant/associate directors, and was over half (50.8 percent) for financial aid advisors. This finding was important in that it demonstrated the necessity for greater flexibility in salary for higher level positions, in order to accommodate for differences in educational level and years of experience.

Figure 6 shows the means for positions by job title. The mean of all positions in financial aids was \$19,315.

Figure 6
Salary by
Position Title

Position Title	Number	Mean Salary	Minimum Salary	Maximum Salary
Director	106	\$22,490	\$13,000	\$41,343
Assistant/Associate Director	118	18,848	10,992	30,456
Advisor	96	16,382	10,000	29,494
	320	19,315	10,000	41,343

The analysis of the salary information further showed that the increase in salaries for positions advertised was 17.6 percent from 1979 through 1983. The largest percentage increases for salaries advertised during this period was for assistant/associate directors. The increase in these positions was 28.8 percent over the five year period. Advisors showed a 19.6 percent increase and directors an 11.7 percent increase. While these increases may seem high, they do reflect increases over a five year span.

The next area examined was the listing of skills, knowledge, and position requirements specified in the position announcement. In reporting these items, only those which were found in over ten percent of the advertisements were reported. These items were; administration (52.7 percent), management (35.8 percent), writing communication skills (20.3 percent), oral communication skills (19.1 percent), counseling (38.9 percent), supervision (35.7 percent), computer knowledge (32.0 percent), need analysis (24.2 percent), packaging (17.8 percent), employment (16.5 percent), and knowledge of federal regulations (47.0 percent). To this group, was added budget (8.5 percent) and training. Figure 7 shows the analysis of these items by position.

The analysis of these findings show the five highest ranked items for director of financial aids were; administration, knowledge of federal regulations, management, supervision, and computer knowledge. The highest ranked items for assistant/associate directors were; administration, counseling, knowledge of federal

Figure 7
Percentage of Skill, Knowledge
and Position Requirements Appearing
in Advertisements by Title

Item	Director	Assistant/Associate Director	Advisor
Administration	64.7	48.8	33.2
Management	41.0	38.0	21.4
Budget	12.3	5.4	5.3
Writing Communication Skill	19.8	23.2	17.1
Oral Communication Skill	19.0	21.9	15.0
Counseling	23.2	48.1	58.8
Training	5.2	11.1	4.8
Supervision	40.7	36.7	23.5
Computer Knowledge	33.3	39.4	17.6
Need Analysis	16.5	30.6	31.0
Packaging	12.6	22.6	21.9
Employment	14.8	19.5	15.5
Knowledge of Federal Regulations	52.6	42.4	42.2

regulations, computer knowledge, and management. Financial aid advisor position advertisements listed counseling, knowledge of federal regulations, administration, need analysis, and supervision as the five highest ranked items. This analysis indicated that the position announcements for directors were highly oriented to office operations, while assistant/associate directors advertisements combined both operational and client service items. The advertisements for financial aid advisors emphasized client service items.

Budget, another operational item, appeared most frequently in advertisements for directors of financial aids. Training was most often listed in advertisements for assistant/associate directors as did both writing and oral communication skills.

One of the items which is very revealing of the changes in financial aids is that of computer knowledge. Figure 8 shows the analysis of computer knowledge by year. This shows the rapid increase of computer knowledge as this item appeared in the advertisements.

Figure 8
Percent of Computer Knowledge
Listed in Advertisements by Year

Year	Percent
1979	26.4
1980	27.0
1981	32.0
1982	33.3
1983	38.9

It would appear that computer knowledge is becoming more important at all levels of financial aid operations and will continue to become increasingly important.

Conclusion

The use of position advertisements to provide a profile of positions in financial aids does represent a somewhat different approach to research. The large number of position advertisements from 1979 through 1983 did indicate the importance of this area to student personnel work.

The number of positions advertised did show a stabilization from the peak years of 1980 and 1981. In addition, financial aids positions seemed to place a greater emphasis upon experience than on academic degree.

In the area of skill, knowledge, and job requirements, both knowledge of federal regulation and computer knowledge were highly important in financial aids positions. This profile has shown what the employers sought in positions in financial aids.