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VECAP

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VECAP MISSION

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) is a nonprofit organization originally founded in 1967 to promote the professions and services of vocational evaluation and work adjustment. Formerly known as the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), the name was changed in 2003 to better reflect the focus of the organization as well as emphasize the independent status of the organization. This group has no affiliation with the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) or the NRA/VEWAA.

The VECAP organization is committed to advance and improve the fields of vocational evaluation and career assessment and represents the needs of the professionals who provide those services. Its scope of services will encompass individuals who need assistance with vocational development and/or career decision-making.

VECAP's membership comprises professionals who provide vocational evaluation, assessment, and career services and others interested in these services.

VECAP members identify, guide, and support the efforts of persons served to develop and realize training, education, and employment plans as they work to attain their career goals.

For membership information visit VECAP.org.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Fall 2012 edition of the VECAP Journal

Vocational Evaluation is More Fun than a Barrel of Spiders

A few months ago, I met with a group of vocational evaluators as they were learning new ways to "find the cans (abilities)" with three different populations. One part of the meeting was to look at how each evaluator conceptualizes vocational evaluation. Each participant was given a sheet of paper and asked to provide anonymous brief background information. Following the background questions, only the words Vocational Evaluation (VE) appeared. Each participant was asked to free associate and write whatever came to mind. There were 41 participants (see table 1) and 41 responses (See Appendix). This is a well educated and quite experienced group with only two evaluators reporting <1 year experience and 4 with >30 years! The average is 13.7 years of employment as a vocational evaluator. They know VE.

Table 1

Education and Experience of Vocational Evaluators

Education		Experience	
Bachelors	3	<5 years	11
Master's in Vocational Evaluation	7	5-9 years	9
Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling	21	10-19 years	5
Master's in other discipline	19	>20 years	16
Total	50*		41

Note: N= 41

*Total greater than 41 because some evaluators had more than one master's degree.

The 41 statements range from 2 words "(VE) *is fun*" to 63 words (see item 34 in the Appendix). Using qualitative analysis software (NVivo 9, http://www.qsrinternational.com), I analyzed the statements. Most (20) of the statements describe VE as the following exemplifies: "(VE) *is a systematic process of evaluating an individual's abilities, strengths, limitations, preferences, interests, etc…*" Some also define VE as a starting point: "(VE) *is the first step in finding an appropriate job match for an individual*." Other responses (6) define VE by our tools: "*Using techniques and methods that have work or work tasks and outcomes as their focus."* Another perspective involves the value of VE to consumers: "(VE) *helps individuals find out what they can do*." There are also three metaphors with two using VE as a tool and one serving as the title for this editorial. Finally, there were other comments (6) about the

rewards of being a vocational evaluator as exemplified by "(VE) *is the closest thing to my ideal job that I have ever had. Performing useful evaluations has become my passion*."

This sampling of statements from vocational evaluators reflects the pragmatic character of our profession: we have a definition, a process, value for the consumer, and a service that provides meaning for practitioners. I am not quite sure how to interpret VE is "*more fun than a barrel of spiders."* Perhaps like art, interpretation is best left to the brain of the beholder. (SRS)

The articles in this journal relate to the themes as voiced by the evaluators. Smith, Leconte, & Vitelli present VECAP's new Position Paper on Universal Design for Learning for Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation. This paper relates to the process of VE. Sligar & Betters present a national study about vocational evaluators and the service of VE in state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, which speaks to the profession. This paper was presented as a general session at the 15th National Forum on Issues in Vocational Assessment and Evaluation *"Let's Create Something Together! Best Practices, Tools and Techniques for a Collaborative Assessment Process"* in San Bernardino, CA on March 31, 2012.

Appendix

Responses of the Vocational Evaluators

1: is a useful tool for helping clients discover what they need to be more likely to succeed on a job or in an educational environment

2: is a rewarding occupation filled with variety and complexity

3: is a systematic process of evaluating an individual's abilities, strengths, limitations, preferences, interests, etc.… Using techniques and methods that have work or work tasks and outcomes as their focus

4: is a process to explore all facts of the career planning, training, actualization process applicable to the specific needs of the person involved

5: is the opportunity to spend sufficient time one-on-one with an individual to explore vocational interests, abilities—basically a complete understanding of the person as it relates to work/school. You also have the opportunity to find out if the goals are theirs or the wishes of someone else

6: is an individualized process that is imperative to individual's vocational process (search/development)

7: is a process of psychometric testing and work samples to help determine a person's strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the work environment and possible employment

8: a comprehensive holistic process to facilitate a person's ability to seek, acquire, maintain, compete and improve in a work environment despite functional limitations

9: is a great process for discovering who one is and what they would/could enjoy doing.

10: plays an important role in the rehab process

11: is a vital tool to assisting individuals in determining job interests, job abilities, and job

matching

12: is my ministry, as it allows me to help others less fortunate than me

13: is a process involving the past, present, and future

14: is an investigative process to find an individual's skill set as well as other factors that may affect employment

15: is the best/most rewarding job I have had

16: is a very rewarding job

17: can be completed utilizing a variety of tools, techniques, and strategies

18: is still a joy to engage in after all these years

19: is necessary and a job for professionals, is an opportunity to assist persons to find meaningful employment by utilizing education and creativity. Vocational evaluation is more fun than a barrel of spiders

20: is the closest thing to my ideal job that I have ever had. Performing useful evaluations has become my passion

21: is a useful tool for everyone

22: provides data that assists the client in making informed choices regarding his/her vocational direction, training options, etc.

23: is a great resource for helping individuals through the process of choosing a career and maintain success in their chosen career

24: is fun

25: has helped folks attain success in their lives!

26: helps evaluees discover their career options, their likes and dislikes, their daily living and work skills, and helps them to integrate that information into a realistic, cohesive plan to achieve their goal(s)

27: is a process to assist the client in achieving success on the job—a job that matches his interests and abilities…and areas that might need further assessment

28: is an integral part of the rehab process

29: allows me to meet such a wide variety of people in my day to day work, which is great; and I was surprised to learn that only a few states employ us like NC does

30: can be extremely helpful with any client if the evaluator is skilled and the client actively participates

31: is the nucleus of the rehabilitation process and critical aspect of matching skills with jobs for successful outcomes

32: helps individuals find out what they can do

33: is a process of observation, interview, and assessment designed to determine a person's unique strengths and challenges, current level of functioning intellectually, behaviorally, socially and vocationally to help them in the process of self-awareness, self-determination, and informed choice to facilitate successful transitions to employment

34: allows me to assist other professionals in aiding PWDs (persons with disabilities) *in planning and providing various rehab services and frequently resulting in direct, selective*

and even independent job placement (and even on occasion in career positions for some of our former clientele). Observations, conversations, background and test results combined make up the gist of our profession in helping our deserving fellow man reach his/her/their/our goals

35: is a process that is meant to help a person find a valuable career choice using his/her interests, aptitudes, academic scores, etc.

36: is the first step in finding an appropriate job match for an individual

37: is my life

38: is a standardized process to assist a consumer with identifying their interests and aptitudes, strengths, limitations with a variety of tools, such as interviews, behavior observation, aptitude tests, interest tests, achievement tests, situational assessment, or community based assessment

39: the process of uncovering personal skills, interests, values, to assist in choosing a vocation that is available in local area

40: is both an art and a science

41: is a helpful component in gathering information in the vocational rehab process…is often seen as a starting point to assess interests, aptitudes, etc.

Steven Sligar and Nancy Simonds, Co-editors
Min Kim, Managing Editor

VECAP JOURNAL GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICATION

Editorial Guidelines

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Journal (Journal) is an official publication of VECAP. The purpose of the Journal is to advance knowledge and practices in the fields of vocational evaluation, career assessment, and work adjustment. The Journal has three target audiences: practitioners and other professionals, educators, and consumers. The Journal provides readers with critical information to inform their practice in assessment or evaluation and therapeutic adjustment services, all with a vocational perspective. Practitioners, educators, researchers, and consumers may submit a manuscript for review. You do not have to be a member of VECAP to submit.

The Journal seeks the following types of manuscripts: research; theory building; perspectives on vocational evaluation or career assessment; reviews of books, tests, work samples; or other related topics of interest.

Note: See page 42 for new test review form Go

Manuscript Submission

1. Use the Manuscript Review Form (see VECAP.org) to determine if the manuscript is ready for submission.
2. Submit the manuscript as an email attachment to Journal@VECAP.org.
3. Receive a confirmation email (within 1-2 days) with manuscript review number.
4. Manuscript is blind reviewed by the Editorial Board or invited reviewers who have expertise in a specific topic (typically requires 3-4 weeks).
5. Receive status email with one of the following conditions: accepted, accepted with revisions, or rejected.

Submission Guidelines

Each manuscript must be prepared according to the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. All manuscripts except book reviews and brief reports require a 150-250 word abstract with 3 keywords. An additional Journal requirement is to include an author bio(s), which is a single page that contains the author's name(s), credentials, and short (100 words) biographical information that will appear in the Journal if the article is published. Reviews of books, work samples or work sample systems, or other related topics of interest to the readers follow a guideline of 800 to 1400 words and no abstract. Here is a site link: http://vecap.org/index.php?/site/publications_categories/C24/

Note: More detailed submission information can be found online at VECAP.org

For information on the status of your manuscript, contact:
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The VECAP Position Paper on Universal Design for Learning for Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

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Abstract

As a framework, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a lens for designing assessments that are fair, equitable, and supportive of variation in learner ability. The UDL framework is aligned with decades of research on effective instructional strategies and recent neuroscientific findings. The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Association (VECAP) published a national position paper on UDL in 2006 (Leconte, Smith, & Johnson, 2006) to establish recommended approaches for vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioners. This paper updates the previous position paper, highlighting emerging neurological research in the learning sciences that underscores the importance of UDL for the profession.

The VECAP Position Paper on Universal Design for Learning and Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Association (VECAP) advocates for the application of universal design for learning (UDL) principles in vocational evaluation and career assessment to expand and enhance best practices that help ensure social justice for consumers and participants. VECAP has been committed to adopting positions that emphasize best practices in assessment approaches, such as the necessity of assistive technology, the value of interdisciplinary collaboration, and the focus of assessment in community settings (Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Association, 2011). Earlier position papers about these approaches have evolved into standards of practice. UDL as a framework to guide the assessment process and integration should become a universal standard of practice in all aspects of career assessment and vocational evaluation. Using UDL as a lens underscores the importance of crafting an assessment process that is personalized and includes multiple approaches and ways to determine an individual's strengths and abilities (Russell, 2011). UDL strengthens the importance of assessment approaches that are formative, authentic, and encourage multiple opportunities to triangulate data (Leconte, 1994; Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Leconte, Rothenbacher, & Sitlington, 1994). Approaches to assessment informed by UDL principles are responsive to research on the value of continuous monitoring of progress to support learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Rose, Hall, & Murray, 2009). Additionally, UDL principles offer multiple opportunities for consumers to explore career options.

Research from the learning sciences continues to support that learner variability is developmental and systematic (Rose & Fischer, 2009; Rose & Gravel, 2010). Learning for one individual will vary across his/her developmental capabilities, background experiences, and context (Fischer & Bidell, 2006). Learner variability is central to the UDL framework and validates the importance of considering multiple means to reach all learners—across all settings. Thus, planning with a UDL lens assures that the career assessment and evaluation process is designed to provide maximum affordances for learning opportunity and success.

Defining Universal Design for Learning

UDL is defined in the *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008* as

> A scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that—provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient (20 U.S.C. § 1003(24)).

Three UDL tenets guide effective practices that advance fairness and equity (Rose & Meyer, 2002). These tenets require simultaneous and consistent provision of

- Multiple means of representation to provide options that support differences in perception, understanding language and mathematical expressions, and comprehension.
- Multiple means for action and expression to provide options that support differences in physical action, expression and communication, and capabilities in executive functioning.
- Multiple means for learner engagement to provide options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and encouraging self-regulation.

By considering these tenets, UDL facilitates access to and participation by all who wish to engage in career assessment and vocational evaluation services. Engagement indicates that UDL tenets will help individuals guide, plan, and participate fully (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, 2003); UDL helps to strengthen this engagement, reinforcing an important goal of career assessment and vocational evaluation: empowerment. Career assessment and vocational evaluation processes that are designed through the lens of a UDL framework acknowledge expected learner variability and support equity and inclusive practices that encourage individual success. Integrating an array of techniques, a variety of methods and tools, multiple representations of material, and multi-modal representations of instructions represents a UDL approach. The requirements of vocational evaluation—to use multiple sources and multiple methods to gain multiple outcomes that will assist participants—naturally align with UDL philosophy, tenets, and principles (Smith, 2003).

The UDL framework is structured across these three central tenets and nine guidelines that offer targeted strategies to consider in planning, providing, and facilitating the career assessment process. A central goal of UDL is to provide opportunities that encourage learning expertise—learners who are resourceful, goal-directed, and motivated (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Framing career assessment with UDL in mind provides for this assurance.

Assessment that focuses on multiple measures that facilitate individuals' self-awareness and understanding of their strengths and abilities is key to career success (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, 2003; Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007). Thus, applying UDL to assessment enables practitioners to offer processes that are flexible, accessible, and appropriate for any type of individual. Such variability in approach accommodates the unique characteristics of individuals with differences in brain structure and function (including those with non-English language backgrounds, low socioeconomic circumstances, disabilities, etc.). Increasingly, the important focus on learner variability across all individuals complements the central philosophies of vocational evaluation and assessment practices and opens doors for new opportunities (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011b; Rose & Fischer, 2009).

Brain-based Learning Anchors UDL

Research of brain-based learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Center for Applied Special Technology, 2010; National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011b; Rose & Meyer, 2000, 2003) multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999; Sternberg, 1997), varied learning style preferences, and diverse learner approaches supports the need to reach out to assessment participants using UDL approaches. The variation of neurological characteristics correlates with the need for multiple and varied means of assessment. In the context of UDL, each individual has three primary networks that are critical to learning: recognition, strategic, and affective

(National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011b).

Recognition Networks

The concept of recognition refers to how individuals gather and make meaning of the various perceived stimuli. Key neurological components to processing these stimuli are located toward the posterior of the cerebral cortex (see Figure 1 for a visual representation).

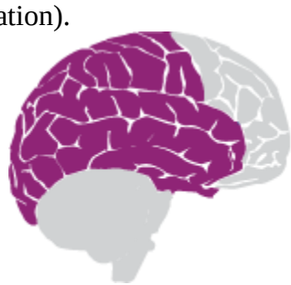

Figure 1. The location of the recognition networks. Retrieved from National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011b)

More specifically, sections of the occipital, parietal, and temporal lobes enable individuals to recognize patterns, upon which further cognitive processes (such as evaluating or analyzing data) are based. For example, word recognition is rooted primarily in the left fusiform gyrus, where the occipital and temporal lobes meet. Shaywitz (2005) explains that this area is where "incoming information from different sensory systems comes together and where, for example, all the relevant information about a word—how it looks, how it sounds, and what it means—is tightly bound together and stored" (p. 79). However, this occipito-temporal area does not function in the same manner for every individual. Neurological imaging (e.g., functional magnetic resonance imaging or *f*MRI, positron emission tomography or PET scanning) reveals that, in comparison to other readers, individuals with dyslexia experience an under-activation of this region during reading exercises. An individual's life experiences and training may also impact his or her recognition networks, further suggesting variation in posterior cortex functioning. In addition to differences in reading abilities, individuals with dyslexia also "appear to be disproportionately represented in the upper echelons of creativity" (Shaywitz, 2005, p. 57). Such creativity can facilitate learning and should be captured within career assessment processes. Research suggests that individuals with dyslexia may possess specific visual-spatial talents, and may be more inclined to pursue artistic related studies at the postsecondary level (von Károlyl, Winner, Gray, & Sherman, 2003; Wolff & Lundberg, 2002). If assessment environments implement UDL, these talents can be used to enhance assessment experiences and outcomes.

Strategic Networks

Information and knowledge gained from the recognition networks are subsequently utilized by the strategic networks, which are housed in the frontal lobe (see Figure 2 for a visual representation).

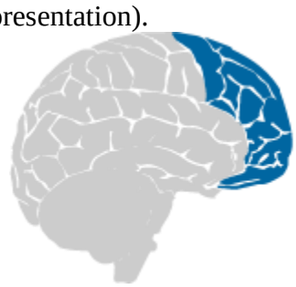

Figure 2. The location of the strategic networks. Retrieved from National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011b)

The strategic networks coordinate how an individual interacts with his or her environment, controlling a set of faculties frequently referred to as executive functions (e.g., goal planning, focusing, organization, self-monitoring). Variation in frontal lobe functioning may express itself in myriad ways. Among transition-age individuals (ages 14-24), a common manifestation is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Recent research suggests that individuals with ADHD have reduced frontal lobe volume and activity (Krain & Castellanos, 2006; Rubia, Smith, Brammer, Toone, & Taylor, 2005; Valera, Faraone, Murray, & Seidman, 2007). Correspondingly, these individuals, in contrast to their non-diagnosed peers, typically experience delays in the development of their executive functioning abilities, causing difficulties related to inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. However, these individuals may be sought after as creative employees capable of generating many ideas to solve difficult problems (White & Shah, 2006; 2011).

Affective Networks

The recognition and strategic networks work in tandem with affective networks,

which are located below the cerebral cortex, in the limbic system (see Figure 3 for a visual representation).

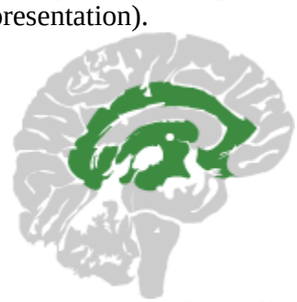

Figure 3. The location of the affective networks. Retrieved from National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011b)

As Meyer and Rose (1998) explain, affective networks help us act (strategic networks) upon the information that we perceive (recognition networks); "they determine whether the patterns we perceive matter to us, and help us decide which actions and strategies to pursue" (p. 6). The limbic system consists of several important components, including the amygdala, thalamus, hypothalamus, and hippocampus. Variation in any of these components may impact an individual's ability to regulate his or her emotions or willingness to engage in particular tasks. For example, recent research indicates that individuals with larger amygdala volumes tend to have more personal relationships, while individuals with impaired amygdala functioning have difficulty with social interactions and recognizing fear (Adophs, Gosselin, Buchanan, Tranel, Scyns, & Damasio, 2005; Bickart, Wright, Dautoff, Dickerson, & Barrett, 2011; Kennedy, Gläscher, Tyszka, & Adolphs, 2009).

Assimilating UDL with Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

Among the goals of career assessment, especially vocational evaluation, gaining or improving access to one's personal aspirations are primary. Universal design for learning and assessment facilitates access more than any idea since the initiation and growth of using assistive technology prior to, within, and following assessment and evaluation. UDL provides a framework that encourages multiple opportunities in how information is represented, expressed, and engaged with for assessment and instruction, which are based on neuroscience research about how people learn. This research indicates that all assessment and instructional activities must be designed for equal access and participation *prior to* delivery so that all individuals can succeed (Ketterlin-Geller, 2005; Spooner, Baker, Harris, Delzell, & Browder, 2007). The UDL conceptual framework is supported by the National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2011a), with the recommendation that any assessment should "reduce or remove barriers to accurate measurement of learner knowledge, skills, and engagement" (para. 6).

Given the shifting demographics within education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, and career assessment services, the UDL framework focus on individualization is of particular importance (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, 2003; Russell, 2011). Planning assessment services through a UDL lens assures that tests are universally designed, incorporates technologies to expand accessibility, and are appropriate for a range of learners (Dolan & Hall, 2009). UDL provides individualized access to all users or consumers of career assessment and vocational evaluation services, but it is essential for certain consumers.

Changes in Consumer Characteristics and Skills

Increasingly, education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, and career assessment professionals are working with transition-age consumers (ages 14 to 24). In forty-seven states and the District of Columbia, transition-age consumers constituted a higher percentage of the overall vocational rehabilitation population in 2010 than they did in 2004. This is reflected in national statistics. In 2004, one in every four (25.9%) vocational rehabilitation consumers fell into the transition-age demographic. In 2010, this figure rose to one in every three (34.6%) consumers (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 2012). This trend is expected to continue since the Rehabilitation Services Administration has maintained service to transitioning students as a national priority (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 2008).

Members of this transition-age population also belong to another unique demographic. They are "digital natives," individuals who were born into a society already immersed in digital technology (Prensky, 2001; 2010). In contrast to

previous, "pre-immersion" generations, they are accustomed to a "plugged-in" environment, having been raised in an era where phones also serve as video cameras, where email—itself a recent technological breakthrough—is falling victim to social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011; Madden, 2010), and where books are downloaded instead of checked out of libraries. They are accustomed to communicating in multiple ways with multiple devices and are no longer as engaged in learning or other activities that do not rely on electronic formats (Gray, Silver-Pacuilla, Brann, Overton, & Reynolds, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). According to recent research on media consumption, youth between the ages of eight and eighteen spent in 2009 an average of seven hours a day utilizing various electronic media. This represents a consumption increase of approximately 20% since 1999 (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). This preference for electronic-based means of communicating is not unique to younger consumers. Research suggests that heavy usage of electronics is increasing in older citizens. As a result, this growing demographic has become a target audience for suppliers of social media and digital technology (Kang, 2011; Smith, 2011). As more digital immigrants require services, career assessment and vocational evaluation should use contemporary technology while implementing UDL-based environments.

Such a drastic shift in consumer characteristics may present challenges to service provision. In practice, however, technology creates unprecedented opportunities for career assessment and vocational evaluation professionals to work more effectively with a wider range of consumers. Through the use of an ever-increasing palette of digital resources, consumers can benefit from individualized learning and assessment environments, including materials that are responsive to their unique needs and interests (Smith, Leconte, & Johnson, 2006). As a protean medium that lends itself readily to customization, digital technology is a natural ally of the UDL approach (United States Department of Education, 2010). By using multiple techniques and tools that are appropriate for individuals with varied backgrounds, learning style preferences, cognitive attributes, and abilities, the framework eliminates barriers to full engagement, learning, and discovery in career assessment and vocational evaluation. Implementing multiple techniques and options supports the central tenets of assessment processes. In other words, to facilitate positive, growth producing outcomes for consumers, assessment processes must be holistic and humanistic (Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Rothenbacher, & Sitlington, 1994) as well as therapeutic and equitable (Leconte, 1994).

A Process Strengthened by Multiple Approaches

Because of this diverse spectrum of neurological functioning, career assessment, planning, and programming should be individualized and customized to gain maximum benefit for participants. Assessment plans that are created through a UDL lens better assure that methods will be flexible and offer multiple opportunities for success. Russell (2011) notes,

> From a test theory perspective, however, personalization has great potential to reduce error that results from needs that are irrelevant to the construct a test is designed to measure. By improving access through adapted presentation and alternate representations, some students will better understand the information with which they are asked to work. In turn, better understanding results in activation of the construct of interest. By increasing engagement with test content and the problem presented to the student, a test item has a better opportunity to capture outcomes that are the product of the construct of interest (p. 125)

More importantly, when vocational evaluators consider connections to UDL guidelines, they are aligning their approaches with research-based practices that support expected differences in learner variability (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011b; Rose & Fischer, 2009). The three central tenets of UDL reinforce the importance of offering multiple options during an assessment process and provide additional opportunities to consider providing:

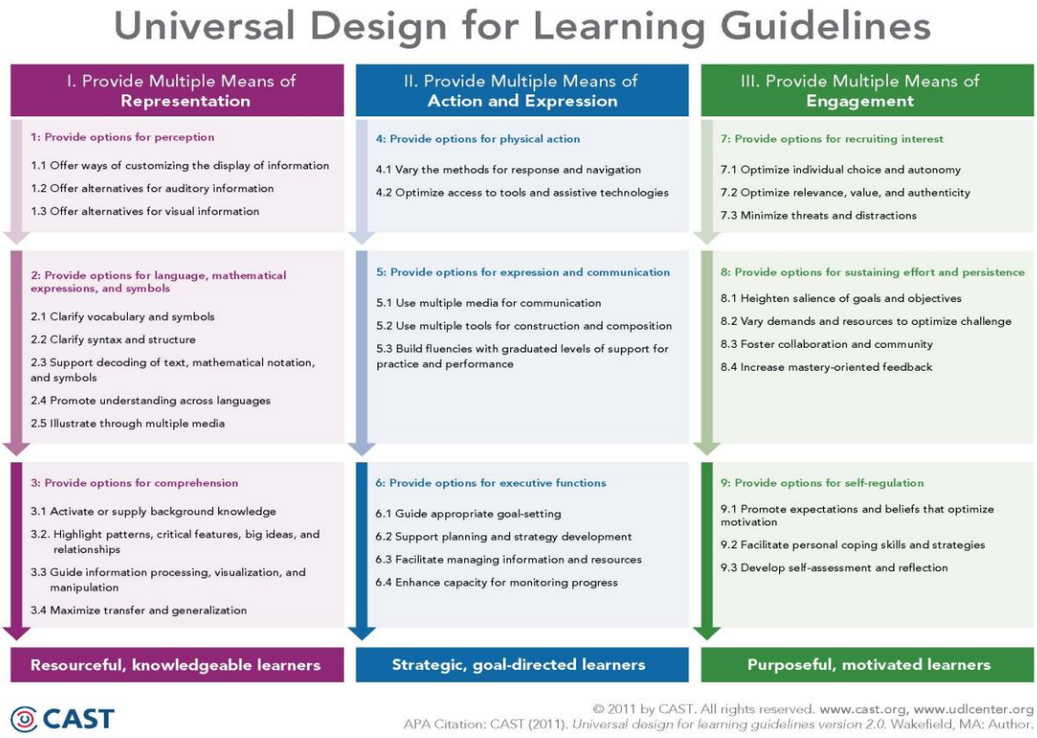

Figure 4. The nine UDL Guidelines, organized by the three principles. Retrieved from Center for Applied Special Technology (2011). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.0.* Wakefield, MA: Author. Copyright 2011 by CAST.

- Multiple means of representation, to give learners (and people being assessed as learners) various ways of acquiring information and knowledge (e.g., multi-media instructions for work samples and other methods, such as standardized inventories, situational assessments).
- Multiple means of expression, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know (e.g., individuals may use hands-on performances, oral, written, graphic, video, or computer-generated communication as well as American Sign Language and other languages).
- Multiple means of engagement, to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation (e.g., individuals may watch, listen, use their hands and bodies as well as digital platforms in assessment and shall help guide the process by selecting areas of interest or curiosity).

UDL Guidelines

The UDL guidelines suggest a variety of strategies and technology approaches that can be considered for expected learner variability across each of the three brain networks (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2011b). These nine guidelines suggest techniques that align with the identified brain networks and representative options within each. For example, to support the recognition network, UDL guidelines one through three align with considering (a) options for perception, (b) options for language, mathematical expression and symbols, and (c) options for comprehension. To support the strategic network, specific guidelines four through six address (a) options for physical action, (b) options for expression and communication, and (c) options for executive functions. Finally, to align approaches that address the affective network, UDL guidelines seven through nine address (a) options for recruiting interest, (b) options for sustaining effort and persistence, and (c) options for self-regulation. An illustration of these guidelines is noted in Figure 4.

These nine guidelines offer a new lens through which the vocational evaluation and career assessment practitioner can consider all of the key components of the assessment process, including interviews, interest and aptitude testing, career exploration, work sampling, and reporting.

Vocational evaluation and assessment is a professional discipline which utilizes a systematic appraisal process to identify an individual's vocational potential. Consumers range from school-aged youth to older adults who are making career decisions or vocational transitions. The vocational evaluation and assessment professional provides services to measure, observe, and document an individual's interests, values, temperaments, work-related behaviors, aptitudes, skills, physical capacities, learning style and training needs. The foundation of vocational evaluation and assessment is that all human assessment should be holistic and humanistic. A holistic approach encompasses issues of diversity, all relevant attributes of the individual, his/her existing or potential environments (ecologies), and the interactions between the individual and the environments. A humanistic approach to vocational evaluation and assessment requires consumer involvement, and processes that are designed and implemented to benefit the individual served, with an emphasis on individual capabilities rather than disability. Further, the environment should fit the individual rather than the individual adjusting to fit the vocational environment (1994, p.1).

Figure 5. Definition of Vocational Evaluation and Assessment (Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Leconte, Rothenbacher, & Sitlington, 1994).

Means of Representation

Vocational evaluation and assessment practitioners can be creative in the design of assessment plans that incorporate varied approaches for client/student action and expression. In today's growing digital world, the recognition of how technology changes the ways in which individuals use and access information is another important factor for evaluators to consider as they develop evaluation and career assessment plans. For example, paper-based tests might be scanned into an optical character response (OCR) digital format that allows various learners to "read" information through a speech synthesizer, electronically translate it into a different language, or easily magnify the view. Pictorial career

interest surveys that are paper based might be represented through digitally based career exploration tools such as photographs, videos, or virtual reality scenarios to enhance perception or comprehension.

Multiple Means for Action and Expression

Learners vary in both their preference and ability to express what they know. Individuals required to "write" an assessment response might instead use their voice to dictate the information through a software program or an application ("app") on a portable device, use a word processor to compose a response, or demonstrate a response through a hands-on activity. Embedded digital supports such as spell-checkers, highlighters, and graphic organizers prove invaluable to many who have grown accustomed to tools that scaffold their writing and expression when communicating through written expression.

Multiple Means for Engagement

Finally, encouraging the natural give-and-take exchange of information during the assessment process can facilitate the value of choice and ownership of the consumer in the assessment process. Crafting an assessment plan with consumers allows them to consider and select which tools address their individual interests, goals, preferences, and capabilities.

VECAP's Definition of Career Assessment

Previously, VECAP endorsed the definition of vocational evaluation and assessment as articulated by The Interdisciplinary Council on Vocational Evaluation and Assessment (Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Leconte, Rothenbacher, & Sitlington, 1994; see figure 5). Integration of UDL in evaluation and assessment processes is compatible with, and guided by, this definition.

Efforts to provide holistic and humanistic assessment services require the integration of UDL from the onset of any assessment process. By doing so, professionals facilitate a third principle of career assessment and vocational evaluation (Smith, et al., 1994) that fosters human growth (i.e., enhanced maturity, improved self-esteem, advanced self-determination, and enhanced personal responsibility) and career development.

Benefits of Including UDL in Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation Practices

Career assessment and vocational evaluation services designed within a UDL framework allow any participant access to all types of methods and approaches. To gain access to one's personal goals and aspirations, one has to have complete access to assessment methods (e.g., work sampling, inventories, situational assessments, web-based career exploration). This requires use of digital text, voice synthesizers, access to various digital applications and tools, and re-thinking provision of services. The use of assistive technology along with advances in general technology and cyberspace (e.g., the cloud) can reinforce UDL in assessment. Thus, participants can try out, see, and experience their potential in safe settings prior to using them in education or employment environments. This permits multiple opportunities to express, explore, and demonstrate career preferences, needs, strengths, capabilities, and goals. It also

Table 1

Universal Design for Learning in Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Processes

	Traditional Approach	**UDL-enhanced**
Referral	Information is obtained through a variety of outside sources.	Information includes expressed and expected outcomes from the individual.
Initial Interview	Specifics are explained with the individual through a structured paper-based questionnaire or face-to-face oral interview.	Data is gathered through multiple sources including a digitally based interview tool that allows variation in how information is provided either through writing, writing with supports, voice or speech-to-text. Oral interviews may be conducted face-to-face but via audio-video teleconference call.
Individualized Planning	Plans are developed through a structured (often paper-based) planning form.	Plans are developed in a digital format (perhaps a portfolio design) that allows the individual to create plans alongside the evaluation practitioner—recruiting interest and increasing relevance. Use of hyperlinks to videos of career examples and relevant terms/information help to fill gaps in prior knowledge.
Evaluation/Assessment Techniques	Assessment methods may include options that provide many instruments or techniques, including paper-based inventories, questionnaires, hands-on work samples, and community-based exploration experiences.	Emphasis on multiple methods and approaches which integrate digital technology to expand one's opportunities for multiple ways of learning, performing and behaving.
Synthesis of Data and Report Development	Assessment results are analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted into language that is	Results can be presented in multiple digital formats, including interactive electronic

	understandable to all users of the results, especially the consumer.	profiles, reports, and portfolios. Pictures, illustrations, graphs, and PowerPoint can improve understanding by recipients of reports, especially if the consumer's own words and interests are included.
Exit Interview or Wrap-up Conference	Assessment results and recommendations are discussed with multiple recipients of reports and profiles, especially the referral agent, consumer, and other stakeholders.	Results are discussed using multiple formats and media and are available to anyone who wants to participate with the use of telephonic, video and audio media, electronic conferencing platforms, etc.
Feedback from consumers and users of reported information	Feedback is requested from referral agents and others who may use assessment information via paper follow-up surveys.	Immediate and long-term feedback are promoted and can be solicited via email, electronic surveys, and other electronic formats.
Follow-up	The hardest stage of assessment to accomplish, follow-up information is usually requested by calling the consumer, asking the referral source, and/or mailing brief questionnaires.	Evaluators can be alerted about times for follow-up by functions in their electronic calendars. They can send out electronic surveys that will compile information on both individual and multiple consumers to identify which recommendations were followed, why others were not followed, and which aspects of their services are validated as useful and which are not.

allows participants opportunities to demonstrate optimal learning, discovery, and performance preferences and needs during assessment processes. Integrating UDL offers opportunities to try out various methods and techniques that facilitate representation, expression, and engagement to determine which are most effective. UDL helps equip individuals with knowledge about themselves—how they learn, what works to support learning, and how to engage in life-long learning. Finally, use of UDL in assessment reduces barriers to achieving desired education, training, and

employment. An illustration of how UDL can be infused across a typical vocational evaluation or career assessment process is provided in Table 1.

Guiding Principles for Including UDL in Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

Adopting a UDL framework to guide a career assessment and vocational evaluation process makes good sense. Vocational evaluation and career assessment processes, by definition, focus on methods that highlight the use of multiple and authentic approaches to assure that a participant's career directions are appropriately ascertained. "The underlying principles of UDL support the same philosophies many vocational evaluation practitioners have been recognizing for years—that all individuals benefit from a different presentation in approach" (Smith, 2003, p. 70). To provide equity and fairness, career assessment and vocational evaluation processes that integrate the principles of UDL help to ensure process that considers variations in how individuals learn, work, behave, and interact with information and their environment.

Conclusion

The range of people who can benefit from career assessment, including vocational evaluation, is wide and diverse. No one method or approach can effectively provide the discovery and learning that one is expected to experience when using these services. In the past, some people have been denied access to meaningful assessment and evaluation due to methodological, physical, and instructional barriers. Advances in technology and in our understanding of how the brain works (e.g., how we learn) provide the opportunity for anyone who wants to participate in our service to do so. As professionals, we must provide barrier-free, fully accessible services. This will require vocational evaluators to be self-motivated, on-going learners about ever-changing technological advances (e.g., mobile devices, digital applications, and social media—along with the "next new thing") and neuro-scientific discoveries regarding how people learn. If we subscribe to the notion that "assessment is learning," we must individualize and tailor career assessment and vocational evaluation services to adjust and meet anyone's needs so that anyone can benefit (i.e., learn) from participating. To provide anything less than UDL-designed assessment and evaluation processes undermines equity, fairness, and success for individuals who seek to realize dreams and achieve educational, vocational, and employment success.

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The State of State Vocational Evaluators: A National Study

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Abstract

Vocational evaluation (VE) as a profession has evolved over time. Although studies have examined the roles and functions of vocational evaluators, there is a need to identify current VE employment practices in state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. This paper reports a survey administered to a purposeful sample of 63 respondents representing general, blind, or combined state VR programs in the United States. The 32-item survey collected data on job titles; the number of positions currently available; entry level requirements for employment; career ladder opportunities (both horizontal and vertical); starting and ending salaries; geographic assignments; Department of Labor exemption status; and vocational evaluator responsibilities, including report writing production and components, and tool utilization. This study provides benchmarks for the VE profession that include the ways in which VR programs provide VE services, the number of vocational evaluators employed by VR programs, a comparison of employment conditions of vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors, and other employment conditions unique to VE.

Keywords: vocational evaluator, salary study, conditions of employment

The State of State Vocational Evaluators: A National Study

Many of the founders of the profession of vocational evaluation were employed by state vocational rehabilitation programs (VR). Their first meeting was hosted at a state-operated facility in Georgia, and other states soon followed (Hoffman, 2008). Mike Ahlers, former President of the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) and the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP), has noted that "the founding membership included many state employees, as does the current membership" (personal communication, January 17, 2011). To date, however, there has been no examination of the employment practices of state VR regarding vocational evaluators, and only one study (Thomas, 1989) has compared vocational evaluators with rehabilitation counselors (RC) who work for VR. This paper discusses the definition of vocational evaluation, the roles and functions of vocational evaluators, the current climate of VE, and reports a national survey of VE professionals.

Contextualizing Vocational Evaluation

Vocational evaluation (VE), originally known as work evaluation (Hoffman, 2008), has experienced several redefinitions, usually in conjunction with variations in the perceived roles and functions of vocational evaluators. The current definition of VE, which was developed by the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), is as follows:

> A comprehensive process that systematically uses work, either real or simulated, as the focal point for assessment and vocational exploration, the purpose of which is to assist individuals with vocational development. Vocational evaluation incorporates medical, psychological, social, vocational, educational, cultural, and economic data into the process to attain the goals of evaluation (Dowd, 1993).

This definition implies that VE is a methodical approach that uses specific tools to measure factors affecting an individual's employability. However, the definition remains vague, to give individual professionals the flexibility to vary methods and tools in the design and delivery of a VE.

Table 1

An Analysis of the Roles and Functions of Vocational Evaluators

Studies	Key Roles & Functions
Pruitt (1972)	Evaluation, Interviewing/Counseling, Training, Administration, Occupational Analysis, Communication, Research/Development
Coffey (1978)	Effective Communication, Report Writing, Professionalism, Interpretation of Evaluation Results, Formulation of Recommendations
Leahy & Wright (1988)	Assessment Planning/Interpretation, Vocational Counseling, Assessment Administration, Job Analysis, Case Management, Personal Adjustment Counseling
Taylor et al. (1993)	Vocational Assessment, Job Matching, Vocational Counseling, Situational Assessment, Report Writing, Job Readiness Appraisal
Taylor & Bordieri (1993)	Vocational Counseling, Behavioral Observation, Occupational Development, Standardized Assessment, Professionalism, Case Management
Hamilton & Shumate (2005)	Analysis/Synthesis of Assessment Data, Behavioral Observation and Evaluation Techniques, Case Management, Occupational Analysis, Vocational Counseling, Professionalism

The definition is an encompassing description of a process that can be implemented in numerous ways; it does not limit the scope of the process to specific procedures and tools. Vocational evaluation, therefore, can be shaped to meet the needs of the client. A potential disadvantage of the vagueness, however, is that it allows ambiguity and significant variation in the process, to such a point that VE may begin not to look like VE anymore. Therefore, it is important to identify the processes that exist in VE to assess actual variability in the professional identity and characteristics of vocational evaluators.

Roles and Functions of Vocational Evaluators

The rehabilitation literature includes studies of vocational evaluator roles and functions (Coffey, 1978; Hamilton & Shumate, 2005; Leahy & Wright, 1988; Pruitt, 1972; Taylor et al., 1993; Taylor & Bordieri, 1993). The key roles and functions identified in all six are provided in Table 1. Although these six studies collectively specify 36 roles and functions, only seven of the roles and functions (counseling, behavioral observation, administration of instruments, occupational/career analysis, case management, and professionalism) are shared. This suggests two possibilities. Either the roles and functions have changed over time, or variability exists among respondents in their perceptions of the roles and functions of vocational evaluators. Thus there may be notable differences in how VE is perceived and practiced.

The Thirtieth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (30th IRI; 2003) identified 11 paradigm shifts presented in Table 2. The shifts were in the following areas: the role and functions of the vocational evaluator; the VE process; the VE setting; and the length of a VE. The importance of contributory underpinnings becomes evident: recognition of individualization; an emphasis on client empowerment; promotion of universal design to maximize accessibility; and accountability for cultural considerations.

Table 2

Paradigm Shifts in Vocational Evaluation by Area

Old Paradigm	Current/New Paradigm	Area
VE used as gatekeeper (eligibility determination)	VE used to optimize consumer driven employment outcome and long-term career development	Function
Screen client in/out of rehabilitation services	Facilitate customer's success in effectively choosing and maintaining desired employment despite severity of disability	Function
Fit client to the VE process	Tailor the VE process to fit the consumer	Function
Provide long-term evaluations	Provide individualized evaluations of varying lengths that are sensitive to specific information needs and outcomes	Length
Focus on VE process	Focus on employment outcome with the consumer	Process
Evaluator is the sole provider of VE	VE is a team approach directed by the evaluator	Role
Evaluator in control of the VE process	Evaluator facilitates a consumer-driven process emphasizing participant involvement and decision making (the basis of empowerment, self-determination, informed choice)	Function
VE offered primarily in a clinical setting	The community is one of the many VE settings	Setting
VE only offered once	VE offered more than once as a dynamic process to evaluate change and accommodation	Process
Offered in isolation as a standalone service	Incorporates other disciplines (assistive technology, career development, transition, empowerment using profiles and portfolios for consumer involvement and ownership)	Process
Initially offered in sheltered workshop settings primarily for VR	Offered in a variety of community-based settings for numerous populations	Setting

* The Old and Current and New Paradigms from the 30th IRI (2003, pp. 22-23).

The Current Climate of VE

Recent activity in the field of VE is troubling, particularly the cessation of the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CCWAVES) and the transition of the Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist (CVE) credential from an open process that included new evaluators to a maintenance process for already credentialed professionals. These two developments point to a critical need for attention to the profession's longevity. The population of CVEs will retire or leave the field, eventually resulting in the group's extinction. With each year, there is some attrition of providers who have demonstrated minimal competency through certification. The rehabilitation field is then likely to experience an increase in the number of vocational evaluators who may not be trained to provide services at the same level of competency. The danger is that without some benchmarks for a credential, there will be no mechanism to ascertain a professional's competency. This is a great concern to many in the field who think the integrity of VE is being compromised (Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association, 2011). Thus a detailed investigation into the employment conditions of practicing vocational evaluators is warranted.

Examining State Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Practices

No employment practices study has been published for the VE field. In an early study, Thomas (1989) collected information on

vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors and found that vocational evaluators were employed by 32 states and the District of Columbia. In most states, evaluators' education, experience, and salaries were similar; none of the states required certification. In a more recent study, the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC, 2008) published a self-report survey on rehabilitation professionals (n=1220) who were Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC). This study examined work setting, academic degree held, and other variables that may influence salaries. CRCC reported that 36% of the participants were state employees, their average pay was $57,176, and the salary range by work setting was $45K to $78K. There were differences in earnings by gender, race/ethnicity, geographic location, educational attainment, and educational specialization.

Vocational evaluators who work for VR are subject to state policies and practices in regard to the provision of the service: that is, whether to provide VE directly, purchase VE from vendors, use a combination of both, or not use the service. As state employees, vocational evaluators are also subject to various conditions of employment, including entry level job requirements, compensation, job duties, and tools provided. Rehabilitation counselors (RC) have knowledge similar to vocational evaluators (e.g., effects of disability, world of work, principles of testing), as well as similar skills (e.g., career counseling, case management), and educational (master's degree) requirements. In the CRCC study, 15% of the respondents who were certified RCs reported employment in the job category of vocational evaluator.

Purpose

Given the current economic climate and the concerns about the vocational evaluators' roles, functions, and credentials, it is important to examine the current employment practices under which these professionals provide services. This study therefore examined current practices of state VR programs in regards to the provision of VE services, including conditions of employment in programs that employ vocational evaluators. Research questions were: a) how do state VR programs provide VE services? b) What proportion of VR programs employ vocational evaluators? c) How do the conditions of employment compare for vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors? d) What are the employment practices of vocational evaluators employed in VR programs?

Methods

A 32-item survey was administered from June 2010 to April 2011 to a purposeful sample of 64 general, blind, or combined VR programs in the United States. A respondent in the central office with statewide responsibilities for the VE program was sought. This person was typically a program specialist. Because no directory of these positions exists, one had to be created. The research assistant first called the VR Director's office and then proceeded through the organization until an appropriate party was identified. Next, a phone interview was conducted with follow-up calls or emails.

The survey was developed based on benchmarking, which is a process of measurement and comparison (Watson, 1993) used to examine performance and practice (Stapenhurst, 2009). Survey items were based on three other studies: Thomas (1989) compared vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors; the Federal Salary Council (2005) compared Federal General Schedule pay to non-Federal pay; and Riehl (2009) looked at Speech-to-Text (Sign Language) Interpreter salaries. Some items were added to collect information specific to vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors. The survey was administered by graduate research assistants (RAs) who were trained to follow a protocol to identify participants, record responses, and follow up to obtain lists of tools or sample reports or outlines. The VR contact person's information and responses were recorded in Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. Descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of East Carolina University.

Results

The following data is reported as sample size and relative percentage. Of the 64 VR

programs contacted, 63 participated in the survey, which is a response rate of 98.4%. One program declined to participate. Sixty respondents (3 skipped the question) self-identified the following program types: 15 (24.6%) blind, 19 (31.1%) general, and 27 (44.3%) combined.

Twenty-six of the 26 VR programs (41.3%) employed vocational evaluators and the respondents from these programs had the following types of positional authority: 12 (46.2%) had staff authority—these were program directors; 11 (42.3%) had direct line authority (supervisors); and 3 (11.5%) were direct service providers (two vocational evaluators and one RC). When asked who had line authority over the vocational evaluators, respondents commented that 14 (73.7%) had a supervisor who also had responsibilities for other disciplines/personnel, and 5 (26.3%) had a supervisor whose primary responsibilities were directed to VE.

Almost all the VR programs (60, 96.8%) purchased VE services; the remaining 3 (4.8%) included two that conducted VE using only state employees and one did not comment. Respondents indicated that most VR programs purchased VE services from community rehabilitation programs (52, 86.7%), followed by vocational evaluators in private practice (35, 58.3%), or psychologists (25, 41.7%). Four (6.7%) used private contractors, employment service organizations, and technology centers. One program hired consumers to assist with computer skills evaluation and transferable skills analyses.

Employment Conditions of Vocational Evaluators and Rehabilitation Counselors

Twenty-six state VR programs that employed both vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors were compared using seven common components of jobs: the job titles, the number of positions currently available, entry level requirements, career ladders (both horizontal and vertical), salaries, geographic assignments and responsibilities, and the job's exemption status from the US Department of Labor Fair Labor Standards Act.

Exemption status is an indicator of how the personnel system views the professionalism of incumbents. In order for the vocational evaluator and rehabilitation counselor to be considered for the learned professional employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- *The employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than $455 per week.*
- *The employee's primary duty must be the performance of work requiring advanced knowledge, defined as work which is predominantly intellectual in character and which includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment.*
- *The advanced knowledge must be in a field of science or learning.*
- *The advanced knowledge must be customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction* (US DOL Wage and Hour Division, 2008).

Job Titles

Vocational evaluator was the title used by the most programs for vocational evaluators (12, 46.2%). Five programs used counselor, and another five used vocational rehabilitation or rehabilitation specialist (19.2% each). There were five other titles used: assessment and career evaluation specialist (referred to as a vocational ACE), technician, psychologist 1, vocational rehabilitation technician, and human service counselor. One respondent noted that the vocational evaluator title was in the process of being changed to rehabilitation counselor. Rehabilitation counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and counselor were the titles used by most of the programs for rehabilitation counselors (23, 82.1%). Five programs reported three other titles: specialist (3, 10.7%), rehabilitation counselor representative (1, 3.8%), and human services counselor (1, 3.8%).

Positions

The total number of vocational evaluator positions in 24 programs was 363 (one respondent did not answer and one respondent's information could not be verified; see Table 3). The average number of vocational evaluator positions per program was 15.12. The great majority of the programs (23, 95.8%) had less than 50 positions, with a range from 1 (three programs, 12.5%) to 72 (one program, 4%).

Table 3

Vocational Evaluator and Rehabilitation Counselor Positions in State VR Programs.

Number of Positions	Programs with Vocational Evaluators*	Programs with Rehabilitation Counselors**
1-10	14	1
11-20	5	2
21-30	1	2
31-50	3	2
51-100	1	2
>100	-	6

* Mean for Vocational Evaluators = 15.12 positions statewide (n=24)
**Mean for Rehabilitation Counselors = 97.47 positions statewide (n=15)

The total number of RC positions in 15 programs was 1,462 and the average per state was 97.47. The majority of the programs (14, 71.4%) had more than 50 positions, with a range of 10-315.

Entry-Level Requirements

Three entry level requirements were examined: education, experience, and certification (see Table 4). The preferred educational level for both vocational evaluator and rehabilitation counselor positions was a master's degree. Vocational evaluators could have a master's in VE (12, 46.2%), rehabilitation counseling (17, 65.4%), or a closely related field (14, 53.8%)[1]. Rehabilitation counselors could have a degree in vocational evaluation (6, 23.1%), rehabilitation counseling (22, 84.6%), or a closely related field (18, 69.2%). A bachelor's degree was acceptable for either position in 12 (46.2%) programs, and one (3.8%) program accepted an associate degree for a vocational evaluator. Respondent comments included these: "*The employee must agree to obtain a master's degree within 5 years"* (6), "*The agency provides training"* (1), and "*There is an internship available"* (for vocational evaluators; 1).

Most of the programs did not have a minimum experience requirement for either the vocational evaluators (17, 68.0%) or rehabilitation counselors (20, 80.0%). Seven programs (28%) required between 1-3 years of experience for vocational evaluators, and five programs (20%) required 1-3 years of experience for rehabilitation counselors. One program required more than 5 years of experience to qualify for entry as a vocational evaluator. Comments indicated that no experience was required for master's level applicants and the experience requirements were for applicants with a bachelor's degree. One program required experience with adults with disabilities to work as a vocational evaluator.

Certification was not required by most of the programs for either vocational evaluators (17, 65.4%) or rehabilitation counselors (14, 56.0%) [1]. Two respondents said that they preferred the applicant to be eligible for certification for either position. Certification for vocational evaluators included CVE (4, 15.4%), CRC (7, 26.9%), or Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC; 3, 11.5%). Certification for rehabilitation counselors included CRC (13, 52.0%), or LPC (3, 12.0%).

Career Ladder

There were 17 horizontal and 12 vertical career ladder titles for vocational evaluators noted by 16 respondents. Horizontal titles that showed different levels (11, 64.7%) included: vocational evaluator 1, 2, or 3; or vocational evaluator entry, vocational evaluator, or master's evaluator. Other specific titles provided were senior vocational evaluator, rehabilitation counselor, and other (2, 11.7% each). Vertical titles included first line supervisor (i.e., VE supervisor; 4, 33.3%), middle to upper management (i.e., unit supervisor, regional director; 3, 25.0%), and program specialist (5, 41.7%).

There were 27 horizontal and 26 vertical career ladder titles for rehabilitation counselors noted by 26 respondents. One reported no career ladders. Horizontal titles that showed different levels (20, 74.0%)

[1] Because there are multiple points of entry, each requirement is treated as a separate element.

Table 4

Educational Requirements for Entry Level per Position.

Education	Vocational Evaluator	Rehabilitation Counselor
Master's in Vocational Evaluation	12 (46.2%)	6 (23.1%)
Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling	17 (65.4%)	22 (84.6%)
Master's in Closely Related Fields (Psychology, MSW, etc.)	14 (53.8%)	18 (69.2%)
Bachelor's	12 (46.2%)	12 (46.2%)
Associate	1 (3.8%)	-

included: rehabilitation counselor 1, 2, 3, or 4; and rehabilitation counselor (entry), then certified rehabilitation counselor 2 or 3. Other horizontal titles included senior rehabilitation counselor (4, 14.8%) and 3 others: rehabilitation counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor specialist, and vocational career counselor (3.7% each). Vertical titles included first line supervisor (12, 46.2%), middle to upper management (same titles provided as for vocational evaluator; 6, 23.0%), program specialist (6, 23.0%), and two others: consultant and rehabilitation counselor career (3.8% each).

Salary

Seventeen respondents reported that the starting salary for vocational evaluators ranged from $20K to $24,999 in one program (5.9%) to $45K to $49,999 in the highest paying program (1, 5.9%; see Table 5). The majority (16, 94.1%) of the programs' starting pay was in the broad range of $25K to $49,999, with a modal range of $30K to $34,999 (7, 41.2%). Sixteen respondents reported that the pay scale started at $25K to $29,999 (1, 6.3%) and ended at >$60k (2, 12.5%), with a modal range of $50K to $54,999 (5, 31.3%).

The findings were similar for rehabilitation counselors, with 15 respondents reporting that the starting salary ranged from $25K to $29,999 (2, 13.3%) to $45K to $49,999 in the highest paying program (1, 6.7%). The majority (13, 86.7%) of the programs' starting pay was in the broad range of $30K to $49,999, with a modal range of $30K to $34,999 (8, 53.3%). Thirteen respondents reported that the pay scale started at $30K to $34,999 (1, 7.7%) and ended at >$60k (2, 15.4%), with a modal range of $50K to $54,999 (4, 30.8%).

Geographical Assignment

Of the 26 respondents, 22 (84.6%) said that vocational evaluators practiced within geographical assignments, while 4 (15.4%) reported this did not occur. There were four primary mechanisms by which vocational evaluation services were assigned: based on the number of counties or regions (15, 75.0%); site-based (such as the state capitol or at larger, metropolitan centers; 4, 20.0%); within territories based on population size (1, 5.0%); and statewide (3, 15.0%). Twenty-five (96.2%) programs assigned specific geographical areas to rehabilitation counselors and one (3.8%) did not. Assignments were based on the number of counties or regions (18, 75.0%); or site-based, such as the state capitol or at larger, metropolitan centers (1, 4.1%); within territories based on population size (5, 20.8%); or statewide (1, 4.10%). One (4.1%) program served by school district.

Department of Labor Status

The programs were very similar in DOL classification. Exempt positions were assigned to vocational evaluators in 10 (45.4%) programs and RCs in 10 (50.0%). Non-exempt positions were assigned to vocational evaluators in 12 (54.6%) programs and to RCs in 10 (50.0%).

Employment Practices for Vocational Evaluators

Selected employment practices were analyzed to examine the day-to-day operations of vocational evaluators providing services for VR. The practices analyzed were production requirements,

Table 5

Starting and Ending Salary Ranges per Position.

Salary Range	Starting - Vocational Evaluator	Starting - Rehabilitation Counselor	Ending - Vocational Evaluator	Ending - Rehabilitation Counselor
20-24,999	1 (5.9%)	-	-	-
25-29,999	4 (23.5%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.3%)	-
30-34,999	7 (41.2%)	8 (53.3%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (7.7%)
35-35,999	1 (5.9%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (12.5%)	2 (15.4%)
40-44,999	3 (17.6%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (12.5%)	-
45-49,999	1 (5.9%)	1 (6.7%)	-	2 (15.4%)
50-54,999	-	-	5 (31.3%)	4 (30.8%)
55-59,999	-	-	2 (12.5%)	2 (15.4%)
>60,000	-	-	2 (12.5%)	2 (15.4%)

including frequency and content of VE reports, and requirements or preferences for tools used by vocational evaluators.

Production Requirements and Report Writing

Of the 26 programs conducting VE, 15 (57.7%) respondents said there was no quota in terms of report productivity; 11 (42.3%) reported a production requirement. Twelve respondents shared the requirements, which varied widely: two (16.7%) reported production at 3-4 per month (36-48 annually), five (41.7%) reported 7-10 per month (84-120 annually), three reported 12-20 per month (144-240 annually), and two (16.7%) reported a variable quota depending on location, other duties, and available slots. One respondent added that the reports had to be completed within five days.

Eleven respondents (42.3%) said that the VE report length varied significantly. Reports could be as short as two pages, but could also exceed 12 pages in length. Several respondents noted that report length was based on client characteristics. However, 21 programs (80.8%) had an outline for VE reports to follow.

All 26 programs had similar requirements for information that must be in reports: 22 (84.6%) required behavioral observation data, a summary of the evaluation process, and vocational recommendations; and 21 (80.8%) also required client demographics. Reports were also required to include tools and methods applied: 23 (88.5%) required psychometric tests; 20 (76.9%) required work samples; 15 (57.7%) required situational assessments and findings; and 10 (38.5%) required community-based assessments and findings.

Seventeen respondents provided 26 comments about other topics that were required less frequently. Three respondents mentioned career guidance (e.g., information, knowledge, exploration).Two respondents said reports were required to include: answers to referral questions, assistive technology recommendations, labor market analysis data, medical information,

job modifications, and transferable skills analysis results. One mention was made of: functional capacity evaluation results, learning styles information, situational assessment, specific behavioral observations, and job recommendations (including entry level, middle, and dream jobs). Two respondents said that report contents were completely driven by the referral source's questions. One respondent repeated there were no requirements for the information in the VE report.

Tools Utilized

Of the 26 respondents, 24 (92.3%) said that they maintained a list of tools to be used by vocational evaluators. Two participants (7.7%) said that a list was not maintained. Twenty-two participants were willing to provide the researchers a copy of their tools.

Discussion

Comparisons with Thomas and CRCC Data

The current study surveyed 63 VR programs; and in an earlier survey, Thomas (1989) examined 51 programs but gave no indication of whether these were general, blind, or combined. Therefore comparisons must be considered as approximate. Since the Thomas study, the percentage of states that employ vocational evaluators has decreased: Thomas found 64% (n=32) and the current study found 41.2% (n=26).

Thomas (1989) and the current research found salaries to be very similar between vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors, with modal and highest starting salaries the same and lowest starting salaries differing by only one program for vocational evaluators. The CRCC (2008) salary information ranged from salaries for new professionals or those whose career started in the 2000s to those with 30 plus years of experience. Using the former, the average salary was $40,000. This same figure was reported for vocational evaluators and rehabilitation counselors who worked for VR programs. The figure is higher than the $30,000 to $34,999 modal range found in the current study and may be explained by the inclusion of professionals in private practice, academics, or those who had sufficient experience to have earned raises.

There were marked differences in educational requirements between Thomas (1989) and the current study. Thomas found that 23.3% (n=30) of programs required a master's degree for employment as a RC or vocational evaluator. The current study found that a master's degree was required for vocational evaluators in 65.4% (n=17) of programs and for rehabilitation counselors in 84.6% (n=22), representing increases of 242% and 314%, respectively. There was no difference, however, in bachelor's degree requirements, with both studies finding them required in 46% of the programs. The programs requiring experience for entry also increased. Thomas found that 12.5% (n=4) of the programs required experience for both vocational evaluators and RCs, while the current study found 32% (n=8) required experience for vocational evaluators and 20% (n=5) for rehabilitation counselors, or increases of 200% and 125%, respectively. There was no change in certification requirement: certification was not required in 1989 and it is still not required. Thomas did not collect national information on a career ladder, though he reported on horizontal ladders in seven states in the

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Region IV. Four states had a career ladder for both rehabilitation counselors and vocational evaluators, two states did not have a ladder, and one state had a ladder for rehabilitation counselors, but not vocational evaluators. The current study found that 16 programs reported both horizontal and vertical ladders for vocational evaluators and 26 reported horizontal and vertical ladders for rehabilitation counselors.

Benchmarks

Vocational evaluators work primarily in settings in which the supervisor has responsibilities for other professions and services beyond VE (14, 73.7%). This implies that vocational evaluators need to be capable of practicing independently with administrative but not clinical supervision. The practice of VE in state VR programs is conducted in a competitive environment, with 96.8% (n=60) of programs purchasing VE services from other sources. The average ratio of full time equivalent (FTE) vocational evaluators to rehabilitation counselors is .25:1. Given this situation, vocational evaluators must assume the role of educator as defined by Thomas (1999), to help others (including the supervisor and referring counselors) to learn about the scope and purpose of the profession.

Clearly, rehabilitation counselors have a stronger professional identity than vocational evaluators as shown by job titles and entry requirements. Most (23, 82.1%) of the respondents in the current study said their preferred job title was rehabilitation counselor; only 42% (n=12) indicated vocational evaluator. To enter the profession, all of the respondents said that different MS degrees were acceptable but most preferred one in rehabilitation counseling for either RC (22, 84.6%) or VE (17, 65.4%) positions. Preferred credentials reveal similar findings, with 52% (n=13) of the states preferring CRC and 15% (n=4) preferring CVE. None of the programs would accept CVE as a credential for an RC position.

Interestingly, programs accepted the LPC as a suitable entry level credential for either rehabilitation counselors (3, 12%) or vocational evaluators (3, 11.5%). Also about half the programs' DOL classification for both positions was non-exempt—10 or 50% for the rehabilitation counselors and 12 or 45.6% for vocational evaluators—indicating that these programs do not consider either position as a learned professional employee.

Two findings can serve as additional benchmarks. First there were only slight differences in experience requirements: no experience was required by 17 programs (68%) for vocational evaluators and none was required by 20 programs (80%) for rehabilitation counselors. Second, most of the programs (22, 84.6%) for vocational evaluators and (25, 96.2%) for rehabilitation counselors assigned work geographically, and the most common assignment was by county or region (15, 75%) for vocational evaluators and (18, 75%) rehabilitation counselors.

Practice Implications

The production requirements, in terms of how many VE reports were due monthly or annually, and the specifics required in the reports was striking. There were significant differences in the quotas for report submission, with a range of 4-20 a month. The higher end of this range, which represents five evaluation reports per week,

is particularly surprising. The time required to conduct an initial interview, behavioral observations, and evaluative measurements (e.g., psychometric testing, work sampling, real work evaluation) would appear to leave minimal time for actual report writing. Fortunately, the modal number of reports due weekly was two, which would seem to be more manageable considering the time involved in the evaluation process. One state program required reports to be submitted within five days of the evaluation appointment(s), suggesting a preference for working with one case at a time in their evaluation process. Production requirements, as defined by report quotas varied by program, and probably was influenced by supply and demand factors: how many evaluators were present, how many clients required evaluations, and how evaluators and clients were paired based on geographic assignments.

Required components of VE reports also varied by program. For example, page requirements ranged from two pages to more than 12. The modal page number, however, was approximately 6-8 pages. This figure differs from previous reports, including one article by Simmons (1975) and one unpublished thesis by McDaniel (as cited in Thomas, 1986) that reported a preference for evaluation report length of two pages. Although two pages are still accepted by some programs, the modal number of 6-8 clearly shows that the expectation of page length has dramatically increased since the 1970s.

The majority of the programs (80.8%) required that the report be drafted with an outline, and there was little variation in the components required in the evaluation reports. However, there was significant variability in the length of the VE reports, suggesting that reports were drafted to represent an individualized evaluation process, rather than a "cookie-cutter" report writing system. The variations noted in the page lengths, therefore, may be attributable to the depth and scope of the information required, based on the individual client.

Report requirements suggest that some programs also required that specific instruments be used in the evaluation process. This is not too surprising, since evaluation programs have been known to select tools based on the client population (e.g., age, educational level, disability type), the tools' validity for measuring the constructs of interest (aptitude, etc.) as well as more practical considerations such as cost and availability. Using an established list of tools also promotes standardization of the evaluation process, which may provide greater efficiency and time management. However, there are some dangers to limiting tool usage, including limiting areas of assessment and a potential lack of "fit" with the consumer population.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the goal was to describe the current situation in the vocational evaluation profession. Therefore, the data do not lend themselves to inferences, but merely depict the employment conditions of vocational evaluators and RCs. Also, data were collected via a telephonic survey, which has potential threats to internal validity, specifically instrumentation. Since research assistants collected the data, it is also possible that deviations in the measurement

process, which could yield inaccurate information, occurred. This potential error was minimized by training and follow up. Third, the data were provided by an authority in the chain of command in each state program, and therefore the assumption was that this individual provided accurate data. This issue was minimized, however, by the diligence taken to identify the appropriate respondent, including, at times, multiple calls before identifying the best source of information. Finally, the data were limited to state vocational rehabilitation programs that were willing to participate. One state was not included, and the data do not depict employment conditions for vocational evaluators working in community-based programs or in the private sector.

Future Research

There is a tremendous need for further research on this topic. It would be useful to replicate the study in the community-based vocational evaluation arena, as well as with private sector providers, to capture a comprehensive picture of vocational evaluators. This is challenging, however, since it would be difficult to identify these vocational evaluators and collect data. The benefit of examining state employees is that a sampling frame is present; the number of vocational evaluators working within community-based programs may be impossible to determine. Nevertheless, research that attempts to collect this data would be beneficial for the profession. Research replicating this study in the near future would also be beneficial in order to monitor changes and trends over time. This information is especially critical given the current climate, with shifts in credentialing bodies and professional organization involvement. Additionally, research on the professional identity of vocational evaluators is needed. Finally, it would be useful to obtain the views of vocational evaluators about their professional identity and best practices.

Conclusions

In the state VR programs, rehabilitation counselors maintain a more prominent professional identity than vocational evaluators. Data on rehabilitation counselors are therefore easier to obtain. This may mean that the rehabilitation counselor profession is more crystallized than that of the vocational evaluator. Professional organizations exist for both groups; however, there are clearly more for rehabilitation counseling. Rehabilitation counseling, as a profession, is older and larger than vocational evaluation, and is more cohesive than vocational evaluation.

A key indicator that should serve as a red flag for vocational evaluators is the difference between the two professions' career ladders. There are clearly more opportunities for advancement as a rehabilitation counselor in state vocational rehabilitation systems than for vocational evaluators. Overall, the data suggest that rehabilitation counselors maintain greater recognition, cohesiveness, and professional career-building opportunities than vocational evaluators in the state VR programs.

However, it is important to remember that recent activity in the vocational

evaluation field has produced promising results. In 2010, a VE Task Force was formed (Pell, Lui, & Guthrie, 2010) which created a new credential, the Professional Vocational Evaluator (PVE), that became operational on April 1, 2011 (Registry of Professional Vocational Evaluators, 2011). The PVE has several purposes: it serves as an equivalent to the CVE, and will eventually replace the CVE as those with this credential phase out; it reestablishes the professional identity of vocational evaluators; it maintains cohesion in the profession; and it limits the erosion of professional accountability. VEWAA and the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) are engaged in collaborative work towards the revitalization of the vocational evaluation profession, and will continue to do so. The data collected in this study will serve to educate all parties associated with vocational evaluation in state vocational rehabilitation programs and support efforts to promote the vocational evaluation profession.

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VECAP Test Review Form

Do you have a test that you use in practice that provides you and the person served with information to make an informed decision? Please share your knowledge, wisdom, and insight with our readers. This effort to collect information about tests we use is in line with our mission to improve and advance our field and you can help.

The VECAP Test Review Form is designed to gather information about tests currently used in vocational evaluation and career assessment. The form is a synthesis of ones used by Drs. Jean E. Johnson (Langston University), Pam Leconte (George Washington University), Greg Long (Northern Illinois University), and Steven R. Sligar (East Carolina University)**.**

The form is self-explanatory and some example questions are included to help with your review. There are five parts:

- Ordering Information
- Purpose, Development, and Standardization (the psychometric properties)
- Practical Evaluation (how do you administer the test?)
- Reviewer Comments (what did you think about the test? which populations can/cannot be tested?)
- Summary Evaluation (how can vocational evaluators and career assessment professionals use the test?)

To submit a Test Review, complete the form and email it to Journal@VECAP.org
The Test Review will go through the peer review process and be published in the VECAP Journal and posted online.

An electronic version of the VECAP Test Review Form is available on the VECAP website http://vecap.org/index.php?/site/publications_categories/C24/

Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Test Review

Test Review: **(Name of Test)**
Reviewer:
Institutional Affiliation:

Author(s):

Publisher: dates of publication, including dates of manuals, norms, and supplementary materials (especially important for tests whose context or norms may become outdated).

Contact/Purchase: information (e.g., company address, website).

Cost: of the test that may include booklets, answer sheets, other test materials, available scoring services (e.g., online availability, CD, hand scoring templates or other methods).

Examiner Qualifications: Vendor purchase requirements (may be old APA Level A, B, or C). Also includes specific training required to administer the test.

Training: availability from the test vendor.

Purpose, Development, and Standardization

Purpose: As stated by vendor.

Type: Interest, aptitude, achievement, intelligence, values, other.

Nature of Content: What is measured (verbal, numerical, spatial, motor)?

Items: How the items are presented (power, multiple choice, written, pictorial, orally).

Reading Level: What is the reading level to take the test (per the manual)?

Language: What language(s) versions are available?

Subtests and Separate Scores: describe.

Norms: Population sampled (selection criteria, gender, age, race, ethnicity, other characteristics).

Reliability: Types, procedures, and formula used (e.g., retest, parallel forms, split-half, Kuder-Richardson, coefficient alpha, inter-rater reliability), including size and nature of samples employed and range.

Standard Error of Measurement: included?

Validity: Type (content, criterion-related predictive or concurrent, construct) and range.

Practical Evaluation

Qualitative Features: of test materials (e.g., design of test booklet, editorial quality of content, ease of use, durability, attractiveness, and appropriateness for test takers).

Administration: How done (1:1, group) and directions (specific, general).

Start and Discontinue Rules: Describe if applicable.

Time: Test time and total administration time.

Recording: How are item responses recorded?

Scoring: Discuss the general directions for scoring.

Accommodations: Are any accommodations allowed during administration (per the manual)?

Rapport: Is this addressed? If so, how (per the manual)?

Reviewer Comments

Some questions to consider:

- Do you agree with measurement description (explain; if you disagree, then what do you think the test really measures?)
- How clear are the directions? Is the test easy to administer, score, and interpret?
- Is the test face valid?
- How can this test be used with different people? Can it be adapted/modified for various populations?
- Consider the following: persons with learning disabilities; blind or low vision; deaf, hard of hearing, or other communication problems; mobility limitations; cognitive limitations; paralysis or impaired limb functioning; history of substance abuse; or disadvantaged.

  Which of these groups would be appropriate to use the test without modification? Who could use the test with modifications or accommodations?
- What are the cultural implications of using this test?
- Your personal observations or insights gleaned from administering, scoring, and interpreting the test.
- Other comments that address unique aspects of the test.

Summary Evaluation

- Major strengths and weaknesses of the test across all parts of the evaluation.
- What is the primary use of the test for purposes of rehabilitation with persons who have disabilities, are disadvantaged, and/or present substance use issues?
- How can this test be used in practice by vocational evaluators?

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VECAP
Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals

Professional Membership in VECAP

Definition according to Bylaws:

Professional members shall be those individuals actively engaged in the practice of some aspect of vocational evaluation or work adjustment training. This shall include those individuals who are immediate supervisors, teachers, or researchers in the fields of vocational evaluation or work adjustment.

Benefits to Members:

Newsletters, Journals, discounted registration at Forum and other training events, one member/one vote voting privileges, eligible to hold office in VECAP.

Associate Membership in VECAP

Definition according to Bylaws:
Associate members shall be those individuals interested in vocational evaluation or work adjustment, but who are not actively engaged in the practice thereof.

Benefits to Associate Members:

Newsletters, Journals, discounted registration at Forum and other training events, one member/one vote voting privileges, eligible to hold office in VECAP.

Student Membership in VECAP (Effective 1/1/2008)

Definition according to Bylaws:
Student members shall be those individuals enrolled full-time (9 hours per semester or equivalent for undergraduate study, 6 hours or equivalent per semester for graduate study) in recognized educational programs preparing them for practice in the fields of vocational evaluation or work adjustment.

Benefits to Student Members:

Newsletters, Journals, discounted registration at Forum and other training events, opportunity to compete in Literary Awards competition.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City:_____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Fax: _____

State Chapter Affiliation (if different from mailing address state): _____

Membership options (select one):

☐ Professional ($70) – 1 year ☐ Associate ($70) – 1 year ☐ Student ($20) – 1 year

☐ Professional ($130) – 2 years ☐ Associate ($130) – 2 years

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