

**Advancing Global Careers: An Analysis of NCDA International Advocacy Visibility and
International Member Needs**

Panka Desai, PhD

2026 NCDA Leadership Academy - Leadership Action Learning Project

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Abstract

This study, conducted as an Action Learning Project through the National Career Development Association (NCDA) Leadership Academy, investigates the professional advocacy needs of international career development practitioners and the visibility of current NCDA international advocacy initiatives. Utilizing a mixed-methods survey, the research adopted a multi-dimensional framework to define the "international" member, capturing insights from both foreign-born and U.S.-born professionals operating domestically and abroad. The findings reveal a significant disconnect: while foundational efforts such as global credentialing standards and the work of the International Student Services Committee (ISSC) maintain high visibility, 85% of respondents reported passive or limited engagement with NCDA's day-to-day advocacy. Furthermore, practitioners expressed an urgent need for culturally adaptive resources that transcend U.S.-centric career models to address systemic employment barriers, navigate complex visa policies, and support the mental health of globally mobile populations facing challenges like reverse culture shock. To fulfill its strategic goals, this paper recommends that the NCDA standardize its global credentialing architecture and significantly expand its multilingual career resources. Additionally, the organization should develop advanced practitioner pathways and foster equitable, reciprocal collaborations that move beyond a strictly U.S.-centric worldview. Ultimately, embracing these targeted actions will ensure that the NCDA's advocacy effectively elevates professional practice and empowers human potential on a truly global scale.

Keywords: International Career Development, International NCDA Members, NCDA Advocacy, NCDA Strategic Goals, Culturally Adaptive Frameworks, Global Credentialing

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Need for this Study.....	6
Figure 1.....	7
The Existing Gap.....	8
The Goal and Purpose of This Study.....	10
Research Questions.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Research Design and Data Collection.....	11
Target Population.....	12
Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.....	13
Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.....	13
Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.....	13
Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S..	14
Survey Instrument.....	14
Data Analysis.....	15
Ethical Considerations.....	16
Results.....	17
Participant Demographics.....	17
Figure 2.....	17
Constituency Groups.....	18
Figure 3.....	18
Visibility of NCDA Advocacy Efforts.....	19
Figure 4.....	20
Engagement Levels and Connection with NCDA's Current Advocacy Efforts.....	20
Figure 5.....	21
Visibility of Advocacy Related to International Members.....	21
Visibility of NCDA Advocacy Efforts Related to Their Needs.....	22
Desired Advocacy Related to International Career Development Policies.....	23
International Member Needs for Client and Student Support.....	24

Satisfaction with Current NCDA Resources.....	27
Figure 5.....	27
Member Recommendations for Future NCDA Support.....	28
Discussion.....	30
The Multifaceted Identity of the "International" Professional.....	30
Divergent Perceptions: U.S.-Based vs. International Members.....	31
U.S.-Based Practitioners.....	31
Global Practitioners Outside of the U.S.....	32
Practitioner Needs for Advising and Supporting International Populations.....	32
The Advocacy Disconnect: High Visibility vs. Passive Engagement.....	33
Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Advocacy Strategies.....	34
Recommendations: Strategic Pathways for NCDA's Global Future.....	34
Recommendations for Supporting Foreign-Born Career Services Professionals Working Primarily in the U.S.....	35
Recommendations for Supporting Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.....	37
Suggestions for Future Research and Conclusion.....	38
Suggestions for Future Research.....	40
Immediate Qualitative Expansion.....	40
Expanding Sample Size and Developing ROI Metrics.....	41
Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health, Culture, and Career.....	41
Alignment with the NCDA Strategic Plan and Emerging Technologies.....	42
References.....	43
Appendices.....	46
Appendix A: The Survey Instrument.....	46
Appendix B: Call for Participants Flyer.....	50
Appendix C: NCDA Federal Advocacy (2023-2024).....	51

Advancing Global Careers: An Analysis of NCDA International Advocacy Visibility and International Member Needs

The National Career Development Association (NCDA) operates with a global mission to advocate for practitioners and educators who inspire and empower individuals to achieve their career and life goals (National Career Development Association, n.d.-a). A core pillar of the NCDA's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan (National Career Development Association, n.d-d) is advocacy, which specifically emphasizes the need to support state, national, and international career development policies, as well as to increase the visibility of these advocacy initiatives among its membership. Advancing global careers requires a culturally adaptive framework that addresses the unique socio-economic, political, and systemic challenges faced by mobile populations globally.

This study emerged as a core initiative under the NCDA Leadership Academy (National Career Development Association, n.d.-e). Established in 2006, the Leadership Academy selects a small, promising group of national and state leaders every two years to participate in an experiential development program. As part of this curriculum, participants are tasked with completing a twelve-month Leadership Action Learning Project designed to address specific board-identified priorities or relevant professional issues, drawing direct alignment from the NCDA 2024–2027 Strategic Plan (NCDA, n.d.-d). The NCDA Strategic Plan explicitly prioritizes Cultivating Community, Career Empowerment, and Advocacy through its overarching goals. Specifically, the plan mandates increasing the visibility of NCDA advocacy initiatives and supporting career development policies both domestically and internationally.

Aligned with these goals, the author of this study was charged by the NCDA Board of Directors & Trustees with designing a study to gain a better understanding of the advocacy needs of NCDA members, especially those who identify as 'international,' and evaluate how the organization specifically supports its diverse membership in their work with international students and clients. Dr. Melissa 'Missy' Wheeler served as a mentor and supported the author of this study, Dr. Pankaj Desai, in designing this research study and finalizing this report.

Need for this Study

The need for robust international advocacy and targeted practitioner resources is increasingly urgent. International students and globally mobile clients face significant systemic barriers to education, employment, and work authorization (Fakunle, 2021; Han et al., 2022). These challenges are further compounded by a complex hierarchy of institutional obstacles, political volatility, and neo-racist practices embedded within host-country labor markets and career networks (Bhandari & Welch, 2022; Chen, 2024; Weiner & Ghazarian, 2024; Zhai et al., 2025). Practitioners frequently express a keen interest in exploring social justice topics with their colleagues, yet studies reveal they often experience a persistent hesitation to initiate these conversations (Fickling, 2016).

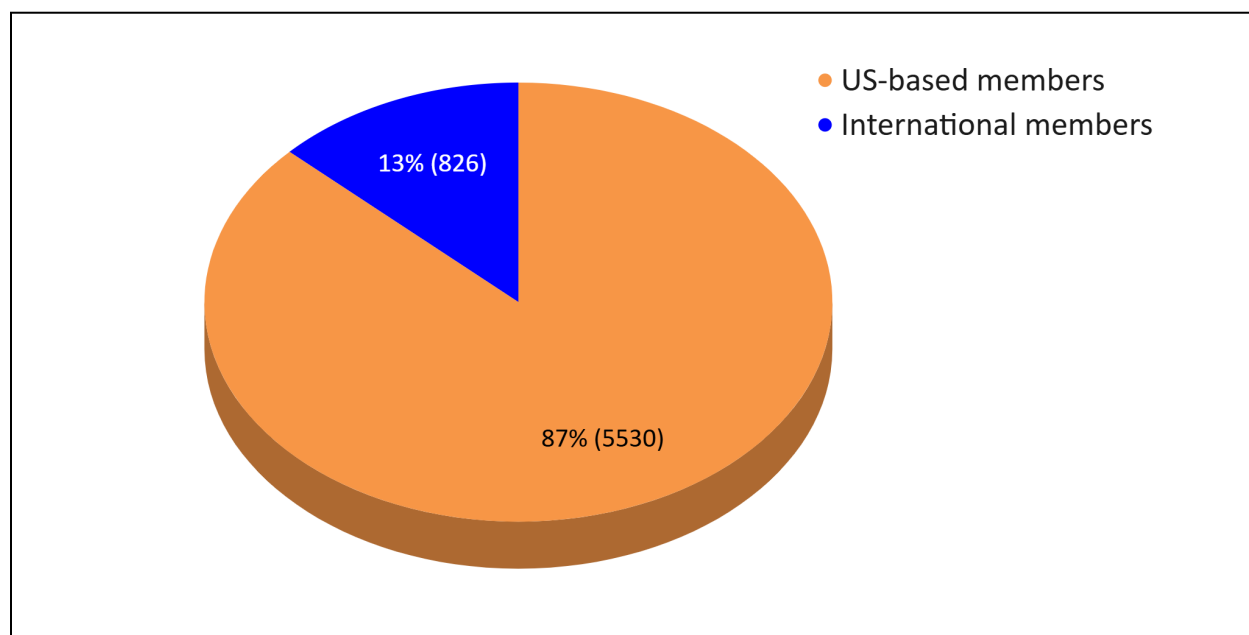
The NCDA has formally expressed its support for policies that enable international students to complete their educational programs, explicitly advocating for the continuation of critical pathways like Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) (National Career Development Association, 2020). NCDA has adopted social justice as its guiding value, which:

represents an ethical commitment to ensure that all people – especially those from marginalized or oppressed groups – have fair access to resources, opportunities, and career development services, and that systemic barriers affecting clients’ well-being or access to education and the labor market are acknowledged and addressed (National Career Development Association, n.d.-c).

NCDA is also committed to working to reduce inequities and “actively work to create environments where all people feel welcomed, valued, and respected with the ability to participate fully regardless of their identities, backgrounds or abilities” (NCDA, n.d.-c). However, ensuring that these high-level policy goals translate into visible and practical support requires a continuous evaluation of the organization's existing strategies.

Figure 1

NCDA Membership Based on Location



According to the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting Report (National Career Development Association, 2025), 13% of NCDA members were 'international,' which amounted to 826 members out of a total membership of 6,407 in 2025. As seen in this report and elsewhere on its webpages, NCDA generally classifies members as 'international' based on their location. Central to this study's design is the foundational hypothesis that the term "international" is multi-dimensional and encompasses several distinct categories of professionals rather than representing a single monolithic demographic. To capture this nuance, the research intentionally sought input from a wide spectrum of practitioners who may not be traditionally seen or overlooked in the analysis of those who are 'international.' By analyzing the feedback from these diverse groups, this study aimed to illuminate how varying professional contexts shape the demand for NCDA advocacy, ultimately guiding the organization on how to more equitably support practitioners who identify as and empower international populations.

The Existing Gap

An examination of the central public policy and government relations frameworks published on the National Career Development Association (NCDA) website reveals a critical structural gap: there is no explicit mention of advocacy, legislation, or policy initiatives specifically targeting international issues, foreign-born career professionals, or globally mobile client populations. Researchers such as Fickling (2016) have argued that "additional conversations and training around advocacy are wanted and needed among practicing career counselors." This holds true for practitioners who come from marginalized backgrounds. While NCDA outlines detailed mechanisms for legislative engagement, its public-facing advocacy agenda remains structurally bound to domestic, U.S.-centric policy areas. The structural gap in public-facing advocacy is highlighted by the vast socio-economic footprint of the international

students in the U.S. served by a majority of these practitioners, many of whom are past international students, who also continue to remain bound by localized policy constraints. According to institutional data, international students contribute an estimated \$55 billion to the U.S. economy and support more than 355,000 domestic jobs, yet they continue to navigate host-country labor networks that structurally prioritize local labor pools over global talent (Institute of International Education, 2025; NAFSA, 2025).

While it is possible that the NCDA Government Relations Committee may have advocated related to issues concerning its ‘international’ members, the author of this review did not find any international advocacy under the key focus areas or other webpages connected to the NCDA Government Relations Committee. What is available is a resource for partnering with international students created by the NCDA International Student Services Committee (ISSC), which has been made available to members (National Career Development Association, 2025). The formalized NCDA Federal Advocacy Policy Areas compile a detailed, eleven-point list of strategic directives (National Career Development Association, n.d.-a) meant to guide legislative lobbying and ethical frameworks. However, even within sections designed to champion equity and marginalized groups, international considerations are omitted.

The toolkits, templates, and legislative guides provided to train members on "Why and How to Advocate" (NCDA, n.d.-a) are built entirely around the architecture of the U.S. Congress. The primary action step directs members to locate their specific U.S. Senators and Representatives using domestic zip codes, offering no alternative advocacy pathways, cross-border coalitions, or international policy briefs for members operating outside the United States or working with globally mobile populations (NCDA, n.d.-a). Consequently, while NCDA maintains a dedicated internal International Student Services Committee (ISSC) that publishes

independent solidarity statements (NCDA, 2020); these global priorities have not been integrated into the central, public-facing governance and legislative agenda of the overarching organization. This disconnection creates a distinct visibility gap for international members seeking systemic advocacy from their professional association.

The Goal and Purpose of This Study

The overarching goal of this study was to systematically examine the intersection of professional advocacy and international member needs within NCDA. This study also underscores the importance of investigating the specific ways in which international members perceive the organization's advocacy on their behalf. This includes mapping out where and how career development professionals have directly witnessed or heard about advocacy initiatives tailored to international populations, thereby identifying which current strategies are successfully cutting through to the membership. At the same time, this study highlights the specific international career development policies, resources, and structural efforts that members believe the organization should actively explore. This research effort aimed to pinpoint actionable opportunities for intentional engagement, enhanced visibility, and targeted advocacy that align with the evolving demands of a diverse global field. Consequently, the objective of this research report was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of current NCDA advocacy strategies from the perspective of its international members and to help shape the future of NCDA's advocacy and resource development for the international community.

Research Questions

To achieve this purpose, the study addresses the following overarching research questions:

1. What are the needs of NCDA members with regard to helping them in their ability to advise and support international students and clients in their professional roles?
2. What specific NCDA advocacy efforts are most visible to its members and career development practitioners?
3. How do NCDA members rate their level of engagement and connection with NCDA's current advocacy efforts?
4. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of NCDA's current advocacy strategies based on the identified needs of the membership?
5. How do the perceptions of NCDA's advocacy efforts differ between US-based members and foreign-based members?

Methodology

Research Design and Data Collection

To investigate the advocacy needs of international career professionals, this study utilized a mixed-methods research design anchored by an 11-question survey instrument. Initially, the survey was sent out through the National Career Development Association (NCDA) to all of its members. This first round of data collection yielded 22 responses, out of which *Foreign-born Career Services Professionals working primarily outside the U.S.* accounted for only 4.55%, and *Foreign-born Career Services Professionals working primarily in the U.S.* yielded only 13.64% of the respondents.

Determining that this was a low response rate that failed to adequately capture the target populations, a second round of targeted outreach was conducted. In this phase, the survey was sent specifically to NCDA members who identify or are coded as “international” in the NCDA

member database. This strategic adjustment successfully broadened the participant pool, resulting in a final sample size of 41 respondents. Consequently, this two-tiered distribution method significantly improved the representation of the intended audience, with *Foreign-born professionals working outside the U.S.* ultimately comprising 31.71% of the final sample and *Foreign-born professionals working in the U.S.* rising to 17.07%. *Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.* also an addition of two more respondents in the second round, but their share saw a significant drop to 43.90% of total respondents in comparison to 72.73% of the respondents in the first round.

Target Population

This study was founded on the hypothesis that the term “international” is multi-dimensional, encompassing several distinct categories of National Career Development Association (NCDA) members rather than representing a single, monolithic group. While it is true that membership can be categorized based on location as ‘within the U.S.’ and ‘outside the U.S.’, this classification does not fully capture the nuance of those who identify as ‘international’ but are located within the U.S. Similarly, U.S. citizens not identifying as ‘international’ could be located outside of the U.S. Oftentimes, citizenship or country of birth is also a criterion along with geographic location when it comes to members identifying as 'international.' Also, for foreign-born members located both in the U.S. and outside of the U.S., accounting for both their country of birth and current location accounts for nuances related to their acculturative journey and process of building social capital in the U.S. Therefore, to capture these nuances and ensure the research accurately reflected the diverse realities of the membership, an effort was made to create specific classifications within the study's design using the intersections of geographic location and place of birth, which is often-times is connected to citizenship of those who identify

as ‘international.’ Participants were invited to pick any combination of these four classifications that best described their identity and functional area, as well as to write in their own rationale for identifying as "international" to ensure all unique professional contexts were captured.

The following four categories, along with an ‘other’ write-in option, were suggested, each selected with a specific rationale to isolate and understand the unique advocacy and resource needs of that sub-population:

Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.

This category was selected to capture the needs of practitioners building and navigating career development frameworks entirely within foreign labor markets and bureaucratic systems. Understanding this group is crucial for assessing how well NCDA serves its global members, the international visibility of credentials like the CCSP and GCDF, and the demand for culturally adaptive, non-U.S.-centric career resources and policies.

Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.

This classification was included to represent professionals who operate within the U.S. workforce but do so from the perspective of an immigrant or foreign national. Their inclusion helps identify the unique professional and systemic barriers they personally face—such as navigating work sponsorship and employer prejudices—while also capturing how their distinct cultural lenses inform their work with diverse or globally mobile client populations.

Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.

This category was selected because these practitioners frequently serve on the front lines of supporting international students, immigrants, and refugees within U.S. higher education institutions and private practices. Including this group is essential for understanding the demand

for specialized advocacy regarding U.S. visa policies, Optional Practical Training (OPT), regulations, and the need for resources (like multilingual materials) to help foreign nationals successfully integrate into the American labor market.

Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.

This category was chosen to account for expatriate professionals, such as those working at international branch campuses, military bases, or global organizations. Their perspective is vital for understanding the challenges of applying the U.S.-based career development theories, training, and ethics to foreign contexts, often while assisting clients with complex cross-cultural transitions, localized hidden job markets, and reverse culture shock.

Survey Instrument

The primary data collection tool for this study was an 11-question survey utilizing a mixed-methods approach, which incorporated single-choice questions, multiple-selection checkboxes, and open-ended text responses. The instrument was specifically designed to capture quantitative metrics and nuanced qualitative feedback, structured around three core thematic areas: participant identity, advocacy visibility and engagement, and practitioner needs.

The first section of the instrument focused on establishing the respondents' specific demographic and professional context. It included a single-choice question for participants to define their identity and functional area, specifically distinguishing between domestic and foreign-born professionals, as well as whether they primarily work inside or outside the U.S. This was followed by a multiple-selection question asking respondents to identify their affiliation with specific NCDA constituency groups, such as Higher Education or Private Practice.

The second section measured awareness of and connection to NCDA's ongoing initiatives. Participants were given a multiple-selection checklist of 11 general advocacy areas (such as "Student Career Services" and "Mental Health and Career Development") and asked to indicate which efforts were visible to them. To measure connection, the survey utilized a 5-point scale asking respondents to rate their level of engagement with NCDA's advocacy work, ranging from "No engagement" to "Very actively engaged." Two open-ended questions then allowed participants to qualitatively elaborate on what specific international-focused or other member-specific advocacy efforts had been visible to them.

The third section shifted focus toward the future, assessing resource satisfaction and practical needs. Using open-ended questions, practitioners were asked to detail their specific needs when helping students or clients and to suggest international career development policies they would like NCDA to explore. Respondents also utilized a 5-point scale to rate their overall satisfaction with the current resources available through NCDA, and were given a final open-ended prompt to recommend how NCDA could further support their ability to assist their clients.

The survey concluded with an opt-in question (Question 11), which invited participants to provide their name and email address if they were willing to participate in an optional follow-up 1:1 or focus group conversation. This information was collected in case a follow up study was determined to be conducted in the future.

Data Analysis

Upon the closure of the survey, the collected data from the 41 respondents

was processed using a dual approach to accommodate the mixed-methods nature of the instrument. The quantitative data, derived from single-choice and multiple-selection questions, such as identity classifications, constituency group representation, and Likert-scale satisfaction and engagement ratings, was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This process involved calculating response frequencies, percentages, and total respondent counts to establish baseline trends in member demographics, resource satisfaction, and overall awareness of general NCDA advocacy efforts.

Conversely, the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions, which prompted participants to detail specific client needs, visible international advocacy efforts, and desired future policies, was subjected to a thematic analysis. The textual responses were systematically reviewed to extract recurring patterns, common challenges, and shared recommendations among the diverse practitioner base. For example, this thematic review surfaced frequent commendations of the International Student Services Committee (ISSC), recurring structural concerns regarding global credential standardization, and a widespread demand for holistic, culturally adaptive resources to manage challenges like reverse culture shock.

By synthesizing the descriptive quantitative statistics with these qualitative themes, the analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of both the scope of member engagement and the nuanced, contextual realities driving the need for expanded international NCDA advocacy.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the protection and privacy of all participants, ethical safeguards were integrated throughout the data collection process. The survey preamble explicitly informed respondents of the study's purpose and provided a clear guarantee that their responses would remain strictly

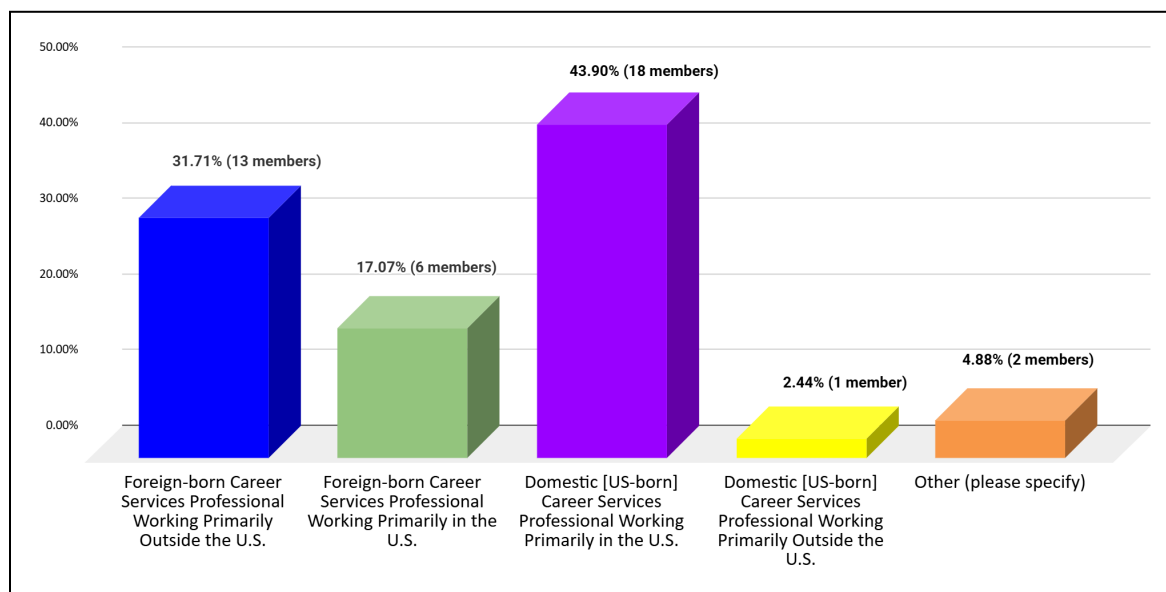
confidential. Furthermore, participants were assured that their specific answers and qualitative feedback would not be individually identifiable in the final research report. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and the survey concluded with a completely optional prompt allowing individuals to safely opt-in and provide their contact information only if they were comfortable participating in future follow-up conversations or focus groups. By prioritizing informed consent and data anonymity, the study maintained academic integrity while fostering a safe environment for NCDA's diverse international professionals to share their honest, unfiltered perspectives.

Results

Participant Demographics

The survey received responses from 41 professionals. When asked the question, "Kindly pick your identity and functional area," all 41 respondents answered the question.

The largest group consisted of *Domestic (US-born) Career Services Professionals working primarily in the U.S.* at 43.90% (18 respondents). This was followed by *Foreign-born Career Services Professionals working primarily outside the U.S.* at 31.71% (13 respondents) and *Foreign-born Career Services Professionals working primarily in the U.S.* at 17.07% (6 respondents). Additionally, 4.88% (2 respondents) selected "Other," noting specialized roles such as a foreign-born professional teaching ESL, and 2.44% (1 respondent) identified as a Domestic (US-born) Career Services Professional working primarily outside the U.S.

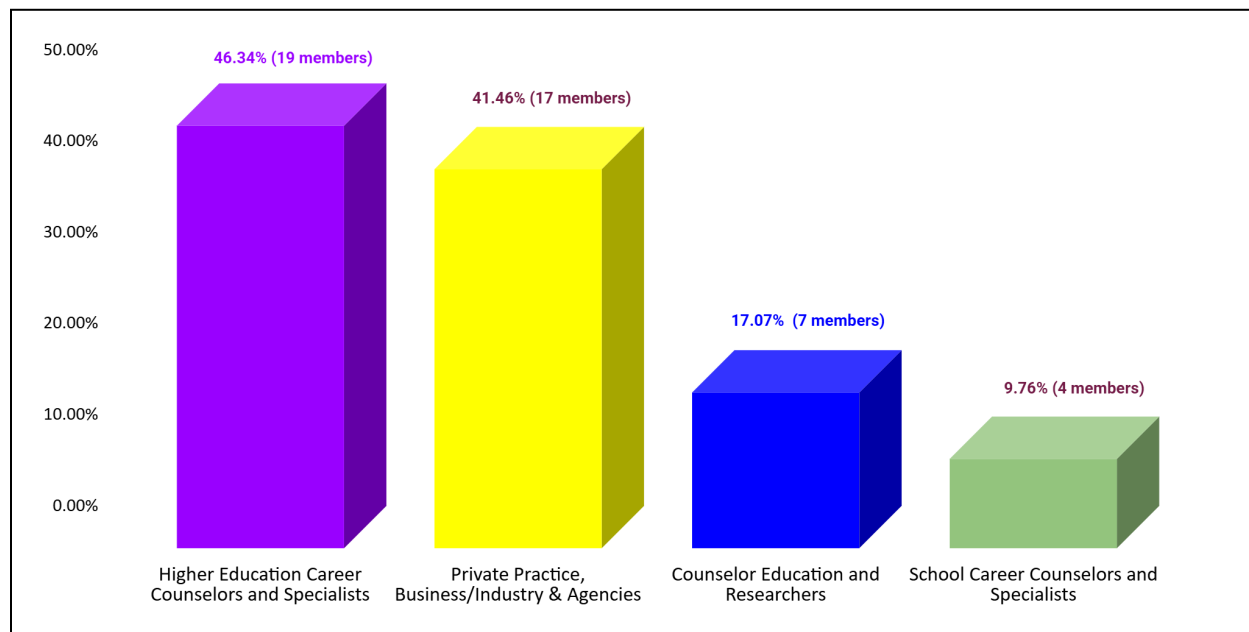
Figure 2*NCDA Member Identity and Functional Area***Constituency Groups**

Respondents represented various NCDA constituency groups, with some of the respondents selecting multiple affiliations. In response to the question, *"What constituency group are you part of?"* which 41 answered, respondents could select multiple affiliations.

Figure 3*NCDA Member Constituency Group*

Higher Education Career Counselors and Specialists formed the largest constituency at 46.34% (19 respondents), closely followed by *Private Practice, Business/Industry and Agencies* at 41.46% (17 respondents). *Counselor Education and Researchers* made up 17.07% (7 respondents), and *School Career Counselors and Specialists* represented 9.76% (4 respondents) of the respondents. Six respondents selected more than one constituency group, with four of

them picking *Higher Education Career Counselors and Specialists* and *Private Practice, Business/Industry & Agencies*. One of them picked *Private Practice, Business/Industry &*



Agencies and *Counselor Education and Researchers*, with another respondent affiliating themselves with the *Higher Education Career Counselors and Specialists* and *Counselor Education and Researchers* constituency groups.

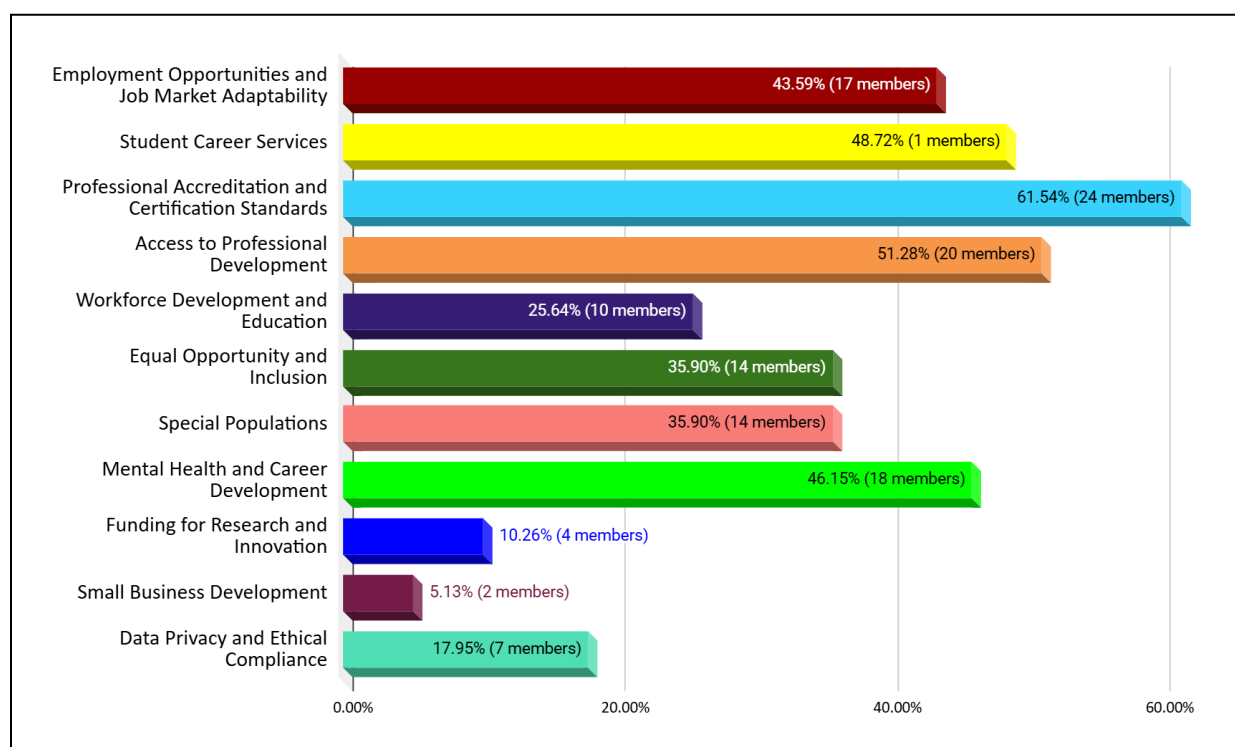
Visibility of NCDA Advocacy Efforts

To assess initiative awareness, the survey asked the question, "What specific NCDA advocacy efforts have been visible to you?" Of the 41 participants surveyed, 39 provided responses, and 2 did not respond. The most widely recognized effort was Professional Accreditation and Certification Standards, noted by 61.54% (24 respondents). Other highly visible efforts included Access to Professional Development at 51.28% (20 respondents), Student Career Services at 48.72% (19 respondents), and Mental Health and Career Development at 46.15% (18 respondents). Furthermore, 43.59% (17 respondents) recognized Employment

Opportunities and Job Market Adaptability, while Equal Opportunity and Inclusion and Special Populations were each visible to 35.90% (14 respondents). The less visible efforts included Workforce Development and Education at 25.64% (10 respondents), Data Privacy and Ethical Compliance at 17.95% (7 respondents), Funding for Research and Innovation at 10.26% (4 respondents), and Small Business Development at 5.13% (2 respondents).

Figure 4

Visibility of NCDA Advocacy Efforts



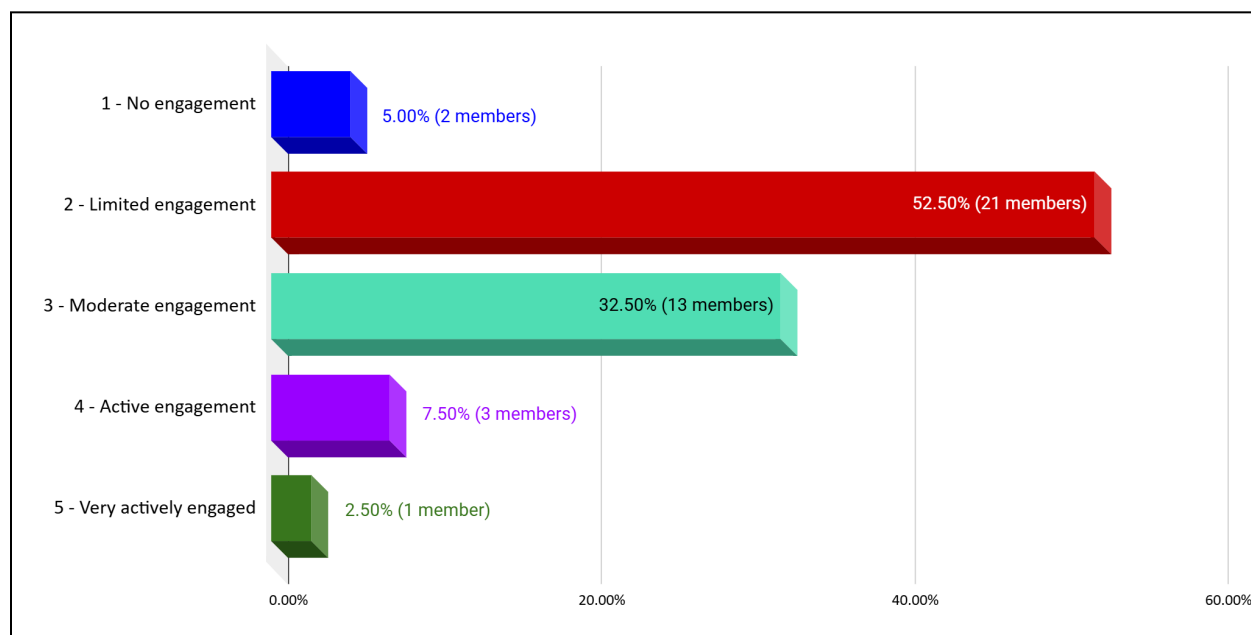
Engagement Levels and Connection with NCDA's Current Advocacy Efforts

Of the 41 participants surveyed, 40 responded to the question, "How do you rate your level of engagement and connection with NCDA's current advocacy efforts?", and 1 participant did not respond. Over half of the participants, at 52.50% (21 respondents), indicated "Limited

engagement," meaning they are aware of the advocacy work but rarely read updates or participate. Another 32.50% (13 respondents) reported "Moderate engagement," noting they occasionally read updates and have participated in at least one related event. Only 7.50% (3 respondents) reported "Active engagement," and 2.50% (1 respondent) described themselves as "Very actively engaged." A small fraction, 5.00% (2 respondents), reported having "No engagement" at all.

Figure 5

Members' Level of Engagement and Connection with NCDA's Current Advocacy Efforts



Visibility of Advocacy Related to International Members

Participants were asked the open-ended question, "What specific NCDA advocacy efforts related to the needs of our international members (students and professionals) have been visible to you?" Of the 41 participants surveyed, 25 provided qualitative responses, and 16 did not respond. The International Student Services Committee (ISSC) was frequently praised, with

participants highlighting its active communication, the annual virtual mini-conference, and a 2020 advocacy statement on international student needs. Respondents also recognized NCDA's global credentialing frameworks, such as the CCSP as highly visible resources for professional mobility. Participants also acknowledged knowledge dissemination through Career Convergence and other global learning events and work done by NCDA's Global Connections Committee (GCC).

Despite these positive observations, several participants explicitly stated they were unaware of international-focused advocacy or observed a communication gap. Some of the participants shared that the email from the author of this study specifically asking for feedback from "non-US members" was the only form of advocacy they had witnessed so far. Sharing that most of their exposure was related to the active work of the International Student Services Committee but mostly invisible to them from NCDA, one of the respondents said:

I rarely saw activities dedicated to international members. I recognize the conference events (an orientation or peer accompaniment and a welcome reception) for international members - but these are with a very limited group of people (and I assume people with certain financial privileges who can travel to the conference). Such limited participation does not support NCDA's claim to become a "global" organization.

Visibility of NCDA Advocacy Efforts Related to Their Needs

Participants were subsequently asked the open-ended question, "What other NCDA advocacy efforts related to your needs have been visible to you?" Of the 41 participants surveyed, 22 provided responses, and 19 did not respond. Responses highlighted visible initiatives such as the DEI Symposium, NCDA ISSC Virtual Mini-Conference, legislative policy

tracking by the NCDA Government Relations Committee (GCC), and efforts supporting mental health. One respondent specifically noted the recent revision of the NCDA multicultural career counseling competencies to include a new global section. One participant shared how advocacy statements shared in the past are no longer seen:

I also almost never see a recognition of social-political events at the global scale and how they impact career professionals and people we serve. In the past, my ISSC colleagues created advocacy statements and resources to support career professionals and international students in the face of systemic barriers.

Besides this, respondents also mentioned the following advocacy efforts: Hill Day and legislative policy tracking led by the NCDA Government Relations Committee and School Counseling Constituency work to develop K-12 career development competencies and immigration policy updates offered through the NCDA ISSC Virtual Mini-Conference and revised NCDA multicultural career counseling competencies, engagement in global dialogue, creating spaces for knowledge exchange across cultures and regions, government lobbying for career education, and Mental health in career development, amongst others.

Highlighting their own advocacy initiative during the revision of the NCDA multicultural career counseling competencies, another participant shared:

With the support of other scholars, we have advocated and secured the inclusion of a “global” section in the new draft to bring attention to the competencies we need when we work with people from outside of the U.S or people who need career planning support in other countries. These competencies are close to final approval, and I hope they lead to more professional development and resource creation for career professionals who work

with those building careers beyond the U.S. or those who strive to adapt to the U.S. education and work settings (such as international students and new immigrants).

Desired Advocacy Related to International Career Development Policies

Participants were asked the open-ended question, "What international career development policies or efforts would you like to see NCDA explore?" Of the 41 participants surveyed, 26 provided responses, and 15 did not respond. Qualitative feedback demonstrated a demand for an expanded worldview beyond the U.S. translating into support related to diverse pathways and outcomes beyond careers in the U.S. One of the needs shared by a participant was regarding challenges faced by international professionals and faculty in the U.S. and shared:

I would like to see more advocacy for international professionals and faculty. International (foreign-born) professionals face more challenges when applying for jobs due to the sponsorship situation. This priority must be at the core of the mission of the entire professional organization.

Participants also called for enhanced collaboration with other organizations from around the world, such as the President's Alliance for Higher Education and Immigration. Participants expressed gratitude for virtual offerings such as the NCDA ISSC Virtual Mini-Conference which aids those who are unable to travel and attend the NCDA annual conferences. One other need expressed by participants was career and job search support for international members who have the added challenge of navigating hostile immigration policies in the U.S. Other needs shared by the participants included the following: adjusting membership fees based on regional economic levels; standardizing credentials to meet credentialing requirements in other countries, such as

CDA (Career Development Advisor) in Japan; developing country-specific career tools; and education related to employment rights, amongst other needs.

International Member Needs for Client and Student Support

In response to the question, "What are your needs related to helping your students/clients?", 29 participants provided responses, and 12 participants did not respond. Participants shared a range of needs, highlighting a complex web of logistical, cultural, and emotional challenges, which was summed up by one of the participants who shared, "ultimately, my goal is not just to guide careers, but to empower human potential - so that every individual can contribute, belong, and thrive with purpose in a rapidly changing world." Practitioners expressed a high demand for resources dedicated to navigating systemic employment barriers within the U.S. job market. Specific requests included tools for understanding Optional Practical Training (OPT) options, equal opportunity employment laws, and the general hiring processes for international students. Furthermore, respondents noted a need to connect job-seeking immigrants to local opportunities, identify supportive employers, understand how immigrants perceive U.S. career development processes, and secure resources tailored for military veterans.

A significant portion of the feedback focused on the challenges of assisting clients who are leaving the U.S. to return to their home countries or move to third nations. Practitioners require practical information to help students pursue careers outside the U.S. and stay informed about specific countries' enrollment and employment policies. This includes helping clients translate their U.S. degrees and experiences into foreign labor markets that may feature fragile economies or hidden job networks. Expanding on this need, a participant shared that they need more resources related to "understanding those differences, and especially helping people adapt their U.S. education, degree, or work experience into a new country's context is essential." A

critical challenge identified is helping students manage "reverse culture shock" as they adapt to the working cultures and job markets outside the U.S. Additionally, practitioners expressed a need to help clients navigate bureaucratic hurdles and political fears, such as injustice or nepotism in countries like Turkey, while simultaneously struggling to help these students maintain professional networks in their home countries during their U.S. studies.

Cultural adaptation and the nuances of diverse workforce models formed another major theme. Respondents emphasized a need to understand how collective cultural dynamics impact career decisions, such as when family needs supersede an individual's personal desires or how societal status affects employment and education options globally. Practitioners specifically requested resources to bridge Eastern and Western models of career networking, incorporating attention to culture, spirituality, and differing workforce orientations. One of the respondents summarized the need for resources that could help practitioners in supporting their clients holistically by sharing, "my core need is to support my students and clients not only in achieving career outcomes but also in building meaningful, sustainable lives grounded in awareness, purpose, and dignity." Overall, there is a strong desire to understand the intersection of diverse groups, spanning gender, age, beliefs, and ethnicity, to design the best inclusive practices.

The intersection of mental health and career counseling emerged as a profound need for supporting globally mobile populations. Practitioners require holistic frameworks that integrate career development with mental well-being, dignity, and identity. Respondents asked for research demonstrating the connection between mental health and career challenges, enabling practitioners to deliver culturally relevant, scalable solutions that empower human potential and resilience. Communication barriers and language accessibility were also frequently cited. Practitioners working with multilingual language learners identified a critical lack of career

materials in non-English languages, particularly requesting resources translated into Spanish and Arabic. Support is also needed to help students successfully learn English within their academic areas, prepare for interviews as English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers, and assist career services staff in developing their own foreign language proficiencies.

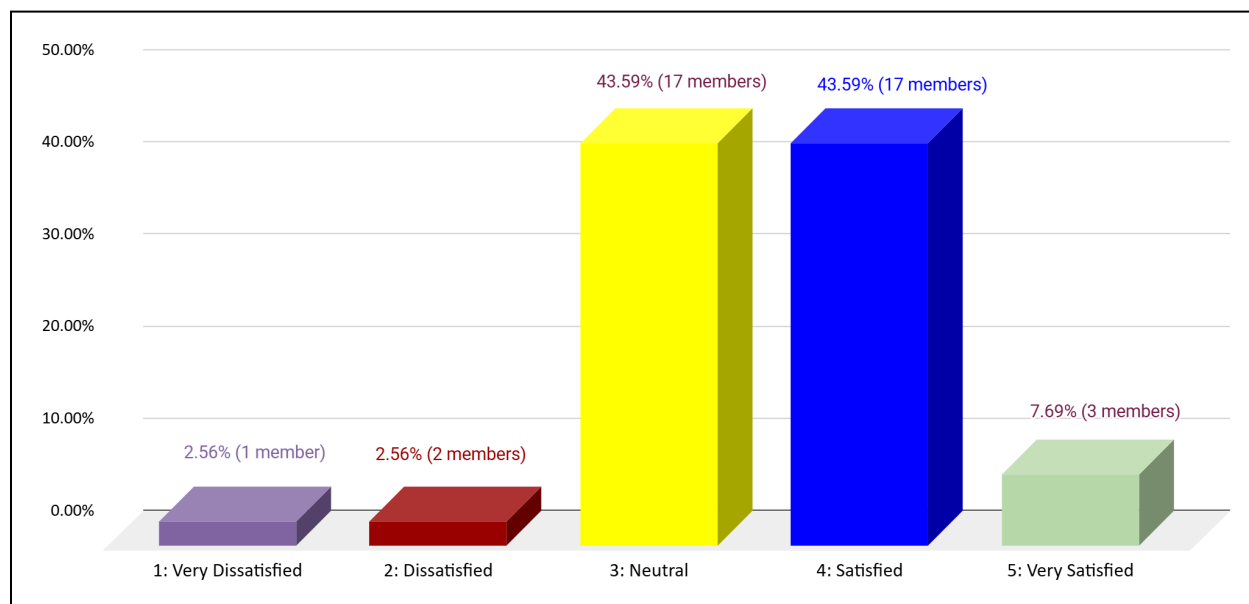
Finally, members asked for systemic and structural tools to supplement existing theories. Practitioners requested more practical, globally adaptable coaching tools and theories to address the global workforce. There is a desire for rigorous research on the latest global trends and a concerted effort to encourage international voices and dialogue within NCDA resources. On a functional level, practitioners also identified a need for standardized tracking systems and quantifiable measurement sets to accurately assess client interactions and evaluate the Return on Investment (ROI) of their career service efforts.

Satisfaction with Current NCDA Resources

Regarding resource satisfaction, the survey asked, "How satisfied are you with the resources available through NCDA to support your needs as a professional?" yielding 39 answers and two skips.

Figure 5

Members' Level of Satisfaction Regarding Resources Available Through NCDA to Support Their Needs as a Professional



Satisfaction was evenly split, with 43.59% (17 respondents) feeling "Neutral," meaning resources are adequate but could be improved, and another 43.59% (17 respondents) feeling "Satisfied" that the resources generally meet their professional needs. Only 7.69% (3 respondents) were "Very Satisfied," while 2.56% (1 respondent) were "Dissatisfied" and 2.56% (1 respondent) were "Very Dissatisfied."

Member Recommendations for Future NCDA Support

Finally, participants were asked the open-ended question, "How can NCDA further support you in your ability to assist your students/clients?" Of the 41 participants surveyed, 24 provided responses, and 17 did not respond. In response to this question, respondents provided a wide array of actionable suggestions, though a few participants noted they were unsure at this time, had not thought about the question, felt satisfied with the information they currently receive, or simply responded with "N/A" or "see above." For those who offered specific recommendations, a prominent theme involved elevating international representation and community building. Members suggested assigning a non-U.S.-based international voice with

the clout to represent and support them, establishing an advisory role, and expanding outreach to career coaches. Practitioners also emphasized the importance of networking, requesting the creation of regional groups for credential holders to learn, exchange, and grow together, as well as facilitating connections to local workforce chapters. Additionally, respondents asked for local group speakers and leaders, a professional community for experience sharing, and better opportunities for mentoring and reverse mentoring across diversified ages, genders, cultures, and ethnicities.

Accessibility and practical training were also heavily emphasized. Respondents recommended making more resources free and scheduling events in time zones friendly to Australia and New Zealand. They requested on-demand web-based training, current updates, more practical ideas, and broader publications regarding career readiness and best practices. There is a strong desire for more programming and events focused on global contexts beyond the United States, with members urging NCDA to make intercultural issues an important part of NCDA initiatives. To bridge the gap between theory and application, practitioners requested access to applied research, case studies, and real-world models that can be directly implemented in training, coaching, or institutional settings. Furthermore, they highlighted a need for resources explaining the metrics professionals use to establish their accomplishments or the support provided to students. One respondent additionally noted that bringing awareness to this very survey and its resources is a step in the right direction.

To address direct client needs, members asked for globally adaptable frameworks that can be tailored to regional contexts, such as the Middle East and GCC, while maintaining alignment with international best practices. Practitioners need current, updated resources regarding global job market trends and the dynamics of job search and application strategies tailored to specific

countries. They also require methods, tools, and career theories focused on cross-cultural diversity to better help students manage "reverse culture shock" when returning to their home countries, citing examples such as the transition from Western work-life expectations to the intensive "996" working hour system adopted by many companies in China. Domestically, practitioners requested resources detailing international student employment and hiring processes, specifically suggesting that NCDA invite legal experts to explain policies related to international students seeking jobs in the U.S. Additional requests included providing targeted career resources for military veterans, as well as inclusive, human-centered guidelines and toolkits for supporting diverse populations like youth, entrepreneurs, and individuals with special needs.

Finally, members called for NCDA to deepen the integration between global standards and culturally responsive practices, starting with the standardization of certificate offerings. One respondent noted that the NCDA's CCSP credential currently loses visibility and usability in regions like Taiwan, where the "CDA" credential name is more popular and its overlapping usage causes confusion. Beyond baseline credentials, practitioners expressed a strong desire for advanced practitioner pathways, post-CCSP and GCDF, that offer opportunities for continued mastery, specialization, and leadership development in emerging areas like AI-informed career services. Crucially, respondents stressed the need to integrate skills that help clients broach and navigate the political and bureaucratic challenges that impact career decision-making and securing a job. To achieve this, members advocated for a more holistic career counseling model, one that closely aligns with mental health to help globally mobile individuals stay active, persistent, and resilient when experiencing occasional hopelessness or discouragement.

Discussion

To comprehensively evaluate the impact of NCDA's advocacy initiatives, it is essential to contextualize the survey findings around the explicit needs of the members, the visibility of current efforts, engagement levels, and the distinct experiences of practitioners operating in different global contexts.

The Multifaceted Identity of the "International" Professional

A foundational insight from this study is that "international advocacy" is not a monolith. The respondent demographics reveal two distinct, yet equally important, subgroups within the National Career Development Association (NCDA): domestic professionals navigating the U.S. system on behalf of international populations (43.90%) and foreign-born professionals building career development frameworks globally (31.71%). This demographic spread illustrates that NCDA must simultaneously address localized U.S. challenges, such as helping foreign students secure U.S. employment, while also providing relevant, non-U.S.-centric resources for practitioners operating in entirely different global labor markets.

Divergent Perceptions: U.S.-Based vs. International Members

The qualitative responses illuminate distinct differences in how U.S.-based practitioners (including both domestic and foreign-born professionals in the U.S.) and international members perceive and require NCDA advocacy. One of the research questions was "how do the perceptions of NCDA's advocacy efforts differ between US-based members and foreign-based members?" However, to preserve participant anonymity, the survey data was exported without cross-tabulating individual qualitative responses with the demographic identities selected in Question 1. Because individual responses cannot be definitively mapped to practitioner identity,

this section relies on contextual clues within the qualitative feedback to provide a broad thematic overview of the differences between these two groups. Therefore, rather than attributing specific quotes to distinct demographic groups, this section provides a broad overview of the divergent needs of these members by inferring their operational context from the qualitative data.

U.S.-Based Practitioners

These professionals are largely focused on frontline domestic barriers. Their perceptions of advocacy are tied to NCDA's ability to help them support international students currently within the U.S. system. Consequently, they prioritize resources related to U.S. employment law, connecting immigrants to local employers, legal expertise on work visas, and language-accessible materials for ESL learners.

Global Practitioners Outside of the U.S.

For members working primarily outside the U.S., the focus shifts toward structural adaptation and professional parity. These practitioners seek advocacy that standardizes global credentialing to protect their professional identity locally. They are also more likely to advocate for benchmarking NCDA standards against European or Canadian models and request practical frameworks for adapting U.S. education to non-U.S. labor markets. For these members, effective advocacy means equitable, reciprocal collaboration that moves beyond exporting a U.S. worldview.

Practitioner Needs for Advising and Supporting International Populations

To answer the research question, "what are the needs of NCDA members with regard to helping them in their ability to advise and support international students and clients in their professional roles?" the survey responses revealed that practitioners operating in the international

space are managing intense, systemic complexities that go far beyond traditional career exploration. Practitioners explicitly requested tools to help clients navigate complex bureaucratic and political barriers, such as understanding U.S. visa policies, Optional Practical Training (OPT) regulations, and the legal intricacies of international student hiring processes.

Furthermore, members highlighted a critical need for holistic frameworks that integrate mental health and identity with career development, particularly to assist clients managing the systemic stress of global mobility. Another prominent need is managing "reverse culture shock" and helping students translate a U.S. degree into a foreign labor market, especially in countries with fragile economies, hidden job markets, or different work-life balance expectations. Finally, practitioners noted a significant accessibility gap, citing an urgent need for career development materials available in multiple languages, such as Spanish and Arabic, to support multilingual learners. These findings highlight that international career development cannot be divorced from mental health and cultural adaptation, with practitioners explicitly requesting culturally relevant, holistic frameworks that integrate career development with mental well-being to assist clients managing the systemic stress of global mobility.

The Advocacy Disconnect: High Visibility vs. Passive Engagement

To answer the research question, "What specific NCDA advocacy efforts are most visible to its members and career development practitioners?" the survey revealed that NCDA's structural and foundational initiatives are the most broadly recognized by its global membership. Professional Accreditation and Certification Standards were recognized by the majority of respondents (61.54%), followed closely by Access to Professional Development (51.28%) and Student Career Services (48.72%). Regarding international-specific advocacy, the work of the International Student Services Committee (ISSC) was overwhelmingly cited as the most visible

effort, particularly their 2020 advocacy statement supporting international students and their dedicated mini-conferences. Practitioners also highly praised the recent revision of the NCDA multicultural career counseling competencies, which successfully integrated a new "global" section to validate the competencies required when working with populations outside of the U.S. However, in exploring the research question, "how do NCDA members rate their level of engagement and connection with NCDA's current advocacy efforts?" the data exposes a significant disconnect between the high visibility of NCDA's broad policy goals and the heavily passive day-to-day engagement of its international members. Indeed, 85% of respondents reported only "Limited" or "Moderate" engagement with NCDA advocacy efforts, indicating they rarely read updates or participate. This disconnect suggests that while members recognize the organization's broad policy goals, NCDA's reliance on U.S. legislative lobbying fails to translate into actionable, daily relevance for practitioners operating outside the U.S. political sphere.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Advocacy Strategies

To address the research question, "what are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of NCDA's current advocacy strategies based on the identified needs of the membership?" the findings indicate that while NCDA's primary strengths lie in its credentialing frameworks and explicit commitment to inclusion, notable weaknesses exist in its U.S.-centric communication biases and an over-reliance on a single committee for global visibility. The active voice of the ISSC is a major structural strength that members deeply value. However, relying almost exclusively on the ISSC creates vulnerabilities, as members observed a communication gap and a gradual decline in global committee activity outside of this group. Additionally, current strategies suffer from a U.S.-centric bias, highlighted by the lack of non-English resources and

credentialing confusion internationally. For example, the U.S.-driven CCSP credential lacks visibility and usability compared to the CDA in regions like Taiwan, limiting the effectiveness of NCDA resources for international practice.

Recommendations: Strategic Pathways for NCDA's Global Future

To elevate its global impact, the findings of this study recommend that NCDA must transition from exporting a U.S. model to facilitating an equitable exchange of global knowledge. The qualitative recommendations align seamlessly with the "Cultivating Community" and "Career Empowerment" pillars of the NCDA 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

Recommendations for Supporting Foreign-Born Career Services Professionals Working Primarily in the U.S.

Foreign-born Career Services Professionals working primarily in the U.S. represent 17.07% of the NCDA practitioners surveyed in this study. To effectively advocate for this group, the NCDA must address the unique professional and systemic barriers they face as immigrants operating within the domestic workforce, while also supporting their work with globally mobile populations.

- ***Advocate for Work Sponsorship and Visa Pathways:*** The NCDA must prioritize direct advocacy for international professionals and faculty regarding the severe challenges of securing work sponsorship. Survey respondents explicitly stated that addressing the sponsorship situation and employer prejudices must become a core priority within the professional organization's mission. To support this, the NCDA should elevate public-facing policy initiatives that push back against host-country regulatory constraints, H-1B lottery cap pressures, and localized hiring discrimination. To effectively address

these systemic bottlenecks, NCDA must include working directly with the Government Relations Committee, as well as the Global Connections Committee (GCC) and the International Student Services Committee (ISCC), to develop targeted resources, platforms, and advocacy actions.

To actively champion direct work sponsorship advocacy and dismantle employer prejudice, NCDA can leverage the strategic positioning of its Higher Education Career Counselors & Specialists and Counselor Educators & Researchers constituency groups. Higher Education Specialists can spearhead frontline campus actions by forging direct alliances with Designated School Officials (DSOs) to host collaborative informational programs. They can also curate legally vetted employer education toolkits and build specialized placement networks targeting domestic organizations with a proven history of visa sponsorship. Concurrently, Counselor Educators & Researchers can establish the structural and academic framework required to imbed international advocacy directly into the core organizational mission. This group can integrate global and systemic policy competencies into graduate-level counselor training, drive empirical research focused on the intersection of work sponsorship stress and mental well-being, and develop holistic, culturally adaptive career theories that help de-center purely U.S.-focused employment models. By systematically linking applied campus intervention with targeted academic inquiry, these constituency groups can transform the immediate logistical hurdles of work sponsorship into a central, public-facing governance priority for the entire association.

Because these international practitioners are frequently on the front lines of supporting other international students and immigrants while navigating the system themselves, they require robust institutional support regarding complex visa structures.

The NCDA should actively advocate for the protection and expansion of critical pathways like Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT), helping to alleviate the deep frustrations caused by visa backlogs and restrictive host-country labor networks.

- ***Develop Specialized Legal and Regulatory Toolkits:*** To bridge the gap between policy and practice, the NCDA should curate advanced practitioner toolkits that provide clear guidance on equal opportunity employment laws and the general hiring processes for international candidates. As a foundational step, the NCDA should actively promote and expand the visibility of existing materials, such as NCDA ISSC's 'Resources for Partnering with International Students' guide, utilizing it as a baseline to build more comprehensive, legally vetted toolkits for practitioners. (National Career Development Association, 2025). Practitioners specifically requested that the NCDA invite legal experts to clarify immigration policies and the legal intricacies of international student hiring. Furthermore, these resources should provide actionable strategies to help these professionals identify supportive domestic employers and connect job-seeking immigrants to local opportunities.
- ***Leverage Diverse Cultural Perspectives:*** NCDA must actively utilize the distinct cultural perspectives these professionals bring to the field. By elevating the voices of foreign-born practitioners operating in the U.S., the organization can gain critical insights into how immigrants perceive U.S. career development processes. This will ultimately enable the NCDA to design more culturally adaptive, inclusive resources that move beyond a strictly domestic worldview. Furthermore, participants mentioned the need for more inclusive career development theories and resources related to applying career

development concepts globally. To support this, the Career Development Quarterly (CDQ) could dedicate a special issue to research applying career development theories globally, and Career Developments magazine could highlight the work members are doing and focus on practitioner interventions to add to this knowledge.

Recommendations for Supporting Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.

Other key actionable pathways include the following:

- ***Standardize and Market Global Credentialing Architecture:*** Respondents highlighted a critical need to standardize and market credentialing architecture internationally, noting that the CCSP credential loses visibility and usability in regions like Taiwan, where the "CDA" is more recognized. Reinforcing the infrastructure of credentialing is a direct goal of NCDA's strategic plan.
- ***Institutionalize Equitable Community Building:*** Practitioners proposed adjusting membership and conference fees based on regional economic development, establishing regional networking groups for global credential holders, and scheduling virtual events in time zones friendly to areas like Australia and New Zealand.
- ***Expand Cross-Border Resource Toolkits and Advanced Pathways:*** Members requested opportunities to benchmark career standards against robust models used in places like Canada and Europe, moving beyond a strictly U.S. worldview. To fulfill the strategic goal of "Career Empowerment," there is a clear demand for post-CCSP/GCDF mastery pathways. International professionals are seeking advanced training in coaching integration, global labor market trends, and navigating political challenges in hiring.

Ultimately, these findings suggest that while NCDA resources are currently viewed as adequate, there is a profound opportunity to tailor and expand them. By embracing these targeted recommendations, NCDA can strengthen its mission to empower human potential across diverse global contexts, ensuring its advocacy is as impactful internationally as it is domestically.

Suggestions for Future Research and Conclusion

This study, conducted as an action learning project through the NCDA Leadership Academy, set out to assess the visibility of current advocacy efforts and to better understand the specific needs of NCDA members who work with international students and clients. By intentionally defining the "international professional" as a multi-dimensional identity, encompassing foreign-born practitioners operating globally and domestically, as well as U.S.-born professionals guiding international populations, the research successfully captured the diverse, localized realities of the membership. The findings indicate that while NCDA has achieved high global visibility in professional accreditation, particularly through the CCSP and GCDF credentials, overall member engagement with advocacy initiatives remains largely passive. Furthermore, while the International Student Services Committee (ISSC) is widely praised for its active advocacy on behalf of international students, the reliance on a single committee highlights a need for NCDA to more broadly integrate global perspectives across all organizational communications.

The qualitative feedback from this study underscores that international career development is deeply intertwined with systemic, legal, and emotional complexities. Frontline practitioners expressed a pressing need for NCDA resources that go beyond traditional career exploration to address concrete barriers, such as U.S. visa and Optional Practical Training (OPT) regulations, and tools to help clients navigate "reverse culture shock" when returning to their

home countries. The explicit demand for multilingual career materials and holistic frameworks that integrate mental health with career development further illustrates that standard U.S.-centric career models must be culturally adapted to serve globally mobile populations effectively.

Moving forward, the insights gathered from these practitioners align seamlessly with the overarching goals of the NCDA 2024-2027 Strategic Plan: Cultivating Community, Career Empowerment, and Advocacy. To fulfill these strategic priorities, NCDA has a clear mandate to explore standardizing its global credentialing to prevent regional confusion, such as the overlapping use of the CCSP and CDA in Taiwan. Additionally, practitioners are eager for NCDA to establish regional networking groups, offer advanced post-CCSP practitioner pathways, and expand reciprocal collaborations with other global workforce organizations. Ultimately, advancing global careers requires a shift from exporting a U.S. framework to fostering a truly reciprocal exchange of global knowledge. By decentralizing international advocacy and tailoring practical resources to reflect the socio-economic and political realities of its diverse membership, NCDA can strengthen its foundational mission. Embracing these actionable recommendations will ensure that the organization continues to elevate professional practice and empower human potential on a truly global scale.

Suggestions for Future Research

While this Leadership Academy action learning project establishes a foundational understanding of international practitioners' advocacy needs, further investigation is required to fully capture the complexities of global career development. Guided by the foundational threads of the NCDA 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, specifically its emphasis on research, evaluation, assessment, national and international initiatives, and the impact of technology, the following

recommendations outline actionable pathways for expanding upon this initial study. Pursuing these specific avenues of research will help ensure that future NCDA initiatives, resources, and advocacy efforts remain culturally adaptive, equitable, and impactful for a globally diverse membership.

Immediate Qualitative Expansion

As an immediate next step, future research should leverage the qualitative momentum of this foundational study. Question 11 of the survey instrument successfully invited respondents to opt into follow-up 1:1 or focus group conversations. These interviews could not be conducted due to paucity of time as of writing this report. Conducting these structured interviews will allow researchers to dive deeper into the complex, localized challenges practitioners face, capturing the nuanced narratives behind issues like global credential standardization and the specific barriers preventing active engagement with NCDA advocacy.

Expanding Sample Size and Developing ROI Metrics

While the two-tiered distribution method of this study successfully captured a highly diverse cross-section of the "international professional," the final sample size of 41 respondents remains a limitation. Future quantitative studies should aim to secure a larger, more statistically representative sample of the NCDA's global membership. Furthermore, qualitative feedback indicated a specific practitioner need for standardized tracking systems to measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of career services efforts. Future research should focus on developing quantifiable measurement sets that allow international career professionals to evaluate and benchmark client outcomes across different countries and educational systems.

Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health, Culture, and Career

Feedback from practitioners highlighted several specific areas ripe for scholarly exploration. Most notably, members expressed a critical need for rigorous research demonstrating the intersection between mental health and career challenges, particularly the role career counseling plays in supporting the well-being of globally mobile populations. Future studies should investigate the psychological and practical impacts of phenomena like "reverse culture shock" and explore how to seamlessly integrate Eastern and Western models of career development, taking into account differing cultural, spiritual, and workforce orientations. Research into how varying socio-economic statuses, cultural family dynamics, and regional work-life balance expectations impact international job seeking would provide invaluable data for culturally adaptive frameworks.

Alignment with the NCDA Strategic Plan and Emerging Technologies

Finally, future research should directly support the "Research/Evaluation/Assessment" and "Technology, AI" threads of the NCDA 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. Practitioners highlighted a desire for advanced pathways integrating AI-informed career services with regional contexts. Investigating the ethical use of AI in translating and culturally adapting career resources could address the urgent need identified in this study for non-English materials (such as Arabic and Spanish). Additionally, to support the strategic goal of expanding credentialing in international markets, targeted research should evaluate the global market perception, usability, and visibility of NCDA credentials (like the CCSP and GCDF) in specific regions, such as Taiwan and the Middle East.

References

- Bhandari, R., & Welch, J. (2022, February 15). *Immigration and racial equity for immigrant and international students*. Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/effective_practice/immigration-and-racial-equity-for-immigrant-and-international-students/
- Chen, M. (2024). The value of U.S. college education in global labor markets: Experimental evidence from China. *Management Science*, 70(2), 1276–1300. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2023.4745>
- Fakunle, O. (2021). Developing a systemic framework for international students' rationales for studying abroad. *Higher Education*, 82(3), 619–636. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00647-w>
- Fickling, M. (2016). An exploration of career counselors' perspectives on advocacy. *The Professional Counselor*, 6(2), 174-188. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1114071.pdf>
- Han, Y., Gulanowski, D., & Sears, G. J. (2022). International student graduates' workforce integration: A systematic review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 86, 163-189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.11.003>
- Institute of International Education. (2025). *Open Doors 2025 report on international educational exchange*. <https://opendoorsdata.org/>
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators. (2025). *NAFSA international student economic value tool*. <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>

National Career Development Association. (2025). *Resources for Partnering with International Students*.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14hE4zAicp4L62y5eckCpfJhWFjZgYnJkkydv8G4lJn8/edit?usp=sharing>

National Career Development Association. (2025, December 11). *Updated resource for those partnering with international students*.

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/608742/_blank/layout_details/false

National Career Development Association. (2025). *2025 annual membership meeting report*.

https://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/923089?ver=1

National Career Development Association. (n.d.-a). *Government Relations Committee*.

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/govtrelations_contact

National Career Development Association. (n.d.-b). *Mission & vision*.

<https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/about>

National Career Development Association. (n.d.-c). *Social justice resources*.

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/social_justice

National Career Development Association . (n.d.-d). *Strategic Plan 2024-2027*.

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/899952?ver=0

National Career Development Association. (n.d.-e). *The NCDA leadership academy*.

https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/leadership_academy

National Career Development Association. (2020, October 30). *NCDA supports international students* [Position statement].

https://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/510839?ver=0

Weiner, H., & Ghazarian, P. G. (2024). From the personal to the professional: International student experiences of seeking employment in the United States. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*, 16(5), 121–131.

Zhai, Y., Xiong, Y., Almaawali, M., Tian, X., & Du, X. (2025). National trends of mental health and service utilisation among international students in the USA, 2015–2024. *General Psychiatry*, 38(5). <https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2025-102124>

Appendices

Appendix A: The Survey Instrument

This study aims to better understand more about the advocacy needs of NCDA members and how it specifically supports its diverse membership in their work with international students and clients. Being aware that many different categories of individuals identify as ‘international,’ we are seeking input from various professionals, including those born outside the US (working both domestically and abroad) and US-born professionals who work with international populations.

Your participation in this survey will provide critical insights into not only your experiences but also help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of NCDA’s current advocacy strategies. This study would also help shape the future of NCDA’s advocacy and resource development for the international community. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be individually identifiable in the study.

For any questions regarding this study, kindly reach out to Dr. Pankaj Desai at dr.desai.pankaj@gmail.com. Dr. Desai is an inductee of the 2026 cohort of the NCDA Leadership Academy.

1. Kindly pick your identity and functional area: [single choice]
 - a. Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the U.S.
 - b. Foreign-born Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.
 - c. Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily in the U.S.
 - d. Domestic [US-born] Career Services Professional Working Primarily Outside the

U.S.

- e. Other, please identify _____ [open-ended]
2. What constituency group are you part of? [multiple checkbox]
- a. Higher Education Career Counselors and Specialists
 - b. Private Practice, Business/Industry & Agencies
 - c. Counselor Education and Researchers
 - d. School Career Counselors and Specialists
3. What specific NCDA advocacy efforts have been visible to you? [Learn more here.](#)
[multiple selection checkbox]
- a. Employment Opportunities and Job Market Adaptability
 - b. Student Career Services
 - c. Professional Accreditation and Certification Standards
 - d. Access to Professional Development
 - e. Workforce Development and Education
 - f. Equal Opportunity and Inclusion
 - g. Special Populations
 - h. Mental Health and Career Development
 - i. Funding for Research and Innovation
 - j. Small Business Development
 - k. Data Privacy and Ethical Compliance
4. How do you rate your level of engagement and connection with NCDA's current advocacy efforts? [single choice]
- a. **1 - No engagement:** I am not aware of NCDA's advocacy efforts and have not

participated in any related activities or communications.

- b. **2 - Limited engagement:** I am aware that NCDA conducts advocacy work, but I rarely read updates or participate in initiatives.
 - c. **3 - Moderate engagement:** I occasionally read NCDA advocacy updates and have participated in at least one advocacy-related event or action (e.g., signing a petition or attending a webinar).
 - d. **4 - Active engagement:** I regularly follow NCDA's advocacy news and frequently participate in calls to action, legislative updates, or committee discussions.
 - e. **5 - Very actively engaged:** I am deeply involved in NCDA advocacy, such as serving on an advocacy committee, meeting with policymakers, or leading advocacy initiatives within the organization.
5. What specific NCDA advocacy efforts related to the needs of our international members (students and professionals) have been visible to you? [open-ended]
6. What other NCDA advocacy efforts related to your needs have been visible to you? [open-ended]
7. What international career development policies or efforts would you like to see NCDA explore? [open-ended]
8. What are your needs related to helping your students/clients? [open-ended]
9. How satisfied are you with the resources available through NCDA to support your needs as a professional? [single choice]
- a. **1: Very Dissatisfied** (Resources do not meet any professional needs or are of poor quality)

- b. **2: Dissatisfied** (Resources are often insufficient or difficult to use)
 - c. **3: Neutral** (Resources are adequate but could be improved or expanded)
 - d. **4: Satisfied** (Resources generally meet professional needs and are helpful)
 - e. **5: Very Satisfied** (Resources are excellent and fully support all professional needs)
10. How can NCDA further support you in your ability to assist your students/clients?
[open-ended]
11. Would you be willing to participate in a 1:1 or focus group conversation to be held in April-May 2026? A selected group of respondents will be contacted directly by the primary investigator.
- a. If yes, share your name and email address here. Enter 'No' if you do not wish to participate in a follow-up conversation. [open-ended]

Appendix B: Call for Participants Flyer



Call for Participants



NCDA International Professionals'
Advocacy Needs and the Visibility
of NCDA Advocacy Efforts

NCDA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Appendix C: NCDA Federal Advocacy (2023-2024)

[This NCDA webpage was shared with the participants found at this link:

<https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/govtrelations>]

NCDA Federal Advocacy | 2023-2024

NOTE: Policy Areas are not in order of priority. Priority of these areas will be ever-evolving to mirror prominent issues within the legislature.

Policy Areas

1. Employment Opportunities and Job Market Adaptability

- **Focus 1:** Advocating for federal policies that foster a dynamic and inclusive job market, ensuring opportunities for all skill levels and backgrounds.
- **Focus 2:** Pushing for legislation that supports job transition programs, particularly for workers in declining industries or those impacted by automation and digital transformation.
- **Focus 3:** Collaboration with federal agencies to develop and promote initiatives that match job seekers with opportunities based on current and forecasted labor market trends.

2. Student Career Services

- **Focus 1:** Educate policymakers and advocate for the continuum of career services from early education through the end of life, with particular emphasis on meaning and purpose derived from work.

- **Focus 2:** Advocating for and supporting funding for high-quality career services in K-12 settings.
- **Focus 3:** Advocating for and supporting funding for high-quality career services in higher education institutions at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional (e.g. law and medical school) levels.
- **Focus 4:** Advocating for and supporting funding for high-quality career services in vocational programs, community programs, and additional services for minors and adults.

3. Professional Accreditation and Certification Standards

- **Focus:** Lobbying for federal standards and support for the accreditation and certification of career development professionals to ensure quality and uniformity across the field, with particular emphasis on NCDA's professional and ethical standards, including credentials approved by the NCDA Credentialing Commission.

4. Access to Professional Development

- **Focus:** Advocacy for federal grants or subsidies aimed at promoting ongoing professional development among practitioners and educators in the career development field.

5. Workforce Development and Education

- **Focus:** Collaboration with federal agencies, including the Department of Education and the Department of Labor, to integrate career development into national education policies and workforce development programs.

6. Equal Opportunity and Inclusion

- **Focus:** Promoting legislation that ensures all individuals, especially those from

underrepresented and marginalized groups, have equitable access to career development resources and opportunities.

- **Focus:** Advocating for legislation to protect workers from discrimination, especially those from underrepresented and marginalized groups.

7. Special Populations

- **Focus:** Advocating for legislation and programs that support special populations, including military veterans, individuals with disabilities, reentering formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants, and other groups with barriers to workforce participation.

8. Mental Health and Career Development

- **Focus:** Pushing for policies that integrate career development as part of broader mental health and well-being initiatives at the federal level.

9. Funding for Research and Innovation

- **Focus:** Advocating for federal funding to facilitate research in career development trends, technologies, and best practices.

10. Small Business Development

- **Focus:** Support funding and programs supporting small businesses, including tax structures to support small businesses and their owners.

11. Data Privacy and Ethical Compliance

- **Focus:** Advocacy for ethical standards and data protection laws relevant to the gathering and storage of client information in the career development sector.