Campus Recreation
Assessment of Student Employee Job Related Learning Outcomes
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ABSTRACT
CR wanted to find what job related learning outcomes student employees gained as a result of working in their facilities. CR worked closely with Shawn Clouse from the UM School of Business to develop and administer a survey that would examine a variety of job skills. The purpose was to discern what job skills students had acquired while working for CR, what skills were improved upon, the student’s perception of a job skill’s importance to her/his job, and the student’s level of proficiency in that skill.

This assessment should direct CR to develop staff training curriculum that contributes to student’s learning experiences related to the work world. Findings reveal that most job skills were at least somewhat improved upon while working at CR. Two exceptions, however, included self-confidence and personal initiative, related to expressing ideas and thoughts. Future staff trainings should be directed towards improving student employees’ self-confidence and personal initiative. It is recommended that CR focus on improving supervisor to staff communication through more frequent and/or effective staff meetings/trainings, and to offer more opportunities, where student staff from all CR come together and interact to build a more cohesive CR staff.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
CR employs 140 students, primarily undergraduates (77 percent of student staff), to work in the areas of the golf course, swimming pool, outdoor program, intramurals, fitness, front desk, and equipment desk, and as weight room monitors and student custodians. All potential student employees go through an application/interview process with the manager in their prospective work area. The managerial staff is committed to hiring individuals who not only have appropriate skills for a given job, but who also demonstrate other attributes that make them assets to the department, such as a friendly outgoing demeanor, ability to work well in a social setting, and personal interest in some aspect of the recreation field.

CR aspires to provide a work environment for student employees that will contribute to their learning experience outside the classroom. To assess the impact CR has on student employees in regards to providing job related learning experiences, a survey was designed to determine if students encounter job related learning experiences while employed.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE
To assess job related learning outcomes, CR developed a survey that asked student employees questions about different skill sets they need while employed at CR. The survey was comprised of a consent form followed by questions related to working at CR. The questions targeted specific areas of customer service, office operations, organization and scheduling, leadership, marketing and advertising, professionalism, self-confidence, communication, mechanical, professional development, and personal initiative skills. Every skill set had subsequent behaviors attached (see appendix).

A variety of job skills were listed within the specific areas. The student employees rated each job skill in a given area for importance to the job, their proficiency in that skill, if the skill had been newly acquired while working at CR, and if the skill improved while working at CR. The rating was a seven point likert scale, (1) not at all, (4) neutral, and (7) to a great extent, and the option of not applicable.

The four different skill aspects were defined in the survey as follows:

1. **Importance** refers to the degree to which you consider a particular skill (e.g., handling complaints) to be important to your position at Campus Recreation.
2. **Proficiency** refers to your level of ability in a particular skill (e.g., handling complaints) for your job at Campus Recreation.
3. **Newly acquired skill at CR** refers to the degree to which you consider a particular skill (e.g., handling complaints) as a skill you learned or acquired while at Campus Recreation.
4. **Skill improved upon at CR** refers to the degree to which you believe you have improved a particular skill (e.g., handling complaints) while at Campus Recreation.
The final group of questions gathered general demographic information.

The research team developed the survey instrument as a web-based questionnaire in the spring of 2011. The survey was delivered via Survey Monkey from April 27, 2011 to May 16, 2011. A total of 140 participants were solicited via emails with a link to the survey online. After data cleansing, 98 students participated in the survey for 70 percent participation of the student employee base. To encourage participation all respondents were included in a drawing for a $75 gift certificate to REI and $50 and $25 gift certificates to the Trail Head, after completion of the survey.

One online survey included the research questions and a second survey was used to gather names, phone numbers, and email addresses to ensure that all survey submissions were anonymous. This project was descriptive research.

The research team analyzed the data using SPSS and Excel. SPSS was used to calculate means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. The questions that enabled participants to select more than one item were analyzed to show total frequencies based on 100 percent. These questions were also analyzed to show the percentage of total participants that selected each of the items reported as percent of cases. Excel was used to graph responses in bar charts to graphically show preferences of participants. It was also used to test for statistical differences within the questions that had multiple items.

**FINDINGS**

The following is an outline of the main findings from the survey. Findings were determined by examining each job skill (for example, leadership skill of enforcing policies) and the four associated job skill aspects (for example, importance to job) and by looking for skill aspects that scored four or higher on the likert scale (1-7). If a skill aspect scored four or higher, the following interpretations were made in regards to what impact CR employment had on the student group surveyed: the associated job skill had high importance to their job, students had a higher than neutral proficiency for that job skill, it was a newly acquired job skill, it was a job skill that was at least somewhat improved upon.

Seventy-five of the 98 participants were undergraduate students. The average age was 23 years old, and 53 percent of the responders were female. The self-reported GPA was 3.38 (out of 4.0), and 89 percent of the students reported that they hold a “B” or above average for grades. CR used the grade data with caution as self reported grade data is often overstated. The student employees heavily used the CR facilities, with 52 percent using it four or more times per week, and 70 percent coming to the facility two to five days per week beyond work.

The CR student employees were found to be 59 percent extroverts (outgoing and sociable verses quiet and reserved), 88 percent adjusted (stable or content verses moody or tense), and 67 percent agreeable (cooperative or friendly verses fault finding or unfriendly) as found through a set of questions that rated personality traits (see appendix).

No customer service skills were newly acquired at CR, but all were improved upon. The students ranked these skills very high in ‘importance to job.’ Four out of five skills had a lower rating for proficiency than the rating of ‘importance to job.’

Working at CR has had a substantial impact on developing student employee office operations skills. All five office skills saw some improvement and three out of the five skills were newly acquired at CR.

Students ranked both skills in organizing and scheduling as higher for their proficiency level than importance to their jobs, so this is an area CR may not need to include in future trainings.

Employment at CR has had a considerable impact on student employees’ leadership skills, including decision making and enforcing rules and policies. Enforcing rules and policies ranked one of the highest in all job skills in relationship to job importance. All three leadership skills had a high rank for skills improved upon while employed at CR.

Most student employees feel they have a role in promoting CR through marketing and advertising skills.

The ratings show that CR is a healthy work environment where student workers are encouraged to interact and resolve differences in a professional manner. All skills related to professionalism ranked very high for importance to job with a corresponding high level of proficiency. Six out of the seven professional skills scored above four for being improved upon while employed at CR.
Expressing feelings or thoughts at work ranked lowest for *self confidence* skill that held importance to job. This skill also did not show improvement while employed at CR.

High scores in the areas of active listening, giving and receiving feedback showed skill improvements by students. These *communication* skills matched well with professionalism skills. Student employees at CR are therefore gaining soft skills, interpersonal skills that are not trained while on the job or outlined in job duties, which may help them to be successful in their future work life.

The highest ratings for *personal initiative* were for confidence in emergency response procedures (six for importance to job, six for proficiency, five for newly acquired, and five for skill improved). Confidence in emergency response was one of the highest ranked skills for improvement out of all job skill areas. Emergency response was the topic of CR’s all staff training in fall of 2010. This demonstrates the effectiveness of staff trainings on job skill enhancement. The personal initiative skill that rated lowest for job importance was proposing new ideas. This skill was one of the lowest rated out of all job skills for job importance.

Students were asked in an open-ended question how to improve student employment at CR. Two main themes emerged. Students requested more and better communication (top down) through trainings or meetings. They also suggested greater interaction between the employees of the various CR units in order to create a more cohesive student staff.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the assessment results the following recommendations will assist CR in enhancing student employee job related learning experiences:

- The survey demographic results demonstrate that CR managers are achieving their goals of hiring students who are well suited to work in social settings by staffing people who are by majority extroverts, adjusted, and agreeable. Student staff usage of the CR facilities is very high, implying that student employees take a personal interest in the recreation field, thus making them more invested in their work environment. CR should continue the hiring of interested students thorough its job interview, audition, and application process.

- All *customer service* skills were improved upon while working at CR; however students rated their proficiency level in this area as lower than its importance to job, demonstrating that they perceive their customer service proficiency to be operating at a lower level then they rate the importance of customer service to their job. Therefore, CR should provide more customer service training to improve student employees’ sense of proficiency in this area.

- *Self-confidence in expressing feelings and thoughts and taking personal initiative to propose new ideas* ranked as two of the lowest skill scores. *Thoughts, ideas, and feelings* showed up as a low score in two different skill areas (self-confidence and personal initiative), indicating this is an area that needs to be addressed. CR should consider developing a training program to enhance student employee self-confidence, and/or creating a new staff training and staff meeting format that will provide students with greater opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts.

- *Taking personal initiative to express ideas* ranked one of the lowest rated skills in regards to importance to job. If students perceive that contributing their ideas to the workplace is of a low importance in their job, they may not make an effort to contribute. As stated above, CR should develop methods to emphasize that student’s input in the workplace has importance, creating a work environment that encourages student staff to express their ideas.

- Based on the open ended questions, it is recommended that CR management focus on improving supervisor to staff communication through more frequent and/or more effective staff meetings/trainings, and that they offer more opportunities, including social programming, where student staff from all CR units can come together and interact to build a more cohesive CR student staff.
APPENDIX

Customer Service Skills –
- Handling complaints
- Dispensing information
- Remembering information
- Providing customers with service
- Determining a problem
- Finding answers

Office Operations Skills –
- Updating files
- Handling money
- Reporting information
- Gathering information
- Maintaining accurate records

Organization and Scheduling Skills –
- Prioritizing tasks
- Coordinating schedule and times

Leadership Skills –
- Supervising or managing employees
- Decision making
- Enforcing rules and policies

Marketing and Advertising Skills –
- Promoting events
- Publishing/displaying creative works
- Promoting Campus Rec

Professionalism Skills –
- Creating a positive work environment
- Following instructions
- Teamwork
- Maintaining emotional control under stress
- Coping with deadlines
- Confident in job duties and application of job duties
- Being thorough

Self Confidence Skills –
- Confronting other people
- Resolving conflicts
- Expressing feelings or thoughts
- Gaining the confidence of others
- Applying knowledge

Communication Skills –
- Teaching, instructing, and/or training individuals
- Preparing written communications
- Active listening
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Conveying ideas clearly

Mechanical Skills –
• Repairing or inspecting equipment or physical objects
• Operating equipment
• Assembling products

Professional Development Skills –
• Obtaining certifications
• Participating in continuing Ed.

Personal Initiative Skills –
• Becoming actively involved
• Proposing new ideas
• Taking personal responsibility
• Troubleshooting
• Self-motivation
• Confident in emergency response situations

The following questions were asked to determine the personality traits of the employees:
• People would describe you as being
  o Soft spoken
  o Energetic and bubbly
• Are you usually
  o Quiet
  o Talkative
• Which describes you best
  o Reserved
  o Outgoing
• If you were at a party, you would
  o Talk to your closest friends
  o Talk to most of the people
• Which describes you best
  o Hopeful
  o Successful
• Your parents would have been more likely to say
  o You could have done even better
  o We are proud of you
• Do you more frequently find yourself
  o Not content with your life
  o Content with your life
• If you could live your life over, would you
  o Make a lot of changes
  o Make very few changes
• Which describes you best
  o Intense
  o Patient
• Do you tend to be
  o Intense
  o Easygoing
• People that know you would say you are
  o Demanding
  o Understanding
• Which describes you best
  o Determined
  o Understanding