Student Employee Work Quality and Diversity Survey

The student affairs division wished to meet two separate strategic planning objectives by assessing our student workers (work-study, non-work-study, graduate assistants, interns and volunteers). Our goals were to offer high quality work experiences that teach real-world skills, and separately, to demonstrate inclusivity in our hiring practices. The assessment was administered in a web format in November 2012, and there were 153 respondents. This document outlines results for our division. Responses were also broken down by department and shared with the appropriate Director.

Among respondents, 73% identified as white, 66% as women, and 12% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

In general, students rated their college work experience positively overall. 84% of student employee respondents rated their working conditions as either “good” or “excellent”. When asked if they would like the opportunity to learn new skills in their current positions, students reported very specific ideas concerning the additional training they would like to receive. Additionally, 35% of student employee respondents reported that they would be willing to talk in more detail with Jill Crandall, the Assistant Director for Experiential Education at the Career Development Center, about how AU could provide better work-study or internship experiences for students. These students submitted their contact information.

84.21% of student employee respondents rated their overall work experience either “good” or “excellent”.

82% of student employee respondents rated the support they received from their supervisor as either “good” or “excellent”.

81% of student employee respondents rated their daily job responsibilities as either “good” or “excellent”.

76% of student employee respondents rated the job training they received as either “good” or “excellent”.

88% of respondents believe their work is at least moderately important to the department.

Important things students learned from their on-campus jobs, in addition to general responses such as “time management,” “people skills, and “communication skills.”

- “Leadership skills, assertiveness and ability to facilitate compromise”
- “Being an RA has taught me many valuable skills. One of the most important skills I have learned it how to manage people and what to do when people are not getting along.”
- “Being able to take the initiative to start new work projects and continue to update existing (projects) on my own.
- “It’s always OK to ask for help when you need it. Employees need to support each other, and a great work environment is really important to the overall functioning of the organization.”

Positive Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Overall experience</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Below average</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06. How would you rate the following aspects of your work experience?</td>
<td>45.59%</td>
<td>20.81%</td>
<td>10.63%</td>
<td>3.95%</td>
<td>5.09%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“How to be professional and complete given assignments in a timely manner.”

“That not everything is black and white like accounting is. Sometimes numbers don’t match up because people don’t show or numbers fluctuate on a daily basis.”

“I have learned so much about myself as a person. I knew how to be a leader before but now it is a lot easier to be a leader all the time now”

“Sometimes you have to do more than your job description”

“The importance of healthy, sustainable connections”

75% of student employee respondents agreed that their campus job was helpful in learning career-related skills.

**Additional Findings and Areas for Improvement**

45% of student employee respondents report that they do not receive regular feedback from supervisors regarding job performance.

When asked if they would like the opportunity to learn new skills in their current positions, 26.72% of student employee respondents responded affirmatively. Those responses were shared with individual department.

42% of students view their on-campus job as an internship, whether or not their supervisors define it as such, and sometimes even when not in their field of study. Comments included:

- “I feel as though this job was great for my communication skills, however, I do not believe I will be working in this field again.”

- “As an education major I feel being a RA is related to my career field. I am responsible for student safety, and well-being, and I have to plan activities, much like a teacher does for her students”

- “Most of my work is more geared toward mundane, but necessary office activities, which does not provide job skills in a specific area, only more general skills like social development and time management.”

- “I would eventually like to be a physical therapist. I feel that learning how an office works and how to be effective at running one will be infinitely helpful working in a medical office. “

- “I am learning skills (such as communication, leadership, group organization, time management, holding responsibility, etc..) that will be used almost every day in my professional career.”

- “The interpersonal skills I learn from being an RA can be applied in the fields of biology and chemistry to some extent (for example, in team projects). However, it has no hands-on activity in these scientific fields.”

- “Working at the CDC has definitely helped me gain professional, supervised experience that is applicable to various fields. This experience has opened my eyes to many opportunities that could be a good fit for me and I have gained a lot of experience in the process.”

- “While interesting, the experience pertains to a field outside of and generally unrelated to my studies.”

**Diversity**

Our student employees who responded to the survey were similar in diversity characteristics to AU as a whole. 12% of respondents identified as LGBT, and 27% reported an ethnicity other than Caucasian, although this included 8% who preferred not to respond. 8% of our respondents identified as Black/African-American, and 8% as Hispanic/Latino, slightly higher than the AU proportions. We did tend to hire proportionally more women students - 66%, compared to 51% of AU full-time undergrads.

**Summary and Action Steps:**

Almost half of student employee respondents reported that they did not receive regular feedback from their supervisor. This highlights the need for a greater frequency of dialogue between supervisor and student employee about job performance in many departments within Student Affairs. However, 83% of students felt that their supervisor supported them regardless of whether or
not they reported receiving regular feedback. Students were generous in noting a wide variety of skills they would like to learn in their campus jobs. These have been shared with supervisors for review and action.

We are discussing the idea of a staff development day geared toward our student employees which could further enhance their ability to leverage the campus experience into a fulfilling job after college.

We will be presenting these results in the spring at a campus breakfast roundtable, and would offer our survey instrument to any other division who wishes to assess their student workers.

The very small response from Athletics student workers greatly limits our ability to generalize in that area, and affects our overall results since that’s a large population of student workers. We will administer this survey next semester to new student employees, and we’ll need to do a better job of encouraging athletics student workers to respond. We’ll re-issue a second version of this report at the end of the academic year.