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# Professional Skill Development For Collegiate Recreation Student Employees

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PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR COLLEGIATE RECREATION STUDENT  
EMPLOYEES

A Dissertation  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Higher Education  
The University of Mississippi

by

PETER J. TULCHINSKY

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## ABSTRACT

Practitioners in the field of collegiate recreation have begun to place greater emphasis on the co-curricular learning experiences of undergraduate students who are employed in collegiate recreation departments. Institutions have implemented learning outcomes and career readiness assessments to measure student knowledge acquisition through on-campus employment. Astin (1993) suggested that on-campus, part-time employment positively impacted student development, specifically in terms of timely degree completion and more frequent self-reporting of cognitive and affective growth, while Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that undergraduate employment is also linked to the attainment of higher levels of professional responsibility. The Dissertation in Practice (DiP) will examine the professional skills that student employees identified as learned through their employment experience in a collegiate recreation department, and what professional skills students believe they will need for future employment. The topic of student employment as a high-impact practice in higher education will also be discussed, along with recommendations for enhancing professional skill development of student employees in collegiate recreation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR COLLEGIATE RECREATION STUDENT

EMPLOYEES: DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

MANUSCRIPT ONE

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## MANUSCRIPT ONE

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

In the field of collegiate recreation, frequent discussion exists among practitioners about the co-curricular learning opportunities available for student employees. Institutional alignment with Student Affairs for many collegiate recreation programs has fostered a more holistic approach to student development and transferable learning experiences. Astin (1993) suggested that on-campus, part-time employment positively impacted student development, specifically in terms of timely degree completion and more frequent self-reporting of cognitive and affective growth. Undergraduate employment is also linked to the attainment of higher levels of professional responsibility (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook (2015) surveyed over 200 employers and outlined the attributes employers are seeking in new college graduates entering the workforce, finding that the most sought after skills are leadership, communication, and problem-solving. Collegiate recreation programs offer student employees the opportunity to develop personal and professional skills through a variety of employment experiences. Self-cognition of these professional skills, how they are learned through student employment, and what skills student employees find most valuable in their professional development is an emerging focus in collegiate recreation. The Problem of Practice is focused on the professional skills that student employees learned through their employment experience in a collegiate recreation department.

This study will identify the professional skills, as reported by student employees, learned through employment in the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi and review on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice in higher education.

Manuscript two will examine semi-structured interviews that were conducted to illustrate the professional skills that Campus Recreation student employees have identified as most beneficial in their current and future employment. Manuscript three will discuss the merits of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice in higher education, how Campus Recreation student employees experienced the various components that comprise high-impact practices, and methods of implementation from an institutional context.

## PROBLEM OF PRACTICE IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

The Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi is a comprehensive collegiate recreation program focused on services, programs, facilities, and educational opportunities that promote the pursuit of life-long wellness for members of the university community. With 13 professional staff, 14 graduate assistants, and nearly 200 student employees, Campus Recreation is one of the largest departments at the university from a staffing perspective, employing the second-highest number of student staff. The department consists of six program areas (Aquatics, Facility Operations, Fitness, Health Promotion, Intramural Sports & Sport Clubs, and Outdoors), employing students in a variety of service-oriented and instructional roles.

Campus Recreation utilizes six values as “pillars” for the program. These values are skills/attributes that directly relate to the NACE attributes that employers are seeking in college graduates and include: teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, respect. These skills form the acronym TEAM CR, which is used by the department to emphasize the importance of demonstrating these attributes as a member of the Campus Recreation workforce. At the end of each semester, student employees are evaluated and rated on their demonstration of these values through their employment. Student employees also self-evaluate their professional performance and communicate how they demonstrated these values in the workplace.

The Problem of Practice emerged from the assessment of student self-evaluations of how they were demonstrating the departmental values through their work. During the first year of this

evaluation process, student employees articulated superficial learning of the TEAM CR values and were challenged to connect the TEAM CR values to their work performance. Campus Recreation identified this issue and worked to assist students in better identifying the professional skills gained through student employment. However, the department wanted to more closely examine the learning of professional skills through student employment and the ability of students to identify those skills. The Dissertation in Practice evolved from the departmental focus on professional skill development in the collegiate recreation setting.

## PROFESSIONAL POSITIONALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

My work as a collegiate recreation director for nearly twenty years has led me to further study how student employees learn professional employment skills through their undergraduate employment experiences in my field. My tenure at Elon University, a selective, private university in North Carolina that is one of the leading institutions in the nation for engaged learning, was especially significant.

When I began working at Elon in 1997, it was ranked as the #16 master's level Southern university by US News & World Report. It was a small, regional institution with an enrollment just over 3,500 students, primarily from mid-Atlantic states. Tuition, room, and board totaled \$15,712. The average student SAT score was 1085, nearly 70 points above the national SAT average of 1016. During my first nine years at Elon, over 40 students from our recreation program earned graduate assistantships in the field of collegiate recreation. Our top students would attend the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) national conference, which at the time was the primary location for hiring graduate assistant candidates, and have multiple offers before the conference ended. Peers in our field recognized how well-prepared our students were for the next step in their professional careers. Their preparation was in large part due to the fact that we only had two professional staff members in our department and no graduate assistants. For our department to offer the programs and services of a comprehensive collegiate recreation program, we had to rely on our undergraduate students to take on the roles that were often performed by graduate assistants or professional staff at larger

institutions. Through their employment experience, I was observing that students were developing professional attributes as juniors and seniors that were equivalent to graduate assistants and entry-level professionals in collegiate recreation.

Around 2006, I noticed a significant shift at Elon. As the university had grown in stature and prominence, our students changed. The SAT average score was 1208, more students from the Midwest were enrolled, and first year to second year retention was at 90%. We were working with students who had a different academic and socioeconomic profile than a decade earlier. Our students were now paying over \$25,000 a year to attend the university, and there was a different expectation from both parents and students for a return on that investment. As the composition of our student body changed, Elon developed a more significant institutional focus on assessment of engaged learning. Our department started to identify some of the leadership traits our student employees were demonstrating through their employment experience and how those skills would be valuable in the professional workplace. Campus Recreation became proficient in helping our student leaders identify their leadership strengths and their roles as team members.

We were hearing from our Campus Recreation alumni that they were very prepared for their careers. Their undergraduate employment experience had granted them experiences that enhanced their communication, leadership, teamwork, conflict management, and problem-solving skills and transferred across a range of professions. In response to the feedback from our alumni, as well as the evolving expectations from students and parents, our messaging began to change.

The 2006-2010 Five Year Plan for Elon's Division of Student Life prioritized what we termed the "professional competencies" of teamwork, leadership, and public speaking. Student Life departments were charged with implementing and assessing co-curricular initiatives that

promoted student learning in these three competencies. In admissions sessions, trustee meetings and other showcase events, we emphasized the co-curricular learning of professional competencies and how these transferred to professional employment. Campus Recreation was an institutional leader in these professional competencies, implementing programs and assessments that demonstrated the impact of student employment in our department.

When I left Elon in 2014, it was a different institution than the one that hired me in 1997. It was ranked the #1 master's level Southern university by US News and World Report. Enrollment was over 6,500 with students from 40 states and 28 countries. Tuition, room, and board was \$46,142. Elon was recognized by US News and World Report more often than any university in the country for eight academic programs focused on student success, which reinforced the university's claim as the national leader in engaged learning. We were also developing a new marketing approach with prospective students and parents. Utilizing the NACE *Job Outlook* survey, we were demonstrating how the engaged learning experiences at Elon translated to the skills employers were seeking in college graduates. The university began emphasizing return on investment, demonstrating how the skills listed by NACE were practiced through engaged learning at Elon and resulted in financially rewarding professional opportunities post-graduation.

With the NACE *Job Outlook* survey as a frame of reference, I wanted to create a model for my Campus Recreation student employees at the University of Mississippi. I noticed during my first few months on campus during the spring of 2014 that our students were not invested in their work. For many of our employees, a job at Campus Recreation was strictly a paycheck. They were not educated on the relevance of their work to future employment opportunities. I



wanted to help our students understand the benefits of employment in our department and how the skills they learned through that experience would translate to their work after college.

Our department developed six employee values based on the NACE *Job Outlook*: teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, and respect. This list, which forms the acronym TEAM CR, helps our students understand the skills that are important for them to demonstrate through their work in our program. Our employee performance appraisals assess our student staff on these values and asks them to articulate how they demonstrate these skills through their work experience. This process should help prepare our students in articulating their knowledge and execution of professional “soft skills” to future employers.

Now that we have had our TEAM CR appraisal system in place for almost two years, I’m interested in learning how well it has worked in preparing student employees for the professional job market. I want to hear from our students if they feel they are proficient in these professional skills, how they have developed these skills, and what skills they feel will be most relevant for their future. By developing an intentional student employee development process that teaches professional skills, our program can be an institutional and national model for co-curricular learning. We also have the potential to help national leaders in higher education understand and recognize the value of on-campus student employee experiences as a high-impact practice.

Through the course of doctoral study, the importance of the Problem of Practice has taken on greater professional significance. As institutions place increasing emphasis on student retention, experiences such as on-campus employment have tremendous value because of their impact on keeping students engaged. With multiple states tying institutional funding allocations to post-graduation outcomes, public colleges and universities have more incentive to produce career ready graduates for the professional workforce. At the institutional level, there is a need to

demonstrate the value of on-campus student employment so that this high-impact experience is supported in a fashion similar to undergraduate research, study abroad, and practicum/internship programs.

## CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Each year, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducts a survey of its employer members that asks what qualities those employers are seeking in new college graduates entering the workforce. The top 10 skills cited by NACE in the *Job Outlook 2016* survey included leadership, ability to work in a team, written communication skills, problem-solving skills, verbal communication skills, strong work ethic, initiative, analytical/quantitative skills, flexibility/adaptability, and technical skills (NACE, 2015). In surveying 225 employers, a Millennial Branding study (2012) found that employers view communication skills (98%), demonstrating a positive attitude (97%) and teamwork skills (92%) as being important or very important when hiring for entry-level positions. These “soft skills” may also be defined as professional skills and include such qualities such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, communication, time management, critical thinking, and respecting difference (Tooperzer, Anderson, & Barcelona, 2011; Winstead, Adams & Sillah, 2009). Robles (2012) identified soft skills, or people skills, as the personal attributes and intangible interpersonal qualities that one possesses. Citing behavioral science research, Kyllonen (2013) identified soft skills such as work ethic, teamwork, effective communication, motivation, organization, and cultural awareness as important in determining success in school and the workplace.

The Center on Education and the Workforce (2015) reported that over the last 25 years, over 70% of college students worked while enrolled, with internships, externships, and work-

study programs connecting students to job experiences and professional contacts as a “new norm.” One of the largest and potentially most beneficial employers of college students are the universities they attend. These institutions provide employment opportunities for hundreds of students, making them incubators for developing the professional competencies that employers are seeking.

Collegiate recreation departments are typically campus leaders in the number of students employed (NIRSA, 2008), with opportunities available for positions such as lifeguard, facility manager, fitness center supervisor, exercise instructor, office assistant, and intramural official. These collegiate recreation employment positions may require various levels of proficiency in professional skill development, where student employees must demonstrate communication, teamwork, and critical thinking in a practical employment setting.

Professional preparation is often a major consideration for students who seek undergraduate employment opportunities, as students look to build their professional profiles in an effort to be more competitive in the post-graduate job market. Many students approach employment in collegiate recreation in a way that can be explained through the social mobility framework posited by Labaree (1997). Students consider the personal benefits of employment and how the experience will contribute to their chances of securing a professional position. Their attitude toward student employment mirrors the consumer perspective, where the student accumulates forms of educational property to gain an advantage in competition for social position (Labaree, 1997).

Students working in student affairs environments on campus view their work experiences as practical ways to learn skills which transfer to other employment settings (Carr, 2005). Hall (2011) found that employment in collegiate recreation settings enhances the ability of students to

communicate effectively, work with diverse constituencies, solve problems, and be more confident in their leadership skills. Students in a Campus Labs (2014) survey indicated they more frequently gained skills such as verbal communication, working in a team structure, and influencing others through their co-curricular experiences than in-classroom environments. In developing these professional skills, students are preparing themselves to be productive members of their community and the professional workforce, with the tools necessary to obtain post-graduate employment and attain career advancement.

Students seek employment while in college for a number of reasons. College costs are a motivating factor for student employment, as students work to fill the gap in unmet financial need (Torres, Gross, & Dadashov, 2010). The cost of a college education has increased by 1,120% since records began in 1978, a rate that is four times higher than the consumer price index (Jamrisko & Kolet, 2012). Nearly seven out of ten seniors (69%) who graduated from public and nonprofit colleges in 2013 had student loan debt, with an average of \$28,400 per borrower (The Institute for College Access & Success, 2014). With the ever-increasing costs of higher education, students turn to income sources other than financial aid to pay for their education (Furr & Elling, 2000). Financial considerations such as paying for basic living expenses and contributing to tuition payments were primary reasons for students who sought to be employed while enrolled in college (Dundes & Marx, 2006).

College costs have also forced institutions to place a greater emphasis on initiatives that impact student success, specifically in regards to student retention and graduation rates (Bok, 2013). Astin (1993) found that holding a part-time job on campus is positively associated with the attainment of a bachelor's degree and with multiple areas of self-reported cognitive and affective growth. Working on campus was also shown to have no adverse effect on persistence,

while actually having a positive impact on the probability of enrolling in post-graduate education (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1985). Students create meaning from reciprocal academic and social interactions at the institution, with incorporation into the institution's ongoing social and intellectual life a key element of student persistence (Tinto, 1993). On-campus student employment can play an important role in this process. Student employment can foster greater engagement with faculty, staff, and fellow students, an important factor in creating connections to the institution.

Student employment may have a meaningful impact on the development of the student during their collegiate tenure. Long (2012) identified four types of student development theory. *Humanistic-existential* theories focus on student decision-making and how those decisions affect themselves and others. Helping skills utilized by counselors and other professionals in student affairs are utilized frequently in this family of theories. The *cognitive-structural* family of theories are centered around how students reason, think, organize, and create meaning from their experiences. These theories are typically sequential and discuss cognitive development through stages that students build upon from previous experiences. *Person-environment* theories focus on how the educational environment directly impacts student growth and behavior. This group of theories is used frequently by offices that consult with students, such as academic advising and career services. The *psychosocial* family of theories examine the interpersonal and self-reflective aspects of students' lives. These theories describe the evolution of student perspectives concerning their identity and society through their experiences with conflicts and crises.

The humanistic-existential approach to student development that best connects to student employment in collegiate recreation is Hettler's model of wellness. Hettler (1984) proposed that wellness was essential for psychosocial and intellectual development, with wellness defined as a

state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Hettler's model integrates the life of a student in six dimensions: physical, intellectual, spiritual, social/emotional, occupational, and environmental. Each of the six dimensions must be achieved for a healthy, positive, and complex developmental and learning experience, with an intentional personal commitment to each dimension at the optimum level to maintain balance. The physical dimension requires students to be well-rested, properly nourished, and performing physical activity on a regular schedule. Active, continuous learning and the effort for acquisition of new knowledge and skills are vital elements of the intellectual dimension. The spiritual dimension focuses on the exploration of philosophies and value systems, which often undergo critical self-examination during the college years. Healthy relationships and social interactions which allow students to find belonging and create meaningful connection are key components of the social dimension, while the occupational dimension involves the identification of value in lifelong learning and vocational fulfillment. Finally, the environmental dimension explores how students develop their connection to natural and physical surroundings. For example, a Campus Recreation intramural official may experience several of these employments through employment. There is the physical element of officiating a game, the intellectual element of knowing sport-specific rules, the social element of engaging with fellow officials and sport participants, the occupational element of working, and environmental aspect of awareness of surroundings.

A common example of cognitive-structural student development theory is Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development. The theory of moral development identifies six stages which require a conflict of morals before progression to a subsequent stage. Personal responsibility for individual actions and those of a morally just society are developed through individual progression. There are three distinct levels which comprise the six stages: pre-

conventional morality, conventional morality and post-conventional morality. The first and second stages of moral development fall under the pre-conventional morality category and is most commonly exhibited by children. Behavior in these stages is typically characterized by an effort to avoid punishment and serving individual needs.

Conventional morality is composed of the third and fourth stages of moral development and is often exhibited during the “school-age” years. In stage three, there is a shift from egocentric behavior to social conformity and consideration of how choices may impact relationships. Rules may be viewed in the context to which they support social roles. Stage four is focused on social order and its necessity for the maintenance of a functioning, healthy society. There is an emphasis on following rules and respecting authority, with dualistic concepts of right and wrong. Kohlberg (1976) believed that many traditional-age college students operated at the conventional level of moral reasoning. In the local context, these stages are demonstrated by student employees who enforce policies simply because “that’s the policy” and have not progressed to the stages where they can interpret “shades of gray” and exhibit situational adaptation.

The fifth and sixth stages of moral development fall under the post-conventional level. Behavior is characterized by the recognition that situations are frequently ambiguous and that there can be a disconnect between what is legally right and morally right. Individuals develop a sense of what is ethically just and consider universally ethical principles. Integrity is developed through the consistent application of those principles, even if they may conflict with rules and laws. Kohlberg (1976) felt that moral dilemmas must be experienced and responses reflected upon in order for the individual to progress through the incremental moral development stages.



Person-environment theories of student development focus on how the college/university environment affects the student's development as well as the impact of the student's background and individual characteristics in fostering or impeding development (Long, 2012). Of these theories, Astin's (1984) *Theory of Student Development* is widely-recognized for its desirable outcomes for student change and development as a result of co-curricular involvement. Astin's theory is composed of three core elements: inputs, environment, and outcomes. The first element, *inputs*, includes previous experiences and pre-existing characteristics the student brings to college, such as demographics, background, and personal history. The second element is *environment*, which encompasses all involvement and engagement the student would experience during college. The final element, *outcomes*, includes characteristics, knowledge, perspectives, and values that exist after a student has graduated college. Astin (1984) found that highly involved students typically spend more time on campus, are active participants in student organizations, and interact frequently with faculty, staff, and their peers. Astin's theory has been utilized by higher education professionals to create productive learning environments that make academic work and co-curricular activities relatable to students. In the collegiate recreation setting, Astin's theory is extremely relevant. Student employees come to the department with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences (inputs). They share a campus workplace with common values and expectations (environment), and complete their employment with knowledge and skills to apply in their professional career (outcomes).

The interpersonal and self-reflective aspects of students' lives are examined through the psychosocial family of theories of student development. These theories view development as sequential in nature, and typically accomplished through the mastery of tasks, stages, or challenges before the individual can advance to the next phase of development. Theorists

working in the field of college student development have focused primarily on the developmental stages of the traditional eighteen to twenty-two age group of college student and issues of conflict, autonomy, independence, and interdependence. Arguably the most widely known and applied psychosocial student development theory is Chickering's (1969) Seven Vectors of Identity Development, which was later revised in his collaboration with Reisser in 1993.

In the updated Seven Vectors model, Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed that student development occurs through differentiation and integration as students engage in increasingly complex ideas and values while reconciling these positions with their own beliefs. These vectors, or stages, build upon one another as students progress through their college experience. The vectors are not rigidly sequential, as students may evolve through the vectors at different paces and may vacillate between vectors as they reflect upon issues and experiences. The seven vectors include: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering and Reisser, 1993).

The first vector of identity development is *developing competence*, which includes developing intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal competence. As students experience new academic and living environments, diverse peers, and technology, they acquire a wide range of new cognitive, psychosocial, and technical skills which helps them develop confidence to manage those situations. Students improve their critical thinking skills, objective reasoning, and ability to draw and communicate conclusions. Student employees in a collegiate recreation environment would typically demonstrate this vector through their acquisition of new knowledge and skills during their first semester of employment.

*Managing emotions* is the second vector and relates to the ability of students to recognize, control, and express their emotions and reactions appropriately in various contexts. Awareness of emotions, especially at their minimum and maximum levels, is important for the student to identify and manage so as not to interfere with the proceedings of the educational environment. This can be a challenging vector for student employees, as many of them have not previously faced the difficulty of managing emotions during the intense conflict resolution situations that may arise in their work environments.

The third vector, *moving through autonomy toward interdependence*, focuses on the reliance upon self rather than others. Students learn to solve issues and accomplish goals on their own, relying less on the approval and reassurance of peers and parents. Students may express increased emotional freedom and demonstrate a greater balance between needing to be independent and needing to belong, incorporating the perspectives of others into their own emerging self-concept. Student employees in this vector have the confidence to resolve situations independently without seeking guidance from supervisors.

*Developing mature interpersonal relationships* is the fourth vector and includes two significant aspects, the tolerance and appreciation of differences and the capacity for intimacy (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). The interactions students have with peers can provide powerful learning experiences, shaping the individual's sense of self and allowing for an increase in tolerance. As interpersonal relationships mature, they reflect a greater awareness and acceptance of difference in ideals, values, and beliefs, and demonstrate the capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships. In this vector, student employees begin to form stronger bonds with supervisors and peers. Mentoring relationships begin to develop, specifically supervisor to student and student to student.

The fifth vector is *establishing identity* and encompasses development that occurs in the first four vectors. As students establish identity, they construct a secure sense of race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical appearance. Growth is demonstrated in self-esteem and personal stability. As individuals attain a stronger sense of self-image, challenges to their beliefs and values becomes less threatening and identity is better integrated with history, culture, and society. Student employees become very comfortable with their identity within their peer group and their role in the organization. They also become more aware of perception and how they are professionally perceived by others.

In *developing purpose*, the sixth vector, students expand their competencies, further develop personal relationships, and set clear goals for their personal aspirations. Decision-making is guided by the emerging identity of the student, with an increased intentionality in developing professional goals, commitments to family, and personal interests. Campus Recreation professionals tend to see student employees develop purpose as they approach graduation. Students become more focused on career preparation while attempting to leave a legacy in their program area.

The seventh and final vector is *developing integrity*. In this vector, students progress from a rigid, “black and white” perspective on ethical and moral issues to a more personalized value system that acknowledges and respects the perspectives of others. Personal values are established and clarified, and integrity is signified through the congruence of behavior and values. The emerging values and identity of the student manifest themselves through the demonstration of socially responsible behavior. In this vector, students are able to demonstrate and articulate the importance of personal and professional accountability.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) also identified seven areas where colleges and universities could enhance student development along each of the vectors. The areas of influence include: clarity of institutional objectives, institutional size, student-faculty interaction in diverse settings, integrated curricula, flexible teaching, diverse student communities, and collaborative student development programs and services. These areas of influence may dictate the institutional commitment toward supporting student learning and success.

Another key component of student knowledge acquisition in the collegiate setting is experiential learning. Drawing on the work of Dewey, Piaget, Jung and other 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars who centralized the role of experience in their theories concerning human learning and development, Kolb (1984) developed a holistic model of the process of experiential learning. Experiential learning theory (ELT) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning theory is designed on six propositions concerning the primary role of experience in learning and development (Kolb, A. & Kolb, D., 2005). First, learning should be best conceived as a process, not an outcome. The primary focus for improving learning in higher education should be on student engagement processes that best enhances their learning and includes feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts. Next, learning should be a facilitated process which extrapolates beliefs and ideas so that students can examine, test, and integrate topics with new, better developed ideas. Third, learning requires the resolution of conflicts and differences. The learning process is driving by disagreement, and the student must alternate between the opposing modes of action and reflection. The fourth proposition concerns learning as a holistic process of adaptation which involves the whole person, including cognition,

perception, feeling, and action. Learning as a result of the synergy between person and environment is the fifth proposition, while the final proposition is that learning is the process of knowledge creation. Experiential learning theory is a constructivist theory whereby social knowledge is created in the learner's personal knowledge (Kolb, A. & Kolb, D., 2005).

Kolb and Kolb (2005) proposed that experiential learning in higher education could be enhanced by creating learning spaces which promote growth experiences for learners. For experiential learning, growth-producing experiences relate not only to direct experience with the subject matter being studied, but also the social and physical environment, as well as the quality of relationships of the learner. The process of experiential learning entails experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in a responsive context to the learning situation. As students move through the experiential learning cycle, concrete experiences are used as the basis for observation and reflection. The reflections are then assimilated into abstract concepts. Students may draw upon their reflection as they consider new implications for action. Implications can then be actively tested and used for guiding the creation of new experiences.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is frequently demonstrated through the student employment experience in collegiate recreation. In the first stage of the cycle, *concrete experience*, the student employee will encounter a new experience or need to reinterpret a previous experience. For example, an employee may have to enforce a policy violation with a community member. In the next stage, *reflective observation*, the student will review and reflect on the experience, considering if the situation was handled well or if it could have been handled differently. The student may reflect on the interaction with the community member and how it may have transpired differently giving an alternative approach. Through *abstract conceptualization*, the student develops conclusions and learns from the experience. The student

may learn how tone of voice or body language could have impacted the interaction and to implement that learning in the future. In *active experimentation*, the student applies the learning acquired from the situation when faced with similar experiences. The student has learned from the previous interaction and applies the improved approach with future patrons.

A somewhat similar experiential learning model was proposed by Joplin (1981). In this cyclical “hurricane-like” five-stage model, the first stage of the cycle is connected to the completion of the final stage of the previous cycle. *Focus* is the first stage of the model. In this stage, educational material is presented along with the challenge that will be faced. In the *action* stage, the center of the hurricane, the learner is placed in a stressful situation where the challenge must be addressed. The student is provided *support* in the third stage, where security is offered to let the learner know that help is available if needed. *Feedback* is provided to the learner with information about their action, with more specific feedback providing a better chance of the learning understanding the experience. In the final *debrief* stage, the learner can recognize, express, and assess the learning objective, which then leads to the next cycle.

Like Kolb’s model, the Joplin model is readily evidenced in the Campus Recreation student employment experience. A new student employee is provided an orientation and onboarding training (focus stage). The employee is then assigned shifts where duties must be executed (action stage) in collaboration with co-workers. New employees are often paired with more experienced staff members or during shifts where graduate assistants/professional staff are readily available to provide assistance (support stage). After 30 days of employment, evaluation meetings are scheduled (feedback stage) to provide detailed comments on work performance. End of semester evaluations (debrief stage) allow for the supervisor and employee to reflect on how the employee executed work responsibilities. The evaluation also allows students to

articulate how they demonstrated departmental values through the TEAM CR model and how those professional skills may relate to other settings.

Connecting co-curricular involvement to the skills sought by professional employers has the potential to address issues identified by those who work in career placement and experiential education fields in higher education, as well as professional employers (Peck et al., 2016). Progressively increasing expectations from students, parents, employers, legislators, and others about outcomes of a college education, as well as the assessment of these outcomes for institutional accreditation and public funding (Keeling, 2004), has made the topic of career readiness extremely relevant. By examining the co-curricular learning environment and professional development experiences of their students, institutions can develop experiential learning curriculums and learning outcomes for on-campus student employment. Programs such as the University of Iowa's Iowa GROW use scheduled, structured conversations between student employees and supervisors to connect academic knowledge acquired in the classroom with skills being learned through student employment (Iowa GROW, 2017). In their Professional Connections Program, the University of Memphis uses a three-part curriculum to focus on skills acquired through co-curricular experiences, combining intentional networking with professionals and awareness of competencies learned through involvement in campus programs (University of Memphis, 2017). These types of programs may help students better demonstrate the skills they have acquired through campus employment to potential employers, while helping employers better identify future employees with the necessary preparation for the professional workforce.

Practices in higher education that provided significant educational benefits to students were defined by Kuh (2008) as "high-impact." Higher rates of retention and engagement are demonstrated by students engaged in high-impact practices, but a small fraction of students



participate in these experiences (Kuh, 2008). These high-impact practices typically share common characteristics. First, the activity requires a significant commitment and investment of time and effort by the student. Second, students must interact with faculty and peers, engaging in a substantive subject or project over an extended duration. Third, through their participation in the project or activity, students will experience diversity and confront new circumstances through engagement with difference. Next, students will receive feedback on a regular basis concerning their performance in the activity. The fifth common characteristic is the opportunity for students to create valuable educational experiences through observation, integration and application of knowledge in different settings. Finally, students gain a better understanding of themselves, their beliefs and values, and the human condition. Notwithstanding educational and social background, student engagement in high-impact practices increases the odds that a student will acquire the competencies and skills needed to face current challenges, attain personal and educational goals, and reap the intellectual and financial rewards associated with earning a college degree (Kuh, 2008).

## THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE AND ISSUES OF EQUITY, ETHICS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Issues of equity, ethics, and social justice concerning professional skill development through student employment in collegiate recreation are primarily affiliated with the responsibility of the department in providing opportunities that enhance the co-curricular learning experiences of students.

In regards to equity, the Campus Recreation department must ensure that all students have equal access to employment, including information regarding employment opportunities and the application process. Furthermore, the department should make every attempt to provide equitable developmental resources and opportunities to student employees. Professional staff supervisors are crucial in this regard. A commitment by supervisors to provide enriching developmental programs and feedback throughout the department is essential for student employees to receive an equitable professional experience in Campus Recreation.

The responsibility of the Campus Recreation department to provide co-curricular learning opportunities is a matter of ethical principle. The department should have an ethical responsibility to foster an educational environment for students to engage in experiences that enhance their academic, personal, and professional growth. To use student employees as a low-cost labor pool for providing programs and services without providing opportunities for learning, engagement, and reflection could be considered a failure of the department's ethical responsibility to support the university's mission. The department should have a moral duty to

support institutional efforts that offer enriching co-curricular experiences, enhance critical thinking, and promote lifelong learning.

A primary issue of social justice regarding student employment is accessibility of opportunity. Employment hiring practices may prevent students from marginalized or underrepresented groups from applying for available positions or obtaining employment through the application process. For example, the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi utilizes a hiring process that is designed to simulate what students will experience in the professional workforce. Candidates must submit a cover letter and resume, which is evaluated and scored by a hiring committee comprised of current student employees. Higher-ranked candidates advance to a group interview session, where they are interviewed with fellow candidates, evaluated, and scored. Remaining candidates are then invited for interviews with professional staff and graduate student supervisors, at which time final hiring decisions are made. While this process has proven very beneficial for helping students create and develop cover letters and resumes, as well as experience job interviews and a formal application process, it can provide unfair advantages for students that have more significant social capital.

The ability to identify and communicate learning of professional skills to potential employers is another Problem of Practice topic relevant to social justice. Students who come from more privileged backgrounds may have more experience in social settings that are similar to professional interviews. For example, students with privileged backgrounds may have been interviewed for acceptance at private/preparatory schools, summer internships, or scholarship/merit programs. They may also have had social interactions, such as recruitment for Greek letter organizations, where they had to demonstrate communication skills which required them to articulate their personal merits and differentiate themselves from their peers. Students

from less-privileged backgrounds, and in some cases international students, may face greater challenges in communicating what they have learned in the employment setting and how those skills may apply to the professional workplace. These students may be intimidated in an interview setting because of unknown formalities, social cues, or language barriers. They may have well-developed professional skills acquired through student employment, but are challenged to express their learned attributes in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable setting. Ideally, the department would provide opportunities for all student employees to gain more experience in formal, professional environments to assist in the acquisition of social capital.

## NEXT STEPS

The research project was approved by the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board. A total of ten Campus Recreation student employees who were graduating in either May 2017 or December 2017 were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews to investigate the Problem of Practice. Student employees that were interviewed were selected based upon their program area of employment (i.e. Facility Operations, Intramural Sports, Fitness), employment tenure (at least one year of employment at Campus Recreation), and diversity of race and gender. Interviews were conducted at the Turner Center on the campus of the University of Mississippi. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

Manuscript Two – What professional skills were reported as gained by graduating seniors who were employed in a collegiate recreation program through their employment experience? How did they report those skills as being learned through their student employment experience? What professional skills do the students believe will be most beneficial for future employment experiences?

Through the knowledge gained by the researcher from the student interviews in addressing the Problem of Practice, Manuscript Three was developed to consider the following:

Should on-campus undergraduate student employment be considered a high-impact practice for higher education? What are recommended implementation strategies for on-campus student employment to be most impactful?

Campus Recreation student employees at the University of Mississippi would provide the most insightful data on their learning of professional skills through their employment experience. This study could be extrapolated to other institutions, but the TEAM CR model utilized by the University of Mississippi's program provides an intentional focus on professional employment attributes that is unique among other collegiate recreation departments. While the researcher may be conducting "backyard research," the familiarity of the department's history and context will provide useful data in addressing the Problem of Practice.

A few ethical issues must be considered in this study. First, the researcher served as the department director for the student employees being interviewed. There was the potential for student employees to communicate information they may have thought the researcher was seeking rather than conveying their actual learning experiences. Next, the student employees may have been intimidated by speaking to their department director in an interview setting. The employees might have been challenged to clearly communicate their learning experiences with the department director. An interviewer with a more equal "power differential" relationship may have put the student employees more at ease in the semi-structured interview format. Finally, the interview questions were developed by a professional with biases toward the value of professional skill development in collegiate recreation student employees. While every attempt was made to ensure the reliability of interview data, the potential for bias existed.

Student quotations in manuscript three were direct responses from the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher for the manuscript two study. The quotations in manuscript three were used to support the researcher's position that on-campus student employment should be considered a high-impact practice in higher education. None of the semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix) addressed the topic of high-impact practices or

asked students to evaluate the impact of on-campus student employment on their collegiate experience.

There is potential for future research data sources with collegiate recreation student employees on other college campuses. The ability of student employees to identify professional skills learned in the on-campus workplace could also be expanded to various campus departments such as student housing, admissions, and athletics. An examination of retention rates for students employed in collegiate recreation programs or other departments on-campus may also serve as a potential data source in the consideration of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice.

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PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR COLLEGIATE RECREATION  
STUDENT EMPLOYEES: SKILLS LEARNED BY GRADUATING SENIORS

MANUSCRIPT TWO

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The University of Mississippi

## MANUSCRIPT TWO

### INTRODUCTION

Practitioners in the field of collegiate recreation have frequently discussed the concept of professional skills learned through student employment. Through a variety of roles in collegiate recreation programs, student employees have the opportunity to develop skills that could apply in a number of employment settings. Student employees who serve in front-line service positions gain experience communicating with patrons, while others who may supervise their peers have the opportunity to enhance their leadership and team-building capabilities. Student employees often share with their professional supervisors that they have become more proficient in these skills, but limited research has been conducted to assess the professional skills student employees are learning through their work experience in collegiate recreation departments.

A few collegiate recreation practitioners have studied the topic of learning professional skills through student employment in collegiate recreation. Carr (2005) found that students who work on campus in student affairs environments consider their work experiences as a practical way to learn skills that may transfer to other employment settings. Employment in collegiate recreation environments improves the ability of students to have more confidence in their leadership skills, work with diverse constituencies, solve problems, and communicate effectively (Hall, 2011). A Campus Labs (2014) survey indicated students employed in collegiate recreation departments gained skills such as verbal communication, working in a team structure, and influencing others more frequently through their co-curricular experiences than in-classroom

environments. These studies demonstrated the value of employment in college recreation departments, but did not identify the specific professional skills students articulated they had learned through their work experience.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) *Job Outlook* (2015) surveyed over 200 employers and highlighted the attributes employers were seeking in new college graduates entering the workforce. Several of the attributes identified in the NACE survey closely align with skills that student employees may develop through their work in collegiate recreation. The most identified attributes (teamwork, problem-solving, communication, work-ethic) sought by employers in the survey are directly aligned with the skills demonstrated by student employees in collegiate recreation. Collegiate recreation practitioners, as well as other student affairs professionals, have been slow to intentionally connect these attributes to the skills student employees are demonstrating in their day-to-day work environments.

#### Summary of Problem of Practice and Dissertation in Practice

The practitioner identified the lack of connection between professional skills learned through student employment and the attributes sought by employers as a Problem of Practice. Kuh (2008) defined multiple practices in higher education as “high-impact” because of the significant educational benefits they provided to students. Many of these high-impact practices focused on the interaction between the curricular and co-curricular experience (i.e. undergraduate research, study abroad, internships). Institutions such as Clemson University and the University of Iowa have designed best practice programs that assist students in connecting their on-campus employment with their academic experience. These programs use guided reflection to help students articulate the relationship between their classroom and on-campus



employment experiences. However, these models do not have an intentional focus on professional skill development learned through student employment and transferability of those skills to other employment settings.

In developing values-based terminology that was similar to the attributes identified in the NACE survey, the practitioner intended to provide students employed in the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi with the ability to communicate skills and experiences that demonstrated their learning of professional skills to future employers. The practitioner also felt that students who were able to understand that skills learned through departmental employment could transfer to other settings may be more invested in their work and perform those duties at a higher level. The practitioner developed a departmental values system (TEAM CR) which focused on the professional skills of teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, and respect. These values closely aligned with the most-identified attributes of the NACE survey. Through employment evaluations, students could articulate their learning of these values through their employment in the Department of Campus Recreation.

The Dissertation in Practice originated from the practitioner's interest in assessing the skills-based values system implemented in the Department of Campus Recreation. With a unique focus on professional skills and connection to future employment, the TEAM CR model could provide a "best practice" template for institutions seeking to enhance career preparedness and employability outcomes for their graduates. The model could also assist in identifying what skills were most enhanced through student employment in collegiate recreation, how those skills were most frequently developed, and how those skills could be applied in future work settings. Through end of semester employee evaluations and student exit interviews over two semesters of

employment at the University of Mississippi, the practitioner was able to gain insight about the TEAM CR model which shaped the Dissertation in Practice. Practitioner observations on student articulation of professional skills learned through employment tenure, work experiences that helped enhance learning, and perceived transferability of skills to other work environments were identified as key elements of exploration.

### Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What professional skills were reported as gained by graduating seniors who were employed in a collegiate recreation program through their employment experience?
2. How did they report those skills as being learned through their student employment experience?
3. What professional skills do the students believe will be most beneficial for future employment experiences?

### Definition of Terms

*Campus Recreation:* Campus Recreation is a department at an institution of higher learning that typically provides facilities, staffing, and programming to enhance physical, social, and emotional well-being. Institutions may also use the name University Recreation or Recreational Sports for this department. Program areas that fall under the supervision of Campus Recreation may include aquatics, fitness, group fitness, informal recreation, intramurals, outdoor recreation, sport clubs, and wellness. For the purposes of this manuscript, Campus Recreation will refer to the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi.

*Collegiate recreation:* The field of recreation in higher education environments. Staffing typically includes professional and student staff comprised of exempt and/or non-exempt employees.

*Graduate assistant (GA):* Master's degree-seeking students who are employed by the Department of Campus Recreation. Graduate assistants typically serve two-year appointments in a designated program area for the department and may serve as primary supervisors for student staff.

*National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):* Professional association for collegiate career services. NACE provides information on the employment of the college educated, analyzes hiring trends and starting salaries in the job market; and identifies best practices and benchmarks for recruiting, hiring, student outcomes (NACE, 2017)

*NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation (NIRSA):* Professional association for collegiate recreation. NIRSA advocates for the advancement of recreation, sport, and wellness through developmental and educational opportunities, and the generation and sharing of knowledge which promotes membership networking and growth (NIRSA, 2017)

*Professional skills:* Skills that may transfer from one workplace environment to another. These skills frequently include teamwork, communication, critical thinking/problem solving, leadership, professionalism, respect for others, and technical abilities (NACE, 2017).

*Professional staff:* Professional staff members employed by the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi. Professional staff have direct oversight of program areas, supervise graduate assistants, and serve as the primary or secondary supervisor for student employees.

*Program area:* Unit of employment in the Department of Campus Recreation. The department has six program areas: Aquatics, Facility Operations, Fitness, Health Promotion, Intramural Sports & Sport Clubs, Outdoors.

*Student employees:* Undergraduate students who are employed on-campus while enrolled at an institution of higher learning. Employment opportunities are part-time and students are typically not allowed to work more than 20-25 hours per week for the institution during academic periods.

*TEAM CR:* The Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi utilizes six values as “pillars” for the program. These values, which form the acronym TEAM CR, are skills/characteristics that directly relate to the NACE attributes that employers are seeking in college graduates and include: teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, respect.

## DATA OVERVIEW

The research project was approved by the University of Mississippi Internal Review Board. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher to gain an understanding of the professional skills learned by student employees through their Campus Recreation employment experience at the University of Mississippi (see Appendix for interview questions). A total of ten seniors (five male, five female) who graduated in either May 2017 or December 2017 and had at least two semesters of employment experience with Campus Recreation were selected to participate in the interviews. Student employees that were interviewed were selected based upon their program area of employment (i.e. Facility Operations, Intramural Sports, Fitness), employment tenure, and diversity of race and gender. Interviews were conducted at the Turner Center on the campus of the University of Mississippi and ranged from 15-25 minutes in duration.

Interviews took place during the spring 2017 and summer 2017 academic periods. Each interviewee was informed of the purpose of the interview and encouraged to speak freely when responding to questions. The researcher audio recorded each interview, took field notes during the interview sessions, and made observations to highlight responses to specific questions. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and relevant themes were identified. Responses were categorized by terms and themes used by the students.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each student who participated in the interviews. The pseudonym for the student, the student’s employment position(s), and the date of his/her interview is listed in Table 1.

Table 1:

<b><u>Pseudonym</u></b>	<b><u>Employment Position(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Interview</u></b>
Abbey	customer service representative, fitness center supervisor, group fitness instructor	May 3, 2017
Alexa	fitness center supervisor	May 3, 2017
Alton	facility manager	June 9, 2017
David	lifeguard, program assistant	May 1, 2017
Kelley	facility manager, office assistant	August 14, 2017
Kirk	fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, program assistant,	May 18, 2017
Misty	customer service representative, fitness center supervisor, group fitness instructor	April 24, 2017
Sam	fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, program assistant	May 2, 2017
Shia	facility manager	April 24, 2017
Tyler	intramural official, program assistant, supervisor	May 3, 2017

## LIMITATIONS

There are limitations of the study's data. Interviews were only conducted for selected Campus Recreation student employees who were graduating seniors at the University of Mississippi. Findings were not intended to be generalized to student employees in other campus departments. Additionally, findings may not fully reflect the complete learning of professional skills that the student experienced.

Interviews were collected at the University of Mississippi during a specific academic term. The findings may not accurately depict similar employment experiences at different academic periods or other institutions. Also, different findings may have resulted from utilizing a different pool of student employees from the department.

Students who were interviewed may have been employed in other campus departments or served in other leadership capacities on campus. While interview questions were specific to employment experiences at Campus Recreation, it cannot be assumed that students communicated professional skills learned only through their employment with Campus Recreation.

The interviewer was the department director for the student employees being interviewed. The potential existed for student employees to communicate information they may have thought the interviewer wanted to hear rather than their true learning experience. The student employees may have been intimidated by speaking to their department director in an interview setting and may not have been able to communicate their learning experiences as clearly with the department

director as they would with an interviewer who had a more equal “power differential” relationship.

The interview questions were developed by a professional with biases toward the value of professional skill development in collegiate recreation student employees. Every attempt was made to ensure the reliability of interview data. However, the potential for bias existed.

The absence of baseline testing presented a challenge for this project. There was no information relating to student knowledge of professional skills at the beginning of their employment experience which could be used to measure knowledge acquisition through employment tenure. A few students mentioned that they had no reference of what professional skills entailed at the beginning of their employment in the department, but the researcher could not accurately assess how much learning of professional skills was truly acquired through the Campus Recreation student employment experience.



## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The students in this study were able to identify professional skills learned through their employment experience at Campus Recreation. Most of the students understood the term *professional skills* to mean transferable skills, or skills that could be utilized in various professional environments. Nearly all the students equated professional skills with employment, while almost half of the students also related these skills to their relevance in daily life. The professional skills students articulated can be categorized as skills within the TEAM CR framework and skills outside the TEAM CR framework.

Table 2:

<b><u>Professional Skill Gained</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Responses</u></b>
Communication*	7
Teamwork*	6
Adaptability*	4
Mentoring*	3
Conflict management/resolution	3
Professionalism	3
Customer Service	2
Diversity	2
Respect*	2
Time management/being on time	2
Accountability	1

Excellence*	1
Leadership	1
Resolving problems with co-workers	1
“TEAM CR”	1
Transferable skills	1

*\*TEAM CR framework*

### Professional Skills Within the TEAM CR Framework

The interviewees primarily utilized language that included the TEAM CR components to identify the professional skills they learned through their employment experience at Campus Recreation. Over half of the students listed teamwork, communication, and adaptability as professional skills they learned through their employment. Communication and teamwork were the most commonly identified.

Students mentioned the importance of communication when articulating their understanding of professional skills. Verbal communication was emphasized as a skill necessary for patron interaction, specifically by student employees who had front line service responsibilities. “We’re constantly having to communicate,” said Alexa, a fitness center supervisor. “Whether it’s enforcing policies, or talking to your bosses about certain issues. This job helped me learn to stay calm when someone’s approaching you with a lot more attitude.” Misty, who served as a customer service representative, fitness center supervisor, and group fitness instructor, noted that her verbal communication skills improved through her employment tenure. “I didn’t have the maturity...I feel like I’ve gotten better at that, especially communicating with faculty and staff that have memberships here or people that ask questions over the phone,” she said.

Communication was also discussed in terms of dialogue with supervisors and co-workers. Kirk (fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, and program assistant) talked about communication in terms of feedback from his supervisor and team members, saying,

Communication is not just learning to change how to talk to different people depending upon the situation but actually asking for feedback...it's making sure that it does go two ways and that you're not just trying to change things on your end but figuring out someone else's perspective on it and integrating that in your own day to day activities.

David, who worked as a lifeguard and program assistant, felt that his public speaking improved through his work leading his peers. He said, "My communication skill has definitely developed. Coming to meetings, giving presentations, getting up and talking...that was my biggest fear. Working here has helped alleviate that fear and made me into a better communicator." Kirk commented that he had to learn to communicate with co-workers who felt he was somewhat intimidating, saying,

I learned the ability to communicate effectively with people who have so many different communication styles, so being able to break down that intimidating persona and connect with people on a level that they didn't think they would be able to connect with me on, whether it be talking in the fitness center in a work environment, in the fitness center off of work, or outside of Turner completely.

Both David and Kirk served in student leadership roles during periods of professional staff transition where they needed to demonstrate higher levels of communication with peers and patrons.

The students who articulated that they learned teamwork through their employment cited the importance of working together in accomplishing tasks, solving problems, building trust, and

understanding roles. Tyler, a student who served as an intramural official, program assistant, and supervisor, addressed multiple teamwork dimensions in describing the skills he learned,

Working in a team, the concept is so simple...but I didn't know what that meant or what that was like until I had to do the 'real deal' experience of not only working on a team when things are easy, but also whenever you're trying to solve a problem or whenever things are hard or when you disagree with someone or someone just doesn't like you. I've served as a program assistant, I've served as a supervisor, so there's time that I was leading and there's also times that I was being led and seeing how we can work towards a common goal whenever we're in these different roles. Now I know that wherever I'm at or what job I'm in, I can see the role and think about what does this role need from me.

The individual's role in the group was also mentioned. Abbey worked in three different roles during her tenure at Campus Recreation. She stated, "The team building activities we did at training...really helped me to see the value in each part of the team. From the Director and the graduate assistants to the customer service representatives, we all have a very important job, so not looking at each job as though I'm more important as somebody else." Understanding their role on a team was an element of teamwork identified by both Tyler and Abbey, while other students articulated how those roles intersected with their team members.

A few students spoke about the value of teamwork because of the need to work with others. Both Alexa and Kelley (facility manager and office assistant) commented that teamwork was necessary for employment since work will always involve interacting with other employees or clients. Alexa said, "No matter what job you have, you always are going to be required to work with others. You're never isolated." Kelley observed that it was difficult to work with team members who had different perspectives. "At first that was a bit of a challenge because to me,

things were very black and white. I've learned in working with other people that we're all working towards a common goal and there are some areas of gray. I've opened my mind to the different ways that people think and do things," she said. Interestingly, none of the students who described teamwork as a skill learned at Campus Recreation identified leadership as an element of teamwork. Rather, the descriptions of teamwork spoke of the interaction amongst peers and goal attainment.

Across program areas and employment roles, students highlighted adaptability as a professional skill they had developed. Misty and Abbey worked in multiple roles for Campus Recreation, both of them serving as customer service representatives, fitness center supervisors, and group fitness instructors. They both noted how working in various departmental roles assisted in their learning of adaptability. Misty stated, "I was able to take my adaptability from Turner in all three different areas at work and apply how it works, mold into other areas, and transfer skills to each. Then I was able to take that adaptability concept and apply it to my personal life and my physical therapy life." Abbey felt that working in different areas helped her better adapt to her work settings, saying, "Everything tied into each other, even though each job I had was vastly different. Being adaptable, I was taking what I learned from there [fitness center] down to the front desk and being able to explain it to patrons who have questions so they don't have to go up to the fitness center." Students were also able to articulate how they demonstrated adaptability in their service to patrons. Sam, a fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, and program assistant, felt that he was able to learn adaptability through working with his clients. Sam stated, "As I became a personal trainer and program assistant, adaptability with your clients is huge. Scheduling around them, programming their workouts to their needs, and being able to

change on the fly in your workouts. If they have an injury or if they're not feeling well or if they didn't get enough sleep the night before. So adaptability is huge.”

Other components of the TEAM CR values were less frequently discussed. Mentorship was specifically identified by three students, who shared that they learned this skill through helping younger employees learn duties necessary for their jobs. Alexa said,

When you think of mentors, you kind of always think of this huge age gap, like you have this elder full of wisdom passing it on to the young people. When I came here it was interesting how someone who only worked here for a year could mentor someone like a new hire. Or even someone here just a semester can kind of take that role and guide them and help them be better workers.

David noted how his role with bringing new employees into the department impacted his perspective on mentorship, saying,

I have definitely learned a lot about mentorship because I was part of the hiring committee. We had to hire, then train, then supervise new employees, so I feel like I've really honed that skill the most since I've been here because I took a really active role in the hiring and training of new employees.

The role of peer mentorship in Campus Recreation was also highlighted by Sam, who said he “kind of took a couple of staff members under my wing” to help them pass their personal training exam. Interestingly, no students mentioned a specific graduate assistant or professional staff member as a “mentor” in their professional growth.

Respect was mentioned by only two students, both of whom served in roles that have significant interaction with patrons. Alton, a facility manager, commented on the importance of respect as a skill learned through his role as facility manager, saying, “Being respectful to people

that are giving respect. Being respectful to people who don't give you respect. You should show them that respect in return." Tyler observed that his approach to respect evolved through his employment experience, with a greater focus on others rather than self. He said,

Respecting your co-workers. Respecting your patrons. Having that mindset of I'm here to serve you. At the beginning it was definitely a service towards me. As I began to view it in a different light, and view it as this is something that is training me for the future, I saw that...I need to respect this person. I need to treat this person as my equal.

Excellence was identified as a skill by only one student, who communicated the importance of being excellent in carrying out job duties. For the student employees, the departmental values of respect and excellence did not register as skills learned through their Campus Recreation experience with the same magnitude as communication and teamwork. The lack of recognition of excellence as a skill learned through Campus Recreation employment should be identified as an area of concern for the department.

#### Professional Skills Outside the TEAM CR Framework

One of the most interesting observations from the student interviews was how challenged students were to identify professional skills they had learned that were outside the TEAM CR framework. Students were able to communicate behaviors they had demonstrated and interactions or situations they had experienced, but they had difficulty relating those traits or scenarios to a descriptive skill they demonstrated. Without the TEAM CR terminology, students struggled with articulating and identifying attributes that would resonate with potential employers. For example, three students communicated that they had learned how to deal with difficult people or keep calm when patrons were arguing about rules or policies, but these

students did not immediately identify the terms *conflict management* or *conflict resolution* to describe this skill they had acquired. *Time management* was also a term that students had difficulty formulating, even though they were able to share examples of how they had learned this skill through their employment experience.

The students that identified conflict management/resolution as a skill they had developed were in roles that involved significant front-line interaction with patrons. Misty, who served as a customer service representative at the access control desk, spoke about her experience dealing with challenging patrons. When provided the term *conflict management*, she stated that she had acquired that skill, saying she had learned "...how to talk to people, how to deal with difficult customers, working with students who didn't understand why situations were the way they were. Dealing with tough situations like people stealing. I had never worked with situations like that." Alton, in his role as a facility manager, said he "...learned be level-headed, especially when people are unruly to you." Tyler was able to identify conflict management as a skill he had developed working in intramurals. He said, "Conflict management has been huge with intramurals. I don't know how much personal conflict other areas have, but at least three times a shift, we get people who are furious at us about something." Tyler was able to articulate how this skill would translate to the professional workforce, saying,

You've got to figure out a way around this wall that's just stopped us. That's something people want to know in interviews. If something stops you, are you going to be able to figure out a way around it? Are you going to be able to be creative with your ideas and to get around this problem?

Three students shared that *professionalism* was an attribute they had developed through their employment experience, though in different contexts. Shia, who served as a facility



manager, connected professionalism to doing your job well when supervisors were not present, saying, “I guess sometimes, we tend when we’re working, we’re slacking off, but it’s better to just do your job because you’re getting paid for it. Even if no one is around, just do your job properly. That’s professionalism.” Misty identified the importance of being professional in dealing with direct supervisors and other administrators in the organizational hierarchy, while Alton noted that his growth through the TEAM CR values had helped him develop his professionalism.

Two students stated that they had learned customer service skills, specifically in interacting with patrons. Abbey felt that her employment as a customer service representative helped enhance her front-line service skills. She said, “My communication with patrons and being positive, answering their questions to the best of my ability, knowing who to direct them to if there is a problem. Making sure they feel comfortable coming to me to approach me was one of the biggest things I learned with my job.” Abbey also connected her work to the professional workforce, saying, “This is a big customer service job. That ties into every job in the world whether people think about it or not. Every time you enter or interact with people, this job helps you with that.” Alton described how his service skills were enhanced in his role as a facility manager, saying, “I slowly learned the ins and outs of customer service. You know, the customer is always right, even when they’re wrong. Being able to accommodate them but also not sacrificing our rules and regulations.”

The importance of time management (balancing academics, employment, and social obligations) was identified by two students. Misty stated,

I took 19 hours of classes one semester and was involved in many different things outside of Campus Rec but still worked in multiple areas, so I was able to learn that you can

prioritize and balance things. In a career you still have to prioritize your work...and learn that 'me time' is important too.

Tyler felt his tenure with the department was helpful in his learning of time management. "I look back now and all these things I've had to struggle with to learn the past two years. I can confidently say I can do all of these things. I can organize. I know the value of time management," he said. Both Misty and Tyler commented on the importance of learning time management as undergraduates and how beneficial that skill will be in their future careers.

The ability to interact with diverse patrons and co-workers was identified by two students. Alton stated that he had learned how to work with diverse team members and situations, saying, "I've learned to be diverse with our employees. Some work a certain way, some don't work in a certain way." David also mentioned that he had learned about diversity in his employment experience. "Working with people from different backgrounds, races, religions, creeds. That was big here. I haven't been around this much of a diverse group of people and culture," he said. Personal trainers Sam and Kirk both mentioned that they had worked with faculty, staff, and student clients in their employment at Campus Recreation, but did not specifically mention that working with a diverse clientele was a skill they had learned through their training experience.

Accountability was described as a professional skill Tyler gained through his tenure at Campus Recreation. In relating this trait across a variety of Campus Recreation constituency groups. Tyler said,

Being accountable to your bosses, to respect them enough to say that I'm going to be honest with you and we're going to have an open conversation. Being accountable to your employees. I'm going to be here and I'm going to work my hardest. If someone is

slacking on shift, everyone suffers from it. So being accountable to everyone else and stressing that professional skill. I'm going to hold myself accountable and I'm going to hold you accountable in this.

Two other students mentioned being exposed to accountability through their employment and the Campus Recreation accountability system, but did not specifically identify accountability as a professional skill they had learned.

### How Professional Skills Were Gained

Students stated that their primary acquisition of professional skills was through employment experience. While students felt staff training in-services and professional development workshops were helpful, skills developed during day-to-day operational tasks had the most impact on their learning. The concept of experiential learning through Campus Recreation student employment was best summarized by Tyler, who said, "There's things I don't think I would have learned unless I did it."

Communication was a professional skill that students frequently identified as acquired through experience. Communication was discussed in terms of interaction with patrons (verbal and written), articulating concerns to supervisors, policy enforcement, constructive feedback (evaluations), and public speaking (presentations). Students also discussed that they had learned the importance of communicating with their fellow employees through event planning, coordinating work schedules, and working up to accepted performance standards.

Students who worked in front-line service positions felt they had improved their communication skills through patron interaction. Misty said, "I didn't have the maturity or really didn't know exactly how to communicate with business professionals but I feel that I've gotten

better at that...dealing with faculty and staff that had memberships.” Kelley, an engineering major who held front-line roles as both a facility manager and office assistant, also observed her improvement, saying, “I definitely learned how to be a better communicator. Engineers are not the best communicators, when it comes to writing especially. I definitely got a chance to work on that being a program assistant, returning emails and answering patron questions.” Abbey and David identified an improvement in their written communication, citing both communication to their supervisors as well as professional correspondence. David said, “I’ve also learned how to, which, this should have been an easy skill, but how to write a formal email and how to present a resume and a cover letter since being here. It’s huge, because it’s helped me land interviews for employment.”

Communication with peer employees in a team environment also proved to be an area where experiential learning was apparent. David and Abbey mentioned that they had seen improvement in their communication skills from interaction in program area meetings. “My communication skill has definitely developed. Just coming to meetings every two weeks and giving presentations, getting up and talking...that was my biggest fear. Working here has helped alleviate that fear and made me a better communicator as a whole,” said David. Abbey cited program area meetings as a means of growth, saying, “Our monthly meetings helped with communication because we were able to talk a lot, give feedback, and get feedback on how well we were doing and working as a team.” Kirk felt that he had learned to be more receptive to communication from peers. “In terms of communication, it’s just making sure that it goes two ways and you’re not just trying to change things on your end but figuring out what someone else’s perspective is,” he said.

Students articulated that they learned teamwork through working with others to achieve a common goal, responding to emergency situations, and understanding roles in a team environment. Again, experiential learning was evident in their responses. Kelley stated that the team environment at Campus Recreation helped her learn to work with other people towards a common goal. “You can’t do anything on your own. You’re going to need some sort of assistance. Whether you need somebody to help you with something or if you want somebody to do something for you,” she said. Shia felt that she learned teamwork through mock emergency drills, noting the importance of each area working together to respond to potential emergency situations. Abbey also cited the importance of teamwork as it related to emergencies, saying, “We all have to be [of] one accord in case of emergency. We have to know who is supposed to be communicating with who so we can keep everybody safe. That’s very important.” Alexa observed that working in the team environment had helped her program area solve problems together.

The students talked about their learning of adaptability through experiences including patron interaction and serving in multiple roles during their employment tenure. Misty and Abbey, who worked in both the Facility Operations and Fitness program areas, felt that they had learned how to adapt to each role and assist in operational tasks even if they were not “on the clock” in a specific employment capacity. Misty said, “I definitely had to be more adaptable...sometimes I was able to help even when I wasn’t on shift for the other job. I was able to help them in their area while I was working the other job.” Abbey also identified her experience working in multiple areas as key to her improved adaptability. Personal trainers Kirk and Sam felt that they had learned adaptability through patron interaction and progressive responsibility. Sam identified the need to adapt to various clients, saying,

As I became a personal trainer and program assistant, adaptability with your clients is huge. Scheduling around them, programming their workouts to their needs, and being able to change on the fly in your workouts...if they have an injury or if they're not feeling well or if they didn't get enough sleep the night before.

Kirk echoed a similar experience. "Working in so many different roles...just being able to adapt to different situations and work with such a huge variety of people is probably the most important professional skill I've learned here." he said. Interestingly, each of these four students performed in roles where they had to provide adaptable instruction to patrons through their roles as group fitness instructors or personal trainers.

Adjusting to different supervisors and supervisory styles played a significant role for a few students who discussed their learning of adaptability. Of particular note, three students who mentioned that they had learned how to adapt to new supervisors all experienced periods of professional staff transition in the department. During the period when students were being interviewed, both the Aquatics and Fitness program areas were going through the process of hiring/onboarding a new professional staff supervisor. David served as a stabilizing figure during transition in Aquatics, and felt his adaptability skills were enhanced during this period. While discussing his more prominent role with student staff members, David said, "In Aquatics, especially this summer, we had a transition period...responsibility passed on to me. So really, in a short span of time, I had to be able to present ideas and procedures to people I hardly knew." David described how he also learned how to adapt messaging to his audiences, saying, "Obviously we're in a transition period here...we've had some patrons who have, how should I put it, not been the happiest...so we have to present the situation and make it the best both for our employees and our patrons." During their two years of employment at Campus Recreation,

Kirk and Sam had multiple professional and graduate assistant supervisors, which impacted their experience and professional development. When describing his learning of professional skills, Kirk said,

Adaptability is absolutely the biggest one. I came in under Charles [former professional staff supervisor] and then I worked under Meg and Chelsea [former graduate assistant supervisors] for a while, now learning to work under Andy [former professional staff supervisor], which, they are diametrically opposed leadership styles. Not that there's anything negative about that, but being able to work with someone that was so stern and a little bit distant, then working with Andy who is everybody's friend...it's probably the most important professional skill I've learned here.

None of the students who maintained the same professional staff supervisor during their employment tenure mentioned adaptability as a learned skill in regards to dealing with graduate assistant or professional staff turnover.

### Professional Skills Identified as Most Beneficial for Future Employment

Students most frequently identified adaptability, communication, and teamwork as the skills they felt would be most beneficial for future employment opportunities. This is an important finding as it pertains to alignment with the NACE attributes. The professional skills students most frequently identified as necessary for future employment are the same skills that are most desired by employers per the NACE survey.

Table 3:

<b><u>Professional Skill Needed for Future Employment</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Responses</u></b>
Adaptability*	6

Communication*	5
Teamwork*	5
Leadership	2
Time management	2
Diversity	1
Mentoring*	1
Professionalism	1
Respect*	1
Rules and regulations	1

*\*TEAM CR framework*

Adaptability was mentioned by a majority of the students, who referenced the need to adapt to different clients, co-workers, and supervisors. They also discussed adaptability in relation to work environments, job assignments, communication styles, and service expectations. Alexa felt adaptability would be needed for her future career in forensic science, saying,

You have to be able to adapt. If you...caused this volatile reaction, you have to be able to adapt really quick to neutralize it before it becomes this big issue. You don't want any explosions happening or chemical burns or contamination types of things so you've got to be able to adapt if something goes wrong.

Alton noted how working with a diverse peer group had helped him in his professional preparation to serve as a public school behavioral invention specialist. Alton said,

“Being able to work with diverse people, that’s been the most important thing I’ve learned from this work experience. I have students who have ADHD. I have some kids who have a learning disorder. I have some kids who just have a troubled background. You have to be prepared for basically anything.



Alton and Alexa had completed internships in their chosen field and had experienced how adaptability would be an important skill for the professional workplace.

Both personal trainers noted the importance of adaptability from the standpoint of client services. Sam said, “Adaptability is a huge component of being a personal trainer. Being able to train an elderly female client or a 20-year old male who likes powerlifting. It’s about being adaptable and doing what’s going to help your client. Kirk also identified how important adaptability would be to his future in the fitness industry. Kirk stated, “Being able to take the services that you offer and cater them to all those individual personalities. Doing that through feedback and figuring out what works for a specific person and what doesn’t is probably going to be the most applicable to my professional life.” Sam and Kirk indicated they would like to continue personal training after graduation and would be using the skill of adaptability in future interactions with clients.

Communication was identified by half of the interviewees as a professional skill needed for their future employment. Students acknowledged the importance of communication from multiple professional perspectives. First impressions, client interaction, dealing with co-workers, and public speaking were areas where students felt communication would be utilized in future workplace settings. Sam noted the importance of communication as it relates to professional perception. He said, “Whether it’s spoken language or non-verbal communication, it’s just really important when you’re communicating with other people and how they view you and their opinion of you initially and over time.” Abbey was able to connect the verbal communication skills she had learned through her employment with Campus Recreation to her future career in a legal office. Abbey stated,

As a paralegal, communication is key. You are the first contact with the client when they come in, so my communication with patrons, being positive and answering their questions to the best of my ability and knowing who to direct them to if there is a problem. Making sure they feel comfortable enough to approach me was one of the biggest things I learned with my job at the front desk.

Students were able to identify multiple aspects of professional communication. David mentioned the importance of learning professional writing skills through his employment with Campus Recreation and how those skills would be needed in his future career. Tyler discussed the importance of formal communication skills (email, application materials, interviewing) in securing employment and opportunities for promotion to higher-level positions, while Sam acknowledged the importance of communication and its relation to personal perception. Sam said, “Whether it’s spoken language or non-verbal communication, it’s just really important when you’re communicating with other people and how they view you and their opinion of you initially and over time.”

Teamwork was also mentioned by half the students, who cited the importance of interacting with co-workers in a professional setting. Shia, an engineering major, noted that she would need to demonstrate teamwork in her future career, saying,

I’m going to be an electrical engineer and we’ve learned to work in groups. Engineers always work in a group. Even if you’re good on your own, it doesn’t matter. You have to be good in a group. I’ve worked here for almost three years, and that’s something I’ve learned.

Kelley, another engineering student, also noted that teamwork would be vital in her career path. She said, “You can’t do anything on your own. You’re going to need some sort of assistance.

Whether you need somebody to help you with something or if you want somebody to do something for you.” Alexa felt that teamwork would be important to her future work environment in forensic science because she would be working in a lab with others. “In the lab, you have to be able to work with others because whatever you’re investigating or researching...whatever you’re seeing, someone else is seeing. No matter what job you have, you’re required to work with others. You’re never isolated,” Alexa said. Tyler mentioned the importance of the work culture and employers “wanting to know if you’d fit” as a team member. Each of the students who felt teamwork would be a necessary professional skill connected the skill to working with others in future employment settings.

Time management was mentioned by two students who felt that they would need to be able to balance work projects and personal commitments. Misty, who plans to be a physical therapist, said,

I think time management is important through your whole life, obviously, because someday I’ll have a career and children and other things I’ll have to do where life just happens some days. Being able to prioritize and manage time is going to be extremely important, especially when I’m going to have tons of patients and scheduling. Time management will always be important in making sure that I have me time and my health and lifestyle.

Tyler discussed the importance of time management in the professional workforce, specifically regarding project assignments. In referencing future employers, Tyler said, “They want to know that if they give you this job or this task, are they going to have to help you along the way to do it or can they give you this and know that you’re going to work it out.”

Of the TEAM CR values, mentoring and respect were the least frequently mentioned by the student employees as skills that would be needed in future employment settings. Kelley was the only student who identified respect, saying, “I believe that any team, business, whatever the case is, there has to be a certain level of respect between all people that work there. Whether it be the person that’s in charge or the janitorial staff.” David was the only student who identified mentoring as a professional skill that will be needed for future employment, as he felt that, “You will always need mentors in a new workplace.” Even though it is a departmental value, excellence was not a professional skill identified as necessary for future employment by any of the students interviewed.

Students identified a few other professional skills they thought would be beneficial for future employment, including leadership, professionalism, and technical skills (specifically, knowledge of policies and procedures). Both engineering students, Shia and Kelley, felt that leadership was a skill they would need in their future careers. Shia said leadership would be necessary because “you have to be able to make yourself heard,” while Kelley believed that, “You have to be a leader that people respect.” Both Shia and Kelley referenced leadership as it related to leading teams of fellow engineers. Misty discussed how the professionalism she learned through her employment experience would carry over to her future career, mentioning the interaction she would have with supervisors and clients as well as making positive first impressions through potential job search processes. In his role working in public education, Alton noted that it would be important to know the policy and procedural aspects of his position. “If you have any questions about the rules and regulations, it’s not bad to ask higher ups. Asking questions isn’t a bad thing, it just makes you seem like you want to learn more and you want to better yourself,” he said.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A review of the student responses yielded several interesting observations. First, the skills that students most frequently identified as skills learned through their Campus Recreation employment experience (teamwork, communication, adaptability) align with the skills they think they will need in future professional settings. They are also the same top three skills identified by employers in the NACE survey as attributes they are seeking in candidates. There could be multiple reasons why these three skills were the most frequently identified, ranging from emphasis in program areas to professional development workshops on the topics of teamwork and communication. The consistency in messaging on these skills may have also played a role, as two students commented that TEAM CR was “hammered into them” throughout their employment. However, the lack of acknowledgement of values such as excellence and respect signals that certain TEAM CR values were more relevant to students than others.

The very limited mention for excellence as a learned skill and its complete absence in being identified as a skill necessary in future employment is troubling. There could be several factors for this finding. Student employees in Campus Recreation have limited opportunities for promotion or progressive responsibility. They may not have the experience of observing excellence in the workplace being rewarded through financial gain, increased authority, or additional oversight. Since they may have limited background in seeing the value of excellence in their current workplace, they may not feel it is a valuable attribute in professional settings.

There seemed to be a slight disconnect between the skills students stated they learned through their Campus Recreation employment experience and what they felt would be needed for future employment. Adaptability was discussed in much more depth and more frequently as a skill students thought they would need for future professional roles rather than as a skill learned through Campus Recreation employment. Conflict management and customer service were identified as skills learned through employment with Campus Recreation, but these skills were not identified by any students as skills they thought they would need in future employment settings. Mentorship was identified by three students as a skill learned at Campus Recreation, yet was identified by only one student as a necessary future professional skill.

The most potentially relevant finding relates to the TEAM CR framework. The TEAM CR framework provided the students common language and references to describe their professional skills. However, when attempting to articulate professional skills outside the TEAM CR framework, the students were challenged to attach a descriptive term to the skill they demonstrated. They could communicate behaviors, interactions, or situations, but had difficulty using terms similar to the TEAM CR values. As Table 1 demonstrates, students utilized the TEAM CR values more frequently to describe the professional skills learned through their employment than terminology describing other professional attributes. Students had some difficulty in identifying and articulating similar terminology for other professional skills. For example, one student stated that she learned how to resolve problems with co-workers, but was challenged to identify the term *conflict management* as the skill she developed through these experiences. Another student shared that he had become much more aware of coming to work on time and making sure he was not late for his shifts, yet he did not immediately connect this awareness to the skill of time management.

Student learning of professional skills through day-to-day employment experiences seemed to support Kolb and Kolb's (2005) description of the experiential learning cycle. The active learning that took place through progressive responsibility or situational leadership impacted student competencies in adaptability, communication, mentorship, and teamwork. Students communicated how they were able to experience situations, reflect on their handling of the situation, learn from the experience, and apply their learning in future settings. While some students did note that they learned through observation, their learning through personal experience seemed to be much more impactful.

Personal interaction was an area where students also demonstrated learning. Millennials are often critiqued for their lack of socialization skills and reliance on technology as their primary method of communication. Many of the examples shared by students regarding how they learned their professional skills focused on personal interaction in the workplace. Enforcing policies with patrons, delegating assignments to peers during emergency action situations, training new employees, and interacting with supervisors were all described as situations where students had to develop personal communication skills. These various experiences with personal interaction had a profound impact on student learning.

Supervisors played a significant role in the reporting of skills learned by students. A few students commented how they had learned skills through observation of how their supervisor demonstrated competencies such as teamwork and communication. From the researcher's perspective, the professional staff supervisors who were most invested in the TEAM CR framework developed students who were better able to articulate the skills learned through their employment experience. Supervisor turnover also allowed students to experience leadership opportunities in their program areas that they may not have experienced otherwise.

While the TEAM CR framework seems to be beneficial in providing students with terminology to describe their employment experiences, there appears to be some deficiencies regarding critical thinking as a professional attribute that students are learning. The adaptability component of the TEAM CR framework is being referenced to describe patron interaction and customer service-related issues rather than thinking critically to solve problems and develop creative solutions. Campus Recreation may want to provide a clearer definition of adaptability as it relates to critical thinking or include guided reflection elements focused on critical thinking to better develop student understanding of this attribute and how it is being practiced in their work environment.

An observed deficiency in the TEAM CR framework, specifically as it relates to on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice, is its lack of intentional connection to the academic experience of students. Only one student identified seeking employment at Campus Recreation as a means to make relevant connections to his/her academic major. No students mentioned how their current academic content (curricular learning) related to their professional development (co-curricular learning). The department should consider adapting elements of guided reflection to assist students in their understanding of curricular and co-curricular relationships.

There is much potential for future research in regards to the learning of professional skills through on-campus student employment. One important subject would be the ability of student employees to identify professional skills learned in campus workplaces. What do student employees in other functional units (student housing, admissions, athletics, etc.) identify as the primary professional skills learned through their on-campus employment, and do they identify similar skills (adaptability, communication, teamwork) as the Campus Recreation students? Does



the TEAM CR framework provide Campus Recreation student employees with language and terminology that is not identified by student employees in other campus departments? Potential employers could also provide feedback on the value of the TEAM CR model through their assessment of candidate interviews and the ability of students to communicate and relate the skills learned through their on-campus employment to the professional attributes sought by the employer.

Another area worthy of future investigation would be the consideration and prioritization of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice in higher education. With increasing institutional and public emphasis on issues such as student retention and career readiness, higher education should be assessing the impact of on-campus employment on student engagement, career preparation, and post-graduation employment outcomes. Of particular interest would be the analysis of six-month and one-year post-graduation employment outcomes of students who were employed on-campus compared to their peers who did not have on-campus jobs.

## SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT

This study was conducted to research the learning of professional skills through student employment in the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi. The practitioner identified the ability of students to recognize and articulate the professional skills learned through student employment and the attributes sought by employers as a Problem of Practice. The Dissertation in Practice study originated from the practitioner's interest in evaluating the skills-based values system implemented in the Department of Campus Recreation. Utilizing the department's TEAM CR values-based framework, student learning of professional skills could be analyzed. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What professional skills were reported as gained by graduating seniors who were employed in a collegiate recreation program through their employment experience?
2. How did they report those skills as being learned through their student employment experience?
3. What professional skills do the students believe will be most beneficial for future employment experiences?

Of the professional skills students communicated as learned through their employment with Campus Recreation, the majority of responses identified skills within the TEAM CR framework. Communication, teamwork, and adaptability were the most commonly identified skills. These three skills also align with the top three attributes listed in the NACE *Job Outlook* survey as most commonly sought by potential employers. The most commonly identified skills

learned outside the TEAM CR framework were conflict management/resolution and professionalism. The departmental values of respect and excellence were not significantly identified as skills acquired through their employment tenure.

Experiential learning was critical to the acquisition of professional skills. Students communicated that their experiences collaborating with peers, assuming leadership roles, and providing instruction for patrons were primary opportunities to gain professional expertise. Teamwork, communication, and adaptability were also the skills most identified as learned through employment experience. The importance of adaptability was specifically mentioned by students employed in program areas that had experienced transition with professional staff supervision.

Adaptability, communication, and teamwork were the skills most frequently mentioned as beneficial for the professional workforce. The need to adapt to various work environments, job duties, and employer expectations were felt to be important for employment after college. Students specifically noted the importance of written and verbal communication in client and co-worker interaction as primary areas where communication would be utilized in future workplace settings. The ability to work with others was a key element in identifying the value of teamwork.

Key findings from the study include the benefit of the TEAM CR framework, the perception that students prioritize some TEAM CR values (communication, teamwork, adaptability) over others (respect, excellence), and the need to help student employees connect their curricular and co-curricular learning. The TEAM CR framework provides common language for the student employees and assists them in communicating their learning experiences. Students were better able to identify their learned skills utilizing the TEAM CR values than skills outside the framework. The values of respect and excellence do not seem to

carry much significance for the student employees, so further evaluation of this observation will be necessary. The department should also consider methods to incorporate the academic learning of students in their reflections on employment to develop a more impactful and engaging educational environment.

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APPENDIX

**Title: Professional Skill Development for Collegiate Recreation Student Employees**

**Interview Questions**

Researcher: Peter Tulchinsky \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

I: *Are you at least 18 years old?*

A:

I: *Why did you decide to apply for a job with Campus Recreation?*

A:

I: *What aspects of your student employment with Campus Recreation have you most enjoyed?*

A:

I: *When you hear the term professional skills, what does that mean to you?*

A:

*I: What would you identify as professional skills that you have learned through your student employment at Campus Recreation? How did you learn these skills?*

A:

*I: What professional skills do you think will be most beneficial for your future employment opportunities?*

A:

*I: How would explain the professional skills you have learned through your Campus Recreation student employment experience to a future employer?*

A:

*I: What are some professional skills you think you will need for future employment that you have not developed or didn't experience during your time as a Campus Recreation student employee?*

A:



*I: How could your Campus Recreation student employment experience provide you with professional skills you think you will need for future employment opportunities?*

*A:*

*I: Are there any skills you learned that we haven't discussed?*

*A:*

*I: As it relates to professional skills, what advice would you give to a new Campus Recreation student employee?*

*A:*

Notes and Observer Comments:

PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR COLLEGIATE RECREATION STUDENT  
EMPLOYEES: STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AS A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION

MANUSCRIPT THREE

Peter Tulchinsky

The University of Mississippi

## MANUSCRIPT THREE

### PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Kuh (2008) defined specific practices in higher education as “high-impact” because of the significant educational benefits they provided to students. These high-impact practices, which have exhibited increased rates of student engagement and retention, demonstrate common characteristics. First, these practices typically require students to devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks, requiring daily decisions that deepen their investment in the activity and their commitment to the program and/or college. Next, high-impact activities place students in circumstances that essentially require interaction with faculty and peers over an extended period of time about substantive matters. Third, participation in these activities increases the likelihood that students will experience diversity. Through their interactions with people who are different from themselves, students will be challenged to respond to new circumstances in their work with peers on academic and practical assignments, both inside and outside the classroom. The fourth common characteristic is feedback. While the environments of high-impact activities may be different, students typically receive regular feedback about their performance in each setting. The opportunity for students to observe their learning, as well as integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge in different settings to create meaningful educational experiences, is the fifth common characteristic. Finally, these activities bring an awareness to individual’s values and beliefs, put events and actions into perspective, help students better understand themselves

and the world around them, and provide them with the intellectual and ethical foundation to better the human condition (Kuh, 2008).

A limitation of high-impact practices is that they only reach a fraction of college students (Kuh, 2008). Students may engage in activities that have similar benefits, such as serving in a leadership role for a student organization, participating on a varsity athletic team, or writing for the student newspaper, but these opportunities are only available to a small number of students. However, an exception noted by Kuh (2008), is students employed on campus. When structured properly, student employment can serve as an exemplar of high-impact practices in higher education.

The University of Iowa has developed a model for student employees to connect their classroom learning with their student employment experiences. The program, called Iowa GROW (Guided Reflection on Work), uses structured conversations between supervisors and student employees to reflect on work experiences and how those experiences relate to their classroom learning. Supervisors are encouraged to schedule at least two meetings each semester with student employees and address four basic questions that help students make connections between employment and academics. The meetings can be individual or small group, and should build upon previous conversations. Students are surveyed and asked to articulate skills they have learned through their employment experience, as well as perception concerning how well their position has helped them prepare for employment after college. The program has been referenced in multiple books and articles describing best-practices in higher education and is a national model for developing student employment into a high-impact experience (Iowa GROW, 2017).

Assessment of the Iowa GROW program reveals that students are benefitting from the guided reflection on connecting their work experience to their academic endeavors. Student

participants in the program were more likely to report that their supervisor had helped them make connections between work and academics, that they felt their job had prepared them for full-time employment, and their job had positively contributed to their communication, conflict resolution, and time management skills. Additional outcomes included formation of positive relationships with faculty, staff, and other students, as well as making a positive contribution to the University of Iowa community (Hansen, 2014).

Other institutions have adopted tenants of Iowa GROW and modeled student employment as a high-impact experience, with collegiate recreation programs serving as leaders in demonstrating various components. The University of Florida's Campus Recreation program connects student employees with mentors who provide guidance throughout the student's undergraduate career, with one-on-one and small group interactions that help students learn skills valued by employers (Peck et al., 2016). Collegiate recreation programs at Lafayette College and the University of Texas-San Antonio utilize The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) to help students become more proficient leaders, while Salem State University uses the Social Change Model (Astin & Astin, 1996) with their students to develop leadership and influence positive social change. Some collegiate recreation departments design intentional co-curricular learning outcomes for their student employees, affording students the opportunity to connect their employment and academic experiences. James Madison University incorporates learning outcomes for each of its University Recreation student employment positions. Elon University Campus Recreation utilizes a reflection component for monthly reports submitted by student program area leaders. While multiple collegiate recreation and student affairs programs have intentionally connected academic learning and on-campus student employment, there has been

little focus on assessing how campus employment fulfills the criteria of a high-impact practice in higher education.

The Problem of Practice inquiry emerged from the University of Mississippi Department of Campus Recreation's analysis of student employee self-assessments. End-of-semester performance appraisals, which provided a snapshot of student learning of professional skills through the Campus Recreation student employment, seemed to demonstrate that their work opportunities in Campus Recreation were having a significant impact on their collegiate experience and career readiness. While the main component of the inquiry was to assess the professional skills students were learning through their employment and what skills they thought they would need for their future careers, there was also an underlying question about student employment as a high-impact practice in higher education. From this analysis, the Problem of Practice question evolved: *Should on-campus undergraduate student employment be considered a high-impact practice for higher education?* The inclusion of on-campus student employment as a recognized high-impact practice in higher education could potentially justify additional institutional support for enhancing student employment opportunities at the University of Mississippi and further development of the unique career preparation model utilized by Campus Recreation which focuses on the professional skills identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the professional skills learned by student employees through their Campus Recreation employment experience at the University of Mississippi. A total of ten seniors (five male, five female) who graduated in either May 2017 or December 2017 and had at least two semesters of employment experience with Campus Recreation were selected to participate in the interviews. Student employees that were interviewed were selected based upon their program area of employment (i.e. Facility Operations, Intramural Sports, Fitness), employment tenure, and diversity of race and gender. Multiple student interviewees had been employed in different organizational roles. Interviews were conducted at the Turner Center on the campus of the University of Mississippi. Students were prompted to articulate professional skills developed through their employment experience at the Department of Campus Recreation. They were asked to describe how they learned those professional skills and how those skills could be beneficial in future employment settings. Students were also asked why they had sought employment at Campus Recreation, aspects of employment they had most enjoyed, advice they would provide to new student employees, and personal or professional growth through their employment experience. While interview questions did not mention student employment as a high-impact practice, student responses to questions about professional skill development through employment in the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi indicated that students communicated experiences that demonstrated Kuh's criteria for high-impact learning in higher education.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each student who participated in the interviews. The pseudonym for the student, the student’s employment position(s), and the date of his/her interview is listed in Table 4.

Table 4:

<b><u>Pseudonym</u></b>	<b><u>Employment Position(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Interview</u></b>
Abbey	customer service representative, fitness center supervisor, group fitness instructor	May 3, 2017
Alexa	fitness center supervisor	May 3, 2017
Alton	facility manager	June 9, 2017
David	lifeguard, program assistant	May 1, 2017
Kelley	facility manager, office assistant	August 14, 2017
Kirk	fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, program assistant,	May 18, 2017
Misty	customer service representative, fitness center supervisor, group fitness instructor	April 24, 2017
Sam	fitness center supervisor, personal trainer, program assistant	May 2, 2017
Shia	facility manager	April 24, 2017
Tyler	intramural official, program assistant, supervisor	May 3, 2017

The first element of a high-impact practice is the requirement of students to devote considerable time and effort to a purposeful task, daily decisions which further their investment in the activity, and a commitment to the program and/or college (Kuh, 2008). The student



employees shared how they were invested in their work and committed to Campus Recreation during their undergraduate tenure. Misty, who worked in multiple roles during her employment experience, stated, “I wanted to be here. I was able to time manage three different jobs [at Campus Recreation] with outside things because it was important for me to be here. I loved what I was doing, so that was the drive of being here.” Kirk, a personal trainer, noted how his opportunity to provide continuing education for new fitness staff members furthered his development. Kirk said, “Having the ability to work with not just personal trainers, but other fitness employees and educate them on everything from basic fitness and nutrition to the psychology of change to much more intensive, specific personal training topics, has been really rewarding for me.” Tyler, a student who held several roles with progressive responsibility in intramurals, spoke about how he matured through his investment in Campus Recreation. “I was a kid and I matured into an adult at Campus Recreation. I spent more time at Campus Recreation than anything else outside of class. I’ve taken 124 hours of classes, but I’ve learned just as much from my professional experience here,” Tyler said.

Interaction with faculty and peers over an extended period of time about substantive matters is a second element for high-impact learning identified by Kuh (2008). Student employees articulated that professional staff supervisors and peer mentors had positively influenced their experiences. In discussing how professional staff had shaped his tenure at Campus Recreation, Tyler stated, “I invested in Campus Rec, so Campus Rec invested in me. These professional skills I’ve learned...unless there’s that mutual investment, people aren’t going to get as much out of it.” Students also mentioned the role of peer mentors in their development. Alexa, a student leader in the fitness program area, identified the influence of peers. “When you think of mentors, you think of this huge age gap...this elder full of wisdom

passing it on to the young people. When I came here it was interesting how someone who only worked here for a year could mentor a new hire,” she said. David, who served as a lifeguard, felt mentoring was a skill he developed through employment, saying, “I have definitely learned a lot about mentorship. We had to hire, train, and supervise new employees, so I feel like I’ve really honed that skill the most since I’ve been here.”

Several students reported experiences outlined in the third element of a high-impact practice, encountering diversity with others different from themselves. Students articulated that working with and experiencing difference was influential in their growth. When discussing elements of her work experience in the fitness center that she enjoyed, Alexa stated, “I think my favorite one would have to be all the different people you meet. It’s nice to know all these people from all over the world.” David, who grew up in a small town in northeast Mississippi, shared his experience with diversity in the workplace. He said, “Working with people from different backgrounds, races, religions, creeds. I haven’t been around this much of a diverse group of people and culture. That was big here.” Multiple students also connected working with diverse others to the professional skill of teamwork. Alton, who worked in a front-line service position as a facility manager, discussed the relationship between diversity and teamwork in his experience. “Being able to work with diverse people, that’s been the most important thing I’ve learned from this work experience, because you can’t assume everyone thinks the same, everyone will react the same, and do the same. I’ve learned to be diverse with our employees...to cooperate with them, to work together, to reach that common goal,” he said. Kelley, who also served in a customer relations role, articulated her experience, saying, “I’ve learned, with working with other people and working towards a common goal, there are shades of gray. I’ve just opened mind to different ways people think and the different ways people do things.”

Evidence of a fourth high-impact aspect, receiving frequent feedback, was noted most frequently by students who served in front-line roles that required multiple points of interaction with patrons and supervisors. Abbey, who also worked in three different organizational roles, felt that her supervisors had helped her improve her communication skills. “When I first got here, I struggled the most with communication. I was coming across as intimidating with my co-workers and didn’t realize it. Having my supervisors talk to me in my evaluation about it... we were able to talk about it and get feedback on how well we were doing,” she said. Misty was especially impacted by her interactions as a student employee, stating, “I didn’t want to be anywhere else because the people here were always trying to help me. I really had a lot of people pushing me and taking all my questions and what I wanted and helping me.” Student employees also communicated how they provided feedback and supervision for their peers. Sam, who served as a personal trainer and student leader for other trainers, discussed how he had worked to provide feedback for others. “When I got hired as a program assistant, stepping into that leadership role, I kind of took a couple staff members under my wing. [One] specifically, worked with him and helped him pass his PT certification test. I tried to teach him and teach other people on staff things that I learned over the span of my two years working at Campus Rec,” Sam said. Students also commented on how feedback from supervisors had helped them prepare for job interviews and internships.

Student employees made special mention of the final high-impact learning element, the opportunity for students to observe their learning and integrate, synthesize, and apply that knowledge in different settings. Two students, Shia and Kelley, were engineering majors who worked in customer service roles. They both noted how their experience in the academic program connected to their employment experience. Shia said, “I’m going to be an electrical

engineer and we've learned to work in groups. Right now, it's all group work. I've worked here [Campus Recreation] for almost three years, and that's something I've learned. Teamwork."

Kelley made a connection between academics and employment that focused on communication, saying, "Engineers are not the best communicators, when it comes to writing especially. I definitely got a chance to work on that being a program assistant." Tyler noted how he felt his various roles as an employee had prepared him for his professional career. He said, "There's times that I've been leading and times that I was being led, seeing how we can work towards a common goal when in a variety of different roles. Now I know that it doesn't matter where I'm at or what job I'm in, I can see the role and think about what this role needs from me." Students were also able to articulate how employment at Campus Recreation had improved their public-speaking skills, ability to separate their personal life from their work life, and adaptability with colleagues and situations in the workplace.

The responses provided by the student employees are significant in their demonstration of the impact the employment opportunity had on their collegiate learning environment.

Interestingly, the students articulated these experiences which show evidence of high-impact learning without being prompted to make connections to elements defined by Kuh, such as communicating situations where they had to work with diverse others or interact with faculty and peers over an extended period of time. The observed connections between the student employment experience in Campus Recreation and high-impact practices initiated further examination of best practices and methods for improvement in the local context.

## IMPROVING PRACTICES

The interviews conducted through the Problem of Practice study led to a critical examination of the Campus Recreation TEAM CR framework and implementation. The Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi utilizes six values as “pillars” for the program. These values are skills/characteristics that directly relate to the NACE attributes that employers are seeking in college graduates and include: teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, respect. These skills form the acronym TEAM CR, which is used by the department to emphasize the value placed on these attributes. At the end of each semester, student employees are evaluated on their demonstration of these skills through their employment and are prompted to articulate how they exhibited each skill.

Benchmarking the University of Mississippi Department of Campus Recreation TEAM CR framework against the nationally recognized Iowa GROW model demonstrates some successes as well as deficiencies. Comparing Campus Recreation’s TEAM CR initiative to the Iowa GROW best-practice model, which has been in operation for nearly a decade, provided an opportunity to improve student employees and allow the department to continue its development of a high-impact co-curricular experience with a unique focus on professional skill development.

One of the benefits of the TEAM CR model, which was very evident in the interviews of student employees, is the use of common, shared terminology. These terms (teamwork, excellence, adaptability, mentoring, communication, respect) were utilized by every student in the Problem of Practice interviews. When students were asked to articulate additional professional skills they thought they would need for future employment, they were extremely

challenged to use similar terminology. They struggled to find commonly recognized terms of professional skills such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, and time management. However, students were not only able to identify the TEAM CR components as professional skills they had learned, they were able to give examples of how they demonstrated skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability in their job duties. Many of the interviewees were able to share how they had communicated examples of their proficiency and experience with the TEAM CR skills to interviewers for professional positions and graduate school admission. While the Iowa GROW model uses the themes learning, reflecting, and connecting, there are no common terms or specifically identified skills for students to reference in articulating their learning through on-campus employment.

A strength of the TEAM CR model is the assessment tool utilized for performance evaluations. Through qualitative responses, students are asked to share examples of how they demonstrated each of the TEAM CR professional skills through their job duties. This instrument is used at the end of each semester, allowing both supervisors and employees the opportunity to review growth in skill development and communication through employment tenure. The evaluation also has components for students who serve in leadership roles. The skills that are assessed for those students (leadership, engagement, attitude, development) form the acronym LEAD and provide assessment criteria for progressive leadership. The skills also relate to attributes identified in the NACE survey, making further connections for students between their employment experience and professional expectations.

The Iowa GROW program also has a consistent format for supervisors to utilize in their reflection meetings with students. These prompts are used for students during their first year of campus employment and supervisors can use student responses to evaluate growth and

development. Iowa GROW has additional prompts for supervisors to utilize with students who are beyond their first year of employment or may be in their junior or senior year. The TEAM CR assessment of progressive responsibility focuses on departmental leadership and engagement, while the Iowa GROW reflection questions prioritize connection to academic learning and critical thinking.

With its direct connection to the attributes identified by employers as necessary for college graduates entering the workforce, the TEAM CR model is uniquely positioned among student employee development programs. While this model may be advantageous for students in making connections between their current and future employment experiences, it does not appear to be assisting students in deepening connections between their employment and academic learning. In fact, none of the students interviewed in the Problem of Practice study mentioned practical application of their academic work through their employment. While the interview questions did not specifically ask students to make this connection, the fact that the topic was not addressed by any of the interviewees indicates that the TEAM CR model may be missing an important element of the Iowa GROW program. A potential shortcoming of the TEAM CR model relates to a key component to high-impact practices, specifically the opportunity for students to observe their learning and apply knowledge in different educational settings.

Another area for consideration in improving the TEAM CR model is a focus on critical-thinking. While the model does include adaptability as a component, there has not been an emphasis on asking students to develop their critical thinking skills through their employment experience. Many positions require students to demonstrate problem solving and conflict resolution through their day-to-day responsibilities, but students are not typically asked to perform tasks commonly associated with critical thinking such as analyzing or synthesizing

information. There is potential for implementing programs that emphasize critical thinking, such as capstone projects and proposal writing, but incentivizing these initiatives would be extremely challenging.

Iowa GROW provides a reference tool for colleges and universities looking to initiate a similar assessment program that outlines considerations learned through their implementation process. They offer eight recommendations from their experience that can assist guided reflection models at other institutions. Their first recommendation, starting with a pilot program, was not utilized with the TEAM CR model. Iowa GROW suggests that a pilot program allows observation, modification, and the collection of advocates (Iowa GROW, 2017). Campus Recreation chose to implement TEAM CR across the entire department to develop terminology and culture for all student employees. While implementation and facilitation varied depending upon supervisor, all Campus Recreation student employees were exposed to the same language and had the same opportunities for professional growth through evaluation. Had Campus Recreation implemented a pilot program in our department, at least two-thirds of student employees would not have had the experience of learning and communicating the TEAM CR professional skills in the 2015-16 or 2016-17 academic years.

The support of high-level administrators is another recommendation from Iowa GROW. One of the institutional challenges Campus Recreation has faced is the perception that co-curricular, high-impact practices are not valued at the same level on the University of Mississippi campus as some of our peer institutions. For example, Auburn University has received national recognition for its architecture intern program, and the University of South Carolina is renowned for its first year experience initiatives. While the University of Mississippi has a strong honors program, the Division of Student Affairs has not prioritized high-impact practices in its long-



term planning or focused on developing initiatives that would improve results on the National Survey of Student Engagement. As a department, Campus Recreation has positioned itself to be the leading divisional advocate for high-impact practices by promoting the professional skill development of our student employees.

At the departmental-level, gaining investment from veteran supervisors who had leadership roles in the organization was challenging. A few supervisors had no experience with providing coaching and evaluation on professional attributes and were resistant to providing guidance and instruction on these skills during staff meetings or performance appraisals. Once these supervisors began to see differences in student staff performance, use of TEAM CR terminology by students in their evaluations, and examples of how students utilized TEAM CR values to articulate their work experience to future employers, the supervisors became more open to investing their time in providing reflective guidance.

Better assessment of the TEAM CR model would be beneficial for providing evidence to senior administrators that significant student learning is taking place through on-campus employment, while a pilot model with assessed outcomes may have made buy-in from department staff easier. Currently, there is limited assessment of the model. Students are asked to provide a self-evaluation rating of their performance of each of the values, and supervisors provide a ranking to each student during the appraisal process. Campus Recreation then gathers the rankings to evaluate student and supervisor perceptions of performance in each of the values. There is also an opportunity for students and supervisors to describe how each of the values were demonstrated through work performance. These qualitative remarks are reviewed, but there is currently no reporting of the qualitative responses. To better tell the story of student learning and impact of on-campus employment, Campus Recreation must develop a more effective method

for assessment and reporting of student learning experiences through the TEAM CR model.

Additionally, there could be an opportunity to measure post-graduation employment outcomes of Campus Recreation student employees against other recent graduates of the university to gauge the success of the TEAM CR model in career preparation.

The role of the supervisor is highlighted in the Iowa GROW recommendations. There is specific mention of supervisor selection, buy-in, and feedback, and continued skill-building. In fact, half of the recommendations for implementation prioritize program aspects involving supervisors (Iowa GROW, 2017). Campus Recreation has succeeded in performing some of the recommendations regarding supervisors, but has not developed others to a significant degree. When implementing the TEAM CR model, there was no selection of supervisors to implement a pilot program, as all supervisors were assigned with the task of implementation in their areas of responsibility. As discussed earlier, buy-in was modest until supervisors saw results. Feedback from supervisors has been a positive, as adjustments have been made to the evaluation instrument based on supervisor suggestions. For example, the addition of the LEAD components for student employees in leadership roles evolved from a discussion with supervisors on how Campus Recreation could better evaluate progressive student leadership. The department has not provided training for supervisors on how to conduct reflection on work performance, so there is inconsistency among supervisors in regards to their process, ability, and effectiveness in facilitating these conversations. Iowa GROW, with its training packets and instructional videos, is much more sophisticated in its provision of resources for supervisors.

## RESOURCES FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The value and importance of professional preparation and career readiness could be better emphasized at all levels of the institution. Students, faculty/staff, departments, divisions, and institutional leadership all have a role in developing graduates who are capable of successfully transitioning to the professional workforce. The following recommendations outline efforts that could initiate a sustained institutional commitment to professional preparation.

Senior-level institutional leaders must recognize the value of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice. On-campus student employment directly relates to the five elements of high-impact practices in higher education outlined by Kuh (2008), yet is rarely considered or valued as an influential experience on student learning. While institutions place great emphasis on practices such as study abroad, living-learning communities, and undergraduate research, on-campus student employment does not share the same prestige, and therefore the same commitment of institutional resources, as other high-impact experiences. For example, Elon University, a national leader in high-impact practices and study abroad, has a staff of 16 employees in their Global Education Center. Elon has one employee on campus who is dedicated to on-campus student employment (Elon University, 2017). Residential learning communities are often praised for their impact on the student experience, yet the University of Mississippi has 2,615 students employed on campus (V. Johnson, personal communication, Jan. 8, 2018), nearly three times more than the 906 students housed in its residential learning communities (D. Meyer, personal communication, January 5, 2018). Iowa GROW claims that

over 100 institutions have expressed interest in implementing a similar program (Iowa GROW, 2017), which would be approximately 3% of four-year institutions in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). When compared to the number of four-year institutions that have departments for study abroad, internships, or residential learning communities, the establishment of an office focused on student employment does not seem to rank highly as an institutional priority.

Senior leaders at public colleges and universities have a significant financial incentive to support on-campus employment. Currently, 32 states have performance-based funding models that designate funding on metrics such as increased retention, time to completion, and graduation rates for first-generation students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). States such as Florida, Missouri, and Nevada have metrics that align with post-graduation employment outcomes such as job placement in field of study and full-time wages after one year of graduation. With research from some of higher education's leading scholars in student development theory demonstrating that holding a part-time job on campus is positively associated with the attainment of a bachelor's degree, and incorporation into an institution's ongoing social and intellectual life serving as a key element of student persistence (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993), it would behoove colleges and universities to utilize on-campus student employment as a resource for student retention and career readiness.

The development of student employment resource centers would be valuable in establishing the importance of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice. Institutions have established offices and centers for study abroad, undergraduate research, residential learning, and community service. These offices and centers are staffed with full-time employees who direct and assess programming and learning experiences, provide training and

support for campus partners, and typically have reporting lines to academic affairs or student affairs. However, most offices that coordinate student employment typically serve as a clearinghouse for on-campus and/or off-campus jobs, assist students in identifying federal work-study opportunities, and coordinate human resource policies and procedures. These offices oftentimes report to financial aid or human resources and place little to no emphasis on the co-curricular learning opportunities available through on-campus employment. As programs like Iowa GROW demonstrate the co-curricular impact of on-campus student employment, institutions could follow the University of Iowa's lead in establishing dedicated offices and centers focused on outcomes-based student employment experiences.

A final recommendation from the institutional level in regards to on-campus student employment is to review wages for student employment positions. At most public colleges and universities, student wages for on-campus employment positions are aligned with the minimum wage with that state or locale. At the University of Mississippi, most on-campus student employees work for \$7.25 an hour, the state minimum wage, with nominal increases based on merit, seniority, or skill level. Lower wages for on-campus student employment often send students to search for off-campus employment options, where they may have longer work shifts, less-flexibility in their work schedule, and less interaction with members of their campus community. Pike, Kuh, and Massa-McKinley (2008), found that students who work 20 hours or less on campus positively relate to the five student engagement measures for the National Survey of Student Engagement (academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment), while students who work 20 hours or less off-campus positively relate to only two of the engagement benchmarks (active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction). The researchers also

found a negative relationship between academic performance and working more than 20 hours per week. Most institutions limit the number of hours students may work in on-campus employment positions. By offering more competitive wages, institutions could continue to enhance student engagement by keeping students on-campus for employment.

At the divisional level, there are multiple opportunities to address the Problem of Practice. Again, the recognition of on-campus student employment as high-impact practice must be highlighted. Financial and staffing support for on-campus student employment that is on par with similar high-impact practices such as study abroad, residential living communities, undergraduate research, and community service learning is essential. At the University of Mississippi, these practices involve offices that employ one to six professional staff members who coordinate implementation and assessment of initiatives. However, there is no dedicated professional position or office for on-campus student employment.

Divisional planning should incorporate an emphasis on high-impact practices, with the inclusion of student employment as one of those practices. Currently, the University of Mississippi Division of Student Affairs does not have a strategic plan specifically for the division. The UM 2020 plan makes no mention of high-impact practices. By contrast, the University of Iowa's strategic plan specifically mentions institutional investment in high-impact practices, with the goal of having an increased percentage of students engaging in at least three high-impact practices upon graduation. Iowa also identifies the importance of embedding career readiness in academic major programs and ensuring that all undergraduate students can articulate their leadership competencies by the time they graduate (University of Iowa, 2017).

The Division of Student Affairs should develop a curriculum of learning outcomes for student employees. These outcomes should be clearly aligned with the NACE attributes of

professional skills needed for future employment, with a particular emphasis on communication, teamwork, and critical-thinking. The learning outcomes should be components of all student employment positions and assessed each semester. In their Division of Student Life 2010-15 Plan, Elon University identified five learning outcomes for students who participated in divisional programs. These five areas (service, leadership, integrity, diversity, wholeness), were assessed through surveys, interviews, and guided reflection (Elon University, 2010). The University of Mississippi has four core values for the Division of Student Affairs, but there are no identified learning competencies for students who participate in divisional programming, have leadership roles in student organizations, or serve as student employees.

Ideally, as part of its strategic planning process, the division could create an office for student learning and engagement with professional staff members who develop learning outcomes and assess co-curricular student learning. This office would provide training to professional staff across campus on assessment methods to measure student learning, facilitation of guided reflection, and connecting learning between curricular and co-curricular experiences. This office could also work closely with the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning to improve student learning and communicate data that supports strategic initiatives.

Preparing students to better articulate the learning of professional skills through their on-campus employment experience will be a significant challenge. Ongoing assessment of student learning in the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi has led to improvements in professional development education, but there is wide variation among student employees in their ability to communicate their learning of professional skills and how those skills transfer to future employment opportunities. There are multiple approaches at the departmental level that could assist in improving the ability of students to communicate their co-

curricular learning and career readiness. The majority of these approaches would require a significant commitment from both the department and student employees. The recommendations to address the Problem of Practice at the departmental level demonstrate how student commitment is vital to the learning process, while the department must be strategic in its presentation of co-curricular learning opportunities.

Improvement in the Problem of Practice begins with students and their motivation behind on-campus employment. Of the ten graduating seniors who were interviewed for the Dissertation in Practice, only one student indicated that a reason for pursuing employment at Campus Recreation was to enhance prospects for future employment. Multiple students communicated their need to secure financial resources, make friends, or continue being involved in activities of interest from high school. Throughout the interview process, the student employees did not appear to initially approach their employment with the intent of developing their professional skills for future opportunities. They sought employment to pay bills, have spending money, and build their social network. For students to better benefit from on-campus employment, they should demonstrate a greater interest in taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered through on-campus employment.

While students are responsible for taking advantage of learning opportunities, the department must work harder to communicate the personal and professional benefits of working on campus. Marketing for on-campus student employment often references the ability for students to make money at a convenient location with flexible hours. Campus Recreation marketing materials followed a similar model. In reviewing Campus Recreation marketing for student employment over the past three years, the only TEAM CR value that was highlighted was teamwork, with no mention of professional skill development. The department must do a



better job telling the success stories of students who have been able to transfer the professional skills learned through on-campus employment to their professional careers. Rather than emphasizing the immediate gratification of a minimum wage job with a flexible work schedule, Campus Recreation could be highlighting the long-term benefits of employment with our organization.

A major topic of consideration from both departmental and student perspectives concerning the Problem of Practice is social capital. It was evident in the interviews of graduating senior employees that there was significant variation in the social capital that students brought to the interview setting. Student employees who had more significant social capital (interview experience, previous internships, Greek-letter affiliation, family socioeconomic status,) were much more comfortable and proficient in describing the professional skills they had learned through their student employment experience and how those skills would translate to other settings. Students with less social capital (first generation, international students, lower socioeconomic status, not involved with Greek-letter organizations) were more challenged to articulate their professional skill development, how those skills were learned, and how those skills would transfer to future employment. This observation sparked the departmental conversation of how social capital can be enhanced through experiential opportunities. The department looked at ways to provide environments for employees that may have less social capital where they could practice the skills that are more frequently experienced by students with greater social capital. Mock interview sessions and resume writing appointments are now available for individual students who request assistance. Campus Recreation developed a program called IMPROVE U, which provides students with skill sets necessary for the professional workforce. Peer mentorship programs were also implemented to give more

opportunities for leadership, socialization, and role modeling. By creating a broader base of student leadership and implementing a program that focused specifically on job preparation skills, Campus Recreation hoped to address inequities in social capital.

The Campus Recreation hiring process may be disadvantageous to students with less social capital. Potential student employees are required to submit a cover letter and resume with their application. Application materials are scored, and students with higher scores move to a group interview session. Group interview participants are placed in small groups of four to six students for an hour-long session. Candidates are scored again, with selected candidates advanced to one-on-one interviews with graduate assistants and/or professional staff in program areas for final candidate selection. While this process is conducive to finding students who have previous related work experience and determining departmental “fit,” several students may be eliminated from the employment process because they do not have the social capital and learned experiences to help them be competitive in this process.

To provide assistance to students with limited social capital, Campus Recreation has provided job fairs before hiring deadlines to provide more detail on the employment opportunities in the department. Current student employees are available to discuss the application process and job duties with prospective applicants. A job application information session is also conducted, where applicants are provided instruction on cover letter writing, resume content and formatting, and interview preparation. While these educational sessions may not make up for years of missed social capital development, they provide students with equal access to information on the hiring process.

Training and facilitation at the departmental level is also needed. The Iowa Grow model provided resources for professional staff facilitation of their program. Campus Recreation

supervisors need more education in student development theory, high-impact practices, and professional implementation of transferable skills. This knowledge could be acquired through staff workshops, conference attendance, site visits, or advanced education. A professional position in the department could also be established that focused on student employment. There are multiple collegiate recreation programs that have a professional staff member within the recreation department dedicated to student employee development and assessment. Most of these positions are at the coordinator level, but there are a few at the associate director level. If established, this position could serve as the human resource administrator for the department, prioritizing training and assessment for professional skills learned through employment experiences. However, at a departmental cost of \$55,000 for salary and benefits, this position would be economically challenging to support in our current funding model.

Over the past three years, the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Mississippi has worked to assist students in their professional skill development through professional development experiences such as cover letter and resume writing sessions, mock interviews, etiquette dinners, leadership workshops, peer mentoring programs, and performance appraisals. These initiatives have had various levels of success. Attendance at voluntary experiences has been sparse, and less than 5% of student employees have participated in leadership development programs. When programs have been built into employment expectations, there is increased engagement and learning. For example, a peer mentoring program developed for intramural officials and supervisors saw an improvement in self-evaluation scores in the professional skill of mentoring for student employees who were responsible for serving as mentors for new employees (A. Alpert, personal communication, Dec. 15, 2017). Workshops presented during mandatory staff meetings on Tuckman's model of group

development early in the fall semester of 2016 helped student employees understand stages of development in their program area, as terminology from the workshops was utilized by students in their end of semester employment self-appraisals.

A final area of improvement at the department level that requires investment from both professional staff and student employees is the development of a process that assists students in connecting academic learning to employment experiences. The department must look at implementing components of the Iowa GROW model, specifically the guided reflection questions that ask students to articulate the connections between their curricular and co-curricular learning. The guided reflection must also include a component on critical thinking, where students can begin learning how to communicate scenarios where they have demonstrated their ability to analyze situations, think creatively, synthesize information, and solve problems. The guided reflection can be built into end of semester employee evaluations, 30-day new hire evaluations, interviews for positions of progressive responsibility, and monthly staff meetings.

## PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

The doctoral process has motivated me to become a more well-rounded professional, advanced my understanding of critical issues in higher education, strengthened my motivation to enhance the educational experience for students, and challenged my personal perspective on a broad spectrum of issues.

When I made the decision to enroll in the doctoral program, I was unsure of my future career goals. I enjoyed having a leadership position in collegiate recreation, and knew that I could continue in a similar role for the next few years whether it be at the University of Mississippi or a different institution. However, I knew that at some point I would likely look for another career challenge, whether that be as a senior administrator in student affairs or athletics, an instructor in a higher education academic program, or search firm consultant. For any of these options, a terminal degree would be extremely valuable, if not an absolute necessity.

The doctoral program has helped me be better prepared for the issues I deal with in my current role and those I anticipate facing in the future. For example, the focus on Labaree's (1997) framework of democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility forced me to consider my outlook on the role of higher education, while simultaneously influencing my perception on how I should approach my role as an educator.

Having spent the vast majority of my professional career at a private, four-year institution, I was extremely unfamiliar with challenges of access and affordability, both at four-year and two-year institutions of higher education. In fact, I had almost no professional exposure

to two-year institutions and minimal perspective on the role they play in offering affordable access to higher education and career preparation. While I was very aware of the impact that higher tuition costs had played at my former institution, I had not looked at that issue from a broader perspective to consider the impact on affordability of public colleges and universities. Learning about the Ayers case and its impact on higher education in Mississippi was extremely valuable in helping me understand how enrollment trends at both four-year and two-year institutions in the state have been affected.

The issue of social capital has likely been the most profound personal and professional area of reflection through the Dissertation in Practice. Prior to enrolling in this program, nearly all of my experience in higher education afforded me the opportunity to study and serve at institutions where students had significant social capital. The majority of students were from upper-middle class backgrounds. They came to the institution with similar life experiences and socioeconomic status. If they worked on campus, it was to build their resumes or to have discretionary income. College was an expectation, not a privilege. My experience at the University of Mississippi, and through the academic program, has made me much more aware of the issues regarding access, affordability, and attrition. Through reading and reflection, I have gained new perspectives on how social capital influences the status quo, and forced me to consider how I can provide greater access to social capital for our student employees.

## DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

The results of this work have been presented at collegiate recreation and student affairs conferences. At the 2017 NIRSA national conference, I served on a panel that presented innovative approaches to student leadership education, where the Department of Campus Recreation's model of connecting student employment to professional skill attributes was unique amongst the other departmental models for co-curricular learning and leadership development. I was also able to share results at the 2017 NIRSA Emerging Leaders in Recreation Sports conference and the 2017 annual conference for the Mississippi Association for Colleges and Universities.

## SUMMARY OF MANUSCRIPT

The Problem of Practice inquiry emerged from the Department of Campus Recreation's belief that student employment at Campus Recreation was meeting the defined criteria of a high-impact practice in higher education. With the department's framework for the development of professional skills, the inquiry could be utilized to generate institutional support for student employment as a high-impact learning practice, while also further developing the department's unique career preparation model focused on the professional skills identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Interviews of graduating seniors who were employed by the Department of Campus Recreation demonstrated that their experiences as student employees met the criteria outlined for high-impact practices in higher education. Each of the six characteristics was evidenced through the interview process, with a particular emphasis on learning outside the classroom and collaboration with diverse others. The learning experiences articulated by the student employees demonstrated the significance of their co-curricular experience and could be used to support further institutional efforts to prioritize on-campus employment as a high-impact practice.

The Iowa GROW program, a nationally recognized best practice in higher education for its consideration of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice that helps on-campus student employees connect their experiences in professional settings to their academic learning, was compared to the Campus Recreation TEAM CR model. This comparison demonstrated similarities, strengths, and potential deficiencies in both approaches. Both



programs utilize student employment as an intentional co-curricular learning experience for students, with consistent evaluation instruments to measure student growth. Iowa GROW places greater emphasis on connecting curricular and co-curricular learning, while Campus Recreation focuses more on learning professional competencies through employment. The training program and institutional commitment are significant strengths of Iowa GROW, while the defined values and direct connection to professional employment attributes are benefits of the TEAM CR model. Iowa GROW could benefit from more clearly defined professional competencies, while Campus Recreation could enhance TEAM CR with a more intentional focus on critical thinking and connections to curricular learning.

Recommendations to advance consideration of on-campus student employment as a high-impact practice were provided at the institutional, divisional, departmental, and student level. Recognition of the value of the on-campus student employment experience is necessary at all levels. Institutional prioritization of preparing career-ready graduates would generate planning across multiple divisional and departmental levels to support professional and programmatic resources on par with other high-impact practices such as study abroad, residential learning communities, and undergraduate research. A commitment from departments and students is also necessary to ensure that co-curricular learning is being experienced through on-campus employment opportunities.

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## VITA

### **Peter J. Tulchinsky**

#### **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:**

##### **Director of Campus Recreation**

*University of Mississippi – Oxford, MS*

February 2014 – Present

- Coordinate the daily operations of a comprehensive recreation program with seven programmatic areas serving a university community of approximately 24,000 members.
- Recruit, hire, supervise, and evaluate 12 professional staff (Associate Director, five Assistant Directors, four Coordinators, two Operations Supervisors) and 14 graduate assistants who manage over 200 student employees.
- Propose, allocate, and administer \$1.7 million department and fee-based budget.
- Facilitate planning for \$32 million recreation center with projected completion date of Fall 2018.
- Plan and coordinate renovation projects totaling over \$3.5 million for Turner Center recreation facility.
- Supervise annual grant proposal development and allocation of \$150,000 from BlueCross BlueShield Foundation of Mississippi.
- Incorporate Office of Health Promotion in Campus Recreation reporting structure. Revise departmental mission with greater focus on holistic wellness.
- Collaborate with Department of Intercollegiate Athletics on facility usage, institutional data reports, and long-term facilities and program planning.
- Develop mission, vision, and value statements to guide strategic planning and future growth for the department.
- Create annual goals and objectives in alignment with university and divisional priorities. Articulate department contributions to high-impact practices that promote transformational student experiences.
- Utilize programmatic data to guide distribution of resources and prioritization of initiatives.
- Oversee emergency, injury, and disciplinary policies and procedures for participants.
- Initiate enhancement initiatives and develop long-term strategies for renovation of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.
- Plan, implement, and evaluate MPower, a summer experience program for 32 first-year students with an emphasis on leadership and inclusion.

- Manage policy development, operational procedures, and maintenance planning for 160,000 square foot Turner Center recreation facility, Blackburn-McMurray Outdoor Sports Complex, and Rebel Challenge Course.

### **Director of Campus Recreation**

*Elon University - Elon, NC* June 1998 – June 2000, Jan. 2001 – Feb. 2014

- Coordinated the daily operations of a comprehensive recreation program with ten programmatic areas serving a university community of approximately 7,500 members.
- Recruited, hired, trained, scheduled, supervised, and evaluated Associate Director, Assistant Director, Program Assistant, and 12 student team leaders who managed over 120 student employees.
- Prepared, proposed, and allocated operational and programming budget from various sources totaling over \$375,000.
- Collected and analyzed facility usage data, program assessments, and student learning outcomes to determine departmental needs and goals.
- Oversaw the scheduling, programming, maintenance, equipment ordering, planning, policy development, and risk management of Stewart Fitness Center, Jordan Gym, Beck Pool, East Gym, Harden Clubhouse, Firehouse Field, South Campus Fields, and Driving Range.
- Developed emergency, injury, and disciplinary policies and procedures for participants. Trained student supervisors in crisis response and customer relations for area specific programming.
- Educated and supervised professional staff and student team leaders who implemented area specific programs. Coordinated collaborative special event programming with Athletics, Student Life departments, academic areas, and student organizations.
- Developed self-directed work-team model that promoted engaged learning experiences for student employees.
- Created proposals, assisted in project coordination, and brought on-line the following facilities: lighted, 35-acre Intramural and Club Sport field complex with 20 station driving range, putting greens, and 10,000 square foot clubhouse satellite facility; lighted, 14-acre, Intramural and Club Sport complex with six fields; lighted, 8-acre, Intramural and Club Sport complex with four fields; 1,000 square foot residence area satellite fitness center facility; 5,000 square foot fitness center addition; 8,000 square foot fitness center renovation; 11,000 square foot fitness center renovation.

### **Associate Director**

*StayWell (Wayne State University) – Detroit, MI* July 2000 – Dec. 2000

- Brought on-line a \$15 million dollar, 75,000 square foot fitness and recreational facility.
- Created risk management policies and procedures for new facility.
- Assisted in fiscal management of \$1 million dollar budget.
- Managed daily financial transactions and provided financial reports to the University and outsource agency.

- Supervised three professional staff members and coordinated training for 100 student employees.
- Areas of responsibility included Climbing Wall, Fitness, Marketing, Memberships, and Open Recreation.

### **Assistant Director of Campus Recreation**

*Elon College – Elon, NC*

June 1997 - June 1998

- Responsible for the daily operations of Aquatics, Club Sports, Intramurals, Open Recreation, and Special Events/Marketing programs.
- Recruited, hired, trained, supervised, and evaluated six team leaders who coordinated area specific programming.
- Oversaw transition of Club Sports from the supervision of the Leadership Office to Campus Recreation.
- Managed formation, development, and administration of seven student-led Club Sports organizations.
- Coordinated scheduling, maintenance, policy development, and risk management of Campus Recreation facility.
- Planned, coordinated, and implemented collaborative special event programming (Sportsfest, Turkey Trot, Health and Wellness Week).

### **Intramural Sports Graduate Assistant**

*The University of Tennessee – Knoxville, TN*

August 1995 - May 1997

- Recruited, selected, trained, supervised, and evaluated student supervisors, officials, and support staff.
- Coordinated entry procedures, league schedules, and playoff scheduling for a program serving over 9,000 participants in 27 activities.
- Managed student payroll involving 60 departmental employees.
- Organized and directed the official's training program in specified sports.
- Prepared, promoted, and implemented special event activities.
- Created University of Tennessee Intramural Sports Employee Handbook.

### **SERVICE:**

#### **University of Mississippi**

- Non-Resident Admissions Review Committee (review and score applications for out of state students who do not meet automatic admissions criteria)
- MPower Committee chair– extended summer orientation program for first year students
- Chancellor's Standing Committee on Recreational Facilities chair
- Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct board member (adjudication of sexual assault cases)

- Intergroup Dialogue Committee
- Incident Response Team
- RebelWell Committee (university and community wellness committee)
- Replay technician for University of Mississippi Men's and Women's Basketball

## **Elon University**

- University Honor Code board member (adjudication of academic and social honor code cases)
- Staff Advisory Council (elected to university council that consults with senior administrators on staff issues)
- Academic advisor (20-25 student advisees each semester)
- Facilitator for campus challenge course
- First-year Summer Experiences – Adventures in Leadership
- Student organization advisor – Twisted Measure (co-ed, a cappella group)
- Search Committee member for the following positions: Director of Residence Life, Director of Greek Life, Sports Turf Manager, Director of Student Activities
- Campus Committees: Safety, Student Travel, Student Employment, Leadership Fellows, Quality of Life
- Administrator on Duty team responsible for emergency calls and crisis management for student population.
- Official scorekeeper/timekeeper for Elon University Men's and Women's Basketball.

## **Professional Organizations**

- National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) National Conference Program Committee 2015, 2016
- NIRSA Student Professional Development Committee 2009, 2010
- NIRSA Career Opportunities Center Committee 2006, 2007
- NIRSA Student Leadership and Academic Awards Committee 2003, 2004
- NIRSA State Workshop – host university 2003
- North Carolina Collegiate Flag Football Championship, Tournament Director 2000, 2001

## **PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS:**

- NIRSA 2017 National Conference Presenter, *“Student Leadership Development through Collegiate Recreation”*
- NIRSA 2017 National Conference Presenter, *“Three More Letters”*
- NIRSA 2017 Emerging Recreational Sports Leaders Conference Presenter, *“The View from the Corner Office: What Directors Are Seeking When Building Their Teams”*
- NIRSA 2016 Region II Conference Presenter, *“FLSA Panel”*
- NIRSA 2016 National Conference Presenter, *“Multigenerational Perspectives in the Workplace”*



- NIRSA 2014 National Conference Presenter, “*Making Assessment Work: A Real Campus Example*”
- NIRSA 2013 National Conference Presenter, “*The Executive Intern Program: Developing a Premiere Co-Curricular Experience*”
- NIRSA 2013 National Conference Presenter, “*Friends with Benefits: University Recreation and Academic Departments Collaborating to Engage Students*”
- NIRSA 2011 National Conference Presenter, “*‘Be On’ During Your Interview: What to Expect on the Phone and on Campus*”
- NIRSA 2010 National Conference Presenter, Student Development Workshop
- NIRSA 2009 National Conference Presentation, “*Up for the Challenge*”
- NIRSA 2009 National Conference Presenter, Student Development Workshop
- NIRSA 2008 National Conference Presentation, “*PTI for a JOB*”
- NIRSA 2006 North Carolina State Conference Presentation, “*PTI for a JOB*”
- NIRSA 2003 North Carolina State Conference Presentation, “*NIRSA Pardon the Interruption*”
- NIRSA 2002 North Carolina State Conference Presentation, “*The Phoenix PHISH Philosophy*”
- NIRSA 2001 North Carolina State Conference Presentation, “*Making the Most of the Student Work Experience*”
- NIRSA 1999 National Conference Presentation, “*Teamwork and Leadership: Teaching professional competencies through Campus Recreation*”
- Southeast Regional Orientation Workshop 1999 Presentation, “*Follow the Leader: Developing your leadership skills*”
- NIRSA 1998 National Conference Presentation, “*Team Leaders vs. Supervisors: Is it a matter of semantics*”

#### **ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION:**

- *EDHE 105 The Ole Miss Experience* (college success course for first year students) 2014, 2015
- *GST 266 Critically Engaged Eco-tourism in New Zealand* (winter term study abroad course) 2013-2014
- *COE 275 The Job Search* (Cooperative Education course on job search strategies) 2010-2013
- *COE 275 Securing a Graduate Assistantship* (Cooperative Education course on graduate assistantships in higher education) 2008-2009
- *GST 200 Outdoor Leadership via Elon Challenge Course* (challenge course facilitation skills and techniques) 2004-2013
- *GST 278 Cathedral: Messages of Power* (General Studies winter term course) 2002
- *Elon 101* (freshmen orientation and advising course) 1999-2013
- *PED 265 Officiating* (Physical Education course on basketball, softball, and soccer officiating) 1998-2002

#### **EDUCATION:**

**University of Mississippi** - Oxford, MS

Ed.D. Higher Education – May 2018

*University of Tennessee* - Knoxville, TN

M.S. Sport Administration - May 1997

*University of Notre Dame* - Notre Dame, IN

B.A. English - May 1993