

Executive Summary: Exploring Student Employment as a Co-Curriculum within Student Affairs

By: Brittany Wildman

This executive summary presents the findings of an exploratory study on student employment within higher education institutions, focusing on how supervisors contribute to the post-secondary education curriculum. The study highlights that the employer/employee relationship can be seen as curricular, which requires understanding the type of curriculum provided and the variables defining it.

Supervisors of on-campus student employees are acknowledged as providing a curriculum to their students, with a detailed understanding of its documentation and origins. They operationalize essential skills needed for successful on-campus positions, including leadership, career and self-development, communication, and equity and inclusion. Additionally, emergency/safety protocols are integrated into training to enhance performance. Although slight variances in training exist among different departments, the study reveals differences between small liberal arts institutions and large public institutions, with a focus on operational responsibilities and teamwork in the former and soft skills like leadership and career development in the latter.

The experiences facilitated by supervisors for student employees are viewed as an extra curriculum rather than a co-curricular experience. As supervisors curate the focus of the curriculum, a change in terminology from co-curricular to extra curriculum is proposed, potentially influencing the framing of student employment training and development within higher education.

Supervisors' role in the learning process is emphasized, with knowledge flowing bidirectionally between supervisors and students. Supervisors shift from identifying as supervisors at the beginning of the study to mentors by the end, emphasizing their evolving relationship with students.

Referencing Alexander Astin's (1984) work, the study underlines that the quality and quantity of student involvement directly affect their learning and growth in post-secondary education. On-campus student employee positions offer transformational experiences that are vital to the functioning of the institution. Students act on behalf of administration and perform challenging roles, contributing to the institution's operations and acting as "retention agents" who foster connections between students, staff, faculty, and the post-secondary community.

The study identifies both implicit and explicit curricula provided by supervisors to their student employees. These curated experiences foster lasting growth in leadership, career and self-development, communication, and other career readiness skills. For the continued provision of such opportunities, both supervisors and students must evolve and adapt together.

In conclusion, this exploratory study sheds light on the valuable role of supervisors in providing a meaningful curriculum through on-campus student employment. By recognizing the curricular nature of the employer/employee relationship and documenting the diverse experiences students gain, higher education institutions can enhance the educational journey for student employees, foster professional growth, and improve overall supervisor satisfaction.

Funding

Funding was needed to provide additional resources to the study of supervisors of on-campus student employees. Two grants of \$500 were received in support of this project. That funding was spent in the following way.

Item	Amount
Gift Cards (\$10 per participant – 14 Participants)	\$140
MAXQDA Software (2- 6 Month Licenses)	\$100
Grammarly (4 – 3 Month Licenses)	\$180
Editor	\$580
Total	\$1,000

The initial grant was the National Association for Campus Activities Bronze Scholar Awards, and the second was the Association of College Unions International Research Grant Award. These funds were pivotal in ensuring participation and the additional of resources to complete this project.