

Aggies RISE Student Supervisor Survey Fall 2015

Background

Aggies Reflecting and Integrating Student Employment (RISE), a subcommittee of the Division of Student Affairs Committee on Student Learning, promotes the understanding, implementation, assessment, and improvement of student learning specifically focusing on student employment in the Division of Student Affairs. Furthermore, the subcommittee is charged with enhancing communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation between and among student supervisors in all departments throughout the Division of Student Affairs pertaining to student learning in student employment positions. Aggies RISE conducted a survey of student supervisors to learn about the types of student positions available, training, assessing student learning, and the needs of supervisors.

Aggies RISE has assessed student employees previously; however, this was the first time student supervisors had been formally assessed.

Method and Sample

The electronic evaluation was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. Of the 43 questions, 34 were quantitative, eight were qualitative, and one was demographic. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The results were evaluated using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Word® and Excel®.

Student Life Studies sent the survey to student supervisors within the Division of Student Affairs on September 28 through their work email account. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on October 9. Of the 154 staff members who received the survey, 68 completed some part of it, yielding a 44% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are listed in order of decreasing means or frequencies unless otherwise noted. The themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the full listing is in a separate document.

Supervisors were asked about the number of students they typically supervise. Half of the supervisors (50%) stated they supervised 1 – 5 students, 20% reported 6 – 10 students, 8% said 11 – 15 students, and 5% said 16 – 20 students. Additionally, 17% reported supervising more than 20 students and were asked to indicate how many. Of the 11 staff who wrote in how many students they supervise, most ranged between 25 – 50 students; however, two reported supervising 100 or more students.

Student workers throughout the division perform a wide range of work and supervisors were asked about the type of jobs being done. Using a check-all-that-apply option, Table 1, on the following page, shows that most student worker positions include administrative and customer service aspects. Supervisors who wrote in a response for the “other” type of work students performed, reported a variety of tasks including fitness instructor, lifeguard, tour guide, marketing, child care, exam reader, translator, and tutor.

What type of job(s) do the students you supervise do? (check all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Administrative – front desk, receptionist, clerical, etc.	69%
Customer service	69%
Other	27%
Program management (on-campus)	23%
Facility management	22%
Risk management	20%
Accounting work	16%
Website/database management	16%
Conflict management	14%
Medical care	9%
Program management (off-campus)	3%

Table 1: Types of Jobs (n=64)

Staff supervisors were asked about what students learn through their student employment positions through two check-all-that-apply questions. The first question specifically focused on the Texas A&M undergraduate learning outcomes. The next question was similar, but provided more options about skills students gained through their employment. Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that student workers are provided opportunities to practice communication skills, work collaboratively, demonstrate personal and social responsibility/professionalism, and think critically. Supervisors selecting the “other” option were provided the opportunity to write in a response, and mentioned CPR skills, manners, medical training, phone etiquette, and time management.

Which Texas A&M undergraduate learning outcomes do you feel your students gain through their employment? (check all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Communicate effectively	97%
Work collaboratively	89%
Practice personal and social responsibility	83%
Demonstrate critical thinking	80%
Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence	72%
Prepare to engage in lifelong learning	55%
Master the depth of knowledge required for a degree	16%

Table 2: A&M Learning Outcomes (n=64)

What skills do your students gain as a result of their employment with you? (check all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Communication skills (verbal and written)	97%
Teamwork abilities	92%
Professionalism	92%
Problem-solving skills	89%
Interpersonal skills	84%
Planning/organizing skills	83%
Working in a diverse environment	80%
Leadership/management skills	72%
Analytical/research/critical thinking skills	61%
Technical knowledge	58%
Presentation skills	53%
Other	9%

Table 3: Skills Gained through Employment (n=64)

Supervisors were asked about the number of hours they conduct formal training with their students when they are initially hired and on an annual basis. As seen in Table 4, most students are provided training opportunities in their employment. Supervisors selecting more than 20 hours were asked to write in the approximate number of hours they provide formal training. When initially hired, supervisors wrote in hours ranging from 40 – 200 hours. On an annual basis, the number of hours ranged from 24 – 60 hours.

On average, how many hours of formal training do you conduct with your student employees?	Initially Hired	Annually
1 – 5 hours	31%	55%
6 – 10 hours	24%	16%
11 – 15 hours	7%	7%
16 – 20 hours	12%	5%
More than 20 hours	19%	10%
I do not have formal training	7%	7%

Table 4: Formal Training (n=58)

When asked about how often training is provided to student employees, using a check-all-that-apply option, 72% reported as needed. Additionally, 31% of supervisors said in the fall semester, 26% said the spring semester, 19% indicated monthly, 14% stated during the summer, and 10% reported weekly.

Supervisors were asked about the topics they cover during training with student employees and 50 staff members shared a variety of topics. General administrative office procedures, job specific tasks, and overall professionalism (attire, time management etc.) were mentioned the most. Customer service, risk management, and diversity training were also reported several times. A few supervisors talked about training students on accounting procedures, working on a team, and communication.

Staff were also asked about the set-up or structure for their training and 51 provided a response. Over half (30 comments) indicated using a one-on-one format for training, and 25 reported using a hands-on approach. Classroom style training and group training (retreats, meetings, etc.) were mention several times. Other formats being used included online/video trainings, testing students, and having students read manuals.

When asked what they did well in training their students and that they might be able to share with others, supervisors mentioned communication, connecting with students, having a detailed orientation process, and providing hands on experience with personal development for students. Several supervisors indicated that their positions were too specialized or unique to share with other supervisors. A few supervisors also expressed that they could use help with training student employees.

Staff supervisors were asked to share their level of agreement with a number of statements related to their views on student employment and their role as a supervisor. Table 5, on the follow page, reveals supervisors feel student employment enhances students’ educational experience; however, there were slight decreases about providing learning opportunity, time for reflection, and formal evaluations with student employees.

Please respond with your level of agreement to the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Student employment enhances students' educational experience	64%	33%	4%	--	--	4.60 (.56) [55]
My supervisor is supportive of me providing learning opportunities for student employees	59%	35%	4%	2%	--	4.52 (.67) [54]
Co-curricular learning enhances students' educational experience	53%	44%	4%	--	--	4.49 (.57) [55]
I intentionally create learning opportunities for student employees	44%	37%	15%	4%	--	4.22 (.84) [54]
My supervisor expects that I will provide learning opportunities for student employees	48%	24%	26%	2%	--	4.19 (.89) [54]
I provide opportunities for student employees to reflect on their work experience or what they are learning through their employment	35%	49%	11%	6%	--	4.13 (.82) [55]
I conduct formal evaluations for each student employee at least once a year	41%	35%	13%	9%	2%	4.04 (1.05) [54]

Table 5: Student Employment and Supervisors' Role

Two follow-up questions asked supervisors to explain the learning opportunities they provide for their student employees and how they provide opportunity for reflection within their employment. Most supervisors mentioned the learning opportunities in terms of topics or skills student employees may learn. Some staff talked about how they create those opportunities by giving student workers specific responsibilities, having a certification process, bringing students with them to some meetings, and having student employees take the lead of some office projects or processes. A few supervisors talked about having reflective conversations with student employees either through one-on-one or group meetings. Half of the supervisors who wrote a comment about how they provide opportunities for reflection shared that they used reflective conversation/discussion with students, either in a one-on-one or group setting. Some talked about having students complete a self-evaluation, facilitating reflective activities during trainings or retreats, and providing a journaling method for student employees.

All supervisors were asked about how they measure student learning of their student employees. Using a check-all-that-apply option, Table 6, on the following page, illustrates almost three-fourths of supervisors utilized observing their student employees, followed by having reflective discussions and conducting performance evaluations. Two supervisors selected the "other" option and wrote-in that they use performance quizzes and competencies to measure student learning.

How do you measure what students learn through the student employment position? (check all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Observation	74%
Reflective discussions	63%
Performance evaluations	61%
Surveys	19%
Focus groups	9%
I do not measure student learning of my student employees	9%
Rubrics	7%
Other	4%
Learning contracts	2%

Table 6: Measuring Student Learning (n=54)

Aggies RISE wanted to understand what supervisors knew or did not know about the division’s initiative with High Impact Practices (HIPs). A series of questions were asked of supervisors related to HIPs and any relation to student employment. Table 7 indicates supervisors were mostly neutral in knowing about High Impact Practices and their student employment being considered as a HIP. Supervisors slightly disagreed about being encouraged to apply their student employment area for a HIP.

Please respond to the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n=51]
I know what High Impact Practices (HIPs) are within the Division of Student Affairs	8%	53%	22%	14%	4%	3.47 (.97)
Having my student employment recognized as a HIP is important to me	8%	16%	59%	14%	4%	3.10 (.88)
I have considered applying the student employment in my area for a HIP	10%	20%	43%	24%	4%	3.08 (1.00)
My supervisor has encouraged me to have my student employment recognized as a HIP	10%	8%	45%	28%	10%	2.80 (1.06)

Table 7: High Impact Practices (HIPs)

Supervisors were asked their level of agreement about their student employees and the specific criteria that are considered to make an experience a High Impact Practice. Table 8, on the following page, reports that supervisors feel fairly positive about their student employees having opportunities that are aligned with the criteria for HIPs. They were slightly less sure about student employees having opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge between their classes and employment.

My student employees receive the following through their student employment:	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n=52]
Purposeful tasks or responsibilities	62%	35%	4%	--	--	4.58 (.57)
Opportunity to experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves	58%	40%	2%	--	--	4.56 (.54)
Interactions with staff, advisors, and peers about substantive matters, usually over extended periods of time	56%	37%	8%	--	--	4.48 (.64)
Investment of time with supervisor or other full-time staff members	50%	42%	6%	2%	--	4.40 (.69)
Frequent feedback about their performance	35%	52%	14%	--	--	4.21 (.67)
Opportunity to become aware of their values and beliefs and thus to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world	31%	52%	15%	2%	--	4.12 (.73)
Opportunity to integrate, synthesize and apply knowledge gained from their classes to their employment experience and vice versa	23%	46%	25%	4%	2%	3.85 (.89)

Table 8: HIP Criteria in Student Employment

When asked if they were aware of the workshops available for supervisors and students through the Student Employment Office, 79% of supervisors reported they were aware, and 21% were not aware. Supervisors were asked if they regularly attended these workshops. Most supervisors (81%) said they did not attend them, while 19% did attend. When asked if they encouraged (or required) their students to attend any of the workshops, 56% said no, and 44% said they did.

Supervisors were asked to share any reasons that keep them from attending workshops by the Student Employment Office. The main reasons that keep supervisors from attending included having a heavy workload, the availability of classes not fitting with their schedule, and not having office coverage. A couple of supervisors indicated that they did not have an interest in the topics or that they were not required by their supervisor to attend.

Supervisors were asked if they would like additional trainings offered to supervisors through the Division or Aggies RISE. Almost three-fourths (71%) said they would like additional trainings and 29% said no. When asked if they would attend trainings if offered, 78% said yes and 22% said no. When asked if their supervisor supports them in attending trainings through the Division or Aggies RISE, 95% said yes and 5% said no.

Furthermore, supervisors were asked to share topics they would like to see offered by the Division of Student Affairs or Aggies RISE. Responses were varied and included how to train students on diversity or critical thinking, how to facilitate reflective conversations or ask deeper questions with student employees, and how to make training fun.

In Spring 2012, Aggies RISE offered a training related to the Aggies RISE pilot project. Supervisors were asked if they attended this training. Supervisors who indicated they did not remember (n=6) were removed from the analysis of this question. Of those who remembered, 80% reported they did not attend the training and 20% said they did attend. Those who attended the training (n=10) were asked a follow-up question about if they still used the reflection discussion that was covered in the training. Three-fourths (75%) stated they did still use the reflection discussion, while 25% said they did not use it.

All supervisors were asked if there was anything besides periodic trainings or focused discussions that they needed from Aggies RISE or the Division to help them in their supervisor role. Supervisors expressed needing to know when events are, maybe through a newsletter, wanting to receive recognition for the impact supervisors have on student learning and development, and providing online trainings for student employees. Some staff also indicated wanting additional training

on High Impact Practices and coaching. Some would like to see more guest speakers or group discussion to learn from one another.

The final question asked supervisors about their employment classification. Over two-thirds (70%) indicated they were professional staff, 25% were associate staff, and 6% were graduate students. Table 9 displays the departments of the supervisors who were sent the survey and the respondents for each department.

Departments	Division Supervisors [n=154]	Survey Respondents [n=68]
Becky Gates Children's Center	1%	3%
Disability Services	3%	6%
DSA Information Technology	2%	2%
Memorial Student Center	6%	6%
Multicultural Services	3%	2%
Music Activities	1%	2%
Office of the Commandant	10%	7%
Offices of the Dean of Student Life	10%	12%
Recreational Sports	12%	10%
Residence Life	27%	24%
Student Activities	5%	9%
Student Counseling Service	1%	3%
Student Health Services	10%	10%
Student Life Studies	1%	2%
University Center and Special Events	5%	2%
University Art Galleries	2%	--
Veteran Resource and Support Center	--	--
Vice President for Student Affairs	1%	--

Table 7: DSA Departments

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on supervisors' feedback, most view student employment as being beneficial to students and that students can learn numerous skills through their employment. Additionally, many of the top areas students learn about through employment is similar throughout the Division of Student Affairs, and aligns with the institutions learning outcomes.

DSA supervisors spend a great deal of time training student employees and many of the topics are similar between departments. There could be more opportunities for collaboration and consistency between departments to provide training to all student employees, at least at a general sense and then departments focus on the specific job duties.

Many supervisors were not aware of High Impact Practices within the Division of Student Affairs, and some specifically suggested more training on this topic. Yet supervisors were quite positive about the student employment positions aligning with the criteria used to determine if an experience is a High Impact Practice. This could be an opportunity for Aggies RISE to work with the Committee on Student Learning High Impact Practices subcommittee to provide more training in general about HIPs and help more supervisors apply their employment area to be recognized as a High Impact Practice.

Many supervisors expressed an interest in additional trainings by Aggies RISE or the Division of Student Affairs, and indicated that they would attend trainings if offered. Several suggestions were provided for Aggies RISE to consider for training topics. Additionally, there could be prospects to work with supervisors on creating intentional learning opportunities for students within their positions as well as incorporating reflection more in student employment. Three-fourths of the supervisors who had been training in 2012 on using reflective discussion were still utilizing those practices now.

Aggies RISE is strongly encouraged to read through all of the qualitative responses to gain a better understanding of the themes represented in this report. There were several ideas and suggestions shared from supervisors, and the committee may want to consider implementing some of these concepts. Aggies RISE is also encouraged to share the results with supervisors and other staff throughout the Division of Student Affairs.

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