

# The Student Employee Experience: Office of Student Life

Student Life Research and Assessment

June 2, 2010

## INTRODUCTION

The Student Employee Survey is designed to assess the impact of the student employee experience within the Office of Student Life.

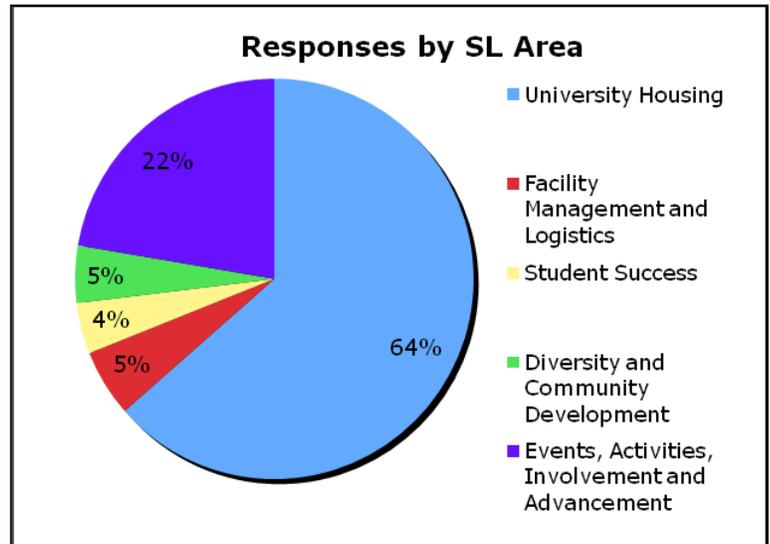
Student Life is committed to student success and development, providing a wealth of support for transformative experiences. From services and events to volunteer opportunities and student employee positions, Student Life strives to provide students with numerous opportunities to acquire and practice transferable skills, in a variety of different settings.

One area in which Student Life can foster such transferable skills lies within the learning environments of a large range of student employee positions. More than 4,000 Ohio State students hold jobs as student employees within Student Life. Within these jobs are opportunities for students to learn, grow, apply lessons learned and cultivate skills in preparation for their future lives and careers. Student Life recognizes students as holistic learners, so views learning as a life-long process. Results of this survey will be used to further explore the learning environments we create for our student employees in the Office of Student Life.

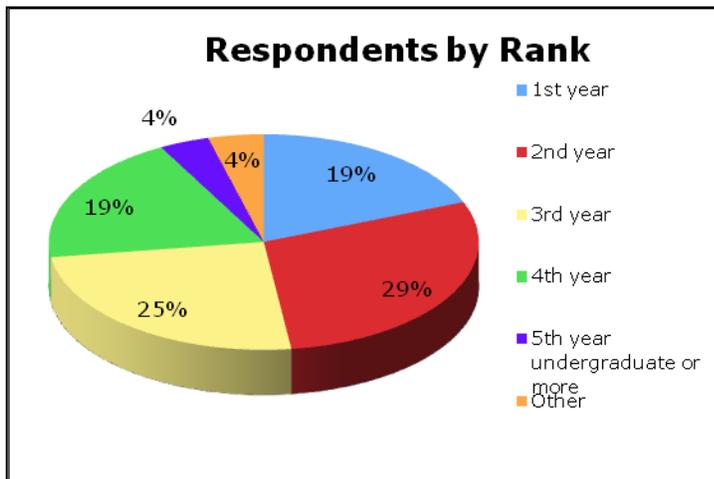
The Student Employee Survey was a voluntary, confidential, online survey conducted through the Student Life Research and Assessment office at the Ohio State University. The survey was administered in the Spring 2010 quarter to all 4,092 student employees within the Office of Student Life. A total of 1,415 student employees responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 34.6%.

Respondent gender was slightly skewed with 61.7% of survey respondents identifying as female and 37.9% as male.

Approximately 26.3% of respondents reported an average course load of 12-15 credit hours; 68.7% reported 16-20 hours and 4.5% reported taking an average of 21-25 credit hours; 24% of respondents hold another job(s) outside of Student Life or the University.



When asked if the department in which they work is a part of the Office of Student Life, 26.6% of Student Life student employees replied **No**.



## METHODOLOGY

Survey items were created based upon research of the 2003 CAS standards<sup>i</sup>, as well as the Office of Student Life Holistic Learner Model, which recognizes transferable skills as one facet of the developmental process of the holistic learner. A six-point scale was used to assess the extent to which the student employee experience impacted each item.

## ANALYSIS

The Student Employee Survey can be analyzed in a variety of ways. A total of 65 items were assessed in the survey; respondents reported their responses to each item based on a scale of 1-6, in which a 1 indicated “Not at all” and a 6 indicated “Greatly.” Items were grouped by related skills and attributes; ten new scales resulted. Scales were tested for reliability and renamed based upon transferable skills related to the Holistic Learner Model. The following tables and charts show some particular areas of interest.

## FINDINGS

*The following survey questions provide a more detailed look at the student employee experience and points to areas in which Student Life should be proud as well as areas for improvement.*

**My experience as a student employee has...improved my ability to comfortably interact with others:**

	Percent
1 [Not at All]	2.6
2	2.6
3	4.6
4	16.2
5	<b>39.4</b>
6 [Greatly]	<b>34.6</b>

The majority of student employees reported an improved ability to comfortably interact with others, with 34.6% reporting that their experience “Greatly” improved their ability to comfortably interact. This finding suggests that, as a division, we should continue to include our student employees in Student Life-hosted events and encourage them to interact both with their fellow staff members as well as with the larger OSU community.

**My experience as a student employee has...improved my writing skills:**

	Percent
1	25.7
2	11.8
3	15.7
4	20.9
5	16.5
6	9.4

There was a striking lack of impact regarding the development of writing skills. Almost **26%** of respondents rated “Not at All” when asked whether their experience as a student employee has improved their writing skills. Only a combined **25.9%** rated an impact of 5 or higher on the scale.

There is a wide array of student employee positions within Student Life and for many of them writing is not a prominent piece of the job description. This may be one area in which we should take a closer look, as we work to improve the learning environments we create for our student employees in preparation for their futures.

*Each sub-scale represents a group of related transferable skills and/or attributes. Students were asked to rate to what extent their student employee experience had on a variety of items. A score of 1 represented “Not at All” and a score of 6 represented “Greatly.” Below are highlights from each of the ten sub-scales:*

**Personal Emotional Wellness**

Personal Emotional Wellness (comprised of 4 items) involves developing an understanding of the self, finding value, and fostering a sense of belonging; **60.4%** of students who were employed for less than 1 quarter rated a 4 or higher on the scale; these numbers increased to **66.3%** for students employed 1-2 quarters and **70.9%** for those employed for 3 or more quarters.

**Lifestyle Wellness**

Lifestyle Wellness (comprised of 5 items) involves skills and attributes such as managing money, dependability, self-sufficiency, healthy lifestyle, and the formation of meaningful friendships. Of those who reported, **66.5 %** who worked 1 quarter or less, **69.6%** of students who worked 1-2 quarters and **75.2%** of students who worked 3 or more quarters reported a 4 or higher on the scale.



**Self-regulation**

Self-regulation (comprised of 7 items) encompasses life skills such as abilities to adapt to change, realistic goal-setting, work-life balance, productivity, and tolerance. Approximately **80.0%** of students who worked 0-10 hours per week reported a 4 or higher on the scale. Numbers increased with an increase in hours; **81.5%** of students who worked 11-15 hours and **82.1%** of those who worked 16-20 hours reported a 4 or higher on the scale. Interestingly, percentages slightly decreased for students who

worked over 20 hours. This may indicate a reduced ability to manage school, social life and work with such a large number of hours as an employee.

### **Responsibility**

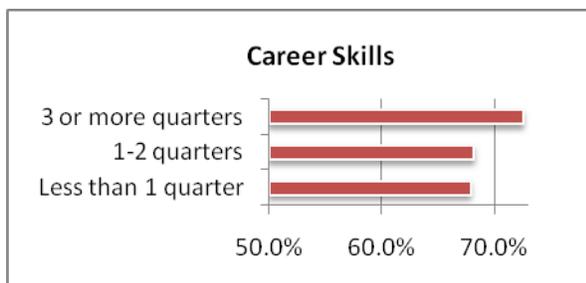
Responsibility (comprised of 6 items) includes integrity, the ability to admit mistakes, to consider the repercussion of actions, and to assume responsibility for everyday actions. Here, **69.2%** of students who worked less than 1 quarter reported a 4 or higher; **75.8%** of students who worked 1-2 quarters and **78.0%** who were employed for 3 or more quarters reported a 4 or higher on the scale.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

Interpersonal Skills (comprised of 8 items) includes the ability to resolve conflict respectfully, weigh different perspectives, communicate effectively and work as part of a team and **84.6%** of student employees rated a 4 or higher on the scale.

### **Career Skills**

Career Skills (comprised of 13 items) refers to time management, organization, ability to make timely decisions, professionalism, attention to detail, ability to speak in front of groups, take direction, follow



instructions, as well as writing, listening, listening, and technological skills. Percentages of those who rated a 4 or higher on the scale increased with increased duration of employment; **67.9%** for students employed less than 1 quarter, **68.2%** for those with 1-2 quarters and **72.6%** with 3 or more quarters.

### **Civic Engagement and Awareness**

Civic Engagement and Awareness (comprised of 6 items) relates to expanding interactions with people of diverse backgrounds, awareness of other cultures, sense of belonging and involvement within the community, and awareness of national and global issues. A total of **62.5%** of students rated a 4 or higher on the scale.

41.7% of respondents reported that their experience as a student employee has “Greatly” expanded their interactions with people of diverse backgrounds.

### **Leadership and Problem Solving**

Leadership and Problem Solving (comprised of 3 items) is related to strengthening work ethic, critical thinking skills and the ability to take initiative; **78.2%** of males and **83.1%** of females reported a 4 or higher.

### Career Exploration

Career Exploration (comprised of 5 items) includes the acquisition of new skills and the realization of potential. Over a third (**78.0%**) of females and **73.2%** of males rated a 4 or higher.

### Motivation and Goal Orientation

Motivation and Goal Orientation (comprised of 7 items) involves the provision of skills useful for a future career, introduction to career opportunities, confidence to pursue a future career, as well as motivation to work on academics and pursue a higher level of education. Students employed less than 1 quarter (**61.5%**) report a 4 or higher on the scale. Percentages increased with increased duration, with **63.2%** of students employed 1-2 quarters and **65.3%** employed 3 or more quarters reporting a 4 or higher.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Since Student Life is committed to holistic, life-long student learning, and to preparing students for their future, it is important to evaluate the kind of learning that is imparted. Student Life is positioned to give students opportunities to enact lessons learned in the classroom. Student employment is a particularly good place for transferable skills and competencies to be taught and practiced.

An initial look at the data from the Student Employee Survey shows that, through employment in Student Life, students report several effects on their lives and development:

- Improved ability to interact with others (but not an improvement with skills such as writing)
- Positive effect in regard to their Personal Emotional Wellness, Lifestyle Wellness, and Self-regulation
- Positive impact in regard to Responsibility, Interpersonal Skills, Career Skills, and Civic Engagement and Awareness
- Increased Leadership and Problem Solving, Career Exploration, and Motivation and Goal Orientation.

One especially important finding is the positive impact of *duration of position*-how long students have worked for Student Life. The data consistently showed that students employed in Student Life for three or more quarters self-reported higher, more positive scores on each of the sub-scales. The influence of retention on the student employee experience is one worth exploring as Student Life continues to shape its learning environments. Considering Student Life's commitment to holistic and life-long learning, careful consideration should be given to what students are taking away from their experiences in engaging with Student Life. The student worker experience is an important means for Student Life staff to foster holistic and life-long learning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Miller, T.K. (2003). The book of professional standards for higher education. Washington, D.C.: Council For The Advancement of Standards In Higher Education.