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# More Than a Job? The Perceived Outcomes of Campus Recreation Employees and Relevance to Professional Employment

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More Than a Job? The Perceived Outcomes of Campus Recreation Employees and Relevance to  
Professional Employment

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Higher Education

by

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## **Abstract**

As grant programs dwindle and students are needing to become less reliant on parents to help finance their education, employment while enrolled is shifting from a choice to a near requirement. Collegiate comprehensive recreation programs employ several hundred students annually. Employers must be intentional in creating positions that help meet their needs, but also serve as a co-curricular experience for the student, assisting them in preparation for experiences beyond graduation. This study explores the perceived outcomes of campus recreation employment and the relevance to professional employment.

Student employees at a large university with a comprehensive collegiate campus recreation program reported their perceived skill enhancement based on their employment with campus recreation. Data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were collected via a paper and pencil survey, distributed and collected at in-service training meetings. All students, employed in December 2015 and January 2016, were invited to complete the survey. This data were analyzed through a comparison of mean scores, one way ANOVA, and independent samples t test. The qualitative data were collected through a series of focus groups. This data demonstrated additional motivation for pursuing employment and what skills they perceived enhancement in and where they would like to see more improvement.

The data revealed that student employees did perceive enhancement in some skill areas, but there was opportunity for improvement in others. Students demonstrated a stronger perceived enhancement of skills related to social work skills than technical work skills. This response pattern held true across each employee area. A statistical significant difference was not found between length of employment, at two years, and skill enhancement. The results of the study demonstrate the need for intentional and purposeful employment experiences that not only

complete the day to day functions of the job or unit, but provide learning opportunities that are co-curricular, supplementing the classroom experience.

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## **I. Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**

### **A. Statement of the Problem**

Higher education institutions are interested in helping students grow, develop, and learn so that they can pursue their interests, whether as employees in business and industry, as concerned citizens, or in their pursuit of graduate education (Shapiro, 2005). As institutions struggle to find new and innovative ways to help students succeed, they pay close attention to variables that impact student success, including the retention and graduation of their students (Bok, 2013). This study focuses on one area that might impact these, student employment on a college campus, specifically situated in a university recreation center.

Student success measures both contribute to higher education institutional rankings and are a cost concern, as institutions have found that recruiting more students is more expensive than retaining those who are currently enrolled (Bok, 2013). This means that institutions are monitoring student success measures as never before and are particularly interested in persistence, graduation, and grade point average as data points. The lack of persistence, or attrition, has been strongly linked to student finances, and such conversations have been a hallmark of the Obama administration's discussion of student debt, and concurrently an issue that institutions want to address (Braunstein, McGrath, & Pescatrice, 2001).

Both traditional and non-traditional college students struggle with the financial commitment from (and to) their families, their own basic needs, and tuition costs. Tuition costs have increased from an average of \$1,726 in 1987-88 to \$7,171 in 2007-08, a 315% increase, at public universities and the result is a cost burden shift from taxpayers to parents and students (Johnstone, 2011). Students and parents must continue to look at ways to fund higher education, both to persist to graduation or even enter the academy. One major result is the national student

debt load surpassing the trillion dollar mark (Braunstein, et al., 2001; Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1985; Selingo, 2013).

With the heightened costs of higher education, and a more competitive and sometimes limited financial aid program offering, students are forced to turn to other income sources to finance their education (Furr & Elling, 2000). Traditional grant programs have generally become loan programs, resulting in student debt (Mumper, Gladieux, King, & Corrigan, 2011; Selingo, 2013). Aside from loans, students continue to pursue part-time employment as a way to fund their own college education. Previous research has been inconclusive and at times even contradictory about the relationship between student employment and a student's collegiate experience (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parks, 2006). Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, and Rude-Parks (2006) identified a spectrum of relationships between employment and the student experience, resulting in findings of a negative experience with the student being overworked and dropping out to experiences where the employment served as a base for the student to connect with the university. Astin (1993), Broadbridge and Swanson (2006), and Tinto (1993) all identified negative relationships related to GPA and student employment, while Broadbridge and Swanson (2006), Furr and Elling (2000), Hackett (2007), and Pike, Kuh, and Massa-McKinley (2008) found positive effects associated with employment during college such as leadership skills, teamwork, and organizational skills.

The shift in the burden of cost to attend college from taxpayers to students has forced the student to find alternative money to pay for college, including working part and full-time. According to the 2011 US census, 72% or 14,135,040 of 19,730,695 college students were employed while enrolled as full-time undergraduates. Of these 14,135,040 students who were employed, 3,858,580, 20%, worked full-time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014; Davis, 2012).



Employment while enrolled can help build the types of skills needed to be successful in school and post-graduation. Students who are employed while enrolled learn how to balance academic responsibilities with other commitments (Jacobson & Shuyler, 2013; Perna, 2010).

Employment opportunities for students consist of off-campus and on-campus experiences. Experiences in both work locations are primarily entry level and based in the service industry including office service units, academics, retail, catering, hotels, and bars (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006). Motivation for working while in college varies, including affording basic living expenses, paying tuition, job experiences, parents want them to, fill extra time, job training, decrease potential student debt, and academic requirements (Dundes & Marx, 2006; Jacobson & Shuyler, 2013; Mounsey, Vandehouy, & Diekhoff, 2013; Torres, Gross, & Dadashov, 2010).

College administrators should be aware of the demands that working students face, and ways in which those demands can affect their ability to perform. Administrators should be aware of the potential of these work experiences as co-curricular opportunities, and develop ways to include them in learning outcomes. Acknowledging and integrating out of the classroom work experiences can supplement the information taught in the classroom. Experiences inside and outside of the classroom will better prepare students for their post-graduation lives and as they become job seekers.

## **B. Statement of the Purpose**

Collegiate recreational facilities continue to be scrutinized by legislators, parents, students, and other stakeholders for the costs associated with their construction and operation (Kampf & Teske, 2013). According to the National Intramural Recreational Sports Construction Report 2010-2015 (2010), \$1.7 billion in construction projects were underway (new

construction, renovation, and expansion) with the average project at \$13.2 million. They are also seen as a major factor in a student's decision to enroll at a particular campus and have been found to be important for retention (NIRSA, 2010). Campus recreation units must increasingly demonstrate their value to the academy, and this process of value demonstration has become increasingly common throughout higher education (Keeling, 2006; Kroth & Young, 2014).

A student's involvement on campus through academic and non-academic activities can be of value to the student, helping students synthesize and understand information in new and different ways, and paid work experiences can similarly supplement a student's education. Work experiences can be considered co-curricular and help prepare a student for full-time employment. Campus recreation facilities are typically one of the largest student employers on a campus, and the student employees in the campus recreation setting will be the focus of the current study (NIRSA, 2008; Toperzer, Anderson, & Barcelona, 2011). The purpose for conducting this study was to explore the self-reported outcomes of employment in a campus recreation setting.

### **C. Statement of Research Questions**

The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What was the profile of students who were employed in a campus recreation program that includes a comprehensive campus recreation program and a full-service recreation center?
2. For these employed students, what skills were perceived to be enhanced through their employment in campus recreation?
3. Were there thematic trends in skill areas that were improved or not improved based on program area student employment?

4. Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on the functional area within campus recreation that students were employed in?
5. Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on length of employment?
6. What skills did students employed in campus recreation most want to see improved based on their employment?

#### **D. Limitations**

The study accepts the following limitations and resulting delimitations:

1. Students will report their skill improvement and attribute that improvement to their position working in campus recreation. Therefore study findings should not be generalized to other employment areas on campus and may not fully reflect the extent of skill improvement that the student perceives.
2. Data will be collected at one case study institution during a specific academic term. Therefore data and study findings may not accurately reflect similar employment at other institutions or at different times in history.
3. Students employed at the institution may work in more than one program area. Therefore it cannot be assumed that skills learned were only acquired from experience in a specific program area.
4. Employed students may also be members of a student organization. Therefore it can be assumed that membership in an organization may also contribute to perceived skill development.

5. The survey instrument was developed by a professional with biases toward the value of university recreation programs. Although every attempt will be made to ensure survey reliability, there exists some potential for bias.

## **E. Definitions**

The following terms will be operationally defined for the current study:

*Campus Recreation:* Campus recreation, also referred to as recreational sport, includes intramural sports, recreational programming, physical recreation, physical activity and fitness programming. Campus recreation programs are considered essential to higher education, aiding in the education of students through physical, mental, and emotional development. Campus recreation has grown to provide quality co-curricular programs (Mull, Bayless, Ross, Jamieson, 2009; NIRSA, 2008)

*Employability skills:* Professional skills that enable one to apply their disciplinary knowledge in the workplace (Riebe & Jackson, 2014). Employability also refers to the personal attributes one may possess that increases their chance to become employed (Tymon, 2013).

*Outcomes:* Outcomes identify growth in knowledge, attitude, and skill (Keeling, 2006). Outcomes are typically demonstrated via knowledge, skill, attitude based on a specific training or learning activity. In campus recreation, many supervisors define outcomes that they hope student employees will be able to demonstrate as a result of training or job experience (Hall, 2013).

*Student employment:* Enrolled students who seek employment on campus. Employment opportunities are flexible and work around academic schedules. Campus recreation enables a large group of students to receive training in recreation programming and facility operations

(NIRSA, 2008). Students who are employed while pursuing postsecondary educational goals (Riggert et al, 2006).

## **F. Significance of the Study**

In addition to graduation rates, it is important for campus administrators and academic programs to be able to report positive employment figures from their graduating students (Tymon, 2013). Skill development only becomes stronger as a student gets the most of their work experience (Tooperzer et al., 2011). Tymon (2013) shared that employability skills are better and more easily developed outside of the curriculum. On-campus employment experiences outside of the classroom offer the perfect setting for offering and developing opportunities to build and enhance employability skills (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Furr & Elling, 2000; Hackett, 2007; Pike, Kuh, & Massa-McKinley, 2008). Faculty members continue to be concerned with the curriculum; staff that supervise students have the ability to provide experiences for students that yield increased employability outcomes (Tymon, 2013). The key to seeing results of employment are students being able to demonstrate their competence in skills (Peck, 2014; Riebe & Jackson, 2014).

Campus recreation professionals identify with student development theory to help realize the importance of student employment in preparing students beyond graduation (Tooperzer et al., 2011). No theoretical model exists that “exclusively (or even primarily) focused on the student employment-higher education relationship” (Riggert et al., 2006, p. 70). Riggert et al. (2006) continues by noting that the theoretical modeling regarding this relationship generally considers student retention (Astin, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tinto, 1993) or learning and cognitive (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Pascarella & Terezini, 1985) models. Developing additional learning opportunities that address the gap between the classroom and work is an

ongoing challenge that campus recreation practitioners are committed to addressing as co-curricular experiences supports the student and the university (Furr & Elling, 2000).

Campus recreation practitioners have made known and prominently publicized the positive benefits between involvement in recreational sports and academic success (Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011; Kroth & Young, 2014; Miller, 2011; Toperzer, et al., 2011). However, positive associations are not exclusive only to participants. Student development through employment is another major emphasis of campus recreation departments. Campus recreation programs offer multitudes of employment opportunities for students. Campus recreation departments are one of the largest student employers on campus (Toperzer et al., 2011). A work experience in campus recreation not only offers the opportunity to gain and build transferable skills, but also provides a sense of belonging to students by providing on campus employment and interaction with their peers and professional staff (Hackett, 2007). For instance, at University Recreation at the University of Arkansas, 434 students experienced employment opportunities across 26 different positions (University Recreation, 2014).

Table 1.  
*Student Employment Counts for University Recreation*

Academic Year	Number of Students Employed
2013-2014	434
2014-2015	460

As such, campus recreation staff members need to make dedicated efforts to maximize the student development outcomes of working in a recreation department. Additional beneficiaries of the study findings will be college policy makers, campus leadership, student

affairs professionals, director of career centers, financial aid offices, faculty members, and human resource professionals.

### **G. Theoretical Grounding**

Researchers commonly frame the term student success with metrics such as grade point average, persistence, and graduation rates. The relationship between grade point averages, persistence, and graduation rates and student employment and academic performance continues to cause anxiety. Researchers are developing ways to connect employment experiences to academic success measures. Commonly, when considering the relationship between employment while enrolled in college, researchers consider involvement, retention, experiential learning, and student development theory (Evans et al, 2010; Riggert et al., 2006; Tinto, 1993).

The absence of student employment as the central focus of a theoretical model makes it challenging to present student employment and persistence theoretically (Mamiseishvili, 2010). No theoretical model exists that “exclusively (or even primarily) focused on the student employment-higher education relationship” (Riggert et al., 2006, p. 70). Student employment is one of several elements that effects a student’s academic performance (Riggert, et al., 2006).

Tooperzer, Anderson, and Barcelona (2011) identified Chickering’s student development theory as a way to associate employment with student development. Employment experiences identify with Chickering’s theory through the nonlinear progression of the seven vectors of development (Evans et al., 2010; Tooperzer et al, 2011). Student affairs professional commonly identify with student development to enhance the undergraduate experience in and out of the classroom (Tooperzer et al., 2011). Todaro (1993) expounded on the direct alignment of Chickering’s seven factors with campus recreation experiences, assisting in the development and growth and maturation.

According to Warren (2002), many researchers adopt a zero-sum approach to employment demands and academic performance. The zero-sum model suggests that increased work demands leads to decreased time and effort put forth towards school. Two problems exist as a result of this approach. First, this approach assumes that if a student is not working, then the student is focused entirely on academic performance. This is a poor assumption, as students who are not working may spend time socializing, watching television, or in some other non-academic manner, potentially contributing to delinquency in academic performance. Second the zero-sum approach does not consider the frequency or qualitative aspects of employment experiences in considering the effect it may have on academic performance.

Alternatively, Warren (2002) suggested primary orientation as a theory to suggest that academic performance may have more to do with “social psychological factors than resource allocation” (p. 371). This theory suggests that as students become more disconnected from their academic program they are less likely to persist. Attrition rates suggested by student employment should not be solely based upon how intensely a student is working, but rather an interaction between educational and employment interests (Warren, 2002). Regardless of the factor facing the student, the student must still possess the motivation to move through the process. If a student is not motivated, he or she is not likely to overcome the perceived concerns with working while enrolled and ultimately will drop out or perform poorly academically (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006).

As institutions see growth in a student body, it should be expected that the number of students working will grow accordingly. Moving forward, further research needs to be done to further theorize the relationship between student employment and higher education. Many of the theories identify and partially relate through involvement, development, experiential learning,



and retention. While these attempts help guide practitioners in the right direction, further work is needed to focus on student employment and higher education theoretical modeling (Riggert et al., 2006; Tingle, Cooney, Asbury, & Tate, 2013).

## **H. Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduces the research study. Specific content includes the statement of the problem, purpose, and research question. Lastly, it includes the theoretical basis for the study and the importance to higher education professionals. Specifically, the study is significant to professionals in campus recreation as those departments generally employ the greatest number of students on a college or university campus and rely upon student employees heavily for day to day operations.

## **II. Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### **A. Introduction**

Decades of literature exists that highlight student involvement and retention models and theories that are useful for retention and graduation information. Additionally, there is much research that has been done linking student employment with academic performance and the ability to remain enrolled. The amount of literature available linking employment to student development theory is weak, but starting to emerge. Practitioners are realizing the importance of learning skills and abilities through methods that supplement the classroom experience. The experience in higher education is moving beyond your textbook and classroom experience. Learning and experiences to prepare for graduation must occur outside and supplement the classroom experience. Practitioners need to identify strategies and methods to prepare students for careers past graduation day.

This chapter will highlight the purpose of higher education, student development, campus recreation, and many of the negative and positive effects of working as an undergraduate student. The review of literature was initiated through University of Arkansas's computerized search engine as well as readily available student development and campus recreation texts and journals.

### **B. Purpose of Higher Education**

The idea that employment is an automatic after the completion of a degree is false today and creating additional tensions between academia and the people it was designed to serve. The role of colleges and universities from the colonial era to today has changed dramatically. Significant changes includes faculty roles, the types of students that attend, and the design of the curriculum. The degree is becoming a prerequisite for employment, but additional credentials

such as hard and soft technical skills and certifications are just as important (Blumenstyk, 2015). The notion of navigating coursework through a desired degree program and finding employment following graduation is changing trend in higher education.

Additionally the historical and formal delivery of degree programs through the classroom setting is changing. Today's typical student is changing roles and taking on much more, so to must the delivery of information. Online classes, complete degree, and MOOC courses have provided students greater chances to complete degree programs. As students complete degrees, employers are concerned about the mismatch in skills that recent graduates cannot demonstrate (Blumenstyk, 2015; NACE, 2014). Professionals in higher education need to be preparing to prepare students for employment beyond the elements of degree completion.

### **Student development**

The development of students must exist beyond the classroom and the leaders of an institution need to recognize this is as important as the information delivered in the traditional classroom setting. Student Affairs and other higher education practitioners have the unique opportunity to fulfill this development in preparing students for life beyond the institution. Student development opportunities take the form of student organization, Greek life, student leadership roles, volunteer experiences, club sports, campus recreation, and employment. Tinto (1993) and Astin (1999) have regularly contributed to the field and stated the importance of these experience as retention and recruitment efforts. Evolving student development theories now also demonstrate the need to understand how these experience shape the entire student and supplement their learning experiences in the classroom (Evans et al., 2010). More recently, campus recreation professionals include the Social Change Model of Leadership Development,

Relational Leadership, the Leadership Model, and the Leadership Identity Model as guides for developing participants and employees (Hall, 2015).

### **History of campus recreation**

The first collegiate recreation programs were created in 1913 at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University. Due to a lack of a formal governing body, the National Intramural Association (NIA) was founded at Dillard University in 1950. The NIA evolved to become NIRSA, now called NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation (NIRSA, n.d.). The goal of the organization is to assist in the facilitation of campus recreation activities. Campus recreation units commonly report through academic colleges, business affair units, but most commonly through student affairs.

Collegiate recreation programs, affiliated with NIRSA, are seeing more than 8 million participants on campuses in the United States (Hall, 2015). Collegiate recreation programs advocate their importance as an experiential learning laboratory for students (Mull et al., 2009). While campus recreation programs have created intentional programming opportunities to develop students through intramural sports, club sports, fitness programs, and outdoor programming to develop the student participant, professionals are continually developing employment experiences to enhance the student development experience. Practitioners are continually developing employment experiences to strengthen the connection between employment and development that exists as well as the growing body of literature that focuses on the campus recreation employment experience (McFadden & Carr, 2015).

### **C. Concerns with Student Employment**

Administrators on campus worry about the large numbers of students committed to extracurricular activities, such as employment. While extracurricular activities during college

have many beneficial outcomes, concerns may develop if these activities become distracting from academic pursuits, rather than compliment them. One of the distractions that researchers cite as an academic hindrance is employment (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Negative academic experiences can affect national rankings, which are very important to universities. Important factors in the ranking system for an institution are graduation rates, retention, and grade point averages. These factors as well as fatigue, stress, and involvement are all concerns of administrators that could be detrimental to a student's academic success (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Mounsey et al., 2013).

Student employment has many negative associations attached to it, based on the assumption that anything done outside studying and attending class will deter the student, including research that has indicated longer time to graduation and higher attrition rates among students who work while enrolled. The negative observations can be addressed so that employment is still possible without hurting the long term goal of graduating. In fact, as the research is reviewed, one will find that many of the negative associations are countered with positive effects on the student experience. Furthermore, the research will also demonstrate that those students who do obtain part-time employment are just as accomplished as and more prepared than those students who choose not to work while enrolled.

### **Grade point averages**

Grade point averages are a common metric used to measure institutional and student success. Grade point averages are easy to obtain and use in relational comparisons with other variables. The research also indicates that there is a difference in the number of hours a student works and their grade point average. A relational comparison of grade point averages can be made with students who work and do not work in college. Several studies have shown

contradictory evidence to a perceived negative relationship, finding that students who work have higher grade point averages than non-workers (Dundes & Marx, 2006; Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987; Hackett, 2007).

The discussion regarding employment and the effect on grade point averages should be centered on the number of hours a student works instead of questioning work. Ehrenberg and Sherman (1987) found that students who worked less than 25 hours a week did not experience a negative relationship in regards to grade point average. Dundes and Marx (2006) completed a similar study, researching the relationship between employment and academic success. Here, employment was examined based on quantity of hours worked; less than 10 hours, 10-19 hours, and greater than 20 hours. Dundes and Marx's (2006) research indicated a significant positive relationship between grade point averages and students working 10-19 hours per week, but no relationship to grade point average existed for those working less than 10 hours or more than 20 hours per week. King (2002) agreed with a moderate approach to working while in college, citing 15 hours per week to be optimal in achieving long term success for students. Examining employment in the campus recreation setting, Hackett (2007) found a positive relationship between students employed part-time and grade point averages.

### **Persistence and graduation rates**

In order to graduate on time and reach ultimate academic success, one would assume that a student should just study full-time and put work on hold, but many factors can contribute to students' ability to graduate on time, including employment. Working to offset tuition costs may result in an increased hardship for students who need to work in order to provide for basic needs (Gleason, 1993). Students need help working through decisions that affect the way they finance their education. Gleason (1993) found similar results regarding the amount of time it takes

students to graduate while working; a delay is likely. Gleason (1993) went on to note that even though students may be delayed a semester or two in graduation, students who were employed while in college successfully transitioned to full-time employment, earned higher wages, worked longer hours, and were employed a larger percentage of months in the first year or two after graduation.

Full time (12 credit hours) paired with part time employment has been associated with graduation delays. However, Mounsey, Vandehey, and Diekhoff (2013), noted that some confusion exists regarding full-time enrollment and delayed graduation rates. This suggests that the association between working and enrollment in college may be subject to measurement discrepancy. The confusion stems from the definition of 12 credit hours as full time enrollment. A student taking 12 credit hours per semester is not sufficient for a student to graduate in 4 years, regardless of being employed. A lack of effective and consistent measurement tools will continually make it difficult to compare the true relationship between student employment and college enrollment (Riggert et al., 2006).

### **Involvement and belonging to an institution**

Administrators in higher education are familiar with Astin's theory of involvement that reveals students who find a way to be involved or develop a sense of belonging with an institution, have a greater chance to persist (Astin, 1999). Developing a sense of belonging, will likely result in an increased appearance and time spent on campus. On-campus employment opportunities are one way in which students can increase their involvement and belonging. Both Ehrenberg and Sherman (1987) and Astin (1975) found that a sense of belonging or involvement for a student can exist in the form of a part-time job, specifically, one on campus. On-campus employment does not mean that hours of work per week should not be monitored. While

Ehrenberg and Sherman (1987) noted an increased sense of belonging, they also found that students working more than 25 hours per week were less likely to persist. These findings suggest that employment opportunities on a campus are important and essential to student's success, but total hours worked a week should still be considered. Faculty and staff need to work with employers and human resource departments to develop opportunities and policies that benefit student employment, while ensuring policies, such as limiting the number of hours students can work, do not push students to seek off-campus employment opportunities. Limitations of hours students can work may likely push students to other employment opportunities off-campus. Off-campus opportunities may not provide the same flexibility and student development outcomes as on-campus opportunities resulting in a loss of students, falling grade point averages, and missed graduation deadlines (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993).

### **Stress and fatigue**

As it could be assumed, an increase in hours worked leads to greater levels of stress and fatigue. Dundes and Marx (2006) found that along with grade point averages, stress levels were also positively correlated with working. Workers reported feeling more tired midday compared to their non-working peers (Dundes & Marx, 2006). This finding is one of very few negative associations with part time employment and college enrollment. This should not discourage students from finding work while enrolled in college. Employers should be aware of the added stress and fatigue that students face while working in college and provide intervention programs to assist and help the student excel. Developing intervention programs offer employers the opportunity to teach coping mechanisms and time management skills to not let work create stress and fatigue. Teaching this skill will help the student be successful in their chosen career after graduation.



Employment in college has been associated with a number of negative outcomes such as grade point averages, retention, persistence, involvement, and graduation. However, there are also many positive associations as well. Students who work while enrolled have also been found to develop and enhance job skills that are desirable to employers (Furr & Elling, 2000; Peck, 2014). One major area of inquiry in to the positive interactions between enrollment and employment is the development of job skills.

#### **D. Employability**

Higher education prepares students for a chosen career through co-curricular opportunities. The co-curricular experiences are those that occur inside and outside the classroom. Students gain valuable information and resources in the classroom to help them become experts in their field. This information is essential to being successful in a chosen occupation beyond graduation. There is an increased pressure for academic courses to include employability development (Riebe & Jackson, 2014; Tymon, 2013). While universities are making efforts to develop the employability of their students, Tymon (2013) notes that graduates do not have the skills needed for the workplace.

Students who have the opportunity to work while enrolled are able to experience various aspects of employment. Work experiences as an undergraduate student can also build skills, outside the standard information from the classroom. Employers are looking for skill sets in college graduates that are learned outside the classroom (Balbi, 2014; Carlson, 2014; Hackett, 2007; NACE, 2014).

Employers are aware of the need for college graduate to have a strong and broad set of skills essential for the workplace to supplement their academic expertise in an industry. Skills that can be learned outside the classroom that employers want to see in graduates are confidence,

time management, constructive criticism, teamwork, organization, leadership, communication, and work experience (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Hall, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Lewis, 2010; Mounsey et al., 2013).

Work experiences that occur outside the classroom offer opportunities to develop skills in conjunction with the academic experience as employers are looking for these skills in new graduates (Jackson, 2014; NACE, 2014; Riebe & Jackson, 2014; Tymon, 2013). NACE's (2014) 2015 job outlook identified 10 important skills/qualities that employers rated as important in a candidate: ability to work in a team, ability to make decisions and solve problems, ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization, ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work, ability to obtain and process information, ability to analyze quantitative data, technical knowledge related to the job, proficiency with computer software programs, ability to create and/or edit reports, and the ability to sell or influence others. Employment experiences while enrolled in college offers the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that supplement classroom knowledge and employers desire of recent graduates (Hart Research Associates, 2015; Jackson, 2014; NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014; Riebe & Jackson, 2014; Tymon, 2013).

### **Intrapersonal skills**

Throughout a college career, students get little exposure to working with professional staff or faculty members unless they are involved in research or hold a part-time position. It has been noted that employers today are looking for the entry level staff they intend to hire to have some work experience (Hart Research Associates, 2015; NACE, 2014). Lewis (2010) found that formal or informal training opportunities with staff members helped students develop skills necessary to be an employee in an organization. Work experiences should be developed to

prepare a student with knowledge, resources, and skills that compliment what is learned in the classroom creating a holistic experience.

Developing problem solving skills as a part time employee will prove beneficial as a student transitions to full-time employment. As an employee, learning how to be flexible and respond to the unexpected is key to success post-graduation (Lewis, 2010). Employers should develop progressive supervisory responsibilities for students so that they can grow and develop problem solving skills. Learning to work with difficult people and difficult situations challenges students to creatively problem solve, preparing them for their next job. Employment helps develop this skill in methods that cannot be captured in the classroom (Tymon, 2013).

It could be assumed that students who work have to find a way to balance the obligations of work and academics. Working teaches students how to organize their priorities whether it be on the job or their academic commitments. Dundes and Marx (2006) found that students who worked more than 10 hours a week reportedly managed their time better than non-workers. As students climbed to more than 20 hours a week of employment the group claimed to still have good organizational skills, but devoted less time to academic requirements.

The demand to meet multiple commitments requires students to be wise with their time and established deadlines. Establishing deadlines may motivate workers more than non-workers. Without multiple commitments and deadlines, non-workers may become procrastinators instead of motivated and organized individuals (Dundes & Marx, 2006).

### **Interpersonal skills**

In any organization, members must have an ability to work together cooperatively. This increases the efficiency and effectiveness of a unit. Regularly, course work offers the ability for students to assemble what is needed for a project or a paper. Similarly, work experiences

provide collaborative, real-time learning environments. Teamwork forces students to develop collective problem solving skills, group thinking, ability to think quickly and respond to teammates, and assigning group roles (Lewis, 2010). Work experiences prepare students for the post-graduation employment environment by providing opportunities to work as a team outside the classroom (Hall, 2013; Riebe & Jackson, 2014; Tymon, 2013). Student employees find opportunities to engage with and create relationships with full time professional staff very rewarding. According to a study by Johnson, Kaiser, and Bell (2012), having an effective supervisor was the number two reason in importance in a job. This is important as this is the time when students develop employee-employer relationships and begin to narrow down career choices preparing them for experiences post-graduation.

Organizations look for employees who stand out as great leaders. Additionally, members of an organization are likely to have a staff that report to them, meaning the student will need practical training leading staff. Creating opportunities for students to grow in an organization leads to great opportunities for leadership experiences. These experiences enhance the student development experience and allow them to grow confidence when it comes to leading a group of people. On-campus employment has the potential to develop valuable leadership skills. In fact, Hall (2013), found leadership skills as a theme students developed as a part of their campus recreation employment. Tingle, Cooney, Asbury, and Tate (2013) also found that campus recreation professionals can create meaningful leadership opportunities for employees through intentional, well sound experiences.

Post-graduation, students must have developed communication skills to effectively traverse the job market and secure employment. Once employed, it becomes even more important to communicate with colleagues, vendors, clients, and supervisors. Developing

communication skills helps students strengthen the way they communicate with their peers, faculty members, and the campus community. Hall (2013) noted the following from her research, “the communication experience at Rec Sports has prepared me to better communicate with my patients in my nursing career” (p. 140).

Feedback that criticizes work performance is a common, yet difficult, aspect of employment. Learning how to accept, learn, and use constructive feedback early in an employment or academic setting is important for future growth and development. Employing students offers a great chance to develop this skill. In on-campus employment settings, students can learn to not only take constructive criticism, but provide it as well. Employers should use annual evaluations or other meetings with students to provide feedback for students (Lewis, 2010). Students should also be provided growth opportunities by evaluating their peers and sharing that information with them. Modeling and teaching the delivery of feedback encourages skill development to prepare students once they graduate.

#### **E. Higher Education as Skill Developers**

In addition to graduation rates it is important for campus administrators and academic programs to be able to report positive employment figures from their graduating students, but the questions remains if higher education should be ones responsible versus the industry (Tymon, 2013). Skill development only becomes stronger as a student gets the most of their work experience (Toperzer et al., 2011). Tymon (2013) shares that employability skills are better and more easily developed outside of the curriculum. On campus employment experiences outside the classroom offer the perfect setting for offering and developing opportunities to build and enhance employability skills. Faculty members continue to be concerned with the curriculum; staff that supervise students have the ability to provide experiences for students that yield

increased employability outcomes (Tymon, 2013). The key to seeing results are students being able to demonstrate their competence in skills (Peck, 2014; Riebe & Jackson, 2014). Campus recreation professionals identify with student development theory to help realize the importance of student employment in preparing students beyond graduation (Toperzer et al., 2011).

Developing additional learning opportunities that address the gap between the classroom and work is an ongoing challenge that campus recreation practitioners are committed to addressing as co-curricular experiences supports the student and the university (Furr & Elling, 2000).

#### **F. Campus Recreation Application**

Campus recreation practitioners have made known and prominently publicized the positive benefits between involvement in recreational sports and academic success. Positive associations aren't exclusive only to participants, however. Student development through employment is another major emphasis of campus recreation departments. Campus recreation programs offer multitudes of employment opportunities for students. Campus recreation departments are one of the largest student employers on campus (Toperzer et al., 2011). For instance, at University Recreation at the University of Arkansas, 434 students experienced employment opportunities across 26 different positions (University Recreation, 2014).

Table 2.  
*Student Employment Counts for FY14 Campus Recreation Programs at SEC Institutions*

Institution	Number of Students Employed
University of Alabama	500
University of Arkansas	434
Auburn University	Not available
University of Florida	730
University of Georgia	600
University of Kentucky	280
Louisiana State University	190
Mississippi State University	200
University of Mississippi	175
University of Missouri	Not available
University of South Carolina	300
University of Tennessee	400
Texas A&M University	900

As such, campus recreation staff members need to make dedicated efforts to maximize the student development outcomes of working in a recreation department.

A work experience in campus recreation not only offer the opportunity to gain and build transferable skills, but also provides a sense of belonging to students by providing on campus employment and interaction with their peers and professional staff (Hackett, 2007). Campus recreation employment experiences not only can create a sense of involvement for students as it becomes a hub for time spent working, recreating, and socializing, but can also create a deeper connection to the institution (Fresk & Mullendore, 2012). Fresk and Mullendore (2012) conducted a study that researched student employee opinions regarding the perception of on-campus employment as an involvement experience. Fresk and Mullendore (2012) found six themes related to factors that may influence perceptions of on-campus employment as involvement: 1) time in work environment, 2) personal interests, 3) relationships with coworkers,

4) relationships with supervisors, 5) tie to program area, and 6) interaction with campus (p. 145). Their research provides greater evidence that employment, particularly on-campus employment, is a positive to the student experience. Furthermore, they demonstrate that individuals who develop an affinity for an institution are more likely to support the institution as alumni.

### **Assessment**

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria encompass much of what academic and service organizations need to do to demonstrate their contributions to student learning and experiences, including retention and graduation efforts. Student employment should be regarded with the same learning potential as student programs and academic classes. Campus employers should include learning outcomes and skills gained in their position descriptions and use this information to market and inform students of the benefits of on-campus employment. Campus recreation practitioners can enhance the student learning experience by collecting information from skills learned during annual performance assessments (Hall, 2013; Tingle et al., 2013). The data collected from student assessments can then be used to further justify the importance of campus recreation to a campus and demonstrate learning extends beyond the classroom.

Campus recreation professionals should make themselves familiar with the outcomes associated with on-campus student employment. Very few campus recreation departments have established staff members with the role of assessment. As has been the practice, the large majority of campus recreation staff members are programming or facility staff, with little background in assessment and outcomes of student learning. As relationships are identified between employment in a campus recreation setting and academic success, a full-time assessment staff position will be vitally important. This staff member will be responsible for



delivering the importance of not only campus recreation, but the employment opportunities available for hundreds of students.

### **Transferable skills**

Organizations that employ young college graduates often state that those graduates do not possess enough skills to start full time work right out of college even though students express greater confidence levels of preparedness (Balbi, 2014; Carlson, 2014; Hart Research Associates, 2015; NACE, 2014). Undergraduate employment experiences can help fill this void by providing learning opportunities outside of the classroom helping build a student's skill set outside academics. Campus recreation professionals should use the employment experiences to develop and enhance student skill sets to develop them outside the classroom for their first job (Jacobson & Shuyler, 2013; Toperzer et al., 2011). Workshops should also be developed to grow the skills of undergraduates (Johnson, Kaiser, & Bell, 2012). In addition to employment opportunities, professional staff members in campus recreation should host additional workshops including, but not limited to time management, organization, leadership, communication, and problem solving. Creating additional opportunities outside direct work experience will help engage the student staff member into their academics and work experience creating a more well-rounded experience.

### **G. Need for Additional Research**

Additional research regarding the effect of employment with campus recreation on the student experience is sorely needed. Large quantities of money are spent annually on the operation of facilities and programs. Students participate in these facilities and programs as both participants and employees. Campus recreation professionals have shown a strong commitment to the participants of programs such as Intramural Sports, Club Sports, or Group Fitness, but

failed to provide significant evidence of development through facilities and programs employment opportunities (Tingle et al., 2013; Toperzer et al., 2011). As additional accountability measures surface, whether it be to campus leadership, the public, legislators, or parents, stakeholders need to know that an investment in campus recreation positively enhances the student experience as a participant and employee. Usage demographics regarding individual participation nicely introduces the campus recreation effect on participants and employees. Campus recreation practitioners must be prepared to move beyond participation attendance as an assessment tool. Deeper meanings regarding the student employment experience must be found and defined through assessment and outcomes (Toperzer et al., 2011).

#### **H. Implications for Policy and Practice**

Administrators need to be aware that students are trying to finance their education using resources outside of traditional loans and grants. Research demonstrates that employment during the undergraduate career can be positive experience, with careful mentoring. This relationship needs continued research to further understand and develop learning opportunities. Additionally, employers on campus can utilize the information to policy build for employees (Johnson et al., 2012).

#### **I. Time Spent Working**

Although research demonstrates a negative association between too many hours worked and academic performance, placing restrictions on the number of hours worked by student employees can result in further negative consequences. Restricting the maximum number of hours a student is allowed to work has the potential to discourage them from working on campus. Previous research frequently uses three basic thresholds of work quantity; 1) less than 10 hours a week, 2) 10 to 19 hours a week, and 3) more than 19 hours a week. This research suggests that

student employees work in the 10 to 19 hours a week threshold in order to see the greatest success (Dundes & Marx, 2006; King, 2002; Perna, 2010; Torres et al., 2010). Research demonstrates a negative association between working more than 19 hours per week and academic success, yet dangers lie in restricting hours.

It is important to consider an increased number of student positions available for on-campus employment. An increased number of on-campus jobs, balanced with close monitoring of student success will benefit a greater number of students. A greater quantity of jobs on campus decreases the number of students who may seek off-campus for employment. Off-campus employers will not restrict the student concerning the amount of hours they are permitted to work, decreasing flexibility and increasing stress and fatigue. Flexibility, which is greater with on-campus employment, is found to be one of the key factors for job importance among students employed part time; more important than pay rates, ability to supervise, and social interaction (Johnson et al., 2012). The decreased flexibility and increased stress likely lessens the chance for persistence and ultimately, graduation.

## **J. Work Study Programs**

Universities present students with many types of financial aid packages to help offset the cost of attending. Work-study programs are a way the federal government contributes to helping students afford college. These programs have been a part of the college experience since the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Astin, 1975). Work-study programs can be attractive as they bring the same opportunities as on campus employers, but at a lesser price tag to university departments (Baum, 2010). Students may not see work-study awards as significant in offsetting college costs, as they have to expend the same amount of effort as any other job, but employing work-study students is one way the campus can increase the number of part-time positions

available for students. Astin (1975) found that participation in work-study programs led to productive work experience and helped universities see an increase in persistence, thereby increasing the chance of completing college.

### **K. Intervention and Mentoring Programs**

Students that work have extra involvement with something outside of their coursework. The same could be said of students involved with student organizations or athletics. Employment, athletic participation, and student organizations will likely result in a substantial amount of commitment outside of time dedicated to attending class or studying. Athletics compensates this extra time commitment by providing resources to students such as study hall, tutoring, and careful attention to course load to maintain eligibility. Specific academic and social interventions should be designed for working students similar to those for student athletes (Hood, Craig, & Ferguson, 1992; Mounsey et al., 2013; Perna, 2010). Advisors and faculty members who advise students should be aware of their commitments that are large time consumers. Employment can serve as supplemental instruction to what is learned in the classroom, but students need mentoring to help guide them to make the best decisions for their academic term.

As King (2002) recommends, students need the help of faculty and staff members to help consider their options and the best path to achieve academic success. Faculty and staff must realize that simply reducing hours may not be an option for students. Students need the assistance of faculty and staff in helping manage their time and make the most of their employment experiences (Mounsey et al., 2013). Helping students become more successful and reach their academic goal helps the institution. Additionally, as a student matriculates through the academic process they free academic resources for the next group of students coming through.

## **L. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a review of literature that encompasses student employment and the positive and negative relationships associated with it. As the literature states, research is readily available when considering relationship between employment and GPA, retention, graduation rates, and general academic success. Meanwhile, the literature is generally inconclusive. Additional research is needed to verify that the work students perform is supplementary to their educational experiences as little research exists that connects student employment and higher education relationship.

Opportunities exist to make the undergraduate employment experience meaningful. It is important that administrators, student affairs professionals, and faculty members know that employment is no longer an option for many students but a must to remain enrolled to support their academic careers. Higher education professionals must package the employment experience in a meaningful way that the student can eventually demonstrate skill development to prospective employers. The ability to demonstrate hard and soft skills to prospective employers will better position students for employment post-graduation.

### **III. Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

#### **A. Introduction**

As campus recreation units provide meaningful experiences through participation and employment there is a need to generate additional research that demonstrates the learning and demonstration of outcomes. The review of literature identified several ways in which students gained valuable experiences in the campus recreation employment setting. The literature does not currently embrace the top skills or students' competencies that employers and colleges are seeking. Experiences that supplement classroom learning and prepare students for employment after graduation are important to student success. Employment experiences in campus recreation that enable students to demonstrate skill competency validate the role of employment while enrolled. This chapter will introduce the methods, subjects, design, instrument, and collection of data.

#### **B. Methods**

Campus recreation units serve thousands of students in both recreational activities and programs as well as through work experiences. Campus recreation has the unique ability to provide co-curricular learning opportunities through multiple work experiences that span a variety of roles within a recreation center (NIRSA, 2008). These positions provide employment to more than 500 student employees throughout the year in large organizations (NIRSA, 2008). The positions available to enrolled students allows for work experiences that apply to campus recreation and help build skills that will be transferable to other full-time positions. A recent report from the National Association of College and Employers (2014) reported that meeting a minimum grade point average was important for employment, but additional skills and experiences helped candidates stand out over another.

As the need for students to work while enrolled is becoming an increasing requirement versus a choice it is important that quality employment opportunity exists. The literature indicated employment experiences in campus recreation offer students the opportunities to build skills that are transferable to full-time positions. Large on-campus employers, such as campus recreation units, need to provide quality work experiences that prepare students for employment past graduation, through intentionally written position descriptions, job duties, and employment outcomes.

The research was completed using a mixed methods approach. This was determined the most appropriate as incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research provides a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012). A convergent mixed methods design was used. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. This design was selected as quantitative data presented the results of the larger group while qualitative data allowed for the evaluation of a select group of individuals (Creswell, 2012).

The quantitative research used a cross-sectional survey asking student employees their perceived enhanced skill ability, as a result of their employment with University Recreation, in skills identified as important by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Creswell, 2012). This is the best method to collect information as it provides the research current beliefs from the respondents (Creswell, 2012). The survey was distributed by hard copy and completed with pencil/pen. This method was selected to increase the response rate. The disadvantage to using a cross-sectional survey is that a cause-and-effect relationship cannot be explained; it captures perceptions and beliefs at the moment the survey is conducted (Creswell, 2012).

Focus groups were utilized to strengthen the research from participants. Three focus groups were conducted in December of 2015. Group sizes ranged from 4-6 participants. Focus

groups and surveys were distributed simultaneously. The focus groups began with participants engaged in a discussion about employment experiences, followed by individual thought and reflection to two open-ended questions. Collecting qualitative data allowed for a stronger answer to the research question through responses that could not be answered through the survey (Creswell, 2012).

### **C. Sample**

The sample for this study consists of graduate and undergraduate students who were employed by University Recreation at the University of Arkansas during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 academic semesters. The students who make up the work force are generally upperclassmen, ages 17-22, and enrolled more than half-time. Twenty-six different types of positions exist at UREC for part-time student employment. See Appendix B for a complete list of positions available. Student positions are divided between three primary categories: Facility Operations, Programming, and Business Services. Facility Operations provides jobs that oversee the operations of the facility, securing entry and exits, event management, participant behavior management, customer service, staff leadership, and conflict resolution. Programming positions consist of those who teach group fitness classes, officiate intramural sports, leading trips, and management of the climbing facility and outdoor equipment rental center. Business Services positions consist of office assistants who manage the membership office, marketing and graphic design staff, and accounting staff. These positions require students to engage with members, serve as a resource, facilitate programs, design programs, and lead staff.

### **D. Instrumentation**

In order to examine the most recently relevant job skills, an instrument was created utilizing the National Association of Colleges and Employers list of the most desirable job skills.



The survey instrument designed was used to measure the perceptions of student employee's skill ability while employed in the campus recreation setting (see Appendix A). The instrument was developed using a job outlook report published by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The report identified 10 skills that are important to employers. An applicant who demonstrated ability in the 10 skills is generally seen as a more desirable candidate (NACE, 2014). Table 3 identifies the top skills identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers and the corresponding survey item. The demographic data collected on the survey profiles the population of students employed at University Recreation at the University of Arkansas. Survey questions asked respondents to rank their perceived ability in the skills identified as important to employers by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The survey was presented to a panel of experts for review to ensure the comprehension and understanding of each survey item (Creswell, 2012). The panel of experts consisted of professionals employed at universities with campus recreation programs of similar size to test for content validity and inter-rater reliability.

Table 3.  
*Skills Identified as Important by National Association of Colleges and Employers*

Survey Item Number	Ability	Reference
7	work in a team structure	Hall, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Lewis, 2010; NACE, 2014;
8	make decisions and solve problems	Lewis, 2010; NACE, 2014
9	verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization	NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014 NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014
10	plan, organize, and prioritize work	Dundes & Marx, 2006; NACE, 2014
11	obtain and process information	Hall, 2013; NACE, 2014;
12	analyze quantitative data	NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014
13	technical knowledge related to the job	Lewis, 2010; NACE, 2014; Tymon, 2013
14	proficiency with computer software programs	NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014 Lewis, 2010; NACE, 2014
15	create and/or edit written reports	NACE, 2014; Peck, 2014
16	sell or influence others	Hall, 2013; Lewis, 2010; NACE, 2014; Tingle et al., 2013

### **E. Collection of Data**

Surveys were distributed to student employees at their in-service training meetings and collected at the same time. Three hundred surveys were distributed. Information about the survey, how the data will be used, and how to complete the survey was presented, with the survey, to participants at mandatory staff training meetings during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters, specifically during the months of December 2015 and January 2016. Direct

supervisors for each employee group administered and collected surveys at the respective in-service trainings. The researcher reached nearly all students employed by University Recreation in the fall 2015 and early spring 2016 semester as 280 surveys were received, a 93% return rate.

## **F. Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were reported from the demographic data to provide a profile of the sample. This information was used to complete additional analysis related to how student employees rated their perceived skill abilities for ten skills. Respondents ranked their ability on an interval scale from Low Ability to High Ability (Creswell, 2012).

### Research question 1

What was the profile of students who were employed in a campus recreation program that includes a comprehensive campus recreation program and a full-service recreation center?

Research question 1 was answered by survey questions 1-6. Frequencies and percentages have been reported about students employed at University Recreation during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semester. This question established characteristics of students employed at University Recreation. Additionally, a frequency distribution organized the data and presented the information in a format that allows the entire set of scores to be interpreted (Glass & Hopkins; 1996; Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999).

### Research question 2

For these employed students, what skills were perceived to be enhanced through their employment in campus recreation?

Research question 2 was answered by survey questions 7-16. The mean, median, and standard deviations have been reported. Reporting the measures of central tendency helps

identify the most representative score of the group (Creswell, 2012; Glass & Hopkins, 1996; Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999).

### Research question 3

Were there thematic trends in skill areas that were improved or not improved based on program area student employment?

Research question 3 was analyzed through an exploratory factor analysis test. Survey responses to questions 7 - 16 answered this question. The desired number of responses needed to provide an exploratory factor analysis were not collected for each functional employment area. Therefore, the employment areas were grouped into two groups; Facility and Business Operations and Programs. Responses indicated a commonality of respondent patterns existed. These clusters were then interpreted as thematic trends within Facility and Business Operations and Programs staff.

### Research question 4

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on the functional area within campus recreation that students were employed in?

Research question 4 was analyzed through a one-way factor ANOVA (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999; Hatcher, 2003). This test allows the researcher to make comparisons based on skill ability and the functional area in which the employee works. Analysis of survey questions 6 – 16 answered this research question. The independent variable is skill ability measured against the dependent variable, functional area of employment within campus recreation. A tabulation was done to report means and compare differences between groups. The alpha level used for level of significance was .05. Furthermore, a post hoc Tukey was conducted to explore

differences between groups as significance was found after the ANOVA (Glass & Hopkins, 1996).

#### Research question 5

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on length of employment?

Research question 5 was analyzed through an independent samples t-test (Hatcher, 2003).

This test allowed the researcher to make comparisons based on skill ability and the length of employment. Analysis of survey questions 6 – 16 answered this research question. The independent variable is the skill ability measured against the dependent variable, length of employment with campus recreation. Means were compared to identify differences in length of employment. The alpha level used for level of significance was .05.

#### Research question 6

What skills did students employed in campus recreation most want to see improved based on their employment?

Research question 6 was answered through a series of focus groups designed to provide a stronger answer to the research question. This results were reviewed to determine what employees want to see improved. Results are provided in a table format reporting the frequency of items reported (see Appendix F). Additionally, the researcher examined the responses for thematic similarities based on repetition of the items.

### **G. Chapter Summary**

This chapter describes methods and procedures that were utilized to conduct the study. The information will help determine what student employees perceived skill ability is, where those skills are developed in terms of functional employment area, if length of employment

contributes to skill development, and thematic trends for skill ability based on employment area.

The responses were analyzed through a Factor Analysis, one-way ANOVA, independent samples, t-test, and descriptive statistics.

## **IV. Chapter 4: Research Findings**

### **A. Introduction**

The purpose for conducting the study was to explore the self-reported outcomes of employment in a campus recreation setting. This chapter includes the summary of the study, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter will share quantitative and qualitative results demonstrating the relationship between campus recreation employment and the top skills employers and colleges seek in recent college graduates.

### **B. Summary of the Study**

Campus recreation programs employ large numbers of student to work and serve the everyday functions of the departmental operations. These student employees carry a significant amount of responsibility and have the opportunity to develop skills that will prove beneficial for employment after graduation. Campus recreation professional have a responsibility to provide an environment that enables the student to do their job and provide a learning opportunity that supplements the classroom.

The study consists of six research questions designed to investigate the perceived skill enhancement of students employed in campus recreation. A mixed methods approach for the study was used. Participation in the study consisted of participation in a paper survey and input in one of three focus groups. Student employees were surveyed in December 2015 and January 2016. Three focus groups took place in December 2015. Responses to survey question were analyzed and reported through descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, measure of central tendency, ANOVA, independent samples t-test, factor analysis, and the interpretation of focus group responses.

Campus recreation practitioners have long made known the benefits of participating in campus recreation programs. Student development through employment can be achieved through work experiences in campus recreation. Therefore, campus recreation departments, typically, one of the largest employers on campus, need to provide beneficial employment opportunities that supplement the classroom experience.

### **C. Data Collection**

Data for the study were collected by completion of a paper survey and participation in one of three focus groups. The sampling began by contacting program area supervisors toward the end of the Fall 2015 academic semester seeking their staff's participation. The collection of data took part in December of 2015 and January of 2016. Collection methods consisted of paper survey and participation in a focus groups.

Paper surveys were provided to each program area supervisor for distribution at a scheduled staff meeting between December 3, 2015 and January 25, 2016. Surveys were distributed and collected at those in-service meetings and returned to the program area supervisor. A total of 280 surveys were collected from the following employment areas: Marketing ( $n = 3$ ), Sport Complex ( $n = 1$ ), Intramural Sports ( $n = 39$ ), Fitness Programming ( $n = 28$ ), Facility Assistants ( $n = 32$ ), Fitness Center Attendants ( $n = 45$ ), Service Center Representatives ( $n = 18$ ), Student Managers ( $n = 13$ ), Facility Supervisors ( $n = 9$ ), Personal Trainers ( $n = 10$ ), Club Sports ( $n = 4$ ), UREC Outdoors ( $n = 19$ ), Office Assistants ( $n = 15$ ), and Lifeguards ( $n = 44$ ).

Three focus group opportunities were presented to the student staff through an e-mail to the student employment listserv. Students who responded as interested in participating were sent a Doodle link to sign up for one of three sessions. Focus group sessions were conducted on



December 3 (5 participants), 4 (6 participants), and 11 (4 participants). In total, 15 participants took part in the three focus groups. Additionally, journaling was conducted during the focus groups to record participant comments.

#### **D. Data Analysis**

##### Research Question 1

What was the profile of students who were employed in a campus recreation program that includes a comprehensive campus recreation program and a full-service recreation center?

Respondents included representation from all functional areas of University Recreation employment, each academic class standing, and those who had more and less than two years of experience. Table 4 provides frequencies and percentages of respondents employed December 2015 and January 2016. The profile of a student who works for a comprehensive campus recreation program was a junior or senior (71.4%), with a 3.00 or better grade point average (80%), had been employed for less than 2 years (62.9%), and primary area of responsibility was within Facility Operations (42.9%). Similar to the campus population, juniors and seniors made up the largest population of the work force. According to spring 2016 enrollment data, juniors and seniors made up 57% of the campus population, meaning that although the distribution of respondents is similar, it was not a complete representation of the university population. Additionally, according to spring 2016 enrollment data, female to male attendance was 51.8% to 48.2%. As shown in Table 4, similar to the campus enrollment, more females than males were employed.

Table 4.  
*Participant Descriptive Statistics*

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	162	57.9%
Male	118	42.1
<b>Class Standing</b>		
Freshman	13	4.6
Sophomore	49	17.5
Junior	84	30.0
Senior	116	41.4
Graduate	18	6.4
<b>Grade Point Average</b>		
0 to 1.99	2	.7
2.00 to 2.99	54	19.3
3.00 to 3.99	224	.80
<b>Years of Employment</b>		
Less than 2 years	176	62.9
Two or more years	104	37.1
<b>Employment Area</b>		
Facility Operations	120	42.9
Intramural and Club Sports	40	14.3
Aquatics and Community Programs	45	16.1
Fitness & Wellness	41	14.6
Outdoors	19	6.8
Business Operations	15	5.4

### Research Question 2

For these employed students, what skills were perceived to be enhanced through their employment in campus recreation?

As shown in Table 5, mean scores for perceived skills and employment indicated a difference between communication, teamwork, decision making, and prioritizing work and technical knowledge, obtain and process information, sell or influence others, analyze

quantitative data, computer software, and create and edit reports. Students had the highest overall mean score for communication skills ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ ), meaning that they reported their communication skills as being enhanced the most by working in campus recreation. Students had the lowest overall mean score for creating and editing reports ( $\bar{x} = 3.14$ ), meaning that they reported their creating and edit reports skills were enhanced the least by working in campus recreation. The high and low scores for all employment groups were clustered around a few individual skills. Individually, the highest mean score for perceived skill enhancement was technical skills by Outdoor employees ( $\bar{x} = 4.47$ ), while the lowest mean score was computer software by Aquatics and Community Programs staff members ( $\bar{x} = 2.40$ ).

The majority of the highest mean scores reported reflected either teamwork or communication skills, with one employment group identifying technical knowledge. Teamwork was identified as the highest perceived skill among Intramural and Club Sports ( $\bar{x} = 4.45$ ) and Aquatic and Community Programs ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ) student employees. Communication skills were identified as the highest perceived skill among Facilities Operations ( $\bar{x} = 4.42$ ), Fitness and Wellness ( $\bar{x} = 4.41$ ), and Business Operations ( $\bar{x} = 4.40$ ) employees. Technical knowledge was found to be the highest perceived skill reported for Outdoor ( $\bar{x} = 4.47$ ) employees.

Individually, the lowest perceived skill enhancement was identified with the lowest mean scores in computer software and creating and editing reports. Intramural and Club Sports ( $\bar{x} = 3.42$ ) and Aquatic and Community Programs ( $\bar{x} = 2.40$ ) student employees reported the lowest mean score with computer software. The remaining groups Facility Operations ( $\bar{x} = 3.40$ ), Fitness and Wellness ( $\bar{x} = 2.73$ ), Outdoors ( $\bar{x} = 2.68$ ), and Business Operations ( $\bar{x} = 3.13$ ) student employees reported creating and editing reports as the least perceived skill enhanced among ten skills.

Nearly all employee groups indicated that social work skills were perceived to be enhanced more than skills related to technical aspects (obtain and process information, analyze quantitative data, technical knowledge, computer software, creating and editing reports, and ability to sell or influence others) of working in a campus recreation setting. The lone exception was Outdoor student employees who noted the greatest skill enhancement as technical knowledge. The greatest perceived enhanced skill among all employee groups was communication ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ ), whereas creating and editing reports ( $\bar{x} = 3.14$ ) was reported to be the least enhanced. Therefore, social work skills (teamwork, decision making, communication, and prioritizing work) were perceived to be the greatest enhanced skills through campus recreation employment.

Table 5.  
*Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation for Skill Enhancement through Employment*

	Facility Operations <i>n</i> = 120	Intramural & Club Sports <i>n</i> = 40	Aquatics & Comm. Programs <i>n</i> = 45	Fitness & Wellness <i>n</i> = 41	Outdoors <i>n</i> = 19	Business Operations <i>n</i> = 15	Total <i>N</i> = 280
<b>Communication</b>							
Mean	4.42	4.30	3.93	4.41	4.16	4.40	4.30
Median	5	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.681	.758	.889	.631	.688	.632	.736
<b>Teamwork</b>							
Mean	4.27	4.45	4.04	3.68	3.95	4.07	4.14
Median	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.788	.815	.852	1.15	.780	.704	.885
<b>Decision Making</b>							
Mean	4.24	4.30	3.69	4.02	4.05	4.27	4.12
Median	4.00	4.5	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.745	.823	.793	.935	.621	.704	.806
<b>Prioritize Work</b>							
Mean	4.14	4.18	3.73	4.27	4.16	4.20	4.10
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.802	.931	.889	.672	.834	.676	.825
<b>Technical Knowledge</b>							
Mean	4.09	4.32	3.76	3.73	4.47	4.20	4.05
Median	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.870	.764	1.026	.923	.772	.775	.903

(table continues)

Table 5

	Facility Operations <i>n</i> = 120	Intramural & Club Sports <i>n</i> = 40	Aquatics & Comm. Programs <i>n</i> = 45	Fitness & Wellness <i>n</i> = 41	Outdoors <i>n</i> = 19	Business Operations <i>n</i> = 15	Total <i>N</i> = 280
<b>Obtain and Process Information</b>							
Mean	4.02	4.20	3.53	3.80	3.74	4.33	3.93
Median	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Dev.	.907	.939	.968	.901	.733	.724	.923
<b>Sell or Influence Others</b>							
Mean	3.60	3.95	2.80	3.90	3.89	3.87	3.60
Median	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	1.163
Std. Dev.	1.080	1.218	1.342	.970	.658	1.060	4.00
<b>Analyze Quantitative Data</b>							
Mean	3.62	3.75	2.87	3.02	3.16	4.00	3.42
Median	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Std. Dev.	1.116	1.214	1.14	1.172	.958	.926	1.171
<b>Computer Software</b>							
Mean	3.62	3.42	2.40	2.98	3.26	3.80	3.29
Median	4.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Std. Dev.	.963	1.196	1.372	1.214	1.147	1.146	1.208
<b>Create &amp; Edit Reports</b>							
Mean	3.40	3.73	2.47	2.73	2.68	3.13	3.14
Median	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Std. Dev.	1.170	1.339	1.217	1.285	.946	1.457	1.288

### Research Question 3

Were there thematic trends in skill areas that were improved or not improved based on program area student employment?

A factor analysis was completed to determine if commonality in responses existed based on the employment area in which students were employed; the factor analysis was completed with a varimax rotation. This method was used to simplify the data and better align responses to be more easily interpreted. With 280 usable responses, there were not enough in each functional area of employment to complete a factor analysis for each individual employee group, so functional employment areas were combined under the umbrella in which they operated within the campus recreation unit. Facility Operation and Business Operations were combined to form Facility and Business Operations ( $n = 135$ ). Intramural and Club Sports, Aquatics and Community Programs, Fitness and Wellness, and Outdoors were combined as Programs ( $n = 145$ ). Combining functional employment areas into Facility and Business Operation and Program allowed for a factor analysis to be completed for two larger functional grouped employment areas within campus recreation. Organizationally, campus recreation programs are organized into a Programs division and Facility and Business Operations division. Therefore, the grouping of functional employment areas into two groups labeled Programs and Facility and Business Operations is representative as to how campus recreation programs are operated organizationally.

The factor analysis of Facility and Business Operations perceived skill enhancement revealed that similar responses could be identified according to common response patterns. The response patterns allowed for the interpretation of two identified themes, social work skills and technical work skills. Teamwork, decision making, communication, and prioritize work were

themed as social work skills. Obtain and process information, analyze quantitative data, technical knowledge, computer software, create and edit reports, and sell or influence others were themed as technical work skills.

Table 6.  
*Factor Analysis for Perceived Job Skill Enhancement by Facility and Business Operations*

Skills	Component	
	1	2
<i>Team</i>	.369	<b>.696</b>
<i>Decision Making</i>	.221	<b>.875</b>
<i>Communication</i>	.220	<b>.827</b>
<i>Prioritize Work</i>	.334	<b>.748</b>
Obtain and Process Information	<b>.564</b>	.556
Analyze Quantitative Data	<b>.751</b>	.397
Technical Knowledge	<b>.710</b>	.341
Computer Software	<b>.850</b>	.152
Create/Edit Reports	<b>.810</b>	.256
Sell or Influence Others	<b>.675</b>	.295

A factor analysis of Programs perceived skill enhancement revealed a commonality of responses clustered into two subjects. Similar to the Facilities and Business Operations staff the factor analysis revealed two clusters of responses. The clusters were interpreted into the two themes of social work skills and technical work skills. Teamwork, decision making, communication, and prioritize work were themed as social work skills. Obtain and process



information, analyze quantitative data, technical knowledge, computer software, create and edit reports, and sell or influence others were themed as technical work skills.

Table 7.  
*Factor Analysis for Perceived Job Skill Enhancement by Programs*

Skills	Component	
	1	2
<i>Team</i>	.423	<b>.538</b>
<i>Decision Making</i>	.245	<b>.752</b>
<i>Communication</i>	.135	<b>.850</b>
<i>Prioritize Work</i>	.304	<b>.761</b>
Obtain and Process Information	<b>.613</b>	.493
Analyze Quantitative Data	<b>.809</b>	.256
Technical Knowledge	<b>.510</b>	.356
Computer Software	<b>.871</b>	.139
Create/Edit Reports	<b>.838</b>	.219
Sell or Influence Others	<b>.581</b>	.376

Therefore, to answer the research question, the factor analysis identified two clusters of statistically significant responses that could be interpreted as themes: social work skills and technical work skills. Social work skills were those that improved individual interpersonal communications or social behaviors, such as how to work on a team or communicate with other employees or recreation facility users. The technical work skills were those that focused on how to perform specific functions, such as using computer software or editing reports. Overall, the

statistical analysis did identify these two clusters as the consistent areas that student employees saw themselves improving and learning from their jobs.

Research Question 4

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on the functional area in campus recreation that students were employed in?

The means, reported by functional employment area, are shown in Table 5. A one way ANOVA was completed to compare means and determine if a statistical difference between each group existed for each skill (See Table 8). The one way ANOVA revealed a significant statistical difference existed between each functional employee area and all skills.

Table 8.  
*ANOVA for Perceived Job Skill Enhancement by Employment Area*

	F	Sig.
Team	4.273	<b>.001*</b>
Decision Making	3.964	<b>.002*</b>
Communication	3.367	<b>.006*</b>
Prioritize Work	2.363	<b>.040*</b>
Obtain and Process Information	3.609	<b>.004*</b>
Analyze Quantitative Data	5.688	<b>.000*</b>
Technical Knowledge	3.882	<b>.002*</b>
Computer Software	8.947	<b>.000*</b>
Create/Edit Reports	7.084	<b>.000*</b>
Sell or Influence Others	6.531	<b>.000*</b>

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Teamwork**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of teamwork skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of decision making skills,  $F = 4.273$ ,  $p = .001$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .002$ ; and between Intramural and Club Sports and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .001$ . Facilities Operations student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.27$ , Fitness and Wellness overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.68$ , and Intramural and Club Sports student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.45$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in teamwork skills than both Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sport student employees.

Table 9.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Teamwork by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.875	.642	<b>.002*</b>	.636	.950
Intramurals & Club Sports	.875		.255	<b>.001*</b>	.291	.682
Aquatics & Community Programs	.642	.255		.375	.998	1.000
Fitness & Wellness	<b>.002*</b>	<b>.001*</b>	.375		.878	.687
Outdoors	.636	.291	.998	.878		.999
Business Operations	.950	.682	1.000	.678	.999	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Decision making**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of decision-making skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of decision making skills,  $F = 3.964$ ,  $p = .002$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Aquatics/Community Programs student employees,  $p = .001$ ; and between Intramural/Club Sports and Aquatics/Community Programs student employees,  $p = .005$ . Facilities Operations student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.24$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.69$ , and Intramural and Club Sports student employees mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.30$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs

perceived less improvement in decision making skills than both Intramural/Club Sports and Facility Operations student employees.

Table 10.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Decision-Making by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.999	<b>.001*</b>	.645	.926	1.000
Intramurals & Club Sports	.999		<b>.005*</b>	.613	.868	1.000
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.001*</b>	<b>.005*</b>		.357	.537	.137
Fitness & Wellness	.645	.613	.357		1.000	.910
Outdoors	.926	.868	.537	1.000		.969
Business Operations	1.000	1.000	.137	.910	.969	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Communication**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of communication skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of communication skills,  $F = 3.367$ ,  $p = .006$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .002$ ; and between Fitness and Wellness and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .026$ . Facilities

Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.42$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.93$ , and Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.41$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in communication skills than Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees.

Table 11.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Communication by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.950	<b>.002*</b>	1.000	.694	1.000
Intramurals & Club Sports	.950		.182	.980	.981	.997
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.002*</b>	.182		<b>.026*</b>	.865	.255
Fitness & Wellness	1.000	.980	<b>.026*</b>		.794	1.000
Outdoors	.694	.981	.865	.794		.926
Business Operations	1.000	.997	.255	1.000	.926	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

### **Skill: Prioritize work**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of communication skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of communication skills,  $F = 2.363$ ,  $p = .040$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Aquatics and Community

Programs and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .031$ . Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.73$ , and Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.27$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in prioritizing work skills than Fitness and Wellness student employees.

Table 12.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Prioritize Work by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations	1.000	.051	.956	1.000	1.000	
Intramurals & Club Sports	1.000	.130	.996	1.000	1.000	
Aquatics & Community Programs	.051	.130	<b>.031*</b>	.402	.392	
Fitness & Wellness	.956	.996	<b>.031*</b>	.997	1.000	
Outdoors	1.000	1.000	.402	.997	1.000	
Business Operations	1.000	1.000	.392	1.000	1.000	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Obtain and process information**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of obtaining and processing information skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of obtaining and processing information skills,  $F = 3.609$ ,  $p = .004$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences

between Facility Operations and Aquatic and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .029$ ; and between Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p=.010$ ; and between Business Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .037$ . Facilities Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.02$ , Intramural and Clubs Sports student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.20$ , Business Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.33$ , and Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.53$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in obtaining and processing information than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sport, and Business Operations student employees.

Table 13.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Obtain and Process Information by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.876	<b>.029*</b>	.786	.808	.795
Intramurals & Club Sports	.876		<b>.010*</b>	.362	.440	.997
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.029*</b>	<b>.010*</b>		.731	.963	<b>.037*</b>
Fitness & Wellness	.786	.362	.731		1.000	.379
Outdoors	.808	.440	.963	1.000		.396
Business Operations	.795	.997	<b>.037*</b>	.379	.396	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$



**Skill: Analyze quantitative data**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of analyzing quantitative data skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of analyzing quantitative data skills,  $F = 5.688$ ,  $p = .000$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .002$ , Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .040$ , Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .005$ , Intramural and Club Sports and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .045$ , Business Operations and Aquatic and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .011$ , and Business Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .049$ . Facility Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.62$ , Intramural and Clubs Sports student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.75$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.87$ , Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.02$ , and Business Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.00$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics and Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in analyzing quantitative data than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations student employees.

Table 14.  
*Post Hoc Tukey – Analyze Quantitative Data by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.990	<b>.002*</b>	<b>.040*</b>	.544	.828
Intramurals & Club Sports	.990		<b>.005*</b>	<b>.045*</b>	.410	.978
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.002*</b>	<b>.005*</b>		.987	.934	<b>.011*</b>
Fitness & Wellness	<b>.040*</b>	<b>.045*</b>	.987		.998	.049
Outdoors	.544	.410	.934	.998		.256
Business Operations	.828	.978	<b>.011*</b>	.049	.256	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Technical knowledge**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of technical knowledge according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of technical knowledge,  $F = 5.688$ ,  $p = .000$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .037$ ; between Intramural and Club Sports and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .031$ ; between Outdoors and Aquatic and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .036$ ; and between Outdoors and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .031$ . Intramural and Clubs Sports student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.32$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employee

overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.76$ , Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.73$ , and Outdoors student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 4.47$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics and Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in technical knowledge than Intramural and Club Sports and Outdoors student employees.

Table 15.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Technical Knowledge by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.695	.248	.214	.495	.998
Intramurals & Club Sports	.695		<b>.037*</b>	<b>.031*</b>	.991	.997
Aquatics & Community Programs	.248	<b>.037*</b>		1.000	<b>.036*</b>	.537
Fitness & Wellness	.214	<b>.031*</b>	1.000		<b>.031*</b>	.491
Outdoors	.495	.991	<b>.036*</b>	<b>.031*</b>		.946
Business Operations	.998	.997	.537	.491	.946	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Computer software**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of computer software skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of computer software,  $F = 8.947$ ,  $p = .000$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and

Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .000$ ; between Facility Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .023$ ; between Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .001$ ; and between Business Operations and Aquatic and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .001$ . Facility Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.62$ , Intramural and Clubs Sports student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.42$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.40$ , Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.98$ , and Business Operations student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.80$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in computer software skills than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations student employees. Additionally, Fitness and Wellness student employees perceived less improvement in computer software skills than Facility Operations student employees.

Table 16.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Computer Software by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.939	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.023*</b>	.803	.991
Intramurals & Club Sports	.939		<b>.001*</b>	.474	.996	.883
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.001*</b>		.175	.062	<b>.001*</b>
Fitness & Wellness	<b>.023*</b>	.474	.175		.942	.154
Outdoors	.803	.996	.062	.942		.742
Business Operations	.991	.883	<b>.001*</b>	.154	.742	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Create and edit reports**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of creating and editing report skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of creating and editing reports,  $F = 7.084$ ,  $p = .000$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .000$ ; between Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .033$ ; between Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .000$ , between Intramural and Club Sports and Fitness and Wellness student employees,  $p = .004$ ; between Intramural and Club Sports and Outdoors student employees,  $p = .030$ . Facility Operations

student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.40$ , Intramural and Clubs Sports student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.73$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.47$ , Fitness and Wellness student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.73$ , and Outdoors student employee overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.68$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in creating and editing reports than Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sports student employees. Additionally, student employees in Outdoors perceived less improvement in creating and editing reports than Intramural and Clubs Sports student employees.

Table 17.  
*Post Hoc Tukey - Create and Edit Reports by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.693	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.033*</b>	.170	.968
Intramurals & Club Sports	.693		<b>.000*</b>	<b>.004*</b>	<b>.030*</b>	.601
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.000*</b>	<b>.000*</b>		.916	.986	.449
Fitness & Wellness	<b>.033*</b>	<b>.004*</b>	.916		1.000	.886
Outdoors	.170	<b>.030*</b>	.987	1.000		.895
Business Operations	.968	.601	.449	.886	.895	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

**Skill: Sell or influence others**

The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences in perceived enhancement of selling or influencing others skills according to students' area of employment. There was a significant difference in perceived enhancement of selling or influencing others skills,  $F = 6.531$ ,  $p = .000$  (as shown in Table 8). A Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed differences between Facility Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .001$ ; between Intramural and Club Sports and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .000$ ; between Fitness and Wellness and Aquatic and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .000$ ; between Outdoors and Aquatics and Community Programs student employees,  $p = .005$ ; and between Business Operations and Aquatics and Community Programs,  $p = .018$ . Facility Operations student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.60$ , Intramural and Clubs Sports student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.95$ , Aquatics and Community Programs student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 2.80$ , Fitness and Wellness student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.90$ , Outdoors student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.89$ , and Business Operations student employees overall mean was  $\bar{x} = 3.87$  (as shown in Table 5). Therefore, student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in selling and influencing others than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, Fitness and Wellness, Outdoors, and Business Operations student employees.

Table 18.

*Post Hoc Tukey - Sell or Influence Others by Employment Area*

	Facility Operations	Intramurals Club Sports	Aquatics & Community Programs	Fitness & Wellness	Outdoors	Bus. Ops
Facility Operations		.514	<b>.001*</b>	.660	.890	.952
Intramurals & Club Sports	.514		<b>.000*</b>	1.000	1.000	1.000
Aquatics & Community Programs	<b>.001*</b>	<b>.000*</b>		<b>.000*</b>	<b>.005*</b>	<b>.018*</b>
Fitness & Wellness	.660	1.000	<b>.000*</b>		1.000	1.000
Outdoors	.890	1.000	<b>.005*</b>	1.000		1.000
Business Operations	.952	1.000	<b>.018*</b>	1.000	1.000	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

#### Research Question 5

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on length of employment?

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was a perceived job skill enhancement based upon the length of employment. The grouping variables used were less than two years of employment or two or more years of employment with University Recreation. The test revealed that a significant difference was not observed based on length of student employment. Therefore, being employed less than or two or more years did not improve perceived job skill enhancement.



Table 19.  
*Independent Samples t-test - Perceived Job Skill Enhancement by Tenure*

	t value	p
Teamwork	-.718	.473
Decision Making	-1.499	.135
Communication	-.912	.363
Prioritize Work	.415	.679
Obtain and Process Information	-.141	.888
Analyze Quantitative Data	.193	.847
Technical Knowledge	-1.761	.079
Computer Software	-.336	.737
Create and Edit Reports	-.853	.394
Sell or Influence Others	.467	.641

### Research Question 6

What skills did students employed in campus recreation most want to see improved based on their employment?

This question was answered through a student employee's participation in one of three focus groups. Three focus groups were scheduled in early December 2015. Participants were solicited through a departmental listserv that contains all currently employed students. Student input was solicited through two different emails to the listserv. The first to respond were sent a call for availability through a Doodle Poll to identify a time to schedule the focus groups. Student responses to the call for availability determined the day and timing of the three focus

groups. In all 15 student employees expressed an interest to participate in the focus groups. A total of 15 student employee participated. Table 20 identifies sex, years of employment, primary position title, and class standing. Appendix F consists a full list of participant responses.

Table 20.  
*Focus Group Participants*

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3
<b>Sex</b>			
Female	5	4	2
Male	1	1	2
<b>Years of Employment</b>			
1	1		2
2	3	3	1
3	1	1	1
4	1	1	
<b>Position Title</b>			
Student Manager	3	2	1
Group Fitness	1		
Facility Supervisor	2		2
Service Center		2	1
Fitness Center		1	
<b>Class Standing</b>			
Freshman			
Sophomore			
Junior	1		3
Senior	3	4	1
Graduate	2	1	

### **Focus group number one**

The first of three focus group took place on December 3, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. Six participants were asked to respond to three questions and then provide individual written responses to two follow up questions. To begin, the group was very slow to respond to questions. Questions were rephrased as participants waited to break the silence. As participants

began to answer, more felt comfortable to speak freely and provide meaningful contributions. The group spoke very positively about their employment experience and how they felt it was beneficial to them not only as a student but how it will be after they graduate. The participants took turns answering the question with nearly everyone providing a comment or making a point to agree with someone or mention that another suggestion was a ‘good one.’ Additionally, as a participant would offer a comment it seemed to trigger follow up and additional thoughts from other participants. Participants appeared to be honest and free to share experiences, both negative and positive regarding their own growth.

The idea of obtaining employment and building skills while a student employee was not a matter of if, but when. According to each participant, employment while enrolled was not a choice, they were bound to find a job at their own desire. While the group cited basic necessities as a good reason to have a job, the rationale for obtaining and maintaining become of greater importance for the steps beyond graduation. One participant stated, “I wanted the experience on my resume for future employers to see.” This comment was quickly followed up with, “yeah, I need to figure out something that will help me stand out over others applying for jobs. Showing that I held a consistent job for several years while in school will help me do that.” Building on that comment, the group discussed what they hope to get out of a part-time job while enrolled. The students shared a resounding comment, “experience”. “I saw this as an opportunity to advance and build skills over what I could do waiting tables, which I could have easily gone out and done”, shared one participant. Another participant commented,

My job here (UREC), requires me to think on my feet. I have to make decisions in a timely manner, which means I don’t have time to ask someone else’s opinion. In the future, the same will be expected of me. I feel good knowing I am getting those experiences now.

Student employees were also able to draw on experiences that occurred during a shift that highlight the types skills they have learned. Controlling emotions and resolving confrontation among peer employees and the membership were noted. One participant shared the following comment,

This job has taught me how to develop a longer fuse when working with people. I'm more patient and allow people to share their opinion – this is sometimes all they really need. Once they are finished, I'm able to respond appropriately, versus I used to just stop them and tell them no or why they cannot do something.

Others commented about they have been able to better manage their time and schedules. “Work is at a scheduled time, but I also have to balance my sorority stuff and homework. This job has helped me plan better and manage my time better.”

### **Focus group number two**

The second focus group was conducted on December 4, 2015 at 2:30 p.m. The group of five was asked to respond to three questions. At the end of the discussion, the group provided individual written responses to two follow up questions. The group was very chatty and eager to share opinions about their employment experiences. The group afforded each member the opportunity to provide input, often agreeing and following up comments with “yeah, I was going to say that”.

Unlike the first group, this group was ready to share their experiences while working for University Recreation and a few stories along the way. The reasoning for getting a job was very similar to the first group noting basic living necessities, but failed to mention career prep like the previous group. Responses centered around low bank accounts, have their own paycheck, pay bills, and to stop asking parents for money. Although, when asked about what they hope to get out of their job, the responses became much more experiential based. Student employees

identified networking, references, experience, build work ethic, problem solving, and customer service as a partial list.

The focus group participants spent the greatest amount of time sharing the various skills they believe they have learned as a result of their employment. Again, students shared how they grew, sharing an experience that they learned from. For example, one student shared,

I've learned how to better relate with people, both staff and participants. When people would be late for their shift in the past, I'd just mad and write them up, without really caring about any excuse, but I've learned that being able to communicate with the staff is important. I know take the time to have a conversation about what happened to help relay any information to a supervisor that may be helpful. The same goes for participants. I have learned that simply telling someone no, is not helpful. I try to always ensure I have a reasoning for telling people know and explain that to them.

Other students talked about learning task oriented skills such as checking pool chemicals, computer software, first-aid, CPR, and AED, and sport specific (volleyball, badminton, pickleball, etc.) equipment. One student responded after others listed off the items, "yeah, I'm not sure when I'll use some of that after I graduate, but at least it shows I can learn and follow directions regarding set-ups or directives."

### **Focus group number three**

The third focus group was held on December 11, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. The group of four was asked to respond to three questions. At the end of the discussion, the group provided individual written responses to two follow up questions. Similar to the two previous focus groups the group spoke positively about their campus recreation employment opportunity. Each member of the group had the opportunity to provide input. Students relied on their specific experiences through University Recreation on how they grew, regardless of whether the experiences with primarily positive or negative, they improved how they addressed situations when they presented themselves again.

Similar to the second group, this group commented about the need for financial awareness and ability to afford necessities as a primary driver for getting a job. The availability of discretionary income is helpful in their general happiness as it helps eliminate worry of “paying for things socially, helps cover what parents cannot or will not, paying bills, and independence.” Again, a group was able to draw on specific experiences that they believe helped build skills and prepare them for experiences after graduation. A participant stated, “this job teaches me how to juggle everything I have going on. It’s not like it is going to slow down after graduation.”

Involvement and connection to a University is an important factor in student retention in the college setting. This is always an important factor for students. It was interesting to note that this was a reason one particular focus group participant sought employment. The following was shared,

I knew I needed a job to force me to become involved and meet people. I’m not a person who likes to go out and not good about meeting new people. I knew a job would force me to do that and create a greater reason to stay at school. I am pretty introverted, this job has helped me communicate. You talk to people all the time, I have to be willing to open up.

Participants spoke largely about the need to gain employment experience and demonstrate to future employers their ability to hold a job, complete their degree, and learn skills to be successful employees. The focus groups demonstrated that students experience a variety of experiences that they are able to learn from and change the way in which they are resolved from scenario to scenario. The employment experience is co-curricular as they are learning from their experiences and making improvements. One participant stated “I want to come out of this job better prepared for future employment opportunities. I want to lead better, adapt faster, and work harder through tasks and challenges.” The employment experience topic resonated regularly

throughout the conversation and how it led to the skills they wanted to develop, actually developed, and hoped to develop. The most common skills identified by student employees were leadership, problem solving, time management, and communication. These skills mirror the top four skills that employers and colleges are looking for in recent graduates. Another participant shared “Continually developing communication skills is very important to me so I can display these skills as a future Physical Therapist to create the best possible environment for my patients”

In summary, each group commented how the employment experience had been a positive experience for them during their experience in college. One participant described their employment experience:

University Recreation has helped me continue to build time management and leadership skills. University Recreation has also helped me develop as a person. I have become more confident and learned how to adapt and deal with a variety of situation and personalities.

Each member of the focus group willingly contributed to the discussion and contributed their individual opinion. I felt all the participants were honest and did not feel pressured to simply agree with the group at each session. A full list of participant responses can be found in Appendix F.

### **E. Chapter Summary**

The chapter presented the results and analysis of surveys and three focus groups conducted with students enrolled in classes and employed at a comprehensive recreation center. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, measures of central tendency, factor analysis, ANOVA, independent samples t-test, and review of the focus group responses. The information answers the six research questions regarding perceived

improvement in perceived skill enhancement as a result of student employment with University  
Recreation.



## **V. Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **A. Introduction**

The study reported the perceived skill enhancement of students employed in a campus recreation setting. The chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for researchers and practitioners. The discussion at the end of the chapter demonstrates the importance of student employment and the relationship with student development.

### **B. Summary of the Study**

Employment opportunities for students consist of off-campus and on-campus experiences. This study used students enrolled at a large, four year, public institution, with a comprehensive campus recreation program. The purpose for conducting the study was to explore the self-reported outcomes of employment in a campus recreation setting.

The sample for this study consisted of undergraduate and graduate students who were employed by University Recreation at the University of Arkansas during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 academic semesters. The research was completed using a mixed methods approach. Data were collected simultaneously through the use of paper surveys and focus groups. The study consisted of six research questions to determine the statistical significance of perceived skill enhancement as a result of employment in a campus recreation program. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, factor analysis, ANOVA, independent samples t-test, and review of focus group responses. The data indicates that campus recreation employment does help prepare students for employment after graduation and supplement the classroom experiences, therefore considering employment a co-curricular activity.

### Research question 1

What was the profile of students who were employed in a campus recreation program that includes a comprehensive campus recreation program and a full-service recreation center?

The profile of a student who works for a comprehensive campus recreation program was a junior or senior, with a 3.00 or better grade point average, had been employed for less than 2 years, and primary area of responsibility was within Facility Operations.

### Research question 2

For these employed students, what skills were perceived to be enhanced through their employment in campus recreation?

Social work skills (teamwork, decision making, communication, and prioritizing work) were perceived to be the greatest enhanced skills through campus recreation employment

### Research question 3

Were there thematic trends in skill areas that were improved or not improved based on program area student employment?

The factor analysis identified two clusters of statistically significant responses that could be interpreted as themes: social work skills and technical work skills. Social work skills were those that improved individual interpersonal communications or social behaviors, such as how to

The research was completed using a mixed methods approach. This was determined the most appropriate as incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research provides a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012). A convergent mixed methods design was used. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time. This design was selected as quantitative data presented the results of the larger group where qualitative data allowed for the evaluation of a select group of individuals (Creswell, 2012).

The quantitative research was a cross-sectional survey asking student employees their perceived enhanced skill ability, as a result of their employment with University Recreation, in skills identified as important by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Creswell, 2012). This is the best method to collect information as it provides the research current beliefs from the respondents (Creswell, 2012). The survey will be distributed by hard copy and completed with pencil/pen. This method has been selected to increase the response rate. The disadvantage to using the cross-sectional survey is that a cause and effect relationship cannot be explained, opposed to perceptions and beliefs at the moment the survey is conducted (Creswell, 2012).

The qualitative research was collected through a series of focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted in December of 2015. Group sizes ranged from 4-6 participants. The qualitative data were collected at the same time the surveys were distributed. The collection of the qualitative data allowed for a stronger answer to the research question through responses that could not be answered through the survey (Creswell, 2012). The focus groups began with participants engaged in a discussion about employment experiences, followed by individual thought and reflection to two open-ended questions work on a team or communicate with other employees or recreation facility users. The technical work skills were those that focused on how to perform specific functions, such as using computer software or editing reports.

#### Research question 4

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on the functional area within campus recreation that students were employed in?

A significant difference existed between each functional employee area and all skills. It might be assumed that opportunities for member interaction, interaction amongst co-workers, task responsibilities, or location of employment may influence the perceived skill enhancement.

**Skill: Teamwork**

Student employees in Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in teamwork skills than both Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sport student employees. It could be assumed that Fitness and Wellness by nature of the job do not have to work cooperatively with their peers. Their time spent working is largely on their own leading participants through classes whereas Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sports staff regularly work together for a common purpose such as an event set-up or officiating a team sport.

**Skill: Decision making**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in decision making skills than both Intramural and Club Sports and Facility Operations student employees. By nature of the position Aquatics/Community Programs staff are following a set curriculum or supervising members using the pool. In these capacities, it is likely that little opportunity to exercise decision making exists by nature of the job duties. Contrary to Aquatics/Community Programs, Intramural and Club Sports and Facility Operations staff regularly make decisions regarding game management and the operation of the facility and oversight of events.

**Skill Communication**

Student employees in Aquatic/Community Programs perceived less improvement in communication skills than Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness student employees. Aquatics/Community Programs staff members are largely sedentary and the position they hold

largely does not communicate with members outside of enforcement of rules. Facility Operations and Fitness and Wellness staff members are communication regularly with staff and members regarding directions for staff, answering member inquiries, and teaching group fitness classes

**Skill: Prioritize work**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in prioritizing work skills than Fitness and Wellness student employees. Students in the Aquatics/Community Program employment area rarely have to prioritize job duties outside of observation of members while swimming. Fitness and Wellness staff members meanwhile have to set up for class, choreograph class, provide participant feedback, and collect enrollment information. This requires them to prioritize what needs to occur for a successful class.

**Skill: Obtain and process information**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in obtaining and processing information than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sport, and Business Operations student employees. This skill provides challenging opportunities for Aquatics/Community Programs staff on a regular basis as the job is largely monitoring individuals using the aquatic facility. Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sport, and Business Operations student employees regularly have to seek and process information to answer member questions, carry out an event setup, and manage a night of intramural and club sport activity.

**Skill: Analyze quantitative data**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness Staff perceived less improvement in analyzing quantitative data than Facility Operations, Intramural

and Club Sports, and Business Operations. Like many other skills, Aquatics/Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness staff are afforded the same opportunity due to the task requirements of the position. Whereas Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations staff must review quantitative data to make informed decisions regarding event needs, game management and set-up, and decisions related to business operations of the office.

**Skill: Technical knowledge**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in technical knowledge than Intramural and Club Sports and Outdoors student employees. Intramural and Club Sports and Outdoors staff members must have a thorough understanding of rules and procedures of their respective activities to provide a safe environment for student participants. The regular review of policies and procedures likely provides a greater opportunity for skill development than Aquatics/Community Program and Fitness and Wellness staff members.

**Skill: Computer software**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in computer software skills than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations student employees. Additionally, Fitness and Wellness student employees perceived less improvement in computer software skills than Facility Operations student employees. By nature of the daily operations of Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations employees they regularly use computers, tablets, and iPads to complete their assigned work. This affords Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, and Business Operations

employees a greater opportunity to develop computer software skills versus those employee groups who do not need software to complete their job responsibilities.

**Skill: Create and edit reports**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs and Fitness and Wellness perceived less improvement in creating and editing reports than Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sports student employees. Additionally, student employees in Outdoors perceived less improvement in creating and editing reports than Intramural and Clubs Sports student employees. A job function for Facility Operations and Intramural and Club Sports staff is create shift or end of night reports that serve as a summary of the activities and events. These reports are reviewed by full-time staff daily. It should be assumed that full-time staff are reviewing these regularly and providing students feedback for improving reports that are inadequate, providing an atmosphere that facilitates the development of creating and editing reports.

**Skill: Sell or influence others**

Student employees in Aquatics/Community Programs perceived less improvement in selling and influencing others than Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, Fitness and Wellness, Outdoors, and Business Operations student employees. A lack of involvement with the membership base outside rule enforcement, such as the Aquatics/Community Programs staff makes it difficult to enhance this skill as Facility Operations, Intramural and Club Sports, Fitness and Wellness, Outdoors, and Business Operations do this regularly for their positions through tours to prospective members, instructing fitness class participants, teaching and enforcing sport rules, teaching clinics and leading trips in the backcountry, and selling services and programs offered by the campus recreation department at the membership office.

### Research question 5

Were there significant differences in perceived job skill enhancement based on length of employment?

A significant difference was not observed based on length of employment; therefore, being employed less than or two or more years did not improve perceived job skill enhancement.

### Research question 6

What skills did students employed in campus recreation most want to see improved based on their employment?

Participants spoke largely about the need to gain employment experience and demonstrate to future employers their ability to hold a job, complete their degree, and learn skills to be successful employees. The employment experience topic resonated regularly throughout the conversation and how it led to the skills they wanted to develop, actually developed, and hoped to develop. The most common skills identified by student employees were leadership, problem solving, time management, and communication.

## **C. Conclusions**

1. The two year or more experience level for campus recreation employment does not carry any statistical significance in perceived skill enhancement. Student employees perceive the necessary development of skill enhancement occurs prior to the two year anniversary of employment with campus recreation.

2. Students demonstrated their perceived enhancement of social work skills providing evidence that campus recreation provides a quality environment for the development of those skills. Student employees also demonstrated a lack of their perceived skill enhancement related to work technical skills indicating that campus recreation does not provide this opportunity or



students fail to demonstrate competency. The demonstration of perceived skill enhancement for social work skills speaks to the ability for employment to supplement learning in the classroom environment as those skills may be harder to develop in the classroom.

3. Similar responses regarding work skills on the survey indicate that all employment areas within campus recreation intentionally or unintentionally create a clear distinction between social work skills and technical work skills.

4. The variety of employment opportunities in campus recreation provide a wide array of professional development opportunities. It is likely that job functions highly dictate the opportunity for development. For example, the work environment likely contributes to perceived skill development. It could be expected that lifeguard staff, who are fairly stationary in their responsibility and have limited participant interaction, will score differently from a Service Center staff member who interacts with members regularly throughout a shift. That information should provide the lifeguard program supervisor a greater impetus to offer additional opportunity for skill development that may not be available as part of an everyday function of the jobs or assist the student employee in understanding how they are developing skills.

5. Students understand that employment, while enrolled, is important preparation for full-time employment. Additionally, students enjoy working in the campus recreation environment as an undergraduate, noting the several opportunities to gain work experience in multiple program areas within campus recreation.

## **D. Recommendations**

### **Research Recommendations**

1. Undergraduate, four year institutions with a comprehensive campus recreation department should consider replicating this study to investigate skill development among student employees.

2. The study should be replicated to determine if a statistical significant difference in skill development exists for an employment tenure of one year or less versus two years.

3. The study should be replicated to include a pre-employment and one year anniversary perceived skill assessment. A perceived rating of skill competency would occur prior to the first day of employment. A second assessment would follow after one of employment with campus recreation to assess perceived skill enhancement, as a result of campus recreation employment.

4. Larger institutions employ more student employees. This study should be replicated with larger institutional enrollment to compare perceived skill enhancement among institutions of small, medium, and large student staffs. This may lend itself to determine if a better employment experience exists at an institution with larger or smaller student enrollment.

5. The study should be replicated with an assessment provided to program area supervisors. This assessment would include the type of in-service meetings, assess and compare job functions between employee groups, and the environment in which the student works. This assessment could help determine if supervisor performance and influence contributes to student employee perceived skill enhancement and the opportunities to develop skills.

6. The study should be replicated to make comparisons on a campus among students who work in other units on campus and those that do not work at all to determine if those in

campus recreation perceive greater skill enhancement than those who do not work in campus recreation.

7. With the large numbers of recreation centers and programs and a governing body with a long list of institutional members, NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation should create a large national, longitudinal database. This information would document and provide greater evidence for the impact of student work in campus recreation centers. Additionally, professionals could post and collect successful strategies regarding student development and employment.

### **Practitioner Recommendations**

1. Campus recreation professionals should review this information to determine how to strengthen job specific responsibilities and opportunities to aid student skill development that employers seek from recent college graduates.

2. Campus recreation professionals should consider student development and engagement workshop opportunities that supplement the employment experience. Workshops should include the development of social and technical work skills.

3. Student in-service meetings should consist of educational opportunities beyond specific tasks and responsibilities. Providing educational sessions and information beyond specific tasks allows for the greater development of skills employers are seeking in recent graduates.

4. Higher education professionals who employ students should develop position descriptions that highlight skill development and describe those skills in the position description through the essential functions of the job. Additionally, position descriptions may include

outcomes of what a student employee should learn and develop as part of their employment experience.

5. Higher education professionals who employ students should develop methods to assist students in the demonstration of competency of skills. A recommended method to assess student employee competency is to host resume and interview workshops. Resume and interview workshops should provide students opportunities to demonstrate skill competency.

### **E. Discussion**

Student employees are an essential asset and enable a campus recreation department to operate efficiently. These student employees make up the very large majority of a campus recreation team and typically carry a full load of academic classes. Campus recreation professionals have a duty to provide worthwhile and meaningful experiences that assist in student learning. In the campus recreation profession, the student employment experience is commonly referred to as a co-curricular experience, supplementing the classroom setting. Students encounter a variety of settings and experiences throughout the collegiate careers all of which help them develop and be successful. Chickering's 7 vectors of student development is a common developmental theory to explain the progress of students. Chickering's vectors is also commonly referenced by campus recreation professionals when discussing student development by means of employment (Todaro, 1993; Topper et al., 2011).

Chickering's 7 vectors focus on the overall identify of student development. Students move through these vectors nonlinearly and sometimes repeating a vector. As a result of this study, student employment in the campus recreation setting demonstrates alignment with Chickering's 7 vectors, specifically related to developing competence, managing emotions, interpersonal relationships, and developing a purpose.

### **Developing Competence**

To develop competence, Chickering discusses three types of competence; intellectual, manual skills, and interpersonal competency. Through the duties and responsibilities of the student employee positions, opportunities arise to develop competence across all three types. Problem solving and following written directions through a checklist or memo from a supervisor helps develop intellectual competence. The ability to physically complete a task or assignment provides the opportunity to develop manual skill competence. Lastly, in many student employee positions there is a need to work together with co-workers and work with members of the facility. The ability to work together develops interpersonal competency.

### **Managing Emotions**

Working with and for your peers, as well as serving the faculty, staff, and student body in the campus recreation setting can be a stressful and joyful opportunity. Students express a variety of emotions in their day. An employment experience in campus recreation, requires a service oriented mentality and attitude. Once a student employee arrives for a shift, they have to collect themselves and ensure outside influences are under control. Throughout the duration of a shift, the student employee must be prepared to resolve conflict and remain aware of their surrounding and control emotions. This experience assists students in moving through Chickering's vector, the management of emotions.

### **Interpersonal Relationships**

Students who work in campus recreation serve many institutional constituents and a diverse student, staff, and faculty body. Working in campus recreation provides the opportunity for student employee to work with and serve those with different backgrounds and perspectives. Through this experience, student employees develop relationships, gain tolerances, and accept

others with different backgrounds. Developing an appreciation and respect for different beliefs, values, and backgrounds allow student employees in campus recreation to move through Chickering's vector of interpersonal relationships.

### **Developing a Purpose**

Student employees who participated in the focus group talked about the reasoning for obtaining employment to assist with finances, purchasing necessities, preparation for experiences after graduation, and building skills. These experiences lead to a sense of purpose. The experiences the student has as both an academic and employee help shape what they want to do, enjoy, and provides them satisfaction. These experiences lead to the students developing a purpose, navigating through another one of Chickering's vector.

### **F. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations for future research and recommendations for practitioners. This research study demonstrates the positive relationship between student employment and student development in college, preparing students for experiences after graduation. The results of the study provide information for future research and best practices for higher education practitioners, specifically those in campus recreation and the amount of influence they hold in the development of student's lives.

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Appendix A

**Letter of Informed Consent**

Dear University Recreation Student Staff Member:

The purpose for conducting this study is to identify the perception of campus recreation employment among students and its relevance to professional employment. The survey should take no longer than 5 – 10 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary. Responses will be confidential and only group data will be reported. Personally identifiable information is not being collected. Additionally, your supervisor is responsible for distribution and collection of the surveys. After completing the survey your supervisor will distribute the completed surveys to me in a sealed envelope.

Thank you, in advance, for your participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or would like a copy of the findings, please contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]; mtmille@uark.edu). For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact [REDACTED], the University's IRB Coordinator, at [REDACTED] or by e-mail at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]  
Mobile: [REDACTED]  
Fax: [REDACTED]  
E-mail: [REDACTED]  
Website: [REDACTED]

## Appendix B

### Survey of Perceived Outcomes of Campus Recreation Employees and Relevance to Professional Employment

The purpose for conducting this study is to identify the perception of campus recreation employment among students and its relevance to professional employment. Participation is voluntary. Responses will be confidential and only group data will be reported.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or would like a copy of the findings, please contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

#### Part I: Background Information

*Please answer each question to the best of your ability. All responses will be held in strictest confidence and only group data will be reported.*

1. What is your sex?  
 Male       Female       Other
2. Are you enrolled in University courses?  
 Yes       No
3. What is your class standing?  
 Freshman     Sophomore     Junior     Senior     Graduate
4. What is your cumulative grade point average?  
 0 to 1.99     2.00 to 2.99     3.00 or above
5. How many years have you been employed with University Recreation at the University of Arkansas?  
 Less than 2 years     Two or more years
6. Select the program area in which you work the most:  
 Facility Operations  
 Intramural and Club Sports  
 Aquatics and Community Programs  
 Fitness & Wellness  
 Outdoors  
 Business Operations (Office Assistant, Accounting, etc.)

**Part II: Employment Experiences**

*Based on your employment at University Recreation, at the University of Arkansas, please rate to what extent your employment skills have been enhanced: Very High = 5; Somewhat High = 4; Moderately = 3; Somewhat Low = 2; Not At All = 1.*

		Not At All (1)	Somewhat Low (2)	Moderately (3)	Somewhat High (4)	Very High (5)
7	Ability to work in a team structure					
8	ability to make decisions and solve problems					
9	ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization					
10	ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work					
11	ability to obtain and process information					
12	ability to analyze quantitative data					
13	technical knowledge related to the job					
14	proficiency with computer software programs					
15	ability to create and/or edit written reports					
16	ability to sell or influence others					

## Appendix C

### **Student Employee Focus Group Meeting Questions**

1. As an enrolled student, why did you seek employment?
2. What did you hope to get out of the employment experience?
3. What skills do you think you have learned as a result of your employment with University Recreation?
4. What skills do you want to improve throughout or as a result of your employment with University Recreation?
5. Why did you pursue employment with University Recreation at the University of Arkansas?

## Appendix D



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

November 6, 2015

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Jeremy Battjes  
Michael Miller

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 15-10-264

Protocol Title: *Perceived Outcomes of Campus Recreation Employees and Relevance to Professional Employment*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 11/06/2015 Expiration Date: 11/05/2016

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 300 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).



Appendix E

**Student Employee Position Available in University Recreation at the University of Arkansas**

Position Available	Average Number of Students Employed
Bike Mechanic	3
Climbing Wall Supervisor	17
Club Sport Supervisor	3
Facility Assistant	50
Facility Supervisor	15
Fitness Center Attendant	60
Fitness/Wellness Program Assistant	2
Graphic Designer	3
Group Fitness Instructor	50
Group Fitness Monitor	14
Information Systems	1
Instructor	7
Internships	2
Intramural Official	35
Intramural Scorekeeper	12
Intramural Supervisor	11
Lifeguard	31
Marketing Assistant	3
Massage Therapist	4
Office Assistant	14
Outdoor Center Supervisor	17
Personal Trainer	10
Practicum Students	4
Service Center Attendant	25
Student Manager	15
Swim Lessons Instructor	6

## Appendix F

### Student Employee Focus Group Responses

#### As an enrolled student, why did you seek employment?

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Response	Number of Responses
Independence	11
Employment experiences	9
Afford basic necessities	7
Socialization	5
Something to do	1
Convenience	1
Campus involvement	1
Help others	1
Parents had jobs	1
Financial awareness	1

---

#### What did you hope to get out of the employment experience?

Employment experiences	11
Networking	6
Time Management	6
Teamwork	5
Problem solving	3
Confidence	2
Leadership	2
Conflict Resolution	1
Money	1

**What skills do you think you have learned as a result of your employment with University Recreation?**

---

Response	Number of Responses
Supervisory skills	14
Time management	9
Conflict resolution	8
Communication	7
Delegation	6
Problem solving	4
Teamwork	4
Equipment set up	1
Pool chemistry	1
Software skills	1

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**What skills do you want to improve throughout or as a result of your employment with University Recreation?**

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Supervisory Skills/Self-management	15
Leadership & Confidence	11
Conflict Resolution	9
Communication	8
Problem solving	5
Teamwork	5
Event management	1
Integrity & Respect	1
Technology	1
Employment experience	1

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**Why did you pursue employment with University Recreation at the University of Arkansas?**

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Flexibility	10
Employment experience	10
Socialization	10
Convenience/On-Campus	9
Teamwork	8
Networking	1
Earn money	4
Passionate about the mission	1

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