SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT EMPLOYEES IN A LEADERSHIP POSITION WITHIN A UNIVERSITY RECREATION PROGRAM THROUGH A THEORETICAL AND APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the professional skill development of student employees in a leadership position through a theoretical lens and applied lens. Research suggests that a deficit of professional skills exist in today's college graduates. In higher education, many colleges and universities use a student employment model to support student development. In particular, student employees within a recreation department were studied to learn more about their development of professional skills. A combination of surveys, interviews, observations, and other analyses were used as data points. Information obtained from the study is shared with higher education administrators about the value of student employment in a recreation department.

Keywords: student employment, student development, professional skills

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Employers plan to hire 5.8 percent more new graduates from the Class of 2020 than they did from the Class of 2019 for positions in the United States, according to results of NACE's *Job Outlook 2020* survey.

As an administrator in higher education, you should care. An increase in hiring college graduates is great news. A common way students in higher education justify their bachelor degree is to either obtain a job immediately after college or gain entry into a highly sought-after graduate school program. The duty of higher education administrators is to help students find his or her first job and set them up for success. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) identified "career readiness" through eight competencies (NACE, 2018). Employers tend to rate the proficiency of recent college graduates lower than do the students themselves. This can be problematic because it suggests that employers see skills gaps in key areas whereas college students don't believe gaps exist (NACE, 2018). Administrators focused on student success should want to close the gap. This study aids administers to be aware of and remedy such gaps.

We know in the 21st-century economy skills have become the most important currency in job markets (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015). Employers who seek recent college graduates for their positions may not see graduates with the professional skills needed to be successful, productive members of their organizations. A Gallup survey conducted on behalf of the Lumina Foundation found that only 11% of business leaders and 14% of the general public felt that students graduated from college with skills and competencies that are necessary for success in the workplace (Peck, Hall, Cramp, Lawhead, Fehring, & Simpson, 2015). According to the annual Job Outlook survey by NACE, critical thinking/problem-solving is rated as most

essential by respondents (employers), as it has been every time (for the past seven years) employers have been asked to rank the competencies (NACE, 2017). Closely behind critical thinking/problem-solving skills are teamwork, collaboration, oral/written communication, and leadership. All score high in regards to being essential to employers.

From the student perspective, we know on-campus part-time employment certainly impacts student development, explicitly in regards to timely degree completion and students reporting cognitive and affective growth (Astin, 1993). Undergraduate employment links with the attainment of higher levels of professional responsibility (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

What we don't know clearly is how students, as they become college graduates, gain the skills & competencies needed by their first employer. Additional work in the form of ongoing and adjusting research aid in the discovery of how students develop skills, specifically within a student employment position in a collegiate recreation program. If left unaddressed, students from an institution may fall into the category of unprepared in regards to having the needed skills for their first job.

The purpose of this study is to hear from students about their perceptions in regards to how students develop the competencies and skills that employers seek in graduates. Students can acquire a multitude of skills during their time in college. The research launches to create a consensus of how and where students gain these valuable skills for their future. Consensus creation occurs when a lack of consensus in the literature is illuminated, and clarity to the topic is provided (Grant & Pollock, 2011). Students can grow from their knowledge acquisition and experiences. Students deserve opportunities to be active learners when multiple methods of learning are utilized to educate themselves better.

Research Focus

The study will focus on the development of skills in students working in college. Student employment has become a vital part of higher education. Student employment is important to both employers and student employees. Employers of undergraduate students cultivate skills in students that impact their futures.

If a student is involved in an on-campus employment position, individual growth potential for leadership progression exists. This study is designed to understand the level of professional skill (competency) development obtained from being in a student employment leadership position. In the study, student leadership positions are held by students who have risen into positions marked by higher-level ability and authority, such as the capacity to supervise other student employees. Employment challenges students who work in a leadership position to grow. Student leaders are expected by their peers, customers, and supervisors to produce results in their given positions.

The specific focus of this study zooms into the role of employment in a collegiate recreation program. Recreational sports departments are typically campus leaders in the number of students employed based on the number of students hired (NIRSA, 2008), with a multitude of opportunities available for students. A mid-size university may employ around 200 students, whereas a large university may employ approximately 500 students. As a job-related field, campus recreation enables a large segment of students planning to enter the employment market to receive training and experience in recreation programming and facility management (NIRSA, 2008). The student employment positions within a recreation department are active where students engage with users while providing recreational services. Although the focus of

employment is toward recreation programming, for students to thrive, students need to understand and articulate their skills gained for any future career.

Research Questions

The study examines the following questions through a multi-phased qualitative collective case study approach:

Central Research Question:

What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Sub-questions:

Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it stresses importance of being purposeful in how employers engage student employees in their personal and professional development. In the United States today, nearly 14 million people – eight percent of the total labor force and a consistent 70 percent to 80 percent of college students – are both active in the labor market and formally enrolled in some form of post-secondary education or training (Carnevale et al., 2015). Part of this population is students who work on-campus jobs. The time spent in an on-campus student employment position can have lifelong effects on a student. These students want successful jobs after college. Workers need a post-secondary education to gain a foothold and prosper in the labor market, and employers need skilled postsecondary talent to remain

competitive (Carnevale et al., 2015). An opportunity to grow comes when students gain the tools to develop their skills through on-campus employment. It is significant for recreation center administrators to be purposeful in what is provided to students for skill development to complement their education.

Theoretical Frameworks

Chapter Two provides a thorough analysis of theoretical lenses in this study. What follows is a brief theoretical overview of each theory and its application to this study.

Thinking with Desire

"Thinking with desire" is a theory whereby an individual's desire for an outcome develops over time. The theory contends that any desire an individual has is part of a process (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). For example, a student at the start of a leadership position thinks he or she has high skill levels. Halfway through their time in the position, they face the daunting realization that they do not have developed high skill levels. A realization sets in to want to develop skills. In this study, with a focus on development, the theory focuses on the individual and how he or she was driven to want to develop. This study presents a perspective on the individual development of participants gained through surveys, interviews, and observations. This theory will encompass the personal context, experiences, beliefs, or values that have impacted the participants. Thinking with desire examines how students transition through their work to a realization of the need for professional skill development.

Student Involvement Theory

A purpose of higher education is talent development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Student Involvement Theory, according to Astin (1985), "can be stated simply: *Students learn by becoming involved*" (p.133). Student Involvement Theory examines how a student develops

talents (skills) due to involvement. Student Involvement Theory consists of reviewing the inputs a student brings to college, the depth of involvement during college, and the outcome obtained after college. The involvement that this study will analyze is the effect of being in a leadership position within a recreational sports program. This study compiles a summary of student involvement through participant surveys, interviews, and observations. The theory will incorporate inspecting the students' past, present, and future.

Conceptual Framework

Great excitement greets students who matriculate into college; it is a world of newness and the unknown. As students' progress through their time in higher education, they encounter many powerful opportunities. One of these opportunities is student employment. Student employment is an impactful vehicle to bring theory-to-practice. Within this study of student employees in a leadership position, it is helpful to understand more about students through the continuum of their transition to college, time in college, and their perspectives for life after college.

In education, developmental theorists have differing views on the characteristics of the development process (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Theorists do share a common perspective that development is usually orderly, sequential, and hierarchical, passing through ever higher and more complex stages that are to some extent age-related (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Using both Deleuze's theory of desire and Astin's theory of involvement, the conceptual framework develops for this study as seen in Figure 1.

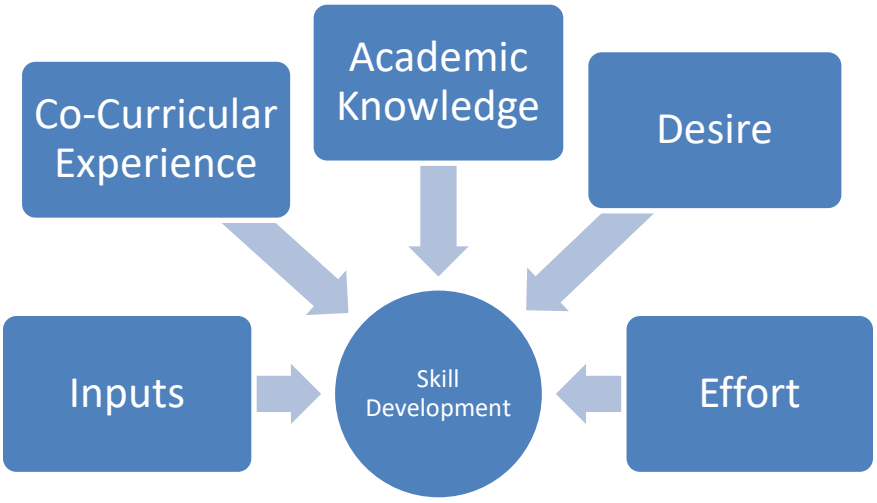

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study of professional skill development

Exploring who the student was before entering college based on his or her background will provide a known foundation for his or her development. The foundation may include family influence, values, and life experiences before college. The knowledge obtained, both inside the classroom and through employment training will form the basis of theoretical development. An examination of the exact application of knowledge through experiences the student has in their employment position explains the impact on skill development. Formal meetings or training sessions are examples of the delivery of theoretical education. Actual work shifts or assigned duties are examples of applied experiences. A student's production of desire is active, becoming, and transformative. Examining students' perspectives on their desires to want to grow professional skills during college enlightens their motivation toward their future. Evaluation of the level of effort a student gives to their employment position factors into their development. This factor is not necessarily looking at the number of hours worked but also the commitment to bettering themselves. Finally, consideration of the outcome of confidence in skill growth is measured. Students will reflect on how they have seen their skills grow based on their

employment. The conceptual framework will better assist those with a vested interest in understanding students in employment positions and how students best attain necessary skills during their time in college.

Definitions of Common Terms

Academic Knowledge: The knowledge gained from classroom learning that is applicable to a student's co-curricular involvement and activities. Applied academic knowledge is the translation of classroom learning to a job or other involvment.

Campus Recreation: Campus Recreation, or Recreational Sports, is a department at an institution of higher learning that typically provides facilities, staffing, and programming to enhance physical, social, and emotional well-being to all members of a campus community. Program areas that fall under the supervision of Campus Recreation may include but are not limited to aquatics, fitness, group fitness, informal recreation, intramurals, outdoor recreation, sport clubs, and wellness.

Collegiate recreation: The field of recreation in higher education environments. Staffing typically includes professional and student staff.

High-impact practices: Teaching and learning practices that have been shown to be beneficial for college students and improve student retention and engagement.

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): Professional association for collegiate career services.

NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation (NIRSA): Professional association for collegiate recreation.

Professional skills: Skills needed for employability in a professional career. Skills that transfer from one work environment to another. These skills frequently include teamwork, communication, critical thinking/problem solving, leadership, professionalism, respect for others, and technical abilities (NACE, 2017).

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

Student Employment: Positions within an institution of higher education that utilize student workers to fulfill necessary positions to operate a program or service.

Basic Assumptions and Limitations

In general, the limitations of a multi-phased qualitative collective case study are that one cannot generalize the findings to the wider population. In this study, student employees with a recreation setting are the focus. Findings in general are isolated to other recreation departments. Within a case study, the researcher's subjective feeling may influence the case study (Creswell, 2013). The study focuses on student employees within one institution. Out of a total staff of 30 student leaders, 10 student leaders served as participants in the study. Having a variety of observations increased the probability of catching a participant in any given setting to evaluate communication skills. The amount of time worked per week each semester was not considered as a data point. Details such as the number of actual hours worked limit the study. In this study, no consideration was given to differences in race, ethnicity, or gender. The study was conducted a private institution with students with strong affluence. No consideration is given to the economic backgrounds of the participants involved. The expectation is that other limitations will arise throughout the study.

Organization of the Study

The present study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic of study, the research questions and the significance of the study. The first chapter included the theoretical basis for the study and the developed conceptual framework that guide the study. The second chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study. Chapter Three offers a description of the methodology of the study, including the techniques and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data and information about the research participants. Chapter Four presents the findings from the study organized by themes based on research questions. Chapter Five focuses on interpretation of the findings while connecting back to literature and implications.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Relevant Literature

A review of relevant literature in higher education, student affairs, student development, university recreation, student employment, and skill acquisition aid in understanding how professional skills develop in student employees in a leadership position within university recreation through theoretical and applied perspectives. Additional resources outside of higher education aid in the story of the importance of the research topic including nationally identified competencies for employers of recent college graduates. The final element of this chapter delivers a description of the theoretical frameworks used to comprehend data collected for this study.

History of U.S. Higher Education

A brief overview of the history of higher education in America illustrates the importance of student development and student employment.

Colonial Years (1636-1783)

Higher education in the United States dates back to the Colonial period. Men from Cambridge and Oxford emigrated to New England; among them were the founders of Harvard, who wished to re-create a little bit of old England in America (Rudolph, 1991). Harvard is the oldest institution of higher education in the United States, established in 1636 by a vote of the Great and General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Harvard, 2018). Harvard College mainly focused on providing education to upper-class young men expected to fill leadership roles in the church, military, society, or government (Cook, 2017; Komives, 2013). Many sources of influence led to the curriculum of Harvard and the other colonial colleges. Thelin (2011) maintains that colonial colleges were established to help identify and ratify a colonial

elite. Had these colleges been only creatures of the Reformation, the emphasis would perhaps have been so overwhelmingly on the preparation of clergymen that the critical roles in military, society, or government would not have been fulfilled (Rudolph, 1991). Colonial times saw the founding of the colleges that we now call our “Ivy League”-- universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, and Brown (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). These institutions were typically associated with churches and predominantly available to members of the elite class to help young men advance in their social or professional circles (Geiger, 2011; Roberts, 2007).

During the American Revolution, American colleges were caught up in the events of the world, and they were never quite the same again (Thelin, 2011). During the war and postwar period, the states moved into a more active role in the life of higher education. In the revolutionary constitution of North Carolina, adopted in 1776, there was an injunction to the effect that "all useful learning shall be duly encouraged and promoted in one or more universities" (Thelin, 2011, p. 36).

Post-Revolutionary War (1784-1899)

Following the Revolutionary War, there was an increase of higher education institutions. Two major events in the 1860s brought about the next shift in higher education. The first was the Civil War, and the second was the signing of the Morrill Land Grant in 1862. The Morrill Land Grant Act facilitated the western expansion of higher education institutions and the establishment of the land-grant institutions that focused on agriculture and mining. Due to the Morrill Land-Grant Act, the number of institutions of higher education increased and the educational opportunities for women, men from social classes other than the elite as well as other minorities increased as well (Roberts, 2007; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). The need for a “useful education” promoted the growth of scientific and technical education. As the curriculum continued to

diversify, so did the conversion from a college to a university. The half-century stretching from 1865 to 1915 witnessed the emergence (or invention) of many characteristics that still define traditional colleges and universities: the popularization of letter grades, departments, electives, majors, and the credit hour (Mintz, 2017).

Twentieth Century (1900-1999)

The twentieth century brought about a growth in the size of institutions of higher education as well as the diversity of the student body (Thelin, 2011). Cohen and Kisker (2010) place the 1930s as the end of the university transformation era, a time marked by the rise of research and universities. In the 1930s, "two years of postsecondary education were rapidly becoming a normal part of American Teenagers Plans" (Levine, 1986, p. 208). More and more professions were requiring a college education. Between the first and second world war, college enrollment increased from 250,000 to 1.3 million (Thelin, 2004). Student numbers, in general, led to the need for student personnel. The number of high school graduates increased between 1920 -1930, at a rate of roughly 150% (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Cohen and Kisker (2010) maintain that the college experience, as a cultural ideal, was solidified in the 1930s. Extracurricular activities and dormitory life became an essential complement to the academic components of higher education.

By the end of World War II, universities in the U.S. were enjoying a "golden age" due largely to the G.I. Bill. Enrollment was so high that public and private institutions were asked to cooperate and "share" the load. Additionally, to keep the United States competitive with other nations, universities were asked to increase the number of graduates with specialties in the maths and sciences. By the end of the 20th century, the institutions' bubble had burst to bring about concerns about the dwindling external economic support. It became evident that students were

moving to more vocational or professional majors, thus reducing the number of liberal arts degrees (Cook, 2017; Geiger, 2011).

Higher Education Today (2000-2018)

Today, whether colleges and universities are still playing the role of providing a liberal education remains an ongoing source of debate (Mintz, 2017). A by product of the American commitment to liberty and to the belief that academic life should exist outside the grasp of direct government control, U.S. higher education's independence has gradually decreased since World War II with the dramatic growth of federal funding for research and student aid (Loss, Hinz, & Ryan, 2016).

Concerns over access, attrition, affordability, and accountability remain in the forefront in higher education in the twenty-first century (Berdahl, Altbach, & Gumport, 2011; Cook, 2017; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Regarding affordability and attrition, both students and institutions have real financial concerns to address in the coming era. From 1999 to 2009, annual tuition increases outpaced inflation, and tuition increased 68 percent at public four-year colleges and 39 percent at private colleges (Cook, 2017; Selingo, 2013). More than 50 million Americans have student loan debt, including 65 percent of the class of 2017 who graduated with an average of almost $28,650 in debt, one percent higher than the 2016 average (The Institute for College Access & Success, 2018). Access and diversity issues remain, but the face of the twenty-first-century campus is vastly different than three hundred years ago. Women now comprise the majority of college students. Students of color, women, and first-generation college students are active in all aspects of student government and leadership groups, indicating a diffusion of the influence of traditionally powerful groups such as fraternities (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Also,

technology advances have increased distance learning and online course content, growing the numbers of non-traditional students (Cook, 2017; Dungy & Gordon, 2011).

Consisting of 4,700 institutions that enroll upward of twenty million students from the United States and abroad, the sector has become a critical governmental intermediary that relies on heavy state-level and federal subsidies and tax expenditures to fulfill its core mission of teaching, research, and service (Loss et al., 2016). The higher education system also faces some pressing challenges: rising costs, declining public support, high student attrition, and long time-to-degree that often results in no degree at all, especially at two-year colleges where the majority of poor and underrepresented minority students enroll (Loss et al., 2016).

The Emergence of Student Affairs

With the growth in higher education, especially into the 1930s, there was a need for personnel that guided students outside the classroom. The profession of student affairs "grew from the campus up, not from theory down" (Cowley, 1934, p. 4). Many institutions used faculty as residential tutors who lived in the halls with the students. These individuals were the precursor to student affairs professionals in the United States. Typically, they served as dean of discipline and *in loco parentis* (Latin for “in the place of a parent”). *In loco parentis* refers to a legal relationship in which a temporary guardian or caretaker of a child takes on all or some of the responsibilities of a parent (Garner, 2009, p. 858). It could no longer be the responsibility of the faculty to both instruct student and guide their development. An increase in student population and research focus of faculty made paramount that other professionals assumed the developmental responsibilities for students.

Developing the Profession

The first student affairs professionals were the dean of women, dean of men, and personnel workers. Many of the early deans came from "teaching roles in the liberal arts" (Cowley, 1934, p. 8). A key transition occurred at a small conference hosted by the American Council on Education. A discussion about educating and serving students resulted in *The Student Personnel Point of View*. The report was issued by the American Council on Education in 1937 and revised in 1949 (ACE, 1937). The report serves as a foundation document for student affairs. From the original 1937 document, assumptions of students emerged. *The Student Personnel Point of View* indicates that supervision and discipline are meant to develop students, critical thinking is a key skill student's need, and educating the whole student leads to better people (1937). Student personnel roles were designated through various duties including helping students develop aptitudes, housing students, job counseling, administering loans, programming extracurricular activities, and creating family involvement (The Student Personnel Point of View, 1937).

As we know it today, "Student Affairs" was not officially established on college campuses until the 1970s (Lucas, 2006). Student affairs can take on many varied definitions. Student affairs delivers both student services and fosters student development to a college campus. Student services are those departments, programs, and services that support students in their daily lives as learners in higher education. Student development is an action that occurs within students as they change, grow, and develop from their experience as a student; in short, colleges create a vast smorgasbord of activities, academic and extracurricular, with which to fill most of the waking hours of their students' lives (Bok, 2013). As we study the development of

students, it is important to examine the role of the office of student affairs as it relates to the general mission of colleges and universities today.

Value from Student Affairs

The office of student affairs adds value to the overall education of the student by having professionals who focus on the whole student. A student-centered division of a university is of great importance to the overall mission of an institution of higher education (Bok, 2013). As an integral part of a university, student affairs aids in the challenges and support of all students. Student success includes both in and out of the classroom experiences. As one professor concluded from studying student methods of learning, "the median response of students polled was that 65 percent of learning occurs outside of classes and class-related activities while 35 percent occurs within" (Bok, 2013, p.177). This learning outside the classroom helps support the value that is intrinsic to student affairs.

With the examination of how student affairs supports the mission of an institution, it appears there should be continued support for the role of student affairs as a part of higher education. Bok (2013) describes 18-year-olds with multiple problems to resolve, especially those whose parents never went to college, seeking help from an array of different offices in different locations. As the home of many of the crucial services at a university, student affairs personnel concern themselves with the ability to bring these resources together. Student affairs bears a level of accountability (an outcome-focused measure) to the students. Responding to the call for greater accountability, "student affairs professionals have continued their focus on learning outcomes and assessment to demonstrate student affairs programs and services' valuable contributions to the development of the whole student" (Dungy & Gordon, 2011, p. 74). Development of a whole student is not a one size fits all operation.

Engaging Diversity

A challenge in today's college is the breadth of the student demographics. The percentage of American college students who are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black has been increasing. From fall 1976 to fall 2015, the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 4 percent to 17 percent, and the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students rose from 2 percent to 7 percent. The percentage of Black students increased from 10 percent in 1976 to 14 percent in 2015, but the 2015 percentage reflects a decrease since 2011 when Black students made up 15 percent of all enrolled U.S. residents. During the same period, the percentage of White students fell from 84 percent to 58 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The role of student affairs is to guide all students regardless of age, ethnicity or other diversity status.

Colleges and universities are becoming more and more racially and ethnically diverse institutions (Schnoebelen, 2013). With greater diversity, institutions have seen "chilly climates" for students of color (New, 2015). Student affairs is concerned for all students and the environment in which they live. Campus racial micro-aggressions contribute significantly to the overall campus racial environment and have a profound effect on students of color (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Students of color who have experienced campus racial microaggressions reported feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and frustration (Solorzano, et al., 2000). These microaggressions can inhibit a student's experience, and student affairs staff instill in students a positive outlook on embracing diversity. From students' time in college, they generally gain greater openness and tolerance regarding issues of diversity (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). Chang (2001) concluded interacting with peers of another race had positive effects on students' college experiences and educational outcomes. Simply increasing diversity of the campus can't alone improve campus racial environments.

Student affairs must show concern and support for all students. Anna M. Ortiz and Silvia J. Santos (2009) stress the importance of building an environment for all people to learn, specifically those who are underrepresented. Numerous studies show many positive outcomes associated with strong and stable ethnic identities, including increased self-esteem, improved mental health, decreased self-destructive behaviors, and greater academic achievement (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). To support these outcomes, student affairs can take the lead at colleges and universities to strive to take advantage of all the benefits of a diverse learning community. Student affairs personnel ought to examine the range of organizations and activities on their campuses to determine whether these meet crucial within-group needs and differences. As diversity increases throughout the country, higher education will play a key role in building the diverse democracy of the twenty-first century (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). All students need guidance to engage in college to contribute to the global community. To meet the challenges of higher education, one must recognize the tremendous value of student affairs as it relates to the mission of an institution.

Student Development

Within higher education, especially within a student affairs division, administrators utilize developmental theories of student change. The current study is guided by select developmental theoretical frameworks. As the study proceeds, findings may emerge that connect to other philosophical works on student development. This section introduces additional theories that allow for further theoretical connections to emerge in the study.

Alexander Astin (1985) states “If talent development is indeed the principal reason for our system of higher education, why not define excellence of an institution regarding its ability to develop the talents of its students” (p. 60). A focus on student development aids in student

success. For students, intrapersonal changes (or development) may be due to physical maturation, environmental forces, or the combined effects of interactions between person and environment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A way to assess a student's development from general campus life is to provide various opportunities, transform the physical environment, expand social and cultural events, and offer extracurricular activities (Astin, 1985). As students transition through college, student development theories serve as a foundation to purposefully interact with students.

Categories of Developmental Theories

Members of a division of student affairs apply theories to their work with students. Within theories and models of change, there are two main categories: "Developmental Theories" and "College Impact Models" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 19). Within these categories, a multitude of theorists expand our view of a student's development and change. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), point out the primary difference between the two categories is the degree of attention they give to what changes in college students versus how these changes emerge. Whereas student-centered developmental models concentrate on the nature or content of student change (for example, identity formation, moral or cognitive development), college impact models focus on sources of change (such as different institutional characteristics, programs or services, student experiences, and interactions with other students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Both developmental theories and college impact models focus on the individual.

Another perspective on the development of a student during their time in college comes from Long (2012) where four types of student development theory are categorized. Humanistic-existential theories look at how students make decisions. The core idea is that a student's decisions affect themselves and others. Cognitive-structural theories focus on how students

reason, think, organize, and create meaning from their experiences. Psychosocial theories study the interpersonal and self-reflective phases of students' lives. These theories describe the evolution of student perspectives concerning their identity and society through their experiences with conflicts and crises (Long, 2012; Tulchinsky, 2018). The impact an educational environment has on student development is wrapped up into person-environment theories.

Humanistic-Existential Theory. Hettler's Dimensions of Wellness is an example of a humanistic-existential theory to student development. Hettler (1984) suggested that wellness carried an aggressive impact on psychosocial and intellectual development, with wellness defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. The model consists of six dimensions: physical, intellectual, spiritual, social/emotional, occupational, and environmental. Ideally, an individual finds a balance in each dimension for a healthy and positive existence.

Cognitive Structural Theory. Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development is an example of cognitive-structural student development theory. Kohlberg's theory of moral development identifies six stages which require a conflict of morals before progression to a subsequent stage. Personal responsibility for individual actions and those of a morally just society develop through individual progression (Kohlberg, 1976; Tulchinsky, 2018). Three distinct levels exist in each stage: pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality. Kohlberg (1976) believed that many traditional-age college students operated at the conventional level of moral reasoning. Stages are demonstrated by student employees who enforce policies simply because "that's the policy" and have not progressed to the stages where they can interpret "shades of gray" and exhibit situational adaptation (Tulchinsky, 2018). Kohlberg (1976) theorized the experience of moral dilemmas allowed an individual to grow through stages of development.

Psychosocial Theory. Psychosocial theories look into the connection between an individual's self-reflection and interpersonal relationships. Psychosocial theories are generally progressive where a student works toward mastery of tasks, stages, or challenges before advancing to the next phase of development. Theorists working in the field of college student development have focused primarily on the developmental stages of the traditional eighteen to twenty-two age group of college students and issues of conflict, autonomy, independence, and interdependence (Tulchinsky, 2018). According to Sanford (1967), identity development models identify the process of increasing differentiation in the sense of self and integration of the growing complexity into a coherent whole. Embedded in this concept is the view that developmental change requires a stimulus (challenge) and response. The individual "strives to reduce the tension caused by a challenge and thus restore equilibrium" (Sanford, 1967, p.49). Sanford charges professionals to manage an environment of challenge and support to students.

A preeminent theory to the category of psychosocial theories is Chickering's (1969) Seven Vectors of Identity Development. An update to the Seven Vectors model occurred in 1993 by Chickering and Reisser. The updates suggested that student development occurs through differentiation and integration as students engage in increasingly complex ideas and values while reconciling these positions with their own beliefs (Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Tulchinsky, 2018). Simply put, the stages form during one's college experience. Among students, stages progress on a fluid basis. The seven vectors include: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser (1993) also identified seven areas where colleges and universities could enhance student development along each of the vectors. The areas of influence

include clarity of institutional objectives, institutional size, student-faculty interaction in diverse settings, integrated curricula, flexible teaching, diverse student communities, and collaborative student development programs and services. These areas of influence may dictate the institutional commitment toward supporting student learning and success.

Person-Environment Theory. Person-environment theories of student development focus on how the institutional environment and the student's background impact the student's development (Long, 2012). Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement commonly is seen as a prominent theory for student change and development based on co-curricular involvement. Astin's theory includes three core elements: inputs, environment, and outcomes. Astin (1984) found that highly involved students typically spend more time on campus, are active participants in student organizations, and frequently interact with faculty, staff, and their peers.

Campus Ecology

To complement how we evaluate student development, it is also important to review the environment in which studies live and learn. Campus Ecology evolved from an ecosystems approach to student development. According to Jamie Hurst (1987), "the ecosystems approach identifies the ecology of the campus as the target of diagnosis and intervention" (p. 7). Faculty and staff all have a role in identifying the aspects of the campus environment that need change. Oetting (1967) proposed an interactive model wherein students would become active agents in shaping or modifying the environment to facilitate the actualization of their goals. As part of campus ecology, all constituents of an institution play a part in shaping the environment.

On every campus, there is a degree of attraction or repulsion a student feels in any particular setting (Strange & Banning, 2001). The more attractive a setting, the more likely it is to engage students. According to Strange & Banning (2001), "This theory of attraction is the

fundamental dynamic of every college's efforts to successfully recruit students who can benefit from its educational programs and opportunities" (p. 137). The physical environment aids in recruitment to on-campus employment.

The physical environment is a factor that can impact student learning or successful work experience. The aspects of the physical environment can solicit many possibilities of human response (Strange & Banning, 2001). As students are engaged in learning, a positive environment can impact a progressive learning experience. A physical environment where rows of desk and chairs align linearly works best for a lecture. Tables and chair moved into a horseshoe can stimulate natural discussion. The functionality of the physical environment not only affords and constrains certain activities, but it communicates important nonverbal messages (Strange & Banning, 2001). The consensus in the literature suggests we should be aware of how we set up the physical environment. Common sense and experience suggest that when the physical environment of a campus, building or classroom supports desired behavior, better outcomes result (Strange & Banning, 2001). From the behavior setting point of view, campus designs and spaces do not merely create a functional space, mood or atmosphere, they facilitate certain behaviors (Wicker, 1984). As student learn theories or development, it is vital to view the physical environment as a part of the learning experience. In a similar regard, the physical setting for the application of knowledge needs to be conducive to put theories into practice.

Role of University Recreation

A multitude of developmental departments exists within higher education including university recreation departments. The first American colleges were against any form of physical education or play. For example, at Princeton in 1761, a severe penalty would be levied on any student found "playing ball" on campus (NIRSA, 2008). Between 1860 and 1900, there

were significant developments in sport by the emergence of baseball and football. Before today's all-inclusive campus recreation programs, there was an amalgam of physical education and intercollegiate athletics that often ignored the athletic needs of the majority of students (NIRSA, 2008). In 1913, the first institutional intramural programs emerged at the Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. University recreation came to life from intramural sports programs at the university level. Intramural sports were sporting events where students stayed within the walls of their institution to compete against one another. In, 1950, due to a lack of integrated sport activity; the National Intramural Association (NIA) was founded at Dillard University (McFadden & Stenta, 2015). In a climate struggling for social justice, people could turn to sport to unite. The 1980s and 1990s saw significant growth in campus recreation programs as more universities began to recognize opportunities for student involvement that the programs provided, making campus recreation a significant contributor to the mission of higher education (Barcelona & Ross, 2002). In the early development of intramural and recreation programs, the oversight was predominantly through an athletic department. More recently, the vast majority of recreation programs report through a student affairs office.

Student affairs, in general, is often seeking to impress upon the university the worth and value of the programs and services provided (Bok, 2013; Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Student affairs units prepare the programs and services for the student population using a heavy reliance on the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The mission of the CAS is to promote the improvement of programs and services to enhance the quality of student learning and development (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2014). Through actively working toward the standards developed with CAS, a unit of student affairs can be held accountable about the product students are being provided. As a recreational sports program, a

key CAS standard is "Recreational Sports Programs must collaborate with colleagues and departments across the institution to promote student learning and development, persistence, and success*"* (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2014, p. 2). A recreational sports program does not exist in isolation. Students who participate in recreation sports programs are involved in other areas of university life. Work within higher education transforms student through common standards (Barcelona & Ross, 2002). Students' success is a shared focus when units, including a department of Campus Recreation, operate with embracing the mission of their university and higher education.

Numerous recent studies have begun to illuminate the significant value a recreation program has at an institution of higher education. In a study, the Recreation and Wellness Benchmark, used as part of the 2013 NASPA Assessment and Knowledge Consortium, reported the substantial impact of recreational sports programs (Forrester, 2014). Recreation programs, especially with their modern facilities, have an impact on recruiting students. Just over two-thirds of students noted that the recreation facilities at their campus were a factor in their selection of institution (Forrester, 2014). The value of participation in recreational programs was constant between both public and private institutions (NIRSA, 2004). Academic engagements have also been studied as an effect of participation is recreation programs. Students with "heavy" participation in recreation programs were found to be "serious students" concerned about their academic success (NIRSA, 2004). From a large scale and holistic perspective, use of campus recreation programs and facilities were identified by over 90% of students at an institution as beneficial to their overall well-being (Forrester, 2014). Since the initiation and growth of recreational sports programs, research continues to prove the value of campus recreation in higher education.

Within university recreation lies strong developmental opportunities for students in the form of employment beyond the value of recreation for participants in programs and services. As a part of a recreation department, student employee positions can range from intramural officials, weight room monitors, front desk workers, to building supervisors and program specific managers (Carr, 2005). Collegiate recreation staff must create intentional learning experiences for students to have the opportunity to grow within the collegiate recreation setting (McFadden & Carr, 2015). Recreation programs are prone to impact students both through participation and employment.

Student Employment

History of Student Employment

Student employment is an undervalued part of the landscape of higher education. Extracting student employment overtime is helpful to gain a better understanding of the value of work during college. Employment of students on campus has progressed over the decades. Before the American Civil War, Harvard designed an employment program geared at supplying financial aid for students. The first documented form of student employment traces back to 1657 when 14-year-old Zechariah Brigden paid his way through Harvard by holding two positions on campus- ringing the bell and "waiting in the hall," which involved monitoring the dining hall (Kincaid, 2001; O'Connor, 2018). Zechariah's work resembles current on-campus employment such as working in residential life and dining services. The financial benefit to aid in the expense of school is similar today.

In time, a broader perspective of student employment emerged. Student employment still was important to financial stability. Additionally, student employment grew to meet the need for

a substantial increase in student services. The following important historical snapshots of time illuminate the role of student employment.

Increase in Research. A boom is student employment can be traced back to late 1800s when there was a rapid growth of science and technology programs (Baldwin, Barkley, & Wilkinson, 2000). At a librarian's conference in 1853, it was noted that some university librarians had student assistants only and others didn't have help at all (Baldwin et al., 2000). With the need for more resources in libraries came more need for personnel. Student employment in the university library was a fundamental need given the increasing need for research to advance science and technology faculty and students called upon in university libraries. The need for increased personnel led to growth in student employment positions.

Impact of Industrial Age. Further along in time, the purpose of students working while in school shifted with the influence of the manual labor movement of the 19th century. Work potential increased substantially during the Industrial Age (Mintz, 2017). The expansion of higher education through the Morrill Land-Grant Act in 1862 and 1890 opened opportunities for students to work (Roberts, 2007; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). With the expansion in higher education, more services emerged for students. Institutions employed students to provide new services.

Architect and civil engineering professor, Herman Schneider, at the beginning of the 20th century, while at Lehigh noticed several of the more successful Lehigh graduates had worked to earn money before graduation (Smollins, 1999). Gathering data through interviews of employers and graduates, Schneider devised the framework for cooperative education (1901). At first, Schneider's ideals were minimized by the opening of Carnegie Technical Schools, now Carnegie Mellon University (Smollins, 1999). Carnegie was founded in 1900 as a vocational school

(Carnegie Mellon, 2019). The vocational approach takes education and job training all within the walls of its institution as opposed to Schneider's concept of learning within an institution of higher education and work experience outside the institution. In 1903, the University of Cincinnati appointed Schneider to their faculty.

At the University of Cincinnati, Schneider proposed an enriched learning environment that involved students learning about the subject of their class in a work environment. Schneider states students working "could make professional contacts that could lead to employment opportunities after graduation" (Smollins, 1999, p. 1). In 1905, the UC Board of Trustees allowed Schneider to try this cooperative idea of education for one year only, for the failure of which they would not be held responsible (University of Cincinnati). The cooperative education program was launched in 1906 and became an immediate success. The University of Cincinnati returned to the matter in its September 2005 board meeting, declaring the 100-year trial period of one hundred years of Cooperative Education officially ended, for the success of which the Board assumed full responsibility (University of Cincinnati, 2005).

Multiple studies support working while in school not necessarily to offset tuition but to develop knowledge and skills. In 1906, "The Labor Program" at Berea College originated (Berea, 2019). Founded in 1855, Berea was the first interracial and coeducational college in the South. Even though "The Labor Program" was not official until 1906, students were always empowered to contribute to the cost of their education. In the first days of Berea, students helped by growing their own food and building their own facilities (Berea, 2019). This allowed the college to operate in a self-sustaining manner. Today, students at Berea agree to work 10-15 hours per week. A student can choose from over 100 on-campus or off-campus opportunities. Berea students pay no tuition except with their labor, for which they receive hourly wages at

special rates. Berea College could not operate as a low-cost quality institution without student labor. By their work, students help the college to keep costs down, and the college is thus able to help them educate themselves and achieve their degrees (Smith, 1982). Astin (1993) indicates on-campus employment impacts student development, explicitly in regards to students reporting cognitive and affective growth.

Creation of the G.I. Bill. Employment opportunities in higher education were constant over time. A major impact on continued growth was the passing of the G.I. Bill in 1944. The G.I. Bill, also known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, was a law passed late in Roosevelt's presidency. The G.I. Bill "gave generations of veterans a chance to get an education, to build strong families and good lives, and to build the nation's strongest economy ever, to change the face of America" (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009, p. 13).

Along with the G.I. Bill, efforts were initiated to increase college enrollment from low income and underrepresented groups which resulted in an expansion in student services. With more services came more opportunities for students to work on campus. Based on the Constitution, the responsibility to educate individuals falls within the judicial powers of the state rather than the federal government, the decision for the federal government to contribute in the access to education for groups of individuals using financial incentives and support was significant (O'Connor, 2018). The involvement of the federal government was momentous to the evolution of student employment.

Impact of Work-Study programs. For at least four decades, growing numbers of students pursued postsecondary educational goals while employed (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parkins, 2006). Stern and Nakata (1991) traced a steady rise in student employment to at least the early 1960s when data was collected to explore the prevalance of

employed students. It was in the early 1960s that the U.S. federal government recognized the social and economic need for college employment. The national Job Corps was created and the work-study program initiated. The federal work-study program emerged from the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964, with the original intent to "stimulate and promote the part-time employment of students in institutions of higher education who are from low-income families and are in need of the earnings from such employment to pursue courses of study at such institutions" (EOA, 1964, Section 2701).

Simply put, the objective of the program was to target students with greater financial need to provide educational opportunities to all. The work-study program was institutionalized in the Higher Education Act. Work-study programs are attractive to both students and employers. They provide students with an economic opportunity. Today more than one billion dollars in funding for students is provided to over 3400 participating schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d). For employers, students come at a lower per hour wage to university departments (Baum, 2010). Astin (1975) found that participation in work-study programs created a productive work experience. Work-study helped universities with increased persistence of students toward completing college (Astin, 1975). The Center on Education and the Workforce (2015) reported that over the last 25 years, over 70% of college students worked while enrolled, with internships, externships, and work-study programs connecting students to job experiences and professional contacts as a the new normal. In higher education, it is seen as a win for both the universities in which students attend and students who obtain the growth opportunities.

This transitory history of student employment in higher education shows that student employment programs emerged from multiple intentions and purposes, including the need for financial support and meeting the demands of additional services in college. Universities at large

recognized that the historical expansion and modifications of student employment allowed comprehension of the prevalence of current student employment experiences and how the experiences benefit the student.

Why Student Employment

The importance of student employment emerges through the lens of both the student and the employer. Students make strides to obtain on-campus employment for a multitude of reasons. Although some families write a check for full tuition to an institution, many students struggle to make ends meet. The cost of college is a factor that does not go unnoticed. Students work to fill the gap in unmet financial need (Torres, Gross, & Dadashov, 2010). The cost of a college education has increased by 1,120% since 1978, a rate that is four times greater than the consumer price index (Jamrisko & Kolet, 2012). Approximately seven out of ten seniors (69%) who graduated from public and nonprofit colleges in 2013 had student loan debt, with an average of $28,400 per borrower (The Institute for College Access & Success, 2014). Given escalating costs of higher education, students turn to income sources other than financial aid to pay for their education (Furr & Elling, 2000). Financial considerations become a reality when one has to pay basic living expenses and absorb tuition payments. These financial considerations were the primary reasons students became employed while enrolled in college (Dundes & Marx, 2006). With rising costs, unintended consequences emerge for students.

As an opportunity for learning, student work holds the potential for a transformative experience (Little & Chin, 1992). Colleges created mandatory work programs for their students to supplement their academic experience. Institutions commonly emphasize the importance of student success, specifically with regards to student retention and graduation rates (Bok, 2013). Astin (1993) indicates that a part-time job on campus positively affects the attainment of a

bachelor's degree and effective personal growth. Administrators in higher education see working on campus as having a positive effect on persistence and having a positive impact on the probability of enrolling in post-graduate education (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1985). Students create meaning from reciprocal academic and social interactions at the institution, with incorporation into the institution's ongoing social and intellectual life a key element of student persistence (Tinto, 1993). On-campus student employment is an entrée for students that carries a significant impact.

Student Benefits of Employment

In higher education, student affairs administrators commonly discuss the learning opportunities for our students, such as a focus on how higher education is preparing students to lead productive lives in society, and in particular, how the use of student learning outcomes has become the standard (ACPA, 1996). As part of the co-curricular life of a student, employment is a vehicle for student learning. Astin (1993) indicates how on-campus, part-time employment certainly impacts student development, explicitly in regards to timely degree completion and students reporting cognitive and affective growth. Undergraduate employment links with the attainment of higher levels of professional responsibility (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When students can recognize the benefits of their skill development due to their employment, they are better positioned to enter the workforce (NACE, 2018). Students need to be able to verbalize to a future employer how their skills can transfer to their future position.

Student perceptions of their learning experiences assist in understanding the role of on-campus employment in developing professional skills. Student employment is a mechanism to create an environment where experiences can complement knowledge acquired in the classroom. Carr (2005) directed a case study of student employees at a campus recreation facility supporting

the benefits of an on-campus work experience. Student employee positions in campus recreation can range from intramural officials, weight room monitors, front desk workers, to building supervisors and program specific managers (Carr, 2005). The purpose of the study was to explore the learning that occurs during the on-campus employment experience from the perspective of the college student (McFadden & Carr, 2015). The implication of the study indicates that collegiate recreation staff members must create intentional learning experience opportunities for students to grow within the collegiate recreation setting by linking their identity to developing their leadership capacity (McFadden & Carr, 2015). The work of Carr is influential because of the importance of thinking differently about how we work with students to better understand their perceptions.

As students become more aware of the importance of professional preparation, the benefits of on-campus employment become more apparent. Students feel the pressure in a competitive job market after college. Labaree (1997) discusses the way that students approach employment opportunities from a social mobility perspective. To a student, the benefit of employment is to help them better move into a career and climb the career ladder. Students approach employment similar to a consumer perspective, where the student accumulates forms of educational property to gain an advantage in the competition for social position (Labaree, 1997).

Theory-to-Practice

Student employment is a key component of a theory-to-practice model of learning in higher education. Many student development theories provide assumptions of how students develop during their time in higher education. These theories guide professionals to help students succeed in their development. Growing student development theories now also focus on the need

to understand how these experiences shape the entire student and supplement their learning experiences in the classroom (Evans et al., 2010). The practices themselves are the opportunities that educators can provide for students to have lived experiences. Peck, Hall, Cramp, Lawhead, Fehring, and Simpson (2016) explore the impact of experiences outside of the classroom that affect professional skills. Their findings indicate that students are becoming better consumers, understanding the value they need to take away from their time in college (Peck et al., 2016). The impact of this study pushes the development of formal models for developing students in on-campus employment positions and sheds light on the importance that student affairs professionals find ways to teach students to understand and articulate the skills gained from employment and involvement in those co-curricular experiences (Peck et al., 2016). When students, through formal programs, better understand their development, they will be a valuable representation of their institution because their on-campus employment.

Many developmental ideals exist today. With student employment, experiential learning becomes a reality. Dewey, Piaget, Jung and other scholars integrated the importance of experience into theories developed addressing learning and development. Kolb (1984) established a model of the progression of experiential learning. Experiential learning theory (ELT) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning theory is set up with propositions regarding the prime role of experience in learning and development (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Students learn through their experiences as described by the constructivist theory of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). As part of the environment, experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in a reactive framework to the learning condition are all part of the process

of experiential learning. A student's experience becomes his/her basis for reflection. Students use reflection as they consider new implications for action and implications can then be actively tested and used for guiding the creation of new experiences (Tulchinsky, 2018). Kolb and Kolb (2005) projected that experiential learning in higher education elevates by generating spaces for learning. For experiential learning, growth-producing experiences relate not only to direct experience with the subject matter studied but also the social and physical environment, as well as the quality of relationships of the learner (Tulchinsky, 2018). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is a part of the student employment experience in a university recreation setting.

Joplin (1981) introduced another experiential learning model. This model includes five stages. Each stage builds upon itself with an automatic connection. The theory description is a cyclical hurricane-like model (Joplin, 1981). In the initial focus stage, a new employee is introduced to the organization and a specific job. Stage 2 is the action stage for employees, where action is working their assigned shifts alongside other employees. In stage 3, the focus is on support. Employees receive support in a variety of ways such as being matched with veteran employees, continued training efforts, and constant feedback. After a period, the fourth stage of feedback applies. In this stage, the employee receives formal feedback on their performance. In the final stage of debriefing, a rigorous assessment is used to report on the overall performance of an employee. The cycle then continues during the lifespan of the employee. A student will transfer the cycle to other job situations. Connecting experiential learning to the skills sought by professional employers will address issues identified by those who work in career placement (Peck et al., 2016).

Learning in Student Employment

In a quantitative study, Hall (2013) examined the influence of campus recreation employment on student learning. Findings suggested strongly that student employees indicated perceived gains in critical thinking, integrative learning, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives, collaboration skills, and communication skills. The study used a quantitative approach that surveyed students only. The limitations of this study are clear that only students were involved and only one measurement tool was used. Researchers should seek more in-depth information about the impacts of components of the employee lifecycle (Hall, 2013). The increased focus of a qualitative approach will aid in better understanding the student perspective in regards to their gains from on-campus employment through the authentic stories we can hear from the students themselves.

Athas, Oaks, and Kennedy-Phillips (2013) performed a qualitative study on the general impact of any student employment position within student affairs. Their study focused on one university in the mid-west that employed over 4,000 students. The main emphasis of the research was to discuss the gain of transferable skills through on-campus employment. The finding that students' employment experiences help them solidify career goals suggests that jobs within student affairs divisions may be instrumental in assisting students in making their decisions that affect their futures (Athas et al., 2013). Given the potential strength of on-campus jobs, it is important that existing recreation staff continue to work toward learning more about the skill development that students obtain that impact their decisions for their future.

Increasing expectations from students, parents, employers, legislators, and others about the outcomes of a college education, such as learning the skills needed for a job has become relevant. The assessment of these outcomes is crucial for institutional accreditation, funding, and reputation (Keeling, 2004). At the University of Iowa, a program entitled "Iowa GROW" uses

scheduled, structured conversations between student employees and supervisors to connect academic knowledge acquired in the classroom with skills learned through student employment (Iowa GROW, 2017). The University of Memphis developed a "Professional Connections Program", using a three-part curriculum to focus on skills acquired through co-curricular experiences, combining intentional networking with professionals and awareness of competencies learned through involvement in campus programs (University of Memphis, 2017). These programs serve as models that assist students in finding value through their experiences as an employee. Their knowledge can be then shared with potential employers clearly and succinctly. In higher education, we need to strive for *high-impact* practices as defined by Kuh (2008). High-impact practices are those which create achievement of deep learning, significant engagement gains, and positive differential impact on historically underserved student populations. Higher rates of retention and engagement come when students are involved in high-impact practices, but only a minimal number of students participate in these experiences (Kuh, 2008). Student engagement in high-impact practices intensifies the chances of a student gaining competencies and skills needed to conquer challenges, attain goals, and reap the rewards from their college experience.

Professional Skills

The definition of *professional skills* is personal attributes that allow a person to engage effectively with other people. Examples of professional skills include written and verbal communication, organization, punctuality, critical thinking, and the ability to work in a team (NACE, 2017). The characteristics of professional skills are context-dependent and fluid. Often professional skills may be seen as open-ended or elusive in regards to how to measure one's professional skill ability. Professional skills are usually broken down into two categories: *hard* or

soft skills. Hard skills being those that are theoretically technical, you either know, or you do not. Soft skills can be defined as professional skills and include traits such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, communication, time management, and critical thinking (Toperzer, Anderson, & Barcelona, 2011; Winstead, Adams & Sillah, 2009). Robles (2012) noted soft skills, or people skills, as the personal qualities and intangible interpersonal abilities an individual holds. Kyllonen (2013) acknowledged soft skills such as work ethic, teamwork, effective communication, motivation, organization, and cultural awareness as significant to attainment in school and at work.

The guiding proposition in this study is that professional skills build from a theoretical underpinning and experiential practice. There is relevant information provided in the literature that has helped shape the need for the study. According to Carnevale, Smith, Melton, and Price (2015), workers need the right postsecondary preparations to gain a foothold and prosper in the labor market; employers need highly skilled postsecondary talent in order to remain competitive; and communities need both a highly skilled workforce and a competitive business sector in order to build attractive places to live, work, and study. In today's job market, employers are looking for skills in recent college graduates. Management consultants TalentQ, a unit of the Hay Group, asked hundreds of hiring managers what skills they were having trouble finding in job candidates, 80% said they couldn't find enough potential hires with strong professional skills, like speaking and writing clearly, listening well, collaborating with other people, and even just showing up on time (Fisher, 2016). Sentiments from employers about the labor force of recent college graduates drive the need for this study. The findings of the study will guide supervisors who work with student employees to better develop learning experiences for their students.

National Association of Colleges and Employers

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) produces a survey, the Job Outlook, annually that is sent to over 200 different employers. The Job Outlook provides insight into the skills needed for college graduates as they enter the workforce. The Job Outlook survey is conducted each fall to forecast hiring for the graduating class. The survey is based on responses from organizations nationwide that hire new college graduates. Job Outlook offers insights into what employers seek in job candidates, information about compensation plans, and more (NACE, 2015). The prior literature review revealed the need for professional skill development in college graduates. According to the NACE Job Outlook 2018, over two-thirds of employers screen graduates for GPA (NACE, 2017). After GPA, employers look heavily at one's resume. The NACE Job Outlook has empirical support toward their 20 identified key attributes employers seek on a candidate's resume as shown in Figure 2. These include the ability to work in a team, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills. Out of the identified attributes, there is a crossover with the professional skills examined in this study. The top two attributes that employers seek are problem-solving skills and the ability to work in a team. Employers equally pursue problem-solving and the ability to work in a team at a rate of 83 percent of future employers (NACE, 2017). Following problem solving and teamwork, written communication skills are requisites by 80 percent of future employers (NACE, 2017).

Attribute	% of Respondents
Problem-solving skills	82.9%
Ability to work in a team	82.9%
Communication skills (written)	80.3%
Leadership	72.6%
Strong work ethic	68.4%
Analytical/quantitative skills	67.5%
Communication skills (verbal)	67.5%
Initiative	67.5%
Detail-oriented	64.1%
Flexibility/adaptability	60.7%
Technical skills	59.8%
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	54.7%
Computer skills	48.7%
Organizational ability	48.7%
Strategic planning skills	39.3%
Creativity	29.1%
Friendly/outgoing personality	27.4%
Tactfulness	22.2%
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	19.7%
Fluency in a foreign language	4.3%

Figure 2: Attributes employers seek on candidates resume (*Job Outlook*, 2018)

With employers reviewing multiple candidates for positions, it is useful to evaluate what differentiates top candidates from others. For the Job Outlook 2018, new attributes were added to the survey related to work experience: "Has completed an internship within your organization," "Has internship experience in your industry," "Has general work experience," and "Has no work experience" (NACE, 2017, p. 31) Because the current study examines skill development that accompanies work experience in a leadership position, it is important to note that after internship experience, having a leadership position and general work experience are

reasons employers choose one candidate over a candidate without that experience. Out of a 5 point scale, with 5 equaling extreme influence, both “Has held leadership position” and “has general work experience” scored a 3.7 out of 5 (NACE, 2017, p.31) A student having a high GPA falls below having a leadership position and general work experience. This evidence suggests the idea that GPA alone is not enough to separate graduates.

Another area of assessment through the NACE survey is career readiness. When employers hire a recent graduate, they want someone who is ready to impact the organization from day one. The Job Outlook uses eight career readiness competencies in the survey. Critical thinking/problem solving is rated as most essential by respondents, as it has been since the inception of the survey (NACE, 2017). As seen in Figure 3, professional skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, oral/written communication, and leadership all score highly regarding essential to employers. Employers of students in leadership positions must create the crucial environments to develop these skills.

Competencies	Weighted Average Rating*
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	4.62
Teamwork/Collaboration	4.56
Professionalism/Work Ethic	4.46
Oral/Written Communications	4.30
Leadership	3.82
Digital Technology	3.73
Career Management	3.46
Global/Multi-cultural Fluency	3.01

**5-point scale, where 1=Not essential, 2=Not very essential, 3=Somewhat essential, 4=essential, 5=Absolutely essential*

Figure 3: Employers rate the essential need for career readiness competencies (Job Outlook, 2018)

The Story of Skill Development

In a white paper entitled *Considering the impact of participation and employment of students in Campus Activities and Campus Recreation on the Development of Skills employers desire most*, professionals from both the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) and NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation, came together to look at how skills gained by students helped for career preparation. Part of the findings showed student affairs staff need to discover ways to teach students to understand and articulate the skills gained from employment and involvement in co-curricular experiences (Peck et al., 2015).

Theoretical Frameworks

For this study, two theories, Deleuze's: Thinking with Desire and Astin's Involvement Theory, were used for the theoretical basis for refining data to answer research questions. The frameworks were kept central in the development to collect and examine data.

Deleuze's Thinking with Desire

Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher, introduces the importance of understanding the meaning behind one's desire. In *What is Philosophy*? (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994), the authors share, "Philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts." Deleuze and Guattari oppose the Freudian conception of the unconscious. Freud's concept of the unconscious states "processes in the mind which occur automatically and are not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memories, interests, and motivations" (Westen, 1999, p. 1061). Instead, Deleuze favors a productive factory model: desire is not an imaginary force but a real, productive force (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). In his work, Deleuze contends any desire an individual has is part of a process of production (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Deleuze turns our minds to a unique way to work with desire. We typically think of desire as simply wanting

something. In the current study, Deleuze's theory is applied to capture the desire for the growth of professional skills. For Deleuze, desire is about production. Production, he maintains, is 'active, becoming, and transformative' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 9). Thinking with desire compliments other theories because of the focus on transformation. As students go through their time in college, we need to be aware of the experiences that impact them.

Jackson & Mazzei (2012) explain, "We desire not because we lack something that we do not have, but because of the productive intensities and connections of desires" (p. 9). This theory presents a perspective for the desire for skill development of students in leadership positions. Another way to turn one's outlook is not merely to ask what is the desire but how did it become. Deleuze suggests to take a look backward toward the past. The becoming is the something else, the newness created (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Becoming is the movement through a unique event that produces experimentation and change (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Data collected aids in the importance to think of the becoming of the research participants.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory

The work of Alexander Astin asserts the purpose of higher education is talent development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Alexander Astin's 1985 theory of student involvement explains the view of desirable outcomes for institutions of higher education about how students change and develop as a result of being involved in co-curricular experiences. The theory is considered a College Impact Model that focuses on sources of change (such as different institutional characteristics, programs or services, student experiences, and interactions with other students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The model itself is simple but casts a broad perspective on the impact of college on students. According to Astin (1985), his theory "can be stated simply: *Students learn by becoming involved*" (p. 133).

Astin's "I-E-O" theory is composed of three elements: inputs, environment, and outcomes. The input element is what a student brings with them into college. These inputs are a part of who the students are such as their demographics, their background, and any previous experiences. The environment element is all about their time throughout college. The term "environment" is used to encompass all the experiences a student would have during college. Lastly, the aspect of outcomes includes a student's characteristics, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values that exist after a student has graduated from college. Astin pushes administrators to realize the impacts of a student's experience. In summary, Astin's focus is on before, during, and after college as part of a student's development.

Astin's theory is the basis for higher education professionals to produce dynamic learning environments that make academic work and co-curricular activities relatable to students. In the collegiate recreation setting, Astin's theory is extremely relevant (Tulchinsky, 2018). Student employees bring a wide range of backgrounds and experiences to a department (inputs). All student employees will work under the same mission, vision, and values of a given department (environment), and take away skills and abilities for their professional career (outcomes).

In addition to the general logic of I-E-O theory, Astin created five basic assumptions about involvement. The first assumption is that while students are involved there will be a certain level of investment of psychosocial and physical energy. Secondly, involvement is ongoing, and it depends on each student level of investment that will impact growth. Thirdly, when we examine involvement, we can use both qualitative and quantitative measures. Fourth, the amount of student development that occurs correlates to being involved. Lastly, academic functioning is interrelated with student involvement. This theory has many applications in the world of higher education and is one of the strongest pieces of evidence for co-curricular student involvement.

The knowledge gained from Astin's theory in regards to the positive influence on co-curricular involvement amplifies the positive impact of student employment. Through this study, it is suggested that not only a student's time in college needs to be considered but also their time before and outlook ahead.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature reviewed creates a framework for the value of the present study. The literature review analysis of the larger impacts on the student experience combined with a historical perspective of higher education indicated a need for the emergence of student affairs. Based on framework and emergence of student development theories there is a value to studying how administrators in student affairs can aid in the development of students. The rise of developmental departments, such as university recreation, and the influence of student employment in context to the skill development of student employees creates a foundation for the research in the study.

The flow of the literature review started with the history of higher education. Part of the intention of the earliest institutions was providing education to upper-class men. The growth of higher education created an intent to educate more and more minds. It became apparent that education also meant college was a place to grow skills. An increase in student population and research focus of faculty made paramount that other professionals assumed the developmental responsibilities for students.

With more students, student affairs offices emerged. Personnel was put in place to focus on the growth of the whole individual based on the knowledge that students do change, grow and develop. A more recent emphasis for student affairs is addressing issues of diversity with a student population from different places. Student development theories with a focus on helping

students, especially outside the classroom, advanced ways to measure intrapersonal changes (or development) that may be due to physical maturation, environmental forces, or the combined effects of interactions between person and environment. Many unique theories exist that can be used as a basis for understanding student development.

Drilling deeper, the review touched on the role of university recreation. Recreation is certainly an outlet for students to escape the academic rigors of college. Recreation identifies as a way to have a greater connection to the whole university. Recreation departments need to focus on the same university priorities as all other departments.

During the past, higher education economic support dwindled, increasing a need for the student to find alternate ways to help pay for education. Anchoring at the core of the literature review was a look at student employment. Student employment was considered during the early days of higher education as a pure financial benefit to both the institution and student. Student employment was necessary to meet the demands of the workforce needed on a college campus as higher education grew. A realization that employment coupled with academic knowledge aided growth of an individual created great strides in the understanding of the impact of student employment on professional potential.

The present study's review focused on the development of professional skills from student employment leadership positions, specifically those skills that are identified by employers of recent college graduates that students need. These skills can be applied in many fields of work and areas of life. The review of the literature provides support for using theoretical frameworks for the exploration of how student employment in a leadership position can aid in the development of professional skills.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methodology used by the researcher to understand how students develop the competencies (professional skills) that employers seek in graduates. The study examined the following questions through a multi-phased qualitative collective case study approach:

Central Research Question:

What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Sub-questions:

Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

This chapter is presented in 9 sections: 1) paradigm, 2) researcher positionality, 3) research framework, 4) research design, 5) data analysis, 6) data interpretation, 7) trustworthiness, and 8) ethical considerations.

Paradigm

On the path of illuminating the connection between student work and professional skill development, it was essential to focus on experiences by student employees. Professionals in recreation programs generally employ the greatest number of students on a college or university campus. Heavy reliance on student employees is established for day-to-day operations. With a focus on the student employee experience, professionals can be educated about ways to develop

skills. According to Lincoln and Guba (2011), “constructivists desire participants to take an increasingly active role in nominating questions of interest for any inquiry and in designing outlets for the findings to be shared more widely within and outside the community” (p. 118). Athas, Oaks, and Kennedy-Phillips (2013) provided a study about student employee development in student affairs through a paradigmatic view of constructivism; their findings showed the preferred pedagogy and learning in student affairs divisions often takes the form of constructivism, the idea that learning takes place both individually and socially. The construction emerges by the meaning attributed to a certain experience. The work in this study was to understand the perspective of the lived experiences of the participants in the study. Students working in campus recreation encounter a range of experiences such as customer service, conflict management, treating injuries, and leading training sessions. The expectation was that the researcher could gain considerable knowledge from exploring what student employees know from their perspective. It was imperative that the study involved active discussion in a natural setting where the researcher and subject felt they are both active minds in the construction of meaningful reality. The reader is better informed by the study when study participants embrace their role in the potential impact of contributing their stories.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality is customarily shared to explain the passion of the researcher to the given topic and unveil the researcher’s path as it relates to the topic. Daniel Sciarra (1999) shares that in qualitative research, the knowing of someone else cannot be separated from the process of knowing oneself. The researcher and the participant are both the subject and the object of investigation, “interactively linked with the values of the investigator inevitably influencing

the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). This section clarifies why the researcher finds value in the research topic.

As a young college student, afraid of the newness ahead, including random encounters of fresh faces, I began to feel transformation for the first time. The path to my current employment originated from co-curricular experiences at the collegiate level. I found the most growth in the ability to connect my classroom knowledge acquisition with practical experience application within the business of campus recreation.

I had tremendous experiences that helped develop me as a leader in my field of study. As a freshman, struggling through personal doubts, a dorm mate asked me if I wanted to become an intramural official. Guided by a love of sport and a desperation to get connected, I gave it a shot. I officiated every sport through the intramural program. I was able to make close friends and learn more about myself, specifically how it was important that I focus on my professional/personal development. During my sophomore year, I became an intramural supervisor. In the supervisor position, I was responsible for training intramural officials — the supervisor scheduled multiple sporting events where we worked with teams throughout the season of play. In my junior year, I applied for a leadership role as the intramural team leader in training. The intramural team leader position was responsible for the management of approximately six supervisors and 15 officials. As Intramural Team Leader, while a student, I was acting in a professional role to my peers. My growth in these positions was key to my professional/personal development.

The importance of being an active learner will always be a part of me. As an active learner, it is crucial that multiple methods of learning are utilized to educate ourselves better. My most prominent way is through personal practice and talking with others. Another very impactful

practice for me was taking knowledge acquisition from the classroom and applying it to my work in Campus Recreation. For example, in an accounting class, I learned about balance sheets. I then applied that knowledge to creating more robust budgets and financial reports for the Intramural program I was overseeing.

In my current role as an administrator within student affairs at a private liberal arts college, I oversee the operation of our Campus Recreation department. We employ a model of student development, most significantly, through approximately 240 student employee positions. The basis of the student employment model is to allow students, while in crucial developmental years, to have opportunities to work in jobs that could be filled by full-time staff. Instead of running an area of the facility with eight full-time staff, the student employment model uses 30-40 students, working shorter shifts, to fulfill the daily operations of a recreation facility.
The mission of the department emphasizes that students develop through leadership. A student may start as an employee who predominantly swipes IDs, yet progresses to lead their peers in the daily operations of a multi-million dollar facility. The experience alone is tremendous, but there are intentional actions throughout an individual student's experience that shape his or her development.

Research Framework

As an individual involved in the discovery of knowledge, it is important to recognize personal beliefs as a researcher. My beliefs toward research are consistent with the paradigm of constructivism. Social constructivism is a concept where individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), "Whether we are aware of it, or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research" (p. 15). When considering how to study the nature of being, from an ontological

perspective, we gain knowledge that things exist through how we live out experiences and from interacting with other members of society. Crotty (1998) explains in what way research methodology can fit with one's epistemology. In Figure 4, below, Crotty shows the linear nature of a research framework.

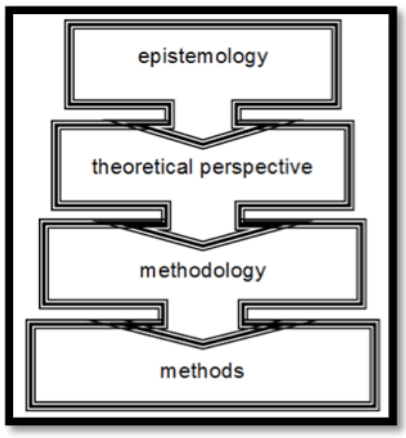

Figure 4: Crotty's (1998, p.4) conceptualization of the four elements of the research process.

As for the process of thinking or the epistemology lens, it was useful to apply what we know through an active process of comparison to what others may know. The methodology by which we seek out new knowledge needs to involve active discussion in a natural setting. The researcher and subject must feel they are both active minds in the construction of meaningful reality. Constructing knowledge is a collaborative enterprise. In the study, the participants are integral in helping shape the findings to inform the reader best. The researcher holds the responsibility to depict the participants' stories accurately to represent their experience. Based on the foundation laid by Crotty and Creswell, the epistemology and methodology used in this study are purposeful to serve the researcher best.

Approach

For this project, a multi-phased qualitative collective case study approach served as the basis to gain awareness. Qualitative research is largely defined as, “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or others means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Whereas quantitative researchers attempt to establish something exactly, often through calculation and/or research, qualitative researchers focus on “natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Within a case study, underlying issues present are globally important to a given field (Janesick, 2011). In this study, student employment of leaders in recreation programs can globally impact all those who work with students in a recreation setting. A case study will “allow the reader to see the people and the environment as described through the use of rich and descriptive language” (Janesick, 2011, p. 52). The end of a case study will not serve useful if adequate thought does not occur on the front end. According to Patton (2015), ”The key to making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis and cases to study is in determining what you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 263). In this study, findings will say something about the professional skill development of student leaders within the context of student employment. A case study is the best way to get evidence based on the depth of analysis of both people and the environment studied.

The case study is classified as “within-case” as it relates to analyzing, interpreting, and legitimizing data. As described by Miles and Huberman (1994), within-case analyses explain “phenomena in a bounded context that make up a single ‘case’— whether that case is an individual in a setting, a small group, or a larger unit such as a department, organization, or

community" (p. 90). This study aimed to understand students' perspectives of the role that student leadership employment plays in their professional skill (competency) development and to provide practical recommendations to administrators that will inform how to organize and facilitate student leadership employment practices to meet the needs related to student professional skill development. According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. This collective case study enables the researcher to explore the collection of individual participants that fit one group: student leaders within a recreational sports program.

Phase one of the research involved a qualitative survey. Phase two added personal interviews and observations of select participants. Survey implementation and qualitative interviews and observations seek to gain valuable knowledge in the study. The qualitative case study methodology was chosen to highlight "insight, discovery, and interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). To understand the nature of the social world, it was necessary to "embrace a profound acceptance of multiple ways of knowing, multiple ways of coming to know" (Smith, 1997, as cited in Greene, 2005, p. 208). Using data from both phases of research allowed a significant interpretation of the data and phenomenon (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Yin (2011), who has done extensive work with case study methodology, is a proponent because it provides deep examination across multiple points of view. Case study methodology provides qualitative researchers with an approach that is rigorous and theoretically sound (Merriam, 2009). A case study is an appropriate method for gaining a breadth of insight and

comprehension of the experiences of the research participants in student employment positions. The multiple sources of data assisted with the credibility of the study. In this study, a multi-phased qualitative collective case study aids in answering research questions to add to the knowledge base of the reader.

Research Site

The site used in the investigation was a private liberal arts college in the south-central United States. The institution currently serves over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Students come from varied geography with 46% hailing from the state in which it is located according to the office of institutional research. The researcher chose the research site based on proximity and convenience. In particular, the study was restricted to student employees who work in the university's recreation center. The facility opened in 2003. The size of the facility consists of over 200,000 square feet of recreational space. The operation of the facility is under the auspices of the Department of Campus Recreation. Twelve full-time professional staff positions are directed to oversee multiple facility and program areas. To manage the facility and programs, over 240 student employees conduct the daily operation. The facility was chosen based on several factors. First, Campus Recreation is one of the largest employers of students on campus. The student employees range from entry desk workers to leadership positions who oversee all student staff working in the building at a given time. The typical student shift is 3 hours in length to balance with their academic schedule. On average, a student employee will work 12 hours a week. Second, the current leadership development practices are consistent with similar recreation programs in higher education. These practices include in-depth trainings, meetings, and evaluation.

Participants

The selection of participants in this study came from a leadership group of student employees known as operation supervisors, intramural supervisors, and area managers. Thirty students fill these positions. The operation supervisors oversee all student staff in the building, provide managerial customer service, and respond to emergency situations. The intramural supervisors manage the daily operations of a comprehensive intramural program where students compete against one another in a variety of sports. Intramural supervisors deal with customer service and respond to emergencies. Area managers work directly with a professional staff member to assist in the hiring, training, and supervision of area-specific employees. These students are generally junior or senior level. Only individuals age 18 years or older were recruited for the study. Operation supervisors, intramural supervisors, and area managers have worked for at least one year in an entry-level role position prior to their promotion into one of the three leadership roles. The entry-level roles vary between front desk staff, weight room attendants, climbing wall staff, intramural officials, and lifeguards.

In summary, the focus on the subject population is due to:

- This student population is unique compared to other student employment positions based on the oversight of other student employees
- The student population acts in place of professional staff members
- These student leaders hold professional certifications not required for other student employment positions

Recruitment Procedure

Because the researcher is an indirect supervisor for the potential participants, the researcher asked a disinterested third party (a recreation staff member who does not have supervisory authority) to invite participation from the pool of 30 potential participants.

The disinterested third party sent one email inviting students to participate in both the survey and interview portions of the study. (See Appendix A) The email invitation was drafted by the researcher and sent to the third party, who sent the email invitation to participate to the 30 potential participants.

For the survey portion of the study, the email invitation included a survey link. The researcher only received results of the survey, which provided anonymous responses, unless the participant chose to reveal personally identifying information in a response. However, the researcher did not know which of the invited students chose to participate (or declined participation).

For the interview portion of the study, the email invitation explained the study and reviewed the consent with interested student workers. 10 students agreed to participate in the interview portion of the study, the third party used a simple random sampling process to cull the number to 10, and then provided those names to the researcher. The sampling frame of 30 is divided into sub-sections comprising of 12 Operations Supervisors, 9 Intramural Supervisors and 9 Area Managers that are relatively homogeneous with respect to one or more characteristics (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

As part of a collective case study, pairwise sampling was used where the participants were associated with all other participants in the sample. The sampling design is called "pairwise" because all selected cases are treated as a set, and their "voice" is compared to all other cases one at a time in order to understand better the underlying phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The study is not designed to differentiate between each subgroup of student leadership positions. See Figure 5, for a breakdown of criteria as it pertains to the current student leadership staff.

Leadership Position	Total Staff Size	Male	Female	Minimum of six months experience	Sample Size
Operation Supervisor	12	7	5	12	4
Intramural Supervisor	9	5	4	9	3
Area Manager	9	4	5	6	3

Figure 5: Student Leadership Staff Breakdown

The researcher did not know which students initially agreed or declined to participate. For both surveys and interviews, these measures were taken in order to mitigate any perception of coercion to participate on the part of student workers, given the student researcher's position.

Participant Profile

As a result of recruitment efforts, data was collected from the ten (10) research participants at a private liberal arts college in the south-central United States. For confidentiality purposes, the researcher refers to the research site as Participating Institution 1 (PI1). The study participants are referenced by number, PI1-1 through PI1-10 in order to protect their anonymity. **Participant Profile**: the following table, portrays the participant gender, academic standing, work affiliation, and years in leadership position. The participants ranged from junior to senior academic standing. The work areas represented in the study include Operation Supervisors, Intramural Supervisor and Area Manager.

Table 1: Participant Profile

Gender	Male (5)	Female (5)	
Classification	Senior (7)	Junior (3)	
Position	Operation Supervisor (8)	Intramural Supervisor (1)	Area Manger (1)
Leadership Years	2 years (7)	1 year (3)	

Consenting Procedure

All subjects were comprehensively informed of all study procedures by the disinterested third party. The benefits and risks associated with the study were distinctly stated. It was presented clearly to participants that this study is for a researcher project in conjunction with the researcher's dissertation. The methods for confidentiality were explained.

For the survey phase, the researcher requested permission not to use a physical consent, but to place consent language at the start of the survey, and for completion of the survey to be accepted as evidence of consent for the survey portion of this study. For the interview portion of the study, after receiving names of a maximum of 10 potential participants, the researcher met with each potential participant to review the consent document and answer any questions. Should a student have elected to not participate at that time, the researcher would have requested the third party to select (at random) a replacement name from among the list of all students who expressed interest in participating. A formal typed consent document was required to be completed by each participant in interview phase. A media release consent form indicating the potential use of recorded interviews was required to be completed. A personal copy of the consent forms was given to each participant. (See Appendix B & C for consent forms)

Research Design

This study was designed using a qualitative approach. The information or data collected and analyzed consisted of textual materials such as survey results, interview transcripts, field notes, and documents that document human experiences about others in social action and reflexive states (Saldana, 2011). The research design used two phases: 1) A qualitative survey of the entire population of student leaders in a recreation program and 2) qualitative interviews and observations of 10 student leaders from the larger population in a recreation program.

Phase 1 – Qualitative Survey

For this study, qualitative data encapsulated a broad perspective of the participants' perspective on their professional skill development. The qualitative survey method provided the researcher with the ability to collect data from participants to digest probable associations or features between participants. For the qualitative approach, all student leaders completed a survey that measures their perspective on professional skill levels due to holding their leadership position. The survey allowed a comparison to emerge from the lens of the participants.

Collection of participant responses occurred through Qualtrics, an online survey distribution, collection, and analysis platform. Each participant received an email with an individual link for completion. An Email Protocol is located in Appendix A. All survey responses allowed for non-disclosure of the individual participant. Given the timing of the study, after receiving participant consent, the participant received a survey asking them to evaluate their level of professional skills currently due to their work in a leadership role.

The survey questions focused on student leader perception of skill levels based on their entire experience as a student leader. The survey design approximated 15 minutes for completion. Questioning included basic demographics and specific skill development related inquiries. The survey tool was guided by NACE Professional Skill competencies. Questions related to skill development used open-ended formatting asking participants to provide self-reflection. A survey template is located in Appendix D. A panel of professionals, who specialize in assessment, student employment, and research design, reviewed the survey tool. With the study grounded in the NACE competencies the panel unanimously agreed the instrument was appropriate for the study.

After the collection of all survey results, generalizations summarized the scope of participants in the study. The results of survey data aided to inform the qualitative interviews and support the professional skill development of students in leadership positions.

Phase 2 – Qualitative Interviews & Observations

Interviews. Interviews of the student employees were a primary source of information. Each participant received an email with an individual link for scheduling an interview. An email Protocol is located in Appendix A. A formal interview was conducted to discuss the participant's experiences and perceived growth in professional skill development. The interview used a semi-structured approach that allowed the researcher to acquire specific information from all interview participants and allowed for more free-flowing responses depending on the participant and the situation (Merriam, 2009). The interviews transpired in person. Interview length was between 45-60 minutes. The format allowed for additional questions that arose during the interview process. Appendix E presents the interview protocol. A panel of professionals, who specialize in assessment, student employment, and research design, reviewed the interview protocol. The panel approved of the interview protocol design. Flexibility was important to explore the feedback provided by participants in their interviews. The interview included questions about the participants' past that have impacted who they are today. These impact moments were not limited to time during college but also who they were coming into college. Part of the questioning strategically identified why the participants chose to pursue working on campus as well as the pursuit of a leadership position.

Furthermore, the emphasis was on the desire to grow professionally. The line of questions helped inform the researcher about specific examples of under what conditions did theoretical knowledge help with the student's skill development. Participants discussed their

personal experiences wherein applied work experience has helped in the development of their skill base. Interviews were recorded using an audio recording device. Audio of interviews generated transcriptions through Trint, a web-based software. All transcriptions were shared with and reviewed by participants for accuracy. From hearing the anecdotal accounts of students, we better understand the nuance of their experience that helped shape their development.

Observations. Notes developed from direct observations of individual participants during scheduled work shifts for the duration of the observation period. The observations for each participant lasted approximately 30 minutes in length. Indirect observations were used to capture the participants in a natural setting. These observations occurred from a distance such as while the researcher routinely walked throughout the facility. Or observations were taken when the researcher participated in departmental programs and services. Notes were swiftly collected and added to data collection. Observations occurred at other high impact moments for the students such as training sessions and weekly staff meetings. These observations focused not only on individual participants but also the content of the meetings in general. Observations served as complementary research that helped balance the feedback from individual interviews. Observations assisted in the development of a case combined with insight provided from personal interviews (Janesick, 2011). These forms were initially filled out by hand then transcribed for secure record keeping.

Security & Minimizing Risk

The data collected from surveys, interviews, and observations, was secured with an emphasis on minimizing risk to the study. Through informed consent, the participants expect and are owed their identity through participation to be kept confidential in the study. Only the researcher knew the identities of the participants involved. A secured network drive that is

backed up and recoverable protected the survey results, audio transcription files, and observation documents. A lockable drawer in the office of the researcher secured all printed transcriptions including notes from interviews and hard copies of observations. The priority was that a safe and secure system was in place for the storage of data.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data evolved during the study. Patton (1987) describes data analysis as a process to bring order to data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units. In qualitative research, there is "typically not a precise point at which data collection ends, and analysis begins" (Patton, 1987, p. 144). The analysis focus stems from the research questions:

Central Research question:

What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Sub-questions:

Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

Patton (1987) emphasizes the analysis of qualitative data is a "creative process" (p. 146). The multi-phased qualitative collective case study was guided by Michael Patton's "Process of Constructing Case Studies" as seen in Figure 6.

The Process of Constructing Case Studies

Step 1: Assemble the raw case data.

These data consist of all the information collected about the person or program for which a case study is to be written.

Step 2: Construct a case record.

This is a condensation of the raw case date organizing, classifying, and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package.

Step 3: Write a case study narrative.

The case study is a readable, descriptive picture of a person or program that makes accessible to the reader all the information necessary to understand that person or program. The case study is presented either chronologically or thematically (sometimes both). The case study presents a holistic portrayal of a person or program.

Figure 6: Patton's (1987, p.149) process of constructing case studies.

In review, the multi-phased qualitative collective case study is studying a single group: recreational sport student leaders (an employment position). As part of Step 1: Assembling the raw case data, all files were organized properly for efficiency. All surveys, interviews, observations, and other documentation were read thoroughly. Multiple copies of data existed. One served as an original. Other copies are available for creative use in the second phase of constructing case studies.

Once the raw data was collected, the analysis transitioned into Step 2: Construct a case record. A case record served to condense the raw data by organizing, classifying, and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package. To construct a case record, the

researcher edited information, removed redundancies, and organized for easy access. The case record was "complete and manageable," including all information needed for subsequent analysis (Patton, 1987, p. 148). The case record was used to build a case study narrative.

With a complete case record, the analysis moved into Step 3: Writing a case study narrative. A narrative approach aids in telling the story of each participant and their exposure to the development of their competencies (professional skills). The case study narrative is descriptive, analytic, interpretive, and evaluative treatment of the more comprehensive descriptive data that are in the case record (Patton, 1987). The overall case study should take the reader into the group's (recreational sport student leaders) life. The narrative of the case aims to be holistic and comprehensive as it is woven into the conceptual framework of the study.

Data Interpretation

Within this collective case study approach, data influenced the creation of interpretations of the study. The interpretation of data is not neatly separated from the analysis. Patton (1987) describes data interpretation as attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions. Interpretation as a separate perspective encourages the researcher to omit bias from data collection (Patton, 1987). Interpretations of data were made through classical content analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Classical content analysis involves identifying important examples, themes, and patterns in the data. A researcher looks for quotations or observations that go together, that are examples of the same underlying idea, issue, or concept (Patton, 1987). Implementing classical content analysis involves the researcher forming codes for different categories of responses. Codes were outlined with *lean coding* as presented by Creswell (2013). The analysis examined each participant's survey results to determine a collective look at

perceived growth. Examination of individual interviews focuses on competency growth and the environment (or ecology) to allow for growth. The lean coding led to a few select categories. Through condensing the raw data, emergent information led to the expansion of categories in the coding process. After categories are established the researcher counted the frequency the codes appear in the data. Codes that repeated suggest important concepts for the participants (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Codes were developed a *priori* due to the use of the conceptual framework guided by theoretical frameworks based on literature. In addition to classical content analysis, the researcher considered the depth of a single participant response as a unique opportunity to add to the interpretation of data.

Computer Software. The use of software made later retrieval easier than if all coding and analytics were produced by hand (Yin, 2011). Computer software, specifically NVivo, allowed the researcher to store all data in one platform. The software features the ability to import transcriptions, open-ended survey results, and more. NVivo assisted in exploring patterns and seeing connections between themes. Charts, mind maps, and word clouds are a few of the visualization possibilities through NVivo, an online platform that is password protected that is only accessed through a private computer to protect participant confidentiality.

Triangulation. To aid in developing the understanding of the study, *triangulation* is implemented. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). The form of triangulation used in this study is triangulation of data. Triangulation of data combines data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different places, or from different people (Flick, 1992). Triangulation is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as

well as methods of data collection (Patton, 1999). According to Creswell & Miller (2000), "Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p. 126). Kaplowitz and Hoehn (2001) found that using multiple data sources provided different perspectives on resources, values, and issues and concluded that one method was not better than the other, but rather, the two approaches were complementary. The use of triangulation leads to three methodologic observations about the data derived: (a) comparing the data led to an iterative process, whereby phenomena were explored more deeply, (b) the combined data led to an enhanced understanding of the context of the phenomena, and (c) convergence of the data enhanced trustworthiness of findings (Carter et al., 2014).

In the study, data triangulation occurred by comparing the results of interpreting surveys and interviews with the observations conducted during the study. The three main sources of data (surveys, interviews & observations) were collected at different times. The researcher looked at the themes from classical content analysis and compare to observation data. Connections made between what the participant said and what the researcher observed created validity through triangulation.

From the data analysis, interpretations, and triangulation the conceptual framework along with two key theories, Astin's Inputs – Environment – Outcomes and Deleuze's: Thinking with Desire, permitted better sharing the data toward the benefits of student employment toward professional skill development.

Trustworthiness

The responsibility of the researcher is to be accountable for truthful results and correct conclusions. In order to establish credibility in qualitative research studies, Creswell and Miller

(2000) contend it is important to "actively involve participants in assessing whether the interpretations accurately represent them" (p. 125). A strategy used to fortify the trustworthiness of the study is member-checking. Member checks, throughout the study, allowed the participants to review transcriptions produced. The research participants reviewed a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy and address any inaccuracies. Requesting involvement by the participants in the review of transcripts allowed a participant to value their role in the project and confirm accuracy in the details provided in the interview process. There were no concerns with a transcription that needed to be addressed.

Beyond working with participants, peer-debriefing was initiated to assist with trustworthiness. Throughout the study, the researcher consulted with the chair of the committee. The relationship between researcher and chair was a key relationship in peer-debriefing. External reviewers who are not associated with the study were given an opportunity to assess the findings. The external reviewers were comprised of individual who are end users of the study, content experts or methodology specialists.

The final tactic toward building the trustworthiness of the study is to focus on the researcher individually compared to the research. As the study progressed, the researcher used journal bracketing. Bracketing is a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing is useful when there is a close relationship between the researcher and the research topic. The researcher kept a journal including all notes of potential assumptions, values, interests, or emotions that are of connection to the study. Tufford & Newman (2010) explain, bracketing can mitigate the adverse effects of

the research endeavor, and it facilitates the researcher reaching deeper levels of reflection across all stages of qualitative research.

Ethical Considerations

As the study proceeded, the role of the researcher was to be responsible in every aspect of the research. Given the study involved participation by students, it was important to consider their relationship with the study for the duration. It was vital to use points of contacts with students, such as member checks, to be sure there was a level of comfort with their participation in the study. Although questioning through interviews was minimally invasive, the researcher used respect for the students' reactions. If at any point in time during an interview, there was a level of discomfort from the participant, an interviewee was able to request to stop immediately. All observations only occurred during the general observation period when the participants were scheduled to work. The researcher was sure that the observation did not influence the behaviors of the employee. During observation, there was no level of discomfort from the participants. Through both interviews and observations, the participants knew their identity was secure. In the case that they felt their identity was recognized the participant had the option to have all content provided to the study removed and destructed. If at any time a participant voiced concern, a consultation with the participant ensued about their desire to continue as a participant. If there was emotional distress, a list of campus resources was available for the participant. The student employee's supervisor served as a primary resource.

In this study, it was important to note I serve in a leadership capacity for the entire recreation department. Although I do not directly supervise any student employees, I do have limited interaction on a routine basis. The most important consideration is that the participants understand my role alongside their role in the construction of knowledge. A student participant

understood the focus was on building information to share with the reader. Comfort needed to exist within the participant to contribute to the study. The information disseminated through the student was guided to serve students in their growth during college. At any point during the study, if there was distress from knowing the researcher is a prominent member of the overall department, then the participant had the option to have all content provided to the study removed and destructed. At any time a participant could have decided to be removed from the study. Then, the original consent form was provided back to the participant or destroyed in the presence of the participant.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Research Findings

The findings of this case study are explained in the chapter. The chapter focuses on qualitative data acquired in the study through a survey and participant interviews. Emergent themes from the data drive the findings. Meaningful statements from the participants connect to the emergent themes.

The purpose of the study was to focus on the development of skills in students working in college, specifically in a university recreation setting. The following qualitative research questions guided the study:

Central Research Question:

What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Sub-questions:

Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

As a method to comprehend the data collected, themes emerged, categories and subcategories were established. Classical content analysis was used to identify the themes and patterns in the data. With classical content analysis, themes are not obvious on their own (Patton, 1987). Complementary quotations or observations that pertain to the same underlying idea, issue, or concept allowed themes to emerge. The analysis allowed the researcher to identify participants' real life experiences. The participants were students who chose to work in a

leadership position during their time in higher education. In particular, the themes from participants were related to four stages: desire to grow as an individual, knowledge acquisition, practical experiences, and achievement in professional growth. These stages of development aid in telling the story of the case of student leaders in a university recreation setting.

Case Narrative

The potential for a transformative experience takes place on the campus of a mid-size private liberal arts college in the south-central United States. The college is a place of hope, dreams, and desires for the students who attend. A student journey starts with a multitude of feelings and emotions during a time of great unknown. It is a time of transition that they have not yet experienced. The institution is filled with opportunity. Students have the ability to find a fit that becomes their transformative story.

In this case, a place to belong comes in the form of a university recreation department. Over 17 years ago the recreation department, where the student leaders in this study work, opened a redesigned and expanded recreation center creating new opportunities for employment. Over the course of time, employment opportunities shifted into leadership opportunities. The leadership opportunities range from oversight of peers in the workplace to program design and implementation. Over the years the number of student leadership opportunities has grown. Currently, over 30 leadership positions with the department exist. All of these positions involve undergraduate students at the university.

The journey is a very individualized experience. For different reasons, students join and are hired into the organization. Some students simply need to have a way to earn money to assist in the financial burdens of college. Parents of students often encourage their students to find a job. An influential peer may encourage another student to seek employment on-campus.

After being hired, the students enter into an entry level employment position within the department. As employees, an in-depth training and orientation process occurs. Student employees are oriented into the organization to understand how their job contributes to fulfill the mission, vision, and values. In addition, students are oriented to the specifics of their jobs. Throughout the course of their employment the students are guided through theory to understand how to better serve and lead. Day in and day out, the student leaders are given tangible opportunities to develop skills. Students learn to interrelate with one another while working toward the same purpose. Customer service becomes a major focus of understanding with each unique interaction. There come times where conflict arises and needs de-escalation. Supervisors provide feedback and aid in a student's ability to be coached. After time, some students commit to progressing in their experience with the department.

After time in an entry-level position a desire grows and opportunity awaits certain students for a leadership position. Similar to when a student first started their employment, financial gain motivates advancement. For some, a desire to have more authority is evident. A majority of leaders are in search of professional skill development based on a need for more professional skills. Students are often encouraged to look to move up positions by their peers or supervisors.

In the newfound leadership position, greater expectations emerge from the department. Greater opportunities are followed by more in-depth training and involvement. According to the training materials and the employee handbook, students become engaged in weekly meetings. Monthly training seminars are provided. Annual retreats are held over multiple days. Students begin to have supervisory roles over their peers. Schedules are executed by student leaders. Trainings are planned and led by student leaders. A student leader will face trials such as

working with a disgruntled patron. Students are provided with comprehensive theory and the ability to live out their knowledge through experiences.

At the end of their experience, student leaders are able to participate in self-evaluation to examine through introspection their perceived growth. Students are able to recognize change in their skill levels. Future application of their experiences as a student leader in their next endeavor is clear. Gratitude develops for the time they spent with the department. One participant in the study indicated:

"All in all it was like one of my top three best choices in my life so far so I was very grateful for all the opportunities."

The case narrative provided a summarized story of the case of student employees in a leadership position within a recreational sports program. To aid in the case narrative, findings for the research questions are examined. The sub-questions are reviewed first to provide context to the specific development of student employees. The central research question is answered to provide greater perspective to the perceptions of student leaders' growth. Accompanying the research questions are areas of consideration that introduce themes discovered from interviews and survey results. For each question, a summary and raw thematic data are provided.

Findings & Themes

Research Question: Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

The student participants all indicated a clear desire to move into a leadership position. Through personal interviews and a survey, data was collected on all 10 students and their reasons for pursuing a leadership position. The following table aids in the summary of themes for why students choose to pursue a leadership position.

Table 2

Reasons for Pursuing Student Leadership Position Themes

Pursuit of Leadership Position	Number of Responses	Example Responses	Example Codes
Financial	2	"The first motivation to do so was actually financially. From that dollar raise was really like appealing to me because like I was paying for I like whatever scholarship and financial I didn't provide. I was paying for that with my own money for tuition. And so like any money counted helped."	Money, Paying Tuition, Paying bills, Pay Raise
More Skills	7	"And I feel that it would give me more skills that would come into play later in life."	Expand Skills, Need for skills, Become better, Competent
More Responsibility	6	"I was just really ready for more responsibility and I knew that was a great opportunity" "Even from the very first moment that I started working at campus recreation I did want a chance to get more responsibilities and pursue a higher level within the campus recreation."	Responsibility, Do more, Work with peers
Out of Comfort Zone	3	"Having a leadership position forced me to jump outside of my comfort zone."	Prominent, Challenged, New experiences
Meet new people	3	"I wanted to meet new people."	Family, People
Influence of Others	3	"And one of the big or biggest factors that pushed me towards the Operation Supervisor was [my co-worker]. If it wasn't for her and how she said it would be valuable opportunity, I wouldn't	Supervisor, Peer, Influence

	have pursued it as passionately as I would have had."
	"[My supervisor] approached me and said I think it would be a really good position for you. Well obviously that had crossed my mind. But once she kind of mentioned that and planted that seed it was something I became interested and kind of wanted to pursue."

A student leader's position is a platform to grow. When it comes to college students, a student leader position can be influential because when we see students transition through college they are enlightened to see growth opportunities. To highlight this point, one participant shared, "I never thought I'd be working in college" referring that student employment wasn't even a thought before matriculating into college. For some students the reality of on-campus employment is unrealized until the opportunity presents itself. Although the recreation department hires over 200 students, many participants did not know a job within the recreation department was a possibility before stepping foot on-campus. Participants indicated that the department highlighted job opportunities to students, especially through first year student programs, such as orientation.

Specifically in the study, all the participants served in an entry-level position and saw the possibilities for growth in a leadership position. One participant stated, "I was feeling I had outgrown the position….I was really ready for more responsibility." The representation of a desire for more responibility indicated a developmental stage in the students path. This quote importantly shows that a student can recognize their own future potential for more responsibility and leadership. More specifically, another participant noted, "I was growing really tired of just

working in the weight room, I knew I had to grow." Based on general student development theory, a student's time in college in very transitional. In these examples, the students choose to pursue a leadership position with a recognition of the need for transition.

From working with the participants, it became evident that there are both unique and common influences that impact the students. A clear common impact that rang out from the participants was in the form of encouragement. One participant noted, "people encouraged me to do it." In greater detail, a participant shared, "And one of the biggest factors that pushed me was [my co-worker]. If it wasn't for her and how she said it would be a valuable opportunity, I may not have pursued the position." Similarly, another participant shared, "[My supervisor] approached me and said I think it would be a really good position for you." Participant stories about how other people had an impression on encouraging them to pursue a student leadership position was an impact point toward moving toward the desire to grow.

From a document analysis, during the application process to become a student leader, one must have a current student leader sign off on their application. This requirement as part of the application process likely has an impact on the takeaway in regards to encouragement. It was evident that student employees are influenced in an environment of encouragement. Personal encouragement from members of the same organization will serve as guidance in the transformative process through a leadership position.

In the study, all participants internalized the growth opportunities for at least a year while in entry-level positions. They challenged themselves in their entry level position which proved their value for the leadership position. Examples from the analysis show how college-aged students have internal realizations that emerge over time such as that they need to be marketable after college. To be marketable, they need to embrace opportunities to learn and grow. In the

study, participants alluded to the fact that they knew the student leadership position would help develop skills for throughout their life. Specifically, a participant noted, “the position would give me more skills that would come into play later in life.” In this case, participants were focused on the immediate and future benefits of a leadership position.

Research Question: What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

Student participants all received a similair experience in the form of being taught information about the importance of job related skills. From interviews and survey results, data were collected about all 10 students in regards to the impact of teaching the theory of a skill as a foundation of growth. The following table aids in the summary of themes for how students learned about skill development.

Table 3

Application of Theory for Skill Development Themes

Learning about skills	Number of Responses	Example Responses	Example Codes
Understand others experiences	2	“I mean it's really helpful to kind of understanding what other people are experiencing.” “Getting updates amongst one another because there's so many different things happening here all the time.”	Empathy, Others
Weekly Meetings	7	“A strong way we learn leadership skills is through our weekly meetings.”	Weekly Meetings, Updates, Reports

All Student Leadership Meetings	5	"Having all of us in our leadership meetings with the entire leadership staff was really valuable because it gave us opportunities to have, not only conversation with other rec staff members but it also gave us insights from professional staff members."	Monthly Meetings, Leadership Meetings, All leaders
Personal Development	4	"I think a lot of the trainings that focus on your personal development. I think the more specific the better. So for instance when we went on the retreat trip and focused a lot on the enneagram."	Development, Personality Assessment
Leadership Retreat	4	"And so the leadership retreat, at the end of summer, is actually really exciting for me because it gives me like an opportunity to hear people that have done this their whole lives and that they've really researched and learned all these professional skills."	Retreat, Summer, Away From Campus
Scenarios	3	"We started doing those scenarios and like situations or what ifs and I think those really helped because then as things progressed and when things came up I either knew the answer or I knew how I should go about it."	Scenarios, Role Play, Practice
Employee Evaluations	2	"Employee reviews that we have of the end of the semester or evaluation that we have at the end of the semester really helps guide you in the right direction if you are slacking in a sense and	Evaluation, End of Semester, Meeting with Supervisor

> it helps you prioritize things that
> are actually important in a job."

As new student leaders are hired, they go through a rigorous onboarding and training process. Before each academic year the group of student leaders take a retreat. It is a time to renew and reset. The participants acknowledged it is a great time to get to know themsleves and one another. In reviewing the retreat documents, there is some business in terms of policy review, but the majority is team building activities. Students indicated that there was significant value in learning about their own self. The use of personality assessments as a platform for personal growth was beneficial. One student acknowledged the use of the enneagram was helpful for knowing more about themselves. Beyond the comprehension of oneself, a significant focus was on understanding others and the team dynamic. It was noted that "It's really helpful to kind of understand what other people are experiencing." An emphasis on both an indivdual and others allow for the development of professional skills.

Before working on their own, student leaders must attend several meetings but most impactful is the shadow training where a new employee sits in the shadow of a veteran. The participants in the study discussed that this was impactful when they were the "newbie," but it also was developmental to be the one sharing knowledge when shadowed as a veteran. We learn from one participant that during the training, "Basically everything that is in packet [employee handbook] is duplicated in training." Coupleling a paper based work manual with in-person training, students can be set up for significant growth.

Weekly meetings are held in an on-going basis. The participants particularly grew from these meetings. Parts of the meetings include "sitting down and hashing out issues or just getting

updates because there is a lot to know." Each student leader has the opportunity to report out about any departmental information or personal anecdotes that could contribute to the group as a whole. The weekly meeting helped students with communication and public speaking.

Another key tactic used is employee evaluations. One participant shared how these one-on-one sit downs each semester "Helps guide you in the right direction." These meetings include both positive and constructive criticism that is shared from the supervisor. In these one-on-one settings, it is vital that theories of skill development are re-emphasized to assist with growth in professional skills.

Research Question: What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

Based on the initial interview protocol and survey results, the majority of insight developed around the student employee's environment. The environment accounts for all of the experiences a student would have during college. From the lens of this study, we saw and learned about how the experiences allowed growth in professional skill development through a student employment leadership position. The following table aids in the summary of themes for how student were able to apply skills during the actual shift work.

Table 4

Applied Experiences for Skill Development Themes

Application of Skills	Number of Responses	Example Responses	Example Codes
Actual Shift Work	8	"The best way to grow was being in the situation itself." "Learning by doing and getting your hands dirty."	On the Job, Hands on, Experience
Training Shifts	2	"Two very clear different shifts. You had your training shifts and	Trainings, Shadow Shifts

		then after your training shifts you would have your shadow shifts."	
Teaching Others	2	"I'm comfortable going around with others teaching them what they need to do. Teaching them what's maybe not in the book but this is something you need to check on because this could happen."	Teaching, Manual
Dealing with Others	2	"Having to tell people who are your peers, who are your friends, that they can you not text while they are at work. I think that has made me become a lot more confident in my decisions."	Peers, Customers, Difficult People

A consistent finding across the participants is seen in the natural environment when they are doing their scheduled shift work. A main emphasis here is interaction with people. Due to the nature of the leadership position the participants noted that they were always meeting people. In this case, both student employees who work for the department and customers who use the facilities. One participant simply stated that the job forces you to "Interact with more people." From some of the more detailed findings, it can be stated that skills develop through working and interacting with other people.

A key challenge that the participants face in their role is that one day they go from being in an entry level role to then having supervision responsibility over that same position. When discussing going from peer to supervisor, one participant mentioned the challenge of "Having those same people now work for me." This natural transition was noted as being smoother when

there was previously developed respect built amongst peers. The conversation turned to the participant expressing their thought that a reason they gained a leadership position was due to the built respect and admiration amongst peers. Then to continue the positive relationship it was noted from other participants in the study that creating a positive work environment was important. One participant shared that they strived to “Make the job more enjoyable for others.” In a rich context, one participant noted how they have grown to be appreciative of people’s differences. When the participant shifted their mindset to one of empathy it allowed them to “Understand them - Understand they have other things going on.” In this story, a student didn’t show up for work due to having pink eye. The participant identified that their old self would have been upset for superficial reasons but by using more empathy they were calm while they had to find someone else to come in and cover for the sick individual.

With the fact that interacting with people is a key part of the position doesn’t mean that it is always easy. When talking about what the day-to-day routine looks like, a participant reiterated that they must, “Get out there and talk to people.” It was common that the conversation moved in the direction of the hardships of working with people. Dealing with difficult people is often a focus of skill development. In a shared story of a challenging experience, one participant shared that one day a customer’s locker would not open properly. The customer was very angry. The tone and language they were using would not fall in line with common courtesy. The participant shared how in the past when someone would raise their tone of voice towards them, their immediate response would be to match it and move forward with a confrontation. But from their work and learning to develop skills, they handled the situation well through effective listening and patience.

Outside of what experiences occur while working with people, there was good growth through personal introspection. As we addressed critical thinking one participant clearly stated that their mind was always running and "Looking for things to do." In a more specific example, one day a customer dropped their keys from a running track onto a hard to reach ledge. In this situation, there was no clear cut (while being safe) way to retrieve the keys. The participant shared that this is just an example of how "Weird things come up and you really have to respond." In the situation, the student called in other employees who had access to equipment that would safely allow the keys to be retrieved. It took some time but in the end the customer was appreciative.

Research Question: What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Analysis of student responses yielded numerous interesting interpretations. The skills repeatedly identified by students as skills acquired through their student leadership position were communication and leadership. Communication and leaderships skills are acknowledged by the NACE survey as attributes they are seeking in recent graduates. The following table aids in the summary of themes for how students view their progress towards their professional skill development.

Table 5

Achievement in Professional Growth Themes

Recognition of skills development	Number of Responses	Example Responses	Example Codes
More outgoing	2	"I have become a really extroverted person. I wasn't. That was not my personality but I think that at least what I see my	Introvert, Extrovert, Outgoing

		role as a leader of others. I take pride in encouraging others but also making the experience for them more pleasing both in the sense of them or the employees enjoying the work but also enabling them to give better customer service to our patrons."	
Greater Confidence	8	"And I think that the operation supervisor position has allowed me to build upon that weakness and now I feel very confident whether it be with one of my friends, even if they're not carrying out policy, and my ability to point us in the right direction." "I've kind of transformed from a little shy into a more outgoing, more self-aware, more responsible."	Confident, Outgoing, Greater confidence
Enhanced Communication	6	"I've definitely seen improvement in communication."	Communication, Presentations
Improved Critical Thinking	5	"Critical thinking that really applies especially when you're having issues and you have to actually because sometimes the policy might be something but applying that policy is requires you to actually think how you're going to carry out the policy."	Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Figure it out
Self-Awareness	4	"I definitely feel that the opposition has made me more conscious about what I'm good at then also point out my weaknesses which I try to improve on. I feel like, well it has definitely prepared me, at	Strength, Weakness, Personality Assessment

> least in my way of thinking, it has helped me more towards five years into future maybe when I have the opportunity of being a leader in the workplace. I think that most of the skills that I've learned I have acquired as a supervisor will carry out when I actually have a leadership position at the workplace. I've also got skills that will apply within my first three years. But I feel that most of the skills that I've gained would be beneficial further down the road rather than impactful right when I get my first or enter the workplace."

Communication. Communication was identified as a key skill that student leaders developed through their scheduled work shift. Both employees of the department and participants in the recreation center programs demand distinctly different communication. And each situation creates a unique application. Student leaders are responsible for delivery both positive and constructive feedback to other employees. Positive communication was identified by participants as a pleasurable experience. At the same time, student leaders found challenge in knowing when to deliver constructive communication. A student employee shows up late and the situation needs to be addressed. Constructive feedback was viewed by the participants as hard to deliver, especially in the early moments as a student leader. With time and repetitive experiences of handing constructive feedback, student leaders identified less hardship. As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders were able to distinguish the difference between when to utilize positive or constructive communication, revise communication styles based on previous

experiences, display the ability to have difficult conversations, and be confident during difficult conversations.

As it relates to the perception of growth with communication skills, a participant tells us "You learn everyone communicates in a different way and you have obviously different publics who need to be communicated to in a different way. You have to be perceptive of what kind of communication different people need. I would communicate with my staff in a different way than I would communicate with the patron." One student clearly stated, "An effective communicator is able to have confrontational skills, public speaking, and writing skills." Another student adds to communication with "Communication conflict management is where I have developed. I group communication and conflict management together because we have both." In addition, communication aligns with the skills students think they will need in future professional settings. A participant noted, "Knowing how to write professional email and knowing just how to act in the workplace will help me in my future."

Leadership. In general, the participants viewed the skill of leadership as an important part of the research participant's growth. The student leaders all started in entry-level position. The student leaders progressed into their leadership role. Being in a leadership role enhanced the ability to grow. A part of being a leader is knowing about how a system operates. As student leader there is the expectation to always be growing in a body of knowledge about their respective job. Aside knowing the specifics of one's job, one must show to other student employees, the way to do a job well.

Some of the participants in the study were tasked to read the work of James Kouzes and Barry Posner who wrote *The Student Leadership Challenge*. Kouzes and Posner's (2014) work focuses on five practices of becoming an exemplary leader. One of those practices that stood out

to student leaders in the recreation program was modeling the way. The student leaders are encouraged to set the example to others by aligning their actions to the shared values of the department (Kouzes & Posner).

Participants in the study identified one of the department's values to be leadership. The department focuses on fostering an environment that encourage staff to direct themselves, inspire others, and provide support. The department uses a tagline of *step up to lead; dare to follow*. The tagline resonated with student leaders. The takeaway was about leaders knowing when to be active versus times to be passive.

Student leaders saw increases in their ability to lead. One student tells us, "I would probably say because leadership has always been an important thing I have strived for all throughout my life and it's been a skill that I think has come naturally to me but also one that I've been able to develop and enhance over time." Leadership skills transpired in relationship building. A participant responded, "Developing leadership is my strongest professional skill. I think if you look at all of my strengths, all of mine are in like relationship building and influencing." In summary to how leadership can be transmitted overtime, a student shared, "As I had the opportunity to grow my leadership skills specifically leading by example."

Critical Thinking. As student leaders worked, they encountered many experiences where a decision has to be made. The skill of critical thinking stood out as one which developed overtime. Within a large recreation facility, many moving parts are functioning at the same time. A vast array of equipment allows the facility to function. Student leaders found themselves in positions where if something broke, training and more importantly critical thinking must be applied. A common theme was that pool equipment often caused a majority of the facility issues. In one instance, a student leader found himself in a room of flooding water. Although the student

was familiar with the pool equipment, he had never experienced a flood. In the moment, the student leader was forced to make decisions on how to proceed. The student was able to navigate shutting down the machine causing the flood of water. Then the effect on the safety of the pool had to be taken into consideration. Without the broken piece of equipment, the pool was not being chemically treated correctly. The student leader was able to determine it was necessary to close the pool. The preceding example is one of many challenging moments a student may encounter during their work experience that forces them to think in a critical fashion.

As a final piece of perceived development, outcomes cover a student's characteristics, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values that exist after a student has graduated college. In these terms the focus on outcomes typically is what a student would be able to speak to after graduation. In this case, all the participants are currently still enrolled but approaching the end of their undergraduate experience. Even though the participants don't have the ability to look back, one participant shared a future perspective. The participant stated, “It has helped me more towards five years into the future maybe when I have an opportunity of being a leader in the workplace.” The participant in this instance, knows they may not use the skills developed as a leader in their first job but five or so years from now he will. Another participant shared about being more confident in their future abilities. It is important to recognize that even while still employed, future outcomes are recognized from student employment. As students are educated through employment, it is important for practitioners to incorporate the future benefits and uses of developing skills.

Summary

In this chapter, the results from student leader participants were shared and analyzed to illuminate the answers to the research questions. From a survey and interviews, themes emerged,

categories and subcategories were established. Quotations that pertain to the same underlying idea, issue, or concept allowed themes to emerge. Specifically, each research question presented a stage in a student's development of professional skills. The four stages were: a desire to grow as an individual, knowledge acquisition, practical experiences, and achievement in professional growth. These stages of development aid in telling the story of the case of student leaders in a university recreation setting. The analysis allowed the researcher to identify in participants a story of the real life experiences of those students who choose to work in a leadership position during their time in higher education.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

What It All Means

The purpose of the study was to focus on the development of professional skills in students working in college, specifically in a leadership role within a university recreation setting. The following qualitative research questions guided the study:

Central Research Question:

What are the perceptions regarding the development of professional skills (competencies) by student employees who hold leadership positions in a university recreation program?

Sub-questions:

Why do students choose to pursue a leadership position?

What influence does teaching the theory of a skill have in creating a foundation for the growth of professional skills?

What applied experiences are catalysts for student development of professional skills?

This chapter provides a summary of the study, discussion of findings aided through the use of relevant literature, practical implications for practitioners, implications for research, limitations, suggestions for future research, and concluding thoughts.

Summary of the Study

This study was designed to provide increased perspective into the professional skill development of student employees, specifically the impact that holding a leadership position has on skill development. Pairwise sampling was used to select five males and five females from multiple leadership positions to discuss their unique experiences as student leaders and to explain their perspectives on their skill development.

The case study approach was guided by a central research question and sub-questions. Data were obtained from participants through a qualitative survey, individual interviews, and direct observations. Both the survey and interviews consisted of open-ended questions developed to gather information from the participants' thoughts and reflections on their work experience as a student leader.

The process to construct a case study began after all data were collected. First, all raw data was sorted and secured. Second, a case record was created by organizing, classifying, and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package. Third, a case narrative was built. The case narrative aids in telling the story of each participant and their exposure to the development of their competencies (professional skills). The overall case study takes the reader into the group's (recreational sport student leaders) life.

With a base case narrative, a more in-depth analysis of the data was conducted. Interpretations of data were made through classical content analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Classical content analysis involved identifying important examples, themes, and patterns in the data. Implementing classical content analysis involves the researcher forming codes for different categories of responses. Codes were outlined with *lean coding* as described by Creswell (2013). The themes included: (1) Reasons for Pursuing Student Leadership Position, (2) Application of Theory for Skill Development, (3) Applied Experiences for Skill Development, and (4) Achievement in Professional Growth Themes.

Discussion of Findings

Student leaders are a select group of employees who advance to a position above entry level work. As young adults they are in a time of growth and advancement. The responsibility they are given includes a level of pressure that not all student employees face in their positions.

They assist in the hiring, training, and daily functionality of other student employees. Meetings and trainings compete with their time while being in academic classes. The students were enthusiastic to share their personal experiences to reveal details about how they perceive their development.

As I started this study, I thought that student leaders had great potential to develop as people and professionals. I was not confident in knowing how each student develops, whether it be in a similar or different way. The more the study progressed, the more I began to see nuance in how each individual's path is shaped. Similarities exist, and differences are present. The student leaders had exposure to some of the same meetings and trainings about skill development. Even some of the experiences they held were comparable. Depending on the position they held, the student leaders had different supervisors that had influence on the student. Through survey results, candid interviews, and work observations, a deeper look into the life of a student leader in a recreation department emerged. The following discussion is guided by points of emphasis based on the themes of the study. The discussion includes thoughts that focus on explaining why the information gained is important for those who supervise student employees. The essence of the discussion is based on intentionality. Supervisors' intentionality in working toward student development is vital for the preparation of career ready graduates.

Start with Why

As a supervisor of student employees it is important to start with an understanding of why students pursue a leadership positon. It is ultimatley a student's decision to apply for a leadership position within the recreation department. The interesting discovery is how they come to their independent decision. It was stimulating to learn that students, as an entry level worker, have typcially no intent to become a student leader. During the course of their employment, a

desire in the student employee to grow into a leadership position emerges. I was struck by the student experience in relation to Deleuze's work on understanding desire. Deleuze's work illustrates that "Desire's production is active, becoming, and transformative" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p.9). As a student leader is active in their employment position, they see things taking shape, and they take further steps to improve their future position. In terms of professional development, there isn't a single way to achieve results. As seen through consideration of Deleuze, it was the time before even being in a leadership position that had an impact on the desire of the participants to grow in their skills. These students were already becoming leaders.

By using the theoretical framework presented by Deleuze, the knowledge to best understand the growth of students (and their professional skills) needed to be examined through a perspective not just limited to their experience as a student leader. It is necessary to examine what motivated them to sit nervously in a room filled with a panel of fellow students, trying to convince the panel that they, the student being interviewed, were the best choice for the position. Understanding why students pursue a leadership position allows sense to be made of what spawns desire in student leadership employees.

I was captivated that students are influenced to become a student leader for different reasons. The reasons range from the increase in pay, the allure of a position of authority, recognition for the need for skill enhancement, and acknowledgment that work experience is important for a future career. As a supervisor, students will have different motivations for their progress into a leadership position. It was common to hear students identify a combination of reasons that emerged over time that led them to pursue a leadership position. For those who work with student employees, it is valuable to monitor how an entry-level employee's desire grows

and intensifies. The transformation is a state of change from being comfortable in an entry-level role to moving onward to a leadership position in the department.

Deleuze's theory aids in understanding the findings. What matters for Deleuze is not what desire means; instead, he wants to know "whether it works, and how it works, and who it works for" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 88). The questions Deleuze poses in regards to desire assisted in providing insight for current practitioners who work with student employees. Although the becoming or transformation that is behind the production of desire as seen through thinking with Deleuze is individually based, many other important factors can have an influence. I think it is important to note that practitioners or employment supervisors do not have control over an individual's final desires, but they do have an impact as an influencer during the time a student is an employee.

Understanding why students desire a leadership position can assist professionals in designing a platform for student leadership positions. The design of student leadership positions in a recreation setting provides a role in which students can strive to obtain. The students' desire for the position will vary, and the desires emerge over time. Beyond the allure of an increase in pay, a key desire was identifiable in the student's desire to gain professional skills needed for their time after college. Professional staff should look to meet this desire through the creation of leadership opportunities and specific curriculum design to help aid in meeting the desire to grow professional skills.

Program Design

The results of the study imply that the leadership training program be considered. A leadership development program needs to be based on individual growth and constructed with a

larger group of students in mind. The design of the leadership training should consider how to introduce skills needed for growth and provide avenues for the skills to be applied.

Skill Introduction. As part of the design of a leadership program, supervisors need to be aware and know about the key skills that student employees are expected to exhibit after graduation. Competencies from NACE, The National Association of Colleges and Employers, should be taught to the students (NACE, 2017). Students' awareness of the skills that employers seek in recent graduates varies. NACE suggests eight competencies eight competencies to assess the student experience. The eight competencies are critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, oral/written communication, leadership, digital technology, career management, and global/multi-cultural fluency (NACE, 2017). Through a direct focus on these competencies, students will have the ability to recognize what are important skills to employers. In particular, professional skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and leadership are skills that stood out to participants when asked to identify professional skills.

Existing skill level. Supervisors of student leaders should recognize that some students will identify some skill attainment prior to their student leadership position. Alexander Astin's 1985 theory of Student Involvement explains that a desirable outcome for institutions of higher education is the change and development of students as a result of being involved in co-curricular activities (Astin, 1984). The core concepts of the theory are composed of three elements: inputs, environment, and outcomes. The skills students bring with them to college are asssociated with inputs. Inputs as part of Astin's theory include an individual's demographics, background, and any previous experiences. In the study, although it was not a specific focus of the interview protocol, I was fascinated that students indicated that they came in with some skills

already developed. In this case there is clear evidence that students do bring some influences with them to college.

Professional staff members should monitor the existing skill sets in their student employees as they design a student leadership development program. Assessing the current skills that students possess can help identify which skills need less focus because of their current existence. For example, if student leaders identify understanding the importance of punctuality as part of their existing skill set, less work is needed toward the development of that skill. Holding the knowledge about existing student skills enables professional staff to create a foundation for a successful student leadership development program.

Skill assessment. Recreation professionals should use an assessment of their staff as they start their student leadership position. This can be done through a survey or an interview with each student after they are hired. Knowing the existing skills and the level of skills can aid in the development of a tailored program designed to increase skill competency. Knowledge about existing skills relates to Astin's inputs as part of his involvement theory. The program should be designed to create knowledge and fluency about the skills needed for employment after college.

Teaching skills. As time progresses with students in leadership positions, it is important to take what was learned from assessing current skill levels and apply that knowledge to how skills are taught to student leaders. Unique experiences will stand out to the participants. The experiences can be related to the environment which Astin (1984) describes as all the different experiences and impact points that students have in college. As a supervisor, the program design should create a variety of experiences that identify skills to the student leaders.

Trainings such as retreats or monthly educational seminars should be considered as formal platforms for recognition. Retreats can be an impactful time that takes students away

from campus to explore critical information about the department and focus in on skills needed for their respective positions. To complement the retreat, monthly educational meetings can take a deeper focus on teaching a certain skill to the collection of student leaders.

A combination of internal and external presenters can be utilized depending on the developmental topic. Often, professional staff will have the knowledge and ability to teach the foundations of certain skills. For example, a professional staff member may be best suited to teach about critical thinking because of the focus on issues that arise with facility management. On the contrary, as a supervisor, it is important to utilize content experts who have a deep knowledge of certain skills. As an example, utilizing someone from the hospitality industry to do a presentation of customer service skills may be more appropriate. A combination of internal and external presenters creates a robust training program.

Outside of the collection of student leaders, each program area should hold weekly meetings during which information is shared about previous work experiences and upcoming work assignments. In addition, specific portions of weekly meetings can be carved out to take time to reflect on the previous monthly educational meeting. In general, 15 minutes can be dedicated to discuss the skill in more depth and how it could be applied in the work setting.

The study revealed a multitude of ways that students felt they were introduced to a skill and why they skill was important in the work setting. With knowledge of the ways that students identify how they were successfully taught professional skills, professional staff can use that information to plan how to introduce the theory of skills to their students. The plan must be thought out and crafted in a way that students will be engaged in learning.

Skill application. As student leaders develop their professional skills, the experience of working on their own without any supervision allows the greatest growth. Actual shift work

where the student is actively in their leadership role is related to the environment which Astin (1984) describes as the unique experiences and impact points that students have in college. Student leaders, depending on their position, serve in a place of authority. The student leaders can be viewed as an extension of professional staff members. The student leaders' responsibilities included the oversight of a facility, programs, and people. Student employees should be empowered in their respective roles. Supervisors should use a supervisory style that allows for adequate teaching and training, then permits students to learn through their experiences.

As a student leader, there are multiple key responsibilities that are delegated to the student. Student leaders can be asked to manage the staffing of an entire recreation facility. A student leader must handle both exemplary and poor staff performance. Communication is a key skill that can aid in sharing what expectations are and how they are being met or not met. Student leaders are empowered to be aware of risks and hazards in a facility. The need to think critically and respond to problems is a key skill that is implemented. Student leaders have the ability to make decisions on their own to best solve any given situation. In their respective roles, student leaders have the ability to learn from experience. The research confirms that on the job work is a skill developer.

The research showed that experiences from actual shift work produced difficult situations, moments of problem-solving, and successes. Students’ experiences all came in different shapes and sizes and levels of impact. The theoretical basis of a skill is complemented by the students being in the trenches encountering situations to apply skills. When put together, these experiences create a structure of growth and advancement.

The applied experience of shift work was found to be a significantly important part of student growth. With the student leaders work shifts came recognition and progressive opportunities for a multitude of skills. In particular, communication, critical thinking, and leadership were seen as areas of improvement. The hands-on component of being a student leader was a catalyst to professional skill development.

Student Leader Outlook

As a supervisor it is important to create an environment that allows students the ability to recognize their growth. The research found that students used reflection to understand their personal growth and its importance. Supervisors should develop structured opportunities for reflection. A practice of reflection can emerge in student leaders. The reflections resemble the outcomes Astin (1984) describes that are seen after a student's time in college. Supervisors should be able to cultivate an individual to look back at their time to see the outcomes of their work and concurrently allow perspective to the future.

An important note to professional staff is that students transform through different stages of development. An overall sentiment that was shared by the student leaders was one of change. Changes were seen in a variety of professional skills and life attributes. Student leaders recognized that they are different individuals today than they were when they started college. An attribute that was a common perception of students was having greater confidence in themselves. As a supervisor, it is crucial to build upon the confidence that students show throughout their employment. The increase in confidence resembles a student developing competence as seen in Chickering's vectors of identity development. The vectors Chickering identifies emerge from a student integrating in complex ideas (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). The students' perspective about their experience included many examples of complex learning and interactions.

Student leaders perceive the complexity of their job leading to enhanced ability to gain employment after college. A supervisor should work with students to recognize the nature of their experiences and create a confidence in gaining employment. In addition to perspective on their immediate future, student leaders should be able to see long-term future benefit of their experiences as a student leader. Professional staff should help student leaders recognize that their development as a leader within the recreation department will have future implications in their career.

The findings of the study share the perspective of student leaders in a recreational program that may apply to any recreation program at an institution of higher education. Those who supervise student employees have significant influence on students. A model of student employment for a recreation program is not only necessary to operate but intrinsic to student development. As discovered in this study, the incorporation of a leadership aspect for select students has lasting impact on their lives.

Implications for Student Development

My research provides qualitative data that confirms student employment, specifically students in leadership positions, provides significant growth toward a student's career readiness. Knowing there is a void in recent college graduates ready to join the workforce, my research aids in sharing how the use of student employment and student leadership positions helps prepare college graduates for their first career. Through employment in a leadership position, student leaders learn about skills they need in the workforce and how to bolster those skills. Allowing students to serve in leadership positions is a crucial part of any given students' success in higher education.

The information gathered from this study is useful to those who work with student employees. As seen with the emergence of student affairs in the 1930s, there was a need to guide students outside the classroom that carries on today. For those who work in student affairs or have an impact on student life outside the classroom the need to continually learn how to better impact student success is crucial. This study provides professionals who work in higher education and impact the life of students on a daily basis the connections of how student employment increases the growth of skills in students.

In reflection and comparison to the review of literature, student employment serves much more than a way to help an institution of higher education operate. Theorists share a common perspective that development is usually orderly, sequential, and hierarchical, passing through ever higher and more complex stages that are to some extent age-related (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The conceptual framework developed for this study theorized order in components of skill development. The components of the framework, seen below in Figure 7, included the impact of inputs that a student brought with them to college, the actual co-curricular experience of being a student leader, a connection from academic knowledge to their employment position, their desire to grow, and the efforts made to develop skills.

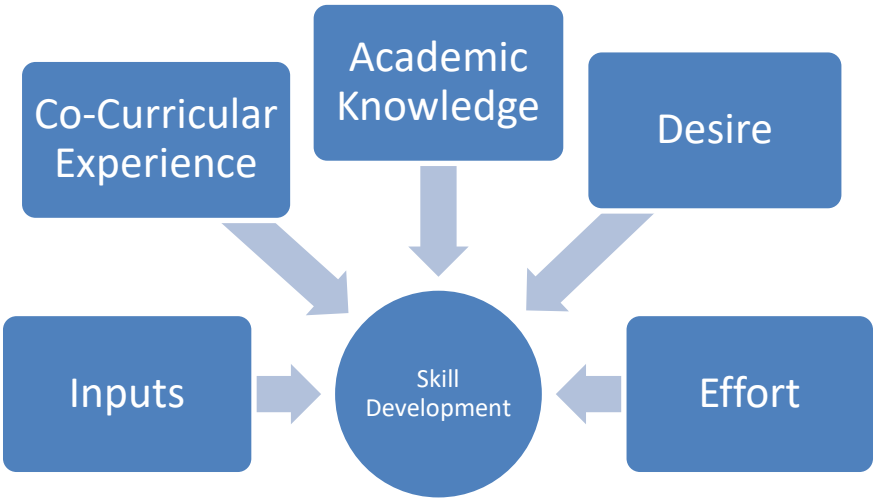

Figure 7: Conceptual framework for the study of professional skill development

Data collected confirmed the conceptual framework for this study. The framework found multiple components were working at the same time toward a given student's development. As an example, a student's growth in the development of communication skills came from a desire to grow, trainings, actual experiences on the job, and outside influences such as their academic classes. All components were not able to be measured to the same depth in the study. Further detail is provided about why each component matters. The conceptual framework assisted in understanding how students in employment positions best attain necessary skills during their time in college.

Inputs. Exploring who the student was before entering college based on his or her background provided a known foundation for his or her development. The foundation included family influence, values, and life experiences before college. The inputs students bring with them into college can be viewed as an advantage to continued growth. Although a student recognized some level and familiarity of a skill coming into college, the growth of their skills was influenced by their student employment experience.

Co-curricular Experience. The co-curricular experience through student employment was when students learned about what skills were important, what best practice of a skill looks like, and then had the opportunity to live out those skills. The identification of skills and the theory of the importance of a given skill was taught through the recreation department with purposeful retreats, trainings, and meetings. Actual work shifts or assigned duties are examples of applied experiences where students lived out situations where they put their skills to the test. Actual on-the-job work experience provided hands-on learning through everyday situations. The

co-curricular experience as part of the overall students' time in college is a major part of their development.

Academic Knowledge. Academic knowledge and a connection to work experience was minimal to the researcher. The classroom was noted as an important component to overall skill development. Students recognized having to work on group projects and doing in class presentations as way their skills also developed. The knowledge and experiences obtained inside the classroom aid in the basis of skill development.

Desire. A student's desire was active and transformative. Students view their time in college as a time to take advantage of all that is offered. In the study, desire to work in college is seen through different lenses. Financial motivation was an important perspective and continued to be throughout a students time as an employee. Transformation was seen in a shift to more desires about growing and becoming better equipped for a student's time after college. Examining students' perspectives on their desires to grow professional skills during college shed light on their motivation toward their future. Some students take more advantage of developing themselves compared to others. Students who found student employment through their desire to grow feel their development of skills is greater than students who did not have the same opportunity.

Effort. The level of effort a student gives to their employment position did not produce a conclusive impact of their skill development. All participants were required to be at the same retreats, trainings, and recurring meetings. Some students may have had more hours worked compared to their peers, but that was not a part of the study. Effort was not a distinguishable factor in impacting student growth of professional skills.

Overall, I was impressed by the student leaders' ability to recognize growth in their skill development. It was clear that the structure in place to have student leader positions was positive for the student who held such positions. I was surprised in the confidence that emerged with each student as they progressed in their time as a student employee. It was evident that students were able to learn skills, apply skills, and recognize their growth which led to an increase in confidence. The student leader's confidence was displayed on the job and in their outlook toward their future. The students in the study felt a competitive advantage due to their experience as a student leader going into their time after college. A combination of skill development and increased confidence in student leaders is remarkable.

Implications for Practice

Recreation professionals have a responsibility to provide valuable and significant practices that balance student learning. In higher education, student employment experiences are co-curricular experiences, where the classroom setting is complemented. A variety of experiences throughout a student's collegiate career impact their development and student success. Supervisors of student leaders play an integral role in student success. Intentionality needs to be at the forefront of work with student employees.

For those who work with student employees, it is valuable to have structures, such as a leadership development plan, in place that allow for growth. A leadership development program can create new opportunities and challeges and eliminate students becoming stagnant in a position overtime. From the research, we better understand the desires that are unique to students in regards to their professional skill development. A challenge for large employers of students is how to create growth for all, especially those who desire advancement. Research indicated that some students focused on a desire for a financial reward from a leadership position. Deeper

exploration uncovered a yearning to devlop skills, increase responsibility, try new experiences, meet new people, and to influence others. Practitioners' focus should exist that takes into account all student employees future potential. Since student desires are constantly transforming, it is best to coach them toward continuing their journey of professional growth. A leadership position could serve as an opportunity to aid these students in continuing their advancement. From the research and knowledge gained, we know student leadership positions are a clear structure that allows those who have been with an organization for some time to progress to continue their development.

Curriculum Design

Professional staff who oversee student employees need to work collaboratively to be sure that their students are exposed to a program enriched with learning and applicable opportunities for growth. The collaboration between staff needs to start by focusing on the why and the vision for what success looks like in student leaders within a recreation program. As a group, it is vital to determine a curriculum design aimed to impact students. Similar to any given academic class a syllabus should be designed to share with students. As an aid to the reader, an example curriculum design is provided in Appendix F. The example design, shows the various components of a hypothetical leadership development program. It is important to introduce the program before the starts such as the beginning of the school year.

A vision frames the decisions that determine what exactly will be part of a leadership development program. Professionals should think about how they will expose their students to knowledge of skills. Books can be used to guide learning about skill development. Guest speakers can delivery key knowledge through presentations. Creating accountability teams of students can allow for the sharing of ideas and experiences. Through the exploration of what

modes of delivery work best for the group of students, a department can create a curriculum that purposefully aims to target skill growth. As part of the curriculum, skills should be introduced to employees, learning outcomes should be established, employees should be understood, individuals discover more about themselves, trainings & meetings should be utilized for skill enhancement, roll-play and scenarios are used to introduce students to their positions, student leaders work alongside each other to learn, student leaders are able to share about their development, and assessment practices be implemented to measure results.

Skill Identification. As a part of a recreation department's structure, recreation professionals should strive to strengthen job specific responsibilities and opportunities to aid student skill development that employers seek from recent college graduates. As seen in the review of literature, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2018), recognizes eight essential professional competencies employers seek in recent graduates. The responsibilities given to student leaders should directly correlate with these eight competencies. It is vital that student leaders are introduced to these skills early in their positions to create an awareness how they will be viewed by employers. NACE recommended that goals that are set out for the development of student employees surround these eight competencies.

Learning Outcomes. Learning outcomes should be a part of all leadership development strategies. Specifically, recreation professionals should consider student development as retreats, trainings, and workshop opportunities are planned. The use of learning outcomes is an essential component of successful preparation. Learning outcomes are declarations that articulate to a student what they will be able to do at the end of a given period of time. Learning outcomes create quality assurance for the practitioner. Learning outcomes should indicate a way to measure the advancement of the professional competencies. As an example, a supervisor can

seek to find, as a result of serving as a student leader, students will agree or strongly agree at a level of 70% or higher that they improved communication skills. More examples are included in table 5. The use of learning outcomes and assessing their significance will aid practitioners in developing opportunities for student growth.

Employee Evaluation. This research has confirmed that some students have already developed certain characteristics in relation to their professional skills. Because students have certain characteristics already developed in relation to their professional skills, it is helpful for employers to get to know their employees as they begin their work together. Supervisors should seek to learn about their staff formally through the interview process and pre-employment assessment of skills and knowledge. Practitioners should also informally get to know their staff through routine check-ins during their work shifts. Knowing staff will help in how supervisors set course for the development of the student.

Self-Identification. Personal development can be supplied through numerous personality assessments such as Myers Briggs, True Colors, Disc Profile, Clifton Strengths or the Enneagram. After knowledge of oneself, the participants noted that understanding others was eminent. It is helpful to allow students an environment that is safe to share their own personal thoughts and feelings about their work and how it is impacting their development. An example to provide this is through staff updates during routine staff meetings. A secure, comfortable environment will allow students the freedom to share. Recreation professionals should be intentional about how students learn about themselves and understand others.

Trainings and Meetings. Throughout the study, the participants directly pointed to trainings and meetings such as their annual retreat, monthly meetings, and weekly meetings as a time they were exposed to the importance of certain skills. Professionals overseeing student

leaders can structure these meetings and trainings to be purposeful toward skill development. For example, out of an academic Fall and Spring semesters, there are eight months that can be used to focus on one of the eight professional competencies identified by NACE. Trainings & Meetings are a necessary component to a leadership development plan.

Role Play/Scenarios. Student meetings and trainings ought to consist of educational chances beyond defining specific responsibilities. A particularly effective component of meetings and trainings that was revealed by the research was the use of roll playing scenarios. These scenarios allowed students the opportunity to theorize how to best handle a given situation. In a scenario-based training, students can apply knowledge gained to predict the steps toward a positive outcome. Proper facilitation of the scenario including a debrief with participants prepares students for actual shift work. Providing educational meetings and trainings beyond specific tasks allows for the further development of skills employers are seeking in recent graduates.

Peer Feedback and Accountability Teams. Supervisors of student employees, especially student leaders, should consider creating space for bringing students together. From students in the study recognizing the impact of their peers, it is recommended that students are brought together to learn together and learn from one another. Beyond learning from professional staff, students can take a lot of away from simply communicating with one another. Each student experience has nuance and the unique experiences should be shared as teachable moments. The development of monthly student leader meetings during which students report out about their experiences can aid in growth and development.

As part of the students' experience, a practitioner may consider forming accountability teams amongst their student employees. The research highlighted the impact students have on

one another, especially with opportunities to teach one another. Accountability teams are small groups of (three or four) student employees. These students are then encouraged to work together to learn outside of formal meeting or training. As an example, the accountability team may choose a book to read together. Routine check-ins with one another aid students to connect and share struggles and successes. These teams can be utilized in formal meetings to work on projects. The essence of the team is that they are present and available for each other.

Resume & Interview Workshops. Workshops should include the development of social and technical work skills. Teachable moments for students need to supplement the employment experience. As inferred from the research, 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. Writing a resume puts the work experience on paper from the perspective of the student leader. In a job interview, a student should be able to verbalize their experience and how it impacted their development. This is important for both student recognition and making positive impressions on future employers.

Assessment. A part of a successful program is how to assess the results of the students involved. Assessment practices must accompany learning outcomes. A dedicated assessment tool, asking students about their perception of their growth, will provide findings for the learning outcome. After any given retreat, training or meeting it is essential that recreation professionals provide an assessment that measures the success of all learning outcomes.

Ideally, an annual assessment will involve a longitudinal perspective on how any individual student progresses in their development. It is suggested to have an approved

assessment tool such as a survey or rubric that can be used repeatedly. The assessment can take into account the students' perspectives themselves, the supervisor's outlook, and peer response to paint a full circle of feedback. With an assessment plan in place, curriculum design can be put into action with employees.

The ability to measure the results of the curriculum is important for multiple reasons. Assessment helps with program modification. Using this assessment, recreation professionals are able to show the value the students are receiving in the co-curricular experience. Sharing data with the administrators to whom the department reports will communicate the value of student leadership in a recreation program. If data are not collected and distributed the strength of student employment will go unseen. Table 6 below provides examples of student learning outcomes and the type of training or setting that the outcome can be measured.

Table 6

Student Learning Outcome Examples

Example Learning Outcome	**Related Skills**	**Training or Setting**
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to improve upon teamwork skills by successfully working along their peers.	Teamwork	Meetings & on the job
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to demonstrate professionalism by always arriving on-time, dressed appropriately, and contributing in a constructive manner.	Professionalism/work ethic	Meetings & on the job
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to develop	Oral/written communication	Written Documentation

written communication skills as evidenced by producing a clear and comprehensive documents that colleagues can understand and follow.		
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to improve upon leadership skills by delegating relevant tasks to other student employees that result in a smoothly run facility/program.	Leadership	On the job
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to develop technological skills by utilizing facility/program management software.	Digital technology	On the job
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to improve upon critical thinking skills, as evidenced by producing thorough and accurate reports.	Critical thinking/problem solving	End of shifts
As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to network with others to identify a particular career trajectory for their time after college.	Career management	Retreats & trainings

Value of Student Employment and Leadership

As professionals continue implementing a student leadership development plan it is important to be able to show the value proposition. As part of the student experience in higher education, the importance of measuring success is growing. From prior literature and the work in

this study, the value of investing in student employees is evident. As a supervisor, it is a primary responsibility to be able to show how success is being seen in students on campus.

The ability of a recreation department to paint a picture of student success should reach a variety of stakeholders at the university. As a supervisor starting with a blank canvas, it is important to work with the assessments that are set up as part of the curriculum design. The data from assessing students is the starting block of how to illustrate value in student employment. With the data available, a professional can be creative in how to tell the story of what transpires on campus. The story should be told across a spectrum of stakeholders. Administration needs to know about the work in the department. In student affairs, the vice president should be presented with a clear story. Administrators often have budgetary decisions to make. Your ability to show value can lead to increase dollars for future developments in the program. The value of a program should be shared with the department itself. Motivation to continue great work with students can be found from knowing the impact on students. Finally, results should be shared with the students themselves. There is an impact from knowing their experience is impacting themselves and their peers within the department. The more students know, the more invested they will be toward their work. An important part of a supervisor's work is to create buy-in from stakeholders to have continued support of the program.

Financial Consideration

As a leadership development program is developed, attention must be given the financial impacts of implementing a program will have on a department budget. Having a large budget isn't necessary to having a successful program. Dedicated dollars invested in student leadership will aid in the student experience. In particular, one should consider the cost to pay student leaders and costs associated with all aspects of a tailored program to student leaders.

In general, the cost of employing students is part of a recreation department. When designing a student leadership program, there are some financial considerations to take into account. Base pay for a leadership position should be greater than that of entry-level employees. It is important to have equitability across multiple leadership positions. This increase may have an impact on a department's overall budget.

A major financial realization is that students who are hired, even those in leadership roles, and are paid low salaries, those close to minimum wage. This is often times viewed as a costs savings by administrators in higher education. The alternative of using full-time staff would cause increased costs for an institution. A student employment model can help save the university money.

As one designs a program there are costs associated with the suggested aspects of the program design. The biggest cost item will come from an annual retreat with students. A typical retreat will involve leaving campus and having students stay overnight. The options for overnight stays can range from hotel, retreat centers, to camping. The budget for the retreat should take into consideration what type of stay will be utilized for the students.

Limitations

In general, the limitations of a multi-phased qualitative collective case study are that one cannot generalize the results to the wider population. In this study, student employees with a recreation setting are the focus. The study was not tied to other areas of student employment. Results in general are isolated to other recreation departments. Although, other places on campus such as student unions or libraries may be able to use some of the guiding principles with their student employees. Within a case study, the researcher's subjective feeling may influence the case study (Creswell, 2013). The study focuses on student employees within one institution. Out

of a total staff of 30 student leaders, 10 student leaders served as participants in the study. With only a minimal amount of observations conducted, the number of experiences produced to use as data towards the value of professional skill development create limitations. Observations were limited in part to a global pandemic, COVID-19, that emerged during the study. Having a variety of observations increased the probability of catching a participant in any given setting to evaluate communication skills. The amount of time worked per week each semester was not considered in this study at this time as a data point. Details such as the number of actual hours worked limit the study. In this study, no consideration was given to differences in race, ethnicity, or gender. The study was conducted a private institution with students with strong affluence. No consideration is given to the economic backgrounds of the participants involved. The limitations of the study lead to areas of future research.

Areas for Future Research

With a continued focus on the importance of student development through student employment, ongoing research can assist in creating and even stronger case for investing in student employees. We have learned a lot from this study and broader literature about the benefits of using students in employment positions. As university budgets fluctuate with available funds, it is imperative to continue showing the value of student employment. Although this study provided valuable information about how to foster an environment for skill growth, there are other important variables to consider as it relates to the benefits of student employment.

Retention of Students

A measure that is commonly used in institutions of higher education is the ability to retain students overtime. Additional research of student employment can dive into the impact that working on campus, especially in a recreation department, has on retention. From this study,

students alluded to the feeling of being part of something bigger than themselves. They felt part of a family environment. These sentiments from students did not go unnoted. These thoughts weren't a focus of this study. Additional research can expand on the students input and look to measure the impact on retention based on holding a student employment position.

GPA Impact

One of the most easily definable measures of success for an individual student is their grade point average (GPA). At no point in this study, did a correlation between working as a student employee and the impact on GPA arise in conversation. From broader literature, the impact of participation in recreational program on GPA has been studied. Results indicate that using recreation facilities or playing intramural sports has a positive impact on increased GPA. Although, the impact of working as a student employee and GPA was not part of the current study, additional research can open discussion about the impact of the correlation between working as a student employee and GPA.

Career Success

A major focus on this study was how students developed skills to be ready for their future career. A great deal of detail was gained and shared about how being in a student employment role, specifically a leadership position, has a positive impact on skill obtainment. We know from this study and broader literature, employers look for established skills in college graduates. What is missing is a deeper exploration of how holding as student leadership position aided in job obtainment. Job obtainment is a measure readily used by institutions across the country, typically through the career center on campus. Additional research can occur by working closely with career centers and measure where students from a recreation program are gaining employment.

The study examined a pool of participants who were still enrolled at the institution. Future research may consider exploring the value of a student leaders experiences after they have matriculated from the institution of higher education and have been in the workforce for a number of years. A new study's findings could be of benefit from participants being asked to reflect on their experience and how they apply the skills learned during the student employment to their profession. Such a study could strengthen the benefit of professional skill growth in undergraduate student employment as it relates to career success.

Conclusion

Student employees in leadership positions are able to reflect on their personal skill development. It is a combination of training and actual shift work that was clearly impactful to skill development. Although the study was limited in the number of participants, the narratives from each participant indicated personal growth. For administrators who oversee student leadership positions, a lot can be taken away and applied in their setting. The use of Deleuze's language (desire) indicated that intensities within an individual allowed for a transformation toward wanting to be a part of a leadership position. For a supervisor, the knowledge about how an employee's desire became can aid in working with them in a leadership role. From the analysis through Astin, many unique experiences may emerge for an individual. From an individual experience level, the general shift work led to great strides in development of skills. There were similarities between participant's experiences but also unique takeaways. Some of the experiences of the student leader can be guided by a supervisor. A supervisor can use tactics to have an impact from a structural perspective on skill development.

One participant indicated feeling more equipped than their peers for work after college, specifically stating, "my peers haven't had work experience." Administrators who work with

student employees, especially those in leadership positions, can promote to their employees the value of the experiences that build professional skills and that they are better equipped for work after college. A key is to help educate the student on how to apply those experiences toward wherever life takes them next.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT EMAIL

Dear [Participant Name],

My name is Brad Stewart, and I am serving as a disinterested third party, to aid in the selection and distribution of information for a research project by Mr. Jay Iorizzo, Doctoral Candidate, in the TCU Higher Education Leadership program.

Jay is conducting a study focusing on professional skill development in student leaders within a recreation program. As a student leader, Jay invites you to take a 15-minute online survey. Your participation is voluntary, and you may exit the survey at any time. Neither your participation nor any specific responses will be reported back to your employer. All information will be kept confidential. Jay will not know who completed the survey although everyone's participation will aid in the study's findings.

The survey can be found here: TBA

Also, Jay needs 10 participants to be a part of personal interviews. This in-person interview should take about 30-45 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may exit the interview at any time. Neither your participation nor any specific responses will be reported back to your employer. Jay will only know the students selected to be a participant. If you accept the invitation to interview, Jay will contact you to formally review the study and sign an informed consent forms.

If you are willing to participate in the interview portion of the study, please email me back as soon as possible so I can forward your acceptance to participate to Jay.

Thank you for your participation!

Brad Stewart

If you have questions, please contact Mr. Jay Iorizzo:

Jay Iorizzo

Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Leadership

Texas Christian University

j.iorizzo@tcu.edu

817-422-1222

APPENDIX B: COLLABORATIVE PARTNER – CONSENT DOCUMENT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research: Skill development of student employees in a leadership position within a university recreation program through a theoretical & applied perspective

Funding Agency/Sponsor: N/A

Study Investigators: Don Mills, Ed.D and Jay Iorizzo, TCU Graduate Student

What is the purpose of the research?
This study will explore the development of professional skills in student employees who serve in a leadership position within a university recreation department.

How many people will participate in this study?
10 students will be invited to participate in the study for a qualitative interview. A disinterested, third-party mediator will chose the collaborative partners because of their status as a student leader with a recreational department. The participants will be of junior or senior level.

What is my involvement for participating in this study?
You are being asked to complete one interview, which will be audio recorded, it is approximated that the interview will last between 30-60 minutes in length. As a partner you will be asked to check the results of the interview transcriptions for accuracy.

How long am I expected to be in this study for and how much of my time is required?
The study will last one year, from April to March of 2020. Interviews will last approximately 30-60 minutes and will be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will they be minimized?
Potential risks to participants are considered minimal, but could arise and every attempt will be made to minimize them. Interviews can be uncomfortable and people can regret the things they share after the fact. For this reason, you will have the opportunity to review your interview transcripts so you can verify everything you have said. At each data collection event, the researchers will remind you that involvement in the study is voluntary and that it is not necessary to respond to every request to remain involved.

What are the benefits for participating in this study?
Participation in this study will give better understanding to the important decision employers need to make when working with student employees to best develop their professional skills. For a student employee, the study aims to present information in regards to their own development potential. The study will help individuals understand the scope and value of the skills they are learning. With a better comprehension of personal growth, a student is able to articulate their perception of advancement of professional skills.

For a supervisor of student employee, better understanding a student's development allows a supervisor of student employees within a recreation program to create more meaningful experiences that generate better prepared and capable graduates into the work force.

Will I be compensated for participating in this study?
No. Neither compensation nor incentives are being offered for your involvement.

What is an alternate procedure(s) that I can choose instead of participating in this study?
While there is no alternate procedure, you can simply choose not to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
There will be no names used in this study nor will any identifying information be recorded on any materials related to the study. All effort will be made to mask your identity using pseudonyms. Your name and the name of your school will not be disclosed. All digital records from the survey will be kept in a password protected location. All digital audio files will be deleted after being transcribed. All data collected will be maintained in a secure location, where only the investigators will have access.

What will happen to the information collected about me after the study is over?

We will not keep your research data to use for future research or other purpose. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project.
We will not share your research data with other investigators.

Is my participation voluntary?
Yes. You may refuse to participate without any penalty. You may also withdraw your consent to participate at any time and for any reason—even if you agree at first but change your mind later.

Can I stop taking part in this research?
Yes. You may refuse to participate without any penalty. You may also withdraw your consent to participate at any time and for any reason—even if you agree at first but change your mind later.

What are the procedures for withdrawal?
Simply inform the researchers (by phone, email, or in person) that you prefer not to participate. If you decide to withdraw from the study after it has already started, then the information collected will be excluded from the study and any of your responses will be destroyed. To withdraw, you may contact Jay Iorizzo at 817-422-1222 or 817-257-7062 or j.iorizzo@tcu.edu.

Will I be given a copy of the consent document to keep?
Yes, you will be given a copy of the consent document.

Who should I contact if I have questions regarding the study?
Jay Iorizzo, 817-422-1222, j.iorizzo@tcu.edu
Don Mills, 817-257-6938, d.mills@tcu.edu

Who should I contact if I have concerns regarding my rights as a study participant?
Dr. Michael Faggella-Luby, Chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, Phone 817 257-4355.
Dr. Dru Riddle, Co-chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, Phone 817-257-6811.
Ms. Lorrie Branson, JD, TCU Research Integrity Officer, (817) 257-4266, l.branson@tcu.edu

Your signature below indicates that you have read or been read the information provided above, you have received answers to all of your questions and have been told who to call if you have any more questions, you have freely decided to participate in this research, and you understand that you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Participant Name (please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:**_____

Investigator Name (please print):_____ **Date:**_____

Investigator Signature: _____ **Date:**_____

APPENDIX C: MEDIA RECORDING RELEASE

TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Media Recording Release Form

Title of Research: Skill development of student employees in a leadership position within a university recreation program through a theoretical & applied perspective

Study Investigators: Don Mills, Ed.D and Jay Iorizzo, TCU Graduate Student

Record types. As part of this study, the following types of media records will be made of you during your participation in the research:

- Audio Recording

Record uses. Please indicate what uses of the media records listed above you are willing to permit by initialing below and signing the form at the end. We will only use the media records in ways that you agree to.

- The media record(s) can be studied by the research team for use in this research project.
- The media records(s) and/or their transcriptions can be used for scientific or scholarly publications.
- The media records(s) and/or their transcriptions can be used at scholarly conferences, meeting, or workshops.

- The media record(s) can be shown/played in public presentations.

Please initial: _____

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the media recordings as indicated by my initials above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, contact Dr. Michael Faggella-Luby, Chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, (817) 257-4355, m.faggella-luby@tcu.edu; or Ms. Lorrie Branson, JD, TCU Research Integrity Officer, (817) 257-4266, l.branson@tcu.edu.

APPENDIX D: STUDY PROCEDURES – QUALITATIVE SURVEY

Recreation Student Leadership Professional Skill Survey

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on Student Leadership Professional Skill development. This is a research project being conducted by Jay Iorizzo, a student at Texas Christian University. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The following survey will ask you specifically about your perceptions of professional skill development you have experienced as a result of holding a leadership position in a recreation program. Examples of professional skills (or competencies) are:

Critical Thinking, Oral & Written Communication, Use of technology, Teamwork/Collaboration, Leadership, Professionalism/Work Ethic, Career Management, and Global/Cultural Fluency

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your survey answers will be sent to Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

Please answer the following questions:

1. *I agree to participate in the research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences. I am age 18 years or older: (Yes/No)*

2. Current Leadership Position: (Chose Operations Supervisor, Intramural Supervisor or Area Manager)

3. Total Months in Current Position:

4. What do you think are the knowledge and skill requirements of an effective leader?

5. What would you identify as competencies (professional skills) that you have learned through your student employment at Campus Recreation?
6. Describe how you were taught professional skills through your leadership position?
7. How did you apply these professional skills in your daily work experience?
8. What are some professional skills you think you will need for future employment that you have not developed or didn't experience during your time as a Campus Recreation student employee?
9. What suggestions do you have to improve how you develop professional skills that you will need for future employment opportunities?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol – Student Leader Interview

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee: (Pseudonym Inserted)

Position of Interviewee:

Months in position:

The study in process looks into the impact of a student employee leadership position on the development of professional skills.

Questions:

1. Why did you decide to apply for a leadership position with Campus Recreation?
2. What prepared you going into your leadership position?
3. When you hear the term competencies (or professional skills), what does that mean to you?
4. Describe your personal growth regarding your professional skills as a student leader within Campus Recreation from when you started your leadership position to today?
5. Describe how you learned professional skills through your leadership position?
6. Describe how you learned about professional skills outside of your leadership position?

7. In what ways were you able to apply professional skills during your work experience in your leadership position?
8. Tell me about an experience during your work shift that you used a professional skill?
9. What is your strongest skill? And what has made it the strongest?
10. What skill do you feel needs more development? How do you recognize this as a skill to develop?
11. What suggestions do you have to improve the development of professional skills that you will need for future employment opportunities?

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

Student Leadership Development Program

2020-2021 Academic Year

Program Description

This program aims to give students a broad, interactive, and buildable understanding of connective leadership development as it pertains to their work as Student Leaders and beyond. The leadership development program focus on a student leaders ability to understand key competencies needed as seen by future employers and how to apply knowledge to everyday life. Student Leaders interact with 360-degree feedback through Campus Labs evaluations to highlight their strengths and areas of improvement.

Prerequisites: Acceptance of a student leadership position.

Learning Outcomes

- As a result of the student leadership program, student leaders will be able to:
    - improve upon teamwork skills by successfully working along their peers.
    - demonstrate professionalism by always arriving on time, dressed appropriately, and contributing in a constructive manner.
    - develop written communication skills as evidenced by producing a clear and comprehensive documents that colleagues can understand and follow.
    - improve upon leadership skills by delegating relevant tasks to other student employees that result in a smoothly run facility/program.
    - develop technological skills by utilizing facility/program management software.
    - improve upon critical thinking skills, as evidenced by producing thorough and accurate reports.
    - network with others to identify a particular career trajectory for their time after college.

Required Reading List (all books will be provided through the department)

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2018). *The student leadership challenge: Five practices for becoming an exemplary leader*. John Wiley & Sons.

Assessment

This program operates within the confines of 360-degree feedback through surveys with staff members that student leaders oversee, from the peer level with fellow student leaders, and includes feedback from supervisors.

Bottom-up assessment: Staff members that student leaders oversee will be asked to provide student leaders feedback in semester evaluations.

Self & Peer assessment: Student leaders will complete a survey measuring their competence in eight competencies as outline by NACE. The competencies measured are critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, oral/written communication, leadership, digital technology, career management, and global/multi-cultural fluency. Also, student leaders will be asked to

write what they & their peers did well at and what needs improving. Students are asked to rank each competency either, 'Needs Improvement', 'Developing', or 'Strength'. Students will receive a breakdown of the results in the form of percentages representing the scaled items and anonymous comments. Student leaders receive this evaluation once a semester and are trackable each year they are involved in the program.

Top-down assessment: The supervisor performs an end of semester evaluations in which they ask survey questions and break down survey results from peers.

Program Schedule

This syllabus is designed for retreat, trips, and monthly meetings and the continuation of leadership development.

Annual Student Leader Retreat: August 17-19	**Reunion, Refresh, Retreat** This multi-day event brings back student leaders before the start of academic year to learn more about department focus, themselves, their roles, and one another. The eight NACE competencies will be introduces and a pre-test administered. See Retreat Itinerary for more Information.
Meeting 1: September 17	**Leadership** Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.
Meeting 2: October 22	**Professionalism/work ethic** Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.
Meeting 3: November 12	**Teamwork/collaboration** Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.
Meeting 4: December 3	**Critical thinking/problem solving** Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.
Annual Winter Trip: January	**A fresh look** This one day event takes student to another institutions recreation facility for a tour.
Meeting 5: February	**Oral/written communication**

	Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.
Meeting 6: March	**Digital technology** Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. The individual demonstrates effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies.
Meeting 7: April	**Career management** Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is able to navigate and explore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.
Meeting 8: May	**Global/multi-cultural fluency** Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates, openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences.

Assignments

Assignment	**Evaluation**	**Due Date**
Attendance at Monthly Meetings	Present/ Not present	Each session
Attendance at the Leadership Retreat	Present/ Not present	End of retreat
Required Student Leadership Challenge Prezi	Present to staff via zoom or in-person	At retreat
Short Reflection Activities and Reactions to shared knowledge	Reflect on skills presented after each meeting and be prepared to share the following week	Each week at area staff meetings
Accountability Team Meetings Reflections	Be prepared to share progress with the accountability team and reflect on how the process is working/ not working	Once a month at each meeting
Resume & Interview Work	Utilize your professional mentor to review resume and conduct a mock interview for a professional role	Once a year