Current Hiring Practices of Campus Recreation Directors of NIRSA Institutions

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A survey of all National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) campus recreation directors was conducted to determine the hiring practices, policies, and procedures relating to professional employees, graduate assistants, and student employees in campus recreation programs throughout North America. The survey instrument, in its final form, addressed hiring practices, policies, and procedures of campus recreation directors through 28 questions relating to the following areas: (a) search and screen committees, (b) job descriptions, (c) advertisement and announcement of vacancies, (d) applications, (e) references, (f) interviews, and (g) impact/involvement of national professional organizations in the hiring process. Selected data is presented in terms of (a) entry level position (coordinator) or for mid-level positions, (b) size of institutions (small, medium, and large), (c) rural, urban, and suburban locations, and (d) public and private institutions.

Key Words: vacancies, applications, references, interviews, job descriptions

Campus recreation directors assume the daily challenge of creating and/or maintaining high quality campus recreation programs. In doing so, they often place an emphasis on hiring high quality employees. The allocation of large sums of money for employee salaries is indicative of the high level of importance placed on securing competent, quality employees. It only makes sense to gain an understanding of what is necessary to attract and ultimately hire the best employees—in this case campus recreation employees—since so much money is being invested in them.

Various categories of employees including, but not limited to, professional staff, graduate assistants, and students are the nucleus of the campus recreation workforce. To identify and ultimately hire high quality campus recreation employees, effective hiring practices must be implemented by directors and others, such

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as search committee members, who play a major role in the hiring process. Clement (2000) pointed out that considerable time is required from beginning to end when attempting to hire a quality person. According to Raschke (2003), the major hurdle in finding the right people has moved away from patiently sifting through dozens of resumes and slowly arriving at the right candidate through a deliberate process, to creating efficient and effective models to identify, recruit, and hire top candidates.

Raschke (2003) also identified hiring practices and procedures that could, if implemented, result in the hiring of high quality employees, which would, in turn, enhance the quality of the campus recreation program. Through the identification of effective hiring practices and procedures, campus recreation directors should be able to improve on the quality level of employees being hired. In addition, Naglieri (2003) indicated that the implementation of effective hiring practices would further reinforce the mutual benefits gained by both the employee and the hiring institution from the entire hiring process.

Related Literature

Literature that specifically addressed the hiring practices of campus recreation directors is in short supply. An abundance of literature, however, was found that pertained to hiring practices in general. The literature included in this section predominately contains information related to the following categories pertaining to hiring practices: (a) search and screen practices, (b) job descriptions, (c) advertisement and announcement of vacancies, (d) applications, (e) references, and (f) interviews.

Search and Screen Practices

Fundamental to a search is the formation of a committee. According to Thomas (1997), search committee size may vary, but fewer than four members probably limits its scope and ability to adequately represent the interested constituents; whereas committees larger than six or seven are unwieldy. Thomas also spoke to the essentiality of composing a balanced search committee consisting of persons from a variety of areas, including a person from an outside department.

According to Womack (1997), search committee procedures vary from one institution to another. As an example, Womack pointed out that in some institutions the construction of the position description as well as the vacancy notices is the responsibility of the search committee, while in other institutions these are tasks completed by administrators. Typical search committee duties include (a) developing the criteria required of applications, (b) analyzing applications using evaluation criteria, and (c) determining those applicants who meet the minimum advertised requirements (Womack). Johnson and Zhu (2003) stated that each member of a search committee may have his/her own preferences across performance measures. Also reinforcing the notion that different search committees function in different ways was Thomas (1997), who pointed out that the chair's charge to the search committee, followed by the committee's development of the job description, will vary greatly by institution and goals.

Job Descriptions

The literature is very clear that writing a job description takes skill and deliberation and a good one incorporates several general and specific elements. According to Garcia and Kleiner (2001), for example, the job description is a part of defining a job. Wendover (1998) indicated that the purpose of the job description is to present the job in a manner that will make it attractive to candidates. Smith (1995) pointed out two job performance categories that could be included in a job description: tangible functional skills and intangible attitudes and attributes.

The literature also suggests that the job description contain descriptive, specific elements. Adams and Veruki (1997) indicated that when writing a job description the position should be reflective of the daily tasks the candidate will be performing. More specifically, a job description should include, but not be limited to, a summary of the job tasks, responsibilities and objectives, background characteristics required, as well as personal characteristics required (Hiring and Keeping, 2002). Wendover (1998), even more specifically, recommended that the following basic components should be included in a job description: a brief overview of the position, the necessary qualifications, a list of functions, explanations of the reporting structure, necessary training, and how performance will be appraised.

Advertisement/Announcement of Vacancies

Traditional advertising methods are fading while new and innovative methods that use technology such as targeted e-mails and list-servs are on the rise (Raschke, 2003). These are not only more efficient but, according to Raschke, also allow an institution to overcome time, space, and budget limitations to sell the best of what it has to offer to candidates. The internet/World Wide Web can get the word out to the right people in a way that can reach a wider audience (Choi & Kleiner, 2002; Thomas, 1997). Findings by Breaugh, Greising, Taggart and Chen (2003) suggested that employers should reconsider their heavy reliance on the use of advertisements and college placement papers.

Advertising, including traditional advertising, does still exist and is useful in attracting potential candidates. Ways of attracting new employees in recreational sports departments included the following advertising channels: word of mouth, fliers/brochures, campus newspaper, and by actual participants in their programs (Ross & Vaughn, 1995). According to Terpstra (1996), one of the least expensive forms of traditional advertising is the newspaper classified advertisement. However, Garcia and Kleiner (2001) point out that newspaper advertisements tend to generate an enormous number of inquiries from individuals, most of whom are not qualified and tending to drive up the cost of doing searches. Newspaper advertisements and public agencies, as stated by Terpstra, are not as effective in yielding higher quality employees as are employee referrals.

Boucher, Morese, and Chant (2001) voiced concern regarding the potential to create less than positive impressions when attempting to attract candidates during the hiring process. This research pointed out four factors that could cause such impressions: (1) vague, uninspiring, and bureaucratically worded job advertisements, (2) failure to include how additional information can be obtained or where questions can be answered, (3) limited circulation of advertisements or job postings, and (4) uninviting language such as, "Only short-listed candidates will be contacted" (Boucher, Morese, and Chant).

Applications

Those responsible for hiring should consider keeping only those resumes that state a job objective consistent with the description of the particular position vacancy. Resumes that do not have a clearly stated job objective should be eliminated from consideration (Garcia & Kleiner, 2001). Gagnon (2003) recommended reviewing all applications of candidates without interruption and then placing them in the following three categories, based on their qualifications: (1) highly qualified, (2) qualified, and (3) minimally qualified.

Employee referrals and direct applicants can be used by the hiring agency or department to increase the percentage of applicants who are determined to be worthy of receiving job offers and of being hired (Breaugh, Greising, Taggart, & Chen, 2003). Peterson (2002) suggested that placing the emphasis on accomplishments instead of the attitude or potential of the candidate would serve to increase the likelihood of hiring high quality candidates. Also, employers should pay particular attention to how well candidates have done in the past, as past performance is often a good indicator as to how well one will do in the future (Horowitz, 1999).

References

Gagnon (2003) claimed that checking references is the most difficult part of the hiring process. References can be verbal or written and can provide information helpful to the hiring process in a variety of ways and, according to Johnson and Zhu (2003), play a role during the initial evaluation of candidates. Checking references not only serves the purpose of verifying the applicant's work experiences and stated achievements, but also allows the hiring entity to learn about such things as an applicant's successes and failures, work habits, and strengths and weaknesses (Hiring and Keeping, 2002). Messmer (1998) also emphasized the importance of obtaining reliable reference information about candidates who are seriously being considered for employment. Andrica (1998) stated that consistent candidate portrayals across references are a sign that the message is an accurate one, whereas inconsistencies raise a signal in the form of a red flag.

Andrica (1998) recommended that one should specifically ask a candidate to provide the contact information for past or present superiors when checking references and also noted that peers or subordinates can serve as additional references. As another way of evaluating candidates, those responsible for hiring may look for phrases that characterize the applicant as the "best ever," as well as considering the reputation of the person providing the recommendation (Johnson & Zhu, 2003).

Interviews

Boucher, Morese, and Chant (2001) stated that the interview is clearly the single most important interaction between employer and applicant especially in that it creates initial and sometimes lasting impressions. Interviews provide both the employer and the applicant an opportunity to evaluate their respective qualities, strengths, weaknesses, and compatibility (Ross & Blackman, 1998). According to Ross and Blackman, the interview allows both parties to confirm or clarify specific information regarding the position opening and to gather additional information about the applicant that may not have been included on the applicant's resume. More than a two-way casual conversation, if conducted properly, the interview is

a systematic process of gathering and evaluating critical applicant information to determine which applicant is right for the position (Ross & Blackman).

Described as "hard work," interviewing, according to Choi & Kleiner (2002), is more than simply recording what is stated but rather requires extra mental energy to carefully listen to what a candidate says, interpret what is really meant, and observe the candidate's reactions. Choi and Kleiner also suggested considering the following six steps when conducting an interview: (1) prepare questions in advance, (2) find out information about the candidate before the interview, (3) make sure the candidate is comfortable prior to the interview, (4) ask open-ended questions, (5) allow the candidate to ask questions, and (6) provide a hiring timeline. Common forms of interview formats as described by Thomas (1997) include a general set of questions varying in follow-up. Thomas also emphasized the importance of being consistent with each candidate when interviewing, particularly with regard to schedule and social activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine campus recreation directors' hiring practices related to the hiring of professional employees, graduate assistants, and student employees in campus recreation programs throughout North America. This study also sought to identify the most frequently utilized practices used by campus recreation directors for the hiring of quality campus recreation employees. More specifically, this study sought to attain from campus recreation directors the processes, throughout the phases of hiring, by which they sought to secure employees.

Methodology

Participants. The participants consisted of all campus recreation directors who held positions at four-year colleges and universities that were institutional members of the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA). The total number of NIRSA directors who were mailed the survey was 560, which was the number of NIRSA institutional members in its entirety at the time this national study took place. Mailing addresses of the campus recreation directors were obtained from the NIRSA national office located in Corvallis, OR.

Survey. A survey was constructed by the researchers and consisted of closed ended questions from which respondents could select from predetermined responses. Some yes/no questions were also part of the survey. The content of the survey questions was based on the current literature related to employee hiring practices and the researchers' personal experiences pertaining to campus recreation hiring practices. Also helping to establish content validity of the survey was feedback obtained from five campus recreation directors deemed experts by virtue of the fact that each had at least 10 years experience as a director.

After incorporating the changes recommended by the "expert" campus recreation directors, the survey was considered to be complete and ready to be mailed to the remaining campus recreation directors. The survey, in its 28-question final form, addressed hiring practices of campus recreation directors relating to the following areas: (1) search and screen committees, (2) job descriptions, (3) advertisement and

announcement of vacancies, (4) applications, (5) references, (6) interviews, and (7) impact/involvement of national professional organizations in the hiring process.

Distribution of the Survey. The identified campus recreation directors were mailed the survey along with a cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Instructions in the cover letter invited the directors to complete the survey and return it in the enclosed envelope. The cover letter made clear the fact that completing and returning the survey was optional and that, at any time, the directors could exercise the option not to participate in the survey. Directors were guaranteed personal and institutional anonymity in that the returned envelopes were received by a neutral clearinghouse that was responsible for opening the envelopes and gathering the surveys prior to forwarding the anonymous surveys to the researchers. All survey methods were approved by the researchers' institutional review board. Of the 560 surveys mailed to the campus directors, 241 were returned for a 43% return rate, a standard rate of return for research in higher education.

Findings

Search and Screen Committees

When vacancies occur on college/university campuses, search and screen committees are often used to facilitate the searching and hiring process. In terms of campus recreation programs at NIRSA institutions, a search and screen committee is extensively used (97%) by campus recreation directors seeking to hire professional staff members; and, to a lesser extent (63%) for graduate assistants. The study found that such committees were used even less frequently (23%) in the search for student helpers/employees.

The composition of search and screen committees involved in the hiring process for professional staff included the campus recreation director (in 70% of schools), current professional staff (87%), and a student representative(s) in 68% of the institutions surveyed. In the search for graduate assistants, the campus recreation directors were involved in 20% of the searches while other professional staff members were included on the search and screen committees in 36% of these searches. Similarly, for searches for student employees, campus recreation directors were part of the committees in 17% of the searches while other professional staff were members 40% of the time.

The role these committees play varies in light of the type of person being sought (professional staff members, graduate assistants, and student employees). In seeking new professional staff, schools used these committees to develop questions (76%), recommend candidates for interview (86%), and to actually interview candidates (95%). The most frequently cited purpose of these committees in the search for potential graduate assistants, as well as student staff members, was to actually interview selected applicants. When search and screen committees were used for interviewing and recommending applicants to the school's administration, the list of recommended candidates are provided in ranked order in 73% of the schools for professional staff positions, in 66% for graduate assistant posts, and 51% for student employees.

Job Descriptions

The responsibility for the creation of job descriptions varied depending on whether the vacancy/search was for a professional staff member, a graduate assistant helper, or a student employee. Eighty-one percent of the campus recreation directors assumed the responsibility for creating job descriptions for professional staff. However, when graduate assistants and student employees were being sought, staff members were usually given this responsibility (36% and 48%, respectively) while a smaller percentage (29% and 35%, respectively) of directors were involved.

Dissemination of Vacancy Announcements

In terms of the methods and techniques used by schools to make potential candidates aware of vacancies in campus recreation (professional staff, graduate assistants, or student employees), a wide range of techniques were favored, including the World Wide Web (86% professional, 46% graduate assistants, 69% students), paid ads in newspapers (71% professional, 9% graduate assistants, 10% students), announcements at conferences (68% professional, 37% graduate assistants, 0% students; "bluefishjobs.com" (56% professional, 48% graduate assistants, 44% students); e-mail (54% professional, 32% graduate assistants, 33% students), and, college/university placement centers (39% professional, 20% graduate assistants, 46% students). Table 1 illustrates the methods used to disseminate vacancy notices according to public and private institutions. Table 2 depicts dissemination efforts according to the enrollment size (small, 5,000 or less; medium, 5,001–15,000; large, 15,001 or more) of the institutions.

Table 1   Dissemination Efforts for Vacancy Notices—Public Versus Private Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Professional		GA		Student	
	% Public	% Private	% Public	% Private	% Public	% Private
Website	87	83	51	33	72	58
E-mail	57	49	35	26	33	35
Paid ads in newspaper classified	77	57	7	12	10	10
Paid advertisement in journals	37	20	12	6	1	0
Announcements at conferences	72	54	41	25	1	0
Mailings	40	23	19	7	2	4
College or university placement center	42	30	22	13	46	45
College newspaper	2	1	8	4	40	28

Table 2   Dissemination Efforts for Vacancy Notices—Public Versus Private Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Professional			GA			Student		
	% Small	% Medium	% Large	% Small	% Medium	% Large	% Small	% Medium	% Large
Website	77	88	90	24	44	63	58	65	80
E-mail	47	52	62	21	28	44	32	34	33
Paid ads in newspaper classified	66	76	67	13	91	96	8	12	11
Paid advertisement in journals	21	42	33	5	12	13	0	1	0
Announcements at conferences	42	69	85	11	38	56	0	1	0
Mailings	15	41	45	13	13	22	5	3	0
College or university placement center	31	39	44	11	22	24	44	44	48
College newspaper	3	2	1	3	7	9	27	36	43

Note: Enrollment 5,000 or less = small school; 5,001-15,000 = medium school; 15,001 or more = large school.

Types of Advertisements Used in the Search Process

Schools tend to use a variety of advertisement avenues in an effort to establish a viable pool of prospective candidates for professional positions, including: "blue-fishjobs.com" (81%), NIRSA Annual Conference, specifically the Career Opportunity Center (71%), local newspapers (57%), departmental web page (35%), the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (29%), and the mailing lists from NIRSA (29%). In advertising for graduate assistants, the most used means included "bluefishjobs.com" (43%), NIRSA Annual Conference (Career Opportunity Center) (37%), and the departmental web page (21%). For student employees, the most prevalent types of advertisements included departmental web page (59%), student employment office (56%), financial aid office (51%), bulletin boards (49%), career services office (45%), freshmen orientation (44%), and the college or university newspaper (32%).

When schools were seeking a professional staff member, the advertisement for such a vacancy was disseminated over a wide geographical area, including nationally (82%), regionally (65%), state-wide (63%), locally (73%), and on the campuses themselves (73%). When seeking graduate assistants the extent of distribution of vacancy notices was less, with 38% disseminated nationally, 36% regionally as well as state-wide, 29% locally, and 47% on the campus. For student employees, vacancy notices were limited to on campus (89%) and locally (12%).

Types of Applications

A large majority of schools required that candidates for professional positions (86%), graduate assistants (84%), and student employees (88%) complete a formal application form. A majority of schools accepted applications/resumes through e-mail for professional positions (77%), graduate assistants (79%), and student employees (63%). However, less than half of the institutions employed an on-line application mechanism that candidates for the various vacancies (professional 46%, graduate assistants 26%, students 28%) could fill out and submit through the Internet.

References

Respondents indicated that a variety of references were required. For professional vacancies, schools required phone recommendations or references (in 69% of the schools), personalized/written recommendations (57%), placement "papers" (24%), and e-mail references/recommendations (18%). For graduate assistantship vacancies, schools required phone references (40%), personalized written references (31%), placement papers references (22%), and e-mail references (13%). Table 3 indicates the type of references required for the three types of vacancies according to public and private institutions. Table 4 depicts required references according to the general location of the schools (rural, urban, and suburban).

Campus recreation directors were asked if school administrators, search committees, or other representatives of the institution contacted references provided by the candidates. For professional vacancies, 100% of the respondents indicated that they did indeed typically contact the references provided by the candidates. For those searches involving graduate assistants, 88% of the schools contacted

Table 3   References/Recommendations Required by Public and Private NIRSA Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Professional		GA		Student	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Placement papers	25	20	23	20	15	6
Personalized, written recommendations	61	51	36	22	19	9
Phone recommendations	69	70	43	32	46	25
E-mail	17	19	13	12	19	9

Table 4   References/Recommendations Required by Rural, Urban, and Suburban NIRSA Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Professional			GA			Student		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Placement papers	32	21	20	24	18	26	18	11	9
Personalized, written recommendations	64	52	55	39	24	35	24	10	16
Phone recommendations	69	68	67	46	35	41	43	35	41
E-mail	18	18	17	17	10	13	25	11	13

the references provided. In the student employee category, 40% of the institutions actually made contact with the references.

Interestingly, 71% of the campus recreation directors indicated that someone from their campuses typically made contact with other people who were not provided as references by candidates for professional positions. For graduate assistants, 40% of the schools contacted individuals (as references) who were not provided by the applicants. And, for student applicants, (15%) of the schools actually contacted individuals (those not provided by the candidate) for references (recommendations) pertaining to the students.

Interviews

With respect to the responding institutions conducting interviews at the NIRSA National Conference, it was found that for professional, graduate assistant, and student employee vacancies, the levels were 33%, 52%, and 3%, respectively. However, when asked whether the schools conducted informal interviews at the conference, the number of directors responding in the affirmative increased. Specifically, 61% of the schools held informal interviews with candidates for professional posts and 63% held such informal interviews for graduate assistant candidates. The number of respondents who indicated that informal interviews were conducted for student employee vacancies doubled to 6%.

The number of candidates interviewed for professional vacancies ranged from one to five with the majority (63%) interviewing three. For graduate assistant positions, 37% interviewed three candidates and 31% interviewed five applicants. For student positions, 72% of the respondents indicated that five applicants were interviewed.

The study found that in 84% of the respondents' institutions interview questions were predetermined in searches for professional vacancies. For graduate assistant positions, 71% of the respondents stated that the interview questions were predetermined, while 64% of the respondents indicated that interview questions were predetermined for student employee interviews. A very small percentage (3% or less) of the respondents indicated that less than 3% of the time they actually shared the predetermined questions with the candidates for all three types of positions (professional, graduate assistants, and student candidates).

For professional positions, 66% of the respondents revealed that phone interviews were typically conducted before in-person interviews were held. For graduate assistant vacancies, 48% conducted phone interviews before in-person interviews, while for student employees, only 6% used such phone interviews. When candidates for professional positions were interviewed, 80% of NIRSA institutions paid all travel expenses associated with the interview process, 13% paid only partial expenses, and 7% paid none of the expenses incurred by the persons being interviewed. For those applying for graduate assistant positions, 72% of the schools indicated that they did not pay expenses, 16% paid partial expenses, and 12% paid all expenses. No school reported reimbursing expenses for students being interviewed for student employment positions.

Impact/Involvement of National Professional Organizations in the Hiring Process

An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) played no meaningful role in the school's hiring process or practices (in terms of advertisements, interviews, and placement of vacancy) of professional candidates (97%), of graduate assistants (98%), and student employees (99%). Similarly, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) played no meaningful role in the hiring process of professional staff in 88% of the schools. In terms of the hiring process of graduate assistants, 91% of the respondents indicated that the NRPA played no

meaningful role. And all schools revealed that NRPA played no role whatsoever in the search for student employees.

Approximately one-third of the respondents indicated that they typically hosted an informational session (to provide updated information about the school job vacancies) at the national NIRSA conference for professional vacancies (36%) and for graduate assistant posts (34%). When asked whether they were able to extend a job offer at the national NIRSA conference, 12% of the directors said they could for professional positions, 44% answered in the affirmative for graduate assistants, and 20% for student employees.

Preferences Relative to Experience of Candidates

When the directors of campus recreation were asked whether they would prefer a candidate for a professional vacancy (entry/mid-level) post be a new graduate or experienced professional, 46% indicated a preference for a new graduate for an entry level position (coordinator) while 37% desired someone with 2 years or less experience for such a position. Fourteen percent expressed no preference. For mid-level positions (assistant/associate directors), 27% of the directors indicated they preferred candidates with 3 years experience, 26% desired a candidate with 2 years experience, 21% chose 4 years experience and 15% picked 5 years. The study found 4% had no preference. Table 5 depicts the preferences regarding the amount of experience that directors desired for professional entry (coordinator) and mid-level positions (assistant/associate directors), broken down according to public and private institutions.

Table 5   Directors' Preferences for Degrees Held by Candidates for Entry/Mid-Level Professional Vacancies

Percentage answering "Yes"	Entry Level Position (Coordinator)		Mid-Level Position (Assistant/Associate Director)	
	% Public	% Private	% Public	% Private
Undergraduate	17	27	3	2
Graduate	70	56	89	79
Makes no difference, depends on the candidate	13	17	8	17

Preferences Relative to Degree(s) Possessed by Candidates

A large number of directors surveyed indicated a preference for candidates with a graduate degree (66%) for entry level positions (coordinator) as well as for mid-level positions (86%). Only 20% preferred an undergraduate degree for entry level posi-

tions (coordinators) and only 4% preferred an undergraduate degree for mid-level positions (assistant/associate directors). No preference was expressed by 14% of the directors for entry level posts and by 10% for mid-level posts. Table 6 indicates reported preferences of directors for undergraduate and graduate degrees for entry level positions as well as mid-level posts in terms of public and private institutions. Table 7 depicts preferences in terms of rural, urban, and suburban locations.

Table 6   Directors' Preferences for Experience Possessed by Candidates for Entry/Mid-Level Professional Vacancies—at Public and Private NIRSA Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Entry Level Position (Coordinator)		Mid-Level Position (Assistant/Associate Director)	
	% Public	% Private	% Public	% Private
New graduate	42	58	3	1
2 yrs experience	41	22	24	33
3 yrs	0	3	23	36
4 yrs	1	0	23	16
5 yrs	1	0	17	9
6 yrs or more	1	0	7	0
No preference	14	17	3	5

Table 7   Directors' Preferences for Experience Possessed by Candidates for Entry/Mid-Level Professional Vacancies—at Rural, Urban, and Suburban NIRSA Institutions

Percentage answering "Yes"	Entry Level Position (Coordinator)			Mid-Level Position (Assistant/Associate Director)		
	% Rural	% Urban	% Suburban	% Rural	% Urban	% Suburban
New graduate	42	48	47	2	1	3
2 yrs experience	41	36	36	19	28	33
3 yrs	2	0	2	31	31	16
4 yrs	3	0	0	27	20	16
5 yrs	2	0	0	13	12	22
6 yrs or more	2	0	0	5	6	5
No preference	8	16	15	3	2	5

With respect to the academic discipline the campus recreation directors preferred for an entry level position (coordinator), a majority (57%) expressed no preference, 28% preferred a degree in recreation, 11% preferred sport management, and 4% expressed a desire for a degree in physical education or equivalent. Similar preferences were expressed by the directors for mid-level positions, that is, 56% expressed no preference, 27% preferred a degree in recreation, 13% preferred sport management, and 3% expressed a desire for a degree in physical education or the equivalent.

Conclusions

The present study sheds light on the current conduct of campus directors and campus recreation departments at NIRSA institutions regarding the current hiring practices for professional staff, graduate assistants, and student employees. The findings reveal present practices relative to the existence and use of (1) search and screen committees, (2) job descriptions, (3) advertisement and announcement of vacancies, (4) applications, (5) references, and (6) interviews in the search process for personnel with college and university campus recreation departments. In addition, the survey provides insight into the impact that several national professional organizations have in the hiring process.

The extent of the involvement of both campus recreation directors as well as search committees varies in light of the type of personnel being sought. As might be expected, directors are more actively involved in the details of the search process for professional staff than for graduate assistants and student helpers, relying on assistants to be more involved in the search for the latter categories of personnel. Similarly, search committees are more involved in the search for professional staff than for graduate assistants and student staff members.

It was revealed that almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that someone from their campuses typically made contact with other people who were not provided as references by candidates for professional positions. In addition, 40% revealed that it is customary for someone to contact individuals (as references) who were not provided by individuals seeking to be graduate assistants. This piece of information may be helpful to candidates as they prepare to enter the job search process.

Neither the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance nor the National Recreation and Parks Association were viewed as playing any meaningful role in the hiring process of professional staff (in terms of advertisements, interviews, and placement of vacancy). In addition, the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association plays only a minor role in the search for professional staff insofar as conducting formal interviews for various vacancies at the national NIRSA conference.

An interesting finding was revealed when the respondents were asked whether they had a preference that candidates for a professional vacancy (entry/mid-level) post be a new graduate or an experienced professional. Forty-six percent had a preference for a new graduate for an entry level position while 37% desired someone with 2 years or less experience for such a position. Yet, a subsequent question generated a response revealing a very definite majority preferring candidates to have a graduate degree for entry level positions, i.e., coordinator (66%), as well as

for mid-level positions (86%). It would seem directors of campus recreation have a preference for advanced degrees over experience.

Another interesting finding revealed by this survey was that a majority of respondents had no preference as to the candidates' academic discipline when applying for either an entry level position (coordinator) or for mid-level positions. Recreation, as an academic discipline, was preferred by only 28% of the directors for entry level posts and by 27% for mid-level positions.

Directors and other campus personnel are able to examine the findings of this study to see how they compare with other NIRSA institutions relative to their own search and screen process for professional staff and graduate assistants as well as for student employees. Similarly, candidates for professional staff as well as graduate assistantship positions can view this study in an effort to learn how the search process is organized, structured, and carried out on many NIRSA campuses. Such awareness will be most helpful in terms of enabling the candidates to be more knowledgeable and better prepared as they work their way through the whole search and screen process.

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