

**A Review of Literature on the College Experience of Students Employed in  
Campus Recreation Programs**

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**A Synthesis Project**

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**By**

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## **Abstract**

Student employment has become an educational fact with more students seeking work after every year. The purpose of this synthesis is to demonstrate the impact of college students who work in Campus Recreation in relation to their collegiate experience and level of job satisfaction. There has been plenty of research conducted on students in regards to the collegiate experience or job satisfaction, but not together. Selected by strict criteria, eleven accredited scholarly journal articles were examined that specifically investigated collegiate experience and job satisfaction. Other sources were used to incorporate background information. Furthermore, factors such as academic performance, leadership and professional development, beneficial socialization practices and sense of belonging, all have partial variables that can influence a student's life on campus, as well as their experiences in the workplace. It is an obligation for student affairs-based departments such as Campus Recreation to foster camaraderie, develop a professional dynamic and include the work setting as a learning venue in order to nourish student maturation. Ultimately, it is up to the student to determine their own fate at their post-secondary academic institution and workplace.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In higher education, students are in control of their own futures. They pick their majors, their classes and their extracurricular activities – whatever they may be. There are many options to choose from, especially regarding extracurricular activities. Some students may choose to socialize at the student Union, or work out at the fitness center, or even find an on campus job. Those who look for jobs within their college setting are pleasantly surprised at what they can do and who they have the opportunity to work with. According to Johnson, Kaiser and Bell (2012), it has been highlighted that students have begun to have increasingly more interest in Campus Recreation departments and the opportunities they may offer.

Additionally, not only do students benefit from employment, but the institution also has several takeaways. Foremost, on campus departments – specifically in athletics, recreation and other student affair activities – appoint distinguished workers in specialized roles and often rely on their staff to oversee the daily functions and operations of the facility (Kellison and James, 2011). A “specialize role” for students can be a leader, manager or supervisor, which means they have access to privileges or are given responsibilities that their nonworking counterparts may not have. In addition, institutions may also promote student development, scholastic achievement, persistence rates and overall satisfaction with the collegiate experience amongst their campus (Hackett, 2007).

Johnson et al. (2012) state that “part-time student employees make up the majority of the workforce in most Campus Recreation departments.” (p. 78). This statement further indicates how heavily reliant Campus Recreation organizations are on their student employees.

Furthermore, there are many positive outcomes for students who are employed on campus such as increased social opportunities, interactions with professionals, appreciation of diverse perspectives and communication skills – to name a few. All of these perceived gains are beneficial to the development of the student. Lundberg (2004) notes how on campus departments must value the workplace as a learning venue. In essence, the student does not necessarily have to be in a classroom setting in order to gain valuable knowledge and skills.

A post-secondary academic institution's department of Campus Recreation is largely significant because it provides so many initiatives and programs for its population. In general, recreational facilities and the amenities they offer can present opportunities for students to build relationships with one another, as well as amongst the community (Dalgarn, 2005, p. 66). Some common amenities include a fitness center, club sports, intramurals, instructional sports and group exercise classes. Furthermore, Campus Recreation divisions tend to foster the well-being of its student and community populations by providing impactful activities and events of differing interests and themes. The intention is to improve student and community development activities, events and opportunities; although, departments depend on and expect their student staff to facilitate and execute quality programs (Griffith, Walker and Collins, 2011). This statement reiterates how heavily reliant recreational organizations are of their student employees to facilitate daily functions, especially at a high expectation level. From the perspective of the non-worker, it was concluded that the implementation of Campus Recreation within campuses have offered a central location for students, faculty, staff and community members to integrate and socialize. This is profound as it helps to create a sense of belonging (Dalgarn, 2005).

For the working student, having to balance a job and academics may have its difficulties at times. It can be argued that the extent of which Campus Recreation departments rely on their

student workers may be burdensome. Moreover, a student worker may feel obligated to go beyond their call of duty for the department for the sake of professional development. Conversely, for the nonworking student, perhaps the commitment of a job is too time-consuming for their academic major (i.e. reading- and writing-intensive majors). Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins II and Grant (2005) studied 300 social work majors and discovered that “the average number of hours worked had negative effects upon the GPAs of the students... one-third of them answered that work ‘much’ or ‘greatly’ interfered with their studies.” (ps. 13 & 17). The participants of the study included undergraduates from two large Southwestern public universities. In addition, these results are significant because it may reflect on the types of majors that are more likely to reach out for part-time employment, either on or off campus.

It is evident that there is a plethora of impacts that derive from student employment in Campus Recreation. Involvement on any level (i.e. academic or extracurricular) has the potential of enhancing the student population’s overall collegiate experience, as well as increase academic success. Therefore, it should be one of the department’s top priorities to “cultivate a high level of job satisfaction... it is not only healthy for the individual employee, but also for the organization as a whole.” (Kellison et al., p. 35).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although student employees are heavily relied upon in most Campus Recreation settings, there is an overall lack of research investigating the student’s job satisfaction level, as well as the student’s collegiate experience. This is problematic because while many college students believe that working during their college years may be detrimental to their scholastic achievement, research suggests, “Student employment programs can provide a variety of opportunities for students that include increased social opportunities, mentoring and interactions with

professionals.” (Griffith et al., p. 108). These opportunities indicate some social benefits from part-time student employment. Particularly, increased social opportunities develop cohesion, which is essential to the involvement, interaction and “development of the whole student”. (Griffith et al., p. 108).

### **Purpose of the Statement**

The purpose of this synthesis is to determine the impact of college students who work in Campus Recreation in terms of their collegiate experience and job satisfaction.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does working in Campus Recreation impact student workers’ overall satisfaction of their collegiate and job experience?
2. Does the relationship between supervisor and worker have an impact on the worker’s commitment to the job?
3. To what extent does being employed in a Campus Recreation setting provide a sense of belonging to the student?

### **Operational Definitions**

The following elaborates on the operational definitions utilized in this synthesis:

*Collegiate experience.* In the context of this synthesis, “collegiate experience” refers to a student’s grade point average, development of leadership and professional skills, progression of relationship building through socialization and ability to determine a sense of belonging.

*Grade point average (GPA).* In the context of this synthesis, “GPA” refers to the cumulative calculation of a student’s total grades based on the amount of credit hours they have

taken to date. For example, it is noted that a freshman's GPA would differ from a senior's GPA based on this criterion.

*Professional development.* In the context of this synthesis, "professional development" refers to the opportunities gained through work experience (i.e. networking, employment).

*Leadership development.* In the context of this synthesis, "leadership development" refers to the attributes gained through guidance, mentorship and/or supervision.

*Socialization.* In the context of this synthesis, "socialization" refers to the development of cohesion and camaraderie through communication, friendship, interactions and similarities.

*Sense of belonging.* In the context of this synthesis, "sense of belonging" refers to the acceptance into a community, feeling of purpose and/or reason and incentive to remain with an affiliation and/or organization.

*Job satisfaction.* In the context of this synthesis, "job satisfaction" refers to the amount of happiness a student may gain from employment in their department.

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations were used in this synthesis review:

1. Studies related to Campus Recreation student employees.
2. Distribution of genders and races to reflect an authentic workplace environment.
3. Various articles that related to GPA, leadership skills, relationship building and sense of belonging.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods used to determine the impact that student employment has in Campus Recreation departments. In particular, a student's overall collegiate and job satisfaction will be observed. The studies collected for this synthesis were located using the online databases from The College at Brockport, State University of New York's Drake Memorial Library. Within the Drake Memorial Library database, the following hosts were searched: EBSCOhost, Human Kinetics Journals, JSTOR, ProQuest, SAGE Journals and Taylor & Francis Online. From these searches, a total number of eleven (11) journal articles met the criteria for inclusion in this literature review. Criteria for the selection process included academic, scholarly and peer-reviewed journals, as well as full text access. Other articles or sources selected as part of this literature review provided context about the topic such as background and/or supplemental information, to complete the review. All sources are cited in the reference section of this paper.

In order to locate the articles that have been applied to this synthesis, many keywords and phrases were combined. The initial keyword that was searched was "Campus Recreation," which yielded 1,143 journal articles. Although this was hopeful, it needed to be narrowed down. Collectively, combining words like "employment," "academic performance" and "socialization" to "Campus Recreation" provided 54 specific hits. Furthermore, the next keyword that was searched was "student employment," which delivered 768 journal articles alone. However, combined with "professional development," the search yielded 53 hits, along with 47 more when "academic achievement" (31) and "job satisfaction" (16) was included. Lastly, when "student

affairs” was paired with “employment” and “professional development,” it offered 828 total journal articles to choose from – 256 and 572 hits respectively.

While assessing all of the literature pertinent to this synthesis, there were specific criteria identified to help finalize the decision to use the article. For example, articles that included Campus Recreation departments were prioritized above all else. This ensured that all information was relevant to the objective of this study. However, articles that did not include Campus Recreation, but instead included other departments were utilized for comparative purposes. Moreover, literature regarding both workers and non-workers were examined in order to determine whether there was a legitimate correlation between working versus not working and the student’s collegiate experience. This was significant because it included the prospective and statistics of all kinds of student populations. In addition, it was assumed that student employees worked less than twenty (20) hours a week as they are simultaneously balancing academics and having a job – amongst other responsibilities. The most important requirement of the articles was that they must be current or have been published between 2000 until the present.

Although a wealth of sources was generated from the combination of keywords, only eleven (11) articles were chosen for the literature review. These articles were derived from Recreational Sports Journal; Journal of Social Work Education; College Student Journal; Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania – Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice; NASPA Journal; and Journal of Education for Business. Furthermore, the general foundation for how the data was analyzed was based on reliability tests, much like ANOVA, Pearson’s correlation coefficient, t-tests, Cronbach’s alpha and Statistical Abstract of the United States – to name some. In essence, the foundation of analysis provided consistency when considering and investigating the literature.

Data was collected through the use of assessments, questionnaires, surveys, self-reported data and an expert panel. Self-reported data stimulated an authentic workplace environment. Additionally, it is important to note that, in two of the articles, national assessments were used: National Survey of Student Engagement and College Student Experience Questionnaire. Moreover, data was collected from 7,007 participants. Based on the reported statistics, the gender ratio was 3,674 females to 2,580 males. The panel included five 2009 Regional Vice Presidents (VPs) of the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) and used the Delphi Process as it featured anonymity for participants, iteration, constructive feedback. The Regional VPs were able to select five professionals from their region for a sample of 30 NIRSA officials, which created an aggregation of panel responses. Collectively, this determined anonymous consensuses. It is particularly significant to note that about 56% of the participants were of Caucasian descent (3,903) because it ensured that the population was diverse, which can assist with generalization. Furthermore, 71% of the studied populations were between the ages of 18- and 24- years old. This implied that “non-traditional” students were included in the research, or students who are adult-learners, United States Services veterans or someone who did not attend undergraduate school immediately after high school. The following comprised the distribution of students, based on their registration status: 524 freshmen, 293 sophomores, 398 juniors, 1,020 seniors and 32 graduate students.

Throughout the search for relevant literature, many unique attributes were identified such as common themes, the extent of the results and differing correlations (based on respective variables). For instance, articles that mentioned socialization theories, included student-learning outcomes, indicated job satisfaction and/or related to the student’s collegiate experience were

reviewed with keen attention. Essentially, these themes assisted in the rationalization of whether there was a true connection between a student's collegiate experience and job satisfaction level.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Review of Literature**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on the college experience of students employed in Campus Recreation programs. Particularly, this chapter delineates common and major concepts, theories and themes that support the purpose of this synthesis. In order to accurately identify the connection between students who are employed in Campus Recreation in terms of their collegiate experience and job satisfaction, it is important to understand the preexisting research that addresses all of these components. Specifically, the following topics will be discussed related to working in Campus Recreation and the collegiate experience: Socialization, Student Benefits and Impact of Employment.

#### **Socialization**

There are several theories regarding socialization such as the social exchange theory, Theories of Involvement and Departure, Student Development Theory, two models of student employment and group cohesion, which will be discussed below.

#### **Applicable Models and Theories**

The social exchange theory, combined with the norm of reciprocity, states that “positive behavior is usually reciprocated in social environments.” (Johnson et al., p. 80). “Social environments” can include the residential dorm, classroom settings, the workplace or any environment that would be associated with a college campus. It is important to understanding the contribution of these concepts on organizational justice and commitment in order to narrow down methods to improve the workplace.

Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement (Griffith et al., p. 107) elaborates on how imperative student involvement is on their collegiate experience. It suggests that, although university faculty and staff members can encourage participation, the student determines the amount of involvement. Furthermore, Astin emphasized how "an involved student is one who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends a great deal of time on campus, participates actively in student organization and activities and interacts often with faculty." (Tooperzer, Anderson & Barcelona, 2011, p. 147). In essence, Astin's theory enables student-learning outcomes and thoroughly develops scholarly attributes. Furthermore, Vincent Tinto's Theory of Departure (Griffith et al., 2011) suggests that "the more integrated students are, the less likely they are to drop out of college." (p. 107). Academic and social integration behaviors were highlighted specifically.

Similarly, the Student Development Theory focuses on the idea that "human growth and environmental influences promote students' learning and maturation." (Tooperzer et al., 2011, p. 146). There are five basic frameworks that encompass this theory, which are: psychosocial, cognitive, person-environment, humanistic-existential and student development process models. According to Tooperzer et al. (2011), if the management at Campus Recreation were to apply these frameworks to the workplace, then an abundance of positive outcomes can surface and be recognized by students – both employees and participants. The division of Campus Recreation that would have the most profound impact by this theory is programming. In particular, this theory is practical for both in- and outside of the classroom.

Warren (2002) produced two models of student employment: zero-sum and primary orientation. According to the zero-sum model, if a student chooses employment, then they are also choosing to take time away from their student life. From this model, it is implied that the

student's life would eventually suffer. Conversely, the primary orientation model claims that the magnitude of service only mattered when it was parallel to a disinterest in personal academia. Lang (2012) predicted that employment had no correlation to student life – explicitly with class preparation, on campus engagement and social interactions. The results concluded no discernable difference; in fact, Lang (2012) only found an increase in likelihood of upper-class students and men working off campus. These theories ultimately create a spectrum, but the decisive factor would be the individual's personal desires and intentions.

The concept of “group cohesion” is used as a measurement when observing socialization opportunities. Specifically, it becomes a useful tool when measuring someone's loyalty or commitment to a group, as well as their resistance to leave and “the tendency for a group to remain united for the satisfaction of member needs.” (Griffith et al., p. 109). Through this process, practices that work and ones that do not will be apparent and then recorded in attempts to improve the camaraderie and/or functions of the work setting. Departmental administrators and management should be diligent when determining the overview of where improvements could be made, as well as support the needs of their staff.

In regards to group cohesion, there were two distinctions provided. Foremost was “task cohesion,” which underline production as opposed to participation. According to Griffith et al. (2011), preferring production to participation was a strong indicator of “team effort, team effectiveness and teamwork satisfaction.” (p. 110). This leads to the idea that, in order to create a solid product, all hands must be on deck. On the other hand, “social cohesion” describes the concepts of commitment, cooperation and trust among the group and their work. The idea is that if all these factors are in play, then the group will generate a great product. However, social cohesion only predicted team effectiveness. Both types of cohesion had positive connections to

job satisfaction and performance; however, an overall negative connection to psychological distress was found.

Furthermore, Moiseyenko (2005) recognized that the culture of post-secondary academic institutions may also benefit from increased social practices. For example, campuses can promote social cohesion while inherently enabling student development, encouraging academic integrity, creating a sense of community and supporting a diverse atmosphere. This statement describes the possible impacts that can derive from employment in student affairs-based departments. In order to implement a better sense of community, Moiseyenko also noted the method of living on campus and having students immersed within the culture of the college. Moiseyenko supports the investment for post-secondary academic institutions to generate residential dorms for students to live on campus.

### Opportunities and Recognition

It is intrinsically vital for organizational management to recognize and implement practices that benefit camaraderie in the workplace. Griffith et al. (2011) examined the differences in socialization opportunities perceived by Campus Recreation student employees. The study used questionnaires to collect data. Furthermore, the study compared the department's student employees with undergraduate students who were enrolled in a course on recreational management. The students in the course also worked off campus – this intention was to examine socialization differences at the fullest extent. According to Griffith et al. (2011), the participants reported a length of employment average of 15.4 months, as well as an average workweek of nineteen hours per week. In particular, African American student staff collectively perceived a lower level of cohesion in comparison with their Caucasian and Hispanic counterparts; the studied population contained about 72% Caucasian students. It was noted that 48 of the

participants were females compared with 59 males and 29% of the population lived on campus, whereas 71% lived off campus. Frequently overlooked, identifying group cohesiveness practices are “critical to achieving the benefits of employing students on campus,” which may eventually develop the whole student (Griffith et al., 2011).

Kulm and Cramer (2006) explored the relationships of employment within college students and its effect on student life. The study utilized web-based surveys to gather information from 500 undergraduates at a Midwestern university. Based on the study, 60% of the respondents were females whereas 40% were males, which are 300 and 200 students respectively. The majority of the population (72.7%) were between the ages of 20- to 22-years old. It was reported that the average workweek was 23.11 hours per week. Moreover, 93% of the population reported having no children and 99% had never even been married. According to Kulm et al. (2006), the correlation between social interactions and persistence is positive, whereas the correlation between extracurricular activities and socializing is negative. In addition, it was discovered that the more time a student spent working, the more that the job inherently interfered with his or her student life, as well as the amount of time spent studying.

On the other hand, Johnson et al. (2012) noted, “Positive behavior is usually reciprocated in social environments.” (p. 80). Johnson et al. (2012) determined the importance of five work-related variables and their contributions to employment. These five work-related variables included pay rate, a strong working relationship with the supervisor, a supervisory role, the ability to work around class schedules and social interaction with other students or patrons. Additionally, this study sampled 290 recreational student employees from eleven NIRSA-affiliated universities and used a 10-item survey that was exclusively for this study. Of the 290 employees, 167 were females, 123 were males and 42.4% were seniors (123). The rest of the

student distribution included 25 freshmen, 63 sophomores, 63 juniors and 16 graduate students. The assessment for the survey was the following: not important at all, slightly important, important and very important.

According to Johnson et al. (2012), 272 students stated that pay rate and a strong relationship with the supervisor at work were important (136 students each). One hundred and forty students claimed a supervisory role was important. Based on 256 students, it was very important for the workplace to accommodate their class schedule. Lastly, 285 students indicated social interactions with people were at least slightly important to employment (39, 116 and 130 respectively). The results showed commitment levels were highest for student employees who had worked in the department the longest, as well as whether they were supervised by a professional staff member.

Conversely, Lang (2012) found that on campus employment allows students to become more engaged in both co-curricular and social activities. Lang (2012) reviewed the differences between grades, class preparation, involvement, socializing and the overall enjoyment of the college experience. The study particularly examined both working and non-working students, which included 794 participants (500 females and 294 males), and implemented the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to gather information. The NSSE consists of 28 sets of close-ended questions and inquires upon a participant's demographics. This study distinctly examined first-year (413) and senior (381) students, as well as 27.9% students of color. Although 60% of the population worked (471), the results determined that there were no obvious differences between working and non-working students. Although working students indicated better grades [to some extent] over their non-working counterparts, this connection vanishes when certain variables are controlled. These variables included grades, class preparation, co-

curricular activities, social activities, race, class standing, overall experience and sex. Furthermore, neither employment nor the number of hours worked per week affected the students' grades when race and sex was controlled. Lang (2012) noted that students who are motivated and organized are efficient and can manage their time better than their typical colleagues. The findings from Lang (2012) support Warren's primary orientation model of student employment.

### Populations

When investigating the purpose of this synthesis, it was important to embrace diverse populations and the feedback that was reported. "Diverse populations" include both workers and non-workers (and, inherently, both Campus Recreation and other departmental employees), undergraduate and graduate students of all majors, student registration status (i.e. full-time versus part-time), student demographics (i.e. age, ethnicity, sex) and administrative perspectives. These were all considered for comparative purposes, in order to delineate notable correlations, impacts and other types of results.

## **Student Benefits**

### The Collegiate Experience

Involvement to any degree can contribute positively to the student's overall satisfaction of their collegiate experience. Hackett (2007) investigated the relationship between part-time student employment in a recreational sport department and academic success. A student's grade point average and number of credit hours enrolled measured academic success. In the research, Hackett (2007) compared the recreational sport department's entire student staff population with a random population that was comparable in size to the student staff. This brought 680 total

participants: 330 staff members and 350 other students. The staff were selected based on their records and the student body were selected using their individual identification numbers. Collectively, the study included 56 freshmen, 149 sophomores, 195 juniors and 262 seniors. Moreover, Hackett (2007) found a positive correlation between employment within the department and academic success, and even further found how employment had no effect on the number of credit hours enrolled. Specifically, freshmen and juniors who worked in Campus Recreation had higher GPAs than their nonworking counterparts did, and some rationales that would explain these differences include “developmental, environmental and academic factors acting singularly or in combination.” (2007, p. 72). It was noted that employment within student affairs and involvement in recreational sports should both be listed as positive activities that are associated with academic success.

Hall (2013), who examined the influence of part-time employment at a Campus Recreation department on a full-time student’s learning, supported the aforementioned findings. One hundred and sixty-three participants responded to the study and the information provided was self-reported. It was emphasized that self-reported data was appropriate to delineate the types of learning outcomes that staff members experience while at work. In addition, it was required for the participants to be registered full-time and have at least one semester of working experience at the department. Within the first semester of working, the student must have collected a minimum of fifteen hours in order to be included in the study. Approximately 70% of students worked between 5 and 19.9 hours per week. Out of the 163 participants, 89 were females, 73 were males and 85.8% were between the ages of 18- and 22-years old. Furthermore, this study included 17 freshmen, 37 sophomores, 50 juniors, 43 seniors and 16 graduate students. Based on the results from Hall (2013), being a Campus Recreation employee enabled

opportunities for students to make positive gains from learning outcomes. For instance, advances in critical thinking, integrative learning and collaboration skills were reported and about 79% of the student population credited their involvement to helping them learn course content a few times a year or more.

On the other hand, Hawkins et al. (2005) reported on an exploratory study that assessed working a part-time job while being a full-time student. A convenience sample was used, which included 300 Social Work undergraduates enrolled in two different large Southwestern public universities – Texas State University-San Marcos and the University of Texas at Austin. It was noted that these institutions have extensive Social Work programs. The undergraduates were given a survey that inquired upon five demographics: gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, parental status and academic class. Of the 300 students, 255 were females, 45 were males and the group distribution included 13 freshmen, 44 sophomores, 90 juniors and 153 seniors. In addition, 71% of the population were between 18- and 25-years old and 33% were students of color. Since there were minor differences in cumulative GPAs, demographics and employment measures between both institutions, the results were aggregated. The results indicated working part-time with a full academic course load was typical for students pursuing degrees in Social Work.

Lundberg (2004) investigated the effect of involvement in the college experience on learning in regards to students. Specifically, this study investigated students who worked off campus. The participants consisted of 3,774 undergraduates from a national database – there were slightly more women (55.6%) than men (42.5%). The remaining 1.9% was not accounted for. Moreover, 52% of the participants were older than 23-years old and 72.1% of the population was Caucasian. The fourth edition of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) was used for data collection. According to Lundberg (2004), there were no differences in

learning based on the number of hours worked. Although, there were differences related to interactions with faculty, staff and peers. Students who work are inherently able to compensate for less socialization altogether, particularly in a way that does not impede on their learning. It was argued that the workplace should be cherished as a learning venue (Lundberg, 2004).

In terms of academic performance, Nonis and Hudson (2006) explored the effect of both time spent studying and time spent at work. It was noted how “performance is a multiplicative function of both ability and motivation.” (Nonis et al., 2006, p. 152). A medium-sized public university in the mid-south United States participated in this study, majorly because the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredited it. Surveys were used to gather information, and despite 440 surveys being administered, only 60% of returned surveys qualified for inclusion (264). The participants included 55.8% women and 44.2% men, with the average age of 23.8-years old. The majority of this study was Caucasian (85%). In conclusion, non-ability variables (i.e. motivation and study time) may impose a strong risk of influencing a student’s scholastic performance. Contrariwise, the time spent studying and working had no distinct correlation on a student’s GPA.

## **Impact of Employment**

### Job Satisfaction and Persistence

Oftentimes, Campus Recreation departments are contingent upon the direction, facilitation and supervision of their student employees to execute daily operations. Some of these tasks include improving student participation, producing quality programs and managing the functions that are intrinsically vivacious to the success of the department. In order to identify the

factors that create an enjoyable workplace, Kellison et al. (2011) assessed the variables of job satisfaction among part-time student employees of a university recreational sports department.

Kellison et al. (2011) used two different assessments in this study: the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS) and Smerek and Peterson's (2007) Perceived Work Environment Factors (PWEFs) scale. The MOAQ-JSS established levels of satisfaction, whereas the PWEFs scale identified influential factors of job satisfaction. In order to qualify for the assessments, it was required for the participants to be student employees of the department, have had more than one school period's worth of experience, older than 18-years old and registered for at least one credit hour. It was highlighted that one credit hour therefore insists that the student is enrolled part-time at the academic institution. There were 135 student employees who were considered qualified, which included 70 females and 65 males. The average age of the population was 20.84-years old and 33% identified as a race other than Caucasian. Additionally, 43% of the population was in their senior year of post-secondary education. The research findings could predict the happiness or unhappiness of the student staff, but still questioned the extent to which job satisfaction affected performance at work. However, a positive work environment resulting in any other outcome regarding job satisfaction would have no debate.

According to Kellison et al. (2011), "happiness" is the appropriate assessment tool used to measure job satisfaction (p. 36). The amount of enjoyment and pleasure that comes from working determines the student's level of satisfaction at the workplace, which can also impact the worker's persistence rate. Additionally, the level of satisfaction has also been associated with other desirable outcomes such as an increased likelihood to offer courteous and respectful customer service, as well as loyalty to the department.

On the other hand, Griffith et al. (2011) measured job satisfaction by identifying two components: organizational justice and support. They also concluded that organizational commitment – paired with support – reinforces employee retention in the workplace. This holds significance because it acknowledges the obligation of the organization and its contribution to the camaraderie of the workplace. Furthermore, Griffith et al. (2011) were cognizant of the different positive impacts that can occur between students “working on campus, in comparison with working off campus.” (p. 108). Relative to level of satisfaction, the department’s contributions and sustenance towards the well-being of their staff wholly affects the employees’ experiences while at post. Johnson et al. (2012), who determined “one’s relationship with their supervisor and the nature of their position are primary factors that influence job satisfaction,” supports this (p. 79).

### Professional Development

In order to promote professional development within collegiate populations, it is imperative for administrations to identify the most effective practices. Toperzer et al. (2011), who sought the best practices for effective student development, supports this and distinctly looks at Campus Recreation departments. This study exclusively created an expert panel and utilized the Delphi Process to establish consensus. Regional VPs were described as the most informed representatives of each higher education institution from their region. They called upon five of their respective region’s professionals to create a panel of 30 NIRSA officials. The Delphi Process encompassed four rounds of data collection, which included experts anonymously debating best practices. Each round had a purpose to “gain understanding of problems, opportunities, or solutions or to develop forecasts” and any repeated or unrelated information was filtered out (Toperzer et al., 2011, p. 148).

The first round for Toperzer et al. (2011) did not record demographics, but 78 specific best practices were identified. These practices were narrowed down in round two with 63 best practices and even further in the third round, where 21 best practices were identified. However, round two included 19 officials older than 22-years old (72% were 35 and above), 13 females and 6 males whereas round three included 20 officials older than 26-years old (40% were 50 and above), 13 females and 7 males. The last round of the Delphi Process verified the final practices and included 20 officials older than 22-years old (15 officials were 35 and above), as well as had the same female to male ratio as the third round. With all things considered, five general themes were generated by the expert panel and can be implemented into any Campus Recreation environment. These themes are leadership opportunities, performance assessment, training and orientation, personal relationships and professional development.

### Leadership Development

According to Toperzer et al. (2011), student staff are essential to the delivery of recreational activities, events and programs, as well as the development of holistic leadership. In relation to leadership development, Hackett (2007) states that being employed in student affairs-based programs is projected to create a “participatory, team oriented and developmental learning experience,” which allows student workers to interactively become acquainted with critical workplace skills (p. 70). Some of these skills include quality customer service, time management, communication and leadership. Hall (2013), who revealed the three different themes that derived from students that indicated the extent of which Campus Recreation influenced their career preparation, supports this data. According to Hall’s (2013) results, the three themes included: “working with people, leadership skills and communication skills.” (p.

139). Collectively, these traits are significant because they are pertinent to the improvement and maintenance of the workplace.

### Employment Opportunities

Often times, departments distribute specific responsibilities to their student staff and in turn, they are expected to manage daily functions and operations. The objective is to develop the student; however, Toperzer et al. (2011) noted that progression is influenced by two primary processes: “natural maturation of the student” and “the learning that takes place in the university environment.” (p. 146). This statement implies that developing the student takes time and dedication from administrators, colleagues, professors and their individual pace. In addition, work experiences in Campus Recreation provided student staff with opportunities such as mentorship and interactions with professional staff members (Griffith et al., 2011).

Not all staff members – students and professionals alike – have the same responsibilities. Moreover, a student manager’s duties will differ drastically from an intramural referee’s duties, as well as from a membership service attendant’s duties. To ensure the overall functionality of a recreational complex, all positions have a distinct purpose towards the operation. Along with the aforementioned job titles, some common employment positions include supervisor, lifeguard and aquatics, fitness and wellness instructor, adaptive recreation specialist, outdoor adventure guide and a variety of other positions that are intrinsically valued to the specific program. It was identified that candidates who apply for positions that require leadership and administrative qualities (i.e. supervisor, manager) go through an interview process that develops professionalism and eventually endorses the candidate into a new, promotional position. Essentially, supervisory roles are earned through “sustained and committed performance.”

(Johnson et al., 2012, p. 78; Kellison et al., 2011). This indicates the extent of which student employees must prove themselves in their division.

### Negative Impacts

Contrariwise to job satisfaction, “dissatisfied employees” reportedly felt less empowered, experienced burnout at a quicker pace and considered attrition (Kellison et al., p. 35). This may be due to personal feelings and/or conditional experiences in the workplace; although, it can be avoided if the Campus Recreation administrators recognize what consistently makes their staff cordial and optimistic. Kulm et al. (2006) found negative correlations between student employment and supplementary activities, socializing and GPA. In essence, the more the student is employed, the more likely it is to interfere with a student’s study time and class preparation. Understanding the components of job satisfaction is imperative to the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and operations of the department. Therefore, Kellison et al. (2011) notes it should be a priority for the Campus Recreation professional staff to be committed to and invested in the development of their student workers and job setting, as well as “implement methods to increase satisfaction.” (p. 35).

### **Summary**

Many intrinsic and extrinsic variables contribute to a student’s collegiate experience and happiness in the workplace. In relation to both the college and job experience, socialization has the potential to either hinder or support the student. It is essential for administrations to be steadfast and vigilant when determining camaraderie and student development strategies that are specific to departments. Moreover, collegiate populations may benefit immensely from employment. Some benefits include an overall increase in academic performance (i.e. critical

thinking, GPA), employment opportunities, valuable life skills (i.e. customer service) and professional development. Simultaneously, it is important to be aware of negative impacts of employment such as burning out and quitting. The workplace should be considered as an educational setting. Lundberg (2004) found that students do not have to be in a classroom in order to gain valuable life knowledge and skills.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion and Future Recommendations

The impacts of college students who work in Campus Recreation in terms of their collegiate experience and job satisfaction was reviewed in this synthesis project. Based on the review of literature, the following conclusions were discovered:

1. How does working in Campus Recreation impact student workers' overall satisfaction of their collegiate and job experience?

It was found that working in Campus Recreation had positive impacts on student workers' overall satisfaction of their collegiate and job experience. Even though employment in other departments was investigated for comparative purposes, these impacts were not restricted to Campus Recreation. Particularly, enhancements in academic performance, leadership development, professional development, social behaviors and sense of belonging were reported regarding the collegiate experience. In terms of job satisfaction, the work's level of happiness and perceptions of the workplace were strong indicators of persistence or attrition.

2. Does the relationship between supervisor and worker have an impact on the worker's commitment to the job?

According to Johnson et al. (2012), the relationship that the student worker develops with their supervisor, in addition to their job description, are primary factors that influence job satisfaction. This is understood through the notion of friendship, mentorship and oversight between both parties. Furthermore, the impression of networking and having a good rapport with professional staff members supports this statement. Integration and socialization are also key factors to commitment to the job.

3. To what extent does being employed in a Campus Recreation setting provide a sense of belonging to the student?

Although the aforementioned conclusions would indicate that being employed in a Campus Recreation setting provided a sense of belonging to the student, it was never visibly incorporated in the literature or elaborated on otherwise. Moreover, factors such as employment opportunities, loyalty to the division and increased socialization practices would implicate a sense of belonging for an individual, but that cannot be assumed, as “sense of belonging” would be considered a self-reported statistic.

For the individuals whom are seeking permanent appointments in a higher education setting, it is imperative to know the impact that employment can have on students. This may assist in the development of activities, events, opportunities and programs for the campus-wide population. Many variables can affect the impact of employment, but ultimately, the decision to work as a college student is up to the individual. In general, scholars are aware of their expectations as students regarding their respective majors and pursuits, so it is within their capabilities and discretion to determine whether balancing a job – amongst other duties – would be worthwhile for them personally. Furthermore, the desires and intentions of the student worker may also determine persistence or attrition in the workplace. Understanding this dynamic will guarantee that students from all backgrounds and lifestyles have purpose in a college setting.

Throughout the review of literature, many limitations were identified. For instance, subjects included workers and non-workers, Campus Recreation student and professional staff, undergraduate and graduate students from all concentrations, full-time and part-time students and administrative perspectives. In addition, factors such as a subject’s age, ethnicity and sex were also observed. It was essential to gather information from all types of post-secondary academic

institutions – whether the institution was public or private, the size of it and location were all considered in this synthesis.

Regarding future research, it is recommended that specific variables are combined and analyzed in order to discover a more accurate correlation between student employment and its impacts on the collegiate experience and job satisfaction. In particular, it would be ideal to investigate a student's level of connection to the university, their registration status and major, length of employment, relationship to colleagues and professional staff and self-reported characteristics such as type of personality or extent of procrastination. Understanding a student's personality and extent of procrastination will help determine whether a "sense of urgency" variable can be measured in the future. It would be helpful if the data collection tool offered options for anonymity, as participants are more inclined to be candid and honest if their identities are not revealed. Furthermore, a larger sample size from all regions of the United States may assist with innovating universal best and efficient practices for Campus Recreation departments and programs. A larger sample size would encompass private and public schools, as well as cultural differences per region to provide further diversity and inclusion.

| Author(s)<br>&<br>Year                    | Title   | Source                            | Purpose   | Methods<br>&<br>Procedures  | Analysis  | Findings  | Discussion<br>&<br>Recommendations   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Griffith,<br>Walker and<br>Collins (2011) | Examining<br>Differences in<br>Socialization<br>Opportunities<br>Among Student Work<br>Groups in a<br>University Recreation<br>Department | Recreational<br>Sports<br>Journal | Examined diffs<br>in socialization<br>opportunities<br>perceived by<br>student<br>employees on a<br>campus rec<br>dept.   | <u>Sample:</u><br>campus rec<br>employees vs.<br>undergrads<br>enrolled in a<br>rec mgmt class<br>& employed<br>off campus<br>(107); avg age<br>= 21.3 years.<br><u>Procedure:</u><br>data collection<br>began Nov '07<br>and Jan '08;<br>questionnaires. | Overall<br>relationships<br>= <i>t</i> -tests; diffs<br>in group<br>cohesion =<br>ANOVA;<br>relationship<br>b/t cohesion<br>& hrs/week =<br>Pearson's<br>correlation<br>coefficient | 48 F (45%) &<br>59 M (55%);<br>15.4 months<br>average<br>employment<br>length; 19<br>hours/week<br>average, 29%<br>lived on<br>campus (31)<br>& 71% lived<br>off campus<br>(76) | Recognizing and<br>understanding diffs in<br>work group cohesion b/t<br>program areas can help<br>guide professional staff<br>members to maximize<br>the impact of the student<br>employment program.<br><u>Recommendation:</u><br>investigate the effects of<br>work group cohesion on<br>other factors such as<br>connection to university,<br>job satisfaction and<br>campus quality of life. |
| Hackett (2007)                            | Exploring the<br>Relationship<br>Between<br>Recreational Sports<br>Employment and<br>Academic Success                                     | Recreational<br>Sports<br>Journal | Examined<br>relationship b/t<br>PT student<br>employment in a<br>rec sport dept.<br>and academic<br>success as<br>measured by<br>GPA & # of<br>credit hours<br>enrolled | <u>Sample:</u> entire<br>population of<br>student staff in<br>rec sports<br>dept. vs.<br>[random]<br>comparably<br>sized student<br>body (680).<br><u>Procedure:</u><br>staff –<br>reviewed all<br>records;   | GPA by<br>employment<br>status → year<br>in school →<br>gender =<br>ANOVA;<br>identifying<br>significant<br>diffs = <i>t</i> -test  | Positive<br>connection<br>b/t<br>employment<br>with the rec<br>sports dept.<br>and academic<br>success; did<br>not affect # of<br>credit hrs<br>enrolled                        | Student involvement can<br>enhance the collegiate<br>experience and increase<br>academic success.<br>Employment in student<br>affairs and participation<br>in rec sports should both<br>be included on the list of<br>positive involvement<br>activities and<br>connections to academic<br>success.<br><u>Recommendation:</u>  |

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|   |   |                                  |  | student body – created list using ID #s.  |  |   | include an analysis on length of employment, comparisons to other campus employment settings and larger sample sizes.  |
| Hall (2013)                                 | Influence of Campus Recreation Employment on Student Learning   | Recreational Sports Journal      | Examined the influence of PT employment at a campus rec dept. on FT student's learning             | <u>Sample</u> : must be FT student with at least one semester and a min. of 15-hrs of exp.<br><u>Procedure</u> : self-reported data were appropriate to find the types of learning outcomes that students experience while working in campus rec. | Reliability of survey = Cronbach's alpha | 163 respondents (37% rate of completion; 89 F (54.6%) & 73 M (44.8%)); 85.8% ages 18-22yos; 10.4% 1 <sup>st</sup> -years & 89.6% UPCM; 70% worked b/t 5-19.9 hours/week | Campus Rec provided an opportunity for students to make positive gains in learning outcomes from their experience working in the dept.<br><u>Recommendation</u> : add questions to performance assessments and exit interview tools to document what students report gaining from their work experience. |
| Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins II and Grant (2005) | The Relationships Among Hours Employed, Perceived Work Interference, and Grades as Reported by Undergraduate Social Work Students | Journal of Social Work Education | Used a convenience sample drawn from two BSW programs to obtain some preliminary descriptive stats | <u>Sample</u> : 300 BSW majors from two large public SW universities.<br><u>Procedure</u> : survey that included five   | One month test-retest reliability        | Because there were few diffs between the two settings on cGPA, demographics and   | Working at a half-time job while pursuing a full-time course load is typical for most BSW students.<br><u>Recommendation</u> : to explore how some students successfully   |

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|                                 |  |                             |  | demographics  |  | employment measures, the samples were aggregated.  | balance work and school.   |
| Johnson, Kaiser and Bell (2012) | An Examination of Variables Related to Student Employment in Campus Recreation Programs  | Recreational Sports Journal | Examined 290 rec student employees at 11 institutions throughout US to determine how important 5 work-related variables were to employment | <u>Sample:</u> 290 recreation student employees at 11 NIRSA universities. <u>Procedure:</u> a 10-item survey created solely for this study.                     | Frequencies and measures of central tendency for all variables; 5 variables of hypothesized importance & demographics = MANOVA | 167 F & 123 M; more seniors than other academic levels (123 @ 42.4%)                                       | Results indicated student employee commitment levels were highest for students that had worked in the dept. the longest and who were supervised by professional staff. <u>Recommendation:</u> expand on the results by increasing # of campuses under investigation and distinguishing results based on institutional characteristics. |
| Kellison and James (2011)       | Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction of Student Employees of a Recreational Sports Department at a Large, Four-Year Public Institution: A Case Study | Recreational Sports Journal | Assessed the determinants of job satisfaction (what makes them happy?) among PT student employees of a university rec sports dept.         | <u>Sample:</u> 135 student employees of rec sports dept.; must be +18yo, reg. for at least 1c/h, and employed for at least one school period. <u>Procedure:</u> | The reliability of MOAQ-JSS was calculated by determining the *mean* of internal consistency reliabilities, range of internal  | Respondents: 51.9% F; avg age of 20.84 years; 77% identified race as White; 43% were in their senior years | Despite conflicting research in the field questioning the extent to which job satisfaction affect work performance, there is little debate that positive job satisfaction results in other constructive outcomes. <u>Recommendation:</u> consider alternate  |

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|                        |   |  |   | job satisfaction = MOAQ-JSS; factors influencing job satisfaction = PWEFs; both procedures combined = CRSSE-JSQ. | consistency reliabilities across samples, and test-retest reliability. Mean scores were provided using correlation coefficients. Homogeneity of survey = Cronbach's alpha |  | predictors of job satisfaction (i.e. flexibility of hours, physical environment, proximity to intended career path, & perks/other benefits).   |
| Kulm and Cramer (2006) | The Relationship of Student Employment to Student Role, Family Relationships, Social Interactions and Persistence | College Student Journal                | Examined the relationships of college student employment and its effect on student life | <u>Sample</u> : 500 undergraduate students in a Midwestern university.<br><u>Procedure</u> : web-based surveys.  | Exploratory factor analyses, reliability, & correlations  | 60% F & 40% M; 72.7% of ages were 20-22yo; 93% reported no children; hours worked/week = 23.11; 99% had never been married | The more a student is employed, the more employment interfered with his/her study time and student time.<br><u>Recommendation</u> : addressing family relationships may reveal a relationship with extent of employment. |
| Lang (2012)            | The Similarities and Differences Between Working and Non-Working Students at                                      | Bloomsburg University of PA - Dept. of | Examined diffs b/t grades, class preparation, involvement,                              | <u>Sample</u> : 794 FT first-year & SR students.<br><u>Procedure</u> :   | SPSS 15.0   | Tables 1, 2, 3   | The univariate statistics (T1) show that working students have higher grades than nonworking   |

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|                 | a Mid-Sized American Public University                              | Sociology, Social Work and CRJ | socializing, and overall college exp. enjoyment of workers and non-workers   | NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) – 28 sets of close-ended questions, as well as a demographic questions.                               |        |  | students. This correlation disappears when controlling for the other variables in the model (T2&3). It was found that neither employment nor the # of hours worked/week affected the students' grades when controlling for race, sex, and other variables. This supports Warren's primary orientation model of student employment.<br><i>Recommendation:</i> Studies that compare students attending different schools would be worthwhile. |
| Lundberg (2004) | Working and Learning: The Role of Involvement for Employed Students | NASPA Journal                  | Investigated the effect of involvement in the college experience on learning for students who were employed off campus | <i>Sample:</i> national database of 3,774 undergrads (52% +23yo)<br><i>Procedure:</i> 4 <sup>th</sup> edition of CSEQ (College Student Experiences | MANOVA | Despite differences in terms of interaction with faculty and peers, there were no differences in learning based on | Working students are able to compensate for less engagement with peers and faculty in a way that does not impede their learning.<br><i>Recommendation:</i> further exploration in the role of working and the value of the workplace.   |

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|   |  |                                   |  | Questionnaire)   |   | number of hours worked  |   |
| Nonis and Hudson (2006)                 | Academic Performance of College Students: Influence of Time Spent Studying and Working | Journal of Education for Business | Examined the effect of both time spent studying and time spent working on academic performance | <u>Sample:</u> undergrads (BUS classes) attending a medium-sized, mid-south, and public university.<br><u>Procedure:</u> 264 returned surveys. | Statistical Abstract of the US (T1), Pearson's correlation coefficient (T2), moderate multiple regression (H3 & H4) | Nonability variables like motivation and study time significantly interact with ability to influence academic performance | Conclusions 1-6.<br><u>Recommendation:</u> Include time management perceptions and behaviors to provide further insight.  |
| Toperzer, Anderson and Barcelona (2011) | Best Practices in Student Development for Campus Recreation Professionals              | Recreational Sports Journal       | Identified best practices for effective student development in campus rec                      | <u>Sample:</u> five Regional VPs of NIRSA, 2009.<br><u>Procedure:</u> Expert panel.  | The Delphi Process - 4 rounds of data collection  | R1 – 78 specific best practices<br>R2 – 63 best practices<br>R3 – 21 best practices<br>R4 – verification                  | The five general themes produced by the research are universal and can be implemented into any campus rec dept.<br><u>Recommendation:</u> Focus future research on student employee's experiences, expectations, motivation, and environment. |

#### Research Notes – Commonalities/Differences

KW: student employee, group cohesion, socialization, student development (GRIFFITH, WALKER & COLLINS)

KW: recreation, GPA, involvement, student affairs, on campus employment, Dalgarn (2001) (HACKETT)

KW: student employment, student learning outcomes, on campus employment (HALL)

Derived from Lang (HAWKINS, SMITH, HAWKINS II & GRANT)

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|---|
| KW: recreation department, student employees, part-time employees (JOHNSON, KAISER & BELL)  |
| KW: campus recreation, student staff, contentment, effective leadership (KELLISON & JAMES)  |
| KW: students, social psychology, college graduates – employment, social interaction, family relations, student activities (KULM & CRAMER) |
| KW: surveys, school-to-work transition, research, work-life balance, students, part-time (LANG)   |
| Derived from Hall (LUNDBERG)  |
| KW: academic performance (NONIS & HUDSON)   |
| KW: leadership, professional development, university, student employees (TOPERZER)  |

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