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Sabbatical Report

My sabbatical focused on developing my dissertation proposal that will inform my research to create a Student Services Student Employee Training Model specifically for the Welcome Center. My research topic focuses on building a leadership-centered curriculum within student employment in community colleges in Hawai`i. It is clear that leadership opportunities and building leadership skills are essential to a college student’s personal and professional growth. A community college student may not feel the need to get involved on campus or more likely does not have the time to participate in extracurricular activities due to their need to work, their family responsibilities, and many other outside factors that are beyond their control. However, the reality that student affairs programs are the first to receive budget reductions encourages student affairs to be creative with their initiatives. Community colleges rely heavily on student employees and students rely on attaining a job at their college to help with finances and its convenient location. This is an opportunity for student affairs to incorporate itself into already established programs on campus that will continue to be funded. Building a leadership-centered curriculum within a program, such as student employment, that is essential to many students ability to attend college will strengthen their experience and provide them with leadership skills that prepares them for the job force as part of the UH system’s strategic plan of “providing a globally competitive workforce that prepares students for effective engagement and leadership in a global environment.”

Thank you for giving me this time to dedicate my energy towards my 8 year PhD journey. I tend to get caught up in my role as the Student Life Coordinator because I’m so passionate about my work, so the sabbatical was beneficial to focus on my professional development.

Sabbatical Review

Objective: Dissertation Proposal and Student Employee Training for the Welcome Center

The sabbatical allowed me to complete comps, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 of the dissertation proposal. My Chapter 1 focuses on developing the problem and the research question. Chapter 3 details the Methodology of interviewing previous IS 107V: Student Leadership Concepts
students. The study seeks to answer the questions:

- What are the desired job skills that employers currently seek?
- What skills did the students gain from The Student Leadership Challenge?

This research study aims to provide context on the effectiveness of a leadership curriculum’s influence on developing noncognitive job ready skills within Leeward Community College students. Cumming (2010) states: “a dominant theme emerging is that many graduates lack appropriate skills, attitudes and dispositions, which in turn prevents them from participating effectively in the workplace” (p. 408). A study by Archer and Davison (2008) cited in Cumming (2010) found “that communication was consistently ranked as the primary skill sought by employers, but in terms of employers’ satisfaction with the quality of communication skills demonstrated by graduates, it ranked only sixteenth. Team working and integrity were ranked second and third in terms of importance, but only seventh and ninth in terms of satisfaction for employers. The authors go on to say: ‘It appears that while many graduates hold satisfactory qualifications, they are lacking in the key “soft skills” and qualities that employers increasingly need in a more customer focused world’” (p. 408)

Previous research suggests that the employability skills of college graduates is not consistent so many universities are investing effort on developing the employability of their students (Harvey 2005; Higher Education Funding Council for England 2003; Yorke 2004). Shapiro & Ebrary, Inc. (2005) state that higher education institutions want to help students grow, develop, and learn so that they can pursue their interests and assist them in being effective as employees in business and industry.

Training for the Welcome Center:

Understanding the research from employers helps frame what the training module for the Welcome Center Student Associates will encompass. I was unable to implement a training during my sabbatical because instead my time and focus was spent on attending Unit Head Meetings to plan the logistics and workflow for the Welcome Center in general. The plans for the Welcome Center were pushed back so my focus was on assisting with the foundation of
strategizing for the Welcome Center. During the sabbatical I created the job descriptions for the Student Associates, a workflow plan of how the student handoff and experience will be implemented, assisted with the Welcome Center Coordinator APT job description, and collaborated on the budget memo for the Student Associates.

The Future:

As I continue to work towards completing the dissertation the research and data gathering will guide the training module. The training will include the following:

- **True Colors:** True Colors uses color to identify characteristics that make up our personalities. True Colors helps us identify our brightest color and our palest color to help us understand how we communicate with others. Understanding the blending of your colors will give you a better sense of who you are and why you do what you do.

- **FISH Philosophy:** The FISH! Philosophy empowers employees to be more effective in any job through four principles that improve teamwork, customer service, and leadership.

- **Safe Zone:** The Safe Zone Program's objective is for trained participants to utilize their gained knowledge and skills to foster a safe and inclusive community for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff to promote social justice in the University of Hawai‘i System.

- **Conflict Management:** Students will understand the deeper causes of conflict and lack of synergy in your organization. It will help students explore and discover their performance strategy based upon their own style.

- **Generational Communication:** The workplace now has five generations working together from Generation Z to Baby Boomers. Employees will gain insight on what is important to these generations and how that affects their working styles and communication styles.

- **Diversity Workshop:** Students will recognize similarities and differences of various backgrounds, learn about and reevaluate personal attitudes and behaviors that are based on the impact of prejudice and discrimination, and develop an awareness to be nonjudgmental.
References
