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**Promoting Professional Development through Appreciative Inquiry: Aiding the Transition
of College Student Employees as Emerging Professionals**

An action research project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education Leadership

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December 10, 2021

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT and DEDICATION

I want to respectfully acknowledge the land I call home was home to the Kumeyaay Nation.

I dedicate all I do and I become to my family. My mother and father continue to be my greatest support, advisory board, and remind me there's more in store.

I dedicate my work to those who broke down walls, pushed the envelope, brought down glass ceilings, and raised the standard, not allowing naysayers, circumstances, or statistics dictate what is possible and achievable.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Former Advisor: Professor Bo Bae, thank you. Your empathy and encouragement have meant more than you know. Thank you for pushing and supporting me.

Current Advisor: Professor David Karp, thank you. Your patience and understanding have been so impactful. Thank you for your continued support time and time again and for not giving up.

Professors, Leadership, and Impact Partners: Thank you for helping me grow, for challenging me, for enlightening me, and for demonstrating learning leadership.

Critical Friends: Thank you for being the force you are. Thank you for your honesty, your insight, your realness, and your energy. You all were/are my allies and have made sure I knew it.

Loved Ones: Thank you for being my motivation and inspiration. You know, I'm looking at you Mom!

Participants: Thank you for giving of your time, talent, and treasure. Your participation was invaluable.

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study aimed to identify how to better promote and support the transition as emerging professionals and elevate the professional development capacity of Sixth College Residence Life at the University of California, San Diego. The primary research question guiding these endeavors is: What role do I/our office play in the transition of student employees to emerging professionals? The secondary question is: How can I/our office collaborate to elevate professional development practices and capacity? Research participants took part through virtual interviews, virtual focus groups, and the completion of an online survey. The significance of my efforts was attaining insight into meeting the development needs of a population at a critical point in their development and actualization. Findings indicate, through collaboration that creating opportunities to connect, lead, engage in further training, and build capacity can better serve college student employees as emerging professionals.

Keywords: action research, collaboration, operational framework, practice, professional development, student employee, school-to-work transition, support, transition

Promoting Professional Development through Appreciative Inquiry: Aiding the Transition of College Student Employees as Emerging Professionals

What is the role and purpose of higher education, to educate and enlighten minds or start preparations for students embarking on their career paths? Who is responsible for transitioning undergraduates from school to work...the students, their future employers, or college and university alma maters? How are students best served? Postsecondary policy, practice, and pathway leaders on an international scale continue to contend with this dilemma (Alam & de Diego, 2019; Benbow & Hora, 2018; Horal et. al, 2020; Tymon, 2013) and have done so for decades with no end in sight. Increasingly, students and families, policymakers, and higher education institutions contend with the notion of employability. To define the term “employability” calls for a distinct recognition of the interconnection and interdependence between education, employment, and the labor market which is not a homogeneous one-size-fits-all model, but is understood differently from nation to nation, articulated and implemented differently from campus to campus. The representation of the term employability for the purposes of this paper is the capacity and competencies gained and cultivated that enhance a worker’s ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work, and cope with change, (Bonnard, 2020).

“Work-readiness” was introduced into the U.S. vocabulary in the 1960s and 1970s (Symonds, 2017), yet more than half a century later, indicators for such a notion are still being developed. However, the notion of employability is a more recent development (Benbow and Hora, 2018) progressing from either one being considered employable or not to more dynamic and adaptive (Williams et al., 2015). Career readiness and professional development, at the end

of the day, are societal constructs that historically were not meant for someone like me, a person of color, someone who identifies as female, a daughter of a single parent who has not yet earned her college degree; anyone of underrepresented, underserved, and minoritized backgrounds.

There are devastating statistics in what "should" have been my experience growing up to now.

Persons with marginalized identities continue to fight for their rightful place. It happens every day, fighting to be accepted and perceived as professional whether:

- Choosing not to speak your native language in front of coworkers, hiding your accent, or code-switching to make someone else feel more comfortable
- Bringing in food that will not raise eyebrows or cause people to stare
- Picking family and friend photos that display "acceptable" romantic relationships
- Going to certain restrooms to avoid looks or glares

All these scenarios are present on campuses and in the workspace, but identity differences and appreciating them are missing aspects from my action research project. I do not take into account discrimination, divides, or gaps in representation in leadership, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race, or language. This was not a conscious decision and for that reason, I had to confront the fact that during my time as Housing Life and Media Coordinator, I was not working to combat the systems in place where refinement and greater awareness are needed. I was doing what I could to be successful in the system as it stands, as a result, held this same mentality as a supervisor and a trainer. I have been challenged to reevaluate and reorient how I am and will show up as an education practitioner. I have been deeply humbled to also reevaluate and reorient how I am to advocate and be a resource, but I know I have a way to go, using myself as an instrument.

Donald Super's Theory of Career Development was an informative resource that offered background and context, giving deeper insight. According to Super's career model, young adult college students, between the ages of 15-24 are in what Super calls Stage two, exploration. This stage may encompass discovery from courses, hobbies, and employment opportunities. In total, Super's model is comprised of five stages: Stage one (ages 0-14), growth, as it pertains to self-concept; Stage two (ages 15-24), exploration, as shared above; Stage three (ages 25-44), establishment, building work experience and skill development; Stage four (ages 45-64), maintenance, with the intent to refine and pursuit to advance; and Stage five (ages 65 and over), decline, moving away from work and toward retirement. However, I do wish to point out that though this resource was useful, I believe each of our journeys is different, and life happens in cycles. One stage may take place more than once at different points in our lived experience. No one is confined or constrained to a model or mold.

Figure 1

Visual Representation of Donald Super's Theory of Career Development Integrating a Holistic



Career Development Framework

Characterized by exposure, examination, and focusing on career trends and options, student employees come to our office solidifying their future plans through internal and external calibration and recalibration. This research inspired me to further examine the learning and development processes of our student support team and my contribution as a supervisor, trainer, and that of our office. How does our office impact their understanding of their professional selves? How do our training practices promote their interest to pursue further professional development opportunities? Can the focus of professional development be a detriment or a turn-off? Can our training practices push student employees away from taking ownership of their professional lives? Holding space as a leader when learning and as a learner, while leading are fundamental and foundational principles that I work to engage in as a professional. In my research, I found literature on the responsibility of on-campus employers was quite lacking. Focus was predominantly on the higher education system and what takes place inside the classroom, the impact of faculty and majors directed toward internships. As a cosupervisor and trainer of college student employees embodied my commitment to holistic student success, a commitment that has called me to serve in the field of education for more than ten years. Student affairs engagement, development, and advancement begin with an experience, an individual, an interaction. Student-facing roles, responsibilities, and functions are grounded in the promotion of meaning-making, life-long learning, other-mindedness, and service orientation which are pursuits I aspire to uphold and generate in those whom I supervise and am accountable for. In action research, we are directed to home in on our sphere of influence and be purposeful in our effort to make an impact.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding these endeavors is: What role do I/our office play in the transition of student employees to emerging professionals? The secondary question is: How can I/our office collaborate to elevate professional development practices and capacity?

Context

UC San Diego is a public, top-tier research institution made up of seven colleges in San Diego, California, specifically, the La Jolla community. Each college is unique and separate; therefore, each operates in a decentralized manner. There are close to 40,000 students in total across the medicine/pharmacy (796), graduate (6,938), and undergraduate (31,842) student populations. (UC San Diego, 2021). The setting in which my research took place was in the residence life function of Sixth College as each of the seven colleges of UC San Diego has its own Residence Life Office and team. The professional team is made up of administrative and nonadministrative staff. At Sixth, two of us handled the administrative side, and four individuals comprised the nonadministrative side of the house. During the most recent school year, 2021-2022, we were responsible for 2,000 student residents, more than 40 Resident Advisors, six Interns, and several Sixth College student leadership community members. As of the 2021-2022 school year, Sixth was the largest college in terms of the number of residents served and residential staff teams.

Residence Life falls under the Vice-Chancellor Student Affairs Office which has more than 500 professional employees and 2,400 student employees (UC San Diego, 2021). The Sixth College Residence Life Office stands on three tenets “innovation,” “interconnectedness,” and “awareness.” The mission of the college is “preparing students to become dynamic and engaged

citizens of the 21st century” (<https://admissions.ucsd.edu/why/colleges/index.html>) and was my professional home for close to five years. The work of residence life on a university campus is supporting a student’s development, involvement, and leadership function. Starting in the 2020-2021 academic year, Sixth College became part of the North Torrey Pines Living-Learning Neighborhood (NTPLLN) where residence life, dining, retail space, and campus engagement and activities intermix together unlike the six other sibling colleges on-campus. NTPLLN is centered on interdependence and community. The Residence Life Office in its new iteration has moved away from the considered more “transactional” interactions with students and more focused on transformational interactions.

During my term in the Housing Life and Media Coordinator position, I was responsible for:

- leading and standardizing day-to-day operations; reception; administration; and coordination
- acting as a liaison and point of contact between the Residence Life Office and maintenance, facilities, custodial, and UC San Diego housing teams to communicate between staff and the resident community
- training, cosupervising, and directing the workflow of the front desk intern team

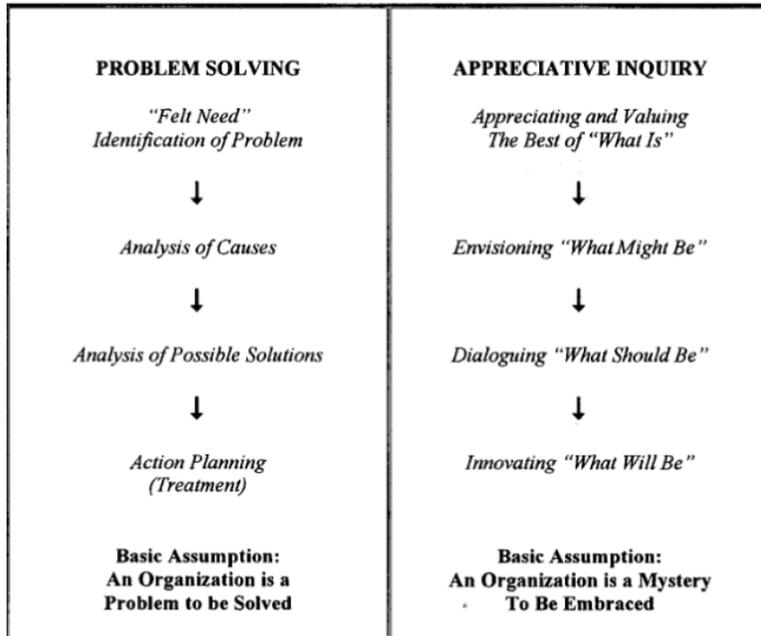
Before I stepped into this role, the intern program did not involve ongoing learning opportunities beyond taking on the day-to-day duties and operation of the Residence Life Office. My administrative counterpart and supervisor were and remained supportive of any ideas I worked to implement to elevate the Intern team from 360 evaluations to committee involvements.

Methodology

When contemplating what would be a fitting approach to conduct my action research, the tenets of appreciative inquiry (AI) stood out: giving life, possibilities, and positivity and leveraging that in the promotion of augmentation and enrichment. At its center and core, AI works to identify what works well with the notion of embracing: being purposefully positive; building on past successes; “grassroots” and “top-down;” being highly participative; nurturing a positive inner dialogue; stimulating vision and creativity; and accelerating change (Cooperrider et al, 2008, p. 68-69). In their article, Elleven (2007) provides the following visual representation to show the contrast between the strategy and steps taken to problem solve versus appreciative inquiry:

Figure 2

Comparison of a problem-solving versus an appreciative inquiry approach



(Elleven, 2007, 454)

This model and framework aimed to and aided in facilitating open and honest dialogue, engaging in collective meaning-making, and fortifying and affirming a supportive context.

Cooperrider developed the AI model focusing on positive outcomes using collaboration and participation for “seeking, identifying, and enhancing the ‘life-giving forces’ that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms” (Elleven, 2007). Appreciative inquiry is an action-oriented, strengths-based framework that involves an ethic of care for those in the organization and those whom the organization serves (Johnson & Leavitt, 2001). There are four stages: (1) discover or “appreciating what it is”, (2) dream or “imagining what might be”, (3) design or “determining what should be”, and (4) destiny or “creating what will be.” The first stage, discovery, involves diving into earlier accomplishments, identifying the most vital and valuable strengths and skills. Highpoints are spotlighted and what to carry forward is sought out. The second stage, dream, consists of endeavoring to envision the organization with the prospect of positive reshaping and reconfiguration. Expanding and extending what participants view as possible while still grounded in each person’s history, this stage emphasizes potential. The third stage, design, strategizing what should be toward the end of implementation. Coconstruction and cocreation are prime bringing forth what were ideals and integrating them into infrastructure, mobilizing action from intention. The fourth and final stage, destiny, where the call to action is personified and participants generate potential outcomes (Cooperrider et.al, 2008; Elleven, 2007; Helens-Hart, 2018; Johnson & Leavitt, 2001; Kadi-Hanifi, 2014).

Cycle Overview

Cycle 1 - Discovery - Student Staff Survey

I sought out the insight, experience, and understanding of the point of view of current and former student employees. Promotional or recruitment materials were not created for participation as most of the target population for this study was a small and specific segment of the UC San Diego community. Many have moved on from UC San Diego years ago and are not readily accessible. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the first cycle taking place near the close of February 2021, weeks shy of the end of winter quarter instruction, current front desk interns were not well represented in the first cycle. I used what information Sixth College Residence Life had on file to reach 67 potential student participants. A total of 12 students participated (both current and former) in completing the survey distributed for Cycle 1.

In the invitation/solicitation, I included the following information:

- study focus
- the four parts of the research study comprised of an online survey for student participants, a virtual focus group with student participants, virtual one-on-one interviews with professional staff, and a virtual focus group with professional staff
- the time commitment: approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes
- my contact information for next steps

Once interest was confirmed, I sent a follow-up email that included:

- study focus
- resubmission of request for participation by completing an online survey and taking part in a virtual focus group;
- delivery of video and adult consent forms (Appendix B and C)
- link to the online survey (Appendix D)

- link to the When2Meet for scheduling the virtual focus group
- deadline set to complete tasks

Cycle 2 - Dream - Student Staff Focus Group and Interviews

In this second cycle, participants were invited to be part of a virtual focus group or to schedule a one-on-one interview. In providing an open forum-like setting I endeavored to bolster cocreation between participants. Promotional and recruitment materials were not used, as specified in Cycle 1, due to the target population being a small and select group of individuals. A few students were unable to attend the virtual focus group that was scheduled for mid-March 2021. Therefore, to be as flexible as possible, participation through one-on-one interviews was offered. This timeframe was especially difficult for current front desk interns as UC San Diego students were amid final exams so just as in Cycle 1, they were, unfortunately, poorly represented. I used what information Sixth College Residence Life had on file to contact 67 potential student participants, both current and former employees. A total of 13 students participated.

In the invitation/solicitation, I included the following information:

- reminder to complete the online survey as part of the action research project
- date, time, and time commitment of the virtual focus group scheduled
- request to accept the calendar invitation to the virtual focus group scheduled
- request to provide three dates and times in order of priority/convenience to schedule an interview one-on-one if not available for the virtual focus group
- consent forms (Appendix B and C)
- my contact information

The focus group and one-on-one interviews were conducted online using the Zoom platform. Participants were asked to verbally consent during the recorded session where pseudonyms were used in place of personal information. Once the recordings were completed, I used the Microsoft Word dictation feature to create a transcript.

In the second cycle, qualitative data were collected through discourse. I composed open-ended questions on (i) preparation in transitioning from college toward employment; (ii) the ways in which Sixth Residence Life and the intern role may aid in the expansion and enhancement of the student employee's professional capacity; (iii) proposed notions for peer-to-peer support; (iv) building assurance and confidence in professional development endeavors; (v) demonstration of commitment to and importance of the professional development of the Intern team; and (vi) feedback, insight, or thoughts.

Cycle 3 - Design - Professional Staff Interview

When I was initially formatting the third cycle, both current and former professional staff team members were to be participants. Their separation may have offered a more fresh and out-of-the-box perspective in addition to their wide and varied experiences within and beyond the field of education. I was unable to overcome the lack of contact information and the concern that such an ask may over-burden people who for whatever reason chose to step down or step away from Sixth College Residence Life and UC San Diego. Compounded by an ever-changing and trying undertaking to manage physically, emotionally, and psychologically due to the ever-present health pandemic, I was not successful and missed the prospect of such connection and cocreation in this way. Nonetheless, of the five professional staff team members of Sixth College Residence Life, 100% participated.

My research transitioned into marrying responses with workable courses of action in the third cycle. Before the one-on-one interviews took place, I introduced the notion of working together as part of my action research project with the professional Residence Life team. However, I sent the official request in an email invitation at the start of March to the current professional staff who worked predominantly on the nonadministrative side of the house of Sixth College Residence Life. Their roles are student-facing (Office Manager, Assistant Director of Residence Life, Associate Dean of Student Affairs/Director of Residence Life) The Office Manager and I share supervision and training responsibilities for who staff the front desk. They are also responsible for maintaining financial and business processes and work as the liaison for facilities and maintenance on behalf of the office. The Assistant Directors are responsible for program development, program administration, management and supervision of the Resident Advisor team, student conduct resolution, crisis intervention, and emergency response. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs/Director of Residence Life manages and supervises the conduction and upholding of policies and procedures in support of the residence life area as it pertains to crisis management, emergency preparedness, student resident and staff welfare, programmatic restructuring, and recommendations on a departmental and campus-wide basis.

As part of the entry into the interview I shared out, anonymously, major points of feedback collected in Cycles 1 and 2 ensuring student voices were heard. I composed 12 open-ended questions spanning the following themes: their impression of the intern program and response to the feedback from student staff participants; the ways to which professional development could be more accessible, constructive, and valuable as part of the front desk intern role; areas of focus for enhancement and action step suggestions; resources available; perceived

challenges and ideas to address them; collaboration opportunities; continuance of dialogue and deliberation with student staff involvement. For convenience and due to coronavirus concerns and protocols, each interview was conducted online using the Zoom platform where participants were asked to verbally consent at the start of the recorded session where pseudonyms were used in place of personal information.

Cycle 4 - Destiny - Professional Staff Virtual Focus Group

I sought to share out the insight, suggestions, and input from the student participants to, first, cocreate enhancements, expansions, and expectations with professional staff participants. Second, I intended to come to an agreement on what could be implemented immediately versus what needed more time and work. Lastly, we would determine and secure who would take action. Promotional and recruitment materials were not created as the decision to attempt to locate former members was dismissed due to the lack of information or direction in trying to establish contact. The entire professional team, at the time of this cycle, April 2021, consisted of five individuals and all were present and participated in the virtual focus group. The professional staff team was given a link to schedule the virtual focus group session and able to review the consent forms at their own discretion. The fourth cycle took place using the online Zoom platform.

Limitations

There were several limitations that arose as part of conducting my action research. Please find a summary below:

The concepts and practices of professional development and graduate employment preparation are flawed. The action research I conducted does not address issues faced such as discriminatory practices, systematic bias, or the deficit pattern of thinking. If this study was conducted on another campus, as it stands, it may be easy to draw connections and find similarities. However, to apply a critical lens, expose barriers, or draw out areas of development at UC San Diego may yield different findings and results across other higher education institutions. In future research studies, it would be pertinent to incorporate critically informed and conscious approaches to this work, such as Dr. Yosso's community cultural wealth and Zaretta Hammond's model on culturally responsive practices. This, in turn, would establish open and honest channels of communication, and prioritize service to meet the particular challenges of the populations the team represents along with building up capacity and understanding in community with those not represented.

Zoom Fatigue

Due to the ongoing consequences and concerns posed by the coronavirus health pandemic, the project was conducted solely in a virtual environment at a time with extremely limited in-person interaction. Participants may not have been entirely comfortable, confident, or authentic due to the focus of the research, their responses being recorded, and using a virtual format. If this study would have taken place in person under less restrictive conditions and constraints the formatting could have allowed for more creative and varied opportunities for activity and engagement

Power Dynamic

As a current and former supervisor to the student research participants, the power dynamic between us may have influenced their contributions posing as a third limitation. The data collected may not have included the insight, input, or interpretations of students who had negative or neutral experiences. Those who may have not had a positive experience on the team or with me specifically may have chosen not to participate altogether or to censor themselves in their responses.

Missing Perspectives

Any viewpoints of newly hired students or professional staff and former professional staff are missing from the study. Perspectives from new additions to the team could offer fresh, outside-the-box thinking and insight. Perspectives from former professional staff could have brought institutional and historical knowledge coupled with a thoughtful point of view given the benefit of hindsight. Both outlooks could offer the potential for a more full and holistic understanding of the needs and demands of the team and office moving forward.

Incomplete Efforts

This project was completed with the impression that the work of my action research would start as part of my graduate program and be worked through as an employee and team member. Due to the ongoing and ever-present needs and demands of the Residence Life Office, all the work begun remained in the ideation space. In the six months since I started collecting data, our team's attention was focused on tending to our responsibilities and the service needs of our student residents. Once the final cycle was completed, the work was no longer on my or anyone else's radar. The project and presentation portion of the action research ended in May 2021. In September, I stepped down from my role as part of the Sixth Residence Life team. In

attempting to complete this paper and thinking about the research overall, the word unfinished has continued to plague me. The work of this study is incomplete and was constrained by divided attention and efforts.

There is an inevitable possibility that my personal bias would show up in my action research study. I hold the belief that the current discourse around addressing the perceived skills gap among college graduates in their employment search endeavors is misguided and off-target. This bias is another limitation as it may have impacted how I formulated the project, data collection, and/or coding efforts.

Major Findings

My intention in conducting this action research project was to pursue ways of enhancing and expanding the capacity of Sixth College Residence Life in how the office functions and operates on behalf of student staff, the intern program, and its development moving forward. The labor market even before the current health pandemic was uncertain, complex, volatile, and ambiguous due to the ever-changing environment of supply and demand, hot and cold industries, technological dominance, and so forth. To say that attempting to take on the current circumstances and challenges as soon-to-be graduates/employees involve these concerns on an even more acute level. Nonetheless, my efforts centered on learning more about the interns' experiences and how the preparation efforts of the office could serve them as part of their transition as emerging professionals. In carrying forward the endeavors of conducting my action research study, the findings that emerged connected with the recommendations offered for Sixth College Residence Life to deliberate and expand upon, progressing on the work launched for the benefit of front desk intern teams to come.

Cycle 1 Findings

In the first cycle, qualitative data were sought by having participants complete an online survey (Appendix D). I created an online survey accessible through both the Qualtrics software program and Google Forms, consisting of four sections, where participants: (i.) choose a pseudonym, (ii.) provide profile information (length of their term as an Intern), (iii.) indicate their class standing while employed, and (iv.) and respond to five open-ended questions asking:

- how the intern experience contributed to their professional development journey
- a high point experienced building their professional capacity
- any support received for their individual learning needs in pursuit of their professional endeavors
- what they value about themselves and/or have come to value in pursuit of career goal attainment
- what made the greatest impression/impact on their professional development journey

This phase was structured to offer a foundational and fundamental lens to assess the intern role and the office's contributions to it.

From coding the surveys completed during this cycle, the following themes emerged: support, skill-building, impact on sense of self/identity development and formation, and direct preparation:

- 67% of respondents mentioned camaraderie, collaboration, and sharing struggles between their colleagues; interaction and interfacing with the Professional Staff team; and the work environment being a source of motivation, energizing their drive in their professional development journey

- 67% of respondents gave examples of how their time as Interns allowed them to gain practical experience and skills such as: managing their time, professional etiquette, and organization
- 50% of respondents articulated their time was a training ground and bridge connecting to their professional aspirations and future career inside and outside of Residence Life or Student Affairs
- 25% of respondents shared how they grew both personally and professionally

On the topic of support, a survey respondent shared,

Being a Sixth [College] Res[idence] Life intern was actually my very first job and I felt that it was a very welcoming environment filled with many different personalities. Every person that I met was eager to provide the mentorship that has help[ed] me develop my own professional work ethic. Additionally, because I was able to interact with not only staff, but also students and their parents I was always happy to provide service to those people no matter how small [the situation]... For myself, I value my own determination to work hard and to be the best at what I set out to do. This was a skill that I developed during my time as an intern through trying to find ways to streamline tasks and stay organized to enhance office productivity. This eventually helped me with my current job in a medical office where I am able to multitask with patients and other clerical duties. It was my first exposure to a work/office environment. I learned multiple technical skills that will become invaluable in my future career endeavors.

This response demonstrates how critical the time spent as part of our office is. In many ways, being an intern may be an entry point, gateway, an introduction, setting a standard, and

expectations as they progress. Cultivating a welcoming and supportive work environment takes purposeful involvement, shared and professional investment. However, this also presents a growth opportunity in how the office can strive to bridge between where they are, to where they are headed. Interns are hired from different colleges across the University, have various academic backgrounds and interests, and are studying to excel in various areas of focus and professions. This phase emphasized what impact close attention to each intern's specific professional journey may have.

On the topic of sense of self/identity development and formation, a survey respondent shared,

[In Sixth College Residence Life] there was a supportive team that had [sic] helped [me] and continue to help me recognize my strengths and worth...I have valued the process of building my "brand" and discovering [myself]. I unknowingly began to figure out who I am professionally. I would not become fully aware of this until after graduating.

As supervisors and leaders, we are seed planters with a critical responsibility to ensure workspaces are fertile ground where growth and progression internally and externally can happen freely. Workers must be given room to flourish and as expressed above, this process is ongoing even after graduation and may bring student employees back to sustain association and receive guidance. Person-to-person connections, not systems preserve relationships. A newly modeled effective and efficient system could boost the enhancement and expansion efforts that have been brought forth. Hands, hearts, and hands are needed to maintain and sustain those efforts.

On the topic of sense of skill-building, a survey respondent shared,

Taught me about professional etiquette via the phone, email, and in-person interactions, which you cannot obtain from a classroom environment. The cordiality and professionalism gained from working in such a job is valuable for more opportunities emphasizing customer interactions. Developing a voice for communicating with other[s] [sic] professionally, not just shyly or submissively, but with confidence became a very important skill.

This respondent's experience spotlighted the tangible and intangible components of their work experience. It would be important to be in partnership with Interns as they strive and grow, acknowledging their advancement, competence, and proficiency.

On the topic of sense of direct preparation, a survey respondent shared,

In addition to being an RA (Resident Assistant), being an intern gave me insight into the inner workings of residence life and influenced me to want to pursue a career in student affairs...In general, working at a front desk helped build my customer service skills-patience, listening, explaining things in ways that others will understand...I valued being able to see the professional staff member in Sixth res[idence] life do their work, and imagine myself doing something similar as a student affairs professional. My time as an intern gave me insight into the field of student affairs, which I ended up pursuing professionally.

The intern program for several students has been a way to view examples of a career in Residence Life, in Student Affairs.

The student staff participants spoke on the positive contributions of having a supportive work environment from peer mentorship between fellow team members, mentorship through

interactions, the work culture, and the office's disposition, to the basic level of monetary compensation. Through this research cycle, I was made aware of many successes in how the office promotes the transition from college employee to professional. However, having a more firm and comprehensive grasp on a student intern's experience revealed an area of improvement: intentional and "formalized" one-on-ones between student staff and professional staff.

Cycle 2 Findings

From coding the virtual focus group and interview student data, the following themes emerged: 53% of focus group/interview student participants mentioned connection in community/community as resources; 67% of focus group/interview student participants mentioned support of their professional identity and capacity; 40% of focus group/interview student participants mentioned changes to how Interns are prepared, how duties are executed, and the expectations of the intern program.

On the topic of connection in community/community as resources one focus group/interview student participant shared:

"For me seeing examples or hearing from individuals who have gone through this before and just hearing what they did and what skills they used in the future is helpful. So something like an alumni network would be really great to start building...if I don't know if like a past intern was interested in something that I was interested in I could see how they or just you know talk to them and see what connections they had. So I think that would be helpful in feeling more prepared to transition just by seeing examples and having that network of alumni. if we are seeing alumni who are you know who are successful and have told these stories and we have this network to come into once we're

done its kind of like if it's a preset and part of the culture of the res office and the intern role as a whole if it is developed and weaved through and just consistently a part of what we do.

During spring quarter 2021, this idea was brought into reality. An alumni student who worked as an intern for four years and as a Resident Assistant for two years made a guest appearance in our regularly scheduled intern staff meeting. Having an intern alum visit worked to give common ground of their shared experiences, offer an opportunity to ask questions, and name concerns.

The guest visit was well received. one intern who actually couldn't make the staff meeting sent in their questions. We did not complete an evaluation to encourage further feedback.

Nonetheless, this theme reinforced there being interest in establishing a network for current and former front desk interns to band together. Building alliances and connections could open more doors.

On the topic of support of professional identity and capacity, one focus group/interview student participant shared:

Coming into this intern position was something that gave me a lot of hope going into other jobs in the field and in the workforce in general. ...had a lot of lot [sic] less confidence going into the workforce but with that position it really did help me develop as kind of a worker that would be confident and maybe in their ability to provide whatever services they needed to for that position.

My heart was filled hearing this student, another intern who began their time at Sixth Residence Life early on during their time at UC San Diego. If every student I am responsible for and must be accountable to for their growth felt this way, I would believe I was successful as their trainer

and supervisor, but I have no formula, no system. Even more, every student and their experience as part of the intern team will not be the same. Partnering and collaborating on an individual basis is critical in defining what support looks like, how they are looking to develop professional identity, and what is crucial to them in building up their capacity.

On the topic of changes to preparation and execution of intern duties and expectations, one focus group student participant shared:

Conflict resolution training would be crucial and more in particularly oriented in interpersonal workplace skills as well as de-escalation especially given the fact that most of the time in our positions the only people we could really call on in emergencies were campus P[olice] D[eartment] people beyond our scope. I think that de-escalation training especially during today's climate would be crucial to help the support system of students make them feel comfortable interfacing with us if they have a problem.

The new model under consideration is one of extension, rendering more in-depth guidance, a more layered approach. De-escalation and conflict resolution were specified more than once by multiple participants as means to reset and re-establish the intern roles and expectations therein. As of September 2021, the intern program equipped students to handle clerical functions as a first point of contact, organization, and operational support. Such training may entail a fuller growth experience.

After reviewing and coding the student data collected and in preparation for the third cycle, I put together a Google sheet for coding efforts to a certain extent, but more so as an organizational tool that I will describe in further detail in the next section.

Cycle 3 Findings

From coding the professional staff interview data of this cycle, the following themes emerged: perception/expectations of the intern team/program; opportunities for development; internal analysis/diagnosis; external support systems to consider.

Seventy-five percent of professional staff participants articulated having a developmental mindset when considering the intern program. The common thread was the aspiration of reconceptualizing what transpires at the front desk.

On the topic of the perception and expectations of the intern team and program, one professional staff participant shared:

I feel like less of [sic] what comes to mind is thinking of them as they're just called in that they're just holding the fort down at the front desk...Like I wanted I don't want to think of them like that.... What we're really getting at shifting the culture...I think we need to have an honest conversation about our organization like and not just organization as a unit like how are we operating and how efficient it is or not kind of thing...So I would say integrating and like they see that feedback for me would be sharing it with people that can make decisions to start show by shifting the culture intentionally to like where are we.

During one of the interviews, one of my colleagues said something I found truly profound, asking the question: "What are we doing if we are not developing?" The question was posed just after they said that every student, every student employee deserves to have professional development, that we owe that to them. This adjustment in mindset and behavior would call for re-establishing the Intern program under a new value set and assessment standards with synergy between student professional staff.

One-hundred percent of professional staff participants demonstrated reflection, introspection, and a desire to put efforts toward an audit of office practices and culture. On the topic of internal analysis/diagnosis, one professional staff participant shared:

Do like a mission and values assessment over what do we want to value? What is our exact mission and what structure are we setting in place that's inclusive and not built in a white supremacist idea? But how do we then create a structure for the pro[fe]ssional staff to operate, the R[esident] A[dvisor]s to operate, the Co[m]munity Board, the front desk interns so that we're providing essential services but also in a way that is conducive to these kinds of environments where people can develop and grow?

Before this interview, I do not remember a time when our team ever completed self-analysis and evaluation of the mission and values we purport versus those that we enact. Our staff development days have been for building outward, deliberating on how our strengths worked together, learning how we each liked to be shown appreciation and projecting for the weeks, months, and school year to come. The team would have to give room and time to be vulnerable, name personal and professional convictions, and begin the labor of looking and building from within.

All professional staff participants had a constructive point of view of the intern program, putting the team to task in terms of how Interns are supported and how to implement different approaches to their training.

On the topic of opportunities to develop, one professional staff participant shared:

I think more of someone like you advocating for them...A more thing is more practice, experiential learning, doing things...moving more around the experience and teaching

people opportunities and giving them a level of autonomy to practice and fail and trial and error.

With these words, I remember feeling both called in and called out. The work of this action research project was new territory for everyone involved as far as evaluating and reimagining the intern program. I felt out of my depth as a cosupervisor and trainer, initially. What time is available to organize more practice? What would implementing experiential learning tools look like? Where could the intern program give autonomy to try, fail, and fail better in addition to what is already ingrained? In my reflections, I came to fully acknowledge that supervision and training development must be viewed as critical components of the administrative team. Development opportunities on behalf of the intern team should run parallel with that of their supervisors/trainers as even the most equipped person must continue sharpening their skills and tool kit. As a professional team, we are role models and examples for the student staff. We must demonstrate and uphold our espoused values, competencies, and the ability to fall short and press on.

All of the professional staff participants spoke on further collaboration within and outside of the office between the intern team, and internal professional staff of Sixth College or resource centers across campus as a means to edify the intern team. On the topic of external support systems to give thought to, one professional staff participant shared:

We could have some type of forum like with the Google Doc but then also like a YouTube forum, UCSD Res Life forum recording around our area and then also maybe interview some of our interns: Hey, what's it like being an intern? What are some of the advantages, disadvantages? What are you learning? Maybe we could have some type of

Res[idence] Life Forum to where everyone has access to it...We can share like when we had our meetings of all the Res Life offices coming together. Create a couple documents on Google to where our ideas are jotted down...When they come up with a new idea put it here and then we can talk about it when we meet once a month or once a quarter. A Res[idence] Life Forum I think would be nice to start.

One fact that for the most part was excluded from the data collected was Residence Life, as a unit on-campus, has been short-staffed for some time. The needs, demands, and challenges that our students/student residents face are intensifying in severity, quantity, impact, and consequence. We as a team student and professional staff alike feel the brunt of this. Sharing best practices, pointing out points of pride and pain would add to the arsenal of each office during a time of having a resource desert.

Cycle 4 Findings

In the fourth cycle, qualitative data were collected through discussion between participants. At the start of the virtual focus group, I shared the feedback received from student participants collected anonymously into a Google Sheet titled, "Feedback and Plans." Based on the input provided, four categories were created as an organizational tool, "(1) In Progress," (2) "Immediate," (3) "Upcoming + Mid-Range," and (4) "Long-Range/On-Going." The "in progress" category signified opportunities that had already begun to be incorporated into the intern program such as: the LinkedIn Alumni Networking Group as suggested during the first cycle. The "immediate" category signified opportunities that were considered "low hanging fruit" where taking on such a task or idea would not add more weight to the team's load but jumpstart support and cooperation beyond the research study. The "upcoming" + mid-range

category signified opportunities that call for more effort, brainstorming, and development. The tools or resources in this category would need to be configured or initiated outside of Sixth College Residence Life. For instance, giving space for interns to learn about professional staff beyond Sixth College Residence Life and their professional development/career stories or designing a lunch and learn workshop series. The final category, “long-range/on-going” signified opportunities that would result in more than the production of tools and resources, but also restructuring the operational and functional structures of Sixth College Residence Life. To this end, the work of this action research would not be a standalone experience, but for prospective programmatic reformation and sustained exertion. For example, changing the job classification/salary of an intern based on a student’s level of experience as an employee or constructing learning modules and tracks for individualized professional development plans.

I intended to have an open and informal dialogue between professional staff participants. I chose not to compose questions or impose a framework on the virtual focus group session. This was done to encourage and promote personal and professional investment. I sought to bolster the internal energy that each individual brought to the session that drew them to a specific endeavor or enterprise. Each professional staff participant, in the end, did volunteer to take the lead of at least one venture including the campus-wide community forum, the student collaborative, and professional staff shadowing. However, this cycle had the least time allotted than all of the other cycles. The conversation that took place was positive, but not substantial and intended to be an initial step of a multi-step process. As an observing participant, interest and inclination were present as I believe each individual indicated and spoke to how and what they would do to further these endeavors. However, urgency was not tapped into, and understandably so. What

was proposed during cycle four in terms of continuing the discussion had not come to fruition as of September 2021. In the weeks and months following the close of the virtual focus group from the fourth cycle, our team was responsible for:

- Engagement and leading roles in the campus-wide prospective student welcome event, “Triton Day”
- Serving as committee members in the search for two additional professional team members to our team
- Hiring and onboarding the two additional professional team members
- Closing duties for the 2020-2021 academic year and transitioning to summer 2021 duties
- Hiring and onboarding summer student staff
- “Reopening” our residential area for summer 2021 housing

In closing the fourth cycle I completed the action research project as a graduate student, but hoped to continue the work as a team member and UC San Diego employee. Yet, at the conclusion of September 2021, I had transferred to a different department on-campus and would no longer be part of the efforts in place.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from cocreated and coconstructed efforts and should be considered by the Sixth College Residence Life team to aid in supporting and enriching efforts of the intern program moving forward.

Move Beyond Skills Gap

Student employees are hired to be part of the Sixth College Residence Life team from a wide range of academic disciplines. The majority of interns are not aiming for a career in Student

Affairs; therefore, in constructing the intern program moving forward it will continue to be imperative to engage in preparatory efforts that are applicable inside and outside of that field. Cultural capital has proven to influence employment opportunities and is part of the interplay between education, employment, and hiring practices (Hora, 2019). Understanding and joining in organizational culture are key components to embodying their mission and values. Promoting networking, gaining exposure, familiarity and affiliation are central to a student's advancement and qualification. As a training ground, Sixth College Residence Life must be cognizant of how a student may or may not make meaning of their time in the intern role, using the learning and development that takes place as a lens through which they will view future professional experiences.

Interconnection Between Student Staff and Student Leaders

Sixth College is made up of several opportunities for students to engage in professional and personal development. Those student teams that predominantly intersect with the front desk intern team are:

- Resident Advisors/Housing Assistants
- Community Board
- Student Council
- Student Ambassadors
- Orientation Leaders

A participant offered the creation of a “collaborative” to promote development and camaraderie on both a professional and social level. There are currently no efforts in place to build bridges between these teams. Re-evaluation and renewal were courses of action that came forward

during the course of the action research project that connects with student feedback around: direct preparation and skill-building (e.g., programming, public speaking, event planning); sense of self/identity development and formation (exploration, discovery, and self-determination); support (networking, and teamwork); This joint task force can be formed on a yearly or quarterly basis as determined by leadership, either led by the administrative and/or nonadministrative professional team members. Collaboration meetings would run as determined by students and professional staff to discuss interests, survey community needs and concerns, share tasks, agree on action steps, and socialize,

An intervention was initiated after the close of Cycle 1, to create a LinkedIn Alumni Intern Networking Group. Group moderation and content creation responsibilities can be rotated between active/current students with the potential of an alumni representative as well. At the time of this submission, the intervention was focused mostly on current students even though alumni are also represented in group membership. It is my recommendation to expand it to each and every student staff team and leadership group to join as well. Both the collaborative and networking group could be spaces where resources are shared, guides are studied,

Before I transitioned out of the Housing Administrative Assistant role, a recommendation was piloted as an intervention (LinkedIn Intern Alumni Networking group) during Summer 2021. I would not say traction or momentum has taken hold in the current model set forth but would support another or a modified approach.

Integration of Learning Outcomes/Competencies

A formal ongoing evaluative and professionally developmental process for front desk Interns was not present at the start of my term as part of the Sixth College Residence Life Team.

Taking on this action research project spotlighted an earnest interest from both interns and professional staff members to establish more opportunities for structured advancement and formalized training. Creating a standardized “curriculum” or learning plan as student staff advance and engage in the front desk intern role would allow for supervisors and trainers to be more intentional and purposeful in their approach to supporting and elevating each team member’s unique needs and experiences. The office would need to first prioritize forming inward-facing initiatives to specify expectations of the student staff, proposed outcomes of what they will gain during their time, and expectations of the professional staff in terms of how they will contribute to the success of the team and each member. The need for this was exposed during Cycle 1 when there were differing student responses on the notion of direct preparation, from viewing the position as a training ground for a student affairs career to viewing the position as only a means of compensation. For the first student, a robust model for professional development may be ideal whereas for the second student it may not be seen as useful or relevant. Having a baseline competency track applicable for each staff member despite their major, class standing, or career aspirations would ensure the collective consensus and understanding of what the intern program entails. However, for incoming versus returning student staff members to the role, there should be a differentiation between how they progress through building their competencies due to their level of exposure, familiarity, and proficiency in the position; therefore, the curriculum or “learning plan” should be modified accordingly.

A lesson the coronavirus has taught is the importance of multimodal frameworks for instruction and learning. In a conversation with one of my critical friends the importance of having synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for training and development was homed in

on. A participant expressed this concern by way of accessibility. Continuing the thread of establishing learning outcomes/competency levels, by putting together educational tools that students can pick and choose to plug into neither rushes someone nor leaves anyone behind. The two scenarios for students in the previous paragraph have the option of furthering and deepening their grasp of different concepts or sharpening and maintaining their entry-level skills. The intern program should allow for flexibility and be adaptive to student interest or lack thereof. Having an intern program that is purposefully not one-size-fits is well suited for student employees transitioning to the real-world workforce where professional development is a self-generative venture.

Inter-Campus Collaboration

The vast majority of processes and procedures conducted across UC San Diego, to my determination, are decentralized. Sixth College Residence Life, innately, is connected to offices, functions, and units from each corner of campus including but not limited to: Custodial; Facilities; Maintenance; Student Conduct; Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS); Recreation; Housing*Dining*Hospitality; and the list continues. In recent years the nonadministrative Residence Life professional teams have elected to work more closely together, centralizing training, duty rotations, and applicant proceedings on behalf of the Resident Advisor student staff. Could there also be an opportunity to join forces on the administrative side? From an anonymous feedback form distributed to the 2020-2021 intern team, 67% of student interns when asked what external professional development support could look like specified “networking/collaboration “with campus partners outside of Sixth College.” Inter-campus collaboration between Residence Life Offices could be joint training, orientation, resource

sharing, and administration. Residence Life Offices on-campus are continuing to handle staff shifts and turnover. Establishing an active network of engagement, asset cultivation, and allied efforts. A coalition of interested partners to add to one another's arsenal working against depletion and insufficiencies.

Another opportunity for inter-campus collaboration is with the UC San Diego Career Center which offers a variety of services including advising, webinars/workshops, a resource directory for planning, exploration, and preparation in seeking prospective work opportunities and experience. One service the Career Center provides that would be invaluable to incorporate into how Sixth College Residence Life delivers professional development is the year-by-year roadmap. For each year a student is in college corresponding guidance is presented. Students are encouraged to take action and deliberate from connecting their coursework to their professional aspirations, networking, gaining insight and inspiration. If Sixth College Residence Life creates a "curriculum"/learning plan along with competency goals from beginner to advanced level, the team could work in parallel with Career Center offerings. Having a relationship would ensure the learning standards and objectives set in place are maintained and upheld.

Analysis and Discourse in Pursuit of Further Progress

To enhance and expand is an ongoing and continuous endeavor. Student and professional staff participants alike expressed the desire for establishing a system that would support enlisting feedback and having a dialogue on an ongoing basis. The team can choose to set up whether to conduct assessments on a quarterly or yearly basis. Senior or returning student staff could take up leadership roles in formulating surveys and collecting data to offer input and insight to be shared in an open forum and anonymous capacity. Bringing reflection and introspection not just

into the foreground but making them part of the professional development exercises and evaluative structures ensures practices and methods in place stay relevant and effective.

The recommendations given are not without areas of improvement, without need for further contemplation and deliberation. The work of this action research project was not comprehensive, but there are good bones and a good foundation to stand and draw upon. It is my wholehearted belief and hope that Sixth College Residence Life will take the steps necessary, having the resolve, energy, and capacity to not only listen to the voices of participants and validate their perspectives, but also to act and respond accordingly.

Personal and Professional Learning

Conducting this action research study has been an invigorating and affirming experience. Engaging in dialogue and employment centered on support and service afforded me the opportunity to assess my practice as a higher education and student support services professional. UC San Diego, Sixth College Residence Life is equipped to expand and enhance the pursuit of intentionally aiding emerging professionals in their postgraduation preparations and journey. A major takeaway from student participant discussions and feedback was how their role as an intern impacted their sense of self, specifically their professional identity development and formation. This can be further accomplished and advanced through integrating the promotion of specific learning outcomes into the student staffing program while also being transparent and critical of the connection between higher education attainment, skill acquisition, credentials, and graduate employment. Such an undertaking goes beyond training and workshops, but implementing, championing, and investing in nondiscriminatory practices, critical consciousness, cultural responsiveness, and accountability.

I endeavor to pursue educational equity research and analysis as a vocation and this study has allowed me to reflect on my positionality and how I show up as an advocate. Professional development and employability carry with them stereotypes, structural bias, and favoritism that having a positive work ethic, professional etiquette, and proficiency in any given number of competencies are not weaponized against. In the work of progress, some may focus on improving and building on the present moment, some may focus on pushing past it and moving forward, while others may do the work of both endeavors simultaneously. In other words, some may concentrate on the progress made, attempting to work within current systems in place, some may emphasize how much further to go with urgency and the need to dismantle the current system, while others attempt to do the work of both together. I have come to realize my inclination is to work within the current system, how ironic? As a supervisor, trainer, and Principal Investigator, I have not addressed the realities of the systems of prejudice that play a part in professional development and employability but have taken on this realization in stride. A critical friend gifted a mantra to me that I have come to rely on, “strive for excellence, not perfection.” Striving for excellence is continuous, ongoing while perfection has an endpoint with no further growth, development, or improvement expected. This is just one instance of learning leadership demonstrating where I have opportunities to cultivate and sharpen my capacity.

In my current position, I have joined in partnership with my counterparts in Sixth College Residence Life to create initiatives and put plans together for applying the learning gained from this action research project. I will assemble coalitions to sustain what we have produced thus far and lead the charge in maintaining our momentum to bring our ideas to fruition. Beyond my role, I am dedicated to continuing to enrich my awareness and deepening my knowledge and

understanding to set up students for success not just in the immediate sense but preparing them for navigating the trials of the labor market as emerging professionals.

I deeply appreciate every research participant, critical friend, faculty member, and mentor who contributed to supporting the efforts of my action research project. My time in the Master's in Higher Education Leadership program has shown me the importance of improving my own professional and personal practice so I may more critically and fully be of service and support.

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**APPENDIX A:
Solicitation Email**

REQUEST: Enhance the Intern experience in Sixth Res Life at UCSD

Dear Staff Team Member,

My name is Juleane Johnson. I am seeking participants who are interested in sharing experiences, opinions, input, and insight as part of the UC San Diego, Sixth College Residence Life Office team. I work as the Housing Life and Media Coordinator in the Sixth College Residence Life Office at UC San Diego, but am also a full-time graduate student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. A part of my completing my graduate degree is considering an area where I have leadership responsibilities that can be improved, striving towards building capacity and service knowledge in that area, collaborating in service leadership, and working towards enacting change.

For my research study, I will focus on the transition of Intern team members from Sixth College Residence Life to their professional endeavors. I am interested in learning more about the experience of Interns and what understanding, confidence, and preparation in one's professional development may look like. It is my hope to dialogue with current and former Interns, as well as current professional staff team members, brainstorming on how to enhance the professional development capacity of Sixth College Residence Life as a training ground for emerging professionals.

Participating current and former student staff members are asked to complete an online survey and take part in a virtual focus group. Participating professional staff members are asked to take part in a separate virtual focus group. The virtual focus groups will be audio and video recorded. Participation in this study involves (approximately) one hour and thirty minutes.

If you are interested and would like to commit to participating, please respond to Juleane Johnson at juleanejohnson@sandiego.edu. Your feedback, ideas, input, and insight about how we can further build on the professional development capacity of Sixth College Residence Life to the benefit of Intern team members are fervently requested. You will be helping us better prepare for how we will be part of the transition of college student employees in the Intern position to being professionals and life after UC San Diego.

Please note that not participating will not affect your job security or receiving potential recommendations for professional opportunities in your future endeavors. Also note, your participation will be confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns before agreeing to participate, please feel free to reach out.

In community,

Juleane Johnson

juleanejohnson@sandiego.edu

Housing Life and Media Coordinator

Sixth College Residence Life Office

Graduate Student, Higher Education Leadership Studies

University of California, San Diego

Sixth College Residence Life Office (NTPLLN)

9500 Gilman Drive Mail Code 0094

La Jolla, CA 92093-0094

**APPENDIX B:
Consent Form**

**University of San Diego
Institutional Review Board
Research Participant Adult Consent Form**

For the research study entitled:

Promoting Professional Development in College Student Employees through Appreciative Inquiry: Aiding the Transition of College Student Employees as Emerging Professionals

I. Purpose of the research study

Juleane Johnson is a student in the College of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is: using appreciative inquiry to identify how to better promote and support the Sixth College Residence Life Office's professional development practices and capacity in aiding the transition of Intern members from college student employees to emerging professionals.

II. What you will be asked to do

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:

1. As a Student/Alumni participant, complete an initial online survey of 7 questions, including multiple-choice, open-ended, and short answer questions about your experience as an Intern of the Sixth College Residence Life Office at the University of California, San Diego (UC San Diego) and your preparation, understanding, and development as an emerging professional transitioning from college student employment to life beyond UC San Diego.
2. As a Student/Alumni participant, take part in a 60-minute virtual focus group meeting in the Winter'21 quarter consisting of 5 open-ended questions about your experience with the Sixth College Residence Life while serving in the Intern position and suggestions for further improvement in professional development practices and capacity, as well as ideas for new ways to support Interns preparing to transition from college student employees to emerging professionals. This focus group aims to brainstorm and dialogue on "what could be" in terms of the professional development practices and capacity of the Sixth College Residence Life Office on behalf of the Intern team.
3. As a Professional Staff participant, take part in a 90-minute virtual focus group meeting in the Spring'21 quarter consisting of 9 open-ended questions about how to translate the feedback provided by student participants into action, address challenges raised and areas of improvement in student professional development initiatives on behalf

of the Intern team. This focus group aims to brainstorm and dialogue on “what will be done” in terms of cultivating on-going initiatives and efforts to build on the professional development practices and capacity of the Sixth College Residence Life Office on behalf of the Intern team.

4. You will be audio and/or video recorded during this study.

Your participation in this study will take a total of between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes.

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts

This study involves no more risk than the risks you encounter in daily life.

However, sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day: San Diego Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339.

IV. Benefits

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers to better understand how the Sixth College Residence Life Office at UC San Diego can better approach and consider how to promote and support the professional development of student employees transitioning to professionals from the Intern position. Participants will be making an impact in support of on-going and future efforts to improve, build and strengthen professional development practices and capacity.

V. Confidentiality

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher’s office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public, and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

The information or materials you provide will be cleansed of all identifiers (like your name) and may be used in future research.

VI. Compensation

You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you’re entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades. You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

VIII. Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Juleane Johnson**USD Email:**

juleanejohnson@sandiego.edu

2) Dr. David Karp**USD Email:**

dkarp@sandiego.edu

**APPENDIX C:
Video Recording: Additional Consent**

A video recording will be made of you during your participation in the study. We may wish to present some of the video recordings from this study at professional meetings or as demonstrations in classrooms. Your face and voice will be used and you potentially could be recognizable by a viewer of the video recording.

In addition to consenting to participate in the research study, you may choose to verbally consent to either of the statements below.

1) I hereby give permission for the video recording made for this research study to be also used for **professional meetings**, such as being shown to professors and researchers at a scientific conference.

2) I hereby give permission for the video recording made for this research study to be also used for **educational purposes**, such as being shown to students in a classroom or available for viewing by students via a password-protected file which cannot be copied or downloaded.

**APPENDIX D:
Front Desk Intern Staff (Current and Former/Alumni) Online Survey**

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my research study: Promoting Professional Development in College Student Employees through Appreciative Inquiry. Thank you for offering your time and completing this survey as the first task for the research study.

I ask that you be as honest as you are comfortable being so that the best possible data can be collected to expand and enhance the professional development practices and initiatives of the Sixth College Residence Life Office on behalf of Front Desk Interns.

As stated in your consent form, any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Below, please provide your initials for this survey.

Please indicate the length of your term in the Sixth College Residence Life Office as a Front Desk Intern.

Please indicate your class standing during your time as an Intern. Choose all that apply.

- First-year
- Second-year
- Third-year
- Fourth-year
- Fifth-year or beyond

What about your time in the Intern position contributed to your energy or drive in your professional development journey?

Can you describe a high point you experienced in the Intern position as part of building your professional capacity?

Please share how your individual learning needs were supported in pursuit of your professional endeavors.

What have you valued most about yourself as a professional? What have you valued most about your professional development journey transitioning from being part of the Sixth College Residence Life team to focusing on career goal attainment?

What was the greatest impression/impact that your time as an Intern had on your professional development journey?

Please offer any further input or comments regarding your experience below.

APPENDIX E:

Front Desk Intern Staff (Current and Former/Alumni) Protocol and Questions for Virtual Focus Group/Interviews

Introduction

Thank you for offering your time as part of my research study: Promoting Professional Development in College Student Employees through Appreciative Inquiry. Thank you for filling out the survey which will offer much insight and inform this study moving forward.

The second task for this study is for student employees (current and former) to take part in this focus group/this interview. The purpose of today is to envision “what could be” in how the Front Desk Intern position and the Sixth College Residence Life Office at UC San Diego could aid in the transition of Intern student staff members in becoming emerging professionals.

If at any point you wish to no longer participate, please feel free to remove yourself from the focus group/interview session. Partaking in this focus group/interview session or choosing to no longer act as a participant will not impact your employment, as a current employee, or future opportunities to receive professional recommendations in any way as a current or former employee.

Informed Consent for Focus Group

Please let me know if you would like to review your consent form prior to getting started. Please remember, this session will be recorded, and insights shared will be reported anonymously using a pseudonym. I will need to ask each of you to please confirm your verbal agreement and consent as a student participant of this action research project, “Promoting Professional Development in College Student Employees through Appreciative Inquiry.” I will state your pseudonym name, please respond stating your pseudonym name and whether you agree and consent to participate in this study and to address fellow participants by pseudonym. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Focus Group Protocol/Ground Rules

If you are to address each other, please use the name/number and gender pronouns provided to ensure the conversation remains anonymous.

- i. What is shared stays here. We must ensure that everyone feels they are free to share.
- ii. We would like all participants to take part. I may call you in if I have not heard from you in some time. You can pass on any questions and not respond if you are not comfortable doing so.
- iii. No answer or response is right or wrong. Everyone’s experience, opinions, input, and insight are important to this research project.
- iv. This focus group/interview will be audio/video recorded so that all that is shared is captured. I do not identify anyone by name in my research project. Each participant will address one another by a pseudonym to remain anonymous.

I will now be asking you questions about your development and experience with the UC San Diego, Sixth College Residence Life Office and requesting your insight and input in what more we can do to aid in the transition of college student employees to emerging professionals as part of the Intern team experience.

Questions

- (1) How could the Sixth College Residence Life Office help Interns feel more prepared in their transition from college toward employment?
- (2) In what ways could the Sixth College Residence Life Office and Intern role aid in expanding and enhancing professional capacity?
- (3) In what ways could fellow Interns support one another's professional development?
- (4) How could the Sixth College Residence Life Office build assurance and confidence in the professional development journey of Interns?
- (5) What could Sixth College Residence Life do to better demonstrate being committed to and the importance of the professional development of Interns?

Closing

In a short phrase or using just a few words, please share any feelings or thoughts you have from participating in this focus group. Is there any final feedback, insights, or thoughts you would like to share?

Thank you for your contributions to this focus group giving insight into the student/professional development experience of the Intern team as part of the Sixth College Residence Life Office at UC San Diego! Just as a reminder, this session has been recorded and will be transcribed and saved on my password-protected computer in my locked home office. If you have questions or concerns, please email me (juleanejohnson@sandiego.edu).

Introduction

Thank you for offering your time, participating in this focus group in order to deliberate on what concrete ways the professional development experience of Front Desk Interns as part of the Sixth College Residence Life Office team at UC San Diego can be enhanced. As you may know, I am a current graduate student in the Higher Education Leadership program at the University of San Diego. My thesis is an action research project where I am pursuing opportunities to learn how to expand and enhance the professional development experience within and capacity of the Sixth College Residence Life Office generated from both feedback and input from current and former student staff members.

Before this session, I have spoken with current and former student staff members of the Sixth College Residence Life Office about the actions they would take to enhance access to and value of the professional development capacity of Sixth College Residence Life on behalf of the Intern team. The purpose of today is to set into motion ways in which to enact potential operational changes, implementing plans to professional development practices and initiatives.

Informed Consent for Focus Group

Please let me know if you would like to review your consent form prior to getting started. Please remember, this session will be recorded, and insights shared will be reported anonymously using a pseudonym. All responses will be anonymous. If at any point you wish to no longer participate, please do not hesitate to say so and feel free to remove yourself from this focus group/interview session.

I will need to ask each of you to please confirm your verbal agreement and consent as a participant of this action research project, “Promoting Professional Development in College Student Employees through Appreciative Inquiry.” Please state your pseudonym name/number and confirm your agreement and consent to participate and to address fellow participants by pseudonym. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Focus Group Protocol/Ground Rules

If you are to address each other, please use the name/number and gender pronouns provided to ensure the conversation remains anonymous.

- i. What is shared stays here. We must ensure that everyone feels they are free to share.
- ii. We would like all participants to take part. I may call you in if I have not heard from you in some time. You can pass on any questions and not respond if you are not comfortable doing so.
- iii. No answer or response is right or wrong. Everyone’s experience, opinions, input, and insight are important to this research project.
- iv. This focus group/interview will be audio/video recorded so that all that is shared is captured. I do not identify anyone by name in my research project. You will remain anonymous.

I will now highlight the findings from the student survey and focus group conducted about their development and experience with the UC San Diego, Sixth College Residence Life Office and will ask questions about your impressions, insight, and ideas for moving forward and taking action.

Highlight the findings from the student survey and student focus group...

Questions

- (1) Please share your impression of the Front Desk Intern team as emerging professionals based on the feedback provided.
- (2) What would your first step be to translate the feedback provided into action?
- (3) In what ways do you believe the Sixth College Residence Life Office could connect on-campus employment with the professional development goals of Interns?
- (4) What action steps would you suggest enhancing access to and value of the professional development capacity of the Sixth College Residence Life Office on behalf of student staff members?
- (5) What resources would you suggest be put in place that could be of assistance?
- (6) What challenges do you sense may arise when attempting to implement the strategies shared today and how do you suggest those challenges be addressed?
- (7) What areas of focus would you suggest for the coming year to bring the student professional development initiatives/ideas into fruition?
- (8) What more would you propose either to build on what has been previously shared or to address potential gaps? What opportunities are available for collaboration?
- (9) How could the Sixth College Residence Life Office continue this dialogue, brainstorming and deliberating on student professional development initiatives while also enlisting and integrating student feedback and input?

Is there any final feedback, insights, or thoughts you would like to share?

Closing

Again, thank you for participating in this focus group session and offering your knowledge and insight to enhance the professional development experience of Interns as part of the Sixth College Residence Life Office at UC San Diego. This session has been recorded and will be transcribed and saved on my password-protected computer in my locked home office. If you have questions or concerns, please email me (juleanejohnson@sandiego.edu).