

# IOWA GROW™:

## Guided Reflection on Work



# Our Mission

*The Division of Student Life fosters student success by creating and promoting educationally purposeful services and activities within and beyond the classroom.*



# Defining Student Success (UI SST, 2007)

*University of Iowa students succeed when they achieve personal and institutional educational goals.*

*Successful students develop skills and knowledge, become more mature in their thinking, assume greater responsibility for their own lives and learning, develop understanding of diversity and multiculturalism, and become effective leaders.*





# Defining Student Success at Iowa

*Student success at . . . Iowa is **a shared enterprise**.*

*Students succeed by active engagement in educationally-purposeful activities.*

*Faculty, staff, and students create . . . learning opportunities [and] policies, programs, and practices that foster student engagement.*

# Where do Students...

- develop skills and knowledge?*
- become more mature in their thinking?*
- assume greater responsibility?*
- develop understanding of diversity?*
- become more effective leaders?*



# Classrooms, Student Activities, and...





# Why Should We Focus on the *Learning* in Employment?

- Kuh: *Students are most successful in "seamless environments"* where they can make connections between classroom and out of classroom experiences
- One of the unique contributions of our Division as the largest employer of students

EXCEL  
STRETCH  
ENGAGE  
CHOOSE  
SERVE

# What is High-Impact?

- High impact activities are those that allow students to apply learning to real-life, *to make connections*, reflect and integrate learning
- Examples:
  - Learning communities
  - Senior courses
  - Service learning





# High-Impact Activities: Student Employment

- Most students work at some point
- Employment can be related positively to engagement with the institution not a 'distraction' from academic pursuits
- Work *can* be high-impact with some additional structure from us (supervisors)

# Our Project

Can we make student employment in the Division of Student Services high-impact?



# IOWA GROW™: Guided Reflection on Work

- Pilot, Phase 1: Supervisors from Student Health Service/Health Iowa, University Housing, and the Iowa Memorial Union were recruited to participate in the IOWA GROW™.
- Pilot, Phase 2: Expanded to “harder to connect” jobs, a department outside the Division, and included small group discussions as an intervention option.
- All participating supervisors received one hour of training on:
  - Outcomes of student employment
  - Results from the previous year’s Division of Student Services Student Employment Survey
  - Background on the role supervisors can play in helping students make connections between work and academics
  - Expectations for IOWA GROW™



# IOWA GROW™: Guided Reflection on Work

- Supervisors were asked to have two structured conversations with each of their student employees during the spring semester.
- They were asked to record the student's answers to 5 questions.
- Supervisors submitted completed questionnaires to the IOWA GROW Project Team.

# IOWA GROW™: Guided Reflection on Work

- Did taking time to talk with students about their learning help them see what they were learning more clearly?
- How are our jobs in the Division contributing to the key aspects of student success we mentioned earlier?



# Job Types of Pilot Participants

## ■ Iowa Memorial Union

- Campus Information Center: Information Specialist; Special Project Assistant
- Guest and Event Services: Student Custodians
- University Bookstore: Student Clerical Worker
- IMU Business Office: Cashier Assistant

## ■ Student Health Service

- Health Iowa: Health Promotion Assistant

## ■ University Housing

- IT Support Staff
- Tutors
- Residence Hall Desk Staff

*Some jobs  
were  
directly  
linked to  
academics,  
while others  
were not.*



# Survey Logistics and Goals

- Duplicate surveys sent to IOWA GROW™ vs. non-IOWA GROW™
- 1:1 conversation themes coded
- Surveys came via link in email from VP Tom Rocklin
- Response rates:
  - Non-IOWA GROW™: 26% (2010); 34% (2011)
  - IOWA GROW™: 45% (2010); 49% (2011)
- Goal: To gather data regarding the impact of student employment in the Division in terms of:
  - Connections to academics and careers
  - Contribution to developing key skills for student success
  - Extent to which employers encourage students to make connections between work and life as a student

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 09-10

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
My supervisor helps me make connections between my work and my life as a student.*	77%	46%	4.1	3.3
My job has helped prepare me for the world of full-time employment.	54%	43%	3.6	3.1
My job has helped me improve my written communications.*	69%	17%	4	2.6

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 09-10

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
I can see connections between my job and my major/coursework.*	69%	29%	3.7	2.7
My job has helped me learn about career options.*	54%	30%	3.6	2.9

**77% of non-IOWA GROW™ participants said they “rarely” or “never” had conversations with their supervisors about connecting work to academics.**



# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 09-10

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
My job has helped me develop more effective time management skills.*	100%	77%	4.3	3.9
My job has helped me improve my oral communication skills.*	100%	68%	4.8	3.8
My job has helped me develop conflict resolution skills.	69%	59%	3.9	3.6

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 09-10

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
Because of my job, I am able to work effectively with individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.	83%	75%	4.3	4
My job has helped me use critical thinking skills to form opinions and solve problems.	77%	56%	4	3.4

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 10-11

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
My supervisor helps me make connections between my work and my life as a student.	60%	51%	3.8	3.4
My job has helped prepare me for the world of full-time employment.*	62%	51%	3.7	3.4
My job has helped me improve my written communications.	16%	21%	2.7	2.7

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 10-11

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
I can see connections between my job and my major/coursework.*	56%	36%	3.4	3.0
My job has helped me learn about career options.	30%	39%	3.2	3.2

67% of non-IOWA GROW™ participants said they “rarely” or “never” had conversations with their supervisors about connecting work to academics, compared to 38% of IOWA GROW™ participants.

# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 10-11

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
My job has helped me develop more effective time management skills.	76%	76%	4.0	4.0
My job has helped me improve my oral communication skills.	78%	72%	4.0	3.8
My job has helped me develop conflict resolution skills.*	74%	61%	3.8	3.6



# Student Employment Outcomes: IOWA GROW™ Participants 10-11

Outcome (* outcomes = significant difference for IOWA GROW vs. non-IOWA GROW; $p < .05$ )	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW	IOWA GROW	Non-IOWA GROW
Because of my job, I am able to work effectively with individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.	82%	77%	4.1	4.0
My job has helped me use critical thinking skills to form opinions and solve problems. *	70%	57%	3.8	3.5

# Positive Outcomes of Employment

*Please describe one specific way your work as a student employee has positively influenced your experience at the UI.*

## Themes (most to least frequently mentioned)

IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW Participants
Forming relationships	Forming relationships
Feeling satisfied with job contribution	Gaining time management skills
Gaining knowledge of self	Earning money
Gaining work-related knowledge and skills	Gaining work-related knowledge and skills

# Specific Skills that Contribute to Student Success

*Please describe one specific skill you have learned as a student employee that contributes to your success as UI student.*

Themes (most to least frequently mentioned)	
IOWA GROW Participants	Non-IOWA GROW Participants
Communication skills	Time management skills
Specific skills (e.g., software, cooking, etc.)	Communication skills
Time management skills	Relationship skills
General work skills	General work skills
Relationship skills	Specific skills (e.g., software, cooking, etc.)
	No skills contribute to student success
	Problem solving skills

# 1:1 Meetings

## Supervisors and Supervisees

*“What are you learning here at work that is helping you in school?”*

Themes (most to least frequently mentioned)
Relationship skills
Responsibility and time management
Understanding others' learning styles/needs
Problem solving skills
Communication skills

# Structured Discussions: Supervisors and Supervisees

*“What are you learning in class that you can apply here at work?”*

Themes (most to least frequently mentioned)
Advanced knowledge (content learned in class that can be applied on the job)
Teaching methods
Relationship skills
Problem solving skills
Responsibility and time management
Study skills



# Structured Discussions: Supervisors and Supervisees

*“Can you give me a couple examples of things that you are learning here at work that you will be using in your future profession?”*

Themes (most to least frequently mentioned)
Relationship skills
Communication skills
Teaching methods
Responsibility and time management
Problem solving skills

# Progress and Next Steps

- Completed Phase 2 of Pilot, with 209 additional student employees receiving intervention:
  - Expanded to “difficult” jobs – those that students may have a harder time connecting with academics
  - Expanded to a large employer outside the Division (Libraries)
  - Included small group discussions as an option
- Created IOWA GROW™ website to assist colleagues in implementing the intervention in their settings:
  - <http://studentlife.uiowa.edu/about/iowa-grow/>

# Enhancing Student Learning Through Employment

- Things we may continue working on:
  - Establish Division-wide general outcomes for student employment
  - Incorporate language of student learning into job announcements and position descriptions
  - Create and use interview questions that encourage students to make connections between world of work and academics

\*Suggestions may not all be applicable to every setting/job type

# Enhancing Student Learning Through Employment

- Things to consider:
  - Add discussions of learning outcomes to Orientation/Training checklists
  - Provide questions for supervisors that they can use to help students make work/academic connections
  - Provide overview for supervisors of pilot survey data and get their suggestions for helping students make connections
  - Share information by department

# Sharing Our Successes

- *George Kuh article in Chronicle of Higher Education*
- *Organizational Effectiveness series for Supervising Students*





# Questions? Comments?

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