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## **Stronger Surveys: Assessing Campus Recreation Student Employee Transferable Job Skills**

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Stronger Surveys: Assessing Campus Recreation Student Employee Transferable Job Skills

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Master's Project

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### **Abstract**

Employers depend on higher education institutions to develop competent professionals. Current literature suggests that higher education professionals are concerned about the various ways their students develop proficiency of job skills needed for the workforce. Campus recreation student employment provides ample opportunities to develop such skills. Peck and colleagues released a whitepaper regarding the positive impact campus recreation student employment has on developing the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) top-ten preferred transferable job skills by employers. Although Peck and colleagues' work serves as the primary resource for campus recreation transferable job skill information, there is no current comprehensive assessment tool template that evaluates student employee transferable job skill proficiency. In the current study, researchers emailed campus recreation and higher education professionals working for diverse institutions across the United States and requested their current transferable job skill survey tool. Eleven survey tools were gathered and analyzed to determine if frequencies of questions related to NACE's skills varied among survey tools. Chi-Square Goodness of Fit tests were used for analysis. The results revealed that the survey tools had a disproportionate frequency in questions related to NACE's top-ten skills. Additionally, a significant difference existed between the frequency of questions related to NACE's skills and "Other Skills." The researchers produced a condensed survey inspired by current literature, results of the current study, and Peck and colleagues' work. Although, a survey template was created, researchers note that higher education institutions may use this template as a guide to assess transferable job skills but may also add institution specific questions to evaluate their practices. Further research on assessing transferable job skills in campus recreation student employees is suggested.

*Keywords:* Transferable job skill assessment, campus recreation, survey tools, student employment, career readiness, higher education

### **Stronger Surveys: Assessing Campus Recreation Student Employee Transferable Job Skills**

Higher education institutions are primarily responsible for producing educated professionals for the workforce (Peck et al., 2015). In addition to gaining knowledge in their academic programs, students are also expected to gain practical work experience during their collegiate careers (Peck et al., 2015). By providing practical experiences during college, students will be more competent and prepared for post-graduation life (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015). Employers have high expectations for graduates, so it is crucial for higher education institutions to find innovative ways to offer professional development while still valuing the overall student experience (Peck et al., 2015). Student employment is one innovative opportunity that can enhance professional development; therefore, higher education student affairs professionals are interested in studying the skills gained by students during their on-campus student employment experience (Anderson et al., 2018).

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) used the 2015 “Job Outlook” survey to evaluate the top-ten preferred transferable job skills employers look for in future employees. Transferable skills, also known as soft skills, are defined as skills developed in a particular work or professional environment that can be used universally in other work environments (Peck et al., 2015). The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) and the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA): Leaders in Collegiate Recreation collaborated to investigate how student employment and involvement in other cocurricular activities impacted their future professions (Peck et al., 2015). Peck et al. (2015)

noted that transferable skill development is acquired through involvement and employment in campus activities and campus recreation; however, there is a lack of evidence-based research to support these claims. Therefore, it is suggested that researchers continue to study how student employment and involvement may provide an opportunity for gaining transferable job skills. Peck and colleagues' (2015) collaborative work became a primary resource for campus recreation professionals which sparked the interest in learning more about transferable job skills, employability after graduation, and other benefits of working in campus recreation.

Student employment provides the opportunity to enhance proficiency in transferable job skills that may be applied across extensive work disciplines (Fede et al., 2018). Although transferable job skill proficiency can develop through various experiences in one's collegiate career and life, student affairs professionals are interested in understanding, assessing, and reporting the process of transferable job skill attainment during on-campus employment (Anderson et al., 2018). Researchers suggest student employment is an effective opportunity to develop transferable job skills (Fede et al., 2018). Anderson et al. (2018) even suggest that student employment is a "learning laboratory" that could improve students' employability post-graduation. While research focused on the benefits of student employment has been conducted, there is still a lack of literature to relate the impact campus recreation student employment has on transferable job skills (Hall, 2013).

Fede et al. (2018) suggests that practical skills gained during employment are not obtainable through classroom experiences alone. Gorman and Cimini (2018) support this claim and suggest that on-campus employment opportunities should deliberately and intentionally provide professional development and other challenges to enhance student growth. Anderson and colleagues (2018) advise measuring and understanding the frequency of transferable job skills

reported by college students compared to the transferable job skills underreported by college students, so employers can provide more intentional work experiences for optimal growth and development of students. Higher education professionals should assess their student employee procedures to ensure employers are providing optimal opportunities for growth and development.

Additionally, student employment may provide other benefits to the overall student experience such as: a work schedule that is revolved around the academic schedule, ease of connecting with faculty and staff, and convenient location close to other academic and campus activities (Fede et al., 2018). Anderson et al. (2018) suggest that on-campus employment may increase campus involvement, overall social interactions, and connectedness with the institution. Other researchers mention that work within the various campus recreation departments may enhance students' leadership skills needed for the workforce (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015). Campus recreation student employment offers many opportunities to develop transferable job skills and may contribute to career readiness post-graduation.

The potential transferable job skills that may be gained by on-campus employment should be understood by both employers and student employees. Although students may be obtaining these skills, many are unable to properly communicate their career readiness to an employer (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). There seems to be a disconnect between students and future employers' perceptions about their career readiness after graduation (Peck et al., 2015). Peck and colleagues (2015) suggest that students feel more prepared than employers think they are. Kuh (1995) suggests that students have higher opinions of their jobs when they feel they are developing applicable job skills for the workplace. Mitchell and Kay (2013) explain that students and employers should reflect on their learning experiences as an important step in having a

comprehensive student employee development program. Employers should provide various opportunities for self-reflection so students better understand and comprehend their growth.

College experiences are unique and diverse; it is difficult to state that one environment, one intervention, promotes the greatest development of transferable job skills (Anderson et al., 2018). Hackett (2007) suggests that more assessment needs to be completed to gain a better understanding of student employment and enhanced employability. Student employee transferable job skill assessment could be a useful intervention that helps students better comprehend their experiences, growth, and preparedness for the workforce. Further assessment and research should be conducted about transferable job skills obtained through campus recreation student employment.

Presently, there is no ‘universal’ or suggested survey tool template that gathers transferable job skill assessment data utilized by campus recreation departments in the United States. The purpose of this study was to analyze current transferable job skill assessment tools and create one survey tool template for campus recreation departments.

## **Literature Review**

### **Background Information**

Higher education is the forerunner in creating an employable, educated, and driven workforce. Recently, higher education institutions have experienced pressure to produce students with skills needed to be successful in the workforce post-graduation (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). Furthermore, enrollment and retention rates in higher education institutions have declined requiring institutions to enhance student engagement, success, persistence, and retention initiatives (Kiss, 2017). In addition to the faculty and staff who work with students in the classroom, student affairs staff are now also responsible to provide students with diverse out-of-



the-classroom opportunities for personal and professional development (Anderson et al., 2018). Student employment is one unique opportunity to provide students personal and professional development.

The cost of higher education puts a financial burden on students which may influence their decision to work during college (Mathias et al., 2017). Most college students are employed, even if only working part-time (Anderson et al., 2018). Understanding the role of employment on the student experience has gained attention; therefore, researchers have increased studying this topic since 1990 (Robotham, 2012). More recently, transferable job skills have become a trend in higher education research. Transferable skills, or soft skills, are skills learned in one work environment that can be used universally in future work environments (Peck et al., 2015). Themes focusing on the following topics are typically studied when collecting data on transferable job skills: skill proficiency, confidence, and practical experience. Skill proficiency gained from part-time student employment is a research area studied by higher education professionals (Anderson et al., 2018). Confidence in the workplace comes from preparing students with practical, hands-on experience prior to entering the workforce, which in turn, produces more confident and able workers (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015). Student employment offers ample opportunities to become prepared and experienced for the workforce.

### **Student Employment**

NACA and NIRSA collaborated to examine skills gained from campus recreation student employment and its resulting impact on preparing students for future career success (Peck et al., 2015). NACE determined that employers desire potential employees to have proficiency in: teamwork skills, problem and solution skills, verbal communication skills, organization of work skills, gathering and managing information skills, comprehension of quantitative data skills,

technical understanding of the job skills, computer skills, reporting skills, and sales skills. The researchers exposed how critical it is to consider the importance of a wholistic student experience rather than focusing solely on academics because students reported that they gained many of these skills outside of the classroom (Peck et al., 2015). Peck and colleagues (2015) believe it is crucial for higher education institutions to provide opportunities for varied work experiences and learning opportunities.

Higher education professionals support the concept of on-campus student employment as it relates to students' growth and development (Anderson et al., 2018). On-campus student employment provides various opportunities for interactions with others through mentorship, leadership, and other social experiences (Griffith et al., 2011). Some researchers refer to on-campus student employment as a "learning laboratory" for transferable job skills (Anderson et al., 2018). Fede and associates (2018) note that students understand that working on campus allows them to acquire skill sets not obtainable through the classroom. Acknowledging these benefits, some institutions have integrated work and learning experiences as well as practical activities to enhance job readiness upon graduation (Mitchell & Kay, 2013).

On-campus student employment provides countless benefits such as flexible work hours, ease of connecting with faculty and staff, and accessibility to working where they also participate in other campus activities such as student organizations and athletic events (Fede et al., 2018). On-campus employment encourages students to build connections with professional staff members that supervise their work areas and build relationships with other students at the university. Lastly, on-campus job opportunities are ideal for students with limited access to transportation. These students are provided the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning an income in the same location as their academic studies. On-campus student

employment offers countless opportunities for growth in the higher education experience (Fede et al., 2018).

### **Campus Recreation Student Employment**

Campus recreation departments are one of the largest student employers on American college campuses (Anderson et al., 2018). Many campus recreation professional staff manage their departments, although student employees are the primary staff responsible for practical application of their department mission through policies, procedures, events, and customer service (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). Due to this structure, employment with campus recreation provides students with practical, student-development centered work opportunities for growth and future success (Anderson et al., 2018). Through a dynamic work environment, campus recreation professionals aim to develop transferable job skills in their student staff to prepare them for their future careers (Hackett, 2007).

Working in higher education, campus recreation professional staff are responsible for developing their students (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). On-campus jobs should be designed to challenge students to progress their growth (Gorman & Cimini, 2018). Campus recreation departments demand a high-functioning student staff for necessary daily operations and interactions with patrons and in-turn provide ample opportunities for practical work experience (Peck et al., 2007). These learning opportunities create a leadership structure that assists student learning potential (Anderson et al., 2018). Researchers note that sometimes students are spending more contact time in their part-time position rather than in the classroom (Robotham, 2012). Because of this, professional staff aim to intentionally create job positions and a work environment that promotes learning in the workplace and stimulates a positive, productive work experience for all students (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017). This work environment allows for

relationships between students and professional staff as well as with peers (Fresk & Mullendore, 2012). Overall, campus recreation offers a unique experience for student employment and enhancing the overall student experience (Bolton & Rosselli, 2017).

### **Campus Recreation Student Employment Studies**

Boettcher and Gansemer-Topf (2015) collected qualitative data from eleven campus recreation outdoor program student employees after a five-day canoeing and kayaking trip. The purpose of this study was to assess perceived leadership skill development gained from the experience. Individual student interviews included photos from the trip as prompts to reflect on their experiences. Each interview was one hour in duration; researchers audiotaped and transcribed each interview prior to analysis. The data were analyzed to determine themes between subjects; measures for goodness and trustworthiness were met (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015). Skills reported by students included: communication, empathy, and listening skills (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015). Students also explained that they earned valuable experience in practicing teamwork skills and team cohesion needed in the workforce while connecting with others. Boettcher and Gansemer-Topf (2015) explain the importance of understanding that skill building may extend beyond one outdoor program trip or the workplace and note that students were able to connect their experiences working in outdoor recreation to skills they will need in their future careers. The researchers suggested that experiences in outdoor recreation programs can equip students with essential leadership skills needed for the workforce. On the other hand, since little data exists to support the positive impacts of student affairs programs, including employment, researchers suggest that future research should investigate the job skills gained through student employment (Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf, 2015).

Bolton and Rosseli (2017) were interested in comparing what student employees learned to the transferable job skills professionals reported teaching their student staff. The researchers used both qualitative and quantitative data; quantitative data were collected via survey whereas qualitative data were gathered from two separate focus groups. One group consisted only of student staff and the second group consisted of professional and graduate assistantship staff. The researchers gathered quantitative data from 37 student employees and 19 professional staff and graduate assistant members across department areas to better understand perceived opportunities provided to student employees. The qualitative data were collected via focus groups with semi-structured interviews comprised of four student staff and five professional staff and graduate assistants. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were compared to the NACE's top-ten preferred job skills used during their employment (Bolton & Rosseli, 2017).

Both student and professional staff and graduate assistant staff believed campus recreation is a great environment to learn and practice transferable job skills (Bolton & Rosseli, 2017). The main responses for opportunities for transferable job skill development included: mechanical and maintenance skills, customer service, computer skills, reporting, communication, and risk management proficiencies. Aside from data concerning "analyzing quantitative data" and "creating and editing reports," all responses that corresponded to transferable job skills had an 80 percent frequency response rate of "Daily" or "Almost daily" from both focus groups (Bolton & Rosseli, 2017). Both student and professional staff representatives reiterated that student employees "learn by doing" and professional staff aim to teach student staff by giving them hands-on experiences. However, the researchers noted that students and professional staff and graduate assistants' perceptions of teamwork opportunities differed. Qualitatively, students seemed concerned that some job positions did not utilize much teamwork, but their quantitative

data gathered from the survey suggested that students did believe they work in a team environment either daily or almost daily (Bolton & Rosseli, 2017).

These findings suggest many experiences offered in the workplace allow students ample opportunities for development, and researchers suggest that students should be encouraged to reflect and “connect the dots” about their work experiences (Bolton & Rosseli, 2017). Bolton and Rosseli (2017) believe student affairs departments should provide exit interviews or questionnaires to provoke critical thinking and comprehension of skills learned during employment to better prepare students for post-college workforce. Bolton and Rosseli (2017), like Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf (2015), also suggest that further research should include comparisons between various internal campus recreation departments.

### **Other Employment Opportunities**

There are other student affairs departments on college campuses that provide unique practical experience, although limited research about the transferable job skills gained currently exists. Libraries often hire student staff to help run their departments. Adeogun (2016) states that academic libraries provide a “creative” workplace environment for students. The researcher surveyed 32 student employees about the skills acquired through working at the library by assessing their observed personal abilities, work experience and classroom learning, skills for future workplace, and suggestions for workplace improvements and perceived job satisfaction (Adeogun, 2016). Adeogun (2016) notes that skill sets described by students as having acquired through their student employment were the same skills that are indicators of success in their future careers and lives. Skills obtained through employment are essential assets for their future careers and, if able to articulate to potential employers, should make students more desirable to future employers (Adeogun, 2016).

While there are many benefits to on-campus jobs, these positions can be limited based on funding, may not be available at the time of desired employment, and may have lower pay rates compared to larger, off-campus companies. It is important to consider that some students may work off-campus in order to best meet their financial and overall workplace desires. Dundes and Marx (2006) investigated off-campus employment and its impact on undergraduate student college experience and overall academic success. The researchers used a survey tool to gather information about academic performance while also working at an off-campus job. Dundes and Marx (2006) found that performance was similar between off-campus workers when compared to students who did not work during college. The researchers discovered that students who worked between ten and nineteen hours per week had the best overall academic performance, even when compared to students who did not work. Dundes and Marx (2006) note that finding the balance between academic responsibilities, work, and social life is essential for this type of success. Future research should investigate off-campus jobs and other on-campus jobs in order to draw more conclusions about the impact of employment on the overall student experience and consequential transferable job skill acquisition (Dundes & Marx, 2006).

### **Student Employment and Involvement**

Student employment allows students to be involved and engaged on their college campuses and promote assimilation to college life (Fresk & Mullendore, 2012). Tinto (1975) states that when students are involved in their campus communities, they are more likely to persist whereas students who are not involved have increased chances of dropping out or performing poorly academically. Another researcher, Astin (1984), developed the Theory of Involvement which states that student learning is proportionate to one's campus involvement. Student involvement is defined as: "the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological

energy that students invest in the college experience” (Astin, 1984, p.528). Astin (1984) acknowledges that a student’s higher education experience is not only about the time in the classroom, but also relies heavily on everything that happens outside of the classroom, too. Tinto (1975) and Astin’s (1984) theories serve as the foundation in higher education beliefs about the student experience and the importance of a “student experience” outside of a traditional classroom setting. Student employment offers unique opportunities for engagement and engagement may also enhance academic success (Hackett, 2007).

### **Student Employment and Academic Success**

Academic success is highly researched (Anderson et al., 2018; Fede et al., 2018; Mathias et al., 2017; Robotham, 2012; Hackett, 2007). Academic success is determined by many factors, but is often determined by grade point average, persistence and retention, and graduation rates (Mathias et al., 2017; Vasold et al., 2019). College students aim to find an adequate balance between their academic and extra-curricular activities in an effort to personalize their “college experience” (Mathias et al., 2017). In the literature, student employment has been a positive contributor to student success (Fede et al., 2018; Dundes & Marx, 2006).

Student employment during college is often linked to academic success and retention to the university (Anderson et al., 2018). On-campus employment can be a resourceful tool to enhance student success and retention (Gorman, & Cimini, 2018). Higher education professionals aim to provide diverse socialization opportunities to increase student retention and enjoyment (Griffith et al., 2011). Higher education administrators, professional staff, and campus recreation employees should consider the opportunities for engagement offered through campus recreation as a means to enhance retention rates (Forrester et al., 2018). Researchers note that getting students engaged and involved on campus is essential; therefore, it should be suggested



to recruit students to join the workforce early-on in their academic careers (Deprano et al., 2005; Ozlem, 2018). Student involvement, which may include student employment, plays a crucial role in student persistence and retention to a university (Forrester et al., 2018).

As supported by Tinto, (1975) campus recreation student employment can be applied as one distinctive opportunity to enhance both the academic and social systems and reduce the chances of dropout. Professional and leadership staff keep students accountable to their academic goals while also providing enriching, social experiences (Tinto, 1975). Mitchell and Kay (2013) suggest that student employment may also enhance retention due to students feeling more engaged through their part-time employment. This concept showcases the necessary considerations of integrating the academic and social systems for a well-rounded, balanced college experience and perceived preparedness for the workforce.

Forester and colleagues (2018) collected retention rates from all undergraduates, intramural participants, and collegiate recreational sports staff at a medium-sized public university in Canada from 2012 to 2015. The sample included 35 collegiate recreational sports staff, 24 intramural staff, 461 collegiate recreational intramural participants, and 3,257 undergraduate students. After reviewing the retention data, the researchers found that there was a significant difference between retention rates of students who participate or are employed through campus recreation when compared to those not involved with campus recreation (Forrester et al., 2018). The researchers also discovered a 97 percent retention rate at a four-year benchmark for campus recreation student employees (Forrester et al., 2018). These studies align with the theories proposed by both Astin (1984) and Tinto (1975) and emphasize the importance of student involvement for increased chances of retention. Retention is necessary for graduation, and an earned degree increases the probability of successful job placement post-graduation. With

these suggestions in mind, competitive institutions will need to have both high retention rates and plentiful opportunities for the development of practical skills for students desiring to be employed in the workforce post-graduation.

Although strategies related to student learning, academic success, engagement, and retention may differ from those geared toward the development of transferable job skills, the goal of these strategies are ultimately connected to one another. Student employment can provide a meaningful relationship between the student and the university which can promote higher retention, graduation, and overall student development (Mitchell & Kay, 2013). Students are more likely to graduate and pursue a career post-graduation after feeling successful in their experience as a student. It is essential for educators to consider the crucial role that extracurricular experiences and jobs can have on the overall college experience (Tinto, 1975).

Astin (1984) suggests exploring assessment options for the various methods of involvement; in this case, student employment within campus recreation could be studied. In addition, it is suggested to investigate if student characteristics correspond to modes of involvement and if the same mode provides varying results for diverse students (Astin, 1984). Based on these suggestions, campus recreation assessment should be explored more thoroughly since there are many gaps in the current literature about campus recreation employment and its impact during one's collegiate career and consequential post-graduation future. The current literature focuses heavily on student success, involvement, retention, and general participation in campus recreation; however, the impact of being a student employee during the collegiate experience and post-graduation is underrepresented (Peck et al., 2015).

Researchers mention that connecting academic learning with experiences as a student employee is a useful tool in building stronger students (Mitchell & Kay, 2013). Peck and

colleagues (2015) admit that there are significant findings that suggest that many of the top 10 skills desired by employers are being practiced during campus recreation student employment participation, but little research exists to provide substantial support for these claims. There is a call for specific, comparative, and, simply, more research to determine the true impact of campus recreation student employment on the development of transferable job skills (Peck et al., 2015). Researchers note that student employee's reflections of their learning experiences are one critical component necessary to implement a well-versed student employee development program (Mitchell & Kay, 2013). Unfortunately, there is little assessment about student employee's perceptions of reflection of their employment.

The goal of this project was to create a campus recreation student employee transferable job skill survey template based on the theories and suggestions provided by the researchers in the field, results of the current study, and Peck and colleagues' work. Campus recreation departments may find this survey template helpful when creating their own transferable job skill surveys.

## **Methods**

### **Recruitment**

The principal investigator contacted campus recreation and higher education professionals across the United States to request the transferable job skill survey tool used at their respective institutions. The principal investigator intentionally contacted professionals working for diverse institutions in anticipation that the collected survey tools would be more representative of the diversity of higher education institutions (i.e., institutions of various sizes and geographic locations and included both public and private institutions).

### **Procedures**

The principal investigator submitted a Determination Form to the investigator's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to establish if the study required IRB approval. The purpose of the study was to analyze current assessment tools and create one survey tool template for campus recreation departments. Due to the purpose of the study, the IRB determined the study did not involve human subjects and, therefore, a formal review by the IRB was not required.

The principal investigator connected with 23 professional contacts via email to recruit survey tools for analysis (see Table 1: Summary of Professional Contact Interactions). Contacts were made through the principal investigator's participation in a volunteer committee through a campus recreation professional organization as well as through internships, assistantships, mutual colleagues, other work experiences, and conference attendance. In the initial email, the purpose of the study was described, and the contact's current survey tool used at their institution was requested (see Appendix 1: Recruitment Email Template). After the initial email, 11 survey tools were collected from the professional contacts. Three professionals responded to the initial email explaining they did not have a current survey tool used at their institution. Four weeks after the initial email, a follow-up email was sent to the four contacts who did not respond to the initial request (see Appendix 2: Recruitment Email Follow-up Template). One additional survey tool was collected after the follow-up email was sent. Two contacts responded to the follow-up email stating they did not have a survey tool at their institution. One contact did not respond even after the follow-up email was sent. The final response rate was 96 percent (22 out of 23), and of those who responded, ten professionals provided one or more survey tool(s) for a total of 12 survey tools analyzed for this study (see Table 1: Summary of Professional Contact Interactions). Regardless if contacts provided a survey tool or not, access to the final survey tool template upon completion of the project was provided.

Table 1  
*Summary of Professional Contact Interactions*

Data about the initial email	Frequency
Contacts with access to initial email	23
Contact provided one or more survey tools	9
Contact connected P.I.* with a colleague who had a survey tool to share	7
Contact did not have a current survey tool at their institution	3
Contact did not respond	4
Collected survey tools after initial email	11
Response rate	19 of 23
Data about the follow-up email	
Contacts with access to follow-up email	4
Contact provided one or more survey tools	1
Contact connected P.I.* with a colleague who had a survey tool to share	0
Contact did not have a current survey tool at their institution	2
Contact did not respond	1
Collected survey tools after follow-up email	1
Response rate	3 of 4
Overall Project Data	
Survey tools collected after initial email	11
Survey tools collected after follow-up email	1
Total surveys collected	12
Final response rate	22 of 23

\*P.I. is principal investigator

### Statistical Analysis

The principal investigator coded the survey tools prior to analysis. Upon examination, the investigator reviewed the survey tools to determine the frequency of questions that related to the NACE top-ten job skills preferred by employers (Peck et al., 2015). The investigator also recorded “Other Skills” for questions that included transferable job skills, such as leadership skills, not represented on NACE’s top-ten preferred job skills list (Peck et al., 2015). Demographic questions, institution-specific questions, and other questions were also identified and included in an Excel file.

Chi-Square Goodness of Fit tests were used to investigate if significant differences existed between frequencies of NACE’s top-ten skills (Peck et al., 2015). In addition, a Chi-

Square Goodness of Fit test was used to investigate if a significant difference existed between the frequency of NACE's top-ten skills and the frequency of "Other Skills" (Peck et al., 2015).

An alpha value of 0.05 was utilized for the analyses.

### Results

Twelve survey tools were collected from various higher education institutions across the United States. The researchers used the following Chi-Square equation:  $X^2 =$

$\frac{\Sigma(\text{Observed Frequency} - \text{Expected Frequency})^2}{\text{Expected Frequency}}$ . Using this equation, the researchers determined that  $X^2$

(9,  $N = 310$ ) = 91.03,  $p < 0.0001$  (see Table 2). The results suggest that a significant difference

existed between the overall observed and expected frequencies of questions about the NACE

top-ten skills (Peck et al., 2015). Follow-up analyses identified exactly which category of

questions differed from what was expected. Additionally, the researchers determined that  $X^2$  (1,

$N = 485$ ) = 37.58,  $p < 0.00000$  (see Table 3). The analyses showed that seven of NACE's top-ten

skills have a significantly different observed frequency value than what was expected (see Table

2) (Peck et al., 2015). The results suggest that there is a significant difference between the

frequencies of questions related to NACE's top-ten skills compared to "Other Skills" (see Table

3) (Peck et al., 2015).

Table 2

*Frequencies of Questions Related to NACE's Top-Ten Skills (Peck et al., 2015)*

Skill	Observed	Expected	(Obs.- Expected) <sup>2</sup> / Expected)
Teamwork	65	31	37.29032258***
Decision Making & Problem Solving	52	31	14.22580645***
Communication	44	31	5.451612903*
Planning & Prioritizing work	27	31	0.516129032
Obtain & Process Information	30	31	0.032258065
Quantitative Skills	12	31	11.64516129***
Technical Skills	16	31	7.258064516**
Computer Skills	17	31	6.322580645**
Reporting	15	31	8.258064516**
Selling & Influencing others	32	31	0.032258065
Results			Chi-Square: 91.03225806 p-value: 0.0000000000

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3

*Comparison of the NACE's Top-Ten Skills to "Other Skills" (Peck et al., 2015)*

Skill	Observed	Expected	(Obs.- Expected) <sup>2</sup> / Expected)
Total frequency of top-ten skills	319	242.5	18.7886598
Total frequency of "Other Skills"	175	242.5	18.7886598
Results			Chi-Square: 37.5773196 p-value: 0.000000001

## Discussion

Higher education professionals want to develop competent and prepared employees for the workforce, and campus recreation student employment is one unique opportunity that can promote student professional development. However, limited research exists to adequately assess students' job readiness and job skill proficiencies after campus recreation student employment. NACE's top-ten skills serve as the primary resource for transferable job skill information for campus recreation professionals, although there is not a standardized survey tool used by campus

recreation professionals. The researchers of the current study recognize this issue and found that many differences exist between the collected student employee transferable job skill survey tools used by campus recreation departments. The survey tools gathered have a disproportionate frequency in questions related to NACE's (Peck et al., 2015) top-ten skills. Overall, the survey tools were significantly oversaturated with questions about teamwork, decision making and problem solving, and communication skill related questions. Quantitative, technical, computer, and reporting skills questions were underrepresented. Without equitable assessment of each of the top-ten transferable job skills, it is difficult to thoroughly examine all the skills on NACE's list. Additionally, a collective 175 survey questions included "Other Skills" that are undefined and uncategorized within the NACE's top-ten skills.

The variations in the gathered assessment tools of this study should not go unnoticed. While these survey tools may not have adequately represented NACE's top-ten skills, it is apparent that many of the survey tools were derived from NACE's list as presented by Peck and colleagues (2015). The survey content and overall verbiage was similar to Peck and colleagues work (2015). Although content was not apportioned in a perfectly equitable manner, it provides some indication that the survey tools had a research-based vision. These results may suggest that campus recreation departments use the NACE top-ten list to guide the creation of their surveys, although the NACE top-ten list does not encompass all skills campus recreation departments are interested in studying. Anderson et al. (2018) note that this list may not be extensive enough to cover the breadth of skills developed through campus recreation student employment. Further exploration of desired top-ten transferable job skills should be conducted (Anderson et al., 2018).

### **Survey Tool Production**



The researchers aimed to create a brief, effective, and thorough template with equitable assessment for each of NACE's top-ten skills (see Appendix 3). The simplistic and concise template provided may serve as a resourceful guide for practitioners when creating transferable job skill survey tools at their respective institutions. The suggested survey template is a condensed version of NACE's top-ten skills with paraphrased descriptions to define the parameters of each skill to the target population, campus recreation student employees.

The researchers suggest that this survey template should be used to collect data post-employment in order to best understand students' perceptions of their proficiency in transferable job skills after campus recreation student employment. However, the survey verbiage could be altered, to gain more frequent assessment data, if desired. The researchers suggest using an online survey platform in order to gather data from participants since today's students use online platforms for school and personal use (i.e. submit homework assignments online, communicate with loved ones via various social media platforms online, etc.). Practitioners should prepare the online survey then send out the survey link to participants with appropriate informed consent documentation required by their department and institution and any other additional instructions that may need to be included.

Perceived skill proficiencies can be measured from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent) for all of NACE's skills. The researchers propose that measuring perceived proficiency may allow students to reflect on their experiences and better acknowledge their strengths and areas of improvement which has been suggested by other researchers (Mitchell and Kay, 2013). In addition, using this measurement method may help practitioners better comprehend the impact of their current employment practices.

### **Implications and Suggestions for Practitioners**

The goal of this study was to develop a transferable job skill survey template for campus recreation and higher education professionals. Although researchers gathered survey tools from diverse institutions across the United States, only 12 survey tools were collected and assessed. With a small sample, generalizability for such a survey template for all campus recreation departments in the United States is inapplicable. However, the researchers suggest that this tool may be used as a template during the creation phase of a transferable job skill survey and campus recreation departments may build from the template based on their departments' and institutions' assessment needs.

The researchers note that there are other important components to consider when designing a survey tool. Appropriate demographic questions should be used to better understand the sample population of participants and to ensure a comparable representation of the population was collected. Furthermore, the media of survey, whether in-person, online via survey platforms, or other method, could impact answer integrity and or response rate. Practitioners should consider the time demanded from participants to complete the survey and the consequential time needed for analysis of the survey results. Survey questions that may be verbose and tedious could lead to reduced participation and be a barrier to successfully collecting as many completed surveys as desired.

The template proposed by researchers is advantageous for many reasons. First, the length of this template is beneficial for the participants completing the survey. This template is ideal for college students who may be juggling coursework, campus recreation positions, social lives, and other demands. Additionally, a concise template is helpful for campus recreation staff who may be conducting the survey. Staff members may be more willing to review the results of the surveys and discuss results with administrators and student employees if they are analyzing

results from a succinct instrument. Also, this template is beneficial because the question content and survey design is based on Peck and colleagues (2015) reputable work. Finally, this research-based survey tool is beneficial because its plasticity provides tremendous flexibility for practitioners to make appropriate choices for their department and institution. Overall, the researchers suggest adapting the suggested survey template as needed and to include any non-transferable job skill questions that most appropriately serve their departments' and institutions' needs.

### **Future Research**

The impact campus recreation employment makes on the development of transferable job skills is still unknown. Anderson et al. (2018) note that it is difficult to determine proficiency of skills gained solely in one environment since such skills are developed through various experiences. As practitioners, this should encourage further exploration into developing assessment tools to better understand the experiences of campus recreation student employees.

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## Appendix 1: Recruitment Email Template

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Adrienne Ansel. I am a second-year Kinesiology Graduate Student at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I am working on my Master's project with my advisor, Dr. Jessica Kiss, and committee member, Dr. David Tobar. We are interested in creating a universal Campus Recreation Transferable Job Skills survey tool to potentially be used by Campus Recreation professionals at their respective institutions.

I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to share your current Campus Recreation Transferable Job Skills survey you use with your student employees. My goal is to collect at least 10 current survey tools to analyze and create our final survey template. I will decode all identifying information (i.e., institution name) on your survey tool throughout my project and will share the final survey template with you as a benefit of sharing your current survey tool with us.

The goal of this project is to provide a practical survey tool template that assesses transferable job skills in Campus Recreation student employees. The BGSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has determined that this project does not include human subjects, and granted approval for this project.

Thanks in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Other questions or concerns? Please contact the appropriate person below:

- If you have questions relating to the project or survey template please contact: Adrienne Ansel at [aansel@bgsu.edu](mailto:aansel@bgsu.edu).
- If you have further questions, or desire to speak with my advisor please contact: Dr. Jessica Kiss at [jekiss@bgsu.edu](mailto:jekiss@bgsu.edu).
- If you have any questions referring to IRB processes please contact: Kristin Hagemyer at [khagemy@bgsu.edu](mailto:khagemy@bgsu.edu).

Best,

**Adrienne Ansel**  
Graduate Assistant, Fitness  
Bowling Green State University  
Department of Recreation and Wellness  
Division of Student Affairs  
[aansel@bgsu.edu](mailto:aansel@bgsu.edu)



## Appendix 2: Recruitment Email Follow-up Template

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

I am following-up with you to see if you would be willing to share your current Campus Recreation Transferable Job Skills survey you use with your student employees. My goal is to collect at least 10 current survey tools to analyze and create our final survey template. I will decode all identifying information (i.e., institution name) on your survey tool throughout my project and will share the final survey template with you as a benefit of sharing your current survey tool with us.

The goal of this project is to provide a practical survey tool template that assesses transferable job skills in Campus Recreation student employees. The BGSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) has determined that this project does not include human subjects, and granted approval for this project.

Thanks in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Other questions or concerns? Please contact the appropriate person below:

- If you have questions relating to the project or survey template please contact: Adrienne Ansel at [aansel@bgsu.edu](mailto:aansel@bgsu.edu).
- If you have further questions, or desire to speak with my advisor please contact: Dr. Jessica Kiss at [jekiss@bgsu.edu](mailto:jekiss@bgsu.edu).
- If you have any questions referring to IRB processes please contact: Kristin Hagemyer at [khagemy@bgsu.edu](mailto:khagemy@bgsu.edu).

Best,

Adrienne

**Adrienne Ansel**  
Graduate Assistant, Fitness  
Bowling Green State University  
Department of Recreation and Wellness  
Division of Student Affairs  
[aansel@bgsu.edu](mailto:aansel@bgsu.edu)



### Appendix 3: Transferable Job Skill Survey Template

## Overview

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Thank you for completing the \_\_\_\_\_ Campus Recreation Student Employee Transferable Job Skill survey. Your input is valuable information as we assess our current student employment development model.

Instructions for participants: Please select your perceived proficiency in the following job skills after your employment with campus recreation on a scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent).

Important reference note: The survey below was created and inspired from Peck and colleagues' (2015) whitepaper titled: "Considering the Impact of Participation and Employment of Students in Campus Activities and Collegiate Recreation on the Development of the Skills Employers Desire Most." For more information about this, please contact the primary investigator at \_\_\_\_\_.

---

## Ability to work within a team structure

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to work within a team structure**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Establish team goals and mission with intent to improve overall performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluate team members to define roles and manage conflict	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appreciate diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Ability to make decisions and solve problems

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to make decisions and solve problems**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Make high pressure, fair decisions while complying with department policies/safety concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respond to constructive criticism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adapt to changing work environments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Advocate for requests and new initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respectfully explain information and policies to patrons and co-workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Present at various conferences, meetings, events, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to plan, organize and prioritize work**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Time management skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organize agendas, events, and training programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coordinate work schedules that consider activity plans and needs of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Ability to obtain and process information

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to obtain and process information**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Learn best practices from reputable resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research issues and propose solutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn from regional or national organizations related to job area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Ability to analyze quantitative data

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **ability to analyze quantitative data**?

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Overall program assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintain control of program and event budgets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor participation in					

programs



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## Technical knowledge related to the job

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After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency of your **technical knowledge related to the job?**

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Campus recreation activity administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Event planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Proficiency with computer software

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency **with computer software?**

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Utilize spreadsheets, word, and presentation softwares	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn profession-specific softwares (i.e. RecTrac, Connect2Concepts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn various design softwares (i.e. Photoshop®, Illustrator)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Ability to create and edit written reports

---

After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency **ability to create and edit written reports?**

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Write press releases, policies, technical reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edit your work and work of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create marketing materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Ability to sell or influence others

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After your employment with campus recreation, how would you rate your perceived proficiency **Ability to sell and influence others?**

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Practice personal brand management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sell sponsorships, memberships, and your organization to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak persuasively to influence others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>