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**MORE THAN A JOB: AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENT EMPLOYEE AND
PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

by

Maeve K. McKinney

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
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Abstract

Maeve K. McKinney

MORE THAN A JOB: AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENT EMPLOYEE AND
PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ON-
CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

2020-2021

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Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this sequential exploratory mixed methods study is to explore the relationship between on-campus employment and student development through examining student employees' and professional staffs' perceptions. While certain impacts (i.e., retention and grade point average) of on-campus employment have been researched, the impact this experience has on student development is understudied. Furthermore, the formation of a dueling narrative (the inclusion of both student and professional perceptions) is even less present in research. By analyzing the perceptions held by both populations, these findings compare what student employees are truly gaining from their employment experience versus what professional staff believe student employees are gaining. Findings from the quantitative and qualitative data suggest student employees and professional staff share similar perceptions in many domains, such as transferable skill acquisition and the role professionals play in student development. However, findings also imply there are domains student employees and professional staff do not hold similar perceptions, such as leadership development and the inclusion of student voices in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities.

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Chapter I

Introduction

With the rising cost of college and the average student debt increasing, along with the general cost of living, students are faced with the insurmountable task of affording tuition and related costs that are associated with attending university. In order to manage the costs of higher education and life, there is a significant number of students who work while attending college. As of 2017, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 43% of full-time undergraduate students and 81% percent of part-time undergraduate students were employed while enrolled in college (College Student Employment, 2019). Regardless of the reasoning behind their desire for employment, these students are undoubtedly impacted by their employment experiences.

Historically, much of the research on the impacts of student employment is tied to academic performance, often citing a correlation between the numbers of hours worked and the impact on a student's academic performance (Burnside et. al, 2019; King, 2006). For example, Pike et al. (2008) found in their study of first-year student employment that there was a significant negative relationship found between working more than 20 hours per week and academic performance. Although the literature is heavily focused on the negative impacts employed students face, it is crucial to consider the various other impacts employment can have on a student, their experience, and their development. The challenges of balancing work and school as well as any personal or familial commitments are summarized under the "working student dilemma." However, what about an opportunity, such as on-campus employment, that could potentially remedy some of the

challenges faced while working and attending college? What are the impacts then? What does this mean for the “working student dilemma” and student development?

Despite the lack of national data regarding on-campus employment, it is believed that on-campus student employment exists on, if not all, most college campuses. On-campus student employment is characterized as part-time employment provided for students on-campus to work in/for a campus facility or organization that receives hourly wages, is supervised by institution staff, and enrolled at least part-time in an undergraduate program (Burnside et. al, 2019). On-campus employment, when conducted properly, can provide students with a source of income that accommodates their academic schedules and provides them with developmental opportunities through experiences and various skill acquisition (Burnside et. al, 2019).

Nonetheless, on-campus student employment is not possible without the supervision and commitment of professional staff who supervise students. This remains true in consideration of Student Affairs professionals and their role in on-campus employment. All Student Affairs professionals are expected to be competent in a multitude of areas ranging from personal and ethical foundations to student learning and development (“Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, 2015). It is the expectation when entering the field that professionals demonstrate the ability to articulate and apply student development theories and models to developmental practices and collaboration with students (“Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, 2015). Again, this remains true when applied specifically to students who are supervised by Student Affairs professionals; there is the expectation that Student Affairs

professionals are able to apply these theories and models to the development of their student employees.

Significance of the Problem

While the existing literature recognizes the prevalence of the impacts of student employment, whether it be positive or negative, our understanding of these impacts and how they relate specifically to on-campus employment and student development is very limited. Current research is either too broad in that it does not look specifically at on-campus employment and student development, or too narrow in that it only includes the student perspective or professional perspective, not both. A deeper look at the impacts of on-campus student employment on student development is imperative in not only the understanding of the relationship between the two, but also the understanding and application of student development practices. It is equally as important to analyze the perceptions both students and professionals have of student development practices as a means of evaluating the intended result (how professionals believe they are contributing to student employee development) versus the actual result (what student employees are truly gaining from employment and what they want to gain).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first purpose is to document and explore the experiences of both on-campus student employees and the professional staff that work in Student Life at a suburban, R2 institution. The second purpose is to document and explore the student and professional staff' perceptions of student development practices within Student Life at a suburban, R2 institution, such as Rowan University. Student employment provides a critical opportunity for student development

and thus the relationship and the perceptions of student and professional staff will be examined to reveal potential gaps in perceptions as a means of suggesting and enacting improvements to student development practices as they relate to on-campus student employment.

Setting of the Study

Located in Glassboro, NJ, a suburb approximately 30 minutes outside of Philadelphia, Rowan University is a public doctoral research university that is dedicated to the education and success of nearly 20,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students (Rowan University, 2020a). The university offers 90 bachelor's degree programs, 48 master's programs, two professional programs, and eight doctoral programs (Rowan University, 2020a). In order to best serve students enrolled in any of these programs, Rowan has an administration composed of various divisions each designed to meet specific university or student related needs. These administrative divisions include offices such as the Office of the Provost/Academic Affairs, Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the Division of Student Affairs, along with several others (Rowan University, 2020b).

The Division of Student Affairs at Rowan University consists of three subdivisions- Student Success, Student Life and Strategic Enrollment Management (Rowan University, 2020c). While Student Success and Strategic Enrollment Management are crucial to the success of the university and students, these subdivisions rely more heavily on professional staff rather than a combination of student and professional staff. In contrast, Student Life utilizes the student population to assist in the essential functions of the departments in this subdivision. Student Life consists of the

Office of Orientation and Student Leadership Programs, the Student Center and Campus Activities (SCCA), Campus Recreation (Campus Rec), the Student Government Association, the Office of Greek Affairs, and the Office of Volunteerism, Community Engagement and Commuter Services (VCECS) (Rowan University, 2020d). Even though there are employment or similar type opportunities in every department of Student Life, many are on either a more seasonal basis or volunteer positions. For example, VCECS does not have undergraduate student employees but rather undergraduate coordinators who are unpaid students that facilitate volunteer opportunities for other students. Both Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities depend on paid student staff to assist in facility operations, management, and maintenance, programming (planning and facilitation), and marketing (Rowan University, 2020e; Rowan University, 2020f)

Research Questions

This sequential exploratory mixed methods study explores these three major research questions:

1. What is the pattern of responses related to student development experiences and professional staff support for both student employees and professional staff?
2. What are the perceptions of both student employees and professional staff regarding student development as a result of student employment?
3. What results emerge from comparing the quantitative data measured through the original survey instruments with the exploratory qualitative interview data about student and professional staff experiences and perceptions of student development?

Assumptions and Limitations

There is an assumption due to researcher bias that students, who are more invested in their employment experience/ have had positive experiences, will be more likely to complete the survey and participate in the interview. Additionally, this study presents a few limitations given the researcher's position, the current global COVID-19 pandemic, and the setting of the study. My role as a professional staff member (graduate coordinator) in Campus Recreation may present a limitation because the student participants may be wary of sharing their true perceptions with an authoritative figure. Professional staff may also be wary since they either are technically my direct supervisors or work closely with my direct supervisors. Other limitations are associated with the sampling and data collection. This study includes a small number of participants within particular departments from one medium-sized school. Future studies should expand their participation to include all on-campus employment and/or other institutions. Furthermore, the small sample size of the study only allows us to explore the experiences and perceptions of those within these two departments, and thus cannot speak to the experiences of employees in other departments across campus, such as University Housing. Another limitation of this study is that it does not take into account additional factors such as class standing, years of employment, and federal work-study status. These factors, along with others, have the potential to impact the experiences and perceptions of student and professional staff and thus could affect the findings.

Lastly, it would be remiss of us to overlook the impacts of COVID-19 on our participants and our research. The first limitation that arose as a result of COVID-19 was the sample size of the study. Traditionally, both Campus Recreation and Student Center

and Campus Activities have significantly more employees than they have had throughout the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample was also limited in that many staff that intended to return were no longer able to as the departments were either unable to afford it or did not need as many employees as a result of operational changes (reduced hours and offerings). To provide the most accurate representation of these departments and their student development practices in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, only returning student and professional staff were asked to participate. It is also believed that COVID-19 affected the quality and number of responses. The pandemic has shifted most aspects of life to the virtual setting thus forcing students and professionals to spend more time on their computers and phones. As a result, both likely have virtual fatigue and may have been reluctant to participate, as it would mean more time on their computer/phone.

Operational Definitions of Important Terms

There are various definitions for many of the following terms, but for the purpose of this study, the definitions listed below will be used:

-Student Employee: Students who are employed part-time by either Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities at Rowan University and receive hourly pay while enrolled in a minimum of six credits

-Professional Employee: Either a full time staff member (Assistant Director) or graduate coordinator employed by Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities. The role of graduate coordinator (assistant) at Rowan University is closer aligned with the role of professional staff thus included in this population and not the student population.

-Student Development: An all-encompassing term that refers to personal growth and achievement on multiple levels through a series of holistic experiences during college

Organization

Chapter II provides a review of literature on the progression of related pre-existing research, key student developmental themes, and student employment as a high impact practice.

Chapter III outlines the methodology and procedures used in the execution of this study. It details the strategies used for data collection and data analysis and provides additional context of the study and the population.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study through summaries of the data collected in the survey and the interviews.

Chapter V summarizes the findings and the study and provides recommendations for practice and future research.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter provides a review of literature that examines the relationship between student employment and student development and establishes the influence this relationship can have on the student. It will explore the progression of the study of this relationship and the common developmental themes found in the existing literature. This review highlights findings from specific published research related to student employment and establishes connections between these studies to provide context and establish a foundation on this topic.

Progression of Study/Research

Before analyzing the themes present throughout existing literature, it is important to discuss the progression of the research completed in this field of study as the developments in research depict the complex nature of the impacts of student employment. Based on the notion that students who work may be less likely to succeed in school than those who do not, decades of early research presented conflicting results with some suggesting there to be positive effects of student employment, others suggesting there to be negative, and some even finding there to be no impact at all (Salisbury et al., 2012). The research into the effects, published before 2006, presented inconsistent, contradictory data and a lack of theoretical models to explain this relationship (Riggert et al., 2006).

Riggert et al. (2006) not only highlighted the variance in research outcomes and the lack of sufficient empirical data regarding the impact of student employment but also discussed the limitations of the measurements of impact as they are solely focused on

academic performance and student retention. Through an analysis of the methodologies and empirical data of past studies, the authors explain how some literature concludes that there is a negative relationship between student employment and academic performance while others conclude that there may be a neutral or positive relationship between the two (Riggert et al., 2006).

As a result of Riggert et al. (2006), Salisbury et al. (2012) employed the suggestion of Riggert et al. (2006) to develop a theoretical framework related to the study of the relationship between student employment and leadership development, a specific component of student development. Salisbury et al. (2012) include several factors the authors deemed most critical to the study. These factors include student background, type of college attended, the extent of on and off-campus work, level of engagement, and end of first-year leadership development. In conjunction with these factors, the authors specified further and considered the amount of hours worked as well. The social change theoretical framework and distinctive factors allowed the authors to explain their findings outside of the trite parameters of retention and grade point average. Although there is a significant number of variables associated with this study, the results show the net impacts of student employment on various levels of students' leadership development and overall college experience. The complex nature of this relationship is further proven through the findings of Salisbury et al. (2012). For example, their study showed that work over ten hours per week positively affected leadership development but stipulated that if employment was off-campus, it simultaneously restricted peer interaction and co-curricular involvement. Salisbury et al. (2012) began to close the framework gap outlined

by Riggert et al. (2006), but both stress the importance of limiting the scope of the study to provide clearer, more tangible results.

Through Salisbury et al. (2012) and Riggert et al. (2006), the complex nature of the impacts of student employment becomes evident. Studies are now being conducted to explore specific facets of this relationship using theoretical or conceptual frameworks, but there is still a critical need for additional exploration and research especially into the impacts student employment has on student development and not just academic performance or retention.

Transferable Skills Development

In addition to understanding the progression of research, analyzing the impacts of student employment on the development of transferable skills is equally as important in the review of literature and furthermore the understanding of the relationship between student employment and development. There have been several studies, which will be reviewed, consisting mostly of surveys and interviews, conducted to explore how student employment impacts the development of transferable skills among college students. The development of transferable skills is integral to the college experience as it reinforces classroom learning and provides students with post graduate competencies necessary to succeed in the workplace (Athas, Oaks, & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013).

The impacts of student employment on students' development of skills are seen throughout various higher education studies. Previously surveyed students cited development among skills, such as the communication skills necessary in their careers, to be linked to their employment (Hall 2013, as cited in Baxa, 2017, p. 28). These former employees honed communication skills through their duties, as they required them to be

clear and concise while also remaining patient and flexible when communicating with patrons, peers, and supervisors (Hall 2013, as cited in Baxa, 2017, p. 28). Additionally, in a study conducted by Fede et al. (2017), the authors evaluated the outcomes and experiences of former workers in an on-campus outreach program. Their survey of transferable skill development, which included skills like listening intently and managing time and schedules, found all of the skills gained through employment to have reported use by at least some, and most of the skills were used by over ninety percent of the former student employees (Fede et al., 2017). Student employment exposes them to experiences that may teach them something useful in their profession.

With an additional component of workshops centered on topics ranging from stress management to library related skills along with student employment, Melilli, Mitola, and Hunsaker (2016) discuss students' perception of the impact of workshops through student employment. In this study, students, especially when asked about the professional workshops, agreed that these workshops developed or improved skills for a job after college and outside of work and school as well (Melilli et al., 2016). Hackett (2007) discussed how although student staff in campus recreation, a specific type of on campus employment, come from a variety of areas of study and work in a variety of areas of recreation, the overarching goal of employment within campus recreation is to provide students with experiences that will allow student employees to acquire and develop transferable skills (as cited in Baxa, 2017, p. 32). This goal can be seen through the efforts of the student affairs division employers at the Ohio State University. In Athas, Oaks, and Kennedy-Phillips (2013), the authors discussed how their findings show that students who work in student affairs at Ohio State believe their positions play a pivotal

role in their development within five variables of transferable skill development: interpersonal skills, personal wellness awareness, practical skill acquisition, academic self-efficacy, and self-awareness. Student employees who participated in this survey continuously cited perceived growth within the context of these variables, which indicates the developmental nature of the student employment experience in student affairs (Athas et al., 2013). In addition to cited growth in transferable skill development in recent literature, there is also literature that discuss the development of leadership skills as an outcome of student employment.

Leadership Development

The development of leadership skills is considered one of the most important qualities employers look for in graduates (Dugan, Torrez, & Turman, 2014). Higher education institutions recognize their duty to develop competent graduates and thus created and guided students to opportunities that are believed to develop leadership skills (Salisbury et al, 2012). Rather than focusing on the aged, individualistic principles of leadership in these opportunities, institutions have begun to emphasize the principles of transformative, collaborative leadership in their approach. While researchers have found specific campus opportunities to be tied to leadership development, such as community service or student organization membership, there is limited research on leadership development as a result of student employment (Dugan, 2006; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999; Salisbury et al. 2012).

Although limited, there are studies that highlight the impacts on-campus employment can have on leadership development. Through the lens of a social change model, Salisbury et al. (2012) surveyed over four thousand first year students, with just

over fifteen hundred working in some capacity (hours and type varied) and found student employment to have a considerable positive impact on leadership development. In campus recreation student employment, for example, the employee structure creates an opportunity for leadership development as student employees are supervising other student employees while those student employees manage participants (Baxa, 2017). In Baxa's (2017) study, the researcher found of those surveyed 43% strongly agreed and 49% agreed that their campus recreation student employment experience developed their leadership skills. Leadership development through student employment can be seen in allowing student managers to supervise other student employees while full-time employees are not present, such as weekends and night shifts (Toperzer et. al, 2011). This serves as an opportunity for students to manage peers and handle conflict without the guidance of professional staff. While professional staff may need to give student employees space to grow, the guidance and advice students receive through mentorship is proven to be impactful through existing literature.

Mentorship

In conjunction with the impacts of student employment on transferable skill and leadership development, student employment also provides students with mentorship opportunities on either end of the mentorship spectrum that influence student development; both as a mentee and a mentor. Student employees work alongside faculty and staff who can nurture students by providing them with skills, guiding them through the college experience, and preparing them for post-graduation employment and life. Through modeling "the way," professional staff can mentor students and help student employees improve their soft skills (Kramer & Hill, 2011). However, student employees

can also stand to benefit from acting as mentors for peers. Student employment leaders can serve as mentors to younger employees, which will help younger employees feel more welcomed into the workplace environment and in turn provide the student mentor with a sense of engagement and fulfillment (Ferri-Reed, 2013; Hu & Ma, 2010).

The findings of Bower et al. (2005) produced common themes amongst on campus employment, specifically campus recreation professionals that indicated the value of mentorship for student employees (as cited in Baxa, 2017, p. 34). The common relationship found between student employees and mentors is a friendly one, but includes promoting separation as a method of students learning independence, decision-making, and problem solving without the “hand holding” of a supervisor. Student employers can promote a supportive environment amidst the chaotic college scene in which professionals can help students develop skills, understand the importance of teamwork, and find their purpose (Noel-Levitz Inc., 2010). A byproduct of mentorship within student employment is that effective supervision and mentorship leads to additional learning as happier student employees and high job satisfaction leads to efficiency and a sense of trust is established (Kellison and James, 2011). Mentors can also empower students through validation and recognition of students’ talents and accomplishments (Barnes & Larcus, 2015). Mentorship can help facilitate transferable skill development, leadership development, and even civic development.

Civic Development

Possibly the least researched aspect of student development within the context of student employment is the civic development that occurs through employment. In tandem with leadership development, civic development is recognized as crucial to students’

success in the professional world (Salisbury et al., 2012). Barnhardt et al. (2019) were some of the first researchers to explore the relationship between student employment, education, and civic engagement and development. Through survey data, Barnhardt et al. (2019) determined that on campus work specifically supports civic skill development. These researchers concluded that it is less a matter of how often a student works, and more a matter of where the student works as they found campuses to be better physical work places to spur civic development. Employment on campus exposes students to differing opinions and views while also presenting ample and safe spaces to engage in conversations regarding civics amongst peers thus further encouraging civic engagement and development (Mutz & Mondak, 2006).

Summary of Literature

The broad relationship between student employment and student development continues to be explored and analyzed. The progressive nature of this study along with the assorted variables prove to complicate research. While the lack of theoretical frameworks proved to make older research challenging, more recent literature has been able to apply various theories to explain the data and rationalize the relationship between student employment and development. Much of the more recent literature presents the concept that student employment can affect a students' development within four facets: transferable skill development, leadership development, mentorship, and civic engagement. Despite previous literature highlighting these common themes, the study of this relationship must be delved into further as there are still many gaps. More specifically, there is hardly any research that measures, analyzes, and compares the students' perceptions of the impacts of student employment on student development and

the professional staff perceptions of the same. Research into how student employment within the branch of Student Life impacts student development and how students employees and professional staff perceive these impacts has the potential to provide insight for administrators, professional staff, and students on areas of improvement.

Chapter III

Methodology

With little research exploring how on-campus employment specifically impacts student development and even less research exploring the potential variance in student employee and professional staff perceptions, it is crucial to collect and analyze survey and interview data. Survey data was used to establish a baseline of student employee and professional staff perceptions, while interview data was used to expand on these findings and explain the perceptions held by both populations in more detail. This mixed methods study provides comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data that will explore and depict the relationship between on-campus employment and student development and how the experiences of student and professional staff impact their perception of student development. Utilizing an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, a survey was initially disseminated followed by face-to-face interviews conducted via Zoom. The surveys provided preliminary data that was further examined through face-to-face interviews via Zoom. Through an analysis of the patterns of the survey responses and a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, the findings will provide the answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the pattern of responses related to student development experiences and professional staff support for both student employees and professional staff?
2. How do students' and professionals' perceptions align and/or differ on the impacts of student employment on student development?

3. What results emerge from comparing the quantitative data measured through the original survey instrument with the exploratory qualitative interview data about student and professional staff' experiences and perceptions of student development?

Context of Study

As seen through the review of literature, there is an undeniable, impactful relationship between student employment and student development (Athas et al., 2013, Baxa, 2017, Barnhardt et al., 2019). While previous literature touches on the broader definition and context of this relationship, there is limited research that takes a deeper look at how student employees perceive their own student development versus how professional staff perceive student employees' development. This particular study was conducted at Rowan University, a public 4-year institution located in Glassboro, New Jersey. The study evaluated and compared the perceptions of students and professionals employed by the departments of Campus Recreation and Student Center and Campus Activities, both of which fall under the Student Life branch of the Division of Student Affairs. This study was developed and conducted throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

Rowan University

Although initially created in the early 1920s to educate the future teachers of the local South Jersey districts, Rowan University has since flourished to be the fourth fastest growing research university among public doctoral institutions (Rowan University, 2020a). Following a \$100 million gift from Henry Rowan, Glassboro State University transformed into Rowan University, a nationally recognized university with several

rigorous academic programs, including an engineering program ranked 17th in the nation. The university has nearly 16,000 undergraduate students that partake in various academic, social, athletic, and research activities and programs throughout their careers. While over 90% of the student body consists of New Jersey residents, students hail from 42 different states and 32 countries, with 33% of students coming from underrepresented populations.

As mentioned, on top of the academic and research programs, Rowan students can take advantage of, there are several additional other involvement opportunities. The university has 18 NCAA Division III teams, over 250 student organizations/clubs, and many departments students can get involved in (Rowan University, 2020a).

Rowan Student Affairs & Student Life

I chose the Division of Student Affairs at Rowan University because they have an initiative dedicated to student employee development: Rowan GROW (Student Employment Development, n.d.). Guided Reflection on Work (GROW), originally developed by the University of Iowa, is used by Rowan Student Affairs to facilitate conversations between professional and student staff centered on the transference of their job and academic skills to a career (Iowa GROW, n.d; Student Employment Development, n.d.) This initiative uses four questions to facilitate these conversations. The questions focus on how their on-campus employment fits in with their academic interests, how job responsibilities help students academically and vice versa, and examples of how students think their student employment will translate to their profession (Student Employment Development, n.d.). While this study will not use the same language, the survey and semi-structured questions used will consist of similar

themes. While Student Life at Rowan University also includes the Office of Orientation and Student Leadership Programs, the Student Government Association, the Office of Greek Affairs, and the Office of Volunteerism, Community Engagement and Commuter Services, these departments were excluded, as they do not have several consistent, paid employment opportunities for students.

Research Method

This study employed mixed methods to understand and analyze the relationship between student employment and student development and the perceptions of student and professional staff. Mixed methods provide a deeper, more insightful understanding of social phenomena and thus applicable to this study (Greene, 2007). This methodology is pertinent as it was believed by the researcher to be the most effective in creating a holistic analysis of the experiences of both student and professional staff since it is driven by both statistical data and information-rich data. The qualitative data collected was used to expand on the understanding of these experiences briefly addressed through the survey.

Procedure

After receiving Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, the Director of Student Center and Campus Activities, and the Director of Campus Recreation, were contacted to inform them of the study that was to take place in their respective departments. As a graduate assistant in Campus Recreation, I have access to all student and professional emails within the department, which were used to recruit participants and disseminate the survey and interview links. Additionally, through partnership on different programming across campus in the past, I have established professional relationships with all professional staff that work in the Student Center and Campus Activities (SCCA). I did

not have prior access to the Student Center and Campus Activities student employees' emails and the Director of the Student Center preferred the recruitment email be sent out from their listserv.

Once the email addresses for all potential participants were received, a recruitment email was sent out to all student and professional staff that work in these departments. The recruitment email included information about myself, my interest and experience as both a student and paraprofessional (graduate coordinator), the purpose and goal of the study, and the details and logistics of participation in the study. Individuals who received this email were also informed of the confidentiality and minimal-risk nature of the research.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was all current, returning undergraduate and professional employees (including graduate coordinators) within Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities at Rowan University. Returning staff is defined as an individual who worked for either of these departments prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants in this study were either current returning student or professional employees within one of these departments. Because of the financial ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of student employees was significantly lower than initially anticipated. It is important to note that prior to COVID-19, Rowan Campus Recreation had approximately 185 student employees while the Student Center and Campus Activities had approximately 120 student employees. As of December 2020, Campus Recreation had 60 student employees and the Student Center and Campus Activities had 80 student employees. Of the 120 total student employees,

approximately 77 of these students are returning staff and thus meet the criteria of the study. The number of professional staff was not impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic- Campus Recreation has 13 while the Student Center and Campus Activities has 14, excluding the directors and administrative assistants. Graduate coordinators were included in the sample of professional staff as they often facilitate student development opportunities and directly oversee student employees. Of these 27 professional staff in these departments, only 19 are returning employees and thus meet the criteria of the study. Directors and administrative assistants were not included as they do not directly oversee student staff or lead student development opportunities.

The recruitment emails were sent to 91 student employees and 18 professional staff with a desired minimum reach of 30 student participants and 10 professional participants for the survey. As part of the survey, those who completed it were asked if they would be interested in an interview to speak more on their experiences and perceptions. From those interested, purposeful criterion sampling was used to determine the student and professional employees who will provide the most comprehensive portrayal of student development in both departments. Survey and interview participants had to be either a student employee or professional staff member in Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities. Specific student employee and professional staff were selected to ensure the data reflected the different positions and responsibilities of the roles these participants have. All were over the age of 18 and fit the criteria.

Instrumentation

This study required the creation of a survey instrument and semi-structured interview questions to form an extensive, dueling narrative of experiences and

perceptions. The survey instrument was developed using Qualtrics, an online survey builder, distributor, and data analytic software that is the official survey tool of Rowan University (California State University Long Branch, 2020). A survey instrument was chosen as a data collection tool for this study to establish the foundation of the relationship between on-campus student employment and student development and also as an initial measure of the perceptions of student development held by both student and professional staff. Since there was no existing survey instrument to measure these perceptions, I created a survey instrument (McMillan, 2016). Semi-structured interview questions were chosen to expand and further analyze this relationship, the experiences of both groups, and furthermore their perceptions of these experiences. The method of semi structured interviews was used since it allowed me to remain objective, while also probing to find the commonalities in the experiences and perspectives shared (McMillan, 2016), Creswell and Poth, 2018). In addition, the flexibility of the interviews allowed me to use the results of the quantitative data to further develop the questions asked. While the semi-structured questions were developed before the survey data was collected, the survey data, along with initial qualitative responses, informed my probing questions. The survey and interview questions were solely focused on their employment experiences as they relate to student development and did not ask invasive demographic or employment questions, thus imposing minimal risk on participants.

Data Collection

Final Institutional Review Board approval permitted the survey instrument to be sent out to the targeted population via a link through an email received on the potential participants' Rowan affiliated email addresses. Before completing the survey,

participants were reminded of what they were consenting to and that the survey would take no longer than 10 minutes. Survey data was collected during February of spring 2021. Although the results obtained included participants' names, names were only used to determine who wanted to participate in interviews. The interviews, which lasted approximately 30 minutes long, consisted of open-ended questions in hopes that participants would speak more directly about their experiences and what they felt applied to the study. All interviews were conducted virtually through Zoom. Through the concluding discussion of the interview and an additional email, I thanked the participants, told them about the potential for additional follow-up questions that may arise in the data analysis or writing stage, and instructed them to contact me through email with any questions regarding the study. Every interview was recorded and notes were taken throughout as well. The interview audio recordings were transcribed within one week of each interview completion. Participants did not receive any payment for completion of the survey or participation in the interviews.

Data Analysis

Two analytical approaches were utilized for a mixed methods approach. Qualtrics and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) were used in the collection and analysis of the quantitative data. The results of the survey were kept within Qualtrics and never saved to any personal devices. Names were only collected if participants selected, "yes", to the question regarding their desire to participate in an interview. Only the participants' names were necessary as the university email system is linked with the university directory. The participants' names were left out of the quantitative analysis. To analyze the quantitative data, I looked for patterns among responses (i.e.- majority of

responses and how that relates to other survey responses). All survey responses were destroyed once the study was completed.

In order to analyze the qualitative data, a thematic approach was taken. Described by Boyatzis (1998) as a bridge between quantitative and qualitative data, thematic analysis was chosen as it speaks to the themes highlighted in the literature review and quantitative data thus proving to be appropriate and dependable in this mixed methods study. The six-phase procedure for conducting thematic analysis outlined by Nowell et al. (2017) was employed. The phases include familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and naming themes, and producing the report (Nowell et al., 2017). While participants' responses naturally allowed additional themes to arise, as proposed by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), preset themes were established to provide the preliminary direction of categorization. Interviews were transcribed within the same week of recording and given an initial review to ensure I was familiarized with the data. As part of this phase, I also documented any additional thoughts, potential codes/themes, and potential theoretical implications. The transcriptions along with any notes and codes generated were stored together in a well-organized Google drive only accessible to myself. Upon completion of the coding process, the next phase was to search and identify themes across the coded data. After setting the themes, I reviewed the transcripts and coded data of these transcripts to ensure that the chosen themes did in fact form a pattern. During the next phase, I defined the resulting themes and considered how these themes fit into my research and answer my research questions. Approximately three weeks were dedicated

to repeatedly reading the transcripts, coding the data, categorizing the codes into themes, and then refining the themes.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Quantitative Sample

The participants of the quantitative study consisted of two populations: current, returning student and professional staff in either the department of Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities at Rowan University. For the purposes of this study, returning student and professional staff meant those who worked prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was distributed to the Campus Recreation student staff through their Rowan email on February 9th, 2021 with data collection ending on February 23rd, 2021. Although the Student Center and Campus Activities student employee survey followed the same timeline, the survey was distributed to this population through their employee listserv. The professional staff survey was distributed through their Rowan email on February 9th, 2021 with data collection ending on February 17th, 2021. Professional staff received the same email regardless of department. Both the student employee and professional staff surveys solely consisted of quantitative responses with some employing the Likert scale. The total number of surveys distributed for the student employee population was 91, with a total of 36 responses being collected, yielding a return rate of 39.5%. The total number of surveys distributed for the professional staff population was 18, with a total of 15 responses being collected, yielding a return rate of 83%. The only demographic information collected from all participants of the survey was the office of employment - Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities. For the student employee survey, 23 (62%) of the

participants worked in Campus Recreation, while seven (38%) worked in the Student Center and Campus Activities. For the professional staff survey, eight (53%) of the participants worked in Campus Recreation, while seven (47%) worked in the Student Center and Campus Activities. This demographic information was not used to compare the departments in any way, but rather to provide information on the representation of the departments in the data.

Analysis of Quantitative Findings

In order to answer the first research question, the survey instruments distributed to both student and professional staff consisted of questions regarding students' developmental experiences throughout their employment. Students and professionals were asked several questions related to the developmental areas highlighted throughout the literature review. Lastly, participants were asked if they felt the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the student employment experience and development.

Research Question 1

What is the pattern of responses related to student development experiences and professional staff support for both student employees and professional staff?

Transferable Skill Acquisition

To gain a better understanding of student employee and professional staff perceptions of the skills gained through on-campus employment, both populations were first asked if they believed there was valuable, tangible, and transferable skill acquisition that occurred as a result of on-campus employment. Table 1 and Table 2 highlight questions on the

survey that illustrates student employee and professional staff perceptions of transferable skill acquisition, respectively. The majority of both populations strongly agreed that there was transferable skill acquisition as a result of employment. Of the 36 student employee participants, 35 (97.3%) responded either strongly agree or agree with 1 neutral response (2.7%) when asked if they felt they gained skills through their on-campus employment. Of the 15 professional staff, all either strongly agreed (73.3%) or agreed (26.7%) that student employees gain valuable, tangible skills through on-campus employment that are transferable. This pattern suggests that transferable skill acquisition occurs as a direct result of on-campus student employment.

Table 1

Student Employees' Perceptions on Transferable Skill Acquisition

I have gained valuable, tangible skills through my on-campus employment that will be transferable in the real world.

| | N=36 | % |
|----------------|------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 27 | 75.0% |
| Agree | 8 | 22.2% |
| Neutral | 1 | 2.8% |

Table 2

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on Transferable Skill Acquisition

My student employees have gained valuable, tangible skills through on-campus employment that will be transferable in the real world.

| | N=15 | % |
|----------------|------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 11 | 73.3% |
| Agree | 4 | 26.7% |

Development

To explore the relationship between on-campus student employment and student development, a series of survey questions regarding this relationship were asked of both student and professional staff. These questions were centered around the developmental themes discussed in the literature review, student employees' experiences, and professional staffs' perceptions of these experiences.

Student Employee Developmental Experience. As highlighted throughout the literature review, on-campus student employment tends to impact students' development in four areas: transferable skill development, leadership development, mentorship, and civic engagement. Through the student tailored survey instrument, student employees of

Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities were asked about their experience in the context of these developmental areas. First, the student participants were asked which developmental area they felt they benefited the most from as a result of their employment, followed by which they felt they gained the least from. All but one student participant answered when asked which area was most beneficial. Table 3 shows student employees' perceptions of the area in which they benefited most while Table 4 shows the perceptions of students when asked which developmental area they benefited the least from. Table 3 shows 24 (68.6%) student employees reported they benefited most from leadership development, with the second most reported response being transferable skill development (17.1%). However, also seen in Table 3, when asked which developmental area they benefited the least from, 17 (47.2%) reported mentorship with the second most reported response being civic engagement development (33.3%). The pattern of responses in Table 3 indicates student employees perceive leadership development to be the area in which they developed most. Although the majority of the student participants felt they benefited from leadership development, only 3 (20%) of the professional staff believed this to be the focus of their department, with the other 12 (80%) reporting transferable skill development as the focus of their department. The results when asked about which area their department focused on the least were not as defined with 7 (46.7%) professional staff reporting civic engagement, 5 (33.3%) reporting mentorship, and 3 (20%) reporting mentorship. The pattern of responses in Table 4 reveals student participants felt they developed the least through mentorship and civic engagement development.

Table 3

Student Employees' Perceptions on Developmental Area Most Beneficial

Which developmental area do you feel you benefited from most during your student employment tenure? Please select one

| | N=35 | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Leadership development | 24 | 66.7% |
| Transferable skill development | 6 | 16.7% |
| Civic engagement development | 4 | 11.1% |
| Mentorship | 1 | 2.8% |

Table 4

Student Employees' Perceptions on Developmental Area Least Beneficial

Which developmental area do you feel you benefited from least during your student employment tenure? Please select one

| | N=36 | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Mentorship | 17 | 47.2% |
| Civic engagement development | 12 | 33.3% |
| Transferable skill development | 4 | 11.1% |
| Leadership development | 3 | 8.3% |

While students reported the areas they benefited most and least from, professional staff were asked which developmental areas they perceived their department to focus on the most and least, which can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6, respectively.

Table 5

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on Department Area of Most Focus

Which developmental area does your department focus on the most?

| | N=15 | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Transferable skill development | 12 | 80.0% |
| Leadership development | 3 | 20.0% |

Table 6

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on Department Area of Least Focus

Which developmental area does your department focus on the least?

| | N=15 | % |
|------------------------|------|-------|
| Civic engagement ... | 7 | 46.7% |
| Mentorship | 5 | 33.3% |
| Leadership development | 3 | 20.0% |

Although the majority of the student participants felt they benefited from leadership development, only three of the professional staff believed this to be the focus of their department, with the majority reporting transferable skill development as the focus of their department. Unsurprisingly, the two developmental areas professional staff thought their departments focused on the least, civic engagement and mentorship, were the same two areas student participants felt they benefited least from.

As a means of gauging perceptions on the frequency and sufficiency of formal student development opportunities, students were asked how often their on-campus employment offered formal student development opportunities and if they found this frequency to be ample. Likewise, professional staff were asked about the frequency. Table 7 shows the student employees' perceptions of the frequency of development opportunities alongside Table 8 which depicts the professional staff perception of the same.

Table 7

Student Employees' Perceptions on Amount of Student Development Opportunities

How often did your on-campus employment offer formal student development opportunities (trainings, workshops, individual evaluation meetings)?

| | N=36 | % |
|------------|------|-------|
| Monthly | 21 | 58.3% |
| Bi-weekly | 9 | 25.0% |
| Weekly | 3 | 8.3% |
| Semesterly | 3 | 8.3% |

Table 8

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on Amount of Student Development Opportunities

How often did your on-campus employment offer formal student development opportunities (trainings, workshops, individual evaluation meetings)?

| | N=15 | % |
|------------|------|-------|
| Monthly | 9 | 60.0% |
| Bi-weekly | 3 | 20.0% |
| Weekly | 2 | 13.3% |
| Semesterly | 1 | 6.7% |

The majority of students reported formal development opportunities occurred at least once a month (21-58.3%) with 11 (30.5%) reporting opportunities occurring as often as bi-weekly or weekly. Similarly, the majority of professional staff reported the frequency to be monthly (9-60%), while 5 (33.3%) perceived these opportunities to be happening twice a month or weekly. The pattern of student employee and professional staff responses indicates that some students and professionals may have been involved with more formal student development opportunities than others and/or that they may define a formal student development opportunity differently. Student employees were also asked if they felt the amount of student development opportunities was sufficient. Of the 36 participants, 33 (91.6%) either strongly agreed or agreed the amount was sufficient, with two (5.6%) neutral responses and one (2.8%) strongly disagree responses recorded. This implies that regardless of how often student participants felt their department offered formal student development opportunities, the majority were content with that amount.

Significance and the Pursuit of Future Employment. Both student and professional staff were asked questions regarding the significance of student development and the developmental areas. Student employees were asked which area they felt was most important and which area they felt least important in the pursuit of future employment. Professional staff were asked which developmental area they felt most important and which they felt least important to incorporate into their student development offerings as these offerings are meant to equip student employees with the skills and tools needed to be successful in their careers. Table 9 shows the data on student

perceptions while Table 10 shows professional staff' perceptions of the most important developmental area.

Table 9

Student Employees' Perceptions on Most Important Area in Pursuit of Employment

Which developmental areas do you find most important in your pursuit of future employment? Please select one

| | N=36 | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Leadership development | 17 | 47.2% |
| Transferable skill development | 12 | 33.3% |
| Civic engagement development | 5 | 13.9% |
| Mentorship | 2 | 5.6% |

Table 10

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on Most Important Area to Include in Student Development Opportunities

Which developmental area do you feel is most important to incorporate in student development opportunities? Please select one

| | N=15 | % |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Transferable skill development | 12 | 80.0% |
| Mentorship | 2 | 13.3% |
| Civic engagement development | 1 | 6.7% |

While student employees felt leadership development (17-47.2%) and transferable skill development (12-33.3%) were most important in their pursuit of employment, the majority of professional staff (12-80%) felt transferable skill development was most important with zero leadership development responses recorded. This pattern of responses suggests that students and professionals both recognize the significance of transferable skill development not only in the pursuit of employment, but also throughout their tenure on-campus. Additionally, the student pattern of leadership development responses, along with the same pattern displayed in Table 3, suggests that while students find this important and the most beneficial, professional staff may not have to intentionally focus on leadership development, but student employees feel as though they gain/develop the most in leadership development as a result of employment. Conversely,

both populations were asked their perceptions of the least important developmental area. Of the 36 students, 16 (44.4%) reported mentorship and 12 (33.3%) reported civic engagement as the least important developmental areas in the pursuit of employment. In terms of which developmental area professional staff felt was least important to incorporate, six (40%) responded mentorship, five (33.3%) responded civic engagement development, and four responded leadership development (26.7%). This pattern indicates overlap in the perceptions student and professional participants have of significant developmental areas to career readiness.

Role in Development

Whether directly or indirectly, both student employees and professional staff contribute to student development through on-campus employment. To explore these contributions, all were asked their perceptions of the role students and professionals play in student development.

Role of Professional Staff. In order to measure students' perceptions of the role professional staff play in their development, they were asked if they felt professional staff are crucial in providing developmental opportunities and if they felt professional staff prioritize their development during their employment. When asked if professionals play a crucial role in development, 21 (36.1%) students strongly agreed, 13 (36.1%) agreed, and two (5.6%) responded neutral. The majority of student employees felt professional staff prioritized their development; 23 (63.9%) responded strongly agree, 12 (33.3%) responded agree, and one responded neutral. Student employees clearly believe

professionals are integral to the facilitation of student development, while also remaining committed to the charge.

Professional staffs' perceptions of their individual prioritization and their departmental prioritization of student development were also measured through the professional tailored survey instrument. To assess their individual prioritization, professional staff were asked if they felt they prioritize student development and associated opportunities in their supervisory tasks. Of the 15 participants, 11 (73.3%) strongly agreed, 3 (20%) agreed, and 1 (6.7%) responded neutral. Additionally, professional staff were asked if they felt their respective department prioritized student development. All participants either responded strongly agree (10-66.7%) or agree (5-33.3%). The professional staff of Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities prioritize student development and are supported by the department's prioritization of student development.

Role of Student Employees. Both student and professional staff participants were asked if they felt their departments considered student perspectives in the planning and selection of their student development related opportunities. The perceptions of student participants are shown in Table 11 with Table 12 showing the perceptions of professional participants. Of the 36 student employees, the majority (31-86.1%) either strongly agreed (17-47.2%) or agreed. The data collected from professional staff was not as clear-cut as there were no strongly agree responses recorded and 6 responses of either neutral or disagree. This may be a result of also including student voices in the professional staff question. Regardless, the frequency of responses shows student

employees feel that their perspectives are taken into consideration in student development opportunities.

Table 11

Student Employees' Perceptions on the Inclusion of Student Perspectives in Planning of Student Development Opportunities

My department takes into consideration student perspectives in the planning and selection of our student development related opportunities.

| | N=36 | % |
|----------------|------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 17 | 47.2% |
| Agree | 14 | 38.9% |
| Neutral | 5 | 13.9% |

Table 12

Professional Staffs' Perceptions on the Inclusion of Student Perspectives and Voices in Planning of Student Development Opportunities

My department includes student perspectives and voices in the planning and selection of our student development related opportunities.

| | N=15 | % |
|----------|------|-------|
| Agree | 9 | 60.0% |
| Neutral | 4 | 26.7% |
| Disagree | 2 | 13.3% |

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Although all student employees and professional staff participants in this study worked prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be remiss of this study not to acknowledge the potential impact it has on student development. Both populations were asked if they felt the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the on-campus employment experience and student development. While the majority of professional staff perceived there to be a negative or somewhat negative impact (86.6%), the data collected from student employees was not as clear. Of the 36 student participants, 23 (63.9%) responded either negatively or somewhat negatively, 8 (22.2%) responded neutral, and 5 (13.9%) responded either positively or somewhat positively. Unfortunately, this data cannot be

trusted or discussed further as it became evident to the researchers that due to the structure of the choices following the same pattern (a Likert scale) as other questions, participants chose the first response thinking it was “strongly agree” when it was really “positively.”

Analysis of Qualitative Findings

Profile of Qualitative Sample

Since this study follows an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, the participants of the qualitative study were selected from those participants who had indicated interest at the end of the survey instruments used in the quantitative portion of this study. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure both departments were equally represented in the qualitative sample. This study did not address the differences between certain positions held or department, thus it was important there was a diverse, but equal split of participants from both departments. Of the 17 students who expressed interest in interviewing through the survey, six, three from either department were interviewed. Of the 14 professionals who expressed interest in interviewing, six, three from either department were interviewed. In total, twelve participants were selected and interviewed between February 23rd, 2021 and March 11th, 2021. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, all held via Zoom. Biographies of the interview participants can be found at the beginning of the qualitative analysis section.

For the semi structured interviews, two sets of IRB approved questions were used- one specific to student employees and the other specific to professional staff. After consent forms were signed, 12 interviews (6 of each population-student and professional)

were conducted lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Through Zoom, each interview was recorded and transcribed. The co-investigator then went through each recording and transcription fixing any errors or omissions made by the Zoom software.

Using the thematic analysis method, the transcriptions were read and coded several times in order to find potential themes. Due to the complementary nature of the two sets of interview questions, common themes were able to be drawn from the data collected from both participant populations. There are four overarching themes with a series of sub-themes in each. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data were: transferable skill development, student employee and professional staffs' perceptions of specific student development opportunities, perceptions of the role of professional staff, and the perceptions of the inclusion of student perspectives and voices in student development planning and facilitation. For the purposes of this qualitative analysis section, student employee perceptions will be discussed first followed by professional staff perceptions.

Sample Biographies

Below is a brief biographical description of each interview participant. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used.

Table 13*Professional Staff Participants' Biographies*

| Pseudonym | Department | Number of Supervisory Areas |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lucy | Campus Recreation | Oversees 2 areas of student staff |
| Paul | Campus Recreation | 2 areas |
| Gloria | Campus Recreation | 2 areas |
| Vince | Student Center and Campus Activities | 1 area |
| Cayenne | Student Center and Campus Activities | 2 areas |
| Russell | Student Center and Campus Activities | 1 area |

Table 14

Student Employee Participants' Biographies

| Pseudonym | Department | Year | Employment Area |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Harrison | Student Center and Campus Activities | Senior | Building Manager |
| Amy | Student Center and Campus Activities | Junior | Information Desk Assistant |
| Jordan | Student Center and Campus Activities | Junior | Student University Programmer |
| Vivian | Campus Recreation | Junior | Building Manager |
| Ashley | Campus Recreation | Senior | Campus Recreation Assistant |
| Gus | Campus Recreation | Sophomore | Facilities Operations Assistant |

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of both student employees and professional staff regarding student development as a result of student employment?

Transferable Skill Development

For the purpose of this introduction to the perceptions of transferable skill development, both populations general perceptions will be synthesized. Student employees and professional staff discussed at length the transferable skill development that they perceive occurs as a direct result of on-campus employment. Both populations overwhelmingly agreed that students gain skills through employment that can be applied

elsewhere and that these skills would help in the pursuit of employment following graduation. When asked this question, most professional participants immediately responded “absolutely” “100 percent.” Students responded similarly. Ashley, who aspires to work in the medical field, explained the transferability of acquired skills, “Absolutely, I think that this job is going to be the only job on my resume where even though it doesn’t pertain closely to anything I want to do, it definitely set me up [success]...” Other students agreed, citing their experiences as on-campus employees as something they could speak to in an interview or on a resume. All participants were also asked to speak on specific skills they believed to be transferable. As a result, transferable skill development was discussed by both student and professional employees in the context of four sub-themes: communication, conflict resolution and problem solving, confidence, and professionalism. The sub-themes expand on the survey data related to transferable skill development.

Communication. All student participants directly spoke about how they felt their on-campus employment experience helped them develop and refine their communication skills. Although in different contexts, the student participants discussed how they learned to communicate with different populations-patrons of the campus recreation facilities or Student Center, co-workers, and their supervisors. Many shared how their position made them feel more comfortable when communicating with others and when speaking in front of a group because they had to on a regular basis at work. One student, Harrison, elaborated further, “It [on-campus job] put me in situations where I had to express myself and it made me learn how to express myself more and how to just be comfortable with talking to people...” Others, such as Gus and Jordan, specifically mentioned the

transferability of their communication skills. Gus, another student hoping to work in the medical field, felt their communication would be useful in any professional setting, while Jordan mentioned how they felt this skill helped them work in a team setting and was certain it would be helpful in their future marketing career.

Likewise, some of the professional staff participants also explained how students work on communication skills through their jobs. Four of the six professional participants mentioned communication as a transferable skill gained through student employment that is also beneficial in the pursuit of employment. Vince, a professional staff member, spoke to many scenarios in which student employees must communicate thus working on this skill. They explained, “I really think they’re able to work on communication skills and if you’re not good at communicating with people then you are after you leave because you have to address [people].” Gloria agreed and further explained the importance of this skill in terms of working well with others, especially when communicating different opinions and then talking through it. Student employees and professional staff recognize communication as an integral transferable skill that is gained through on-campus employment.

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving. Three of the six student participants discussed how they regularly dealt with conflicts at their on-campus job and thus developed the ability to handle these situations calmly. The three who explicitly mentioned conflict resolution and/or problem solving as skills worked on positions (facility supervision and officiating) in which conflict was far more likely to occur than the positions in which the other three student participants worked. Vivian spoke about how often they had to employ her conflict resolution skills, but that they felt prepared to,

since before having to deal with an actual conflict, they had reviewed several conflict scenarios specific to their job as a team. They also mentioned that when applying to jobs, they would “...point out the specific things that I gained from it [on-campus job] like the problem solving and the conflict resolution...” Similarly, Ashley discussed how the conflict resolution and problem solving experience they gained as a result of their on-campus job has already helped them in interviews, as they were able to reference specific incidents. Ashley also agreed these skills would help them directly in their responsibilities as a nurse. Harrison added about how the fast-paced nature of their responsibilities forced them to learn how to quickly react and solve any problems or conflicts that arose. Student employees in specific roles may deal with conflict and problems more often than others, but those that regularly handle these sorts of situations understand the importance of these skills and the application they can have in their future careers.

Of the six professional staff participants, three mentioned conflict resolution and/or problem solving as a transferable skill gained by student employees. However, it was only briefly mentioned by two as skills that are gained and relevant in pursuit of employment following graduation. Vince, the only professional participant to discuss these skills in more detail, stated “ I think that’s another big area that we train them on here, critical thinking and problem solving and I think that really translates to the next job.” Professionals agree that conflict resolution and problem solving are skills learned and utilized in on-campus employment but may not place the same emphasis on these skills as student employees do, especially when applying to future jobs.

Confidence. Another sub-theme within transferable skill development that emerged was the development of confidence in student employees as a result of on-campus employment. Four of the six student participants shared how they felt their jobs helped them develop a level of confidence that they did not have before. When asked about their experience as a student employee and how they felt they had or had not developed, Jordan responded:

Just based on where I was when I first found out about the position and everything, my confidence has grown a ton. I didn't really ever imagine myself heading a committee or running events or any of the stuff that I get to do on campus now.

Through Jordan's on-campus responsibilities, they were able to gain confidence, which Jordan also suggested has pushed them to apply for and obtain higher positions they never thought they would be able to obtain or execute. Other student participants shared similar thoughts. They agreed that the responsibilities of the job put them in situations that led to increased confidence. Ashley added that the public speaking that was required of them in the daily responsibilities of their job boosted their confidence "just overall in life." Likewise, for Harrison, the responsibilities of their job required them to confront uncomfortable situations head on, but they felt as a result, they built up the confidence to handle these situations.

Even though the majority of the student participants spoke about the confidence gained through their employment, none of the professional staff participants mentioned confidence as a skill gained through employment. This is not to suggest professional staff

disagree, but rather that they may not hear or know the significance of establishing confidence to their student staff and their development.

Professionalism. While professionalism may not be widely considered a transferable skill, many of the student employee participants spoke on skills relating to professionalism that they gained through their employment and how they felt those would be transferable to future employment. The specific skills discussed included how to conduct oneself professionally in person, on the phone, and through email and how to network. Amy spoke about their experience planning events for internal and external clients and how this in a way forced them to become more professional since they did not want to come off as an unprofessional student when corresponding with clients. Harrison and Vivian believed the “focus” or “emphasis” placed on professionalism to be helpful in the development of their own professionalism. Furthermore, both, as well as Ashley, also discussed how their responsibilities and student development opportunities provided them with the space to learn and/or refine their networking skills. Vivian and Ashley shared how they felt regular networking with professional staff within their department, other student employees, and patrons bolstered their ability to network professionally. The exposure student employees have to a professional setting and professional staff is invaluable as it teaches them to the norms of the professional world, how to behave in the workplace, and how to network with peers and professionals.

Professionalism or anything related, such as networking, was another sub-theme that professional staff did not mention as an area in which their student employees develop. Again, this is not implying professional staff would object to professionalism as a transferable skill, but rather highlighting they did not mention professionalism when

asked about specific skills gained by student employees. Students expanded more on specific skills than professionals.

Conclusion of Transferable Skill Development. It is evident through both student and professional staff responses that all agree transferable skill development occurs as a direct result of employment. Additionally, it is clear that both populations believe these skills will be crucial in the pursuit of future employment. Professional staff agreed with student staff when sharing their perceptions of communication and conflict resolution and problem solving, but unlike student participants, did not share their perceptions on the development of confidence and professionalism.

Perceptions of Student Development Opportunities

The second theme to emerge from this study is the perceptions student employees and professional staff have of the student development opportunities administered by the departments of Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities. Student employees and professional staff were first asked which specific student development related opportunities they found to be most beneficial to themselves/students and then which they found to be the least beneficial. Additionally, the perceptions of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student development were collected and analyzed. The sub themes discussed below unpack students' and professionals' perceptions of student development opportunities and provide further detail on specific opportunities not addressed in the quantitative data.

The Power of One-on-Ones. The first subtheme to develop as a result of being asked which student development opportunities were most and least beneficial was the

power of one-on-one (or one-on-two) meetings with students and their professional supervisor(s) or student (peer) supervisor. The majority of both student employee participants and professional staff participants, nine out of 12 total participants, discussed how they felt one-on-ones were beneficial to students and their development. Four of the six students highlighted one-on-ones using phrases such as “ a comfortable space,” and “always the best.” Ashley specifically spoke to how they felt one-on-ones helped them learn how to take constructive criticism: “I never actually got criticism from anybody [before]...I had never been in a situation where something I was doing needed to be criticized, and like we would work from that.” Ashley’s on-campus employment experience exposed her to a degree of feedback they had previously not experienced, a sentiment Jordan shared as well. While Vivian agreed, they also added that she felt these meetings were about more than just the job:

I think especially the concept of the one-on-ones where you would think it’s just about how you are doing at work, but then I’ve always had the experience, where they’re like how are you doing as a human being...

This opportunity allowed Vivian to establish a connection with her supervisors and feel supported by her supervisors and in the workplace. Gus agreed with this notion when stating, “...It is just so much easier to express yourself in that format, in my opinion.” Students find one-on-ones beneficial to their development as it gives them the chance to receive feedback and learn from it, speak with their supervisor(s) about personal and professional matters, and form a connection with their supervisor(s) that is open and supportive.

Of the six professional staff interviewed, five mentioned one-on-ones as an opportunity they believed students significantly benefited from. Many agreed that one-on-ones allowed supervisor(s) to help students be successful both in and out of their on-campus employment. Lucy described one-on-ones as “...the most beneficial because we can talk about things that are specific to them.” They also added, “One-on-ones are where we talk about other opportunities that they might not have thought about that we can provide for them and experiences that we know...” Cayenne agreed and also added, “...I just feel like it allows you to get deeper and more personal...” Gloria built off of this and discussed how they felt one-on-ones allowed for the development of relationships with student employees that could help them personally and professionally. Specific to professional support, Gloria stated,

...I don't sometimes think that students realize that and one of the things that...has been brought up a little bit more through our one-on-ones is identifying with students what those skills are and to talk about what it means to have a transferable skill...

Gloria suggested through one-on-ones, professional staff are able to help students realize the skills they are gaining through their employment and coach them on how to speak about these skills in an interview. Professional staff participants found one-on-ones to be beneficial as they provide the opportunity to connect students with additional resources, build relationships with students, and guide them personally and professionally in ways that are specific to each student's needs.

Perceptions of Meetings/Trainings of All Staff. Both Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities traditionally have meetings at which all staff, both student and professional, are present. For both departments, these are not only used as opportunities to cover departmental policies and procedures, but also to discuss integral topics that are not directly related to their work responsibilities, such as budgeting/financial wellbeing, QPR (suicide prevention) training, an alumni panel that speaks on transferability, and much more. All twelve of both student and professional participants shared their perceptions on these developmental opportunities in which all staff were present.

When asked what specific student development opportunities they found to be least helpful, five out of the six student employees discussed opportunities with all of the staff. All five suggested that sometimes the information presented felt unnecessary (i.e., university wide policies) and/or other times the topics covered felt not as pertinent or fulfilling as others. Jordan discussed feeling like that the content was repetitive as they had been working with the Student Center and Campus Activities for about three years and also that the content regarding Rowan wide policies was unhelpful. Gus agreed some felt more pertinent than others and added,

I feel like sometimes when we have a real world [all staff development opportunity for Campus Recreation]... there isn't really any direction on how we should apply it. Like we have all the information but it's kind of like okay now what do I do with this?

Gus felt like the lesson was clear but how to apply the lesson in practice was lost in presentations with all staff.

In addition, three students expressed their perceptions of the opportunity to hear from alumni, who worked in their respective departments speak on the transferability of their on-campus job to their current job. While one student spoke on this experience in a positive way, the other two critiqued this opportunity. Harrison's perception of this opportunity was positive, as they felt, "...that [hearing from former student employees] kind of gave me something to look towards and something to look at to see where I could be in the future." Contrarily, Ashley and Vivian, who both mentioned how they liked the concept of alumni panels, felt this was the student development opportunity they benefited the least from as they both felt there was not a sufficient variety of professionals with different career paths and different majors in college. Students have some negative perceptions of trainings with all staff and mixed perceptions of alumni panels.

All professional staff participants shared to some degree their perceptions of trainings with all staff. While there were, certain professionals that spoke to these perceptions more, the most commonly held perceptions were that these were "important," "a little bit lengthy," and "giant." Gloria expanded on this when talking about the all staff training at the beginning of the semester: "We...give students so much information that it's like the fire hose syndrome, where we are like spraying students with a fire hose of information and are they absorbing it all? No, they're not." They also noted they were unsure of a solution to that since there is a lot of important information that needs to be covered and professionals still want to prepare students as much as possible. Cayenne

agreed with the notion students are not absorbing all of training: “So when you have one person speaking to like 100 people, sometimes the message gets lost,” but also felt like these opportunities gave students the chance to connect their experiences with the larger purpose of their departments.

A specific opportunity with all staff present that four professional participants spoke about was alumni panels. While alumni panels may not be what professional staff believed to be most or least beneficial to students, those who explained their perceptions spoke of alumni panels as beneficial. Vince discussed alumni panels in the context of offering staff a different perspective and voice than who students normally hear from at meetings/trainings- professional staff. Lucy concurred and also stated, “I think our students benefit the most when they hear from alumni... to hear about grads and what they are doing now and how the job prepared them for the future...” Lucy and Gloria implied that hearing from former student employees helped current student staff put the transferability of their responsibilities into perspective. Professionals acknowledge the necessity of having trainings with all staff members, but also recognize that due to the large and intense nature of these trainings, information is often lost. These participants also indicated that alumni panels provide examples of skills gained through on-campus employment in the professional setting.

Impact of COVID-19 on Opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities at Rowan University. During the approval process, the directors of Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities informed me that many student employees were not re-hired due to lack of funding and programming, and many of those who were

brought back were forced to work in positions they had not previously worked in. In addition, many professional staff no longer work in the office on a daily basis, but rather work from home. These factors, combined with the constant virtual environment, especially when meetings with all staff occur, has resulted in strong perceptions held by both participant populations. These findings are crucial to this study since the quantitative data collected regarding COVID-19 pandemic could not be used.

All student employees and professional staff shared their experiences during COVID-19 and how they felt it negatively impacted student development. Student participants discussed feeling “robbed,” less motivated, and less connected with other staff. Many talked about how their responsibilities had changed and the specific opportunities they were looking forward to such as, greater responsibility, events, and programs, no longer occurred. Harrison spoke to this exact feeling: “I feel like I was kind of robbed almost of the whole experience because there were certain things that I was looking forward to...that kind of just don’t happen anymore.” Vivian agreed there were more opportunities prior to the beginning of the pandemic:

Coming into it my freshman year as opposed to now is a very different experience. I think that I got more of those developmental opportunities because we could do things in person...like network amongst the pro staff even if I would have had no reason to talk [to them] ...

While they agreed that COVID-19 had some negative impact on their development, Amy, Gus, and Jordan all commented on the opportunity to develop different skills as a result of the pandemic. Jordan explained, “Well sometimes it feels like a negative, I definitely

have increased skills around communication and flexibility and stuff like that that I did not necessarily have outside the pandemic just because it was impossible to get by without them.” They also later recognized increased resilience. Amy spoke to the impacts of a new position: “They took us in over at the Info Desk so I guess I did still grow a little bit because I went over there and I learned the new skills that were needed for the Info Desk...” The overall feeling of student employees is that the COVID-19 negatively impacted their development, but there are some who did not feel all development was lost as the pandemic forced them to be adaptable.

Professional staff participants shared feelings similar to those of the student participants. These six participants expressed their negative perception of the impacts of COVID-19 using phrases like difficult, different, harder to connect, and disconnect. Paul described the different employment experience students have as a result of the pandemic:

...the main reason why many of them wanted to be in that position was to challenge themselves to gain this experience and be challenged...and COVID has changed that big time because at the Fitness Center there is very very little challenge and it's not what they signed up for.

Vince agreed with this perception: “...the responsibilities aren't nearly as much...” Other professional staff members also touched on the impact the mostly virtual environment had on their ability to effectively develop students and create a connected community. Cayenne spoke to this, “...There is this constant struggle of will we do virtual, well students are tired of being [virtual], they have zoom fatigue.” Lucy also articulated the impact on relationship building saying:

We do a lot of team building with our staff and so that's something that just did not really happen this year, like a one-hour zoom get to know you, play games, is not the same as spending a whole week together.

Vince reiterated this, "I really like the get to know you type of thing but it's so hard over zoom..." The virtual environment both students and professionals are forced to operate in has made developing relationships difficult, thus making development harder and less frequent.

It is evident student and professional participants shared similar perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on student development. Shared feelings include feeling less connectedness and an unwanted shift in responsibilities for student employees.

Role of Professional Staff

In order to gain student employee and professional staff perceptions of the role of professional staff in student development, both populations were asked to explain their experiences. Student participants spoke on how professional staff have shaped their experience and development as an employee. Professional participants spoke on what they believed their role to be in student development. Through these qualitative findings, both populations explain the role of professional staff in further detail.

Student Perception. Generally, student participants of this study found professional staff to be very influential in their experience. Student employees expressed their positive experience working with professional staff using phrases such as, understanding, trust, mentor, and on-campus resource. All held the perception that professional staff were supportive of them and their development. Many spoke of the

relationships they had with professional staff, which were not only something they had not experienced before, but also on a level deeper than just a boss. Vivian described how they felt supported by the relationships they had: “I feel like especially in times where I haven’t really known what I am doing or I have needed a lot more support, they’ve been understanding and they’re always willing to extend information and a helping hand...”

Amy shared this same perception:

I really appreciate how understanding all my supervisors have been, like if I have an issue it’s not like okay we are at work, don’t deal with that here...if I need to get something out there, they are there for me anytime I need.

Harrison further contributed,

...professional staff have pushed me to be more of what I saw myself being... they pushed me but there were still times where they’d be like are you okay with this, so they wouldn’t just throw me in the deep end every time.

Professional staff are able to develop and mentor students as a result of building relationships through open and understanding communication.

Professional Perception. The most commonly held perception by professional staff, as described by Russell, was wearing “many hats” in a role that supervises student employees. They all believed they play multiple roles-in their student employees’ development with common roles being mentor, advocate, and facilitator of opportunities. Four professionals articulated the role (and relationship) of mentor in the context of guiding and supporting students in their development as employees and as people. In order to guide student employees’ development, Paul felt it was important to listen to

students and their needs and to create open and honest communication, especially when it comes to providing feedback. Gloria agreed listening was a part of her role and highlighted how creating the relationship of mentor-mentee with students creates a sense of belonging for student employees that supports and fosters student development. Russell defined the role as more than just a supervisor: "...trying to be a role model... because I'm not here to just give you tasks and make you do those tasks, I'm here to develop you as a person not only as a staff member." The ability professional staff have to connect students with resources and advocate on their behalf is perceived as an additional role professional staff play in student development. Paul explained this further,

...They [professional staff] listen first, don't judge, they follow up, they care. And that's the thing is just caring. It's just so much of where, what does the student really need, and how can we be like an on-campus advocate for that person.

Student employees appreciate forming relationships with professional staff who serve as mentors and support their development through open and understanding communication. Furthermore, professional staff acknowledge the importance of this trusting relationship in the facilitation of successful student development.

Inclusion (and Lack Thereof) of Student Perspectives and Voices in Development

Student employees and professional staff shared their perceptions of the inclusion or lack thereof, of student perspectives and voices in planning and facilitation of student development opportunities. The sub-themes to emerge were the inclusion of student perspectives, how they were included, and the varying levels at which student voices are and are not heard. For the purpose of this study, student perspectives connotes the

indirect inclusion of students' feelings and feedback of-development in the planning and facilitation of opportunities, while student voices connotes the direct inclusion of students in the planning and facilitation of development opportunities.

Inclusion of Student Perspectives. All student employees perceived their perspectives to be included in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities. The ways in which students felt their perspectives were included were through informal conversations with professional staff, surveys, and one-on-ones. Some student participants recounted frequently being given surveys that asked for feedback on a specific student development opportunity. Others spoke about being asked for and providing feedback through conversations with their supervisors. Although Ashley remembered these surveys, they suggested that students may not provide meaningful feedback as they often quickly answer and do not give it much thought. Amy felt like they were asked for feedback through a survey but could not explicitly remember. They both considered informal conversations to be more effective in gathering student perspectives. Vivian also felt that area meetings and one-on-ones gave her the space to share her perspective: "... was this helpful to you? What could we have done better? What would you like to see?... you are consistently being asked about how you feel about certain things."

Professional staff perceived the inclusion of student perspectives in a similar manner to the perceptions of student employees. Four of the six mentioned surveys in their responses when asked about the inclusion of the student perspective. Lucy stated,

I would say that we're very heavy on student input. We take what they say on surveys and what they say in casual conversations about how they feel, what they think they could benefit from, what they don't like, into consideration when we're coming up with our training. Obviously there are some things that are university priorities that we have to infuse.

Lucy clarified that while surveys and conversations are used to hear students' feelings and needs', but that sometimes they have to prioritize university initiatives and goals in trainings and meetings.

Regardless of the manner in which they are included, both student and professional participants felt student perspectives are taken into consideration when planning and facilitating student development opportunities. Participants from both populations offered intriguing perceptions that add layers to the discussion of the inclusion of feedback. Students may be providing feedback through surveys, but professionals may consider being wary of the validity of their responses. Professional staff work to include student perspectives but these may be outweighed by forces higher up than these professional staff who want certain things out of trainings.

Inclusion (and Lack Thereof) of Student Voices. All participants were also explicitly asked if they felt student voices were present in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities.

The majority of students participants felt their voices were included at the area level, but not at the departmental level. Jordan described this very perception: "...not so much with all staffs but I've never really tried personally. I think that when it comes to

our staff [area] specific trainings... we definitely get a say in that.” When asked if they ever had the chance to be part of the planning for an all staff training or meeting, Vivian said, “No, not on the department level...I think there’s not much [student] input there.”

Amy touched on this further saying,

I think the themes of all staffs are definitely things that they [professional staff] think would help us, but I don’t know, I’ve never been asked, like oh what do you think would be a good idea for an all staff?

Student employees believed they have more input on the topics of area specific trainings than the topics of trainings/meetings with all staff. Moreover, student employee participants do not feel their voices are heard or included in departmental trainings.

Initially when asked, the majority of professional staff participants quickly responded yes to the inclusion of student voices in their departmental discussions of student development opportunities. Some even continued to suggest they include student voices, but only spoke to the inclusion of student voices in the form of surveys, not a direct inclusion of student voices in the processes involved with departmental trainings. Others discussed the inclusion of student voices but with emphasis on area trainings. Cayenne disclosed, “I would say in area trainings, specifically, students are a lot more involved too because almost every area has a supervisor role. So those students will be tapped to help kind of facilitate and work out the structure.” Professional staff perceived student voices to be heard and used in consideration of the planning and facilitation of departmental student development opportunities.

Mixed Methods Integration

Findings from the results of the quantitative study were integrated with findings from the qualitative study to highlight where one method explained and expanded on the other and the emerging themes.

Most of the quantitative findings aligned with what was shared through the interviews, especially when it came to transferable skill development. The majority of both participant populations agreed there was transferable skill development as a result of employment through both the survey and the interviews. From the interviews, it became apparent that transferrable skill development was the most emergent theme as most students and professionals spoke about this developmental area in the context of several subthemes, thus supporting the conclusion that it is an outcome of on-campus employment. Students and professionals further expanded on the specific skills they believed to be gained and how they believed these skills would aid students in their careers, an element that was not touched on through the survey questions. Additionally, after hearing student employees discuss confidence and professionalism in their interviews, the researchers noticed this was not addressed through the survey questions or choices either.

Student employee and professional staff perceptions of student development opportunities were fielded in both the survey and interview, but the interview provided much richer data on specific development opportunities executed by these departments rather than the developmental areas mentioned in the survey. This allowed the researchers to present specific examples of opportunities and the associated perceptions.

Interestingly enough, while the majority of student participants selected leadership development as the developmental area they benefited most from and as the most focused on area, leadership development as a result of employment was barely acknowledged throughout all student interviews.

While the professional staff survey question regarding the inclusion of students in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities included both perspectives and voices, both populations were asked to speak on this in the interview. Initially both students and professionals agreed on the concept that student perspectives were included, but after further conversation and clarification, student participants did not feel their voices were heard on the departmental level as it pertained to student development opportunities. This was a limitation of the survey in that it did not separately address perspectives and voices, but rather as one.

Due to the unreliability of the survey responses to the COVID-19 question, qualitative data was crucial in providing the perceptions of the impacts of COVID-19 on student development. However, the survey provided data on perceptions of departmental commitment that the interviews did not provide.

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Summary of Study

This thesis explored the relationship between on-campus employment and student development through a study of student employees' and professional staffs' perceptions at Rowan University. To address the lack of literature, the primary goal of this study was to explore and compare both populations' experiences and perceptions related to student development as a result of on-campus employment. Another goal was to contribute additional literature that highlighted the development that occurred as a result of employment while also discussing the role professional staff play in development. Overall, the findings of this research add to the discussion surrounding on-campus employment and its benefits, but also starts a new discussion in which students' and professionals' perceptions are juxtaposed.

The quantitative data was collected using two survey instruments sent out to 91 student employees and 18 professional staff members in either the department of Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities at Rowan University. This data was used to examine the potential relationship between on-campus employment and student development and both populations' perceptions of this relationship. In addition, data was collected through the surveys to explore the role student employees and professional staff members play in student development. Of the 91 students emailed, 36 completed the survey and provided data. Of the 18 professional staff emailed, 15

completed the survey. While there were different surveys for each population, the questions followed similar themes making them comparable.

The qualitative data was collected using purposeful sampling to select participants from those who expressed interest at the end of the survey instrument. Of the 17 students interested, six were interviewed with three employed by Campus Recreation and three employed by the Student Center and Campus Activities. Of the 14 professional staff interested, six were interviewed with three from either department. Three from either department and for both sets of populations were interviewed to ensure equal representation of the departments in the data. With consent, 12 interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed by the co-investigator following each interview. During the interviews, participants were asked several questions designed to expand on the quantitative findings, while the co-investigator took notes. Over the course of two months, the co-investigator conducted interviews, and employed thematic analysis to code and analyze the data. Quotes from each interview were presented to provide evidence of each theme and to explore the participants' experiences.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

What is the pattern of responses related to student development experiences and professional staff support for both student employees and professional staff?

The pattern of responses regarding skill acquisition and the transferability of these skills indicates that both student employees and professional staff perceive student development to occur as a direct outcome of on-campus employment. This supports the

findings in the literature reviewed in this study, such as Anderson et al. (2018) and Athas (2013), which both cited student employees' positive perceptions of their own transferable skill development. Additionally, this data further upholds the notion that student development occurs as an outcome of on-campus employment as all the professional staff participants confirmed that student employees gain valuable skills that will be transferable to their future employment.

While there is little to no research on which developmental areas student staff perceive to be the most and least beneficial as a result of employment, this study seeks to mend the gap as well as provide a dueling narrative through the juxtaposition of student employee and professional staff perceptions of these developmental areas. Although student employees felt they benefited most from leadership development as a result of employment, the majority of professional staff did not perceive this to be the greatest focus of their departments. Only three professional staff suggested leadership development was the focus of the department. The survey did not address the cause of leadership development, but it is clear that it is not a result of intentional departmental efforts. The data presented in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 reinforces the concept that student employees and professional staff have varying perceptions on leadership development. By comparing the student employee quantitative data with the professional staff quantitative data, it became evident that leadership development may not be explicitly addressed through the specific student development opportunities offered by the department. The student participants suggested leadership development was not only the most important in their pursuit of future employment, but also as the area they felt they benefitted most from, which agrees with findings of Salisbury et al. (2012) and Baxa

(2017). Although student employees place significant value on leadership development, professional staff participants did not find leadership development to be the most important to incorporate in student development opportunities. Student employees still benefit from leadership development, but it may be a result of job responsibilities or other means as discussed by Toperzer et al. (2011). Professionals' perception of the most important area to incorporate into student development opportunities also bolsters the perceived significance and prevalence of transferable skill development highlighted through this study and throughout the literature. Student employees and professional staff agreed that mentorship and civic engagement development did not play a large role in student development and associated opportunities. It is interesting to note that while students and professionals both stressed the importance of the professional staff, mentorship was not present in the quantitative data.

Student employees felt their development as a result of employment could not occur without professional staff and their commitment to it. They discussed the importance of the relationship they had with their direct professional staff to their development and work environment, which reinforces the findings of Kramer and Hill (2011) and Noel-Levitz Inc. (2010). Professional staffs' perceptions of their prioritization and commitment supports the significance of the role professional staff play in student development. In addition, their perceptions of departmental prioritization suggest student development is not just the work of professional staff as individuals, but rather a team effort and initiative. While the role of professional staff in student development opportunities became clearer through the survey data, the role of student employees in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities was complicated by the

results. Most student participants believed their perspectives were taken into consideration in the planning and facilitation of opportunities, but the professional staff were not as certain student perspectives and voices were valued in the process. Student employee contributions to student development opportunities were further examined in the qualitative portion of this study.

The COVID-19 survey question and the associated data collected proved to be a limitation of the study as a result of the structure of the question. Two professional staff and five student employees responded “positively” or “somewhat positively” when asked how they felt COVID-19 impacted their on-campus employment experience and development. After conducting an interview with one of the professional staff members, who responded “positively” through the survey instrument, and speaking about COVID-19 and its impact, I realized that the structure of the response choices of the COVID-19 question followed the structure of several other questions (i.e., “positively” was on the same line as “strongly agree” was on in other questions). As a result, it is unclear if participants fully acknowledged the choices before selecting and selected “positively,” or any other choice for that matter, mistaking it as an agree/disagree response.

Including both student employees and professional staff members in this study provided the opportunity to see where the populations’ perceptions aligned and where they were different. Professional staffs’ perceptions were used to confirm the beliefs student employees held and also to offer a different perspective on student development as well as information on their departments’ efforts in student development. The overall pattern of responses implies a firm belief and establishment of transferable skill development as an outcome of on-campus employment, highlights the varying

perceptions on leadership development and the significance of professional staff in student development.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of both student employees and professional staff regarding student development as a result of student employment?

Student employees and professional staff shared many perceptions regarding the relationship between on-campus employment and student development. It became even clearer through the qualitative findings that both populations felt there was a significant relationship between on-campus employment and transferable skill development, which again supported the findings of previous literature reviewed in this study. Student employees, with some perceptions of professional staff included, identified specific skills within this theme that align with skills found in Anderson (2018), such as communication and problem-solving. Even though confidence and professionalism are not generally considered transferable skills, students presented them as such. The confidence that students spoke about helped them not only in carrying out their job responsibilities, but also in applying for future positions and generally in life. This is transferable in that it will help student employees in interviews and their future careers as it will enable them to communicate more effectively and engage in and carry out more challenging tasks. Similarly, the development of professionalism is transferable in that it will help students understand how to function in a work environment, even if it is different from the context they are working in now, and how to network effectively.

There are several experiences and opportunities that play into student development as a result of on-campus employment. Through the interviews, student employees and professional staff shared perceptions on specific examples of opportunities. The most commonly discussed opportunities were one-on-ones, meetings/trainings with all staff present, and the impact of COVID-19 on these opportunities.

The majority of both student and professional participants perceived one-on-ones in a very positive way. They both discussed the significance and power of one-on-ones in developing students. Many student and professional participants highlighted the opportunity one-on-ones provided for relationship building, individualized care, and constructive feedback. Through one-on-ones, professional staff were able to get to know students on a much deeper level. Participants in both populations mentioned discussing more than just work in these meetings. One-on-ones also foster development through creating an environment of connectedness and a sense of belonging, which increases motivation not only in the workplace, but also likely in academics. They also conveyed their appreciation for these meetings and the space it provided for intentional development efforts of professional staff. These meetings show professional staff care about students, their success, and their wellbeing, which in turn leads students to feel supported on campus.

All student employees and professional staff mentioned meetings/trainings, at which all staff were present, throughout the interviews. Students referred to “All Staffs,” “All Staff Training,” or “Real Worlds” as the student development opportunity they found to be least helpful in their development. Professional staff did not necessarily

express the same perception, but they did discuss how gathering all the staff meant very large and long meetings with too much information. There was overlap in the perception that the discussion of Rowan wide policies and initiatives in these all staff trainings/meetings was unnecessary, but it was minimal as it was one participant per population. The majority of professional staff referenced a particular all staff meeting that they found beneficial for students-the Alumni Panel. Both departments host a panel comprised of former student employees to discuss their experience and the transferability of their experience to their professional career. While professionals held this perception, two student participants expressed their distaste for the alumni panel as they felt it portrayed an unrealistic experience of seamlessly going straight from college to graduate school or a successful job and only included certain majors/career paths. Despite some differing opinions on this particular development opportunity, it is apparent both populations agree there needs to be a change to the current model of these all staff trainings/meetings.

Student employees and professional staff held strong negative perceptions of the impacts of COVID-19 on student development and the on-campus employment experience. Both cited changes in responsibilities, zoom fatigue, and less connectedness. Many students who worked in programming positions (i.e., event assistant, intramural official) had to shift positions entirely because those programs were very limited in the last year. Others who were anticipating increased responsibilities were disappointed by the lack of challenge and limited capacity/events, a perception professional staff echoed. There were significantly less student development opportunities, but even less chances to connect for both populations with peers, students, and professionals. While there was the

virtual space to connect in, several participants in both populations discussed how it was harder to connect, especially since they had grown tired of constantly being in virtual spaces for other work or school responsibilities.

The perceptions held concerning the role of professional staff in student development were very positive. Several students and professionals detailed how closely related the relationships between students and professionals were to student development. Students spoke about how their relationships with their supervisors made them feel supported while simultaneously challenged, which agrees with Sanford's (1962) challenge and support theory. This theory argues that for development to occur, a person needs to be equally challenged and supported. Professional staff also spoke of supporting students through listening, mentorship, and open, trusting communication. In order to truly guide students, they professional staff felt it was best to establish relationships with them in which there were open lines of communication. These relationships provided spaces in which students could communicate their needs and issues openly without fear of judgement at any time, whether it was the middle of the night or years after graduation. Professionals emphasized that they did much more for students than just supervise the completion of tasks; they advocated on their behalf and worked to develop them into holistic, competent professionals. Evidence from this study shows students and professionals place the same value on the role of professional staff in student development.

Although student and professional participants both perceived student perspectives to be taken into account in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities, there were mixed perceptions of the inclusion of student

voices. Both populations discussed how student perspectives were included in department considerations through the use of surveys or conversations in area meetings or one-on-ones, but there was no discussion on how student voices were included in the discussion of student development opportunities. Student employees pointed out that there was little to no input on the department level and that it seemed like professional staff decided what was best for the student staff to engage in, especially when it came to all staff trainings/meetings. Professional staff also could not identify how they included student voices in the planning process and facilitation of student development opportunities and a few still held the perception that they were included. Student employees do not have a seat at the table when student development opportunities are being discussed and planned.

Overall, Student employees and professional staff held similar perceptions of the relationship between on-campus employment and student development. The biggest discrepancy was in the perception of the inclusion of student voices in the planning and facilitation of student development opportunities.

Research Question 3

What results emerge from comparing the quantitative data measured through the original survey instruments with the exploratory qualitative interview data about student and professional staffs' experiences and perceptions of student development?

The qualitative portion of this study allowed for further examination and confirmation of many of the themes brought about through the survey data. The qualitative data regarding student employee and professional staff perceptions of

transferable skill development confirmed what was found in the quantitative data. Additionally, the qualitative data provided a richer and more vivid description of this theme. Leadership development was perceived to be very important to student staff through the quantitative data, but was barely mentioned throughout the interviews. As mentioned previously, this may be a result of leadership development being a result of job responsibilities, and thus it was not talked about when discussing specific student development opportunities. The concept of mentorship was touched upon significantly more by in the interviews than in the survey responses. This indicated that while it may not be the most beneficial, most focused on, or most important in the pursuit of employment, it still factors into student development. Unfortunately, the interview did not provide any additional data on civic engagement development as it was not discussed at all. This does not indicate that it is not a factor in student development, but that it is not a regular consideration of either population. The COVID-19 data collected in the interviews addressed the negative perceptions held by student employees and professional staff of the impacts the pandemic had on student development that was unable to be addressed through the survey.

Conclusions

On-campus student employment provides students with the opportunity to earn money and develop skills and relationships with peers and professionals while gaining valuable, transferable experience. While students mainly benefit in the areas of leadership development and transferable skill development, there is much more development that occurs. This on-campus-workplace environment provides the perfect space for true student development in practice. It is reliant on student workers and contingent on

continued professional staff and departmental support for daily functioning. Professional staff play various roles in supporting student employees and their development, ranging from supervisor, mentor, or even friend. Student development as a result-of on-campus employment would not occur to the degree it does without the commitment of professional staff. However, there should be more intentional efforts to include student employee voices in the planning and facilitation of formal student development opportunities. Not only would giving students a voice in this process truly address student needs, but also it would also directly contribute to students' development in areas such as self-efficacy and further leadership development. There is not enough existing literature to address the lack of student voices in their own developmental processes, let alone those specific to student employment. While overlaps in the perceptions student employees and professional staff have of the student development-employment experience do exist, professional staff should address the areas in which they do not align. Students and professionals alike should take advantage of the open communication discussed and have a mutually beneficial relationship in which both provide the other with meaningful feedback that will be truly heard.

The participants in this study detail their experiences as student employees and professional staff as it relates to student development. These students and staff recognize the importance of the on-campus employment experience to student development and their success post-graduation. As the job market becomes increasingly more competitive, it is imperative that further research into the relationship between on-campus employment and student development be ongoing so that practitioners can be informed of best practices to ensure students' success. This study seeks to provide more evidence on

the benefits of on-campus employment that are outside the typically researched areas of academic success and retention as well as highlight the vital role student affairs professional staff play in student development. Simultaneously, it is a call to action for student affairs practitioners to recruit student voices that will represent the needs and wants of student employees in student development opportunities.

On-campus employment is much more than a job to both student employees and professional staff. I thank the students and professionals who provided such valuable insight into their experiences. As a former student employee and future student affairs practitioner, you-contributed much more than just data for my thesis, but information that will influence my practice.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations are based on the existing literature and the findings of this study:

1. Rowan University Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities should provide student employees with deliberate leadership development opportunities. Even though this development may be a natural outcome of on-campus employment, it is evident student employees find it very important and as a result, should be an intentional effort.
2. Campus Recreation and the Student Center and Campus Activities should establish an advisory committee made up of student representatives from each area within the department in order to field feedback on student development related opportunities and ensure student voices are included in the planning and

facilitation of student development opportunities as well as other department matters.

3. These departments should offer students more consistent reflection on their responsibilities and the transferability of them. They should also explicitly teach students how to leverage these responsibilities and skills in interviews and on their resumes/cover letters.
4. As institutions of higher education continue to become more civically engaged, departments on campus should incorporate more intentional civic engagement development opportunities in order to continue committing to engagement in advancing the public good.
5. These departments should leverage their contributions to student development, success, and retention to advocate for the university's continued support. By collecting data on student employee success (both job acquisition and fulfilment in career) and comparing it with data on non-student employee success, these departments will illustrate the work they do even more so.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are based on the findings of this study:

1. A similar study should be conducted on a larger scale with multiple institutions to further explore the relationship between student development and on-campus employment.

2. Future studies should be conducted on the impact of institutional support of student development initiatives and how that factors into the on-campus employment experience
3. Future research should examine how different factors, such as responsibilities of certain positions, potentially contribute to the perceptions held by students and professionals
4. Future studies should delve into specific development areas and the relationship to on-campus employment
5. Future studies should compare the development that occurs as a result of on-campus employment versus the development that occurs as result of off campus employment
6. Future studies-should look at the impact of professional development opportunities (conferences, professional organizations) on student development

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Date: 4-13-2021

IRB #: PRO-2020-177

Title: The Relationship Between On-Campus Student Employment and Student Development: A Study of Student and Professional Staff Perceptions

Creation Date: 11-17-2020

End Date: 1-25-2022

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Raquel Wright-Mair

Review Board: Glassboro/CMSRU

Sponsor:

Study History

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| Submission Type | Initial | Review Type | Expedited | Decision | Approved |
| Submission Type | Modification | Review Type | Expedited | Decision | Approved |

Key Study Contacts

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Appendix B

Final Student Employee Survey Instrument

Student Employee Survey questions:

Are you a student employee of Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities?

- Campus Recreation
- Student Center and Campus Activities

I have gained valuable, tangible skills through my on-campus employment that will be transferable in the real world.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Which developmental area do you feel you benefited from *most* during your student employment tenure? Please select one

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental area do you feel you benefited from *least* during your student employment tenure? Please select one

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental areas do you find *most* important in your pursuit of future employment?

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental area do you find *least* important in your pursuit of future employment? Please select one

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Student employment provides me with *meaningful* student development opportunities.

Please select one

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Student employment provides me with *a sufficient amount of* student development opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How often did your on-campus employment offer formal student development opportunities (trainings, workshops, individual evaluation meetings)?

- Weekly
- Bi-weekly
- Monthly
- Semesterly
- Yearly

Professional staff are crucial in providing developmental opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Professional staff prioritize my development during my student employment.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

My department takes into consideration student perspectives in the planning and selection of our student development related opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted my on-campus employment experience and development.

- Positively
- Somewhat positively
- Neutral
- Somewhat negatively
- Negatively

Would you be willing to participate in a 30 minute virtual interview?

- Yes
- No

If participants select “yes,” they will then be asked their name and email.

Name (First and Last):

Email:

Appendix C

Final Professional Staff Survey Instrument

Are you a professional staff of Campus Recreation or the Student Center and Campus Activities?

- Campus Recreation
- Student Center and Campus Activities

My student employees have gained valuable, tangible skills through on-campus employment that will be transferable in the real world.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I prioritize student development and associated opportunities in my supervisory tasks.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

My department prioritizes student development and associated opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How often did your on-campus employment offer formal student development opportunities (trainings, workshops, individual evaluation meetings)?

- Weekly
- Bi-weekly
- Monthly
- Semesterly
- Yearly

Which developmental area do you feel is *most* important to incorporate in student development opportunities? Please select one

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development

- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental area do you feel is *least* important to incorporate in student development opportunities? Please select one

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental area does your department focus on the *most*?

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

Which developmental area does your department focus on the *least*?

- Transferable skill development
- Leadership development
- Civic engagement development
- Mentorship

I believe my student employees benefit from the student development opportunities my department offers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

My department includes student perspectives and voices in the planning and selection of our student development related opportunities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the student employment experience and their development.

- Positively
- Somewhat positively
- Neutral
- Somewhat negatively
- Negatively

Would you be willing to participate in a 30 minute virtual interview?

- Yes
- No

If participants select “yes,” they will then be asked their name and email.

Name (First and Last):

Email:

Appendix D

Final Student Employee Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience as a student employee and how you feel you have (or have not) developed during your tenure of employment. How has it impacted you?
2. What specific student development related opportunities did you feel benefitted you most?
3. What specific student development related opportunities did you not find helpful?
4. Do you believe you gained tangible skills that can be applied elsewhere? Speak on specific skills
5. Do you believe your employment and skills gained through it will help you find employment following graduation?
6. Do you believe professional staff are in touch with students and their developmental needs?
7. How have professionals shaped your experience as an employee?
8. Tell me about your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a student employee.
9. What else have we not asked that you would like us to know?

Appendix E

Final Professional Staff Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experiences as a professional staff member overseeing student staff.
2. What specific student development related opportunities do you feel the student benefitted from most?
3. What specific student development related opportunities do you feel students benefited the least from?
4. Do you believe the skills students gain through employment will help them find employment following graduation?
5. Do you believe they gain tangible skills that can be applied elsewhere? Elaborate.
6. Do you include student perspectives in your departmental discussions of student development opportunities? If so, how? If not, why not?
7. What do you believe your role to be in student development?
8. Tell me about your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a professional employee.
9. What else have we not asked that you would like us to know?