

Empowering Student Employees: A Holistic Curriculum for Disability Services Offices

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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects...

Access and Inclusion

and

Civility and Respect

...this week and in all aspects of our organization.

Agenda

- The Role of student Employees
- Student Assistant Curriculum
 - Hiring
 - Onboarding
 - Experiential learning
 - Offboarding
 - Professional Development
- Challenges
- Closing & Q&A

The Role of Student Employees

Purpose:

- Student employees are often the first point of contact, handling test administration, scribing, and front-desk support.
- Their role is essential in creating a welcoming and accessible environment.

Representation Matters:

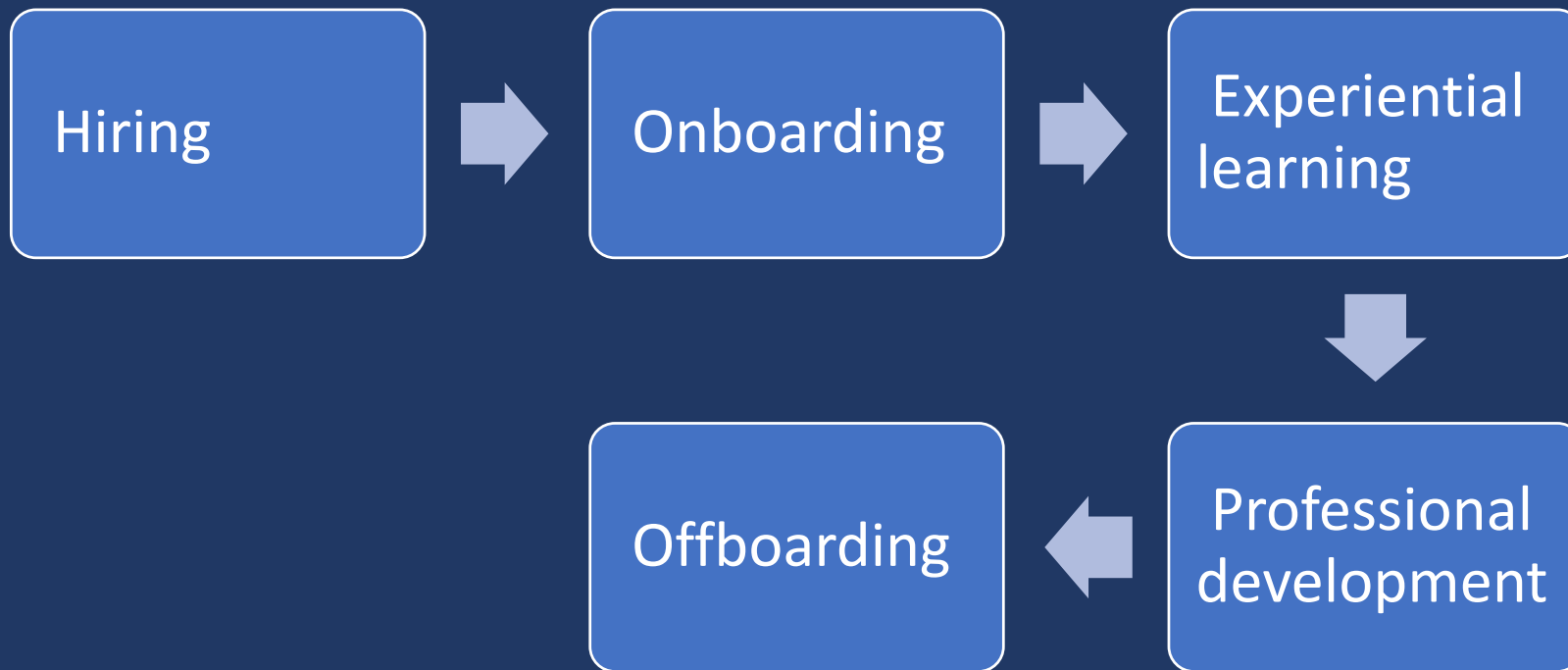
- Many student employees belong to the disability community or hold diverse identities (race, gender, sexuality).
- Supervision should be equity-informed and responsive to their lived experiences.

Why It Matters:

- Student employees are both service providers and developing professionals.
- Investing in their growth supports a more inclusive and student-centered campus culture.



Introducing the Student Assistant Curriculum



Hiring

- Beyond the resume: Hiring focus on the soft skills such as empathy, adaptability, and communication.
- Interviewing with intention: Scenario-based prompts allow applicants to show problem-solving and awareness of disability topics.
- Key qualifications and attributes
- Role of financial aid in student employment

Onboarding



- Training covers **FERPA, disability awareness, and role expectations.**
- **Canvas modules** are updated regularly based on student feedback.
- **Core topics** include confidentiality, policies, and accommodation procedures.
- Students **shadow experienced** staff and practice real scenarios through **customer service simulations.**
- From the start, use of **affirming language** and promotion of **cultural humility** in supervision.
- **Ongoing feedback** helps students build confidence early and grow continuously.

Activity: From Challenge to Change

- Prompt:
Individually
 - “Think about your own institution. What is one ongoing challenge you face when hiring, onboarding, or supporting student employees in disability services or testing accommodations?”
- Discussion:
 - briefly share your challenge and why you think it exists amongst the group also see if others face similar issues.”

Experiential Learning

- **Hands-On Accessibility**

Student assistants engage with real tools and responsibilities, including:

- Assisting visually impaired students with screen readers
- Serving as scribes for students with physical disabilities
- Ensuring large print materials and appropriate lighting are provided

- **Live Accommodation Experience**

- They support real-time accommodations, building professionalism and problem-solving skills through direct experience.

- **Collaborative Skill-Building**

- Working with students, staff, and faculty strengthens leadership, communication, and cultural competence.

Professional Development

- From Student to Advocate
 - Experienced testing accommodations firsthand
 - Gained insight into the student perspective
- Growth as a Student Assistant
 - Managed testing logistics and accommodations
 - Developed skills in communication, problem-solving, and disability awareness
 - Understood the operational challenges of disability services
- Expanding Impact as an Undergraduate Intern
 - Providing accommodation-based success coaching
 - Helping students advocate for their needs and build academic strategies
 - Strengthening mentorship, leadership, and support skills

Impact on a student's academic and professional development journey

- “Being a student employee at the DRC is more than just a job—it’s a meaningful learning experience that’s helped me grow professionally, build advocacy skills, and truly understand the importance of accessibility in higher education.” — Lyiah, Student Assistant

Professional Development



**Student
Assistant:**
Lyiah Denson
(since 2023)

"Hello everyone I'm Lyiah a current student assistant at the DRC.

My journey from student to advocate began with receiving testing accommodations myself. That experience gave me firsthand insight into the barriers students with disabilities face—and the power of accessibility in their success."

"As a Student Assistant, I supported testing logistics and accommodations. I learned to problem-solve, communicate effectively, and navigate the day-to-day challenges of disability services—from resource management to ensuring every student's needs were met."

"I also created guides to strengthen team communication and improve our processes—small steps that led to a better experience for both staff and students."

"As an Undergraduate Intern, I expanded my impact through Academic coaching—helping students with disabilities advocate for themselves and build academic strategies. This role deepened my leadership and commitment to equity.

My journey has shaped who I am today, and I'm excited to continue making a meaningful impact in accessibility services."

Offboarding

- Knowledge Transfer:
Ensure a seamless transition by capturing insights and processes for incoming staff.
- Access & Materials Management:
Systematically return departmental materials and close out digital access to maintain security and continuity.
- Reflective Exit Interviews:
Gather feedback on the student's developmental experience, future aspirations, and recommendations for improvement.
- Recognition of Impact:
Acknowledge the student's contributions, emphasizing their professional growth and the lasting value of their work.

Challenges in Supporting Student Employees

Challenges

- Balancing training with operational needs.
- Managing the expectations of a student worker while balancing academics and life.
- Ensuring compliance with disability services policies.
- Handling sensitive situations professionally.

Solutions to set roadblocks

- Short, engaging training sessions.
- Peer mentoring and continuous support.
- Encouraging self-care and emotional well-being.

Continued Activity: From Challenge to Change

- **Problem-Solving**

- Brainstorm one possible strategy or practice that could address each person's challenge — even if it's a small first step. Don't worry about perfection — this is about planting seeds.

- **Wrap-Up & Share Back**

Closing & Q&A

- **Recap:** Investing in structured, inclusive training improves student outcomes and student employee growth.
- **Call to Action:** Consider how your hiring, supervision, and training practices reflect the values of equity, inclusion, and student development.

Contact

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References

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- American Psychological Association article: Increasing supervisor savvy around culture, race and identity: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/01/culturally-responsive-supervision>
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Session Evaluation



tinyurl.com/AHEADFeedback

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Thank you for attending!