

Desk Assistant Training 2013

Brief description of program / project:

This past August, the Desk Assistant staffs from both the Marriott Honors Community and Peterson Heritage Center front desks attended a one to two day training. The first day of training was specifically for new staff members and included in-depth trainings on various areas of the job, such as mailroom procedures, giving tours, front desk operations, and job expectations. The second day of training included both new staff and returning staff members and it centered around developing a close knit staff through ice breakers, bonding games, and review activities, in addition to cultural competency trainings.

Who was asked to complete the survey:

All staff members who attended this training were asked to complete this survey. The first question allowed them to select which day(s) they attended and we were able to differentiate between new and returning staff on the evaluation.

Response Rate: 76.92 % (30 of 39)

Administration Type: Campus Labs email

Summary of Key Findings:

One of the most important findings that stood out to me was that many staff members felt they were insufficiently trained on mailroom procedures. Some mentioned feeling rushed during this time period, some felt they did not get to practice the skills enough, and some felt the explanations of processes were not clear enough or were skipped entirely. Another common theme among the comments was the desire to have more hands-on practice time during “shadowing shifts,” where they could practice tasks while being observed by and getting feedback from returning staff members. Areas where staff felt they could have used more training were: mailroom procedures (specifically in sending the “friendly reminder email”, utilizing the register, utilizing our Blackboard system, and knowing who and when to contact for various situations. Many staff members also felt that they could use less ice breakers and team bonding activities in the future and that some of our trainings were not actually relevant to the job they are doing.

Actions Taken:

Our student managers and administrative specialists will be meeting with myself, our Senior Events Coordinator, and our supervisor to review these results and also provide our own feedback so that we can make positive changes for our next all-staff semester training. One of the areas we will be changing is the way we structure the in-depth training provided on the first day. This past training, we had 4 categories that staff rotated through and each one lasted an hour. Because the staff felt the mailroom category did not receive enough time, while two of the other categories had extra time, we will be combining them for a total of 3 categories, each with an hour and 30 minutes to complete them. We

will also be implementing mandatory shadowing shifts following training so that new staff members can have more hands-on training before working solo shifts. While some returning members said they felt the training was a waste of their time because they already knew everything, we will not be changing that requirement. However, in the future, we will make our expectations much more clear because they often do not even realize how much has changed or how much they actually are not doing properly and I believe they do need the training even if they perhaps were not understanding that before. I would also like to make our expectations more clear about the importance and value of cultural competency trainings, how they can be utilized at the desk, and also the importance of team builders, active listening, and effective communication. Some folks commented about how they felt those areas of the training were irrelevant to the job, which indicates to me that they have an unclear idea of what the job entails and what Housing and Residential Education's values are. This survey showed me that their understanding of the job does not align with our expectations for them, so I will strive to make this more clear in the future.

Which department and/or program goals does this program align with?

This training implemented several components of the Housing and Residential Education departmental goals. The first component is "Develop integrated and comprehensive training model to ensure job skill training while also expanding knowledge to better serve students, stakeholders, and the university." We worked to structure the training in a way that incorporated different learning styles and also different mediums for education. We utilized powerpoints, computers, worksheets, and resources from the desks as mediums for demonstrating tasks and skills. We also utilized games and activities that appealed to kinesthetic learners, visual displays for visual learners, and hands-on practice for tactile learners, for example.

Which Student Affairs goals does this program align with?

Our training was designed to align with two main strategic goals of the University of Utah. The first is "Provide education that ensures all staff is properly trained to provide professional and competent service." The purpose of this training was to help Desk Assistants build the skills and knowledge base needed to not only complete the tasks of the jobs but also to provide a high level of customer service and professionalism. We had sections of our training specifically dedicated to training our staff on customer service, where we had them role play various situations that may arise at the desk, and professionalism, where we discussed the dress code and expectations for behavior at the desk.

The second goal we align with is "Promote diversity on campus through effective programming and active recruitment of staff and students." This year's training included a cultural competency training provided by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center on campus. The Safe Zone training was helpful, not only to create an inclusive and safe working environment amongst our staff, but we also focused on creating a welcoming place for residents at our desks. We posted Safe Zone signs at each desk in order to demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion.