Hiring and Developing New Professionals:

Supervisor Interview, 2015

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HIRING AND DEVELOPING

I interviewed my supervisor, Matthew Hebert, Director of Prospective Student Services at San Diego State University regarding his thoughts of hiring, developing, and evaluating a new professional. Much of what he had to say was already known to me since we collaborate on hiring student assistants within our office. However, he also informed me of other things to consider when interviewing and transitioning a new professional into our office dynamics which can differ for student workers. Within this paper, I will summarize many of the points we discussed within the interview, talk about some challenges supervisors face when hiring new professionals, and also provide information regarding my reactions and thoughts regarding our discussion.

Ultimately, Mr. Hebert says it depends on the type of position you are seeking to fill when looking to hire professional staff. Matt looks at work experience and personality which he is able to gauge from an applicant’s resume and interview. He has a great perception on whether or not the candidate would be a good fit in the office, and able to work well with the staff already present, although he says, “It’s not just a gut feeling.” We rely heavily on team work within our office; therefore, it is extremely important to get along with others, professionally, although it does not always happen personally. In addition, it is important for new professionals to note they will be working for the rest of their lives, and attributing eight hours a day to work can come as a shock to some when having to balance life and full-time work; especially during the difficult time of denials, crying students and upset parents. One has to be able to work with various groups on campus as well as balancing relationships with your supervisor and coworkers in order to create that team environment within the office.

Due to the nature of our work within Prospective Student Services, new professionals must acquaint themselves with a wealth of information including but not limited to: freshman,
HIRING AND DEVELOPING

transfer, and graduate admission requirements, university procedures and policies, financial aid and scholarships, housing, academic departments and programs on campus, student life, athletics, military information, and a full understanding of how to read the university catalog. We try to be all knowing within our office and therefore reviewing information, attending training sessions, and repetition are the main ways of assisting staff into the dynamics of the office. Matt is pretty generous when it comes to the amount of time it may take a professional to get accustomed to the work we do. Although he does have high expectations, he has reasonable time frames for when something should be accomplished and the extent to what a professional staff member should be capable of. He estimates about 6-9 months to get familiar with the nature of the job, and one year as the expectation that one should now be fully trained on the work.

When evaluating staff, Mr. Hebert prefers one-on-one conversations because all staff are different and having a good rapport with each one in order to relate and provide feedback in their lens of understanding has become essential to his role as director. He is able to get a feel for the person to ensure he is relaying information appropriately and not offending anyone which happens often in group settings. Mr. Hebert also encourages his staff to continue participating in professional development opportunities in order to stay on top of the ever changing information within education; ensuring the professional staff he has are fulfilled in their jobs, and also because it is important to practice what you preach. It is beneficial for staff to gather information on the field and bring that inspiration, information, and skills back to the office in order to improve the productivity and skills we have. Nevertheless, having the funding to do so is always the struggle because everything costs money and making sure he is able to operate the office is essential.
HIRING AND DEVELOPING

I enjoyed asking my supervisor these questions and being able to gauge how he evaluates his staff and his thoughts on professional development. The most interesting information I learned was that professional development opportunities are only approved if there is funding available for it and justification for why the development is needed. Many times, departments are forced to run on bare bone minimums, as shown in our budgeting assignment, and therefore do not have additional funding to provide staff with professional development opportunities. Unless these opportunities are free through on campus programs, online webinars, or other local, non-costly opportunities. This surprised me because I assumed that any time a professional staff member is able to improve their skills or their knowledge of their job duties, the institution would highly encourage or permit the staff to pursue such endeavors. However, it makes sense that the money to fund such opportunities have to come from somewhere. Ultimately, being able to maintain and ensure the department’s functionality is what is most important.

I take pride in being able to learn more information on management strategies and the different opinions and perspectives of higher level administrators. Being able to do these assignments provides me with the opportunity to ask these nontraditional questions in an environment where it is comfortable and not frowned upon. In addition, it allows me to reflect upon the advantages I have with working in my department, and also the growth I need to accomplish to reach my goals of eventually becoming a director of a student affairs department within higher education. Transitioning from being a new professional to a mid-level professional comes with time, and reaching higher requires even more knowledge, understanding, and attention to detail. I hope when I get to this level, I will have a holistic view of hiring, supervising, and managing professional staff where I am able to keep my employees happy while providing the best services possible.