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# “THE SKILLS YOU’RE DEVELOPING, THEY DON’T GO AWAY”: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY EXPLORING ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AS A HIGH IMPACT PRACTICE

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“THE SKILLS YOU’RE DEVELOPING, THEY DON’T GO AWAY”: AN  
INTRINSIC CASE STUDY EXPLORING ON-CAMPUS STUDENT  
EMPLOYMENT AS A HIGH IMPACT PRACTICE

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A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Amanda Marie Salazar

June 2019

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June 2019

Approved by:

Edna Martinez, Committee Chair, Education

John Winslade, Committee Member

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## ABSTRACT

Many low-income, first-generation college students have no other choice but to work to help offset the costs associated with earning a college degree (Savoca, 2016). Meanwhile, colleges and universities have the opportunity to leverage on-campus employment as a high-impact practice (McClellan, Creager, & Savoca, 2018). High-impact practices (HIPs) are known to increase retention, persistence, and completion (Kuh, 2008). If structured with intentionality and purpose, on-campus jobs can offer low-income, first-generation college students the opportunity to participate in a HIP, while simultaneously earning an income (McClellan et al., 2018).

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore on-campus employment as a High Impact Practice (HIP) at Intentional Validation University (IVU). IVU is four-year university that serves a disproportionate number of students who are low-income and first-generation. In addition, IVU had an explicit organizational commitment to incorporating HIPs to achieve higher levels of student performance, learning, and development. Data sources included 26 in-depth semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis.

In addition to cultural and structural issues related to communication, the findings revealed that there were two contrasting student employment sub-cultures. There was the validating sub-culture that serves as an example from which the larger campus can learn. The opposing sub-culture was one that was invalidating to student employees. The student employee experiences with on-

campus employment varied based on their working environment, which was most often influenced by their supervisor. The intentional supervisor created a validating office-environment that elevated the student employment experience to a HIP. Additional benefits of a validating subculture included further engagement with institution and access to and activation of social capital. Based on these findings, recommendations for policy, practice, and future research are advanced.

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I would not be where I am today without the help and encouragement from many. I first would like to thank my chair, Dr. Edna Martinez, who spent countless hours helping me to get to this point. Thank you for never giving up on me even when I gave up on myself. Thank you for your constant check-ins, feedback, due dates, and overall support and validation. Through your guidance and mentorship, I have become a better writer, editor, and most importantly, a better researcher. Thank you for always pushing me; I will forever be indebted to you and all that you have given me.

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My family has always been my biggest supporter and my source of inspiration in my educational pursuits. I want to thank my dad, Felix, who has always supported and encouraged me to pursue my educational dreams. I can't thank you enough for all that you did for my sister and me growing up. I can't imagine that it was easy as a single dad to take care of two young girls, but you did it, and you did it well. Watching you take on multiple jobs and side jobs to put food on the table, or take us out for a Famous Star and a coke (one of our favorite treats growing up), instilled the work ethic I have to this day. Please know that I would not be at this point in my life without your hard work and dedication – thank you Dad.

I would also like to thank my grandma Lorenza. You have and continue to be an example of a strong woman. I have always admired your strength and how selfless you are. I have always strived to be a strong woman just like you. You have always been one of my biggest supporters when it came to my educational pursuits and I hope that I have made you proud.

I would like to thank my siblings – Nicole, Samantha, Brandon, and Savannah – for being my source of inspiration; I did this for you. Thank you to my mom, Karen, for always encouraging me. Thank you to my family – Grandpa Lupe, Aunt Marianna, Uncle George, Aunt Lupe, Uncle Victor, Aunt Lorenza, and my cousins Georgianna, Adrianna, Hannah, Isiah, Priscilla, Israel, Abraham, and Moses. Thank you all for your support and love, but most importantly the laughs. Whether I was tired or frustrated with school, the laughs we shared

allowed me to escape from it and reminded me of what really mattered. You all have kept me grounded and continue to remind me that family is the most important thing I will ever have in this life. I love you all.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my grandma Suzie who is no longer with us. She was always one of my biggest supporters. I remember when I first received my admittance letter into Cal State San Bernardino and how excited I was to call and tell her. She was so proud of me. I remember she sent me a card in the mail a few days later telling me how proud of me she was, one of her many cards along the years, but this one held special meaning. I know she would be so proud if she were here today. I will always love you grandma, thank you for being the best grandma a little girl could ever ask for.

I also dedicate this to my younger siblings and my cousins. All of you have been a constant source of inspiration. For many of us, we grew up knowing what it felt like to go without. While our families may have lacked financially, one thing we never lacked was love and laughter. I want all of you to know that it's never too late to pursue your dreams – if you want it, go after it, and don't let anyone stop you. I love you all so much and I believe in each of you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the problem followed by the purpose statement. Then, I introduce my research questions and discuss the significance of my study. Following, I introduce the theoretical underpinnings of my work as well as my assumptions as the researcher. Lastly, I consider the limitations and delimitations of this study and provide an outline of the remaining chapters.

#### Problem Statement

In contrast to the traditional college student profile - White, middle-and-upper class men - today's college student profile represents students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, lifestyle, and sexual orientation (Rendón, 1994; Ortiz & Waterman, 2016; Schuh, 2016). Low-income and first-generation college students, who are the focus of this study, face a myriad of challenges that traditional college students do not face. Among the greatest challenges are financial barriers, including tuition price (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015), available financial aid (King, 2002), and food and housing insecurity, which are typically ignored in studies related to financial aid (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). In addition, students face an environment that fails to embrace their talents, honor their histories, and value their ways of knowing (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Rendón, 2002; Rendón, 1994).

In today's current economic context, earning a higher education is necessary for economic advancement (Department of Education, 2017). While higher education was once a luxury for the elite, and in most cases is still, it is now essential for economic mobility (Department of Education, 2017). Individuals with a bachelor's degree typically earn 66% more than individuals with only a high school diploma and are less likely to face unemployment. It is estimated that by the year 2020, two-thirds of job opportunities in the US will require postsecondary education or training (Department of Education, 2017). In sum, creating a path to the middle class means making higher education accessible to individuals disproportionately underrepresented in higher education.

While there are many factors that influence student degree completion, financing one's education is one of the top barriers (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014; Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). Although there are several financial aid programs available, they are insufficient (Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2015; King, 2002; Tierney & Venegas, 2009;). Accordingly, students must work to supplement the cost of their education. For even the most high achieving racial/ethnic minority, first-generation, and low-income students who receive large levels of financial support (such as Gates Millennium Scholarships), working for pay during college is necessary to attend college (Melguizo & Chung, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), non-white students often come from low-income backgrounds and are thus more likely to work to cover their educational costs (Tuttle,

McKinney, & Rago, 2005). African American and Latino students are likely to work more hours than White students, with about one-third working thirty-six plus hours a week (Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). The reality today is that the majority of students cannot give their full attention to their academics, as they also need to work to provide for themselves financially (Riggert et al., 2006). Unfortunately, a consequence of working *off-campus* is the potential negative impact it can have on a student's academic persistence and retention (Riggert et al., 2006).

“Student persistence, retention and success are crucial to higher education institutions around the globe” (McClellan et al., 2018, p. 102). Universities and government entities are continuously implementing various structures, programs, and interventions that are aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates (McClellan et al., 2018). In recent years, higher education institutions have explored high impact practices as a way to increase student engagement, retention, and graduation rates. Utilizing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Kuh (2008) highlighted and validated a set of effective educational practices that are correlated with positive educational outcomes for students from a wide range of backgrounds. According to Kuh (2008), participating in high-impact practices has positive effects on all students. However, underserved students show a higher benefit from participating in one or more activities, in comparison to the majority of students (Kuh, 2008).

### Purpose Statement

Given that many low-income, first-generation college students have no other choice but to work to help offset the costs associated with earning a college degree (Savoca, 2016), colleges and universities have the opportunity to leverage on-campus employment as a high-impact practice (McClellan et al., 2018). If structured with intentionality and purpose, on-campus jobs can present the opportunity for low-income, first-generation college students to not only participate in a HIP, but also allow them to earn an income (McClellan et al., 2018).

Accordingly, the purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore on-campus employment as a High Impact Practice (HIP) at Intentional Validation University. Intentional Validation University serves a disproportionate number of students who are low-income and first-generation. In addition, Intentional Validation University has expressed organizational commitment to high-impact practices. Specifically, this study focused on the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University and how the culture fostered undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all. This case study also sought to identify intentional organizational efforts in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP.

#### Research Questions

To explore on-campus employment as a potential high-impact practice, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University?
- 2) How does the culture foster undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all?
- 3) What intentional organizational efforts are in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP, if any?

### Significance of the Study

Universities and government entities are continuously implementing various structures, programs, and interventions that are aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates (McClellan et al., 2018). In recent years, higher education institutions have explored high impact practices as a way to increase student engagement and retention and graduation rates. Many of these institutions have on-campus student jobs; yet, have not tapped into their potential to be a high impact practice.

On-campus jobs have the potential to provide opportunities for engagement and learning for students, yet there are few studies that explore neither the essence of on-campus jobs nor their connection to high impact practices (Savoca, 2016). According to Kuh (2009), on-campus employment is a “target of opportunity...Working on campus could become a developmentally powerful experience for more students if...professionals who supervise a student in their employ intentionally created some of the same conditions that characterize the high impact activities” (p. 698). Therefore, the findings of this study are relevant

to institutional stakeholders involved in student employee programs and retention efforts.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was grounded in the interpretivist paradigm (Sipe & Constable, 1996). As explained by Sipe and Constable (1996), interpretivists “attempt to understand situations from the point of view of those experiencing the situations” (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 158). As such, my primary participants were student employees, supervisors, and administrators.

### Assumptions

Given my own personal and professional experiences, I view student employment as a high-impact practice. During the first quarter of my freshman year of college, I was hired as a student assistant on campus. For close to four years, I worked as a student assistant while earning my degree. My student employment role paved the way for my current profession – working in higher education. While I initially applied to work on campus as a means to earn an income, the learning, experiences, and growth I underwent throughout those four years influenced my present career decisions. Working on campus as a low-income, first-generation college student provided an opportunity for me to connect to my campus and feel supported as I lived away from home and was learning to navigate the unknown world of higher education.

I am drawn to the low-income, first-generation college student population because I was a member of this population. As well, I continue to work with this

population today. I can remember feeling lost, unsure, afraid, and nervous as I ventured out to earn a higher education and how I was fortunate enough to stumble upon a campus job that changed my life in many ways.

#### Limitations

A limitation of this study is that I did not consider student employees' length of employment. There may be different experiences based upon each participant's length of employment and the specific area in which they were employed. In addition, I did not consider student participants' employment classification (i.e., work-study vs. non work-study). I was interested in on-campus employment in general. Additionally, although I attempted to interview student employees and supervisors from the same departments, all student employee and supervisor participants worked in different departments. Another limitation of this study is that I was not able to reach all of the departments that employed students at Intentional Validation University.

#### Delimitations

All supervisors and administrators that I interviewed held staff positions. I did not interview any supervisors who held a faculty position. Therefore, it is possible that they may have had a different philosophy and approach to student employment that was not captured in this study.

#### Summary

With the continued increase in costs associated with attending college and limited financial aid, many low-income and first-generation college students have



no other choice but to work. While institutions do not have influence over off-campus jobs, they do have the opportunity to influence on-campus jobs.

Purposefully and intentionally designed on-campus jobs, with the explicit purpose of providing a high-impact experience for students could potentially support the success of low-income, first-generation college students, while providing financial assistance.

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: In this first chapter I provided the reader with the justification and background of the research problem, the purpose and significance of the study, and the research questions that guided the study. In the second chapter I provide a compilation of literature about the changing landscape of higher education including literature about low-income, first-generation college students, current financial assistance programs, why students need to work, high impact practices, and the connections on-campus employment has with high impact practices. In chapter three I describe the qualitative research methodology and the design of the study. In chapter four I review the findings. In chapter five I discuss the results and implications for practice and future studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In this chapter I present literature associated with student employment as a potential high impact practice for the purpose of promoting persistence and retention for low-income, first-generation college students. I have divided the literature review into several sections. First, I discuss the changing demographics of U.S. college students, with a specific focus on low-income, first-generation students, followed by the challenges they face in their pursuit of higher education. I pay particular attention to the rising costs of attendance and current financial assistance legislation. Related to this point, I present the types of federal and state financial aid available to students, including work-study. Following, I discuss the benefits of on-campus employment and make connections with high impact practices, with an emphasis on how on-campus employment can potentially impact both academic persistence and retention and student engagement. I conclude by highlighting the need for institutional commitment for on-campus employment to function as a high impact practice followed by current on-campus employment programs that demonstrate what institutional commitment looks like in practice.

#### Changing Student Demographic Landscape

Facilitated by various efforts at the national, local, and organizational/institutional level, increasing numbers of first-generation and low-income students, students of color, and undocumented students have changed the U.S. higher education demographic landscape (Abrego, 2008; Choy, 2002; Marklein, 2006; McClellan et al., 2018). To be clear, this shift has been slow and should not be romanticized.

When colleges and universities in the United States developed during the 1600s, they were not “class-bound” (Kezar, 2011, p. 5). Unlike European universities, which were “finishing schools for the sons of the gentry or vocational schools for civil bureaucrats, whom were typically middle class” (Kezar, 2011, p. 5), U.S. colleges and universities were constructed mainly by religious institutions with the intent of educating clergy and statesmen (Kezar, 2011). Unlike the European universities, these students came from much humbler backgrounds, often the children of clergymen, shopkeepers, farmers, and even servants (Kezar, 2011). However, by the late 1700s the American universities began to model the European universities. Tuition became expensive, charity scholarships declined, and opportunities for students to work through college began to disappear (Kezar, 2011).

The People’s Movement, which took place in the 1800s, aimed to train the sons of White farmers. Known as the Farmers’ Alliance, White southern farmers aimed to improve their economic conditions (Bauer, 2018). Oberlin, a private liberal arts college, was an institution created during this time. Its aim was to

educate the children of the poor (Kezar, 2011). Later in 1835, Oberlin College became the first Predominately White Institution to admit African American men, followed by African American women in 1837 (Oberlin College, n.d.).

In addition to educating children from poor backgrounds, the People's Movement led to an effort to create schools where students could work while they pursued their education. During this same time period, there was a movement towards the creation of municipal colleges and universities that focused on more industrial and technical training. These institutions offered evening classes, allowed individuals to attend part-time, provided retraining for workers, credential programs, and other options beyond degree programs (Kezar, 2011). Low-income students predominantly enrolled at these institutions. From this movement, junior and community colleges emerged and began to modify their structures to become more accessible to students who came from low-income families (Kezar, 2011). Although critics of the community college would argue that community colleges were created for the purpose of reproducing social stratification (Brint & Karabel, 1989), what is certain is that community colleges presently enroll students who might otherwise not have access to college (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014).

First-generation and low-income students, as well as students of color are disproportionately concentrated in community colleges (AACC, 2017) or broad-access four-year Minority Serving Institutions, which offer greater affordability and geographic convenience (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). In fact, given that Latino

students continue to enroll in higher education in much greater numbers than in previous decades (Gramlich, 2017), since 2006 we have seen a 78% increase in the number of Hispanic Serving Institutions and a growing number of Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions (*Excelexencia* & HACU, 2017). Specifically, Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) are colleges and universities that have at least a 25% enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that are Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Broadly speaking, between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of Black students attending college rose from 11.7 to 14.1 percent while the percentage of Latino students rose from 9.9 to 17.3% (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As well, the percentage of Latino students between the ages of 18 and 24 grew from 21.7% in 2000 to 36.6% in 2015 and the percentage of Black students between the ages of 18 through 24 increased from 30.5% in 2000 to 34.9% in 2015 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2016). Given persistent systemic issues, such as inequitable school funding and opportunities, low-paying jobs, and high levels of unemployment, which impact students' odds of graduating from high school, being admitted to a university, finding the money to pay for college, and graduating with a bachelor's degree (Sacks, 2009), both Black and Latino students are also oftentimes the first in their families to attend college (Choy, 2001; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

According to Splichal (2009) first-generation college students are defined as those whose neither parent achieved higher than a high school education. Meanwhile, London (1986) and Zwerling (1976) defined first-generation college students as having parents and grandparents who typically did not complete high school, never attended college, and earned a living through blue-collar occupations. Similarly, Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, and Nora (1996) defined first-generation college students as those whose parents do not have any college experience. Additionally, first-generation college students are more likely to come from lower-income homes, to be older, to have dependent children, to be women, and to be Hispanic (Choy, 2001; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). While there are varying definitions, it is understood that a first-generation student is one who is the first in their family to attend and navigate the culture of higher education and earn a degree.

### Challenges in Pursuit of Higher Education

In contrast to the traditional college student profile - White, middle-and-upper class men - today's college student profile represents students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, lifestyle, and sexual orientation (Ortiz & Waterman, 2016; Rendón, 1994; Schuh, 2016). Low-income and first-generation college students, who are the focus of this study, face a myriad of challenges that traditional college students do not face. Among the greatest challenges are financial barriers, including food and housing insecurity, which are typically ignored in studies of financial aid (Goldrick-Rab,

2016). In addition, students face an environment that fails to embrace their talents, honor their histories, and value their ways of knowing (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Rendón, 1994; Rendón, 2002).

Federal efforts, such as financial aid and TRIO, were introduced to expand low-income student access to higher education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), low-income students are defined as individuals whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of the poverty level amount. The poverty levels used to determine a student's economic status are those established through the U.S. Census. Financial aid was established with the passage of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, which authorized financial assistance programs that provide grants, loans, and work-study funds to students attending college (Federal Student Aid, 2018). During the 1960s, Federal TRIO programs were created as well. Specifically, TRIO programs were designed to increase access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including students with disabilities, first-generation college students, and low-income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Following, the Pell grant was established in 1972, which provides need-based grants for low-income students to assist with the cost of tuition (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Although low-income students have gained access to higher education through external intervention and policymaking (Kezar, 2011), many of these efforts are short lived as priorities shift for policy makers. For example, the

current Trump administration has proposed a \$193 million cut in funding for TRIO as well as another initiative known as GEAR UP. Time will tell on the outcome, however the administration is likely to run into bipartisan resistance on Capitol Hill (Douglas-Gabriel, 2017). In addition, the continued rising costs associated with earning a higher education presents the challenge of affordability, even more so for those students who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. From 1987 to 1997, the Consumer Price Index for college tuition and fees rose 111%, compared with 41% for all other goods and services (Paulin, 2001). However, the price of tuition does not constitute the totality of costs that are incurred while pursuing a higher education. In addition to tuition, students also are faced with the cost of rent, bills, food, textbooks, time, and energy. In the 2001-02 academic year, the average cost for tuition fees and room and board rates charged for full-time undergraduate students was \$11,380. During the 2012-13 academic year, the average cost was \$20,234, which is a 44% increase from 10 years prior (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Relatedly, food and housing insecurity amongst college students has recently emerged as a widespread challenge. According to Feeding America (2014) food insecurity occurs when an individual experiences “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods” (p. 2). The rising costs of earning a higher education and the increase in the number of non-traditional students attending college may point to the surge in the number of students who are experiencing food insecurity (Dubrick, Matthews, & Cady, 2016). Dubick,



Matthews, and Cady (2016) found that food insecurity was more prevalent among students of color across both community colleges and four-year colleges. Fifty-seven percent of Black or African American students reported food insecurity in comparison to forty percent of non-Hispanic White students as well as more than half of first-generation students. Fifty-six percent were food insecure compared to forty-five percent of students who had at least one parent who attended college. In addition, sixty-four percent of food insecure students reported experiencing some type of housing insecurity (Dubick, Matthews, & Cady, 2016). In fact, relying on survey data from 3,647 California community college students, Wood et al. (2016) found that approximately one-third (32.8%) of students experienced housing insecurity. Specifically, 31.8% of men and 33.9% of women reported that they faced housing insecurity. To address the prevalence of food and housing insecurity, college and universities have created food pantries and other interventions, yet more attention to this matter remains needed (Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Although efforts to expand access may encourage enrollment, they do not change the underlying assumptions that guide universities. Colleges and universities were designed by and for the privileged, and in many ways, still operate as such. Student activities and organizations tend to favor the traditional college student whose families have a history of attending college and come from middle and upper income households. The curriculum continues to be predominately Euro-centered as well (McClellan et al., 2018; Rendón, 1994).

Stated differently, institutions of higher education continue to operate from White middle class ideals and do not reflect changing student demographics (McClellan et al., 2018; Rendón, 1994). Non-traditional students are expected to assimilate into a new dominant institutional culture that can lead to feelings of alienation and intimidation within the college environment (Rendón, 1994). This can lead students to doubt their abilities to earn a college degree, which carries significant public and private benefits (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016).

#### Promote Higher Education for Social Mobility

In today's current economic context, earning a higher education is necessary for economic advancement (Department of Education, 2017). While higher education was once a luxury for the elite, it is now essential for economic mobility. Creating a path to the middle class means making higher education accessible to individuals disproportionately underrepresented in higher education. Individuals with a bachelor's degree typically earn 66% more than individuals with only a high school diploma and are less likely to face unemployment. It is estimated that by the year 2020, two-thirds of job opportunities in the US will require postsecondary education or training (Department of Education, 2017).

According to Ma, Pender, and Welch (2016) young adults who have a college degree are more likely to reach the upper end of the income distribution when compared to individuals from similar backgrounds who have a high school diploma. These data are based on a nationally representative longitudinal study

of students whom were in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 2002. Among these students whose parents were in the lowest income group in 2001, “21% of those who earned a bachelor’s degree, 17% who earned an associate’s degree, and 13% who had a high school diploma had reached the highest income quartile themselves 10 years later” (Education Pays, 2011, p. 33). From this same population, those students who came from the lowest income quartile and had just a high school diploma, 45% of them were in the lowest income quartile 10 years later, compared with 32% of those who earned an associate’s degree, and 29% of those with at least a bachelor’s degree.

For young adults whose age ranged between 25-34 and who also worked full-time year round, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings consistently for the years 2000, 2003, and 2005 through 2013. In 2013, the median income earned by those who had a bachelor’s degree was \$48,500, \$37,500 for those who had an associate’s degree, \$30,000 for those with a high school diploma, and \$23,900 for those who did not have a high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

As first-generation college students are more likely to come from lower income homes, many have reported achieving financial security through the attainment of a college degree as a prime motivator for earning a higher education (Bui, 2002). Recognizing the need as well as the financial burden that comes with pursuing a higher education, U.S. legislation has been implemented to help offset costs for low-income students.

State legislative efforts to promote higher education for low-income students

Efforts to make community college free for students have gained momentum over the past few years. As of January 2018, Tennessee, Oregon, New York, and Rhode Island offer free tuition at their state's community colleges. As well, San Francisco, California offers free tuition at City College of San Francisco (Lobosco, 2017). Yet, these programs are not without limitations.

The Tennessee Promise Program launched in 2014 made tuition and fees free to recent high school graduates who had been state residents for at least one year. Adults who do not have an associate's or bachelor's degree can attend for free, beginning in fall 2018 (Tennessee Promise, 2018). The Tennessee Promise, which provides two years of tuition for students, covers the cost of tuition and mandatory fees that are not covered by a student's Pell grant, the HOPE scholarship, or the Tennessee Student Assistance Award. According to the Tennessee Promise (2018) students are able to use the scholarship at any of the state's thirteen community colleges and their 27 colleges of applied technology. However, there are a few stipulations students must adhere to in order to maintain eligibility. Each student is assigned a mentor who guides them through the college admissions process. Students are required to meet with their mentors at least twice before each semester. As well, students must serve a minimum of eight hours of community service per term enrolled and maintain a minimum of a 2.0 GPA (Tennessee Promise, 2018).

Similarly, the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship, which was introduced by Governor Raimondo in 2015, promises to cover any remaining tuition costs after a student's financial aid package is applied to their tuition costs. Starting with the high school class of 2017, students can choose to pursue an associate's degree at the Community College of Rhode Island or a bachelor's degree at the University of Rhode Island. They are able to receive up to four semesters tuition free, regardless of their family income (Rhode Island Promise, 2018).

Students are eligible to receive the Rhode Island Scholarship if they are Rhode Island residents, are a 2017 high school graduate or a 2017 GED recipient. In addition, they must have been younger than 19 when they completed it and they must enroll in the semester immediately following their high school graduation or high school equivalency diploma (Community College of Rhode Island, 2018). Unfortunately, this may disqualify some students who do not meet the age criteria nor are enrolled in an approved institution the semester following the completion of their high school degree or GED. Just like many other programs and initiatives the Rhode Island Scholarship caters to the traditional student.

Likewise, the Oregon Promise is a state grant that covers most tuition at any Oregon community college for recent high school graduates and GED recipients (Office of Student Access and Completion, 2017). Students must have a minimum of a 2.5 cumulative GPA or a GED score of 145 or higher. As well, students have to attend at least half-time at an Oregon Community College within

6 months of graduating from high school or earning their GED. Additionally, they have to have resided in Oregon for a minimum of twelve months and not have completed or attempted more than 90 college units (Office of Student Access and Completion, 2017).

About 7,000 students have taken advantage of the Oregon Promise (OP) scholarship, and many of those report that they would have not gone to college otherwise. A study conducted by Education Northwest (2017), revealed that the majority of OP students were first-generation college students. The study defined first-generation students as having no one in their immediate family – parents, guardians or siblings – with a college degree or certificate (Hodara, Petrokubi, Pierson, Vazquez, & Yoon, 2017). During summer and fall of 2016, 1,442 (out of 46,000) 18 and 19-year old high school graduates and GED completers in Oregon completed a survey on the Oregon Promise. The study also included data from focus groups and interviews with school staff members who provide college and career services. Nearly a third of first-generation students agreed or strongly agreed that they would not have attended college without the Oregon Promise program. In comparison, 18% of non-first-generation students either agreed or strongly agreed. However, after examining the enrollment numbers from one semester, the majority of the students who are receiving this aid were middle and upper class students. Disturbingly, the OP saves low-income students on average \$1000, while the richest students save on average about \$3,248 per year (Hodara et al., 2017).

In April 2017, New York passed legislation that provides free tuition for students at New York State's public colleges and universities. Known as the Excelsior Scholarship, students whose families make up to \$125,000 a year can potentially receive about a \$26,000 reduction on their tuition, fees, room and board, that totals about \$83,000 (Chen, 2017). While it appears to be a victory for students and their families, it does not come without flaws. The program would benefit what the state categorizes as "traditional students," those who go to college straight from high school and earn their degrees on time. Chen (2017) does not provide a clear definition on what it would mean for a student to complete their degree on time. However, Chen (2017) does note that New York's college students are increasingly not "traditional." Many of them attend school part-time and/or take breaks within their education. In order to qualify, students must attend full-time and complete their two or four-year degree in that time frame.

Many low-income students take breaks during their schooling to work and at the state's community colleges, more than 90% of the students would not qualify (Chen, 2017). According to Dr. Bruce Johnstone, a former Chancellor with the New York schools, this program will only help a "slice of the middle-class students" (Chen, 2017, para. 7). While there may be a need to assist middle class students with college tuition, low-income students have a greater need (Chen, 2017). While this program seems to be a good start in making college free to students, there is a great amount of work that still needs to be done to

ensure that all students have access to a free college education, and not just those whose families make up to \$125,000 a year.

In February 2017, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee announced that community college tuition would be free to California residents living in San Francisco through the City College of San Francisco (Hafner, 2017). Any individual who has lived in San Francisco for at least a full year will be eligible, regardless of their income. This agreement was made possible through a transfer tax that was approved by the voters in November 2016. Low-income students will also receive \$500 per year if enrolled full time, and \$200 per year if enrolled part time, that can be used to pay for textbooks and supplies (Hafner, 2017).

Relatedly, the California Promise, otherwise known as SB-1450, was founded to support students who attend the California State University and California Community Colleges to complete an associates within two academic years and a baccalaureate degree within four academic years, from the time of their freshman admission (The California promise, SB 1450, 2016). Unlike the before-mentioned states who have made community college free, the California Promise is more about aligning the environment and structures of the university to help students graduate college. Upon admission, first time freshman and transfer students can sign up for the program. In order to remain in the program, students must meet with their academic advisors to develop an enrollment plan to graduate within four years for freshman and two for transfers. As well, students are granted priority registration per term and must complete 30 semester or 45



quarter units at the end of each academic year (The California State University, 2017).

While there are some community colleges that offer free tuition to students, there are still many students who may not qualify for these programs or may choose to attend a community college or university that does not offer free tuition. For students who may fit within these categories, there is federal and state aid available to assist with the cost of tuition, which I discuss below.

### Financial Assistance

There are three major types of financial aid available to undergraduate students: grants, loans, and work-study. The main sources of funding for these three types of student aid are the federal government, states, postsecondary institutions, employers, and private entities (Radwin, Wine, Siegel, & Bryan, 2013).

A student's family income is used to determine eligibility for federal need-based aid. In order to determine a student's financial need, they must complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and enroll in a Title IV-eligible postsecondary institution. To determine the level of financial need for an individual student a complex formula is used to calculate the student's estimated family contribution (EFC). EFC is based on a student's family income, assets, family size, and number in college. If the student's total cost of attendance (COA) (including living expenses) exceeds their EFC, then they are considered to have financial need.

The COA is what it will cost a student to go to college each year. It includes tuition and fees, on-campus room and board, allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, and if applicable, dependent care. It can also include other expenses such as the funds to rent or purchase a personal computer, costs associated with a disability, and/or costs to participate in study abroad programs (EFC Formula, 2018).

### Grants, Scholarships, and State Aid

Broadly speaking, grants include scholarships, tuition waivers, employer tuition reimbursements, and federal grant programs such as Pell (Radwin et al., 2013). Grants and scholarships are known as “gift-aid” because they are free money; students do not have to pay them back. Grants are usually need-based while scholarships are usually merit-based (Federal Student Aid, 2018).

According to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), almost every state has at least one grant or scholarship available to residents. Eligibility for these state aids are usually restricted to state residents attending a college within the state, but this is not always the case.

At the federal level, the Pell grant provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduates and certain postbaccalaureate students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Qualification for the Pell grant is based on a student’s EFC. To be eligible for the Pell grant, a student’s EFC must be less than their qualified expenses, otherwise known as their COA. A student’s EFC is

subtracted from their COA and if there is a balance, this is considered to be the student's financial need.

Meanwhile, scholarships can be awarded based on merit or financial need. They can potentially cover the cost of tuition, or they can be a one-time award. While scholarships do not need to be paid back they can potentially affect a student's overall student aid package. All aid that a student is awarded cannot exceed the cost of attendance at their specific school. Therefore, if a student is awarded a scholarship, and combined with their other aid exceeds their cost of attendance, the financial aid office will reduce their other sources of aid, whether that includes grants and/or loans (Federal Student Aid, 2018). This practice can have adverse effects on low-income students because once their financial aid package is readjusted they can potentially owe money back to their institution that was disbursed to them at the beginning of the term (Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). Although "gift-aid" is available, federal financial assistance has shifted from one that was plentiful in grants to one that is now heavily reliant on student loans (Draut, 2009).

### Federal Loans

Student loans, which must be paid back or forgiven, include federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized loans, and private and alternative loans. Direct Subsidized and Perkins Loans are limited to students who demonstrate a financial need, otherwise known as need-based aid. Direct unsubsidized loans are available to all students, regardless of need, but only up to the cost of

attendance. Federal Direct PLUS Loans are loans that parents are able to take out to help finance their child's undergraduate education (Radwin et al., 2013).

In 2017, the national student loan debt totaled \$1.41 trillion. There were 44,179,100 number of students who took out student loans, which roughly equated to about 70% of college students. The average debt per student borrower was \$27,857 (Sankar, 2018). During the 2011-12 academic year, 19.9 percent of White parents took out PLUS loans and 9.9 percent of Asian parents took out PLUS loans. In comparison to students of color, 30.4 percent of Black parents and 19.3 percent of Hispanic parents took out PLUS loans (Woo & Horn, 2006).

Radwin et al. (2013) examined loan patterns of dependent, undergraduate students based on specified parental income levels. Twenty percent of students whose parents' income fell below \$20,000 took out direct unsubsidized loans in comparison to 14.6 percent of students whose parents' income was \$100,000 plus. Notably, there was a higher percentage of students who took out direct PLUS loans from those families who made \$100,000 plus (33.5%) in comparison to 10.3% for students from \$20,000 income level or less. This appears to contradict Woo and Horn (2006) who reported a larger percentage of PLUS loans taken out by parents of color. One would imagine that other factors need to be considered, such as the differing cost of tuition from different institutions/institutional types (e.g., community colleges, comprehensives, research universities).

Based on a representative sample from over 29,000 alumni from across the U.S. with a bachelor's degree or higher and with internet access, over 35% of recent college graduates took out loans totaling more than \$25,000, a level at which debt burden can have a serious impact on graduates' lives (Index, G. P., 2015). However, for recent Black alumni and first-generation college students, the percentage is higher. Approximately 50% of Black alumni reported taking out loans totaling more than \$25,000, while 43% of first-generation college students reported the same. This raises an important question about how these student loan levels impact students who come from traditionally lower socioeconomic statuses who are attempting to achieve upward mobility (Index, G. P., 2015). Having such a high amount of student loan debt can undoubtedly hinder these students from being able to climb the social ladder. Notably, "Hispanic alumni are no more likely than white graduates to have incurred high levels of debt. However, they are less likely than whites to have taken out no loans at all" (Index, G. P., 2015, p. 10).

Over the past decade, student loan debt in the nation has more than doubled after adjusting for inflation (Sankar, 2018). Additionally, delinquency rates nationwide, which is the share of loan balances unpaid after three months, have more than doubled since 2006 (Sankar, 2018). In 2017, the average student loan default rate was 10.7% while the student loan delinquency rate was 5.41% (Sankar, 2018). While more students are being forced to take out loans to

pay for their education, the end result can be damaging to the possibility of them being able to purchase a home, car, or open their own business (Sankar, 2018).

The public service loan forgiveness program is a federal program that forgives federal student loans for individuals who are employed full-time, in this case more than 30 hours per week. Recently, however, House Republicans introduced a new bill that could end public service loan forgiveness for student loans. Known as the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act, the bill would end the public service loan forgiveness program immediately. This bill would not impact those who were already enrolled in the program. Rather, it would impact those who have not enrolled by June 2018. At this time, the bill has not yet been approved (Friedman, 2017), but its passing would have the greatest impact on low-income students.

### Work-study

In addition to grants and loans, some low-income students are eligible for work-study. The Federal Work-Study (FWS) program was originally passed as part of the Educational Opportunity Act of 1964. It was later transferred to the Higher Education Act of 1965 as a means to “stimulate and promote the part-time employment of students...who are in need of the earnings from such employment to pursue courses of study at eligible institutions” (Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended in 2008, 42 U.S.C. & 2751).

A student may be employed under the FWS program through the school in which they are enrolled; this would be considered an on-campus job. FWS recipients may also work off campus in federal, state, or local public agencies or with certain private nonprofit or for-profit organizations (Federal Student Aid, 2016). Eligibility for FWS is based on a student's EFC. While a student may be eligible to receive FWS, it is not a guarantee that they will be awarded FWS (Federal Student Aid, 2016).

The work-study program was designed to provide students with a means to pay their way through college. However, tuition costs have risen dramatically since the FWS program's inception. In the 1976-1977 academic year, the average cost of tuition, room and board, at a public 4-year institution was \$7,078. In comparison to the 2009-2010 academic year, the average cost of tuition, room and board, at a public 4-year institution was \$14,870 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). What was once a reality is no longer true in today's U.S. higher education context. Adjusting for inflation, college tuition has nearly tripled over the past several decades. In addition, the federal financial aid system has shifted from a predominately grant-based system to one dominated by loans (Draut, 2009). The reality of today is that many students have to work in order to supplement the cost of their tuition and living expenses. According to Scott-Clayton (2011) a public 4-year undergraduate would need to work about fifty hours per week for the entire calendar year to fully fund average tuition and living expenses.

## Students Have to Work

While there are many factors that influence student degree completion, financing one's education is noted as one of the top reasons (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). Indeed, as evidenced by the discussion above, there are several financial aid programs available, yet they are insufficient (King, 2002). Accordingly, students must work to supplement the cost of their education.

The amount of literature focused on college students who are also employed has increased over the years, yet there are still many gaps to address. According to O'Brien (1993) there is a parallel between the consistent rise in the cost of a higher education and the number of students who are employed. For at least five decades, there has been consistent growth in the number of students who have been employed while pursuing a higher education. In the 2011-2012 profile of undergraduate students, approximately 41.7% of students enrolled at a 4-year university worked full-time in comparison to 49.3% who attended a 2-year institution. Additionally, 49.2% of undergraduates who attend a 4-year university worked part-time in comparison to 39.3% of students who attended a 2-year institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Being employed while pursuing a higher education has become the new normal (Riggert et al., 2006).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), nearly 65% of students between the ages of 25-34 worked full-time year around. Full-time in this case was defined as working a minimum of 35 hours per week for a



minimum of 50 weeks per year. Non-white students often come from low-income backgrounds and are thus more likely to work to cover their educational costs (Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). African American and Latino students are likely to work more hours than White students, with about one-third working thirty-six plus hours a week (Tuttle, McKinney, & Rago, 2005). The reality today is that the majority of students cannot give their full attention to their academics, as they also need to work to provide for themselves financially (Riggert et al., 2006). Unfortunately, a consequence of working *off-campus* is the potential negative impact it can have on a student's academic persistence and retention.

However, working *on-campus* can have a positive impact on a student's academic persistence and retention. Astin's (1984) study on college impact revealed that those students who worked on campus were positively associated with the achievement of earning a bachelor's degree. McClellan, Creager, and Savoca (2018) found that on-campus jobs provide students with the opportunity to frequently interact with not just their peers and faculty, but also staff members, specifically their supervisors, who often times become mentors to them. Moreover, in their grounded theory study, Cheng and Alcantara (2007) found that for those who were able to find an on-campus job that aligned with their career goals, they were fortunate to receive on the job training. As well, their on-campus job provided them with a sense of structure in their daily lives. I elaborate on each of these studies in the following sections, but first I introduce high impact

practices and their six defining qualities. High-impact practices and their underlying theories serve as the primary lens guiding this study.

### High Impact Practices

According to McClellan, Creager, and Savoca (2018), “Student persistence, retention and success are crucial to higher education institutions around the globe” (p. 102). Universities and government entities are continuously implementing various structures, programs, and interventions that are aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates (McClellan et al., 2018). In recent years, higher education institutions have explored high impact practices as a way to increase student engagement and retention and graduation rates.

Utilizing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Kuh (2008) highlighted and validated a set of effective educational practices that are correlated with positive educational outcomes for students from a wide range of backgrounds. This includes students from varying ethnicities including: African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Caucasian/White, Hispanic, and other. Student demographics were broken up into part-time or full-time enrollment, first-generation, transfer students, and age (Kuh, 2008). These educational practices are known as High Impact Practices (HIPs). They have been labeled “high-impact” because of the benefits they provide to students (Kuh, 2008).

Kuh (2008) identified ten specific high impact practices: 1) first-year seminars and experiences, 2) common intellectual experiences, 3) learning communities, 4) writing-intensive courses, 5) collaborative assignments and

projects, 6) undergraduate research, 7) diversity/global learning, 8) service learning/community based learning, 9) internships, and 10) capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008).

*First-year seminars and experiences* place a strong emphasis on “critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies” (AACU, 2008, p. 9). Meanwhile, *common intellectual experiences* have moved away from the traditional idea of a “core” curriculum and have evolved into common courses being linked together perhaps through advanced integrative studies or participation in learning communities (AACU, 2008).

The main goal of *learning communities* is to encourage the combination of learning throughout courses and inquiry that spans outside of the classroom. Typically, students take two or more courses with the same peers and work closely together with their professors (AACU, 2008). Correspondingly, *writing intensive courses* encourage students to write in various forms for different audiences, across different disciplines (AACU, 2008).

*Collaborative assignments and projects* combine two key goals: “learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others” (AACU, 2008, p. 9). Related to problem solving, *undergraduate research* provides students with an opportunity to become involved with their faculty as they work collaboratively to

answer contested questions, through observation and the use of cutting edge technologies (AACU, 2008).

*Diversity/global learning* “emphasizes courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews that are different from their own” (AACU, 2008, p. 9). These courses and programs provide students with the opportunity to explore disparities within society, such as racial, ethnic and gender inequalities (AACU, 2008). Similarly, *service learning/community-based learning* provide students with direct experience with issues they are studying in their courses and attempt to analyze and solve problems within their communities. These programs allow students to apply what they are learning in the classroom in real life settings (AACU, 2008).

Finally, *internships* provide students with the opportunity to get direct experience in a work setting (usually within their chosen field) and receive mentorship from professionals in the field (AACU, 2008). Moreover, capstone courses and projects are culminating experiences that require students nearing the end of their undergraduate career to create a project that incorporates and applies what they have learned (AACU, 2008).

According to Kuh (2008) these high impact practices are impactful for students for the following reasons. First, participating in any of these activities requires students to put in a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks. As well, most activities require students to put in a little time each day, which not only strengthens their level of investment, but also solidifies

their commitment to their academic program and college. Second, the make-up of these high-impact activities puts students in situations where they have to interact with faculty and their peers on significant matters, usually over longer periods of time (Kuh, 2008).

Third, students who participate in one or more of these activities come into contact more often with individuals from diverse backgrounds; individuals different from themselves. Fourth, even though the activities differ within each of the identified high-impact practices, students typically will receive frequent feedback on their performance. Because students work in such close corners with their supervisors or peers, feedback is almost continuous (Kuh, 2008).

Fifth, students who participate in these activities are able to see how what they are learning is actually applied in different settings, both on and off campus. These opportunities to “integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge are essential to deep, meaningful learning experiences” (AACU, 2008, pg. 17). Finally, these activities can be life-changing. They allow students to connect as well as deepen their learning and understanding of their own personal values and beliefs. The benefit of this, is that students are better able to understand themselves and how they relate to others and the larger world (Kuh, 2008).

According to Kuh (2008), participating in high-impact practices has positive effects on all students. However, underserved students show a higher benefit from participating in one or more activities, in comparison to the majority

of students (Kuh, 2008). Kuh (2008) defined underserved students as students of color and first-generation college students.

Drawing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from 18 baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities that completed the NSSE at least once between 2000 and 2003, Kuh (2008) aimed to examine the connections between student engagement and two key outcomes of college: academic achievement and persistence and the effects on engaging in purposeful activities for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Kuh (2008) found that while underserved students benefited the most from participating in high impact practices, they were less likely to participate in comparison to Caucasian/White students. Specifically, first-generation college students and African American students are the least likely to participate (Kuh, 2008). Unfortunately, these findings are not all that surprising.

As noted previously, institutions expect nontraditional students to assimilate into a new dominant institutional culture that is unfamiliar to them, which can lead to feelings of alienation and intimidation (Rendón, 1994). These feelings of alienation and intimidation are enough to keep first-generation students from participating in HIPs. To this point, it is critical that external agents, including faculty, staff, and administrators work to validate students, which will in turn empower students to believe in their abilities as powerful learners (Rendón, 1994). It is simply not enough for institutions to offer HIPs; faculty, staff, and

administrators need to take on a more active role and validate students, especially first-generation students and students of color.

Given what we know about the positive impact HIPs can have on student engagement and retention, coupled with the lack of participation in HIPs from first-generation students, it is imperative that supervisors re-examine their student employment positions and embed the qualities of HIPs into these roles. As a reminder these six traits/qualities include: 1) time and energy; 2) faculty/staff/peer interaction; 3) diverse backgrounds; 4) frequent feedback; 5) application; and 6) values/beliefs. In the following section I highlight how these six traits align with on-campus employment.

#### Critique of High Impact Practices

While studies have shown the positive impact HIPs have on student engagement and academic performance, there has been recent criticism on the impact they have on graduation rates. Recently Johnson and Stage (2018) published a quantitative study that examined if the utilization of HIPs correlated with higher four- and six-year graduation rates. The study focused on colleges and universities that had 10,000 or more students enrolled. Their sample included 101 institutions.

Their study revealed that the following HIPs did not have any impact on four- or six-year graduation rates: Collaborative Assignments, Undergraduate Research, Study Abroad (or Diversity/Global Learning), Service Learning, Capstone/Senior Projects, Learning Communities, Common Intellectual Courses,

and Writing-Intensive Courses. They found that internships actually increased the student's time to graduation and that first-year seminars had a negative impact as they overwhelmed the students. They also found that the number of HIPs that the institution offered had no connection with graduation rates.

George Kuh and Jillian Kenzie, associate director of the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and senior scholar at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, responded to Johnson and Stage (2018). They criticized the data from the study and the author's research approach. Kuh and Kinzie (2018) highlighted that the quality of the implementation of HIPs greatly influences their impact on students. Additionally, they discussed how HIPs differ from institutions and therefore some are implemented better than others. Therefore, to compare across institutions is a moot point as there is no context as to how they were designed and implemented.

#### On-campus Employment and its Alignment with High Impact Practices

##### Time and energy

Astin (1984) defined student involvement as the "amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). The theory of student involvement argues that in order to achieve the effects intended from a particular curriculum, there must be a sufficient amount of effort and energy that the student invests. It is not enough for the institution to simply expose students, but students must actively participate as well. A greater



amount of student learning and personal development occurs when the student becomes more involved with their campus (Astin, 1984).

Astin (1993) conducted a study on the impact of college on students. He utilized the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), which was one of the largest ongoing studies of the U.S. higher education system. His work relied on longitudinal data that included around 500,000 students and a national sample of more than 1,300 institutions of all types. Astin chose to focus on the experiences of recent high school graduates who were attending college on a full-time basis; his study focused on the traditional college student (Astin, 1993). This study is limited in that he chose to omit adult college students and those students who attended college part-time. According to Richardson and Skinner (1992) first-generation college students are more likely to attend community college part-time, which suggests that many first-generation students were not represented in this study. The data collected included a wide range of cognitive and affective student outcomes, which allowed the researchers to examine how the college experience impacted students on more than 80 measures related to attitudes, values, behavior, learning, achievement, career development, and satisfaction (Astin, 1993).

Astin (1993) discussed different environmental factors that impacted students in the study. One of these factors was *involvement in work*. Working a full-time job was linked to negative effects, with the completion of a bachelor's degree experiencing the largest negative effect. Other outcomes that were

negatively associated with working full-time included “college GPA, graduating with honors, enrollment in graduate or professional school, and self-reported growth in cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, knowledge of a field or discipline, and preparation for graduate school” (p. 388). These negative effects were also consistent for those students who worked part-time, but off-campus (Astin, 1993).

However, there was a stark contrast for those students who worked part-time on campus. Having a part-time job on campus was positively associated with earning a bachelor’s degree and with nearly all areas of self-reported cognitive and affective growth. In addition, working part-time on campus “increased the probability of being elected to student office, tutoring other students, and attending recitals or concerts” (p. 388). These students spent a significant amount of time and energy in their on-campus job, which led to additional time and energy on extracurricular activities on their campus. Ultimately, it led students to become involved and engaged with their campus.

#### Faculty/Staff/Peer Interaction

Astin (1993) found that on-campus workers had more frequent contact with their peers and faculty members in comparison to those students who worked off-campus. Students’ frequent interactions with their peers and faculty allowed for them to become more immersed into the collegiate environment and culture, whereas off campus jobs, whether part- or full-time, did not allow for the same immersion (Astin, 1993). Similarly, Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, Desler, and

Zusman (1994) noted that on campus employment could foster involvement with other students, staff and faculty alike which enhances the student's overall experience. Students can become part of their institution's culture if their work is on-campus because they have the opportunity to build relationships with students, faculty, and staff, which in turn leads to an increase in their levels of engagement (Empie, 2012). On-campus jobs provide students with the opportunity to frequently interact with not just their peers and faculty, but also staff members, specifically their supervisors, who often times become a mentor to them (McClellan et al., 2018).

Gardner, Chickering, Frank, Robinson, Luzzo, Noel, and de Water (1996) summed up the critical role supervisors play in promoting retention:

Campus work supervisors are ideally positioned to be highly effective 'retention agents' for the students who work with them. In fact, students often say it is their work supervisor who knows them best—better than any teacher or adviser on campus. The best—of—the—best supervisors become proxy 'moms and dads' to dozens of students (and over the years, to hundreds and even thousands of them). For many students, this relationship prominently figures in their decision to return to campus each fall. (p. 32).

The relationships between supervisors and student employees are crucial to creating an environment in which students are engaged and feel that they belong (McClellan et al., 2018). Similarly, Noel-Levitz (2010) summed up the

critical role supervisors and campus personnel play in promoting engagement as follows:

Students working in a particular department often develop a feeling of connectedness as they make friends with staff members and fellow student workers and take pride in their inside knowledge of the institution. Capable and trusted staff members who take an interest in students' academic progress and general wellbeing—but unlike faculty members, are not involved in evaluating their coursework—often become supportive mentors or even surrogate parents for students who work with them. In many cases, staff members create relationships that nurture ongoing ties to the institution. (p. 3)

Specific to first-generation students, Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, and Miller (2007) asserted the benefit of faculty and staff interactions:

Engagement with faculty and other university personnel may be especially beneficial for first-generation students as those people can provide the necessary information, perspective, values, and socialization that can compensate for cultural capital that was not available to first-generation students in their families and broader social networks prior to the college experience. (p. 59)

As Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, and Miller (2007) pointed out, first-generation students are able to tap into broader social networks through their

interactions with faculty and staff; they are able to build on their existing social capital.

Social capital is a resource that is connected with group membership and social networks (Bourdieu, 1970). In relation to this study, group membership is the on-campus job while the social networks are those which the student employee has the potential to build through frequent encounters with their supervisor, peers, faculty, and staff. Membership in groups can be used in efforts to improve the social standings of individuals within different fields. As Noel-Levitz (2010) stated, on-campus student employees gain inside knowledge of the institution. This inside knowledge can improve their social standings within the institution and beyond as they have a better working knowledge of how the institution operates and where it fits in within the larger context. The college experience itself, which includes both the academic and engagement components, can provide access to additional social capital in the form of networks and resources that are especially helpful for both low-income and first-generation students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Students can gain access to these networks and resources through their employment on campus.

Nunez and Sansone (2012) conducted a study which explored the meaning of work in the experiences of first-generation Latino college students. One of the three findings that emerged from their study was how on-campus jobs provided students with opportunities to cultivate various forms of capital outside

of financial capital. These capitals included human, social, cultural, navigational, and to a slighter extent, resistant capitals (Yosso, 2005).

### Diverse Backgrounds

Kuh (2008) claims students who participate in HIPs come in contact more often with individuals from diverse backgrounds. There is not much existing literature on on-campus employment that explicitly states that students are exposed to diverse populations. However, it is presumed that those students who work on-campus come in frequent contact with individuals from diverse backgrounds as they interact with faculty, staff, administrators, peers, and off-campus affiliates.

In addition to skill building, Kincaid (1996) touched briefly on the diversity aspect:

Student employment is more than financial aid – it provides students with the social benefits, with the opportunity for involvement, and with the inherent pressure to better manage their time. In the long run, it provides students not only with experience, but also with increased confidence in their ability to tackle significant tasks and relate well to many different types of people in the world of work after graduation. (p. 34)

### Frequent Feedback

Although the work of both Astin (1984) and Tinto (1987) continues to guide much of higher education student affairs related practices, Rendón (1994), among other scholars (Gonzales, 2012), pointed out the limitations of dominant

student development theories. Rendón (1994) noted that these theories expect the student to get involved on their own and that the institutions are passive when it comes to fostering involvement in that they simply provide various resources for students to get involved, but no further engagement occurs on behalf of the institution (Rendón, 1994). Through open-ended interviews with approximately 132 students from various institutions, Rendón (1994) found that the moments in which students became involved began with a validating agent taking an active interest in them – whether that was someone lending a helping hand, affirming that they were capable of doing academic work, or someone who supported them with their academic endeavors and social adjustment. Supervisors of on-campus jobs have the potential to be a validating agent for the students they oversee. In addition to continuous interaction with their students, supervisors also provide frequent and continuous feedback.

Rendón (1994) stated that involvement and validation share some distinct fundamentals, but also differ. Involvement was defined as “how much time, energy, and effort students devote to the learning process” (Rendón, 1994, p. 43). Yet, the non-traditional students in Rendón’s (1994) study perceived involvement as someone taking an active role to assist them versus themselves taking the initiative to become involved with their campus. These students reported that an individual took the initiative to assist them or did something that acknowledged them as capable of being successful. These individuals supported them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment. Validation must involve

faculty, counselors, coaches, and administrators actively reaching out to students, versus waiting for the student to reach out to them (Rendón, 1994). Campus work supervisors are uniquely positioned to be a validating agent for the students that they work with as they have frequent contact with their students and thus have the opportunity to provide validation through their frequent feedback.

### Application

Cheng and Alcantara's (2007) grounded theory study explored the college experiences of working students. In the Spring of 2003, they sent an annual student survey to all 5354 undergraduates from a single institution. Specifics on the type of institution in which they carried out their study were not provided. A total of 2638 students (49%) responded to the survey. Students were asked to report their employment status and a total of 1001 students (38%) indicated that they worked for pay in fall 2002. Of the 1001 students, only 14 students participated in focus groups, which the researchers identified as a limitation of the study.

Nonetheless, Cheng and Alcantara (2007) found that for a large proportion of undergraduate students, working on campus jobs was not only a means to earn an income, but it was also a way to make their college experience more academic and socially meaningful. Students reported that they wanted work that was meaningful to them as many of these positions were entry level that required minimal skills or knowledge. The key to student satisfaction with their job was



when the students found the work to be meaningful. It was not until they found meaning in their work that they truly began to appreciate the value of their work and considered it to be a critical part of their college experience (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007).

One of the defining qualities of HIPs is the significant amount of time and energy students put in while working on meaningful tasks (Kuh, 2008). With some effort and intentionality, supervisors of on-campus jobs can restructure student work to be more meaningful for their student employees. Institutions, specifically supervisors of on-campus jobs, have the opportunity to redesign and invest in their student positions.

Taking it a step further, Cheng and Alcantara (2007) described the students' search for meaning in their work in three forms. The first was the process of searching for an on-campus job in which the students felt a sense of excitement that came from competition. Students reported a sense of pride in their on-campus job, as they believed it would open up other job opportunities that are desired by their peers. Second, meaningful jobs provide greater access to the world that extends beyond the college campus as it allows them to make connections between what they learn in the classroom and what they want to do once they graduate. HIPs allow students to see how what they are learning is applied in different settings, both on- and off-campus (Kuh, 2008). For those who were able to find an on-campus job that aligned with their career goals, they were fortunate to receive on the job training. Finally, whether or not students find their

jobs to be meaningful, there is still value as it provides them with a sense of structure in their daily lives. While high impact practices literature does not directly state that students are provided with structure, it can be concluded that participation in an internship or undergraduate research can potentially provide them with that same structure.

### Values/Beliefs

Dennis (1988) surveyed 100 financial aid administrators from colleges and universities across the country, which represented 172,055 first-year students and a total of 833,790 students. Findings showed that working on-campus allowed students to become involved with the activities of the university and provided social contact. It also taught students how to better manage their time and at some schools, provided students with career-related experiences (Dennis, 1988). Through their on-campus work experience, these students were able to develop lifelong skills, such as how to manage their time and gain experience in their chosen field.

Barden (2004) was instrumental in the creation of a student work program at Clayton College & State University in 1998. All students were required to have notebook computers and his department was responsible for the development and distribution, maintenance, return, and inventory for 5,000+ notebook computers. As well, his team was responsible for the installation, diagnosis, and repair of these notebook computers. Barden (2004) developed a student training program to assist with the growing need of technical support across campus. He

realized that it was simply not enough to know how to fix the technical issues, but people skills were crucial to help alleviate the client's anxiety. He invested the time and energy to create an ongoing training program for the student workers that focused on providing quality customer service in a customer-friendly environment. Over time, his training program grew to include technical training in addition to professional development centered around work ethic (Barden, 2004). Barden (2004) invested in his students so that they not only learned technical skills, but they also developed real life customer service skills that they were able to take with them to their next job.

Through on-campus jobs, students are able to not only gain real world experience, but also develop values related to their work ethic. Related to this point, Casella and Brougham (1995) noted:

Work experience before graduation provides more than practical job training and skills; it also contributes to an individual's development in a number of ways...Such opportunities develop self-reliance, self-confidence, and responsibility. (p. 26)

#### Campus Employment as a High Impact Practice

While the literature supports the case that on-campus employment aligns with the six defining qualities of HIPs, there is one critical element that HIPs does not address which is the financial need of students. More and more non-traditional students are enrolling in higher education in hopes of achieving upward social mobility (Choy, 2002). While there have been efforts to support

non-traditional students, more work needs to be done – such as more employment opportunities on campus (Savoca, 2016). If intentional and well implemented, they can address the multiple barriers that low-income, first-generation students face, the primary being financial (Savoca, 2016).

Many low-income, first-generation students need to work to support themselves. According to Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, and Yeung (2007) first-generation students who worked 20 or more hours during their senior year of high school, continued to feel the need to work during college. There is a high need for low-income, first-generation students to work to earn an income, even more so as they are faced with the variable expenses that come with pursuing a higher education. While there are opportunities for students to work on-campus, institutional commitment is needed so that on-campus jobs not only provide an income, but contribute to a student's overall growth. By doing so, low-income, first-generation college students will not only be able to earn an income, but they will become engaged with their campus, which will positively affect their persistence and graduation (Tinto, 1986). Institutional commitment to integrating the six defining qualities of HIPs (Kuh, 2008) into on-campus jobs will aid in increasing retention and graduation rates as well as student engagement (Markgraf, 2015). Accordingly, Kuh (2009) proposes:

Campus employment is a target of opportunity...Working on campus could become a developmentally powerful experience for more students if...professionals who supervise students in their employ intentionally

created some of the same conditions that characterize the high-impact activities described. (p. 698)

As pointed out previously, one of the main focuses of higher education institutions is their retention and graduation rates, which we understand from Astin (1984) and Tinto (1987) that increased levels of engagement lead to higher retention and graduation rates. It is no wonder why higher education institutions invest their money and resources into extracurricular activities for students. However, few institutions have treated on-campus employment as an “educationally purposeful activity” outside of the classroom, and therefore have not expended any additional resources to it to make these jobs meaningful to students (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007, p. 309).

Additionally, on-campus jobs need to be more accessible to students. According to Cuccaro-Alamin and Choy (1998) there are relatively few opportunities for on-campus jobs when compared to the overall student population. In 2004, work-study allocations served approximately 1.2 million students out of a nearly 15 million undergraduate students (College Board, 2004). To these points, the development of new institutional policies is needed to address these issues. To date, some colleges and universities, such as the University of Iowa and the University of Texas at Brownsville, have taken such steps.

#### Institutional Commitment

The University of Iowa has been a pioneer in embracing the idea that student employment is a high-impact practice. Their student affairs division created a program called Iowa GROW (Guided Reflection on Work, 2018). They believe that employment during college can promote student success when there are meaningful connections between a student's learning in the classroom and on the job. Using brief structured conversations between student employees and their supervisors can help students make the connections between the knowledge and skills they are learning in the classroom to their job and vice versa. This program is focused on making on-campus student employment a high impact activity, as it requires students to reflect on their learning and connect it beyond the classroom. As Kuh (2008) reported, students who participate in HIPs are able make the connections and apply what they are learning to different settings, both on and off campus.

The supervisors from Iowa GROW check in with their student employees on a regular basis to discuss their work flow, tasks, and assignments. As well, they take the time to check in with the student on their academics and ask them to relate what they are learning in their classes to their job or vice versa. This model requires employers to meet with their students at minimum twice per semester, which aligns with HIPs as students are provided with frequent feedback on their performance (Kuh, 2008). It is important that the supervisors meet with their students twice a semester because it creates a scaffolding effect, as students are able to build on what they have learned. The more that students

reflect and make the connections between the classroom and their jobs, the better they are able to articulate their growth and what they have learned.

Iowa GROW was implemented in 2009. During that time the division of student affairs ran their pilot program with supervisors who were willing to participate. Each supervisor was required to participate in an orientation and receive training on the program. As well, they were all given a supervisor instruction packet which included items such as guidelines for conversations, email templates, and referral resources (Iowa GROW, 2018).

Assessment on the program is conducted on an annual basis using a survey. The Division of Student Life Student Employee survey is conducted during the spring semester. In 2016, a total of 1859 students were sent the survey link. A total of 637 students responded (34% response rate). Highlights from their findings revealed that Iowa GROW participants were more likely to agree/strongly agree that their job was helping them attain the ten student employment outcomes. The ten student employment outcomes were as follows:

- 1) my job has helped me improve my writing skills;
- 2) my job has helped me improve my verbal communication skills;
- 3) because of my job, I am able to work effectively with individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures;
- 4) my job has helped me develop more effective time management skills;
- 5) my job has helped me develop conflict negotiation skills;
- 6) my job has helped me use critical thinking skills to form opinions and solve problems;
- 7) my job has helped prepare me for the world of full-time employment;
- 8) my job has

helped me learn about career options; 9) my supervisor helps me make connections between my work and my life as a student; 10) I can see connections between my job and my academic major/coursework. Participants of the program were more likely than non-participants to report that their on-campus jobs helped them gain skills related to work and their aspired career, build relationships, improve their time management skills, and develop their communication skills, which aligns with the application quality of HIPs. For those students who were not part of the program, money was reported as the major benefit of working on-campus. Participants were more likely to report that they had expanded on their problem-solving skills, communication skills, and overall general work habits. Non-participants were more likely to report that they learned no new skills from working on campus.

Similarly, the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) established the Student Employment Initiative (SEI) in the fall of 2005. During this time, 93% of their student population was Latino. Their goal was to retain their students by helping them earn money through part-time employment on campus. Providing the opportunity for students to work on campus eliminated the time that they would have used to commute to and from work. In the fall of 2013, there were 101 students who participated in SEI and acquired jobs on campus. They held a variety of different roles on campus ranging from teaching assistants to assisting in human resources (Stern, 2014).



The program came to inception as the campus noticed that those students who worked off campus identified as part-time workers rather than college students. As a result, students took fewer classes, which in turn delayed their graduation. Students were able to apply for positions within their fields or employment that was aligned with their discipline. Each supervisor was trained and also served as a role model for the mostly first-generation Latino student population (Stern, 2014).

The SEI program allowed their students to work up to 20 hours per week, as they did not want it to interfere with their academics. The program director, Juan Rodriguez, stated that those students who worked more than 20 hours per week often dropped out or took fewer classes, which in turn delayed their graduation. As Rodriguez noted, "They're often not able to finish on time and stay on track, and it also affects their GPA," (Stern, 2014, p. 57).

Stern (2014) reported that the program had been a success thus far. According to the survey results from those who have gone through the program or currently going through it, 95% of the participants stayed in college and graduated in an average of 4.1 years in comparison to the institution's average of 5.7 years. Rodriguez attributed the program's success to three factors: 1) choosing students who have good GPA's ["good GPA" was not defined]; 2) matching the students with departments in their majors which increased their enthusiasm for the job; and 3) the mentoring that the students received motivated them to continue with their educational endeavors and graduate. Their criteria is

not without criticism, as it can be argued that the students chosen were high achieving students who may not have needed as much support as those students who struggle academically and therefore would perform well regardless. The surveys also reported that the students believed the program to be effective because they were able to gain practical experience, which strengthened their resumes and communication skills. Once again, these findings align with the benefit of HIPs, that provide students with the opportunity to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge (Kuh, 2008). It is important to note that the benefits that these students gained from the SEI program were due to the institutional commitment in the program's design.

Taken together, institutional commitment is required to frame student employment in such a way that allows the institution to embed the six qualities of high impact practices (McClellan et al., 2018). Commitment is required from not only the campus supervisors, but campus leaders as well. Just as IOWA Grow and Brownsville's SEI program, student employee programs must be intentional and well implemented. With institutional commitment, on-campus employment has the potential to assist low-income, first-generation students and potentially fill the financial gap that is needed to persist and graduate college.

### Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by organizational theory (Bastedo, 2012; Gonzales, Kanhai, & Hall, 2018). According to Bess and Dee (2008), organizational theory "comprises a body of knowledge about *how* and *why* organizations function" (p.

467). Moreover, as stated by Gonzales et al. (2018), “although an organizational theorist’s overriding concern is the organization, this does not preclude them from being interested in questions related to human perspectives, experiences, or interactions” (p. 512). Organizational theory is composed of various schools of thought, which Gonzales et al. (2018) categorized as: scientific management; organizational behavior; environmental perspectives; and organizational culture. For purposes of this study, I used an organizational culture lens to guide my study. More specifically, I used Schein’s (2017) prominent work on organizational culture. Schein’s (2017) operationalization of culture allowed me to explore the student employment culture at Intentional Validation University. In the following section I discuss Schein’s (2017) model of organizational culture in detail.

#### Schein’s Model of Organizational Culture

Culture has been studied for many years and thus there are various definitions that exist today. Culture exists at many levels as it relates to observation, i.e. the various cultural elements that one may be able to observe within an organization or group (Schein, 2017). According to Schein (2017) the culture of a group is defined as:

The accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems....This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of

beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness.

Cultures are formed through the shared learning that takes place over time. To fully understand a group's culture, one would need to know what kind of learning has taken place, over what span of time, and under what kind(s) of leadership (Schein, 2017). Organizations have cultures as well as distinct subcultures. Schein (2017) explained sub-cultures as follows:

Every organizational culture is nested in other, often larger cultures, that influences its character; every sub-culture, task force, or work group is, in turn, nested in larger cultures, which influence them (p. preface). Schein (2017) identified twelve facets of culture, which guided this study: 1) observed behavioral regularities, 2) climate, 3) formal rituals and celebrations, 4) espoused value, 5) formal philosophy, 6) group norms, 7) rules of the game, 8) identity and images of self; 9) embedded skills, 10) habits of thinking, 11) shared meanings, and 12) root metaphors.

Observed behavioral regularities when people interact, describes the "Language that is used along with the regularities within the interactions, such as *Thank you* followed by *Don't mention it*" (Schein, 2017, p. 3). Climate was defined as the "Physical layout of an organization and how this impacts the way in which members interact with one another, with customers, and with external agents. At times, climate can be an artifact of culture that can be analyzed as a separate phenomenon" (Schein, 2017, p. 3). Formal rituals and celebrations

entailed “How a group celebrates important events that also reveal important values of the organization. Such events include promotions and completion of important projects or milestones” (Schein, 2017, p. 3). Espoused values were the “Articulated, publicly announced values that the group is trying to achieve. Such examples are product quality, price leadership, or safety” (Schein, 2017, p. 3). Formal philosophy includes the “Broad policies and philosophical principles that guide a groups actions towards employees, customers, and other external constituents” (Schein, 2017, p. 4).

Group norms include the “Implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups; how an organization does things” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). Rules of the game are the “Implicit, unwritten rules for navigating an organization; what a newcomer must learn to become accepted by the organization” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). Identity and images of self include “How the organization views itself, as it relates to who we are, what is our purpose, and how we do things” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). Embedded skills are the “Unique abilities displayed by group members in accomplishing certain tasks. The ability for these skills to be passed on from generation to generation without it being in writing” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). Habits of thinking mental models, or linguistic paradigms were the “Shared intellect that guide the perceptions, thoughts, and language used by the members of a group. These are taught to new members in the onboarding process” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). Shared meanings included where the “Same words can have different meanings in different cultures, they are understood and

created my group members through their interactions” (Schein, 2017, p. 4). “Root metaphors” or integrating symbols account for through time, “The ways that groups evolve to portray themselves; they become engrained in the office layouts, and other material artifacts of the group” (Schein, 2017, p. 5).

In sum, I utilized these twelve facets of culture to help me understand the student employment culture at Intentional Validation University. Broadly speaking, these facets allowed me to gain insights on the norms, shared meanings, rules of the game, as well as other elements related to student employment. For example, they drew attention the office setups and how setups influenced student/supervisor interactions, language used in relation to student employees, student employee related policies. Formal rituals and celebrations within the context of this study allowed me to consider events that honor and recognize student employees.

### Summary

In this chapter I highlighted demographic shifts in U.S. higher education, noting that more and more non-traditional students are attending college. There are different needs that low-income first-generation students have that factor in to their retention and graduation. Finances are a major concern. While there is federal and state aid available as well as new legislation aimed at increasing access and opportunities for students, there is still a gap between what a student may be granted in aid and their actual financial need.

Higher education institutions are concerned with increasing their student retention and graduation rates, and have thus looked for emerging ideas to aid with this growing concern. In 2008, high impact practices were introduced as a means to increase student retention and graduation rates. As such, many higher education institutions have looked to HIPs as a model and implemented them with the expectation of increasing their retention and graduation rates. However, one key area that HIPs do not address is the financial need of students, specifically non-traditional students who may struggle with the financial costs of earning a higher education.

On-campus employment has been around since the 1600s as a way for students to earn an income while attending school. Previous studies have shown the various benefits of on-campus employment for students, such as frequent contact with faculty, staff, and peers which aids in their sense of belonging, the opportunity to come in contact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and the ability to apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world, to name a few. Therefore, on-campus employment can be leveraged as a high impact practice as it encompasses the six qualities of HIPs. However, this requires institutional commitment from campus leaders, but even more so from the supervisors of these on-campus jobs. With intentionality and support, on-campus jobs can be restructured to reflect the six qualities of HIPs, which will thus aid in student retention and graduation rates. As well, it can help aid in closing the financial gap that many non-traditional students face in their pursuit of earning a

higher education. Concluding, I discussed the conceptual framework, Schein's (2017) organizational culture model, and how it was utilized to analyze the student employment culture at Intentional Validation University.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I articulate the purpose of the study, highlighting the specific research questions guiding this work. Then I describe the research design, including methodology, the methods used to collect data, techniques for data analysis, setting of the study, participants, and a discussion of my own subjectivities and how they have shaped my research. Concluding, I discuss strategies for enhancing trustworthiness.

#### Purpose Statement

Given that many low-income, first-generation college students have no other choice but to work to help offset the costs associated with earning a college degree (Savoca, 2016), colleges and universities have the opportunity to leverage on-campus employment as a high-impact practice (McClellan et al., 2018). If structured with intentionality and purpose, on-campus jobs can present the opportunity for low-income, first-generation college students to not only participate in a HIP, but also allow them to earn an income (McClellan et al., 2018).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore on-campus employment as a potential high-impact practice at Intentional Validation University. Intentional Validation University is a four-year institution that serves a

disproportionate number of students who are low-income and first-generation. In addition, Intentional Validation University has expressed organizational commitment to high-impact practices. Specifically, I sought to explore the connections between existing on campus student employment practices and the six qualities that frame high impact practices (HIPs), if any. Additionally, I aimed to understand what organizational structures are necessary to establish undergraduate student employment as a high impact practice.

### Setting

This study took place at Intentional Validation University (IVU). As mentioned previously, it is a four-year institution where the majority of students are low-income and first-generation. In addition, the institution has expressed organizational commitment to high-impact practices. According to institutional data, there are approximately 2,000 students employed through on-campus student jobs, throughout approximately 100 departments (Institutional Research, 2018).

IVU serves approximately 20,000 students. Approximately 57% of students are PELL eligible (Institutional Research, 2017). About 60% of first-time freshmen's parents have not attended college, almost 80% of first-time freshmen's parents have no associates degree or higher, and nearly 85% of first-time freshmen's parents have no baccalaureate degree or higher. About 50% of new undergraduate transfer's parents have not attended college, nearly 80% of new undergraduate transfer's parents have no associates degree or higher, and

about 90% of new undergraduate transfer's parents have no baccalaureate degree or higher (Institutional Research, 2017).

IVU has demonstrated a commitment to high impact practices. For instance, information on what HIPs are and how they can be implemented can be found on their Center for Teaching Learning (CTL) website. Moreover, on their student government association website, the different types of HIPs are displayed along with a link to resources on how to participate in each HIP. As well, the benefits of participating in HIPs are displayed.

Their office of institutional review has the 2018 National Society for Experimental Education (NSEE) survey results available on their website. The NSSE measured the percentage of first-year and seniors who participated in the following HIPs: 1) service-learning, 2) learning community, and 3) research with a faculty. The results were broken up into the percentage of students who participated in at least one HIP and the percentage of those who participated in two or more. For first-year students, approximately 45% participated in service learning, nearly 10% learning communities, about 5% research with a faculty. From these first-year students, nearly 50% participated in at least one HIP and 6% participated in two or more (NSSE, 2018). For senior students, about 60% participated in service-learning, nearly 20% learning communities, about 10% research with faculty. From these seniors, approximately 80% participated in at least one HIP and nearly 50% participated in two or more (NSSE, 2018).

Additionally, IVU's commitment to implementing HIPs can be found throughout their five-year strategic plan. It is apparent that the institution is not only aware of HIPs, but has shown institutional commitment to HIPs. Notably missing, however, is recognition of student employment as a HIP.

### Participants

As my research questions were centered on the exploration of on-campus employment as a high impact practice, I selected three different groups of participants: 1) undergraduate students who are employed on campus; 2) supervisors of on-campus jobs; and 3) administrators who oversee the departments in which students are employed. Overall, I interviewed 15 student employees, 9 supervisors, and 2 administrators.

The student employee participants met the following inclusion criteria: 1) Participants had to be 18 years or over; 2) They had to be a first-generation college student. For purposes of this study, a first-generation college student was defined as someone whose parents did not graduate college; 3) Student participants had to be of low socioeconomic status. Low socioeconomic status was defined as students whom were eligible to receive the PELL grant, which is based on a student's estimated family contribution (EFC). To be eligible for the Pell grant, a student's EFC must be less than their qualified expenses, otherwise known as their COA. A student's EFC is subtracted from their COA and if there is a balance, this is considered to be the student's financial need; 4) Participants had to be enrolled and employed at Intentional Validation University; and 5)

Participants had to be employed in a student level position, which included both work-study and student assistants (paid by the department in which they work). They could not have worked in a staff level position. Overall, I interviewed 15 student employees, 9 supervisors, and 2 administrators. Table 3.1 provides information on the participants. The pseudonyms for each participant are listed as well as length of employment (students), number of years supervised (supervisors), and years in career (administrators).

Table 3.1

Participant Information

	Students	Supervisors	Administrators
Total Participants	15	9	2
Years of employment or supervision range	3 months - 3 years	2 - 21 years	20 - 30 years
Participants	Alex Brenda Carmen Courtney Janet Kyle Melissa Nicole Priscilla Rakel Rogelio	Diane Gabriel Hannah Jocelyn Lainey Mario Micah Patricia Tom	Connor Paloma

Tania  
Valerie  
Yessenia  
Yulisa

Supervisors of on-campus employment jobs had to meet two inclusion criteria: they had to be employed as a staff or faculty member at Intentional Validation University and they had to supervise student employees. Participants were drawn across the various units and departments (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs) on campus.

Administrators had to meet one inclusion criterion: they had to oversee departments that employed undergraduate students. Participants were drawn across the various units and departments (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs) on campus.

I employed purposeful sampling to identify and recruit my participants (Glesne, 2011). I also utilized snowball sampling, which involved obtaining knowledge of potential cases from people who know people who met my research interests (Patton, 2002). I started with reaching out to supervisors and administrators across campus. I sent an email invitation (Appendix A), approved by IVU's Institutional Review Board, that outlined the reason why they were being contacted, an explanation of the study, and what their participation would entail. I also attached the informed consent form (Appendix C) that was approved by

IVU's Institutional Review Board and asked them to review and sign the form if they agreed to participate.

Once I interviewed them, I asked if they would be willing to share my recruitment flyer (Appendix B) with their student employees; they all graciously agreed to do so. Additionally, some reached out to other supervisors on campus that they knew to ask if they could share the recruitment flyer with their student employees and some agreed to do so.

I did not have to send out recruitment emails to potential student employee participants. They emailed me based on the email that they received from their supervisor. I verified that they met the inclusion criteria and scheduled a time for the interview that worked for the both of us. I also attached the informed consent form (Appendix C) that was approved by IVU's Institutional Review Board and asked them to review and sign the form so that we could proceed with the interview.

The majority of the interviews took place face-to-face. There were approximately four that took place via an online video-conference software that is provided by the institution and one interview took place over the telephone.

### Research Questions

To explore on-campus employment as a potential high-impact practice, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University?

2) How does the culture foster undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all?

3) What intentional organizational efforts are in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP, if any?

#### Data Collection Methods

To aid in my exploration of the research questions guiding this study, I relied on three sources of data: interviews, observations, and document review (Stake, 1995). Table 3.2 presents the data matrix I used to better understand which methods would best suit my research questions.

Table 3.2  
*Data Collection Matrix*

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<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Semi-structured Interviews</u>	<u>Observations</u>	<u>Document Analysis</u>
What is the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University?	X	X	X
How does the culture foster undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all?	X	X	X



What intentional organizational efforts are in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP, if any?	X	X	X
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I elaborate on each method in the following sub sections.

Interviews

As noted previously, I interviewed 15 student employees, 9 supervisors, and 2 administrators. In order to gain an understanding of on-campus employment as a potential high impact practice at IVU, I conducted semi-structured interviews. My interview protocol in Appendix D provided consistency amongst the three groups of interviewees and thus provided reliable and comparable data (Stake, 1995). I chose semi-structured interviews to help me obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others (Stake, 1995). I understood that undergraduate student employment at IVU would not be viewed the same by everyone and thus these semi-structured interviews provided me with multiple views (Stake, 1995). Formatting the interviews as semi-structured allowed me to adapt, add, or rephrase questions as needed (Saldaña, 2015).

Before the participants were interviewed, they were required to sign an Informed Consent form (Appendix C) that outlined the purpose of the study and ascertained their willingness to participate. I interviewed each participant one time. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 45 minutes. Each participant was

asked the questions outlined in my interview protocol. As I conducted my interviews, additional questions were asked of the participants based on the responses of previous participants. As well, participants were encouraged to provide any additional information that could potentially assist me in furthering my understanding of their perspective of undergraduate student employment at IVU.

All interviews were audio recorded using two separate devices as a precaution to ensure data were properly captured. This allowed me as the researcher to actively listen to the participants' responses without the distraction of having to scribe their responses in the moment. Interviews were then transcribed verbatim using a secure online transcription service.

### Observations

Glesne (2011) asserted that participant observation allows the researcher to learn firsthand how the actions or behaviors of participants parallel their words. According to Glesne (2011), "Through observation, researchers are able to recognize patterns of behavior, experience both the expected and unexpected, and develop an intrinsic reciprocal relationship with participants in the setting due to the amount of time spent with participants" (p. 63).

Moreover, Glesne (2011) affirmed that participant observation ranges across a continuum from one of mostly observation to mostly participation. Across this continuum, I predicted that I would fall within the observer as a participant range. In other words, I would remain primarily in the observer role,

but would have some interaction with the study participants (Glesne, 2011). This was confirmed when I attended a Job Fair at IVU.

Participant observation in a research setting involves more than the act of observing. The researcher “carefully observes, systematically experiences, and consciously records in detail the various aspects of a situation” (Glesne, 2011, p 67). As the participant observer, I analyzed what I observed for meaning and to check my subjectivities (Glesne, 2011). At the conclusion of the job fair, I composed a thick and narrative description of the individuals and events as well as any emotional responses I experienced (Glesne, 2011).

### Document Analysis

Visual data, documents, and artifacts provide historical insight and context for observations and interviews (Glesne, 2011). As such, I reviewed a recruitment flyer for an on-campus job fair and the career center’s website. I accessed an email from the career center with information on the spring job fair that they were hosting. It was specifically for on-campus jobs only. The informational email was targeted for supervisors of on-campus jobs who would potentially lose some of their student employees at the end of the academic year due to graduation. Although I did not have access to the student listservs, I presume a separate email went out to students informing them of this particular event. I visited the career center’s website and found their events tab on the first page. After clicking on the tab, a list of their upcoming events populated, and this particular event was listed.

## Data Analysis

All data sources were coded. According to Saldaña (2015) the process includes coding, categorizing, and identifying themes. The process of coding is cyclical as the first cycle of coding is rarely perfect and can potentially require second, third, fourth, etc. cycles (Saldaña, 2015). The various cycles allow for further managing, filtering, highlighting, and focusing of significant features of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2015). A code is defined as a word or short phrase that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 3). I utilized the following coding methods: deductive, descriptive, exploratory, and values coding. I elaborate on each below.

Deductive coding involved creating a template of codes and analyzing the interview transcripts for these pre-determined codes (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). For this study, the template of codes included the six defining characteristics of HIPs as well as Schein’s (2017) elements of culture. Deductive coding allowed me to connect the data from the interviews to these six defining characteristics and culture.

Descriptive coding involved assigning labels to data that summarizes in a word or short phrase what the basic topic is of a passage of qualitative data (Saldana, 2015). Descriptive coding allowed me to present my reader with what I saw and heard; it also allowed me to paint a picture for my reader (Saldaña, 2015). I chose this form of coding as I felt it would help me capture the essence

of what I observed and what was shared with me in the semi-structured interviews. This style of coding also allowed me to provide a thick description of the data, which also allowed me to describe to my reader the connections between undergraduate student employment and HIPs.

Exploratory coding methods involved open-ended investigation and preliminary assignments of codes to the data before more refined coding systems were developed and applied (Saldana, 2015). This served as preliminary work before second and third cycles of coding were applied (Saldana, 2015). Exploratory coding allowed me to explore the elements of HIPs within undergraduate student employment as well as the student employment culture.

Values coding was the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview (Saldana, 2015). I chose values coding because it is appropriate for qualitative studies that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies (Saldana, 2015). As well, values coding is applicable to interview transcripts and field notes from observations (Saldana, 2015), which were two of my data collection methods. Values coding allowed me to understand how employers and administrators viewed student employment and their student employees.

Once I coded the data, I then categorized the codes, which enabled me to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or "families" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 9). I then reviewed the categories to identify any clusters of coded data

that warranted further refinement into subcategories (Saldaña, 2015). Once I identified the categories, I then began to gain a picture of reality and identify themes.

Throughout my process of coding the data, I utilized memo writing. Memo writing allowed me to document and reflect on my coding processes and code choices, how my process of inquiry was formulating, and the emergent categories and subcategories, and themes (Saldaña, 2015). As Saldaña (2015) stated memos can be compared to a researcher's journal entries or blogs as they provide a space to unload one's thoughts about the participants, phenomenon, or processes that are being investigated. Memos allow the researcher to have a conversation with themselves about their data (Saldana, 2015).

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is about credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the researcher, I applied the following strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of my study: member sharing, clarification of my own bias, rich, thick description, and peer review.

I employed member sharing as one way to ensure trustworthiness. This method involved taking the data I analyzed back to my participants to determine whether the analysis spoke to their perspective. The participants were asked to review preliminary themes to ensure accuracy of interpretation (Stake, 1995). I sought their input while I was in the process of analyzing the data. This allowed

me to dialogue with the participants about my findings, and provided opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and collaboration (Tracy, 2010).

Another way in which I ensured trustworthiness was through the clarification of my own bias. According to Peshkin (1988), subjectivity is present during the entire research process. Because of this, Peshkin (1988) recommended researchers identify their subjectivities as they have the capacity to “filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue” what emerges from the study (p. 17). As Peshkin (1988) described, by openly presenting one’s subjectivities, the researcher is able to write freely from inclinations that they may not have realized were interfering in the research process. I discuss my subjectivities in the next subsection.

I also employed rich, thick description as an additional method to ensure trustworthiness. Rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study (Creswell, 2013). Providing thick description allows the reader to transfer information to other settings and determine whether the findings can be transferred because of similar or shared characteristics (Creswell, 2013). To ensure that I provided thick description to my reader, I provided details when describing a case or discussing a theme.

The final method that I employed to ensure the trustworthiness of my study was peer review. According to Creswell (2013) peer review or debriefing

provides an external check of the research process. My peer reviewer was my dissertation chair.

### My Subjectivities

As the researcher, I am the instrument in this study. It is possible that my own characteristics and subjectivities may emerge throughout the study. Because of this, it is critical that I identify and acknowledge my subjectivities before I begin the research process. According to Peshkin (1988) subjectivity operates during the entire research process. When researchers are able to reflect on their subjectivities, they learn about the particular subset of personal qualities that connect with their research phenomenon (Peshkin, 1988). It is critical for researchers to be aware of their subjectivities as they have the potential to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue any information that is exchanged throughout the research process (Peshkin, 1988). If researchers are aware of these subjectivities, they can inform their readers of their biases and position. More importantly they can write without being hindered from these positions that they may not have realized were interfering in their research process (Peshkin, 1988).

For this study, I have actively sought out my subjectivities as I want to be aware of these before I begin the research process. As well, I want to be mindful of their potential impact before and during the data collection and not after (Peshkin, 1988). As Peshkin (1988) termed them, I have identified my subjective I's that I need to be aware of prior to the start of my research. The results of my



subjectivity reflection are as follows: (a) first-generation college student I; (b) low socioeconomic status (SES) I; and (c) on-campus employment I.

My first-generation college student I is a large part of my identity. I am a first-generation college student who had to learn how to navigate, the then foreign culture of higher education. I faced many of the same challenges that the literature on first-generation college students highlights, such as navigating an unknown territory, feeling intimidated to reach out for help when needed, feeling like I was an imposter and did not belong, and lacking the confidence to take agency, to name a few. I believe the personal struggles that I experienced contribute to my interests in researching this population and offering some insight that may potentially help support this group.

My socioeconomic status I is another strong influencer on how I interpret the world around me. I believe it is a strong force in my life because I grew up in a low SES family. From an early age, I was able to recognize that my family was different from many of the families in our hometown. I spent the majority of my youth in a city that traditionally had many White and wealthy families. Since moving to this small town in the second grade I knew that I was different. In addition to my ethnicity, one of the most prominent differences that stood out to me was the fact that my family was poor. Having grown up in a place where money and class were so apparent, I believed helped form my critical eye for inequalities based upon this facet.

My final I is my on-campus employment I. During my undergraduate career, I worked as a student assistant on campus for four of the five years of my schooling. I was hired as a student assistant during my first quarter of college and this experience had a large impact on my college experience. It is critical for me to be aware of my on-campus I as I need to ensure that I don't project my experience of working on-campus onto my participants. I have to be aware that their experiences will not be the same as my experience.

#### Limitations

A limitation of this study is that I did not consider student employees' length of employment. There may be different experiences based upon each participant's length of employment and the specific area in which they were employed. In addition, as noted above, I did not consider student participants' employment classification (i.e., work-study vs. non work-study). I was interested in on-campus employment in general. Additionally, although I attempted to interview student employees and supervisors from the same departments, all student employee and supervisor participants worked in different departments. Another limitation of this study is that I was not able to reach all of the departments that employed students at Intentional Validation University.

#### Delimitations

All supervisors and administrators that I interviewed held staff positions. I did not interview any supervisors who held a faculty position. Therefore, it is

possible that they may have had a different philosophy and approach to student employment that was potentially not captured in this study.

### Summary

In this chapter, I articulated the purpose of the study, highlighting the specific research questions that guided this work. I then described the research design, including the methodology, the methods used to collect data, techniques for data analysis, setting of the study, participants, and a discussion of my own subjectivities and how they have shaped my research. Concluding, I discussed strategies to ensure trustworthiness.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study. As a reminder, the purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore on-campus employment as a High Impact Practice (HIP) at Intentional Validation University. Intentional Validation University is a four-year university that serves a disproportionate number of students who are low-income and first-generation. The research questions guiding this study were: 1) What is the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University? 2) How does the culture foster undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all? 3) What intentional organizational efforts are in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP, if any?

The findings are organized according to three interrelated themes. The three interrelated themes are a) Communication Structures, b) Elevating On-Campus Employment Experiences to a High Impact Practice, and c) The Intentional Supervisor. Communication Structures and the Intentional Supervisor have related subthemes. Communication Structures is divided into two sub-themes: a) Formal Structures, and b) Informal Structures, where I highlight the various reasons student participants pursued on campus employment. The varied reasons underscore the importance of providing high impact campus

employment opportunities for students. The Intentional Supervisor is divided into two sub-themes: Engagement with Institution and Accessing and Activating of Social Capital.

### Subcultures

Data revealed the existence and formation of two student employment sub-cultures (Schein, 2017) across Intentional Validation University. As Schein (2017) explained:

Every organizational culture is nested in other, often larger cultures, that influences its character; every sub-culture, task force, or work group is, in turn, nested in larger cultures, which influence them. (preface)

Practices varied by department as well as by supervisor. There was not one formal philosophy (Schein, 2017) at the University as it relates to student employment. While there may have been some similarities between some employers as it relates to student employees, there was no one single way of doing things. The different sub-cultures first emerged through the communication structures that student participants experienced when they searched for a job on-campus. Some secured their on-campus job through formal structures, while others secured their job through informal structures.

Once employed, some participants experienced a *validating sub-culture*, which serves as an example from which the larger campus can learn. In other cases, student employees experienced an *invalidating sub-culture*, for various reasons that I discuss throughout this chapter. As discussed in Chapter Two,

validation “involves the individual taking the initiative to lend a helping hand, to do something [that affirms students] as being capable of doing academic work and that [supports] them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment” (Rendón, 1994, p. 44). Rendón’s (1994) theory of validation challenges traditional, dominant student development theories. Rendón (1994) calls on institutional agents to recognize the rich and valuable knowledge and capabilities non-traditional students bring to our colleges and universities. In addition, she calls on institutional agents to take an active approach when working with students. In sum, my analysis revealed that there were strong connections between the validating sub-culture and the six defining qualities of HIPs, which I will highlight throughout the chapter.

### Communication Structures

Communication is a major component of organizational culture. As indicated by Tierney (1988), “an organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication on both an instrumental and a symbolic level” (p. 3). Students utilized both formal and informal structures to navigate the process of searching for and securing an on-campus job. Findings point to a gap in communication between hiring departments and prospective student employees. Although students were able to identify employment opportunities on campus, their efforts to secure employment were hampered by internal processes or lack thereof. As I discuss further on, some student employees shared their

frustrations with lack of communication from hiring departments. Being left in the dark as to where they stood within the hiring process not only frustrated the students, but at times discouraged them as well.

### Formal Structures

Formal structures encompassed services offered through IVU's Career Center, including the career fairs and online portal. For some participants, attending a job fair hosted by the Career Center illuminated the pathway to secure an on-campus job. Throughout the year, the career center hosts multiple job fairs that brings both on- and off-campus employers to the campus. Students are notified about the job fairs via flyers posted across the campus and emails that are sent to their campus email accounts.

During the data collection phase, I accessed an email from the career center with information on the spring job fair that they were hosting. It was specifically for on-campus jobs only. The informational email was targeted for supervisors of on-campus jobs who would potentially lose some of their student employees at the end of the academic year due to graduation. Although I did not have access to the student listservs, I presume a separate email went out to students informing them of this particular event. I visited the career center's website and found their events tab on the first page. After clicking on the tab, a list of their upcoming events populated, and this particular event was listed. It is possible that students also frequent the career center's website to view their upcoming events.

The online portal houses both on- and off-campus job postings. Students are able to access the portal with their student credentials, filter jobs based on their chosen criteria, and submit their applications. Students are also notified via the online portal if their application has been reviewed and if they were selected for an interview. These notifications were not automatic, but rather required a manual entry from the hiring department; in this process, a gap existed between hiring departments and prospective student employees. Tania shared her frustration with the lack of communication she received from the different on-campus jobs she applied to:

It was really hard to find a job on campus because I applied to at least twenty different places. I got one temporary job for two weeks, but that was it. I found this job on the [Career Center's online portal]. I always look there 'cause everyone's like "Oh go on [online portal]" and that's where I got this job. It was easy to navigate; it's just never knowing if you're actually going to get a response from [online portal] ...there's some positions where there's no contact number or contact office. So, you apply, and a month goes by, so you assume you didn't get it...you can even look to see if your application is reviewed or not and some of them aren't even reviewed; for one's I applied to last year! I've been looking since last year and I just got this job.

Tania shares that it was easy for students to learn where to apply to jobs. Applying to jobs was also easy. However, there were challenges to the



application process, from not being able to contact a hiring office to not knowing the status of applications once they are submitted. Tania shared that an application she submitted in the previous year was still not updated in the portal as “reviewed”.

Tania went on to share her frustration with this lack of communication:

Everybody says [the portal] makes applying for a job easier, but it doesn't.

It makes it easier for the people putting out the jobs, but not for us

because we don't hear anything. Some of them aren't updated. There's

one, I think for [said department] that I was going to apply to last year, I

just didn't get around to that one, but it's still up! *And it's like, “Are you still*

*looking for somebody? Are you not looking for somebody?”*

Tania's experience was common among other student participants.

Findings shed light on the gap in communication that exists within the formal structure, specifically the online portal. It's possible that hiring managers review the applicants and don't manually check off in the system if it has been reviewed. Of course, it is also possible that the applications are not reviewed and therefore would not be updated in the portal. Either way, the passive approach taken by the hiring managers creates a gap in communication that is frustrating to student applicants. It also reveals that the hiring managers are taking a more passive approach in the recruitment of student employees.

Similar to Tania, after receiving no communication from the jobs Brenda had applied to via the online portal, she attended a job fair, which was common

among other student participants. Brenda, a transfer student, whom was previously employed at her former community college explained:

...I was like, "Whoa, how do I get a job over here? How do I apply for a job?" So I went through the career center and they told me about the online portal. I did apply for certain jobs, but I didn't hear from them. Maybe because I thought that they're like *well she's barely starting school*, or whatever reason. But how I ended up getting this job was through the career fair they had at the events center. Since at that point I really needed a job because my parents were in the process of moving to another state. So I was like, I need a job really quick.

Brenda's prior knowledge from working at her former college, aided in her successfully navigating the career fair at IVU. As Brenda stated, she applied for several on-campus jobs through the online portal, but she was never contacted in regards to her applications. Brenda then attended a job fair on-campus, which turned into her successfully securing employment on-campus.

Just as Brenda, Nicole also attended a career fair in hopes of securing an on-campus job. Nicole stated:

I remember there was a job fair here a year ago, and my friend and I went to it. And I was looking around, and I stopped at the [said department] table; that was our last one. They were hiring and I said maybe I'll apply. My friend pushed me to apply and I said okay. She helped me out and I was happy cause it was really hard to find a job. I applied to many jobs on campus and

never heard anything back.

Similar to Brenda and Tania's experience, Nicole described how she felt discouraged due to a lack of communication from the on-campus jobs she applied to. Just as Brenda, she too attended a job fair on campus after applying to multiple jobs through the online portal and not hearing anything back.

The participant narratives provide critical insight into the student experience of applying for on-campus jobs through the career center's portal. Examining the larger picture, it also provides insight into the culture of hiring student employees at IVU. This is important for both student employers and the career center staff to note, as it is possible that some may assume that the online portal provides a seamless way for students to apply to on-campus jobs. The lack of communication from the hiring departments needs to be addressed as it can potentially ease the students' frustration.

Additionally, the lack of communication from hiring supervisors can possibly make students feel as if they are less than, or not valued by the institution, which could possibly hinder their involvement with the institution. As Rendón (1994) shared, non-traditional students perceive involvement as someone taking an active role to assist them versus themselves taking the initiative to become involved with their campus. For the first-generation, low-income students in the present study, becoming involved could be dependent on someone, in this case the hiring supervisors, taking an active role to reach out to them to provide an update on the status of their application.

With the support of her peer, Nicole applied.

My friend helped me to sound professional on the application, and I was thankful. However, on my part I was like I'm gonna make sure they know who I am. I went there, and I was like "When will I hear something? Who do I talk to? I want to work here. And I finally got it [the job].

With guidance from her friend, Nicole completed and submitted her application. She also took agency by visiting the department she applied to, to follow up on the status of her application. To her benefit, it worked. She was hired on as a student employee.

Like Nicole, Carmen also assumed agency and took the extra step to seek out a job on-campus in a department that aligned with her career goals.

So, the quarter before I started, me being me, I came early... So I went to [said department] and I wanted to know who was in charge and stuff and just talk to them... So, I spoke with them and asked who was the Dean, So I went to the office and [they were] free... [They] allowed me to walk in cause usually you have to make an appointment... I told [them] my major and then I told [them] that I worked at my community college in the same department, and then I kinda sneaked it in, to bring it up. But [they were] the one who asked me, "Oh Carmen have you thought about working with us?" And I was like "Yes. As a matter of fact, I've already applied online"... and [they were] like "Oh, really?" and then [they] jotted down my name, ID number, phone number, and my email... Yeah and then [they] contacted me after

like a week or so...I went to the office and had an interview, and yeah. So basically, I went out of my way to speak with the Dean.

Carmen's account highlights that she had to seek out the Dean to discuss the possibility of working on-campus. Just as with other student participants, Carmen applied to the job via the career center's online portal. However, she took it a step further to go to the department to introduce herself and discuss possible employment. In her case, it worked as the Dean personally took down her information and followed up with her to ensure she was contacted for an interview.

For Carmen, the Dean validated her not only as a student, but also as a potential student employee of IVU. They took the time to meet with her and took interest in her story. They validated her as an individual as well as her previous work experience at the community college she attended. The Dean was a validating agent who helped her get a job on-campus. As Rendón (1994) stated, when an external agent takes the time to validate students, academically and/or interpersonally, students begin to take on the mentality that they can be successful. It should also be noted that just as Brenda and Priscilla, Carmen also worked at her community college and was not afraid to seek out opportunities at her new institution. These three transfer students came to IVU with some previous experience with being involved on campus, which in their case was through their employment on-campus.

### Informal Structures

An informal structure that student participants used to secure on-campus employment was utilizing their social capital. As a reminder, social capital is a resource that is connected with group membership and social networks (Bourdieu, 1970; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For some of the student participants, tapping into their social capital opened the door for them to gain employment on campus. The student participants' connections included peers and campus staff. Kyle shared his experience and how it opened up the door for him to get hired on-campus.

I started off going to [said department] to attend their workshops. I really got to know the staff and the student assistants. And I really made good connections with [a staff member] and she emailed me once to tell me there was an opportunity to work as a student assistant in their office and if I was interested. She gave me the deadline, and what I needed to apply so I could look into it. She told me that "I'm willing to guide you in how to put together a resume and cover letter"...so it was networking through her and I just took the opportunity.

Kyle repeatedly visited and attended workshops through [said department], where he was able to build relationships with the staff and student assistants, which turned into a job opportunity. The staff member that he frequently interacted with specifically shared the job opportunity with him. Just as the Dean in Valerie's case, she became a validating agent for Kyle. She also offered her assistance to help him develop his resume and cover letter so that he could

apply for the job. The staff member, which Kyle referred to by name, took a more active role by not only seeking out Kyle as a potential student employee, but also assisted him in the preparation of his application.

Yulisa had a similar experience utilizing her social capital to gain employment on-campus, yet in her case it was with her peer. Yulisa recalled:

My [peer] told me, did you know that we're actually hiring? Someone like you, I really do see that you're going to make it. I think you're really going to like this job...he was like, "You should apply and see how it goes." I was scared because it was literally my first job, like I've never gone through the process anywhere else, so I was low key scared. He told me, "Yeah just come on this day where we will have a workshop to explain the role and if you like it, you can put your name down and we'll email you the application."

They sent me the application and I had an interview and...yeah [I got the job].

In Yulisa's case, her peer informed her that his department was hiring additional student employees. He encouraged her to apply to and was able to share the rules of the game (Schein, 2017) with her so that she was successful in her efforts to be hired.

Similar to Kyle and Yulisa, Courtney secured her on-campus job through networking and by being in the right place at the right time. Courtney explained:

I just happened to be in [said department] one day when I heard some of the assistants at the time discussing with one of their friends like, "Hey

we're hiring, here's an application." So, since I overheard, I decided to go pick up an application, since they weren't really advertising it...I filled it out and did an interview, a couple of interviews, and then I got hired on.

Just as Kyle, Courtney frequented the department in which she was hired on. It just so happened that one of the days she visited, she also overheard the students discussing the job opening and decided to apply. She also shared that the position was not advertised, which could indicate that the hiring manager took on a more passive role in their recruitment efforts or did not know how to advertise using the portal. While the career center had their central online system to streamline the process of hiring students, for both on- and off-campus job, it appeared that not all departments utilized the service.

In Rakel's case, she heard about the job via social media. She stated, "I saw the job through Instagram to just come in and pick up an application. But I know they're re-hiring now and they're positing it on Instagram and also through the career center's online portal." While the department initially utilized social media to advertise the job that Rakel now held, they have since moved to posting the job to the online portal.

Further examination of the system(s) that were used to recruit and hire student employees revealed that there was no one single way of doing so. This provided insight into the student employment culture at IVU: there was no consistency across the institution when it comes to recruiting and hiring student employees. While most on-campus jobs appear to be posted through the online



portal, others are posted to social media and some are not posted nor advertised and students hear about them via word of mouth. Due to the lack of consistency, the issue of equity and access is brought to the forefront. If an open position is posted to social media, it is possible that quite a large population of students would not know about the opening because they either don't have social media or they do, but do not follow the particular department's page. As well, it is important to note that there may be students who are afraid to seek out student employment opportunities on-campus and the lack of consistency in the recruitment efforts would likely go unnoticed.

Additionally, for those jobs that are only heard about via word of mouth, there is a large population of students who would potentially not know because they were not a part of the conversation. For example, Janet heard about her first on-campus job through her friend. Janet explained:

I feel like you have to know someone to get a job on campus. At [said department], my best friend actually hooked me up with the job because she was working there. Her boss asked her, "Do you have a friend that wants to work?" She said she did and that's how I got hired. If I didn't know her, I would never have gotten the job.

Just as Courtney heard about the job via word of mouth, so did Janet. Her friend who was already employed on-campus shared the opportunity with her. Instead of posting the job to the online portal, the supervisor recruited through her current student employee, who in turn reached out to a friend in her social network.

Janet went on to further explain how she was hired for her second on-campus job.

Before I had got hired at [said department], I didn't have a job. I was really broke. I knew one of the managers over there...he told [the hiring manager] to hire me...so that's how I got hired. I submitted an application and it was there for four months and nobody called me. I would go there every day...and then [my friend] said to come see him on this day, when [the hiring manager] was there. I came in and he took me to see [the hiring manager] and he was like "alright". He asked me a few questions and then he hired me...If I would never have known [my friend], I probably would have never been seen by [the hiring manager].

Just as Tania shared that it took her over a year of applying to on-campus jobs before she was able to secure one, Janet revealed that her application sat for four months with no communication on the status of her application. Janet also applied through the career center's online portal, and it was not until she used her social capital that she was able to get a face-to-face meeting with the hiring manager who then hired her.

For Kyle, Yulisa, Courtney, and Janet, they were able to secure a job on-campus through their existing social capital network. Their experiences were quite different than Brenda, Tania, Nicole, Carmen, and Priscilla's in that the career services did not aid them in securing an on-campus job.

While the student participants shared the various approaches they took to

obtain an on-campus job, it was not until I attended the job fair that I learned that a policy was implemented about two years ago that made it mandatory for on-campus employers to post their on-campus jobs to the career center's online portal. As I visited the various job booths throughout the fair, one thing became apparent – all of the on-campus jobs were posted to the online portal. When I spoke to one of the hiring managers, he informed me that it was now mandatory for on-campus jobs to be posted to the online portal. On my way out, I spoke with one of the career staff members about this and they informed me that this policy was in fact implemented about two years ago. When a job is posted to the online portal, the job is assigned a job number. This job number is a required piece of information on the hiring paperwork for students. However, I also learned that a hiring manager could still select their hire using a different method such as social media and then post the job to the online portal after the fact to generate the job number that they need to complete the student's hiring paperwork. By allowing employers to do so, the career center staff that I spoke with shared that they hope it will encourage the hiring manager to post to the online portal first in the future. While this policy shows that IVU has moved to one consistent recruiting and hiring tool, it is still apparent that they cannot enforce how a hiring manager chooses to recruit student employees. Therefore, there is still the potential that some students would not have access to apply to all on-campus job opportunities.

To make on-campus employment accessible, the hiring managers would

need to take on a more active role, especially if trying to reach and support first-generation, low-income students. As noted previously, institutions expect nontraditional students to integrate (Tinto, 1987) into a new dominant institutional culture that is unfamiliar to them, which can lead to feelings of alienation and intimidation (Rendón, 1994). These feelings of alienation and intimidation are enough to keep first-generation, low-income students from securing on-campus employment, particularly within a culture where informal structures appear to be more fruitful than formal structures, and from participating in HIPs. While the student participants utilized different structures, they all eventually secured employment on-campus. However, as discussed next, whether their experience was reflective of a HIP, was dependent on their working environment.

#### On-Campus Employment Experience Elevated to a High Impact Practice

Once students successfully overcame communication gaps and navigated the process of securing an on-campus job, their experiences differed greatly depending on the type of work environment they were introduced to and eventually immersed in. The work environment was most often cultivated by the supervisor and based on their intentionality, or lack thereof, students were or were not exposed to the various defining qualities of HIPs.

As a reminder, the six defining qualities of HIPs are: 1) students are able to see how what they are learning is actually applied in different settings, both on and off campus; 2) students are required to put in a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks; 3) students are put in situations

where they have to interact with faculty and peers on significant matters, usually over longer periods of time; 4) students come into contact more often with individuals from diverse backgrounds; 5) students typically will receive frequent feedback on their performance; and 6) allows students to connect as well as deepen their learning and understanding of their own personal values and beliefs (Kuh, 2008). In the below section I highlight that some students experienced these defining qualities and some students did not.

#### Application within Different Settings

Of the six defining qualities of HIPs, students being able to see how what they are learning is actually applied in different settings, was the most common connection with on-campus employment. Many of the supervisors were intentional in creating a work environment that allowed students to apply what they have learned. For example, Micah was intentional in assigning work to his student employee that provided her with hands on experience into the field she was pursuing. Micah further demonstrated both intentionality and validation while discussing his goals for his student employees. Micah was invested:

I think it's very important that students and everybody kind of becomes invested in what they're doing and know that their work is appreciated and valued. That is why we try to make sure that students get kind of that full circle appreciation of their work. Understand why you're doing it, understand why it's important, learning how to do it, doing it, and then seeing how your work was applied so you can kind of say, oh it was important...if a student

assistant works on a project, I want them to come and present. I want them to either see how it would be presented, see how it would be received, and to whom the presentation was actually focused on. But then also giving them the opportunity to present as well because I think there's a big difference for students presenting results to you know students in the classroom versus getting out in front of department chairs, deans, or staff and saying here's my work.

Micah demonstrated the connections between on-campus employment and the defining qualities of HIPs. His account demonstrated the type of validating environment he cultivated for his student employees by showing appreciation for the work they do. Additionally, he shared the importance of not just assigning tasks to student employees, but also providing context for the student as to why they are assigned such task. Furthermore, Micah provided an environment that encouraged engagement with the institution. His student employees were allowed the opportunity to present their work to high level administrators, which also provided the opportunity for students to apply what they were learning outside of the classroom (Kuh, 2008). Additionally, the student employees came into contact with individuals from diverse backgrounds through their presentations in front of different audiences (Kuh, 2008).

Similar to Micah, Gabriel worked to create an environment where his student employees were able to apply what they learned in a different setting (Kuh, 2008). Gabriel noted:

My job is to provide an environment that they can succeed in, and that means they need to have the tools that they need, they need to have the training, they need to have the space, and so that's no different from any other employee...I want them to take this opportunity to work in an environment that I know offers a lot. It offers exposure to information systems that you would only see in large corporations. Even Fortune 500 corporations...We have a lot of accounting students who work here along with our accountants. What best possible place to work than a place that can help you with your studies if you should have any questions.

As Gabriel mentioned, the majority of the student employees that work within his division are finance and accounting majors. By working on-campus, specifically within this division, student employees are able to apply what they are learning in the classroom to a work setting (Kuh, 2008). Gabriel provides the same training opportunities to his student employees as he does for his staff. They are also exposed to large scale information systems that allow them to make connections between what they are learning in their courses to real life application.

Similar to Gabriel, Hannah was intentional in assigning her student employees work that aligned with their future career goals. She explained:

I like to give my students as much responsibility as I can. So, they pretty much run the entire office. They take all incoming calls, they take all walk-ins, they are fully versed in our policies, and they answer questions...I also have...one of my students is a finance major, and so, he's actually

responsible for our entire operations department budget, in terms of doing expense requests, and in reconciling things, and reconciling payroll. And I know he appreciates it, because that's what he's studying. So, I definitely try to do that as well. If they have an interest in something specific, then I definitely want to be able to give them that work experience, as well, to match their education.

Both Hannah and Gabriel were purposeful in assigning their student employees work that aligned with their future career goals. The goal was for student employees to be able to apply course knowledge to IVU and learn additional skills that could be applied beyond IVU (Kuh, 2008). For instance, as Gabriel stated, his accounting majors were exposed to information systems that would be used within large organizations and have access to experts in the field that can assist them with their school work. Undoubtedly, an advantage that the student employees had due to their employment on campus. Similarly, Hannah's student employee who was a finance major had been provided with the opportunity to gain experience within the field because of his on-campus job.

Undeniably, these are skills and experiences that the student employees will be able to add to their resumes when it comes time to look for employment after they graduate. This is a powerful tool as many entry-level jobs look for individuals with some experience (Cappel, 2016), and these student employees will be able to use their work experience to aid them in securing employment. In the following sub-section, I highlight the relevant and applicable skills that



students developed as shared by students, supervisors, and administrators.

### Development of Relevant and Applicable Skills

On-campus employment also provided students with the opportunity to develop both relevant and applicable skills. As Kincaid (1996) noted, working on-campus not only provides a way for students to be involved, but students also gain confidence in their abilities to tackle significant tasks. Various relevant and applicable skills were mentioned by students, supervisors, and administrators. Such skills were: conflict resolution, time management, meeting facilitation, communication skills, and office skills. Melissa, a student employee, shared a difficult moment she experienced at work and how it helped her develop the confidence to speak up:

One of the most memorable experiences was when I actually had to kind of speak up for myself and tell someone I wasn't allowed to give them information on a specific resident because of FERPA. And because of that, I know they were getting agitated and irritated, and I was about to call the coordinator, but they left and gave up...it helped build my confidence, but it's still a work in progress. I am coming out of my shell in terms of the confidence in terms of telling people the truth, even if it might not be what they want to hear...and just developing other skills that would help out with jobs such as time management, or filling paperwork, or inputting information into excel.

By dealing with difficult individuals in the workplace, Melissa was able to begin to

develop the confidence to speak up, even if what she had to share was not a desirable outcome for the upset individual. Melissa will more than likely continue to encounter difficult individuals during her time working on-campus as well as when she gains employment after graduation and will be able to utilize the skills she developed for potential conflict resolution.

Yessenia shared a similar experience with working with difficult individuals: ...There are certain things that come with the job that you have to learn on your own as time goes on. For example, how to deal with someone who is not pleasant, like a student who comes in, and is angry that they missed their appointment, and are taking it out on you.

For both Melissa and Yessenia, working on-campus has provided them with the experience of dealing with difficult people. While it is possible that they may have received training on how to manage such occurrences, they also gained knowledge and insight by application, which also connects to HIPs (Kuh, 2008).

Just as Melissa and Yessenia, Kyle shared the various ways his on-campus job attributed to the development of his skills. He explained:

It's helped me in my development, personal development, and professional development. Professionally, it has helped me a lot, especially working with the staff. I feel like I've grown a lot. Like, really grown and have gained a lot of independence in my life. That's how I pay my rent at home, so it gives me that independence. Helped me grow up and its helped me to be more productive on campus with my school work, and teaches me how to

manage my time...yeah and just more responsibility...my on-campus job has been the best thing for me.

Kyle believed that his on-campus job helped him develop both personally and professionally. He also shared that he gained independence in his personal life as well as developed skills such as time management. This connects with Dennis's (1998) findings that on-campus employment teaches students to better manage their time. Kyle was able to connect and deepen his learning and understanding of his own personal beliefs and values (Kuh, 2008), through his new-found sense of independence.

In addition to the student participants, both staff and administrators shared their values in relation to the development of their student employees. Paloma provided an administrator's perspective on student employees and their development.

...They are paraprofessionals, it's not just a student employee or, its more than that, because whatever they learn from the job, we want for them, for the outcome to be they have learned a skill set that is going to be marketable...its more than just, you have them here for ten hours, and you just have them do whatever. Right? No, it's about how... what are you teaching them, what are you learning from them? It needs to be more intentional and more cohesive, you need to build rapport, you know, with them and make connections, so that they're learning.

Paloma preferred to call student employees paraprofessionals, which

demonstrated her view that they were professionals in training.

Paraprofessionals can be associated with a sense or level of prestige in that the students are professionals in their own right and should be recognized as such. As a high-level administrator, Paloma was able to create a culture that valued student employees and was intentional in fostering their development. Paloma's intentional efforts, as well as those of her colleagues across areas the university, allowed her to build rapport with her student assistants. Rapport is established and maintained through frequent communication between them, which aligns with HIPs (Kuh, 2008).

Similar to Paloma, Connor, another high-level administrator, demonstrated his intentionality in developing his students so that they are well prepared for employment when they graduate. He provided insight into what he believed was the mission for student employers as it related to their development. He shared:

I have kind of a mission statement for myself that I adhere to for them, and it's that I wanna prepare and equip them for meaningful employment upon graduation and that definitely is connected to what they learn in the classroom academically, the theoretical piece, and this is literally their full-time job at 20 hours a week. So, we need to prepare them for those transferable skills so that they can find meaningful employment. So that goes to the core of everything we do.

Connor's student employees are being prepared to gain employment after they graduate due to his intentional efforts. They will be able to take what they learned

in their on-campus job and apply it to their career once they graduate.

Similar to Connor, Mario, a supervisor, shared how his student employee has been able to gain skills and knowledge that are directly tied to her future career aspirations. Mario stated:

[Student employee] wants to go into student affairs, which is really, really good, because she's helped develop a lot of our development curriculum a lot of our assessment curriculum, really kind of getting her prepared to be the next dean of students. She's worked on a lot of projects that have to do with the human resources side of our corporation.

Mario is intentional in the work he assigns to his student in that he aligns it with her future career aspirations, within student affairs. As her employer, he recognizes her strengths and sees great potential in her, so much so that he states that he is preparing her through her work to become the next Dean of students. Additionally, this demonstrated his asset-based perspective, in that he recognized both her strengths and potential and, thus, worked to develop her skills so that she may be prepared to take the next steps upon graduation. Just as the Dean was to Valerie, and Marie to Kyle, Mario was a validating agent for his student employee.

Diane, a supervisor, demonstrated her intentionality in how she structured her team meetings so that her students were able to develop their oral communication skills as well as team facilitation skills. She shared:

The student employees lead their own meetings. I'll have a few minutes

where I speak, and I give them updates about the program, but they lead their own meetings. So, we rotate student employees and have them put the meetings together, so that each one comes a little bit out of their shell.

They feel more comfortable speaking with their peers.

Contrary to most staff meetings that are led by the supervisor, Diane allowed her student employees to take the lead. While she was there to provide office updates, she allowed them the opportunity to gain experience by leading a meeting. As she mentioned, this provided the opportunity for her students to gain confidence in speaking in front of a crowd and it allowed for them to develop facilitation skills as they led the meetings.

Similar to Micah, Gabriel shared that his student employees were able to develop skills while on the job that can also help them in the classroom. In Micah's case, he provided the opportunity for his student employees to present their work in front of high-level administrators, while Gabriel's student employees were able to practice presenting at work, which then helped them with their presentations in class. He shared:

For the students who are not accounting majors, there is still a lot of skills that they are building – communication skills, interacting in an office setting. All those things that, yes are not learned in a classroom, but are learned here. And I think that sometimes it helps them back in the classroom.

Maybe it's a presentation, and they have to present in front of a group, and then by them being able to interact with folks they may not know as their

classmates, it gives them the opportunity to practice sometimes.

Gabriel provided a different perspective than what had been shared from other supervisors and administrators. He demonstrated that students were able to take what they learn from their on-campus job to the classroom, versus students only taking what they learn in the classroom and applying it to their job. This finding reveals that students have the opportunity to practice a presentation in the work setting, receive feedback from their supervisor and/or other staff in the field, and can take that back to their performance in the classroom. Regardless of the method, student employees were able to take what they learned and develop from their on-campus job to their future ventures.

Patricia, a supervisor, shared that she reminded her students that the skills they were developing will be skills they take with them forever. Patricia stated:

I think something I need to remind myself of often is these are folks that are here for a minute and then they're gone. And whatever they do while they're here they're going to take with them forever. I think of all the stuff that I learned as a student employee and its stuff that I still use to this day. And I tell my students all the time, "Don't take for granted the job that you're doing because what you're doing now you'll use it. The language you're using now, the skills your developing, they don't go away."

Patricia not only expressed that she shared with her students that the skills they developed would be life-long skills and she was also able to relate this back to her own experience of working on-campus as a student employee. She shared

that she still utilizes the skills that she developed as a student employee in her current career, demonstrating that the skills student employees develop through their work are life-long skills. All student employers should have a similar mindset as Patricia, so that they can be intentional in their efforts to develop their students. The life-long skills that student employees develop through their on-campus job is often facilitated by spending a significant amount of time and energy on meaningful tasks.

#### Significant Amount of Time and Energy

For some student participants, spending a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks was part of their work culture. Kuh (2009) defines significant time and energy as daily interaction and decision-making. Mario, a supervisor, provided insight into how he and his staff actively worked to cultivate an environment that elevates student employment to a high impact practice.

I do have one student that reports directly to me, and she's my [said position]. Basically, she works on those long projects that my day-to-day operations do not allow me to work on. So we meet daily, she checks in lets me know where projects are at, I kind of go through, red-lining them, and give them back to her....The current project she's working on is assessment sheets, how to assess...how the staff assess the student staff, how the student staff assess the staff, how the staff assess me, how I assess the staff, and how the student staff assess me...so this is a project that she just



finished completing.

Mario meets with his student employee daily to provide her with feedback on projects that she is working on. As he mentioned, he reviewed her progress on the projects, provided his thoughts, and then allowed her the space to continue working on them. This is a direct connection with HIPs as this student employee had frequent interactions with her supervisor who continuously provided feedback. Her work on these projects that take a longer time to complete is also a direct connection to HIPs. By assigning such projects and frequently checking in with the student employee, Mario has created a work environment that engages the defining qualities of HIPs.

Similar to Mario, Micah, a supervisor, established a work environment that supported different HIP elements. He said:

My focus is to make sure that depending on what their interest is, that they get as much experience and familiarization from doing things related to that as possible. So for our current student, she's a [said major] student and her interests is of course statistics, assessment, and looking where she wants to go with that so she's doing all that statistical modeling and looking at things like that, but we're also making sure that she gets familiar with processes and software that reflect where that position is going in the future.

Micah demonstrated his intentionality by ensuring his student employee was being exposed to what interested her and by ensuring that she was exposed to

the processes and software that reflected where that position is going, not just where it is currently. As well, the student employee was exposed to some HIP qualities through her work. She was able to put in a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks (Kuh, 2008); the meaningful tasks being items that relate to her future career aspirations. Additionally, she received frequent feedback from her supervisor and is also able to see how what she is learning in her program is actually applied in a different setting (Kuh, 2008).

Courtney, a student, shared how she no longer feels engaged with her work due to a change in leadership. In addition to highlighting disengagement in the workplace, Courtney's narrative speaks to the important role supervisors play in creating and shaping the student-employee experience. She said:

Prior to the changes in supervisors, I had more of a hands-on role with being the lead, but as soon as my supervisor retired, all of my roles kind of dropped...which is frustrating...so now, I'm just like, well, I'm used to that work load and now I'm not doing enough...I feel bored. All the time. Every single day.

Courtney is bored and not engaged due to a lack of work. The lack of engaging opportunities has created a work environment for her in which she is not challenged. Other students discussed similar situations.

Tania, a student, shared the repetitive nature of her work and how it is not engaging. She stated:

I file...mainly filing. They're [said department] so far behind, which is why

they hired student assistants...yeah, it's really boring cause it's very repetitive, but the people make up for it cause there's times where I sit in the front and do front desk coverage. It's just answering phone calls and stuff like that. So, when I'm actually out interacting with people there, they're really cool.

Due to the nature of her repetitive work, Tania did not have the opportunity to work on meaningful projects, and reported that she did not feel engaged. When she was able to interact with others, even if just through the telephone, she had a sense of excitement. While filing may be a necessary task at the moment for her department, Tania missed out on the opportunity to engage with her supervisor, staff, and others outside of [said department] which could potentially impact her development.

If Courtney and Tania were assigned meaningful projects that would allow them to spend a significant amount of time to complete, then presumably they would feel engaged and connected to their on-campus job. While Tania was not engaged with her work, she shared how excited she gets when she is provided with the opportunity to interact with others, which happens to also be a HIP characteristic.

#### Interaction with Faculty, Staff, and Peers

Through HIPs, students are able to interact with faculty and peers on significant matters, usually over longer periods of time. As it relates to this study, some student employees had frequent interactions with their supervisors and

peers though their work. Kyle discussed his collaborative efforts with his supervisor, other staff from office, and his peers.

With presentations, sometimes we [student employees] are there just to support. Some days they [supervisor & staff] set up, with me and another student, and we'll present. Or me with a [staff member] and we'll present with them. And the past ones, I worked with [staff] and with other students. So we really build the presentation from the bottom, and we bring it all the way to the top...sometimes we present at big auditoriums, like with [said department], and that was my biggest presentation, I think. Like 100 students.

Through his on-campus job, Kyle is able to spend a significant amount of time with his supervisor, other staff members, and peers on the development of presentations to different student audiences.

Similar to Kyle's employers, Micah aimed to provide his student employees the opportunity to both work and learn from him, and other staff members within their office. He shared:

I encourage them to find their own way to do things. I think I'll say, this is the way you can do it, here's another way you can do it, but this is not the only way to do it...I also encourage them to use the resources they have in the office with the other people in the office because they all have different skillsets too. You know we have several people with an [said background] who've been working at different lengths of time. Then we have a brilliant

PHD in [said field] whose able to give kind of his way of doing things and because they're all in different points of their career, they work to kind of share their insights differently...what they learned, how they learned to do it so, that's kind of how it works for me I think.

The student employees within Micah's office had the opportunity to work with experts within their field to assist them in their work. The student employees were assigned certain tasks and can spend significant time with the staff to help them in their work. Micah also provided insight into the work culture, which is one where student employees were allowed the freedom to come up with different ways of solving problems, which helped to develop their critical thinking skills.

Once again, while some student employees were exposed to HIP qualities within their work, others unfortunately were not. Rogelio, a student, discussed how an issue with staffing caused for less interaction with his supervisor and staff. He recalled:

...They [supervisor and staff] have a lot going on and they're kind of just...not understaffed, but they have a lot going on just with the small stuff that they have. Most of the time, sometimes, they won't be in the office or they'll be out. Before my old supervisor she was kind of like, the way our old office was setup she could see us directly. She was like, hey for future reference maybe you should do this...giving us tips and advice. We don't really get that as much anymore, but I try to do that with the current students. I'll be like, hey for future reference maybe offer to transfer them to

[said department] for more advice on something like that.

Similar to Courtney, Rogelio's experience points the role supervisors/employers play in establishing a culture that supports student growth and development.

Rogelio experienced a shift in office culture with the turnover of supervisors. His previous supervisor would offer tips and advice on how to best handle situations; there was frequent interaction between them. However, with his new supervisor he did not receive the same interaction. However, Rogelio has stepped up and offered the same advice that his previous supervisor did, which demonstrated a skill he developed through previous supervision. The frequent interactions, or lack thereof, simultaneously provide students with the opportunity to interact with a diverse population.

#### Interaction with Individuals from Diverse Backgrounds

HIPs afforded students the opportunity to come in to contact more often with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Many of the student participants shared the different types of interactions they had through their on-campus job, which varied from providing administrative support, giving presentations, and being a part of campus events. Additionally, the supervisor participants shared how through their assigned work, student employees were able to interact with a diverse population. Gabriel, a supervisor, shared how his intentional efforts not only allowed students to see how what they are learning is applied to different settings, but the student employees are also coming into contact more often with

individuals from diverse backgrounds; both of which are defining qualities of HIPs (Kuh, 2008). Gabriel stated:

The same trainings we offer to our employees for information assistants, like people of finance, we offer to [student employees] a dedicated individual working with them. We encourage them to attend a training for finance, which is priceless...and they continue training with the team they're helping...Once I had a couple students do research for me on tools in excel...they spent almost a week researching and then they did a training for our group; the other way around.

Gabriel intentionally created a work environment in which he empowers his student employees to engage in research and develop training for the staff members. As they have the opportunity to present what they have learned to the staff members they are also able to interact with a diverse population (Kuh, 2008).

Similar to the opportunities he has created for his student employees, Nicole, a student, also shared that through her student job she was able to meet a lot of people. She shared:

I love the [work environment], a lot of the people are really nice. I meet so many people there...Like I said, I get to meet a lot of people, my coworkers are amazing, the staff there. Everyone in general, I really do love what I do...I feel a lot of people go there [said department], so it's like easy to see people. It's so cool, I'm walking around campus now and everyone's like,

Hey, are you going to work? No, going to class. I love it that's awesome. Nicole shared that through her work she was able to come in contact with a diverse group of people it was also evident the admiration she had for her on-campus job. Even outside of her job, as she walked around, individuals recognized her from her campus job. This recognition demonstrated a connection to her IVU, which also positively relates to a student's academic performance (Rendón, 1994).

For student employees such as Carmen, a lack of interaction with people within her job demonstrates a lack of interaction with a diverse population.

Carmen shared:

So where I work it's behind the scenes, so it's not like I work with the public unless they come into our little [said department] area and ask for help. And then I put down whatever I'm doing, and I assist them. At my previous job [her community college] I would work with the public, the front desk...helping them, and over here I don't do that. And I feel that since I'm already bad at talking, I'm not practicing that conversation anymore, so I'm like, I need to be.

Similar to Tania, the nature of Carmen's job doesn't allow for much interaction with the public; because of this her interaction with the diverse population at IVU is severely decreased in comparison to Nicole. While some on-campus jobs might be designed in such a way that is more isolated from the public, student employee supervisors could work to change this scenario. Encouraging student



employees to attend campus events, workshops, and open forums while they are scheduled to work would provide the opportunity for them to become involved on campus and engage with diverse populations. In fact, this was a common practice among some student employers, which I elaborate on in the accessing and activating social capital section. While some of the student participants were provided with more opportunities to interact with a diverse population than others, the same could be said for the frequency of the feedback they received from their supervisors.

### Frequent Feedback

When students participate in HIPs, they are provided with the opportunity to receive frequent feedback on their performance. The majority of student participants shared that they received frequent feedback from their supervisors in the workplace. Additionally, the majority of employers shared how they dedicate time to meet with their student employees to provide feedback. Feedback came in the form of daily meetings between student employees and their supervisors, students checking-in with their employers at the beginning of their shifts, and through frequent drop-ins throughout their shift. Kyle, a student employee, noted how he received frequent feedback from his supervisor:

...When I first get to work, I check in with my supervisor and then check what I have on the schedule...I'll start working on projects and then at the end of the day I'll check in with my supervisor and we meet for either an hour or thirty minutes to see what's next.

Every shift that Kyle worked, he was able to meet one-on-one with his supervisor and receive frequent feedback (Kuh, 2008). Kyle's description of his daily encounters with his supervisor demonstrated that he works in an intentional environment that exposed student employees to certain HIP qualities.

Similar to Kyle's account, Tom discussed his daily interactions with his student employees, which revealed that his intentionality has elevated his student employees' experience to the level of a HIP. Tom explained:

I have one-on-one meetings with my students. I check in first and foremost to see how they're doing, their well-being, and if they feel supported, and then we go into some of the tasks that I need to check off my list and we need to complete...We really have an open-door policy in our office. Our students will come in if they need anything, I'll stop what I'm doing and I'll say let's figure out whatever we need to figure out. Typically, just very casual in the office, which is more so back and forth dialogue on our tasks that we need to do and then our meeting that we have as a team.

Tom was intentional in devoting his time to meet one-on-one with his student employees. During their one-on-one meetings, he shared that before they jumped into the tasks, he checked in with them to see how they were doing personally. This was important as the student employees not only worked on campus, they also took classes towards their degree, meaning they dedicated time to complete assignments and study. Additionally, Tom's account also demonstrated that his student employees were put in situations in which they had

to interact with both staff and peers on significant matters, usually over longer periods of time (Kuh, 2008). In Tom's case, he and his student employees are able to discuss their tasks, but also their studies as it relates to their future career goals.

Unfortunately, not all student employees worked in an environment that provided frequent feedback on their performance. Carmen, a student, actively sought to work within her current department because it aligned with her future career goals. While she was able to successfully gain employment, through her additional efforts of reaching out to the dean who validated her experience, she shared how she wished her supervisor were a bit more hands on:

[My supervisor] gives me assignments and then just says do it. But there's no *Okay, do it this way, or you can do this*. As long as you get it done, it's fine. There's a plus side and a bad side to it. The plus side is I figure out my own way and I'm my own leader or whatever. That kind of skill. But I'm not used to it, so I'm building that...so I think maybe just a little more direction...and I'm new so I don't really know anything, so each little thing I come across, I'm like what is this? And I always just feel dumb, and every little thing I have to go ask her, but that's part of the process.

As mentioned previously, Valerie actively sought out working in her department so that she could learn about the field she has chosen to pursue. In contrast with Kyle's experience, Valerie's supervisor provides her with little direction on how to complete the assigned task. Valerie saw both the benefit and drawback to such

an environment. On the one hand she felt she was able to develop leadership skills having to navigate the tasks on her own doing. On the other hand, she missed out on the opportunity to learn from a professional in the field. Additionally, she received little to no feedback on her performance, which demonstrated an environment that counters HIPs. Even further she shared that she felt dumb when she had to ask her supervisor for help, which demonstrated an understanding of a more passive supervisor who contributed to an invalidating environment. Unfortunately, Carmen's supervisor has created an environment that is invalidating, as is evidenced in her feelings of intimidation to ask questions.

Similar to Carmen, Courtney's description of the work environment her supervisor has created is not one that fosters her growth and development. In fact, it illustrates how crucial the supervisor is in the formation of the office culture. According to McClellan, Creager, and Savoca (2018) the relationships between supervisors and student employees are crucial to creating an environment in which students are engaged and feel that they belong. Courtney shared:

My relationship with [my supervisor]...it was rocky at first, extremely rocky, horrible. It was absolutely horrible. It was giving me anxiety; I was having anxiety attacks. I hated going to work, which is not something I'm used to. I was constantly distraught, really nervous...sometimes in a subtle way, or sometimes not in a subtle way, she would threaten my job. Like, I can hire

someone tomorrow or next week, or like you can be terminated after this quarter...she said she felt I was resistant to change. I'm like you can retrain me if you want me to do things completely different, but you're not retraining me and then you're getting upset with me constantly that I'm not meeting your requirements. I don't understand.

For Courtney, her supervisor has created a climate, in which the thought of going to work caused anxiety. While Mario and Tom, hold the espoused value (Schein, 2017) that their primary role is to develop their student employees, according to Courtney, her supervisor created an environment that is quite opposite. Courtney further explained recent student employee turnover in her department:

...We also had a student assistant who had just got hired on for three weeks, and then she left too. So the student just left, and then the [said staff member] just left...And in the fall quarter, my friend left. That's three people who have already left the team, not even in an entire year. Pay attention!

Courtney expressed the frustration she had with her supervisor and strongly recommended that she pay better attention to her employees. The high turnover of student employees within the office, as described by Courtney, is also very telling to the type of working environment her supervisor has created. There is a lack of positive interaction between them. Instead, their interactions have caused Courtney to feel anxiety because of the threats to her job, which of course does not foster the qualities of HIPs. Additionally, it can potentially hinder her personal growth as it relates to the understanding of her own personal values and beliefs.

### Develop an Understanding of One's Personal Values and Beliefs

As Kuh (2008) stated HIPs can be life-changing. They allow students to connect as well as deepen their learning and understanding of their own personal values and beliefs. The benefit of this, is that students are better able to understand themselves and how they relate to others and the larger world (Kuh, 2008). While most student participants did not discuss how their on-campus job contributed to the understanding of their own personal values and beliefs, Kyle did allude to it. He shared:

I really like where I work. I really like what we do, what's our mission, and how we contribute to the whole university, as a whole, but even more globally...sending students to conferences out of state. I feel like I really like that. Being able to contribute, to impact the student's professional career, I really like that.

Kyle recognized that the work he does, along with his office, contributed to students' success beyond the university, but also globally. His sentiments provide insight into the development of his values and even his possible future career aspirations. He shared:

I feel like that, for me, when I was young, I always wanted to be a [said position]. But somehow I got into [said major], but I'm still trying to see what it is that I really want. And being at the [said department] is a perfect fit for me right now.

Kyle discussed how he always had aspirations to go into the field of the department for which he currently works. However, just like many students, he is still figuring things out, but for now, where he is working on-campus is helping him to find his way. He is discovering who he is, his values and beliefs, and what careers he will best connect with.

While Kyle was the only student participant to allude to gaining a deeper understanding of their personal values and beliefs, there were employers who discussed how they were student employees during their undergraduate careers and how it influenced them to pursue a career in higher education. Patricia shared:

I worked as a [said position] for [said department]. I worked there for my whole bachelor's degree. I was on a path to become a [said position], so that's why naturally I worked at [said department], and at one point I dual majored as I wanted to do [said position]. I switched my career path from being a [said position] to becoming more of a [said position], because of the work with students and I loved it. It was something that I really liked, and a corny little light bulb went off over my head like, I want to do this as a career.

For Patricia, the exposure she received at her on-campus job influenced her current career within higher education. Through her on-campus job she was able to learn that she valued working with students and wanted to pursue it as a

career. Her own student employee experiences influence her role as a supervisor today.

Similar to Patricia, Tom shared how his on-campus job during his undergraduate work influenced his career trajectory. Tom shared:

I've been, I would say, heavily involved on campus. I've worked for various departments [as a student employee] including [said department] and [said department] as a [said position] ...all of my experience have come from my university...and then I became a staff member after graduating.

Just as Patricia, Tom had various jobs on-campus during his undergraduate career that directly influenced his current career in higher education. He also attributed all of his on-campus experiences to his undergraduate university, which demonstrates how his values and beliefs were developed because of his on-campus experiences, which now he aims to impart on his student employees. Both Patricia and Tom experienced student employment as a HIP. Based upon their experiences, they are now trying to reproduce the same validating-environment within their sub unit.

The findings show that some student employees are exposed to different HIP qualities through their on-campus job, while others are not. The determining factors that shape the students' experiences are the office environment and the supervisor. It also was revealed that the supervisor plays a large role in the formation of the office subculture, which can either elevate the experience of working on-campus to a high impact practice, or not.



## Intentional Supervisor

As demonstrated in the previous sections, student employment can be elevated as a high impact practice when supervisors are intentional. Although employer practices took on different forms, through their intentionality, employers were able to create a validating office environment. Drawing from Rendón's (1994) validation theory, I frame a validating office environment as an environment that actively fosters the development of their student employees. As previously discussed, validation occurs when an individual takes an active interest in the student. According to Rendón (1994), validation "involves the individual taking the initiative to lend a helping hand, to do something that affirmed them as being capable of doing academic work and that supported them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment" (p. 44). In this study, the validating agents were various individuals, such as the Dean referenced by Valerie or the staff member referenced by Kyle. However, more often than not, it was the direct supervisor as they played a large role in shaping the work culture (McClellan et al., 2018).

Intentional, validating supervisors ensured that students got the best out of their employment experiences. My analysis revealed strong connections between a validating sub-culture and the six defining qualities of HIPs. In fact, concerted efforts by employers led to additional student benefits, including: Engagement with the Institution and Accessing and Activating Social Capital.

### Engagement with Institution

As Rendón (1994) stated, students who are not involved with their institution tend to neglect their academics, spend little time on campus, do not join in extracurricular activities, and have little contact with faculty and peers. Both student and supervisors/administrator participants explained how working on-campus allowed students to become involved on campus. Student employment promoted further engagement with the institution.

Supervisors and administrators were committed to supporting student employee campus involvement and engagement. For Paloma, a high-level administrator, employing students was more than just assigning tasks, but it was also about engaging students both on campus and with their work. Paloma elaborated:

Student employment to me, it's not just you're bringing a student to help you do filing, or to help you run errands. How to help you make copies or just make packets, right? Student employment is about engaging the student with the work, so that they get the skillset that is going to help them move, and grow professionally...it's not just coming to work and giving them little things to do. I mean those are important because that's part of what they do, but you need to engage them also.

Paloma's description of engaging student employees provides insight into a sub-culture that promotes student engagement. Individuals shape an organization's culture (Schein, 2017), and in the case of IVU, more individuals like Paloma are needed to institutionalize this belief. Paloma's practices were

further confirmed through Alex, who is a student employee in Paloma's area.

Alex stated:

My supervisors will share resources or certain events on campus that I can go to. They'll tell me, you can go during work. That's not a problem. If you want to go to this, like workshops and stuff.

While Paloma does not directly supervise Alex, she oversees the department in which Alex works. Alex shared that her supervisors allow her to attend campus events that are for her own professional growth, and even allow her to attend while she is scheduled to work. Being able to attend campus events while students are scheduled to work allows them the opportunity to be involved. This confirms Rendón's (1994) findings that students who work on-campus are more likely to be involved. Similarly, students who work off-campus report that they have less time to be involved because of the time they have to spend away to work, but also travel from school to work and vice versa (Lundberg, 2004; Kuh,2012).

Similar to Paloma and her staff, Diane encourages her student employees to get involved on campus. She shares how as their supervisor, she wants to support them and their own personal growth, which is facilitated through their involvement on campus. She also shared how she encourages their attendance of campus events so that they can share what they learned. Diane stated:

I want them to grow. Where there's opportunities for them to participate in different things, whether it's an internship, or a different job on campus, I'm

very supportive of it...I want to continue to support them with their own kind of personal growth. So wherever I can help them, if there's opportunities for them to sit in, to go see a guest speaker, and learn, and bring something back, then I try to be as supportive as I can.

The majority of the supervisors and administrators shared how they not only encouraged, but also allowed their students to attend different events on-campus during their assigned work times. This provides insight into a sub-culture of student employment on-campus, which is one that actively promotes their student employees to be involved, even if it means time away from the office. Similar to Paloma and Diane, Patricia shared how she encourages her student employees to do the same:

Throughout the year, I'll try to see if there are any open forums for students to give their feedback. I'll try to make sure they present at those types of meetings, or if there's any feedback that the dean needs, they kind of have first dibs at that kind of development. They're involved in those processes sometimes, where decisions are being made, which I'm grateful for.

Because a lot of times you know, they don't want to go, of course, but they need to go. And it's up to us as supervisors to say, alright, you may not want to do this, but this is how it's going to benefit you on the back end.

The types of events that Patricia encourages her students to attend not only provide them the opportunity to get involved, but also allow students to offer their perspective, which Patricia deems valuable. In addition, these events permit

students to be present when decisions are made. Through the attendance of open forums, Patricia's students are able to develop their self-confidence and vocalize their opinion. Students are able to develop self-reliance, self-confidence and responsibility (Casella & Brougham, 1995).

Similar to Patricia, Jocelyn shared how it takes more than just forwarding an email to get student employees involved. Jocelyn is intentional in her efforts to get students involved:

...Like I said [students] have imposter syndrome. I feel like they need a lot of times somebody to bring them to the table and drag them and say fill out this application. Attend this, I want you to attend it. Now, you can be on the clock when you do it. I may be more aggressive as opposed to a supervisor who emails them, you should apply to this. They're not going to. They don't...You have to go above that than just forwarding it because they're going to look at it and not think that they would be selected. You have to say you are going to apply to this and let me know when you're done.

While Jocelyn may be a bit more forceful than Patricia, indeed she is a validating agent to her student employees who might not have confidence in their abilities and need someone else to believe in them (Rendón, 1994). A passive supervisor may simply forward an email to their student employees, but an active one will validate their students, and at times give them no other option but to attend, or apply to a scholarship. Similar to Paloma, Jocelyn believes her role is to engage her student employees. Of this Jocelyn said:

I think [supervisors] need to understand that their role here isn't for them to help you get your job done. Our job is to serve the students. That's number one...the number one thing is to serve them. What that looks like depends on what they have going on. How can I best serve them in my role, in my capacity? What are the resources and tools I can give them to be successful? Not I have too much work. I need student staff to help me, and I'll send them on errands, and then hardly talk to them, right?

Similar to Mario and Tom, Jocelyn believed that her main purpose is to develop her students and how can one develop them if they hardly talk or engage them. She ended her statement with a one word question, "right?" as if there should be any question as to whether or not a supervisor should converse with their student employee. Her sentiments shed light into her beliefs on student employment, which is one that aims to serve them in her full capacity and not view them simply as someone to run errands or repetitively file paperwork, as in Tania's case discussed earlier.

In addition to supervisors' and administrators' views on how on-campus employment can provide the opportunity for student employees to engage, some of the student participants also expressed how it provided a way for them to get involved with their campus. Nuñez and Sansone (2016) found that working on-campus increased the time students spent on campus, which could potentially enhance their engagement with their college experience and contribute to their overall academic success. Kyle expressed his views on how his on-campus job

encouraged him to further engage with IVU. He recalled:

In addition to my job in [said department], I also volunteer with the [said] program. It is a responsibility, but I get to share my experience of what I've learned throughout my whole college and university experience. I share it with the freshmen and transfer students. I serve in a mentor role...my job is really convenient, flexible, and proactive. It really helps me engage, meet students, meet faculty and staff. So it really helps me get involved and know more about what's going on in campus.

Having an on-campus job has helped Kyle to become more engaged with his campus as is evidenced through his volunteer work on campus. Similar to Kyle, Valerie shared how her on-campus job prompted her to further engage with her institution. She shared:

I wanted to become more involved, so I volunteered with [said department] and was also looking into the Greek life a bit too...then I go to the events, that would happen in my village [on-campus housing is divided into different villages]. So I'd go to those a lot and then I'd go study...It's something you should do and it doesn't feel like a requirement, it just feels like, you want to do it.

Kyle and Valerie's narrative connects with Nunez and Sasone's (2016) conclusion that working on-campus increased students' engagement and utilization of campus resources. Additionally, through his on-campus job, Kyle has been able to interact with a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff,

which has also allowed for him to build upon his existing social capital, which I discuss later.

### Accessing and Activating Social Capital

On-campus student employees gain inside knowledge of the institution, which can improve their social standings within the institution and beyond as they have a better working knowledge of how the institution operates and where it fits in within the larger context (Noel-Levitz, 2010). The college experience itself, can provide access to additional social capital in the form of networks and resources that are especially helpful for both low-income and first-generation students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). According to both student and supervisor participants, social capital was an area that students were able to develop further through their employment on-campus. As a reminder, some students drew on their existing social capital to secure their current on campus employment.

Student participants reported that through their on-campus jobs, they were provided with insider knowledge that they believe benefited them. Alex, a student, shared how individuals from her social network have become a resource to her.

...Because of my supervisors and their high positions, they're able to help me. I know sometimes when I run into things that are like, well I don't really know what this means, they're able to explain to me. I don't necessarily have to call this office or wait in line. They already know. They'll be like grab that form off the wall or go online, get this form...it cuts down on the well, I



don't really know what this means or have to go through calling or waiting in line.

Alex has access to her supervisors and thus insider information that not all students are afforded. Her supervisors are a resource to her as she is able to ask for guidance on how to accomplish certain matters on campus that she would otherwise have to navigate and figure out on her own, as students who do not work on-campus do. Yessenia, a student, shared a related experience as Alex. She stated:

I work at the [said department], so we have a lot of information, a lot of resources for the students...I guess for those things, I know about it more compared to other students. So I have, kind of like the first pick I guess you would say...so I get the benefit of accessing those resources.

Just as Alex, Yessenia has access to insider knowledge because she works on-campus. As she shared, she is able to access the resources from her department before they are made accessible to the larger student population. This confirms findings from Noel-Levitz (2010) who stated that student employees take pride in the insider knowledge of the institution. It was evident that Yessenia felt a sense of pride being able to learn of campus resources through her on-campus job, before other students learned and accessed them. For Brenda, she shared how she has been able to learn more about the campus and its respective offices through networking. She stated:

Getting to know staff and faculty and going to events like conferences.

Recently they had the [said conference] and I had the opportunity to go to that one with the office and it's something new, it's a way to get to pretty much collaborate with other staff members from different departments, meet other people...I think that's the biggest advantage, collaborating with staff members from the university because I know when you don't know...if you have a question and you don't know who to go to, what better resource than the people that you work with?

Brenda was able to attend a conference with her office, which allowed her to meet other individuals across campus and get to learn more about what they do. As she mentioned, she would be able to call upon those individuals should she ever need to access information or collaborate with their office. Additionally, Brenda was able to attend the conference with her office staff, which further developed the relationships she had with her colleagues. This provides insight into the espoused values (Schein, 2017) Brenda's office holds as they allowed her to attend the conference for her professional development versus having her stay back in the office while they attended.

Similar to Brenda, Priscilla has had the opportunity to connect with individuals who are outside of her social network. She also highlighted how she feels that she would not have the same opportunities to network if she had worked off-campus.

...I think I've improved myself a lot, throughout the time. I've had lots of

opportunities, like right here [IVU] I've gone to the conferences that we've had...I get to talk to a lot of people and they introduce me to people, so I think that the thing that has opened up a lot of doors for me...it's hard to network at an off-campus job because you don't have the time to go out and network, as a professional or for your education. I feel like being here, that has helped me a lot, because I don't need to have another separate time to be able to do it. I do it within the same time that I work.

Priscilla highlights the convenience of being able to build upon her professional network while she works on-campus, versus if she worked off-campus, she would need to find the additional time to network. Astin (1993) found that on-campus workers had more frequent contact with their peers and faculty members in comparison to those students who worked off-campus. Students' frequent interactions with their peers and faculty allowed for them to become more immersed into the collegiate environment and culture, whereas off campus jobs, whether part- or full-time, did not allow for the same immersion (Astin, 1993). For Priscilla, working on-campus has provided her with the time and space to build upon her existing social capital that she would not be afforded if she worked off-campus.

Similar to Alex, Yessenia, Brenda, and Priscilla, Courtney discussed how her on-campus job has allowed her to make connections. She also highlighted how individuals she meets are also able to possibly connect her with individuals from their social networks. She stated:

...If you branch yourself out to some of the people in administration, they'll try to figure out what your goals and stuff are and try to connect you to the people they know, which is really nice...I also gain recognition from faculty, things like that. They come to some of the larger scale events that I do, they'll praise me or try to get to know me more, and if it's within the psych field, then I get to network and build...the events expose me and it pushes me to communicate with others.

Through her work on-campus, Courtney has been able to establish new connections with administrators and faculty. Additionally, the individuals that she meets are able to connect her with their social networks, which displays that a larger reach is being made than just within her social network. As Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, and Miller (2007) pointed out, first-generation students are able to tap into broader social networks through their interactions with faculty and staff; they are able to build on their existing social capital.

This was true of Mario, a supervisor, who was able to connect one of his student employees with someone from his network that worked in the field the student was interested in pursuing. Mario explained:

I just finished having lunch with one of our students, and he says he wants to go into [said field]. I had a student that graduated a couple years back who's now the marketing person for an [said] company, and I know I don't know anything about [said type of] marketing, but I paired the two of them up. So right now, he's actually writing a letter to the other guy so that he can

mentor him through that process.

Through Mario's connections, his student employee was able to reach out to Mario's previous student employee, who was currently working in the field he aspired to be in. Mario was able to access his social network and connect his student to someone who could possibly mentor him. As McClellan, Creager, and Savoca (2018) shared, on-campus jobs provide students with the opportunity to frequently interact with not just their peers and faculty, but also staff members, specifically their supervisors, who often times become a mentor to them. In this case, Mario was unfamiliar with a specific type of marketing, and thus reached out to his connection within the field to mentor his current student employee. In this particular case, Mario's student assistant would not have had the opportunity to connect with the individual had it not been for his established relationship and connection with Mario. Of special note is the fact that Mario still had contact with his former student employee. This speaks to Mario's commitment to his student employees and his role as a mentor.

In terms of mentorship, Tom, a supervisor, shared how his role is more than task delegation, but also providing opportunities to challenge his student employees and thus aid in their growth. He shared:

I have a great mentor and a great boss and that's our [said position]. I'm not there to boss our students around. I'm not there to tell them what to do. I'm more so there to make sure that I'm developing them along the way. So yeah, my role as a supervisor is of course to make sure we get our projects

and everything competed. However, it's more so of providing opportunities to students, so I'm there to challenge them.

As noted by Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, and Miller (2007):

Engagement with faculty and other university personnel may be especially beneficial for first-generation students as those people can provide the necessary information, perspective, values, and socialization that can compensate for cultural capital that was not available to first-generation students in their families and broader social networks prior to the college experience. (p. 59)

For both Tom and Mario, being intentional in their efforts to develop their students has also allowed them to leverage their social capital to not only connect their student employees with individuals from their social networks, but also provide opportunities that challenge them and thus facilitate their growth. To be clear, student employees in this study possessed social capital before their employment at EDU, but not necessarily that which is valued by privileged groups and institutions such as higher education (Yosso, 2005).

### Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the findings of this study and made connections with the existing literature. The intent of this study was to explore on-campus employment as a high impact practice, through the lens of organizational culture.

From the data, I formed three interrelated themes. The three interrelated themes were a) Communication Structures, b) Elevating On-Campus

Employment Experiences to a High Impact Practice, and c) The Intentional Supervisor. Communication Structures and the Intentional Supervisor had related subthemes. Communication Structures was divided into two sub-themes: a) Formal Structures and b) Informal Structures, where I highlighted the various reasons student participants pursued on campus employment. The Intentional Supervisor was divided into two sub-themes: Engagement with Institution and Accessing and Activating Social Capital.

The first themed highlighted the various reasons why students pursued employment on-campus as well as the methods they took to secure an on-campus job. Findings revealed that students utilized both formal and informal structures as they navigated their search. The differing structures also highlighted a lack of equity as it relates to the recruitment of student employees. Due to the fact that there was not one central method that hiring managers utilized to recruit student employees, not all students were made aware of on-campus job opportunities and therefore were not granted the opportunity to apply.

The second theme highlighted the various connections that existed between on-campus employment and high impact practices. While connections were established with all six defining qualities of HIPs, the most prominent quality was *students are able to apply what they are learning in different settings, both on- and off-campus*. The majority of student participants shared how their on-campus job not only provided them the opportunity to apply what they were learning in

their classes to their job setting, but also how it allowed for them to develop both relevant and applicable skills that they believe will assist them in their future careers.

The third theme highlighted the intentional supervisor and the validating sub-culture. Based on the intentionality of the supervisor, or lack thereof, the student experience differed. The intentional supervisor created a validating work-environment that fostered the development of student employees. In contrast, the lack of intentionality from supervisors created an invalidating environment that did not foster the students' development. The validating environment that was cultivated by the intentional supervisor elevated the student employees' experience to a high impact practice. Additionally, student participants reported that their on-campus job encouraged them to further engage with their institution as well as provided the opportunity for them to activate and access social capital.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore on-campus employment as a High Impact Practice. This study was guided by three research questions: a) What is the undergraduate student employment culture at Intentional Validation University?; b) How does the culture foster undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice, if at all?; c) What intentional organizational efforts are in place to support undergraduate student employment as a HIP, if any? As a reminder, this study was examined through the lens of organizational culture (Schein, 2017).

In this chapter I provide an overview of the findings. In addition, I discuss how it connects with the existing literature from Chapter Two. Following, I discuss redefining HIPs, provide recommendations for practice and policy, discuss the limitations and delimitations of the study, and conclude with recommendations for future research.

#### Overview of Findings

I was interested in learning how the student employment culture at Intentional Validation University fostered undergraduate student employment as a high impact practice. I explored the possible connections between on-campus employment at Intentional Validation University and high impact practices. There

were a total of twenty-six participants, which included the following sub-groups: fifteen student employees, nine supervisors of student employees, and two administrators who provided leadership to departments that employed students. By interviewing each group of participants, I was able to gain insight into the varying perspectives and practices and behaviors related to on-campus employment. These elements allowed me to achieve an understanding of the culture of student employment.

The findings revealed that there were two contrasting student employment sub-cultures at Intentional Validation University. In other words, there was not one overarching philosophy, espoused values, or habits of thinking regarding student employment. There was the validating sub-culture that had strong communication between the student employees and supervisors. This sub-culture serves as an example from which the larger campus can learn. I elaborate on this assertion in my recommendations section. The opposing sub-culture was one that was invalidating to student employees and revealed a gap in communication between student employees and supervisors. The student employee experiences with on-campus employment varied based on their working environment, which was most often influenced by their supervisor.

To both search for and secure an on-campus job, there were two communication structures that student employees utilized. These structures were identified as 1) formal structures and 2) informal structures. The formal structures included utilizing the career center's online portal, where on-campus jobs are

posted by various hiring departments, and attending job fairs that were hosted by the career center. The informal structure included student employees utilizing their social capital to gain employment on campus (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Student employees who applied for jobs via the career center's online portal expressed their frustration with the lack of communication from hiring departments. Tania, Brenda, and Nicole shared how they applied to several on-campus jobs and did not receive any type of update from the hiring managers. Tania pointed out that many of the jobs she applied to were never updated in the portal to show that they had been reviewed. She even shared that one particular job was still posted in the portal for over a year, leaving her questioning whether or not the position had been filled. The lack of communication not only frustrated students, but also at times discouraged them in their search. Recall Brenda, who after applying to several jobs via the online portal and not hearing back from the hiring departments, took it upon herself to attend a job fair on-campus where she was able to secure an on-campus job. Similar to Brenda, Priscilla also attended a job fair in hopes of securing an on-campus job. Both students shared that they previously were employed at their community college and were eager to find a job at their new institution. Through the job fair, they both were able to secure a job on-campus.

The fact that both Brenda and Priscilla were not able to secure an on-campus job until they attended a job fair, reveals that the student employment culture is passive in their recruiting efforts. While the institution has a centralized

system for students to apply for on-campus jobs, the system is passive. There is a gap within communication between the hiring supervisors and potential student employees. While some employers may post their open positions to the online portal, they are passive in following up with the applicants. This reveals a culture that expects the students to take an active role, while the hiring supervisors take on a passive role. As Rendón (1994) pointed out, many of the dominant student development theories that continue to guide student affairs (Tinto, 1987) expect students to get involved on their own and many are passive when it comes to fostering involvement. They simply provide resources for students to get involved, but no further engagement occurs on behalf of the institution. Unfortunately, at Intentional Validation University, this appears to be the case. The resources are the on-campus jobs. While some are posted via the online portal, others are not. For those that are posted to the online portal, there is no further engagement that occurs from the hiring managers, which reveals a passive stance to recruit student employees.

For other student participants, such as Kyle, Yulisa, Courtney, and Janet, tapping into their social networks opened up the opportunity for them to work on-campus. Kyle shared how Marie, a staff member in the office he works in, reached out to him to apply for a job opening they had. He established the connection with Marie by attending workshops that the department offered, and thus developed a connection with her. If this connection was not established, he may not have learned about the position. Marie was a validating agent to Kyle as

she actively sought him out and even offered to assist him with developing a cover letter and resume so that he could apply. For Yulisa, she learned of the on-campus job through her peer who was employed as a student in the same department. He encouraged her to apply and she took advantage of the opportunity. For Courtney, she happened to be at the right place at the right time when she heard a student mention that the office was hiring students. She completed an application and was hired. For Janet, she had two different jobs on-campus at different times. She shared how in both experiences she gained the job because of who she knew. In regards to her first job, her friend worked there and shared that her supervisor was looking to hire another student employee. For her second on-campus job, she shared how she had applied to [a department] and did not hear anything for four months. It was only through her friend who worked there that she was able to meet the hiring supervisor who hired her on the spot. Had it not been for her friend, it is very likely that her application would have remained there and she would not have been hired.

Unfortunately, the recruitment practices at Intentional Validation University are not consistent. Due to the lack of consistency, there is also a lack of equity for students and on-campus job opportunities. Since not all on-campus jobs are posted to the online portal, potential student employees miss out on the opportunity to apply. Instead of all student jobs being posted to one place, in this case the online portal, some jobs are shared in more informal ways. In the case of Janet, her friend's supervisor recruited her new hire through her current

student employees. She did not advertise the job and therefore not all students had the opportunity to apply. Rakel learned of her current job via social media as it was posted to the department's Instagram page. In this case, if a student did not have social media, or perhaps did, but did not follow this particular page, they would not have known about the open position and therefore did not have the opportunity to apply. The inconsistent recruiting and hiring practices highlight issues related to equity and access to on-campus jobs as it relates to the entire student population.

Once student participants were able to successfully navigate the process of securing a job on-campus, they were exposed to varying work environments. In most cases, the work environments were shaped by their supervisors and/or other staff with whom they worked. As noted previously, I identified two subcultures: validating and invalidating. The validating sub-culture was shaped by an intentional supervisor. On the contrary, the invalidating sub-culture was shaped by the lack of intentionality on behalf of the supervisor.

Validation occurs when an individual takes an active interest in the student and affirms them of being capable as well as supports them in their academic and social engagement (Rendón, 1994). Mario, Gabriel, and Micah were validating agents for their student employees and demonstrated their intentional efforts in developing them. Due to their intentionality, they were able to create a work environment that elevated their student employees' experience to a HIP. Unfortunately, not all student employees experienced a validating environment.

For Tania and Courtney, the lack of intentionality from their respective supervisors created an invalidating environment that did not elevate their experience of on-campus employment to a HIP. Instead their employment experiences and office climate caused stress and anxiety, which counters the goal of HIPs, and student development practice, as a whole (Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quayle, 2016).

Findings revealed that there were connections between the validating office environment that was shaped by the intentional supervisor and the six qualities that define HIPs. As a reminder, the six defining qualities of HIPs are: 1) students are able to see how what they are learning is actually applied in different settings, both on and off campus; 2) students are required to put in a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks; 3) students are put in situations where they have to interact with faculty and peers on significant matters, usually over longer periods of time; 4) students come into contact more often with individuals from diverse backgrounds; 5) students typically will receive frequent feedback on their performance; and 6) allows students to connect as well as deepen their learning and understanding of their own personal values and beliefs (Kuh, 2008). The most common HIP quality that was discussed by the participants was students are able to see how what they are learning is actually applied in different settings, both on and off campus. Additionally, many of the participants discussed the development of both relevant and applicable skills through on-campus employment, which I discuss and connect with this particular

HIP characteristic. I discuss each HIP quality within a validating environment below and the connections to on-campus employment.

#### Application Within Different Settings

This particular HIP quality was the most common HIP behavior within the validating sub-culture. The majority of participants including students, supervisors, and administrators, explained how on-campus jobs provided a way for students to apply what they were learning in their classes to a large organization such as Intentional Validation University. Supervisors Hannah, Gabriel, and Micah, discussed how they were intentional in assigning their student employees work that aligned with their future career goals. Their student employees were exposed to the inner workings of a large organization and were able to apply what they were learning in their classes to their work setting. Gabriel also shared how his student employees were able to practice a presentation at work that better prepared them for their presentations in class. As well, through the student employees' experience of working on-campus, they were able to develop both relevant and applicable skills which I discuss in the next section.

#### Development of Relevant and Applicable Skills

On-campus employment also provided students with the opportunity to develop both relevant and applicable skills. Some of the skills that were highlighted were: conflict resolution, time management, meeting facilitation, communication skills, and office skills.



Both Melissa and Yessenia encountered difficult people in the workplace, but work experiences helped them gain confidence within themselves to handle such situations. Kyle shared how his on-campus job helped him grow both personally and professionally. He also shared how he gained independence in his personal life as well as developed skills such as time management, which connects with Dennis' (1998) findings that on-campus employment taught students how to better manage their time. As well, Kyle has been able to connect and deepen his learning and understanding of his own personal beliefs and values (Kuh, 2008), through his new-found sense of independence.

The majority of the supervisors explained how their students were able to build both relevant and applicable skills through their on-campus job. Paloma and Connor, both high-level administrators, shared that their goals for their student employees were to gain skills that will make them marketable upon graduation. Supervisors such as Hannah, Micah, and Gabriel, demonstrated intentionality in assigning their students work that exposed them to the internal processes of their desired future careers. These students were afforded the opportunity to learn on the job skills that will not only help them in their future careers, but are also skills that they will be able to add to their resumes that will aid them when they search for jobs. According to Nunez and Sasone (2016) students who work on campus perceive their positions to positively influence their development and in particular their career development.

Through the application of learning, student employees were also afforded

the opportunity to gain on the job training. On the job training is one element of internships. Internships are designed to help students “gain a realistic understanding of various career fields and organizational environments, and allow a check for fit between individual characteristics and the demands of different jobs” (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2008, p.163). Through the intentionality of the supervisor, student participants were able to gain such experience.

Gabriel and Hannah shared how they intentionally provided opportunities for their student employees to complete tasks that aligned with their major and/or future career goals. Recall Gabriel who shared how his office hired several students from the accounting department. His student employees were exposed to different programs that Fortune 500 companies utilized. Similar to Gabriel, Hannah discussed how she provided the opportunity for her student majoring in accounting to complete accounting procedures for their office, such as reconciling.

While internships and on-campus jobs are similar in that they both offer on the job training, they also differ. Most internships provide students with experience in the field and are unpaid (Pologeorgis, 2019), while on-campus jobs are paid positions. Additionally, internships are located off-campus, which can potentially interfere with a student’s level of engagement with their institution just as an off-campus job does (Astin, 1993). Accordingly, on-campus jobs not only provide the opportunity for students to earn an income, but if structured with intentionality, they also provide students with on the job training through a

significant amount of time and energy spent on assigned tasks.

### Significant Amount of Time and Energy

For some students and supervisors, spending a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks was part of their work culture. Attributable to their intentionality, the nature of the tasks that Mario and Micah assigned to their students allowed for them to spend a significant amount of time and energy to complete them. Mario's student worked on the long projects that his day to day operations did not allow him to work on. Additionally, they met daily which also allowed for both frequent interaction and feedback, all of which are identifying traits of HIPs. In Micah's example, he shared how he assigned his student employee tasks that not only required a significant amount of time, but were also aligned with her future career goals. He was intentional in that he also exposed her to software and processes that reflected where the position was going in the future. Not only did she spend a considerable amount of time and energy on her tasks, but she also received frequent feedback and was able to apply what she learned in different settings (Kuh, 2008).

Both Mario and Micah are part of the validating sub-culture as is evidenced through their intentional efforts to develop their students. However, not all students were afforded such experience. Tania and Courtney, shared how they did not feel engaged in their work. They both shared that they felt bored in their work, for different reasons. For Tania, the nature of her work was repetitive as her job consisted of just filing while Courtney felt bored due to a lack of work that

she was assigned. Due to a lack of intentionality from their respective supervisors, they were not engaged with both their work and their respective supervisors, and thus their experience of working on-campus was not advanced to a HIP.

#### Interaction with Faculty, Staff, and Peers

Both student and supervisor participants shared how students were able to interact with faculty, staff, and peers through their on-campus work. Kyle was able to collaborate with both staff and other student employees within his office on the development of presentations. Additionally, he was able to co-present with either staff and/or his peers, to different student audiences. Micah's students were able to interact with the different staff members within their office to assist them on various projects. As Micah shared, all of the staff were experts in their respective areas and the student employees had the opportunity to frequently interact and learn from them.

However, not all students had the same experience. Rogelio had limited interaction with his supervisor and other staff from his department. He shared how his previous supervisor was more involved in teaching him, which was in stark contrast to his current supervisor with whom he had limited interactions. However, he did share that he had frequent contact with his other student colleague.

#### Interaction with Individuals from Diverse Backgrounds

Many student participants came in contact with individuals from diverse

backgrounds just through the sheer nature of their jobs. Some students reported being able to present workshops and trainings to various audiences. Micah's student employees were provided the opportunity to present their work to high-level administrators. Other students reported coming into contact with faculty, staff, administrators, and their peers through different events that they were a part of. Students such as Nicole were often recognized by the campus community when she was not at work. Coming into contact with a diverse population also contributed to their social capital as their social networks grew.

#### Frequent Feedback

Kyle shared how he met daily with his supervisor for about thirty minutes to discuss his current progress as well as upcoming projects. Tom also shared how he met daily with his student employees to check in on how they were doing as well as receive updates on their current tasks. However, Carmen's experience differed greatly from Kyle and Tom's student employees. She shared how she received little feedback from her supervisor who often assigned her projects with little to no direction on how to complete them. While she attributed the lack of guidance from her supervisor as a source to develop her leadership skills, she also shared how she would have liked more direction, especially since she actively sought out to work in her particular department because it aligned with her future career goals.

#### Develop an Understanding of One's Personal Values and Beliefs

The connection between on-campus employment and the final HIP

characteristic was not as direct as others, but rather a bit more indirect. Kyle noted how his on-campus job provided a sense of independence and helped him to grow personally. He also expressed how his current job prompted him to reflect on his future career goals and was even considering pursuing a career in higher education, specifically within the area of his current department.

A valuable finding was that many of the supervisors shared how their own student employment experience during their undergraduate career directly influenced them to pursue a career in higher education. Supervisors such as Patricia and Tom, expressed how their on-campus employment experience assisted in the development of their values and beliefs that directly influenced their decision to pursue a career in higher education and their current commitment to developing students. As previously mentioned, due to his on-campus job, Kyle was now considering pursuing a career in higher education, which was similar to both Patricia and Tom's experience.

While the experiences of student employees differed, findings revealed that there were connections between on-campus employment and HIPs. However, this was not something that just occurred by chance. Rather, it required a supervisor who was intentional in their efforts which thus created a validating environment where students were able to develop (Rendón, 1994).

### The Intentional Supervisor

In sum, the intentionality of supervisors, on-campus employment can be elevated to a HIP. For those students who worked in a validating environment,

many reported that they benefited in the following ways: Engagement with Institution and Accessing and Activating Social Capital. I discuss each of these benefits below.

### Engagement with Institution

All participant groups reported that through on-campus employment, students became more involved with their institution. Paloma believed on-campus employment was more than just assigning tasks, but it is also about engaging the students so that they gain a skillset that they will be able to use once they graduate. Alex, a student employee who worked in a department that Paloma oversaw, shared how her supervisor not only encouraged her to attend campus events, but also allowed her to attend these events during her scheduled work time. Similar to Alex's supervisor, Diane, Patricia, and Jocelyn all demonstrated their commitment to their student employees' development as they also encouraged them to attend campus events. Jocelyn became a validating agent (Rendón, 1994) for her students who at times lacked confidence in their abilities to apply to a program or scholarship. She took steps beyond just forwarding them emails and at times gave them no other option but to complete the application.

For students such as Kyle, his on-campus job encouraged him to become further involved at Intentional Validation University. He began to volunteer as a mentor to both freshman and transfer students. He attributed his involvement to his on-campus job as it helped him to become engaged with his campus and

meet students, faculty, and staff.

### Accessing and Activating Social Capital

On-campus student employees gain inside knowledge of the institution, which can improve their social standings within the institution and beyond as they have a better working knowledge of how the institution operates and where it fits in within the larger context (Noel-Levitz, 2010). The college experience itself, can provide access to additional social capital in the form of networks and resources that are especially helpful for both low-income and first-generation students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). For both student and supervisor participants, social capital was an area that students were able to further develop through their employment on-campus. As well, student participants reported that through their on-campus jobs, they were provided with insider knowledge that they believe benefited them.

Students such as Alex and Yessenia reported gaining insider knowledge of the campus that aided them in their own academic journeys. Similarly, Brenda shared how she has been able to network with other individuals across campus and learn about their individual department and what they do, should she ever need to call upon them. Similarly, Courtney and Priscilla noted how they were able to make connections with staff, faculty, administrators, and peers through their on-campus jobs.

As well, Mario shared how he was able to connect one of his student employees to a previous student employee who was currently working in the field



the student desired to pursue. Through his supervisor, this student was able to be connected to someone who can possibly mentor him through his pursuits within the field. Mentorship is defined as an individual who provides support that benefits one or more areas of the mentees development (NMRC, 2019). In this case, Mario's previous student employee will provide leadership and guidance to this student, who will not only be able to learn about the field he is interested in pursuing, but it will also contribute to his personal growth.

#### Redefining High Impact Practices

Through the efforts of the intentional supervisor, the student employee experience was elevated to a high impact practice. The intentional supervisor created opportunities for student employees that allowed for them to experience the defining qualities of HIPs.

HIPs, as presently framed and designed, require *students* to take an active role and fulfill the defining qualities instead of placing the majority of responsibility on the institution. For example, HIPs require *students* to invest a significant amount of time and energy while working on meaningful tasks. However, I call on institutions, and within the context of this study, on supervisors, to invest a significant amount of time creating and providing meaningful tasks for their student employees to work on.

The findings of this study revealed that it was actually the intentional supervisor who created the meaningful tasks that allowed students to spend a significant amount of time and energy to complete. As discussed previously,

Mario, a supervisor, was intentional in assigning his student employee the task of completing different assessments for his office. As he mentioned, he was preparing her to be the next dean of students. His asset-based approach validated her as being capable of accomplishing such as task. Through Mario's intentionality, his student employee was able to spend a significant amount of time and energy on a meaningful task (Kuh, 2009).

The intentional supervisor created opportunities for student employees to interact with faculty, staff, and peers. Recall Kyle, who discussed how he has been able to work with his supervisor, other staff, and peers on the development of presentations. Through the intentionality of his supervisor he had frequent opportunities to interact with diverse groups of people (Kuh, 2009). Additionally, he was able to develop oral presentation skills through various presentation opportunities. However, Carmen was not afforded the same opportunity. The lack of intentionality from her supervisor, coupled with the nature of her work kept her isolated from others. Her supervisor's lack of intentionality hindered Carmen's on-campus employment experience in that it was not elevated to a HIP.

It is up to the institution to create these opportunities for students to experience HIP qualities. In this case, it is up to the supervisors to create a validating work environment that elevates the student employees' experience to a HIP and the institution to support and celebrate these efforts. Based on Rendón's (1994) validation theory, I developed a model to help supervisors foster a validating work culture. To create a validating work culture, supervisors must

be intentional. They cannot be passive, but rather they need to take on an active role. It's not enough to simply make the on-campus job available. The supervisor needs to invest in the development of their student employees and can do so through their intentionality to create a validating work environment. Table 5.1 demonstrates the elements of an invalidating model and how it can be transformed by validating elements.

Table 5.1

Fostering a Validating Work Culture

Invalidating Model	Validating Model
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are assigned non-engaging repetitive tasks, such as filing.</li> <li>2. Supervisors do not permit student employees to attend campus events, workshops, and/or conferences during their work shift.</li> <li>3. Supervisors have limited interaction with student employees</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supervisors create engaging opportunities for student employees such as preparing and delivering presentations.</li> <li>2. Supervisors allow student employees to attend campus events, workshops, and/or conferences during their work shift.</li> <li>3. Supervisors create opportunities for frequent</li> </ol>

4. Supervisors do not provide feedback to student employees.
5. Supervisors do not provide direction and/or guidance on how to complete assigned tasks.
6. Student employees have limited interaction with the public.
7. Supervisors do not provide opportunities for student employees to be promoted.

interactions with student employees.

4. Supervisors provide frequent feedback to student employees. They recognize and build on students' strengths.
5. Supervisors provide direction and/or guidance on how to complete assigned tasks.
6. Supervisors provide opportunities for student employees to network with faculty, staff, administrators, peers, and off-campus partners. Supervisors leverage their own social capital.
7. Supervisors provide opportunities for student employees to become a

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| <p>8. Supervisors do not allow student employees to deviate from their preferred method(s) on how to complete a task.</p> <p>9. Supervisors do not share context of tasks assigned to student employees.</p> <p>10. Supervisors do not provide opportunities that aid in skill development, specifically, within areas student employees are not comfortable with.</p> <p>11. Supervisors are closed off and thus open dialogue does not occur.</p> <p>12. Supervisors do not provide nor facilitate opportunities for student employees to be mentored.</p> | <p>student lead within the department.</p> <p>8. Supervisors allow student employees to develop their own method(s) for completing a task.</p> <p>9. Supervisors discuss the purpose of delegated tasks with student employees.</p> <p>10. Supervisors are intentional in providing opportunities for student employees to develop skills within areas they don't feel comfortable, i.e. public speaking.</p> <p>11. Supervisors maintain an open-door policy to facilitate open dialogue.</p> <p>12. Supervisors provide and/or facilitate mentorship opportunities for student employees.</p> |
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13. Supervisors do not show appreciation to student employees.

14. Supervisors do not celebrate student employees.

15. Supervisors do not provide professional development opportunities for student employees.

16. Supervisors do not align assigned tasks to student employees' major and/or future career aspirations.

17. Supervisors label student employees as "student assistant" and/or "child/children." Supervisor do not recognize student employees as paraprofessionals.

13. Supervisors show appreciation for student employees.

14. Supervisors celebrate student employees and their accomplishments.

They are valued members of the department.

15. Supervisors provide purposeful professional development opportunities.

16. Supervisors align the student employees' work with their major and/or future career aspirations.

17. Supervisors refer to their student employees as paraprofessionals as they are professionals in training.

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| <p>18. Supervisors do not provide the opportunity for student employees to lead and facilitate meetings.</p> <p>19. Supervisors view student employees as an individual to run errands on their behalf.</p> <p>20. Despite if physically possible, supervisors configure office setup in such a way that makes them not easily accessible to student employees.</p> | <p>18. Supervisors provide student employees with the opportunity to lead and facilitate meetings.</p> <p>19. Supervisors engage student employees in their work, extending beyond student employees running errands on their behalf.</p> <p>20. If physically possible, supervisors configure office setup in such a way that they are easily accessible to student employees.</p> |
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### Recommendations for Practice

Given equity related issues in the recruitment and hiring practices of student employees, it is recommended that Intentional Validation University and other colleges and universities, move to one standard way to post jobs and hire students. All students should have knowledge of and the opportunity to apply and

be considered for all employment opportunities on campus. I would recommend Intentional Validation University continue to use the career center's online portal. It is already in place, and both staff and students are seemingly aware of this resource. However, I would recommend that the career center offer trainings on how to use the platform and make it mandatory for supervisors to attend. Not all students desire to work on-campus as they may already have a job off-campus, or have other commitments that do not allow them to work on-campus. Therefore, I would make the training mandatory for students who are interested in working on-campus. New Student Orientation, Transfer Orientation, and First-Year Experience courses present promising opportunities to introduce students to the online portal.

For hiring managers, it needs to be mandatory that they update the status of the job position(s) at the end of every week so that applicants can be informed on their status. I would recommend the career center conduct a monthly audit on the on-campus job postings to determine which positions have not been updated, and contact the hiring managers to do so. Additionally, the career center should conduct an annual audit on the system and remove all postings that have been up for at least one year. This should aid in closing the communication gap between hiring supervisors and potential student employees as well maintaining a database of current job openings. Hiring managers can still post the job position to social media given that many students utilize the platform. However, it should also be posted to the online portal and the link to the portal should be



provided in the social media post.

### Recommendations for Policy

I recommend that colleges and universities strive to create an overarching validating student employment culture. The sub-culture identified in this study could be used as a model for other supervisors to follow. As a reminder, the validating work environment is created by the intentional supervisor who elevates the student employment experience to a HIP.

In order to create this overarching culture, I recommend the development of learning communities for supervisors of on-campus jobs. Instead of just offering one session of professional development, the learning communities would allow for the supervisors to continue to learn best practices as they relate to student employment, but they would also be able to build relationships with other supervisors.

I recommend that a design and implementation committee be formed that would develop the content for the learning community. Colleges and universities should seek to identify and call upon validating supervisors such as Mario, Gabriel, Tom, Diane, Hannah, and Patricia to be a part of the design and implementation committee. The learning community should be required for all on-campus supervisors, regardless of the length of time they have supervised students. As well, all new supervisors should be required to attend at least one session of the learning community before they begin their role of supervising students. Because there will be various levels of expertise, I would recommend

that eventually colleges and universities develop different tiers of these learning communities. All supervisors should begin at the first level and through their successful completion, move on to the next. As well, I would recommend involving those who have completed earlier tiers to be part of the development and implementation committee so that they can assist in the development of the curriculum and also facilitate sessions.

The learning community curriculum should include the following: 1) an overview of the student demographics of the college or university, including asset-based literature on students various needs and how they can best be supported by higher education practitioners; 2) a review of asset-based student development theories such as Rendón's (1994) validation theory, and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory, and how it applies to the student demographics; 3) an overview of why students need to work; 4) the critical role the supervisor plays in the development of both the work culture and the student employees; 5) an overview of HIPs, including what they are, why they matter, who has access to them, and the impact they have on students' engagement with the institution and academic performance; 6) what a validating work environment looks like and how the supervisor shapes such an environment; and 7) bring in the student voice where they can share the value they received from working on-campus.

I believe that through the participation of these learning communities, supervisors would become more intentional in their efforts to develop their

students. They would understand that their primary role is to develop students and not just assign busy work. Through the learning communities, supervisors could potentially create a validating environment that would elevate their student employees' experience to a HIP.

Relatedly, I recommend colleges and universities celebrate student supervisors who aim to create validating work environment for students. Just the same, I encourage colleges and universities to celebrate their student employees. A university-wide student employee celebration would further validate students' abilities and expand their networks.

Finally, given some of the invalidating and negative student employee experiences, I recommend student employee orientations during which student employees are introduced to different campus resources that can help provide assistance with resolving problems. Recommended resources would include ombudsman and the dean of students.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

For purposes of this study, I was interested in on-campus employment in general. In other words, I did not consider student participants' employment classification (i.e., work-study vs. non work-study). As such, future studies should explore if there are any differences in employment experiences and environments between work-study and non-work study students.

As the findings revealed, some of the supervisors interviewed shared how they too were employed as a student during their undergraduate careers. They

discussed how their employment on-campus directly influenced their decision to pursue a career within higher education. For many, they were replicating the mentorship they received from their supervisors and were intentional in creating a validating work environment for their students. I would recommend further research to gain a better understanding of their student employee experience and how it influenced their career choice to develop and mentor students. An additional area for future research would be to explore factors that contribute to student employee departure. Understanding student employee departure will help colleges and universities improve and enhance the student-employee experience and consequently their overall college experience.

#### Limitations

A limitation of this study is that I did not consider student employees' length of employment. There may be different experiences based upon each participant's length of employment and the specific area in which they were employed. In addition, as noted above, I did not consider student participants' employment classification (i.e., work-study vs. non work-study). I was interested in on-campus employment in general. Additionally, although I attempted to interview student employees and supervisors from the same departments, all student employee and supervisor participants worked in different departments. Another limitation of this study is that I was not able to reach all of the departments that employed students at Intentional Validation University.

#### Delimitations

All supervisors and administrators that I interviewed held staff positions. I did not interview any supervisors who held a faculty position. Therefore, it is possible that they may have had a different philosophy and approach to student employment that was potentially not captured in this study.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of this study and how on-campus employment connects with the defining qualities of high impact practices. I highlighted how the intentional supervisor creates a validating office-environment that elevates the student employment experience to a HIP. I also presented recommendations for both policy and practice as well as areas for future research.

APPENDIX A  
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

(Date)

Dear (student/supervisor/administrator),

Greetings! My name is Amanda Salazar and I am a doctoral candidate at CSU San Bernardino.

I am completing a study entitled — *Exploring On-Campus Employment as a High Impact Practice*. The purpose of this study is to explore on-campus undergraduate student employment as a High Impact Practice (HIP). I seek to gain insight into the alignment of the two through semi-structured interviews with undergraduate student employees, supervisors of on-campus undergraduate student employees, and administrators who oversee departments that employ undergraduate student employees. This study was approved by the CSU San Bernardino Institutional Review Board on 1-17-19.

You have been identified as a potential participant based upon...

If you are willing to assist and would like to participate, please e-mail me at [asalazar@XXX.edu](mailto:asalazar@XXX.edu) and submit the signed Informed Consent (attached). Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, is my dissertation chair. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her at [emartinez@XXX.edu](mailto:emartinez@XXX.edu).

Thank you for your time!

Amanda Salazar

APPENDIX B  
RECRUITMENT FLYER



**Are you a student employee?**  
**Are you the first in your family to attend college?**  
**Do you receive the PELL grant?**  
**Would you like to earn  
a \$25 Starbucks gift card?**

If so, you are invited to participate in a research study  
about your experiences with working on-campus.

For more information, please contact Amanda Salazar  
at **xxx-xxx-xxxx**.



This study has been approved  
by the Institutional Review  
Board at Eastwest University.

APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT

## Exploring On-campus Employment as a High Impact Practice

### INFORMED CONSENT

**PURPOSE:** Ms. Amanda Salazar invites you to participate in a research study titled *Exploration of On-Campus Employment as a High Impact Practice*. The purpose of this study is to explore on-campus employment as a potential high-impact practice at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) that serves a disproportionate number of students who are low-income and first-generation. In addition, the university has expressed organizational commitment to high-impact practices. Specifically, I seek to explore the connections between existing on campus student employment practices and the six qualities that frame high impact practices (HIPS), if any. Additionally, I aim to understand what organizational structures are necessary to establish undergraduate student employment as a high impact practice. This study was approved by the CSU San Bernardino Institutional Review Board on 1-17-19.

**DESCRIPTION:** I would like to learn about your perspective of on-campus, undergraduate student employment. Your participation would include one interview, which will last approximately 45 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a format preferable to you, either face-to-face, via telephone, or face-to-face remote conversation using Skype. The location and time of the interview is of your convenience. With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

**INCENTIVES:** You will receive a \$25 Starbucks gift card for your participation. You will receive this upon completion of the interview.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** The university, campus, departments, and participants will be assigned pseudonyms, or fictitious name. Audio recordings of interviews will be stored on a non-shared password protected computer. Audio recordings and transcripts will be destroyed three (3) years after the conclusion of the study.

**DURATION:** The extent of your participation would include one interview. The interview would last approximately 45 minutes. Following the interview, you could be contacted via e-mail with follow-up or clarifying questions. Such an exchange would require no more than ten minutes of time.

**RISKS:** I do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study as you will not be identifiable by name. Answering questions about your school experiences

may cause discomfort, however, you may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

**BENEFITS:** There are no foreseeable benefits to you personally from taking part in this study. However, the general benefits resulting from this study would be a deepened understanding of undergraduate on-campus student employment as a high impact practice.

**AUDIO:** With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will rely on a secure transcription service to help transcribe the interviews, if needed. If you prefer that I transcribe your interview, I will transcribe your interview. I understand that this research will be audio recorded and transcribed using a secure transcription service. **Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION:** With your permission, I would observe you for a short period while you are working. I will record my observations within my observation journal. This journal will be kept in a locked storage cabinet located in my office on campus. I am the only individual with a key; no other individual but myself will be able to access this journal. It is possible that this would cause some discomfort as I observe you within your work setting. Please note that if you agree to an interview you are in no way obligated to agree to be observed within your work place. It is completely voluntary.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Amanda Salazar at [asalazar@csusb.edu](mailto:asalazar@csusb.edu) or Dr. Edna Martinez at [emartinez@csusb.edu](mailto:emartinez@csusb.edu). You may also contact California State University, San Bernardino's Institutional Review Board Office at 909-537-7588.

**RESULTS:** The results of this study will be published as a part of Amanda Salazar's dissertation. The dissertation will be available online as a part of CSUSB Scholar Works, an online open access institutional repository showcasing and preserving the research, scholarship, and publications of California State University, San Bernardino faculty, staff, and students. The repository is a service of the John M. Pfau Library. Additionally, the results of this study will be disseminated through various outlets including conference presentations and publication. An executive summary of findings will also be provided to research participants and their respective institutions.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:**

I have read the information above and agree to participate in your study.

**SIGNATURE:**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview description: Interviews will be semi-structured and will follow the protocol below.

1. Introduction
2. Share purpose of study and review informed consent form to interviewee
3. Provide interviewee with the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns
4. Begin interviewing and proceed with interview

The following questions will guide the interview for undergraduate student employees:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- How long have you been employed on-campus?
- How would you describe your experience of working on-campus?
- How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor?
- If you could describe your ideal student employment job, what would it look like?
- What is the most helpful aspect of your job?
- What has been the most memorable experience with your job?
- If you could offer any recommendations to your supervisor, what recommendations would you offer?

The following questions will guide the interview for supervisors of undergraduate student employees:

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- How long have you supervised student employees?
- Can you describe your daily student employee interactions?
- What are your goals for your student employees?
- What recommendation would you offer someone interested in becoming a supervisor?
- Do you offer professional development for your student employees?
  - If so, what does it look like/entail?

The following questions will guide the interview for administrators who oversee departments who employ undergraduate students:

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- What departments do you oversee that have undergraduate student employees?
- What is your view of student employment?

- Do you offer professional development for the staff and/or undergraduate student employees that you oversee?

APPENDIX E  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



January 22, 2019

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

Expedited Review

IRB-FY2019-98

Status: Approved

Amanda Salazar and Edna Martinez  
COE - Doctoral Studies,  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Amanda Salazar and Edna Martinez:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Exploring On-Campus Employment as a High Impact Practice" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires re-submission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from January 17, 2019 through January 17, 2020.

Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following four requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

**1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.**

- 2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.**
- 3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.**
- 4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.**

Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Donna Garcia*

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

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