

**TITLE PAGE**

**Bringing Student Employment Aboard**  
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***Abstract:***

*Students are the primary customers of institutions of higher learning. Without their allegiance to the academy, there would be scant activity, at best, on every front. In addition to the obvious educational experience, their interests, their cultural values, their safety, their financial stability and their overall well-being are of paramount importance to their success at the university. To that end, Florida Atlantic University provides opportunity for students to earn while they learn in a capacity equivalent to a part-time/temporary employee of the university, apart from traditional student work study arrangements. To make this experience fully complement the student's academic priorities, the university has distinguished the office of Student Employment from that of Financial Aid and created an entire platform for the student's professional growth in the Student Employment program.*

## **INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Recognized for our prominence and growth in the south Florida area, and though less than 50 years old, Florida Atlantic University is already claiming a place among America's most productive research universities. Discoveries are being made today in FAU laboratories that will add to the arsenal of diagnostic and treatment tools used in the battle against cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and a host of other deadly illnesses. FAU offers over 170 degree programs with both faculty and student researchers at work in more than 40 research centers. In addition, FAU presents hundreds of cultural and educational events every year to engage members of the outside community. Our student body has grown to 28,000 with students having the opportunity to matriculate among seven lovely campuses spanning the Florida coastline. With people from all 50 states and more than 130 countries studying, living, and working together, FAU offers one of the most diverse educational environments in the United States. This large, diverse population constitutes the most significant reason for serving this area. Our students are not only recipients of the great academic environment we provide, they are contributors to it. For this reason, they are an integral component of our work force through the student employment program. Consequently, it was our goal to structure a Student Employment program that would mirror the care, concern and meticulous detail taken in staffing the university's nearly 4,000 employees.

## **STATEMENT OF INITIATIVE**

Florida Atlantic University has created a stand-alone Student Employment Program which mirrors and integrates into the University's Human Resource function. Prior to this distinction, Student Employment was a 'paper-processing' function within the Office of Financial Aid. There was little or no follow-up with students and/or their worksites. There was absence of orientation or proper transitioning when a student was no longer eligible to work in 'student-status.' Directors of both areas (Financial Aid & Human Resources) engaged in dialogue to address the situation and determine best practice for effective and efficient handling of the program. Over a two year time frame, the transition was made. The outcome was establishing a full hiring program from online application processing, through new hire orientation. In addition, the Student Employment Program has embraced and implemented electronic personnel action form (E-PAF) completion as an environmentally sensitive action consistent with the going green initiative of paper reduction. Among the many challenges previously facing student employees was compliance with laws inclusive of I-9 completion, multiple visits to Financial Aid, sporadic worksite information and inconsistent posting of positions.

## **DESIGN**

The design of our efforts to absorb Student Employment into Human Resources began with an analysis of what the transition would entail. The core elements of the analysis were as follows:

### **General Assessment**

- Review possibility of absorbing Student Employment into the Department of Human Resources
- Assess current conditions of both departments (*Human Resources & Financial Aid/Student Employment*)
- Assess effectiveness of both entities at current staffing levels to meet demands

### **Impact Assessment**

- Determine impact of proposed action
  - Who is affected by proposed action (affirmatively or negatively)
  - Campuses affected by absorption of Student Employment into Human Resources

### **Financial Assessment**

- What support is currently provided to Student Employment?
- What support will be needed to move Student Employment to Human Resources?
- What is current budget of Student Financial Aid with respect to Student Employment?

### **Staffing Assessment**

- Review staffing of Student Employment Office, Financial Aid, annually (2002-05)
- Review staffing of non-Student/non-Faculty Employment Office, HR, annually (2002-05)
- Review number of Students employed annually (2002-05)
- Review number of applicants processed to generate a student hire
- Review number of general employees hired annually (2002-05)
- Review number of applicants processed to generate AMP/SP/OPS hires
- Description of student hiring process
- Description of non-student/non-faculty hiring process
- Record keeping of applicant pools (student/non-student)

## Essentials Assessment

- Specific conditions unique to student hiring
- Space concerns/accommodations
- Supplies for support of Student Employment Program
- Ratio of university employees to staff
- University's growth trends
- Physical Resource Assessment
- Space and Equipment
- Office Support

Following the analysis, we determined the needs for a successful transition. In totality, the cost to transition Student Employment into the Department of Human Resources involved the following costs:

- Three (3) additional office staff (\$128,000 salaries/benefits) inclusive of two HR Representatives to process student hires, manage student flow for customer service, provide reception, and perform data evaluation as well as data entry. A Student Employment Manager was hired to oversee operations of Student Employment recruitment, processing and retention.
- File System Enhancements (\$13,000) to the personnel file room to accommodate HR files and Student Employment Files.
- Computer Software (\$216.83)

Transitioning Student Employment from a Financial Aid function to an HR function involved careful planning. It was determined that Student Employment would no longer be just a processing unit as it was in Financial Aid but that it would be an area within HR that would embody the spirit of making employees successful in the work place. Four components were included in order to make this transition a reality. The components included the development of an orientation session, the creation of student and supervisor handbooks, the formation of a student employment application, and the construction and design of a student employment website.

## Orientation

An orientation session was developed to impart valuable information to students about Student Employment and to familiarize students-*many of which are new to FAU*- to the university. This orientation session also introduces students to good work practices that helps them become excellent employees once they begin a career.

This orientation session is in video-presentation format and is included on the Student Employment website. The orientation video presentation was first developed as a PowerPoint presentation and was converted into a video via the Camtasia Program which operates on the Windows platform. A taped video of the University President, in which he highlights his time as an FAU student employee while in college, is included. A script was developed for the recorded narration heard throughout the video presentation. After professional editing by the HR IT Manager, the video was launched on the Student Employment website.

When students are hired, they are required to view the orientation session. Because it is a mandatory requirement for student employees, verification was needed to ensure student compliance. A link to a "Confirmation Page" was added at the conclusion of the video which the students print. The Confirmation Page, which includes the student's name and the viewing date, is printed out by the student and submitted as part of their employment paperwork. The Camtasia Program cost to the HR department was an investment of \$216.83. Although no additional staff was hired for the website project, the HR IT Manager, the University President, and the President's Speechwriter all played significant parts in bringing the orientation session to fruition.

## Handbooks

Both the Student and the Supervisor Handbooks were created as a means of communicating information regarding policies and procedures for Student Employment.

Information included in the handbooks deals with eligibility, the amount of hours students are permitted to work, appropriate dress in the workplace, submission of timesheets and/or other necessary documentation as well as interviewing tips. The handbooks were created as word documents and subsequently converted to PDF documents for placement on the HR website.

### Employment Application

The University's online job posting program is supported by a third-party administrator, PeopleAdmin. This system, currently in place for the hiring of other types of employees, was ideal for use with Student Employment applicants. With the transition of Student Employment to HR, it was determined that a central location for student job postings was needed. Prior to this, students had to inquire with various colleges and departments about available student jobs. This resulted in students walking throughout the campus in search of jobs. This was deemed to be archaic and not in line with the *technologically savvy* image that characterizes an institution of higher learning. Having hiring departments post available student jobs through the PeopleAdmin site allowed for there to be a central location for student job posting. In addition, it appealed to the techno-savvy student base that engages computers, iPods, I-phones, cell phones, text messaging, blogging, and all forms of social networking as THE way of life.

The Student Employment application was created through the PeopleAdmin hiring system. In recognizing that a significant portion of the student body has never worked before, several parts of the application were optional. The application was made to be straightforward and extremely user-friendly. The Student application was created for the consistency of having an official application on file for each new Student employee. This creation of the Student Employment application provided a '*student-specific*' application available for students when applying to student jobs. Incorporated in the online process is

the means for gaining permission to run background checks as is done with all FAU employees. Creating the Student application involved working closely with the Employment Office, the HR IT Manager, and the PeopleAdmin Support Team.

### Website Creation

Since Student Employment was transitioning into its role as a full HR office within the Department, it was determined that a section of the HR website should be devoted to Student Employment so that there would be an easily accessible, centralized place for Student Employment information. This website houses the Student and Supervisor Handbooks, the Orientation Session Presentation, as well as additional information about relevant forms, including but not limited to the Electronic Personnel Action Forms (EPAFs), Appointment Forms, International Student Forms, IRS Tax Guidelines, and job posting instructions. This webpage is also home to the “Just Hired” page, which is a central place for all newly hired students to complete their applications, view the orientation presentation, and print most of the paperwork necessary to sign-in as a new employee. To alleviate some of the pressure associated with fall semester Sign-in Process, the “Just Hired” page was created on the Student Employment website with the intent of being a “One-Stop Shop” for newly hired students. This page allows newly-hired students to complete most of the sign-in process prior to coming into the Student Employment Office; thus saving time to both the students and the HR Student Employment Team.

### Background Checks

To further integrate Student Employment into HR and provide consistency to the hiring process across the University, background checks are now being conducted on all new Student employees. Conducting background checks on new students not only provides consistency in processes but adds an additional layer of safety to our university community at large.

## Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF)

The EPAF system is a significant enhancement to the Student Employment Office by reducing paperwork and ensuring a timelier processing period for certain personnel actions. This system allows departments to enter employee position information into university HRIS System in a paperless fashion. Utilization of the EPAF process alleviated the need for Student Employment data input which resulted in greater efficiencies to the Unit.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

In order to fully integrate Student Employment into the HR office, a timeline was created to help streamline the process of incorporating all of the major Student Employment components (orientation, application, handbooks, etc). The Student Employment Manager conducted university-wide meetings to familiarize the university community with the move to HR and explain all of the new HR related functions that were now going to be incorporated into the Student Employment Unit. It was recognized that many departments were offering resistance to the new process and would have many questions about the impact on time and efforts. The department meetings were an excellent way of answering questions, alleviating concerns and providing substantive information to dispel fears. It was realized that only a percentage of the needed participants would be captured with general meetings, so targeted meetings were held in every division/department on campus. This resulted in nearly 100% participation. In addition to these meetings, announcements were also disseminated through emails to all faculty and staff members as well as announcements being placed in the MyFAU web portal. Every communication medium was utilized to ensure faculty, staff and students received all of the information.

Hiring departments were also encouraged to have their students '*beat the fall rush*' and sign in early. This added a "*win*" element of excitement to our transition efforts with regard to students. Having students complete the sign in process while the Student Employment Office was experiencing its slow period ensured that early sign-ins would be processed quickly and also ensured students would be paid in a

timely manner. Hiring departments were personally contacted, either by email or telephone, by Student Employment staff and encouraged to have their new student employees sign-in early. Students who did sign in early were asked to also tell their friends and/or classmates to do the same. This networking strategy worked very well.

## **BENEFITS**

- With a central job-posting location, students no longer have to wander around campus seeking on-campus employment. They are at liberty to search available student jobs online. This has saved both time and effort on the part of the student and the hiring department in the employment search.
- By posting jobs online, hiring departments now experience the ease of finding students for their student jobs more efficiently. Moreover, the applicant tracking system is more efficient. In addition to departments having access to a larger pool of student applicants, students have the ability to immediately see what jobs are available.
- Previously, it would take students approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete the entire sign-in process (application, orientation, and employment paperwork) during an office visit to Human Resources. The enhancement of the “Just Hired” page now allows students to complete most of the sign-in process online and subsequently drop their paperwork off in our office, significantly reducing the length of the visit to Human Resources. Not only is this efficient for Student Employment staff, it offers a time-saving allotment to students as well, providing more work time or study time to the student. Students have provided positive feedback about being able to complete this process at home or in their dorm rooms; especially not having to take time between classes to visit the HR office.
- More departments in 2009 utilize the EPAF system for their student actions than in 2008. As a result, less internal paperwork had to be submitted to Student Employment for modified actions and change-processing with regard to student assignments. This has allowed Student Employment staff to devote more time to the processing of new student employees. A significant benefit realized this year as a result of EPAF utilization was the reduction in the peak season; being reduced from a period of three (3) weeks to a period of two (2) weeks.

- Having students print most of the employment paperwork on their own has resulted in a reduction of the amount of sign-in packets printed in the HR office and thus a reduction in the amount of paper utilized, which has consequently reduced our costs. In this time of budget restriction, reduction and constraint, this cost saving has been of significant benefit.

## **RETROSPECT**

In looking back at the transition of bringing Student Employment to Human Resources, it has been a venture that has made good business sense. Information which was previously scattered and without organization has been appropriately categorized and placed in several easy access areas to increase efficiency, information flow, ease of utilization and effectiveness. Our primary customers, our students, have been accommodated in the transition by time-saving methods and easily accessed resources for processing and employment success. Further, resources have been enhanced, created, developed and/or broadened in scope such as the Student Handbooks, Supervisor Handbooks, Orientation and the Student Employment Website. These enhancements have been conveyed through different formats such as campus-wide announcements, university wide meetings, the targeted training sessions and of course, the website itself. One thing that might have been done differently that may have helped in this regard is a “Frequently Asked Questions” Section during the transition period. At the outset, this would have been helpful in not requiring website visitors to read through all of the information on the website to obtain an answer for a simple question. This section may have helped decrease the amount of calls and emails received by Student Employment Staff in the initial stages. This is a project that will soon be launched on the Student Employment website to further increase information access regarding Student Employment at Florida Atlantic University.