

Job Integration for Increased Collaboration

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In student affairs, it is often stated units and offices across campus work in silos, which decreases collaboration across the University and ultimately results in duplication of efforts and lessens the student experience. In the book *Innovation to the Core: A Blueprint for Transforming the Way Your Company Innovates*, it states: “Now look at your insights into core competencies and strategic assets vis-a-vis your business model. Ask yourself whether any assets or competencies could be recombined to create new value, or leveraged in their own right to generate growth, or transferred to new opportunities. Think about how you might combine other companies' competencies and assets with your own to radically change the way you do business. Last, consider the various components of your business model from the point of view of your customer insights. Using insights into existing or emergent customer needs that are currently unaddressed, think about how you could change the various components of your business model to meet these needs. How could you create the kinds of benefits that a currently underserved customer group would value?” (Skarzynski, P., & Gibson, R. (2008)). When writing this white paper, we asked how we could learn from other offices within student affairs and how they could learn from us to enhance the student experience by breaking down silos and working towards true integration.

In another example, at the company Spotify, they are 100% agile. Spotify developed squads, which are cross functional teams to work together on the company's mission and to solve problems related to the customer experience. Spotify emphasizes community over structure and hierarchy, which they have found yields more innovation within their company. By breaking down silos and giving staff the autonomy to make decisions and try something new, even if it's out of their assigned area, Spotify has been able to vastly expand their company and become known as the place to not only get music, but also enjoy the experience (Fernandes, T., 2017).

Improving campus collaboration and enhancing the student experience is our goal. Our goal of increased collaboration across all offices within student affairs as well as academic affairs aligns with the CU Boulder's mission to shape tomorrow's leaders, be the top University for innovation, and to positively impact humanity. We are looking to increase collaboration across all units by creating a job integration program throughout student affairs which will be expanded to academic affairs in the future. Job integration can take on many forms, but this program is designed for staff to be ingrained in areas of student affairs outside of their specialty and home office.

In practical terms, this program requires a staff member to leave their home office for a period of approximately three months or one full semester. Assignments can be made for up to a six month time period depending on needs. The staff member's home office would be responsible for covering their duties or staff members can swap positions for the duration of the semester. We chose the period of one semester so the staff members experiencing the job integration program can be on boarded successfully into the new office, fully immerse themselves in the work of another office, and complete projects as well as the day to day work within the office. Offices who are interested in participating would indicate this on the student affairs website with positions and projects that are available for staff members to apply to the job integration program. In order to participate in the program, we have outlined baseline measures for staff members to be qualified for the program including:

1. Approval from the director of the home office or unit as well as their supervisor
 - a. The staff member must already be performing well in their current position
2. Title/position of coordinator, assistant director, or above
3. Work experience at CU Boulder for a minimum of two years
 - a. The temporary supervisor must have worked at CU Boulder in their position for a minimum of one year

In addition, staff members who work in positions that hold high legal liability such as conduct and student support would not be eligible for the program due to the nature of positions they hold. To show what the job integration program could look like, we have outlined an example with a job integration partnership with New Student and Family Programs and Residence Life.

New Student and Family Programs and Residence Life already collaborate on programs such as Fall Welcome, Spring Welcome, and the overall experience for first year and transfer students. However, a job integration program will enhance collaboration by having each staff member learn the strengths, challenges, and daily work of the office they are temporarily assigned to. In this example, New Student and Family Programs and Residence Life each have one staff member who are interested in the job integration program. The two staff members who are current Assistant Directors in their respective units applied to the job integration program through an online tool provided on the student affairs website. The Directors of both offices reviewed the applications and determined to move forward. In addition, both offices have designed an onboarding strategy for the job sharing employees as well as identified specific projects for the staff members to work on that will need to be completed by the end of the identified semester.

In the example outlined above, the Assistant Director from New Student and Family Programs would take the position of Assistant Director for Residence Life for one full semester and engage in all job responsibilities including supervision of staff, recruitment and training of staff, attendance at departmental meetings, and other day to day tasks. In addition, they would work on large scale projects such as move-in or enhancing student engagement within the residence halls. In turn, the Assistant Director from Residence Life would take the position of Assistant Director for New Student and Family Programs for the same semester. They would engage in all job responsibilities for that position. They would work on large scale projects such as Fall Welcome or enhancing student engagement online before students arrive to campus. Projects should be substantive and able to be completed by the end of the job integration time period (end of semester or summer). Both staff members would fully take on job responsibilities for their respective job integration positions, move offices, and work on projects that will aid in the goals of their temporary office. Evaluations would remain consistent with the home office, however, the evaluation would be completed by both the permanent and temporary supervisors. Salaries would remain consistent with the home office as well. In addition, the switch teams including the home and temporary supervisor as well as both employees participating in the job integration program would meet once a week to discuss challenges as well as what is going well in the position to ensure staff members are set up for success. Since all student affairs staff work under one mission of positively impacting student success, retention, and graduation rates, engagement, and campus climate, even if offices currently do not work closely together, the job integration program is designed to live our values of collaborating as a team to continuously improve through innovation.

We believe the job integration program will meet several outcomes including:

1. Improved work performance and fostering work in innovation
 - a. By having a complete understanding of another office, the employees returning to their home offices after completing the job integration program will have a new perspective and unique

information to share with staff and students about the office they worked in for a complete semester

- b. Bringing in a temporary staff member through the job integration program will allow foster new and innovative ideas from an outside perspective with the goal of enhancing programs and services for students

2. Enhancing the student experience

- a. By increasing collaboration and decreasing duplication on CU's campus, job integration will allow professionals to bring offices together to ideate ways to build new programs and services or to enhance the ones we already provide
- b. Increased knowledge about other offices and work they do will allow students to get a quick, direct, and accurate answer to questions they have. This will also improve when and how we refer students to other offices for information
- c. Staff members who have completed the job integration program will have the in depth knowledge and tools needed to train the staff in their unit on what resources another office can provide
- d. Staff will be seen as experts in areas they have been assigned through the job integration program

3. Diversifying skills of employees

- a. Employees will return to their home offices with increased knowledge as well as a more diverse skill set that will can lead to greater work performance in their designated areas
- b. A job integration program can be used to recruit staff to the University as a place that focuses on professional development and learning for staff

4. Relationship building

- a. Strong relationships between offices will increase collaboration in a natural way, which will break down silos and enhance collaboration on future projects and ideas
- b. Staff in the job integration program will gain knowledge of challenges other offices face, which will increase empathy and cause offices to work together in resolving problems faced on campus

In conclusion, working on such a large campus lends itself to working in silos, duplicating efforts, and specializing in one specific area of student engagement and development. This proposal outlines one unique way we can collaborate across units to foster innovation and ultimately enhance the educational experience for CU Boulder students. After we initiate this program we will conduct assessment on how the program is supporting the student experience. Moreover, at the completion of each job integration, switch teams will meet to discuss how the experience will enable them to enhance their service to students and ways to increase collaboration. As previously stated, it is our hope that the job integration program begins in student affairs, but then is able to be expanded to academic affairs to break down the barriers we often face working as staff and faculty throughout the University. For example, we could develop a faculty liaison position to work on key initiatives happening in student affairs offices and vice versa. Overall, as faculty and staff who are dedicated to student success, a integration program will only have positive benefits for students and staff alike and will unify our team in working towards one common goal.