Hiring Student Staff

Do They Wear Dirty Clothes to the Interview?

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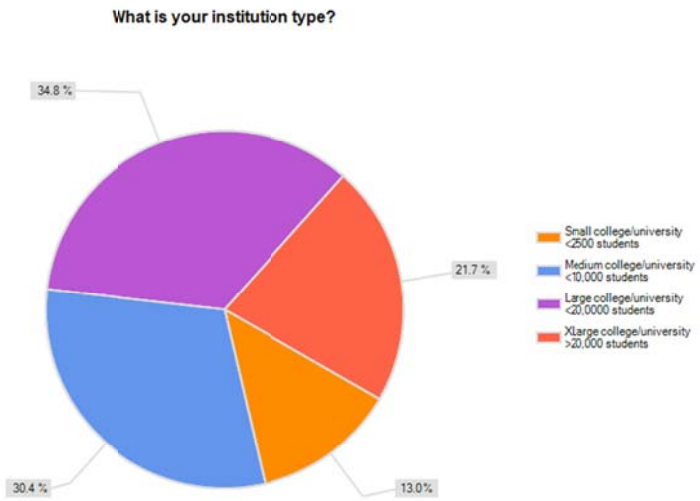
SIGUCCS Webinar 2010

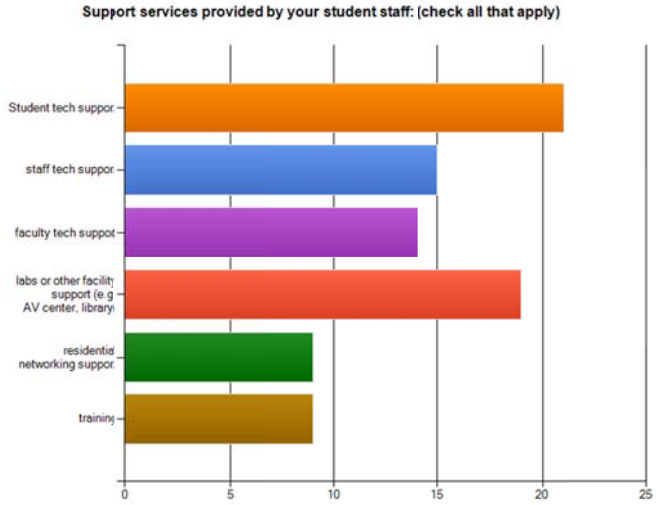
Ideas and advice from those participating in the pre-webinar survey

Webcast Survey Participants



Areas Where Students are Employed

From the survey results, we all use student staff in many service areas. While most utilize student staff for technical and lab support, there are many other schools using them for other services and projects.



Additional areas not listed above

- *Assist with PC repair/maintenance*
- *Digital Media Classrooms*
- *Community Outreach*
- *IT Communications*
- *Multimedia labs*
- *Classroom technology*
- *Assist desktop support teams with tasks (e.g. imaging, deploying computers)*

Marketing the job

1.	Not much, send out the job description to several academic departments on campus to have them distribute it to their students.
2.	All campus jobs are 'marketed' through student services, student employment office and student newsletters.
3.	Job posting in financial aid office. Other work studies referral.
4.	Post to Human Resources website for most exposure
5.	1. Referral by current student staff 2. Advertising by student staff in selected classes 3. Advertising in school portal job postings
6.	Job fairs, web site, university Career Center posting
7.	Word-of-mouth from graduating student workers is often effective. We also advertise on campus with the Jobs Board, and on our Web stie.
8.	Flyers and announcement during Freshman Orientation Sessions
9.	Post on campus job website (dukelist.duke.edu); flyers at beginning of year student tech help tables; emails to current staff asking them to forward to mailing lists, recruit friends. I'd love more ideas on how to recruit.
10.	We post the job on our IT site. Most of the applicants come from listing it on the Financial Aid site where a lot of the student josb are listed.
11.	Not much...we have someone in the Computer Science department that makes recommendations on students in the CS program. And we advertise on the student employment website.
12.	Posting on university job site.
13.	nothing other than word of mouth and posting the job when accepting applications
14.	*The level of experience they gain *Work around their school schedules *Where our graduates have gone *Friendly/fun atmosphere to work in
15.	We have a college wide job fair one day each spring. Students can see what types of employment there is on campus and often connections are made at that time. I often ask current employees to recommend someone they know who may have good skills. (After all, they may end up working with them...)
16.	Word of mouth by existing student employees. Participate in the orientation activities fair and take names of incoming freshman who might be interested in working for IT. Posted year-round on the financial aid website job postings page.
17.	post vacancies to white hatters club
18.	set up tables with info in dining hall during meal times email to new students with info about job student staff wear propeller beanies for tech help during new student days
19.	General postings. Graduate and Undergraduate listservs and online bulletin boards. Word of mouth/Friends of current staff, etc.
20.	University student employment posting and word of mouth.
21.	This is our first opportunity to hire student staff, but I have asked for referrals from our students on

our advisory board and from students who use our services. I have also posted the position on the campus student employment site.

Success in Grinnell's Program

One of the things we have found successful it to create a table display (couple of display boards) with pictures of the TCs working and socializing. They are bright and colorful and then we set up a table in the foyer to the dining hall during the lunch and dinner hours. As students are in line for food, they walk by the table and can see or talk to the staff. We create little business cards with candy attached and hand them out. The cards have the application URL on them.

I heard last year a student said "it is the coolest job on campus." I was very proud. We try to make it cool. You can still be professional while having a dynamic, fun environment to work in. This is part of our success story. It is a learning-focused environment as well as a community. Students want to work for us.

1.	asking them about specific situations they've found themselves in and what they did to solve problems/help people, etc
2.	Are you comfortable with advanced computing concepts? Student workers need to not require any training in basic computing concepts, and are far more effective if they have some advanced experience.
3.	Currently the only question we ask is what hours are you available? Obviously, I need to update the form. We ask for prior experience. Students can go two ways by putting all their computer or software experience or by putting their customer service experience. For me, I prefer the customer service experience. For the computer training, we follow some basic step by step trouble shooting and have staff close by that can help with issues.
4.	Contact information Schedule/availability References Past experience (employment/personal) Education related to position
5.	What exactly is involved in the job? (We cover a help desk and labs and expect a lot of technical aptitude from our staff)
6.	We have a quick online application that asks *What skills, experiences or personal traits best qualify you for employment with Student Computing Services? *You are welcome to make additional comments here: Since I have hundreds of applicants on file at a time (I keep applicants on file until they graduate). If I receive an application with little in these answers, then I assume they either aren't qualified or have poor communication skills.
7.	How does working for the Help Desk dovetail into your college career and beyond?
8.	Q. Previous employment -Allows you to know what there prior experience and knowledge is. Q. Several questions on technical skills -We are in IT Support department and need to know the students technical skill level Q Previous customer service experience -The most important part of the job is customer service, so it is good to know what prior experience they have. Q. Are they eager to learn new things -Good to know b/c we are an ever changing environment and we want people who even if they don't currently have the knowledge, we want people who are eager and willing to learn and will

	learn fast.
9.	You mean the written application? Ours is not particularly strong (one of the things I'm hoping to improve on.) We basically ask questions about experience, and interest in the job.
10.	Describe the customer service skills you have used in previous jobs or service organization positions? Customer Service is an essential component of the position we are hiring. Some applicants provide good examples. If we can hire someone who has already learned customer service skills in a previous position, it's a real bonus for us.
11.	We really need to rework our application...it is very outdated. From the student employment website we only ask the following: "Briefly describe why you should be selected for this position. Also, include any special skills or qualifications you would like the hiring supervisor to consider. Our application asks them to rate themselves on hardware and software. We use a scale from No Use - Daily Use. We ask them to list versions they are familiar with and whether they are seflf-taught or attended classes to learn.
12.	What is an IP number? How do you find it in a Windows XP system? We support the campus network and want people who already know networkng basics. Are you available for a minimum of 12 hours per week? Are you available for three semesters until graduation? We want people who can work long enough to make the training investment worthwhile.
13.	- what is your current GPA - less than 3.0 is a caution but not critical - how many units are you taking this semester/next semester? Over 16 is a caution but not critical. Over 19 is critical - working for ITS is like taking on an additional 3 unit class - can you commit to this? - attempt to determine if student can handle the commitment - you must be able to work a minimum of 10 hours a week in minimum 2 hour blocks - having students scheduled for less than 2 hours at a time does not allow the student to work effectively in my opinion
14.	What was the last book they read? How would they handle specific situations..
15.	Have you had customer service experience? Face-to-face? phone? email? Please provide examples of technology troubleshooting you have done in the past. How many hours a week would you like to work. Please list any formal technology training (or certifications) you have had. (Did not have time to elaborate on "why" on all these)
16.	1) Describe the computing equipment you own and/or use on a regular basis. This question usually identifies the very technical candidates from the rest by virtue of the amount of HW specifics they include for their personal machines.
17.	expected graduation date because of the amount of training necessary
18.	Tell us about... I like to use statements that allow the student to give a detailed explanation or anecdote of their previous experience. This allows us to gauge their communication skills as well as it gives them a chance to give us detail that might not come out if they are nervous during the interview.

Applications@Grinnell College

We have an online application for our Student Technology Consultants. The first page is a description of the job and expectations for training. If students can't participate in training, then they don't need to apply. Once they read through the application information, there is a link to the actual application. http://tcdb.grinnell.edu/apply/

We accept applications at the beginning of fall and spring semesters. I want to hire for attrition only, so we hire approximately as many students that are graduating in the spring and divide that into two training sessions. For example, if I need to hire 25 students and the first round of interviews comes up with 15 students, then our goal is to hire 10-12 in the spring semester.

Scoring the Applications

The demographic information is not included on the application. Each one is automatically assigned a number and the applications are scored by 4-6 students. The main goal is that the scoring has to be consistent, someone can't only score part of the applications, they have to do them all so that we have consistent numbers.

1.	Q: How have you been doing with your computer work for class so far? Long Reason: We're a culinary school so most applicants don't have any computer experience unless at the High School level, older applicants have no computer experience at all (Internet surfing not included). My student-workers are responsible for fielding a whole array of questions pertaining to PC usage, Windows folder and file management, MS Office concepts of all levels, specific specialized database usage, etc, in an environment where very little computer instruction is given. The hands-on education here extends to students needing to learn how to use the technology on their own time. My student staff in the labs and the help desk, the student help desk staff, and I are the people that end up assisting any students needing help with this obstacle. We also do a great deal of one-on-one and group training. So the question I pose is to start a conversation which will help me understand exactly what level the applicant's computer skills are at and how helpful they will be to other students in the labs and the help desk.
2.	If you were having a problem and called, what would you expect from the help desk? How would you deal with an extremely frustrated user? Explain to me how you would respond to a user when you did not know the solution to the issue. What does excellent customer service mean to you? Would like to see what they would expect from the help desk. How they will react to frustrated users whether faculty, staff or students.
3.	Why are you applying for this position? How do you organize your tasks and your schedule? Provide several scenarios (technical issues) and ask them to prioritize how they would resolve the issues.
4.	Give an example of a difficult situation you have been in and how you dealt with it (preferably in a customer service environment). Aim to see customer and solution focus and communication skills. Likely get a feel for overall attitude.
5.	You are talking to someone on the phone who is frustrated at their computer problem, stressed out, and on a deadline. How do you calm them down so you can get the information out of them that you need to assist them.
6.	You've identified a virus that you are not able to eliminate from the running operating system. How would you go about disinfecting this system? - I'd be looking for other tools, bootable CDs, research methods, and other outside-of-the-box thinking.
7.	Q. During stressful times at work, what types of strategies do you use to keep up your spirits and those around you? -We get very busy at the begining and end of semesters so it's great to hear how people handle the stress of a very busy environment.

	Q. Think of a time when your manager gave you feedback regarding a performance issue and you became defensive. What happened? -Good to hear about how someone deals with conflict with a superior and how they take criticism. Q. Tell me about a time when you had to say "No" to a customer because what they wanted was against company policy. How did you handle the situation? -At times there are unhappy customers and customers that make requests that cannot be met. It's good to know how someone handles situations like this.
8.	This is my favorite interview question, and I usually ask it like this almost verbatim: "This question is a bit of a generalization, but we'll go with it for the sake of the question. Students who want IT jobs tend towards one of two types. One type is super geeky, and does this stuff anyway because everyone knocks on their door when their computer breaks at 3 am, so they figure, hey, might as well get paid for it. The other type knows nothing about computers, but they know how to talk to people - they've done customer service work, and they want this job because they want to learn about computers. Now, everyone is somewhere in between those two extremes. Where do you think you fall, and do you think one of the other is a better fit for this type of job?" This is one of the last questions I ask, usually. I like this question because it lets me gauge whether their perception of their own skills matches what has come across in the interview previously (i.e., if they think they know a lot about tech but clearly don't know what they think they know.) I also like it because their answer to the second part lets me see if they understand just how crucial customer service is to the work they're doing. It's basically the ideal question for me to figure out a student's ego and how they might fit into a team-based work environment.
9.	What is your impression of what the Lab Assistant job entails? Students who do not work out often fall into 2 categories: someone who thought the job was easier then expected and would only have to show up, and someone who thought the job was more technical and not so operational and focused on customer service. If they know what to expect, they are more likely to be a successful long-term employee.
10.	I do not handle the actual interview process with student workers. I allow the ALS Manger to do that.
11.	We do a pre-interview questionnaire to select students to go onto a phone interview. In the phone interview they are asked to do some tasks they would handle as first level phone support. They are told to call us at an agreed upon time and have a computer available for use. They are asked to discover several IT information items just as if were on the job. Example: What outage happened on November 9th? From this we see how easily they can search for information and how clearly they can communicate with customers on the phone.
12.	what is your favorite "It was broken and I fixed it" story? - Anyone who is motivated to figure out how something works and how to fix it when it breaks has at least one of these... if not, this has been a pretty good indication this student is not going to enjoy or succeed at this job
13.	Why did you leave your last job?
14.	What hobbies or activities do you like to do outside of technology support? (often can find out if the person has social skills, variety of interests, knows how to speak to adults or other age groups, likes to help others or is more egocentric in personality) Why did you choose the major you are in? (similar to above, you get some ideas of if they are people-centric, technology-centric, or other).
15.	Can you describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer and how you addressed the situation? This question for whatever reason has yielded a wide range of answers from "I've never had to deal with a difficult customer" to mini dissertations on customer service that never address a personal experience or how they handled the situation. Some answers have been very honest with instances where they utterly failed to address the situation properly but then they explain what they learned from that. With the range of answers its often hard to compare applicants on

	customer service skill levels off this question but it gives a good insight into the person themselves.
16.	if they have previous computing support experience
17.	Performance question, such as "lead this blindfolded person to the computer and have them open Microsoft Word." We do this to assess the ability for giving clear directions, receiving feedback from the "user" and then redirecting as necessary. We look for tone, clear information, language, etc.
18.	What interests you most about working here? This question gives us perspective on their expectations for the job ("this job will give me time to do my homework"), their desire to learn ("I want to learn more about computers/multimedia, etc."), and their overall enthusiasm for the work that we do. Can you tell me about a time recently where you had great customer service and what made it a pleasurable experience? This question gets them thinking about customer service in a way they may not have thought about it before. Customer service being the most important aspect of our work (not the technology!). After they answer, we often take this to a broader conversation of why was that such a great experience, how can we provide great customer service in our labs, etc. etc.
19.	We want to be able to know if the student is actually interested in learning and understanding the job. We don't expect the students to know the job skills but we want to know they WANT to learn the skills.

I hope to cover many of these challenges during the session, but I have given you my two cents on each, hoping that it might spark a brilliant idea or help you to modify your processes to make things work better for you. Sometimes one thought or suggestion will lead to a solution, so remember these are based on the success of my program, but can apply elsewhere.

1. Getting good applicants

I think success in this area is a combination of having a great job that attracts good candidates and also a screening process through applications, interviews and training that "weed out" those who are not good workers.

2. Determining whether or not the student is going to be reliable or a good worker, regardless of his or her knowledge and experience.

This is determined through the training process. If you have the ability to run a training with a variety of methods and people, then you have various evaluation opportunities and those who don't make it through and follow the rules, do so before they start working officially.

3. 1. Finding work studies to hire. There are times that I hire if they fit into our schedule.- obviously I need help in marketing our positions.
2. Finding the time to train and schedule appropriately to give the new work study as much as they need to be confident in their job. Currently do not have an admin work study that could handle training and scheduling of newbies to pair with a strong work study.

We use other students in the training process. It is a mix of mentoring (6 hours per week) and 8 workshops. We take 8 weeks to train/evaluate and then they are hired if they complete this successfully. The workshops have been designed, and we have student facilitators. I also have 2 Training Coordinators who organize and supervise training. I provide a 2 hour mentoring session, a facilitator's training, and one training session with the new people each semester. The rest of the time, our best students are involved in the training process.

4. Not being able to assess skill levels through the current application process.
Not being able to evaluate customer service skills.
Scheduling issues - students not being available during certain times of the day.

Can you modify the application process? Or create an online skills evaluation to assess skills which can be an addendum to the formal application? Email those who submit an application and ask them to fill out this online survey, then design something to give you more information about the candidate. Mentoring is a big part of training, so we evaluate their skills as they work with their mentors and real customers. We schedule at the beginning of the semester using 2 hour shifts, they select the days/hours they want to work and that doesn't change unless they post for subs. Their academic schedule stays the same, so why not their work; it makes things easier on me and on them (less forgetting about working). Can you break down those times that are tough to schedule? Maybe someone could work in 1 hour increments between classes?

5. * Hiring students that are reliable, have attention to detail, and will learn quickly.
* Hiring students that won't graduate at the same time.

Train/evaluate those things that are important to you. Evaluate their reliability by having them follow instructions/policies for training. Have your training include problem solving/attention to detail techniques. As far as them graduating at the same time, good luck! We only hire first and second year students, so they will work for us for 3-4 years hopefully, but one year 1/3 of my workforce graduated. We know it is a dynamic workforce and have to modify our policies and attitudes to reflect this.

6. Finding bright, motivated intelligent students with a passion for service. We often need to make trade-offs; we'll hire a highly motivated and service-oriented student with fewer technical skills, and coach them heavily for those technical skills.

I think this is all you can do, hire those that are mostly qualified, be open about the skills you want them to work on and train them.

7. Getting a student who has both "people skills" as well as the technical skills.

Create interview questions that will bring these things out. Know what you are looking for in advance, have more than one person in the interview, other student workers or student supervisors, and try to determine the most qualified students.

8. Recruiting is the biggest challenge -- getting a big enough pool of applicants that we can pick and choose from the ones who are the best fit, and still meet our staffing needs. We're particularly challenged in finding candidates with specialized skills - for example, multimedia or video experience.

Also, onboarding students -- not sure if that's relevant to the webinar topic, but I'm also interested in making the process between hiring --> end of their first month as smooth and wonderful as I possibly can.

Hopefully you can get some marketing ideas from the webinar and other participants that will help in recruiting and getting the word out about the jobs. We train the specialized skills. We normally have several students that like to work with video. We train some basic digital video skills during our 8 week program, from that we often get students who want to continue with those skills and we provide more extensive training for those interested. They work as Digital Media Specialists and assist students with academic projects. I think by introducing them to some basics, students find out that they like that type of work and want to learn more.

The next webinar will be about training ☺

9. We have 1200-1500 applicants every year, and hire about 100 students. Evaluating all the applicants fairly and effectively is a lot of work.

Can you develop or use something online to help screen? Use your best student workers to help with interviewing/screening. Our student staff tend to be harder on their peers than I am.

10. Finding student with good technical ability.

I am not sure that you can always know this because they may rate themselves good at something technical when they don't know much about it, but with a combination of asking the right questions and some assessment of skills, you have a better chance. I don't think there is an easy answer to this. Many students who are those others go to for computer help are good ones to hire, advertise is such a way to attract the right ones.

11. Currently our hourly wages are not competitive enough to pull in some of the best candidates. Our 'perks' aren't attractive enough to make up for it. We rely heavily on this being a great resume builder for technical positions.

I have no control on wages, and so I have made the job fun, a community of staff and emphasize the "help you in getting a real job" side of things. I also create a portfolio of all of their certifications and reference letter to take with them when they graduate. Many of our grads have gotten great jobs and that helps market us as well.

12. Getting team players

I think this is probably something you can screen in the interview process, but you also have to create a team. You have to have a great team structure in place that people can become a part of and feel welcome.

13. Finding someone with the balance of people skills and technical skills who is either a first or second year student. I generally do not hire juniors or seniors.
It is not always easy to gage this during a 30 minute interview.

Advertise only for first/second year, don't accept applications from others. Advertise to the incoming students and during orientation so that you are marketing to the ones you want. I am not sure there is a good balance that can be determined in the interview. You need to ask the right questions so that you get the information you want, don't use standard interview stuff and then if they are the right person, train/evaluate them. we do not tell the new student staff that they will be actually "hired" until they complete training, it is like the usual "probationary period". We have the right not to hire them if the training process and their evaluations don't work out.

14. My biggest challenge this semester has been the time commitment for me towards interviewing and training of student staff.

Use your student staff to help in this process, scoring applications, interviewing, etc. if you don't have student supervisors/leaders, then invite your best ones to help. They know what to look for in the applicants. Determine as a group what questions will be asked and then let them help evaluate the applicants. I don't sit in on any interviews anymore.

15. Finding qualified students with a customer service attitude

I think this is something that can be trained, especially when you compare their own experiences in good/bad service, how to apply that attitude toward their service, role playing. I use the FISH training video which is easy to apply and fun, we do some listening/giving instruction games, role playing, etc.

16. Finding students who are both dependable and consistent.
Creating an environment where student staff can both learn (skills they take with them when they graduate) and provide a service to the University (accomplish the work that we need done).

I think that the learning aspect of this is important, as that is what helps make the job interesting. I have found that most, not all of the student staff, want to learn more skills and contribute in other ways. Having them be part of planning committees, training, mentoring, etc. all help them get more involved and I think, more interested in the success of the job and their colleagues.

17. Apathy. Students who have no experience and/or apparent interest apply but this is just another application they have filled out. We ask applicants what about the job posting compelled them to apply and one actually answered, "I'm just looking for a job."

	I think that if you can create an online application that fits the job you are looking for, ask them detailed questions regarding their experience and attitudes, you can probably weed out those who are just "looking for any old job" and get more qualified applicants. Let the other students help you go through applications as well, and even interview. They are great judges of good staff since they are the ones doing the job.
18.	I think my biggest challenge is my own inexperience at hiring STUDENTS. I have hired employees, but I am not as comfortable interviewing and selected people with limited work experience.
	It is the same, don't treat it differently. You are just creating a dynamic workforce, knowing that they will only give you 2-3 years rather than 10-15 years. Look at this as a learning experience for them, but a way that you can utilize their talents while they are here. The more experience and training you can give them for the "real world," the better they will benefit from the job. Know what you are looking for, though and be open and clear about the expectations of the job. Use your good students to mentor others so that the knowledge and attitudes get passed on. Create a great infrastructure so that the staff can come and go, but the infrastructure can handle it.

Thank you for participating in the webinar on Student hiring…I hope you were able to get some good ideas that might be transformed to fit your situation. We will be doing another webcast in February on training student staff, so look for the invitation.

Please feel free to contact me for any questions or info:

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