

UMR-ACUHO 2009: Quality of Life Survey Results, Long Report
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The Assessment and Information Management Committee set out to discover what young professionals believe is important to their continued development as professionals by conducting a Quality of Life survey. Our survey was distributed in the spring semester of 2009. This survey received a total of **362 responses to 36 questions**. Topics included the use of mentors by young housing professionals and the prevalence of other amenities, such as individualized parking and medical benefits on the professional's quality of life. Our survey not only covered the professional topics that allow young professionals to do their jobs, but also the personal benefits that allow them to accept living and working in a variety of environments, from mid-sized cities to small college towns.

To determine the demographic breakdown of the participants, they were asked to answer questions about their spiritual affiliation, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. The results for the region revealed that the majority of new professionals in the region are Caucasian, female and overwhelmingly heterosexual. The age ranges reveal that the majority of our region remains in the 22 to 40 year old age range, with another majority identifying themselves as having no disability. The majority (97%) of the new professionals in the Upper Midwest region self-identified as US citizens and spiritually affiliating with Christianity.

The second section covered the area of mentors and the importance of mentoring relationships for new professionals. The largest percentage felt that a mentor was "someone I meet with on a fairly regular basis who guides my professional growth." The follow-up questions revealed that many individuals had professional mentors either as they began, or before they began, their graduate or entry level positions. According to the results, mentors were either a direct supervisor or as an advisor at their university or department. The majority of participants also reported having a mentor for as long as the first 2 to 5 years of their careers in Student Affairs and reported staying in touch with that person for as much as once a month after leaving a position. The majority of respondents indicated that having a mentor improved their quality of life.

The third area of questioning covered quality of life issues including services and benefits, residency amenities and policies and opportunities within the surrounding community. This area covered the majority of quality of life issues that new professionals face in our region. Some of the services and benefits that were asked about included a meal plan/meal points for either self, spouse, children and /or partner, the availability of professional development funds; tuition remission; and health insurance. The most common benefits provided were professional development funds, health insurance and tuition remission. In analyzing the services and benefits that were least available to staff, 3 out of the 5 benefits involved domestic partners. The participants self-identified health benefits for a spouse as the most important service. Conversely, the least important benefit was a meal plan/meal points.

We asked staff about different amenities that were available to them within their on-campus residence. These included number of bedroom furnishings, handicap accessibility and security features. The top three amenities that emerged from the survey included number of bedrooms, available furnishings, and having a refrigerator. The bottom three amenities included handicap accessibility, two or more bathrooms and security features. The participants were then asked to rank the amenities that were most important to them in terms in of their Quality of Life. The top three amenities were laundry access, a refrigerator and two or more bedrooms. The least important amenities to staff included a dishwasher and living room/bedroom furniture.

The next area of questions covered policies that affect new, live-in professional staff such as policies around a shared residence, the presence of pets, whether or not alcohol was allowed and whether or not candles were allowed. The top policies offered were spouses and children being allowed to share residence. The participants were then asked to rank the policies that were most important to them in terms in of their Quality of Life. The top three most important policies were children, a domestic partner, or a spouse being allowed to share residence.

The next portion of the survey addresses the participant's feelings about the community options that were offered in their surrounding community and how it affects their quality of life. Issues of personal interests, personal needs, entertainment venue, and recreational venues were listed. In reviewing the results, the majority of the participants felt that options of personal interests and personal needs either exceeded or met their expectations. The largest area of concern was with the entertainment venues available which received a ranking of below expectations from 30.7% of the participants. We also asked if they believed that their institutions

had been honest with them regarding the community options. Over 40%, felt as if they had been informed of their community options appropriately and were able to make an informed decision regarding accepting or rejecting a position at a university or college.

Our final question involved their perception of their institution's overall commitment to satisfying their needs. Overall, the majority of respondents felt that their institution either exceeded or met their expectations in regards to quality of life issues. They also felt that the institution was committed to either meeting or exceeding their expectations. There needs to be more research conducted to explain the other minority of respondents who felt that their institution either addressed their needs below expectations or thought that it was not applicable to their response.

The next area of assessment was the roles of members in our region. We asked a number of questions regarding roles and responsibilities in order to further flesh out the job scopes of various individuals in our region. Our questions not only covered roles and responsibilities, but also examined the changing nature of the professional staff position for first year professionals. The majority of our respondents are at institutions that employ a Masters level Hall Director in a supervisory position. Those new professionals are supervised by a Director/Senior Housing Officer, but a large contingent of respondents indicated that they were directly supervised by another individual in another area of student affairs, such as an Associate Dean of Students or a Program Coordinator.

We asked questions about the day-to-day functions of the respondents and they all indicated that their main responsibilities included some form of staff supervision, including resident assistants and professional staff members and adjudicating conduct with students. A large number also indicated that their job scope included working with hall and community councils as well as communicating with colleagues, arranging campus visits, engaging in crisis management and advising student groups integral to housing such as Residential Housing Association (RHA). A number of respondents indicated that their job responsibilities included a large amount of administrative tasks, such as departmental reorganization, program management, coordinating the housing process and managing tasks around payroll and staff identification systems. Many respondents indicated that their job responsibilities included some form of summer conference administration as well as budgetary management decisions.

The next question addressed the departmental/divisional responsibilities of respondents in several different areas, including, but not limited to, student group advising, the housing assignment process and professional staff selection and training. The vast majority of respondents indicated that their numerous responsibilities included their involvement in some aspect of student staff training. Between 50 and 75% of all respondents indicated that their job scope included other areas, such as student staff selection, departmental professional development, departmental program planning, and the housing assignment process.

Committee participation and the changing nature of the professional staff position were the last two areas explored in the Quality of Life survey. The majority of respondents indicated that they served on a committee either as a part of housing and residence life or in another capacity in another area of campus. A large number also indicated that their committee responsibilities included working with operations, sustainability, student success, student development outcomes and convocation. A number of responses included committee involvement around international students and their needs, departmental benefits for professional and student staff and committee work around fall student staff training. The nature of the staff position generated a myriad of responses, but the largest number focused around the ways in which the professional staff position allowed new professionals to exercise or further develop in areas that were not addressed either through previous training or on the job experience.

Overall, the Quality of Life survey reveals a region that is striving to become a more welcoming place overall for young professionals first entering the field. In every area, from diversity to amenities, the colleges and universities in the region are making strides towards being more attractive to young professionals. The survey also reveals that there are still many areas to be addressed, particularly in the areas of how quality of life for new professionals impacts them remaining in the region and for how long. In addition, while the region is welcoming to women and other minorities, perhaps another survey could be conducted in the future that would address the needs and concerns of these groups. Finally, the survey reveals that the types of benefits provided that are most important to new professionals include the ability to live-in with a spouse or domestic partner and the ever present and growing need for health insurance coverage. The colleges and universities which employ new professionals in the region are continuing to make their institutions the place to live and work for new student affairs professionals.