

Increasing Career Readiness for First-year Hospitality Students:



The Pineapple Club

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Abstract

The purpose of this assessment is to share with the campus community a unique First Year Experience program named, “The Pineapple Club,” which uses career, academic, and co-curricular engagement to increase first-year hospitality student’s career readiness. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Competencies were used to design the program’s format and year-long activities, including monthly workshops throughout the student’s first-year, required one-on-one advising sessions, assignments, and projects. This assessment presentation will provide participants an example of a successful program that will help students increase their career competencies, leading to greater career outcomes for graduates.



Process/Methodology

On October 3, 2017, first-year hospitality students who were participating in The Pineapple Club were asked to self-assess their career readiness on a five-point Likert scale on the eight NACE career competencies and the competencies two corresponding skills. The eight competencies from NACE are, Critical Thinking/Problem Solving, Oral/Written Communications, Teamwork/Collaboration, Digital Technology, Leadership, Professionalism/Work Ethic, Career Management, and Global/Intercultural Fluency.

On April 10, 2018, students were given the same assessment again and asked to self-assess their career readiness. The scores were analyzed and the variance’s found for the students who completed both assessments only.

Results

The competencies with the highest average gains were Oral/Written Communication and Information Technology Application. Students saw the greatest gain in the skill under Oral/Written Communication competency of “articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside the organization”, with a variance 1.2 or 33% gain. This was 42% higher than the next highest gain of the skill in Information Technology Application of “select and use appropriate technology to accomplish a given task”.

The competencies and skills with the lowest variances can be found in Teamwork/Collaboration and Professionalism/Work ethic. The skill of “building collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religion, lifestyles and viewpoints” in Teamwork/Collaboration and the skill of “Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior, act responsibly with the interests of the larger community and is able to learn from mistakes” in Professionalism/Work Ethic had the lowest skills variance with a positive .25 from fall to spring. This may be due to the fact that these skills already had an average of 4.25 in fall, not leaving much room to grow in these areas.

Conclusion

Students who participated in the Pineapple Club saw gains in all areas of career competencies and skills from the fall quarter to spring quarter. Through a series of meetings, advising sessions, a variety of group and individual projects they successfully gained skills that NACE believes are necessary for a “successful transition into the workplace” (NACE Career Competencies Fact Sheet).



“Pineapple Club led me on the path to deciding what I wanted for my future. Much of the skills I learned how to succeed came from the support I got from the Pineapple Club, as well as all the relationships I made with classmates and professors at Cal Poly Pomona. I gained important professional and personal skills, experienced success through support and resources on campus, made plans for completing my degree and for working, and attained knowledge that I can pass on to incoming first-year students”.

Tiffany Wan, Pineapple Club Member, and First-year Hospitality Student



“As I look back on my first year at Cal Poly and The Collins College I am proud of the leader/student I have become. I cannot wait to see what new challenges and success I will face in the new school year”.

Drake Rubalcava, Pineapple Club Member, and First-year Hospitality Student



“As the program administrator, to watch students grow over the course of a year and to see them become more confident in their skills, and abilities was equally an important journey. As an educator, understanding the challenges first-year students face I can better assist them in their journey from students to professionals”.

Ann Lara, Pineapple Club Creator, and Administrator

Future Plans/Discussion

Based on the data that we obtained from the assessment, a further focus on teamwork/collaboration will be implemented in next year’s cohort. The icebreakers, group projects, etc. give students a chance to connect. As higher education professionals we acknowledge that relationships with peers are a high impact practice for retention and graduation. Also, increased activities to focus on the skill of “integrity and ethical behavior”, highlighting examples in the workplace and at Cal Poly Pomona will help students develop positive behaviors in this critical career competency of Professionalism/Work Ethic.

Overall, students responded well to the activities and made gains in all skills and competencies, between 5% and 33%. The use of peer advisors during this coming year will help communicate the purpose, value, and practice of the club to next year’s first-year students. By having a peer to peer network, the incoming students should be able to be able to connect the purpose, value, and practice to greater participation throughout the school year.

	Fall	Spring	
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	4.06	4.63	↑
Oral/Written Communications	3.36	4.10	↑
Teamwork/Collaboration	4.30	4.60	↑
Information Technology Application	3.40	4.20	↑
Leadership	3.88	4.50	↑
Professionalism/Work Ethic	3.90	4.55	↑
Career Management	3.63	4.20	↑
Global/Intercultural Fluency	4.40	4.80	↑



References/Acknowledgements

- Career Readiness Defined. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>
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