More Than Just a Job:
Student Employee Success in Academic Libraries
Overview:

- My story
- What helped me succeed
- Some other student perspectives
- The literature
- What this means for your library
Let me introduce myself:

Holly Dolan

- University of North Texas Libraries
  - Library Specialist I-Access Services
  - Graduate Library Assistant (1/2014-10/2014)
  - Student Assistant (2/2012-10/2014)
- MLS, UNT (Expected 12/2015)
How I got here

- Began college (2007)
- Dropped out (2008)
- Enrolled at UNT, working part-time retail (2011)
- Major improvement in grades and personal relationships

- Graduated with an improved GPA and started MLS (2014)
- Became student assistant at UNT Libraries (2012)
Coming into my own

- Improved ability to cope with stress
- Took pride in my work
  - Supervisors noticed effort and rewarded it
- As my grades improved I began to set goals for myself
- Recognized that I could have a fulfilling career in libraries
What made the difference?

- The on-campus job experience
- Proximity and knowledge of student resources
- Having a campus “home base”
- Diverse hiring practices
- Seeing and participating in the academic community
What made the difference?

- Knowledgeable and understanding supervisors
  - A “glass-half-full” workplace
- Stressful situations become learning experiences
- Cross-training opportunities
- Informal mentoring
  - Combined service desk
Other student perspectives

Thomas
Major: Entrepreneurship
Time spent at UNT Libraries: 7 months
Current Job: Student Assistant

“[Working at the library] helped me practice my customer service quite a bit. I’ve learned of a lot of useful things relating to the library, like good academic sources, ILLs, course reserves, etc.”

“Working on campus is a huge plus, especially because I don’t have a car to get around and live at an apartment on a campus bus route. I’ve enjoyed meeting and working with everyone I’ve met so far while working here.”

Glenn
Major: Political Science
Time spent at UNT Libraries: 2 years, 4 months
Current Job: Student Assistant

“I can’t imagine what things might have been like if I’d worked elsewhere on campus. My library job has been one of the best work experiences of my life.”

“I would recommend working as a student assistant in the library to any student. It’s hard to imagine a better college job.”
Tia
Major: **English**
Time spent at UNT Libraries: **4 months**
Current Job: **Student Assistant**

“This job helps me balance all of my responsibilities and has given me a warm and peaceful work environment that I cannot wait to go to.”

“Working in the library has definitely increased my ability to handle stress from school and home.”

“The experience has taught me a lot about how to study, how others study, campus life and I got to see how many changes that the libraries have to go through in order to help us students get the most out of our studies.”

AJ
Major: **Integrative Studies and Physics**
Time spent at UNT Libraries: **2 years**
Current Job: **Student Assistant at The Pride Alliance and Supplemental Instructor for the Math department**

“The supervisors and staff at Willis eased my anxiety about coming out as trans in the workplace. It is a very positive and queer friendly environment; they have always been supportive of my transition and the activism I do on campus.”

“...I think working at the library made me want to continue to work for the university and **maybe even stay working for different universities** when I’m finished with school.”
Other student perspectives

Sarah
Major: **Library Science**
Current Job: **Graduate Library Assistant**

“My academic progress improved while I worked in the library because it **forced me to manage my time better**”.

“Working at the library encouraged me to pursue a career in library science, but I was also shown tools to research other fields that I was interested in as an undergraduate student.”

“I wish the library was able to **offer more opportunities for advancement** of undergraduate workers, with pay increases.”

Therese
Major: **Taxation**
Time spent at UNT Libraries: **2 years, 10 months**
Current Job: **Tax Associate - KPMG**

“I actually met one of my roommates through working at the library! In that aspect, it helped my social life as she introduced me to our other roommates and **we all formed a friendship**.”

“There were times when I didn't necessarily feel challenged in my job, so **I wish there had been more hands-on training** on the different resources in the library.”
Michigan Technological University: “Students who participated [in on-campus employment] had grade point averages higher than many other students.” (Boost retention…., 2011)

Purdue University: In terms of outcomes, on-campus employment during the first and/or second year is translated into substantially higher percentages of students graduating within four years” (Cermak & Filkins, 2004)
“Successful employment experiences on campus may well contribute to the retention of a diverse student population as it decreases the sense of alienation, provides for the development of useful skills, and gives the student another place in the campus community.” (Kathman & Kathman, 1998)
Study of 1,827 full-time undergraduates:
Improved ability to deal with others 70%
Improved communication skills 69%
Increased self-confidence 69%
Better ability to work on a team 58%
Improved time management 52%

(Study made no distinction between on and off-campus employment.)

(New research…, 2013)
What this means

● Get feedback from students
● Assess your program, make necessary changes to enrich students
● Have students work in physical proximity to potential mentors
● Hire diversely
● Communicate with administration about the success of your students
Questions?

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