

Competencies & Student Employment

Integrating competencies into our work is about using a unifying framework to align what we know is already happening across the University of Iowa, it's not about creating new programs and services. This document outlines guidelines for integrating competencies into student employment.

Map it: From problem solving to conflict negotiation, students learn many transferrable skills as a result of their student employment experience that will help them be successful in their future careers. The first part of utilizing competencies is to think about or “map” what competencies student develop as a result of your employment experience. Are they learning problem solving through working with customers, collaboration by working on a team, verbal communication by serving as front desk staff, etc.?

Name it: Once you know what students will learn as a result of the job experience, you will need to intentionally name those skills. Students may not make the connection between their job and the transferrable skills they are learning as a part of that job, so it is important to utilize various opportunities to make that learning apparent. Opportunities include: incorporating competency language into job announcements and position descriptions, creating and using interview questions that encourage students to think about what they may learn, talking about competency development during student orientation and training, setting goals with student employees at the beginning of the academic year, and discussing competency growth during one-on-one meetings or check-ins, when discussing job performance, in exit interviews or surveys, etc. It is as easy as saying, “As a part of your experience as a student employee I expect you to learn problem solving skills, collaboration...”

Focus on integrative learning: Asking students questions during one-on-one conversations, when checking-in, during trainings, etc. about what they are learning and how it connects to their experiences outside of work are all it takes to get connections firing about how learning might be used across contexts. Some questions to help students connect their learning could include:

- What are you learning here that's helping you in school?
- What are you learning in class that you can apply here at work?
- Can you give me a couple examples of things you've learned here that you think you will use in your career?