

# Student Employee Experiences Shape Library Practices

Do you remember the first time you walked into a university library? Do you remember how you felt? Were you nervous about looking confused and not being able to find what you were looking for?

Over the years, it becomes harder to remember why we felt that way in the first place. We may forget what it felt like to be a first generation student or to move onto a campus where we always feel underrepresented. To ensure that our spaces and services are inclusive and sensitive to students' needs, Grand Valley State University Libraries continually looks for ways to elevate the voices of our student employees. Student employees have not only experienced a multitude of these feelings themselves, but are also accustomed to how their peers are

using library spaces and services.

In their 2017 article, "[Understand, Identify, and Respond: The New Focus of Access Services](#)," colleagues Juan Carlos Rodriguez, Kristin Meyer, and Brian Merry wrote, "these students serve, in a sense, as the eyes and ears of the library. They see what is happening both in the library and around campus. As students, they are attuned to student needs in a way that professional staff are not."

At the Frey Foundation Learning Center at the Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences on the Health Campus, our student employees helped us recognize that their close-knit cohorts often spend much of their day working collaboratively, but that they also need spaces to study alone. In this way, the furniture for these spaces needs to

be adaptable to fit all of their needs. User Experience (UX) students at the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons answer a "Questions of the Week," prompt to get their perspectives on a variety of issues, from information missing on our website to stress-relief activities offered during midterms and final exams.

In this reciprocal relationship, student employees also partake in higher impact opportunities. Kellie Corbett used unique insight into the experience of first-year students that she had gained from also being a Resident Assistant, to help design and implement an exhibit geared toward connecting students. Another student, Addison Gucwa, created an entire game-based training module that is being used this semester to train other UX students. Several student employees have also worked on this publication and continue to be fundamental to its design and success.

University Libraries' students first philosophy is successful because the student employees are embedded in the decision making process, and bring key insights about user needs. Without them, the University Libraries could not function and would not be such a thriving part of the Grand Valley community.



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Understand, Identify, and Respond: The New Focus of Access Services  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/article/653207>