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The Price of Hiring Resident Assistants: An Analysis of Human Capital, Opportunity Costs, and Personnel Wages

EVALUATING CANDIDATES FOR THE RESIDENT ASSISTANT (RA) position is typically a time consuming and resource intensive process. As a result of the considerable—and necessary—human capital required to facilitate multicomponent hiring processes, routine daily job responsibilities are often limited, deferred, or eliminated altogether. Thus far, no scholarship exists exploring the actual “cost” of evaluating RA candidates, both in terms of personnel time and their associated wages. Put another way, the “opportunity cost” linked to evaluating RAs is unknown, despite a general agreement of the scarcity of resources in housing operations. To bridge this gap, this study presents alterations of various magnitude to a standard baseline RA hiring process articulating the cost in both time and wages of involved personnel. The results reveal tangible examples of how even small intentional changes to standard hiring practices can release staff time in meaningful amounts, which in turn allows for increased business continuity. Strategies for intentionally navigating the time economy of hiring RAs are discussed.

Schroeder and Pike (2001) described the challenges facing higher education practitioners with non-routine priorities as navigating the “tyranny of now” and how the “problems of consequence are often whatever is happening in the here and now!” (p. 350). Compounding such sentiments, universities and their individual functional areas “strive to ‘do more with less’” (Barnett, 2015b, p. 122), a common claim including both budgets and staffing resources. These feelings are aptly illustrated by Dilbert asking his boss on which category of priorities he should stop working: essential, critical, or must-have (Adams, 2007).

When managing additional—often competing—priorities, it becomes clear “human capital is a significant factor both in terms of input and output for modern enterprises” (Chen & Lin, 2004, p. 117), which undoubtedly encompasses institutions of higher education and their housing units. On the individual employee level, college administrators engage in “time-trading” and “time-bargaining” (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013, p. 1132), alternating attention from one priority to another (Ylijoki, 2015). Macroscopically, departments create systems which “are designed to monitor the performance of both physical and human resources” (Barnett,

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2015b, p. 122). In reality, and perhaps ironically, attempts by institutions to increase efficiency tend to create time and resource inefficiency (Murphy, 2015), which is problematic because time comes with the burden of value (Barnett, 2015a) while remaining scarce as a resource (Murphy, 2015).

There is no doubt the act of facilitating Resident Assistant (RA) hiring processes consumes large amounts of resources (Berg & Stoner, 2016). A vast majority of those resources come in the form of human capital and personnel time, both of which are already in limited supply (Stoner, 2018, p. 13). Understanding the various personnel time transactions—or the cost of their opportunities—deserves additional attention since “the use of resources in one way prevents their use in other ways” (Palmer & Raftery, 1999, p. 1551). Put another way, how much time spent on routine job responsibilities and opportunities are sacrificed or displaced by facilitating RA staff interviews?

Across disciplines, much scholarship exists exploring opportunity costs (e.g., Fernbach et al., 2015; Lippman & Rumelt, 2003; Payne et al., 1996; Posnett & Jan, 1996); but thus far such research endeavors end where housing literature begins. All too frequently scholars compare the additional—or “marginal”—costs between an existing process and a new one (Torger-son & Spencer, 1996, p. 35), leaving a void in the critical exploration of current personnel deployment patterns and the resulting cost of production. Therefore, this study aimed to begin filling the gap in housing literature by understanding the human capital investment

in facilitating resource intensive RA hiring processes, specifically examining the personnel time investment and associated wages.

THE COST OF OPPORTUNITY AND TIME EXCHANGES

For our analysis, we used an application of *opportunity costs* as a lens because it is “arguably the most fundamental concept in economic reasoning” (Ferraro & Taylor, 2005, p. 1). Simply put, opportunity cost “expresses the basic relationship between scarcity and choice” (Buchanan, 2017, p. 1). In the case of this study, we present personnel time as the primary variable because of its scarcity (Murphy, 2015; Schroeder & Pike, 2001) and perceived value (Barnett, 2015a). To further quantify the actual cost, we extend our analysis to monetary considerations by converting staff time into wage potential.

Due to the time commitment required of housing staff to facilitate multi-faceted RA hiring processes (Berg & Stoner, 2016), opportunity costs served as an appropriate lens because it quantified the personnel resources while illuminating potential lost opportunities. For instance, the tradeoff of an entry-level staff member conducting a 30-minute RA candidate interview is the necessary lost opportunity to complete 30-minutes of regular job duties (e.g., mediate a roommate conflict, adjudicate a conduct case, follow-up on a facility concern, approve program proposals). Because the previously mentioned “time bargaining” and “time-trading” is a typical practice employed by college administrators (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013, p. 1132),

exchanging one 30-minute opportunity may serve as an inconvenience but is typically not problematic due to the limited scale and smaller downstream effects. However, consider if instead of exchanging 30-minutes to conduct a single interview, the same entry-level staff member actually exchanges an entire work day (or eight hours) of routine job duties for a full day of interviewing RA candidates. Presumably, the cost—both intrinsically and extrinsically—of the exchange increases as the required amount of time needing exchanged grows.

TERMINOLOGY

Across institutions, the variety of strategies and philosophies for hiring paraprofessional RAs results in as many different RA hiring infrastructures as there are existing departments. As a result, no two systems are necessarily consistent, making them difficult to study. Therefore, this section provides the definitions used in our study while detailing any relevant analytical procedures.

The *hiring process* encompasses the dedicated time to select paraprofessionals beginning with marketing to extending job offers to the candidates. For the purpose of our analysis, we focused on structured portions used during RA hiring processes. These *components* (e.g., structured interviews, group process) are designed to evaluate desired traits among candidates. The one exception is *interest sessions* (or information sessions), which provide information and details about the RA position to interested candidates. Interest Sessions may take the form of programs, presentations, or open forums allowing potential applicants a dedicated space to learn about position requirements and ask questions before submitting their application. We calculated the required time com-

mitment of interest sessions by multiplying the number of staff participating in each session, the total number of interest sessions offered and the session time duration.

Structured interviews are “a personally interactive process of one or more people asking questions orally to another person and evaluating the answers for the purpose of determining the qualifications of that person in order to make employment decisions” (Levashina et al., 2014, p. 243). Structured interviews are designed to elicit responses demonstrating the candidate’s characteristics, skills, and ability to successfully perform the RA role. We calculated the required time commitment of structured interviews by multiplying the number of staff required for each interview, the number of interviews in which a candidate participated, the time duration of a single interview, and the total number of candidates.

Another common feature unique to RA hiring processes is *group process* where candidates participate in small group activities which are designed for candidates to “behave more naturally” (Ostroth, 1981, p. 25). We calculated the amount of staff time required to facilitate group process by multiplying the following: the number of staff required to facilitate one activity, the total number of unique activities (or *stations*) in which each candidate group participated, the time duration of each activity, and the total number of candidate groups.

ANALYTICAL PARAMETERS AND ASSUMPTIONS

RA hiring processes are often complex, involving many variables: number, types, and duration of components; volume of candidates, candidate requirements, and when and how candidates advance; involved staff

position and salary levels, number of participating staff, and to what degree of participation staff maintain; and, various evaluation metrics. In an effort to focus on analyzing the human capital and personnel resources invested in hiring RAs, we felt it necessary to either eliminate or explicitly define extraneous variables not vital to the purpose of this study *a priori*. Generally, in an effort to avoid overstating the effects, assumptions and parameters were generally designed to yield a conservative result. Descriptions and rationale for each analytical parameter and assumption follow.

Staffing Structures

One complexity of RA hiring processes is the variety of position levels participating in the process. For our analysis, we assumed the most common and frequently represented positions involved in facilitating RA hiring processes were the only participating positions: full-time, entry-level (FTEL) positions as defined in the ACUHO–I Campus Housing Index (e.g., Hall Director, Residence Director, Residence Life Coordinator; ACUHO–I, 2020, p. 12) and paraprofessional student staff (e.g., Resident Advisor, Resident Assistant, Peer Advisor). While mid-level and senior-level positions may be involved on individual campuses, their participation is often minimal from a time investment standpoint, both in terms of fewer available staff at those levels and their direct time contributions. By excluding higher-level positions (which typically have higher salary values), all results will be conservative.

Graduate-level positions were also excluded despite often representing greater participation rates compared to upper-level positions to simplify the analysis due to high variability in graduate-level job requirements and remuneration packages (i.e., stipend, tuition remission, required weekly hours).

Salary and Remuneration Packages

Employing opportunity cost analysis requires an understanding of wage rates (Kassouf, 1994); however, since there is no consistent wage rate for staffing levels across the college housing industry, we elected to create standardized hourly wage rates. Although entry-level staff remuneration packages often include benefits above and beyond salary (e.g., full or partial housing discounts, meal plans, tuition waivers or remission, professional development funds, fringe benefits; Horvath & Stack, 2013), we only considered their salary wages in the analysis because “simply put, salaries are the first benefit candidates see and, among entry-level professionals, what they hold in highest regard” (ACUHO–I, 2020, p. 10). We standardized salary to reflect the all-campus average salary for entry-level staff of \$36,000 (ACUHO–I, 2020, p. 12), which converts to an hourly rate of \$17.31.

RA benefit packages vary even more dramatically compared to entry-level staff. Some departments offer full room and board discounts while some offer partial discounts. Other departments may provide no discount, instead offering a more substantial stipend. Despite the wide variety in benefit packages,

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the most consistent feature is some level of reduced room and board rate. Therefore, we used the “combined charge for room and board” mean of \$9,341 ($n = 432$; U.S. Department of Education, 2019) as the standard total value of an RA’s remuneration package. For the purposes of this analysis, we assumed RAs worked 20 hours per week for two 16-week semesters plus two additional weeks of training and closing responsibilities totaling 34 weeks of employment. Therefore, tan RA’s hourly rate converted to \$13.74.

Planning and Application Review

We only considered staff involvement for components with a specifically defined time duration. For example, certain components have a defined start and end time (e.g., a structured interview lasting 30 minutes, an interest session lasting one hour) whereas the time involved in reviewing applications varies by staff member. Therefore, time spent in interview components and during the interest session was included while time spent reviewing candidate applications was excluded. We also did not include the amount of time spent by the recruitment committee planning, marketing, and recruiting candidates even though “[c]ommittees consume time” (Murphy, 2015, p. 145).

Optional Components

When offered, interest sessions may be optional for candidates while other processes require attendance to advance applicant candidacy. We decided to include the personnel time involved in hosting interest sessions, even if optional, since the act of facilitation re-

quired dedicated resources even in the event a majority of candidates opted not to attend.

Candidate Elimination

Occasionally, but especially with larger candidate pools, departments will reduce their applicant pool based on candidate performance in preceding components. Put another way, departments will only advance the highest performing candidates to subsequent components in their hiring processes. Such practices will save personnel resources due to a lower number of candidates, but the variability of when and how this practice occurs between departments increases the complexity of generating generalizable and comparable example processes. Therefore, we assumed any reductions in candidate pool size occurred after application review but before extending invitations to interview.

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

To understand the investment necessary to facilitate RA hiring processes, we created a “baseline” departmental recruitment process based on commonly employed structures, components, and formats to serve as a miniature case study. The baseline process included interest sessions, structured interviews, group process, and an assumed staffing structure. Next, we presented minor alterations to certain components to explore changes in personnel time and wages between the baseline and altered processes: size of groups in group process, number of group process stations, eliminating group process, alterations to structured interviews,

and candidate pool size reductions. The established parameters allowed observation of the marginal effects of due to changing assumptions or variables without getting in the multitude of other variables. To aid readability, we rounded all monetary data to the nearest whole dollar except the hourly wage rates.

Baseline Process

The baseline RA hiring process evaluated 125 candidates and included eight one-hour interest sessions facilitated by two entry-level staff and four RAs; one 30-minute interview with one entry-level staff and one RA; and, three 30-minute group process activities with six candidates per group facilitated by one entry-level staff and three RAs. A pool of 125 candidates requires 21 groups of no more than six participants. To guide readers, we initially provide the specific analytical steps for calculating both personnel time and wages for the baseline’s components as previous-

ly described. Although not explicitly detailed, the subsequent procedures specific to each relevant component were applied in each alteration but not explicitly detailed. Table 1 details the full baseline results.

Interest sessions required 16 hours of full-time, entry-level (FTEL) time [2 FTEL/session x 8 sessions x 1 session hour] and \$277 in wages [16 hours x \$17.31 FTEL salary/hour]; structured interviews required a total of 62.5 hours of entry-level time [1 FTEL/interview x 1 interview/candidate x 0.5 interview hour x 125 candidates] and \$1,082 in wages [62.5 hours x \$17.31 FTEL salary/hour]; group process required 31.5 hours of entry-level time [1 FTEL/station x 3 stations/candidate group x 0.5 station hours x 21 candidate groups] and \$545 in wages [31.5 hours x \$17.31 salary/hour]. In total, the baseline process required 110 hours (or nearly 14 FTEL work days) of entry-level time which converted to \$1,904 in entry-level wages.

TABLE 1
Baseline Process Summary of Time and Wage Totals

Component	FTE		RA		TOTAL		Time per Candidate	Wages per Candidate
	Time	Wages	Time	Wages	Time	Wages		
Interest Session	16	\$277	32	\$440	48	\$717	0.38	\$5.74
Structured Interview	62.5	\$1082	62.5	\$859	125	\$1,940	1.00	\$15.52
Group Process	31.5	\$545	94.5	\$1,298	126	\$1,843	1.01	\$14.74
Total	110	\$1,904	189	\$2,596	299	\$4,500	2.39	\$36.00

Note. Time is reported in hours. Except for wages/candidate, all wages are rounded to the nearest dollar. Baseline process was designed to evaluate 125 candidates.

To understand the investment necessary to facilitate RA hiring processes, we created a “baseline” departmental recruitment process based on commonly employed structures, components, and formats to serve as a miniature case study.

Interest sessions required a total of 32 hours of paraprofessional time [4 RA/session x 8 sessions x 1 session hour] and \$440 in wages [32 hours x \$13.74 RA salary/hour]; structured interviews required a total of 62.5 hours of paraprofessional time [1 RA/interview x 1 interview/candidate x 0.5 interview hour x 125 candidates] and \$859 in wages [62.5 hours x \$13.74 RA salary/hour]; group process required 94.5 hours of paraprofessional time [3 RAs/station x 3 stations/group x 0.5 station hours x 21 groups] and \$1,298 in wages [94.5 hours x \$13.74 salary/hour]. In total, the baseline process required 189 hours of paraprofessional time which converted to \$2,596 in wages. Facilitating the baseline process collectively required 299 hours of staff time and \$4,500 in staff wages.

Put another way, with 125 candidates, facilitating the baseline process costs 2.39 hours of staff time and \$36 of staff wages per candidate. The highest proportion of monetized human capital in the baseline process is invested in structured interviews (43.12%, or \$1,940); closely followed by group process (40.96%, or \$1,843); and finally, interest sessions (15.92%, or \$717).

Group Sizes

While the baseline process had six candidates per group, we first considered what value, if any, existed in increasing the size of the groups in group process. Increasing group sizes from six to eight candidates reduced the number of groups required from 21 to 16. The resulting effect was a total savings of 30 personnel hours (or \$439 in wages),

broken down between entry-level staff and RAs to 7.5 hours (\$130) and 22.5 hours (\$309), respectively. Adding in a fourth RA evaluator to ensure equal assessment of all the candidates, because two candidates per RA was the baseline, increased the paraprofessional staff cost by 1.5 hours (or \$21), but the increase was still offset by the previously determined reduction in entry-level staff yielding a total savings of 6 hours and \$109.

Number of Group Process Stations

Altering the number of group process activities in which candidates participate changed the entry-level and RA time by 10.5 hours and 31.5 hours per station. This change accounts for ±\$182 and ±\$433 in collective staff wages per added or removed station. Put another way, adding a third station increases the total hiring process cost of necessary personnel wages by 13.7% (\$4,500 to \$5,115).

Eliminating Group Process

Analysis of the baseline process revealed group process represented the second highest proportion of monetized human capital. Eliminating group process substantially lowers the time required to facilitate the recruitment process. The total hours of entry-level and RA time decreased by 42.1% (299 hours to 173 hours) which converts to \$1,843 in total wages.

Structured Interview Staffing Configuration

Interviewing 125 candidates for 30 minutes each requires 62.5 hours of entry-level time and 62.5 hours of RA time. Removing RAs from the interviews saves 62.5 RA hours and

\$859 in wages. On the other hand, replacing the entry-level staff member with a second RA in the structured interview team yielded no change in allocated time, but the overall cost of wages decreased \$223.

Structured Interviews

We next explored the benefit of only conducting structured interviews, which yields a substantial change in required time and human capital. With 125 candidates, the total cost was \$1,940 with 62.5 hours for one FTEL and one RA. Thus, this saved 126.5 hours and \$2,560. Perhaps a department felt they gained more information about candidates during the structured interview component and decided to eliminate everything else while increasing the number of structured interviews to two, each with an entry-level staff and RA. The result would still yield a savings of 49 total hours and \$620 in wages.

Candidate Pool Size Reductions

Although our initial parameters assumed any reductions in candidate pool size occurred prior to facilitating any interview components, we explored the effect of cutting the candidate pool further while leaving all other baseline variables consistent. By reducing the candidate pool by 20% (from 125 to 100), the necessary time required for entry-level and RA staff decreased by 18.5 (\$320) and 30.5 hours (\$419), respectively.

LIMITATIONS

The analysis is presented with recognition of certain limitations. Due to the lack of existing scholarship studying college housing

time-markets, this study was exploratory in nature. The stated parameters and assumptions under which the baseline process was developed and altered limits the ability for direct application of the findings to a localized departmental setting (i.e., campuses interviewing substantially more or fewer candidates than the baseline 125). The same is true of specific staffing structures (e.g., involvement of graduate-level staff) and variation in the value of staff benefit packages. However, the stated parameters were established to produce conservative estimates so any effects on time and wages would likewise be conservative. We also did not include the time involved in participating in other recruitment practices such as the planning and application review process prior to the interviewing period, which necessarily consumes additional personnel time.

This analysis did not consider variation in time quality so practitioners should be cautioned about assuming the quality of every hour is equal. For instance, at least anecdotally, it is a fallacy to assume an interviewer provides an equal level of attention, focus, and care to the first and last candidate of an eight-hour interview day. Therefore, adjusting resources involved in hiring RAs may also alter the candidate experience.

DISCUSSION

Instead of producing physical “widgets,” multi-faceted RA recruitment processes generate candidate assessment profiles which serve as artifacts for advancing departmental staffing structures. Thus, housing recruit-

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ment process production queues and human capital efficiencies deserve consideration as if they were manufacturing physical goods. This study aimed to begin the conversation about the various human capital investments, opportunity costs, and personnel wages associated with hiring RAs.

Anecdotally, full-time entry-level professionals have more responsibilities and thus less flexibility surrounding their involvement in hiring compared to paraprofessionals RAs, usually participating for multiple days. RAs, who represent a substantially higher proportion of overall staff by headcount, have more collective time resulting in limited individual involvement (i.e., rotating through shifts). Therefore, while the analysis explored the various time and wage costs associated with RA involvement in hiring processes, we primarily discuss the results specific to full-time, entry-level employee involvement.

Direct time exchanges and their associated monetary wages present the exchange of time as equal (i.e., 30-minutes for 30-minutes), which fails to fully capture the economic impact. The critical follow-up is how regular job duties cannot be exchanged without consequence. Unfortunately, when the narrative is “work until the job is done,” most entry-level staff return to their long to-do lists after a full day of interviews. While conducting RA interviews, entry-level staff still have conduct cases to process, students with whom to meet, and programs to approve, among many other responsibilities. If RA recruitment requires days of additional work, the necessary time required to complete those routine responsibilities typically occurs outside of regularly dedicated office hours.

For non-exempt, entry-level staff who qualify for overtime pay, the actual cost of completing those same regular duties increases due to the elevated overtime wage

rate. For exempt employees who do not qualify for overtime, the cost instead may be more difficult to quantify but no less important, manifesting in ways such as elevated personal exhaustion (Golden & Wiens-Tuers, 2008), increased anxiety (Kleppa et al., 2008), lost leisure time (Posnett & Jan, 1996), lower quality of work (Luther et al., 2017), and decreased morale (Hanna et al., 2005). Designing recruitment processes purposeful of employee time may therefore yield benefits extending beyond budgetary savings.

Quantifying the personnel time invested in an existing hiring process provides interesting and alternative ways to discuss staff involvement. For instance, altering the presented baseline process by reducing the candidate pool by five candidates (or 4% of the existing pool) yields an approximate total time savings of four entry-level hours. Put another way, cutting five additional candidates prior to the interview process allows time for eight 30-minute conduct cases to be held during standard business hours.

Similarly, using opportunity costs and studying wages also allows for alternative ways to consider staffing patterns and infrastructure configurations in RA hiring process components. The existing wage gap between entry-level and RA staff allows for increased numbers of participating staff while still reducing the associated wages given certain circumstances. For example, as demonstrated when altering the size of group process groups, we were able to increase the number of total personnel involved by adding an additional RA while still reducing the total time necessary based on the number of required groups because of less entry-level involvement.

The duration of time spent in different components of multi-faceted hiring processes should not be considered equal. Some

practitioners may argue group process is a method that allows hiring managers to see mass amounts of candidates when they otherwise would be limited to only the candidates on their personal interview dockets. Our analysis of the time economy supports this notion with price per candidate being lower for group process (\$14.63/candidate) compared to structured interviews (\$15.52), but it would be worth exploring whether the metrics associated with group process evaluations reveal the same quality of information as a structured interview. Eliminating group process is occasionally considered by recruitment committees, typically due to concerns about “fair[ness]” in assessing “capable introverted applicants who may get overshadowed by more vocal extroverts in group settings” (Stoner, 2019, p. 50). The presented analysis provides objective considerations about the necessary time investment required by group process.

With the vast array of job responsibilities associated with the RA role, it is necessarily problematic to believe hiring managers can effectively assess every single job responsibility within a reasonable amount of time. Therefore, housing practitioners must curb the desire to overdesign hiring processes as a substitute for subsequent training and supervision at the expense of their staffs’ time unless assured the time investment pays satisfactory dividends.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Institutions should be mindful of their hiring process component goals, expectations, and value when compared to the necessary facilitation time requirements. Defining goals provides an opportunity to remove practices that are not valuable or necessary

to the recruitment process. Defining the purpose of each component allows departments to understand the ‘why’ and the ‘what,’ which is best illustrated by the purpose of interest session components.

Interest sessions typically lack opportunities to quantifiably evaluate candidates; therefore, every minute of staff time invested in facilitating interest sessions is necessarily “wasted” if the overall purpose of the recruitment process is to identify strong candidates. Departments may feel strongly about educating candidates on the role for which they applied, but due to the resources required, existing designs may benefit from critical alterations. For instance, cutting the number of interest sessions in the baseline process by half reduces the necessary entry-level time commitment by eight hours (or 16 half-hour conduct cases). Moving interest sessions to a virtual modality with an educational video to watch would release all staff time, other than one-time investment to create the video.

Departments must also weigh the cost-benefit analysis of centralizing staff recruitment into a few full days against spreading it out over multiple partial days. Increased number of partial days may in turn decrease the disruption of normal business continuity and limit overtime. Spreading a process out over a longer total duration may justifiably cause some practitioners to tire due to the feeling of running a process that seemingly never ends.

If altering the structure and timing of hiring processes is not a feasible option, another possibility is to expand the number of interviewing and facilitating staff to include employees from outside the housing unit. While this suggestion neglects to reduce the overall time necessary to facilitate the hiring process, it does further distribute and create

a reduction in housing-specific personnel costs. Such a strategy could be intentionally designed to focus on professional development and collaboration for non-housing staff wishing to expand skills and knowledge outside their regular, unit-specific job responsibilities. The only requirement is trust by housing personnel that their non-housing colleagues can appropriately identify strengths and weaknesses of candidates given whichever process component they are staffing. With intentionally designed evaluation metrics and appropriate training, this need not be an actual concern, other than overcoming internal feelings and personal biases.

This could be taken one step further since housing departments are typically not unique on their campuses to hiring large groups of paraprofessional staff. Instead of “borrowing” personnel resources, perhaps certain portions of hiring processes might be best combined between units to collectively evaluate candidates holistically for shared traits among multiple positions. Then, each unit could split apart to do follow-up interview components with specific evaluation of the unique job responsibilities. For example, it is safe to assume the positions of Orientation Leader and RA share some similar desired attributes (e.g., leadership, ability to work with others). An institution could combine all staff resources from both the housing and orientation units to collectively assess common attributes with follow up interviews to evaluate unit-specific

job responsibilities. However, since not all unit staff sizes and candidate pool sizes are equal, further analysis would be warranted. It could be one unit brings fewer resources per candidate by default, thus reducing workload for that unit while stressing the time economy of the other unit.

If none of the earlier recommendations are sufficient in addressing lost opportunity costs among localized staff resources, perhaps a more radical approach is warranted. Instead of building out a comprehensive hiring process and then forcing it into existing staff workloads, departments could work backwards by predetermining how much staff time they wish to dedicate for recruitment efforts balanced against existing job responsibilities. Intentional efforts such as this would further reinforce business continuity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

Although it may appear the presented analysis focused on time efficiency, it really should be viewed as focused on being purposeful and intentional with staff time. Additional analysis on candidate evaluation and assessment metrics would further illuminate the intentional deployment of personnel resources in the most effective manner. By extending Stoner’s (2018) analysis studying the weights of each component score contributing to overall candidate scores, a department may learn, for example, a majority of the total points available to candidates is collected in a component requiring the fewest personnel hours.

Therefore, housing practitioners must curb the desire to overdesign hiring processes as a substitute for subsequent training and supervision at the expense of their staffs' time unless assured the time investment pays satisfactory dividends.

Framing the design of RA hiring processes while being mindful of human capital, opportunity costs, and personnel wages has powerful effects on the success and continuity of housing operations.

If that were the case, it begs questioning the actual value of overinvesting human capital in the other components to collect minimal objective information about candidates.

Departments looking to increase operational efficiency would benefit from applying a similar analysis to areas outside of paraprofessional hiring. For example, it costs 15 hours of personnel time for ten entry-level staff members to meet for 90 minutes. If the meeting reoccurs weekly, the cost of the meeting expands to 420 hours over the course of an academic year (at 14 meetings per semester). Departments should then ask themselves if it is worth \$7,000+ in staff wages to hold that weekly meeting. Perhaps their departmental goals would be better served by moving to a biweekly format and releasing 210 hours (or 26 work days) of staff time each academic year.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the human capital and time economy associated with the resource intensive process of hiring paraprofessional RA staff. Interesting and alternative considerations emerged when viewing the process of hiring RAs through a basic lens of opportunity costs. Analysis of the presented baseline process evaluating 125 RA candidates revealed a total requirement of 300 hours and \$4,500 as represented by the combined time and wage commitments of both entry-level and paraprofessional staff. This study demonstrated the value of intentional efforts to alter both staffing structures and hiring component configurations. Framing the design of RA hiring processes while being mindful of human capital, opportunity costs, and personnel wages has powerful effects on the success and continuity of housing operations. ■

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A large takeaway of this study is being intentional with staff time. In what ways has your department been intentional with staff time related to hiring processes and what were the results?
2. The authors note that without group process hiring managers may be limited to only the candidates for which they conduct structured interviews. What could be added in place of group process to supplement structured interviews and allow hiring managers to get quality information on greater volumes of candidates?
3. The authors discuss how quality of time may not be equal across different components. What areas of your department's hiring process facilitates the most quality use of your time and why?
4. How does the time economy change when resources are reallocated during a local, national, or worldwide crisis event?
5. The authors discuss how interest sessions require time and money that does not necessary aid in identifying strong candidates. In what ways can this component be reimagined so it aids in the interview process?
6. The article emphasizes the narrative of "working until the job is done." How does this narrative differ between exempt employees and non-exempt employees?
7. How might this analysis be extended to other departmental priorities such as staff training, professional staff recruitment, or move-in and move-out events?

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