

Top Ten List for DPCR Student Worker Success

10. Include students in your organization's culture as much as possible

Examples: Involve them in meetings/offsite events. Include them in office newsletters or updates. Share company trinkets (water bottles, key chains, etc.) Introduce them to multiple members of staff, not just immediate supervisors. Place a name placard or sign at the students' work station with their name and "Cristo Rey student" so others know who they are, too.

Benefits: Students feel like they belong and are not "just students" - they develop a greater sense of pride for their work and the organization.

9. Find a mentor for the students

Examples: Get to know the student's personality, interests, & aspirations. From this, find a person in a leadership position who might be interested in meeting with the students monthly or quarterly to talk about his/her own career path and the work he/she does. Let students shadow someone for a morning in a different department. Organize a "day in the life" activity in which a student observes and learns about the company.

Benefits: Students become more engaged in the company because they feel connected. Students may also be exposed to long-term career goals or be motivated to go to college by another person's career path.

8. Provide a variety of resources for students to reference

Examples: A map of the campus or building, with departments/personnel locations annotated; a company directory; a script for answering and making calls; a manual with instructions on how to complete certain computer functions, a list of important phone numbers and emails.

Benefits: Encourages students to be self-sufficient in seeking answers.

7. Encourage student ownership on tasks and projects

Examples: Explain the "big picture" of a task and how it relates to the overall success of a project. Emphasize the importance of even small or mundane activities so they understand how the projects that are "just theirs" fit in.

Benefits: Students will feel their work is important and appreciated, producing better outcomes.

6. Keep students busy

Examples: Provide a daily agenda so the student knows what to expect from the day. Create a list of back-up projects (non-urgent filing; cataloging returned mail; inventory; etc.) and make sure the students know what to do when they finish a primary assignment. Develop periods of routine (if possible) so that the student knows he/she always has a particular task at a certain time (mail run every afternoon, etc.)

Finally, occasionally “share” the student with other departments to provide a variety to the day, incorporate the student into more of the organization which also ensures there is always something for them to do. If you think a student is ready, assign them activities that you think might be a bit more complicated and let them rise to the challenge.

Benefits: Boredom can breed inaccuracy so if they aren’t bored they will continue to perform well. Also, agendas, routine, and established “back-up” projects create clear expectations so students are never wondering about what to do next.

5. Provide multiple methods of instruction/explanation

Examples: When giving verbal instructions, ask the students to re-state, in their words, what you expect. Encourage note taking if you provide written instructions, ask them to summarize what they understand. It’s always a good idea to provide a concrete example of a finished project, or to ask the student to show you an example before they get too far into a project.

Benefits: This reduces frustration for both student and supervisor by minimizing mistakes and misunderstandings.

4. Provide regular feedback

Examples: You can never over communicate with a teenager. Have the students check-in and out every day; set regular times to “check-in” with the student to discuss how things are going. Have students fill out the electronic timecard. Address concerns immediately with the student. Use specific examples: “Good job today” does not mean as much as “I really appreciated how quickly you completed X job.” When completing progress reports and official Mid-Year/End of Year Evaluations, review the results with the student.

Benefits: Enhances communication between you and the student which enhances work performance.

3. Make your expectations clear and hold students accountable

Examples: Provide time limits on projects and help them prioritize the projects. Make certain the student understands instructions. Offer a clear “chain of command” (i.e. “If I’m unavailable, talk to Sue. If Sue is unavailable, work on the back-up project).

Benefits: Clear expectations reduce mistakes and frustrations for both the supervisor and the student.

2. Maintain regular communication with your Relationship manager at DePaul Cristo Rey.

Examples: Send us emails or call us to let us know how things are going (good or not). No issue is too small; even if you’ve addressed the concern with the student, just let us know, so we can stay in the loop. If you were particularly impressed one day, let us know that too. Write specific comments on timesheets. If you’re not comfortable, or don’t have time, to comment on the timesheet, send us an email. We are here to help you in any way we can, so that your experience with our students and program is mutually rewarding.

Benefits: By working together, we can often address and correct concerns before they become big problems. We can also make sure that students get the recognition they deserve for a job well done.

1. Have fun!!

A positive work environment will energize the students and allow their creative ideas, individual talents, humor and a willingness to succeed to be developed. Tap into these traits to re-energize your workplace.