The Memorial Union: Creating a Successful Learning Outcomes Based Workplace
Tony Trimarco, Director of the Memorial Union – November 7, 2006

With the increasing urgency of assessing student learning outcomes being placed on student affairs and academic units, how much thought are we giving to the learning that takes place in the campus work environment? Each school year, students have access to hundreds of employment opportunities on UND’s campus. But what is being done to determine what student employees are learning in the campus work environment?

Using Learning Reconsidered1 as a model, UND’s Memorial Union staff has been assessing learning outcomes in the workplace for the past three years. An analysis of these results reveals that students are learning skills beyond the practical aspects of the job that correlate closely with learning outcomes described in the university’s mission statement and the University’s General Education Requirements. When asked to reflect on the learning experience the Union’s work environment provides, students listed the following as skills they attained:

Interpersonal skills
Communication Skills
Decision making
Conflict resolution
Leadership
Time Management
Confidence
Dealing with difficult people
Organizational skills
Responsibility
Supervision skills
Teamwork
Set and meet deadlines
Standing up for what I think is right
Stress management
Work independently

The use of the University’s General Education Requirements and mission statement as learning outcomes allows the Memorial Union staff to connect employment outcomes directly to academic outcomes (and academic success). This helps the Memorial Union staff integrate the work experience with the education and preparation of the whole student, as it relates to their total collegiate experience. The goal is to create a work environment for student employees that would move employment goals beyond job satisfaction to goals which support student learning.

The Memorial Union’s program was featured in Learning Reconsidered 2 (p. 77)²