

Name: Rachel Syko  
Working Title: Resident Relations Coordinator  
Payroll Title: BLANK AST 3

It is my pleasure to nominate Rachel Syko as an Exemplary Employee of the Year. Rachel has demonstrated exemplary work in all nomination criteria. I would like to focus on innovation and proactive leadership.

Rachel is responsible for coordinating the Student Staff program in our department. Under Rachel this program has grown immensely, and we have seen huge improvements in the service we are able to provide our residents and the development of our student staff.

Prior to Rachel joining our team our student staff assisted our department with various office tasks, like filing and taking messages, with minimal face to face interaction with our residents. In order to better serve our residents, we extended our office hours to include evening and weekend hours and student staff was able to step in and cover these shifts. When Rachel joined our team she recognized our student staff being underutilized and worked to empower our students to be more involved in more important office tasks and customer service. Our student staff are now an integral part of our operations, completing critical tasks by staffing our mailrooms and assisting residents in person and over the phone. We now have about 20-30 students serving in positions across four offices working closely with professional staff in each area.

To further assist with future success of our student staff, Rachel worked to integrate the Co-Curricular Record into our Student Staff Program to better document job-related achievements. In this way, we can validate and recognize the hard work our students are doing.

Rachel has developed a more streamlined hiring and training process through which we are able to better retain student staff over longer periods of time. Where previously training was done in individual areas, Rachel has developed a group onboarding and training program for them that allows the students to interact together. This training focuses on office operations as well as customer service skills. Students leave this training with a good foundation and are ready to take on tasks on their first official shift.

Rachel has also enhanced the role of Student Managers. These students have more responsibility, including scheduling and training other student staff. Rachel has developed this into a mentorship; meeting with Student Managers regularly, coaching them, and teaching leadership skills they can take with them in their careers. As an example, Rachel saw potential in a hardworking but reserved student. Through her coaching, he was promoted to Student Manager who then felt empowered to suggest and implement positive change throughout our department.

A new aspect of our Student Program that Rachel cultivated is a quarterly development and team building workshop. Through Rachel's coordination, these workshops allow our students to experience new ideas, work together, and mature as balanced professionals. Some recent workshops included facilitating a Strengthsfinder survey and discussion, navigating an escape room, and completing a ropes course.

Our offices remained open though the pandemic. During this time Rachel advocated for students, assisting them with balancing their work, school, and life in general. She came up with opportunities for students to work some hours remotely and spearheaded an effort to ensure students can still work their desired hours in different work sites. Rachel is a caring and involved manager, taking time to learn student's interests and goals and looking for ways to support them. She has connected students with campus resources like the Hub and regularly checks in to help the students thrive.

Managing our student staff is one of the most fulfilling parts of Rachel's job and her enthusiasm is obvious and contagious. This program continues to grow under Rachel as our student staff are invaluable members of our team and our ability to serve nearly 4500 students and their families.