

Professional Interview for TCE 530

Abstract: I interviewed Emily Boling. She is the Westside Complex Director at Oregon State University. She works for University Housing and Dining Services in Residential Education.

Questions and Answers:

- a.) What is your role within University Housing and Dining Services? Emily supervises five residence hall directors and indirectly supervises forty student staff members, primarily resident assistants. Emily meets one-on-one with her residential directors each week to help them implement projects, discuss and resolve conduct issues with their residents, deal with facilities issues, and to see how their personal lives are going. She is responsible for overseeing student staff selection and also works as a team to oversee housing staff selection.
- b.) Describe what a typical day is like for you: For Emily, no two days are the same. In general the beginning of her week is consumed with committee, staff and the one-on-one meetings mentioned above. The later part of her week is when she gets to work larger scale residential hall projects and has meetings with students to discuss conduct violations.
- c.) What do you find to be the most difficult aspect of your job? What skills do you find helpful in handling these difficult situations? Emily has had to let go of some talented, dedicated staff members because of budget cuts and telling them the bad news has been the most difficult aspect of her job. She tries to be straightforward about the news, but also show that she cares about the person being let go. The skills she finds most helpful are listening and non-verbal skills along with compassion and being able to read the other person and react accordingly.
- d.) What do you find to be the most enjoyable aspect of your job? Emily enjoys getting to incorporate a great deal of fun into the work she does. She works with lots of hardworking people who also know how to let loose and have a good time.
- e.) What aspects of your job would you change if you could? Emily would like it if Housing and Dining Services had a larger budget to produce quality, educational programming in the residence halls. She also would like to find better ways to utilize technology to her advantage and not have to respond to 100 emails a day.
- f.) Do you have any training in counseling skills? If yes, are they helpful? Emily is a graduate of the OSU College Student Services Administration program and has therefore taken a counseling class similar to the one offered now. She has also received additional training in counseling from CAPS. The skills she learned from

class and CAPS sessions were helpful, but she has found learning by experience to be the greatest teacher.

- g.) Do you refer students to counseling? How do you determine who to refer? Emily has referred students with conduct issues to counseling. She has also referred staff members whose work performance is suffering because of personal issues to counseling. Emily is most likely to consider referring someone who is exhibiting worrisome behavior and is dealing with a problem that she doesn't think she is qualified to help solve. She would also recommend counseling to anyone who she feels is a danger to themselves or others.
- h.) Are you involved at all in crisis response situations in your work setting? Emily has to be on-call most of the time. She has to deal with emergency fire alarms, students who need alcohol detoxification, and suicide attempts. Emily has found that remaining calm and deciding quickly how best to handle the situation and who has been affected is important in a crisis situation.
- i.) Other questions/comments- How do you differentiate between being someone's friend and being their supervisor? Emily supervises people who used to be her co-workers and has learned to have honest conversations with them about their new roles as supervisor and staff member. She also finds that holding everyone equally accountable is essential. Emily has to gauge when it is appropriate to hang out with her staff members and when she must leave in order to maintain a healthy supervisor-staff member role.
- j.) How do you deal with the stress associated with your job? Emily tries to ensure that her family responsibilities (swimming lessons with her kids, hanging out with her husband) don't get overshadowed by her work. Playing with her kids is her greatest stress release. She is also an avid reader and sets time aside every night to read. She has also learned to appreciate and fully utilize her vacation time: no checking of email or carrying her business cell phone.

Summary Reflection

- a.) What you learned about what it means to be in the interviewee's role? Emily's role requires flexibility and the ability to rearrange work tasks on short notice. She has to balance a busy schedule of meetings, hearings and project planning while also making time for unexpected surprises. Sometimes Emily has to be straightforward and deal with conduct violations and crisis situations in a quick, efficient manner. She must also be able to slow down and show compassion and caring for students and staff who are dealing with difficult issues. Emily must also be able to energize her staff members and provide them with ample support to deal with the various difficulties they encounter when working with students.
- b.) What surprised you about the interview? The most surprising thing was learning that Emily lives on-campus with her husband and two kids. I thought that that she lived off-site due to her supervisory position. I think that living and working on-

campus presents all sorts of additional issues for staff members. Leaving your work at work and heading home, which in some cases is only steps away from your office, seems like a tricky situation to navigate. I can see it being particularly hard to counsel students during the day and then bump into them in a much more informal setting later at night. Emily explained to me that working and living on campus can be especially hard for people who don't have partners or families to come home to in the evening. They often end up being workaholics simply because their work and home environments are so closely linked. A residential position is something that I've always shied away from doing, but I may have to do apply for one in the future and confront the unique challenges associated with it.

c.) What you liked and disliked about the role of the interviewee: I definitely like the fact that Emily's role keeps her on her toes. I get bored if I have to deal with the exact same issues and challenges every day and I think that in a job like Emily's you are constantly learning. I also like the fact that Emily gets to work with people who recognize the need for laughter and fun. I consider myself to be a hardworking person, but everyone needs to kick back and relax sometimes. People spend so much of their lives at work that having good natured colleagues is essential. I also like the fact that Emily gets lots of one-on-one interaction with staff members and students. I find the most rewarding part of my job to be the knowledge I get to impart and gain while working with students one-on-one. I want to continue having these interactions well into the future. I dislike the fact that Emily has to live on campus. Like I said before, I have some reservations about living on campus because I think it would be hard for me to balance my work and personal life. I'm sure that the challenges that Emily faces would also be difficult for me, but I'm sure that overtime they would become easier and that I would gain lots of hands-on experience in conflict management, crisis response, and other valuable skills.

d.) How the skills learned in this class can help you navigate the role of the person being interviewed: Emily uses a lot of counseling skills everyday. She must display empathy to her students and coworkers and help both groups work through conflicts and stressful situations in their lives. Emily uses invitation skills and reflecting skills to get her students to open up about underlying issues that may be affecting their interpersonal relationships with roommates and hall mates. She must also use these same skills when supervising her student and professional staff members. Emily must be able to paraphrase her student's and coworker's concerns in order to better understand where they are coming from and help them delve deeper into their feelings and how they ascribe meaning to those feelings.

