University health center employee perceptions of their new hire experience: Implications for a new employee orientation

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University Health Center Employee Perceptions of Their New Hire Experience:
Implications for a New Employee Orientation

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY
In
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science in Education

Learning Technology, and Leadership Education Department

May 2012
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to my grandchildren (Brooklyn, Ryan and Austin). I hope seeing Grandma work hard to achieve this accomplishment will be an encouragement to each of you. I love you and want you to achieve your full potential.
Acknowledgements

I cannot begin to express my appreciation to my husband, children, grandchildren, friends and coworkers for allowing me to put life on hold to work towards this awesome graduate degree. I know there were times when you thought this day would never get here. I often felt that same way. I would like to acknowledge your support and words of encouragement throughout this process.

I would like to thank my Committee Chair, Dr. Jane Thall for the time, attention and encouragement she gave me during this process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Karen Kellison and Cannie Campbell for their time in reading my thesis, providing me feedback and being available for me to defend my thesis. I’ve heard horror stories from others about trying to find a time when all the members of their committee could meet. Those individual’s on my committee were so accommodating and willing to work with me to find a time for my defense.

I would also like to thank Rickie Domangue, a Professor in the Mathematics & Statistics Department of James Madison University for his help with the statistical analysis that might otherwise have been incomplete. Thank you all!
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conduct a needs assessment based on employee perceptions of the existing new employee orientation at a University Health Center (UHC) in a medium-sized, Mid-Atlantic public university. This research consisted of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The researcher surveyed 66 employees to examine their perceptions of their new hire experience, to investigate the possible gaps in the existing new employee orientation program, with the implication for implementing a comprehensive new employee orientation. The UHC Director also was interviewed to discuss current structure, possible new employee orientation gaps and her vision for future new employee objectives. A body of research shows the importance of having a new employee orientation. The researcher reviewed characteristics of new employee orientation such as knowledge of job skills and training, mentorship, job standards, knowledge of organizational structure and the effectiveness of employee socialization. Based on a review of literature on new employee orientation and the UHC employee survey responses, gaps were identified. The framework of a New Employee Orientation program is proposed based on determined needs of the UHC employees.

*Keywords:* new employee, orientation, socialization, job standards, adult learning, onboarding, university health centers, cognitive learning, mentoring, and organizational learning.
I. Introduction to Study

The first chapter discusses new employee orientation (NEO), the impact it has on new employees, and investigates whether there is a need for a more comprehensive NEO program at the health center of the institution being studied. The purpose of this needs assessment-based research study is then described, along with assumptions and limitations of the study. This is followed by the study’s research questions, null hypotheses and anticipated contributions to NEO research. This chapter concludes with definitions of terms commonly used in this paper.

An employee entering a work environment without an orientation program is like setting out on a journey without knowing where to go or how to get there. As this paper focuses on employee orientation, it is important to first define the key terms and definitions used in this research. In looking at the root of the word, the term orientation can be self-explanatory. To orient is to familiarize, to get used to, to learn about or to acquaint one’s self with (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Thus, a NEO program (Gioia, 1999) provides an opportunity to familiarize, get used to, learn about and acquaint the new employee with not only the organization but also the new employee’s job and fellow employees. Orientation is the organization’s opportunity to give new employees the information they will need to succeed in the organization (Merriam-Webster, 2011).

Most new employee orientations include some type of new employee handbook with basic information about the organization. Some organizations have NEO programs that focus on training the new employee with the skills needed to perform a specific job (Wescott, 2011) and other new employee orientations include assisting the new employee
in feeling welcomed and meeting fellow employee (Connelly, 2005; Lowe, 2006; Williams, 2003).

In addition to examining how an organization can simultaneously communicate organizational information, target training needs, and assist new employees in becoming assimilated into the organizational culture during a new employee orientation (NEO), this study also examines the impact that a comprehensive NEO has on both the employee, as well as the organization. One impact found from NEO literature is that an effective orientation gives the new employee a fundamental understanding of how they add value to the organization (Bates, 2004; Gioia, 1999). This understanding gives employees a purpose, not just a job. NEO also increases employee satisfaction, retention, relieves anxiety, and empowers new employees to be more confident (Gioia, 1999; Hacker, 2004). Literature supports the influence employee job satisfaction has on an employee’s job performance. In a descriptive-correlational study conducted on the impact of job satisfaction on job performance, Rehman and Waheed (2011) tested the link between job satisfaction, job retention and job performance. A sample of 568 employees from public sector regulatory authorities was chosen to participate in the study. The results showed that job satisfaction has a significant influence on job performance. The more satisfied an employee is with their job; the better the employee performs (Wescott, 2011).

In a study completed by Schmidt and Akdere (2007), new employee orientation was suggested as a powerful tool to use in teaching new employees about the organization’s vision and leadership. “Clearly defined mission, vision, and value statements create an organizational culture where employees are motivated to achieve a higher purpose” (Ingersoll, Witzel & Smith, 2005, p. 86). According to research, there is
a strong correlation between an organization’s mission statement and the behavioral outcomes of their employees (Bart, 1996).

It takes time for a new employee to “learn the ropes” and feel comfortable within a new organization. Facilitating this component of a NEO is called organizational socialization (DeSimone, Harris & Werner, 2002). The socialization process is complex and may take a new employee weeks or months before they understand how to behave in an organization or how to gain acceptance from other organizational members. This socialization process can also be a time when patterns of behavior may be fostered by helping the new employee assimilate into the organization and develop positive employee attitudes. In a study on organizational assimilation, Myers and Oetzel (2003) note that newcomers who do not assimilate into an organization are more likely to break organizational norms, such as not keeping coworkers informed about projects they are working on. This type of passive-aggressive behavior violates norms and would likely cause established members to be less accepting of the newcomer, thereby creating added stress on the new employee. A comprehensive employee orientation is one way to help a new employee become familiar and feel comfortable with both their job and the work environment (Caruth, Caruth & Haden 2010; DeKastle, 2010; Rollag, Parise, Cross, 2005; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Employee socialization within a NEO program will be examined in more detail in the study’s review of the literature.

Orientation is more than introducing new employees to co-workers and completing the standard paperwork. This is the time to provide new hires with the technical support, the organization’s big picture (from the top down) and to provide them
with the tools needed to become productive team members who are committed to the success of their department and company (Gioia, 1999; Hacker, 2004).

Research indicates (Caruth et al., 2010; Rollag et al., 2005; Wanous, 1992) the first few days of employment are an important time to familiarize new employees with not only the job they were hired to perform, but to convey important organizational information to the new employees. This important information consists of knowledge about departmental history, its culture (i.e., how things are done), departmental policies, rules, and job expectations. Orientation is a process where the new employee learns about his or her job, meets co-workers and begins to feel like part of a team. While this information may be presented during the first few days, the process of orienting new employees usually occurs over an extended period of time. According to Hacker (2004), “Orientation in its most ideal form is ongoing” (p. 90). While how much time a NEO should take varies from author to author, all agree orientation is both a formal and informal process. (Ragsdale & Mueller, 2005; Rocchetti, 2006; Van Maanen, 1978; Wanous & Reichers, 2000).

The literature suggests there are several valuable components of a NEO program. Some of these components include: conveying employee job standards, the organization’s strategic framework, and ensuring the socialization of the new employee (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; Ashcraft, 2004; Dean, Thompson, Saunders & Cooper, 2011; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Fenwick, 2008; Holton, 1996; Messmer, 2000; Ragsdale & Mueller, 2005; Randolph & Brian, 2003; Rocchetti, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). It is also noteworthy that there is “no one size fits all” approach to a new employee orientation (Dellasega, Gabbay, Durdock & Martinez-King,
While there is “no one size fits all” there are important components, such as socialization, an organization’s structural framework and the employee’s job standards, that may be generalized in organizations.

The university being studied has a NEO, known as “Onboarding”. It is a program that transitions new employees to a college campus and familiarizes the new employee with their benefits. The new employee also completes the necessary hiring paperwork and is given information about the University’s system access, parking, and acquiring an official identification card. However, the UHC’s departmental NEO participation is completely different from the university’s central Onboarding process (the University’s generic Onboarding process for all employees). One difference is the university’s Onboarding does not address departmental structure, job tasks or departmental socialization. It is difficult, for several reasons, for the institution’s central human resource department to facilitate departmental orientations. In a survey conducted by The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM Survey Findings, 2011), one of the key findings was that limited HR resources was one of the barriers to offering more options in their onboarding programs. “More than one-half of organizations reported that time constraints and insufficient HR staffing are barriers to offering more formal onboarding activities” (2011, p. 2). Furthermore, within a university, each department’s purpose and area of expertise is different. As each individual department’s expertise is different, it is difficult for University Onboarding to include departmental specifics in their new employee onboarding process.
Statement of the Problem

Many organizations have the notion that they exist primarily to get the work done. While this is one of the purposes of an organization, there is also a human development purpose (Knowles, 1974). The term “human development” includes not only the process of assimilating a new employee into the organizational culture, but also providing the employee the ability to optimize their learning potential and achieve success. New employee orientations are a proactive way of having a pervasive impact on an employee. It is a way to assist new employees in their acclimation to the organization and a means to familiarize themselves with job responsibilities and the job skills the employees will need to fulfill their new roles and become successful in their new position. A key element in a new employee being successful in his or her new position is to establish relationships within the organization, understand fellow employee behaviors, organizational facts, procedures, expectations, and the values of the organization (Caruth et al., 2010; DeKastle, 2010; Louis, 1980; Randolph & Brian, 2003; Rollag et al., 2005; Wanous, 1992).

This process is called “employee socialization” (Caruth et al., 2010; DeKastle, 2010; Louis, 1980; Randolph & Brian, 2003; Rollag et al., 2005; Wanous, 1992). “Socialize” can have diverse meanings such as; to meet people, to mingle, or to come together (Merriam-Webster, 2011). For a NEO socialization also conveys important and necessary organizational information in both a formal and informal framework. Another key to new employee success is to learn about the organization in more detail, including its heritage, values, vision, and culture.
By understanding the key elements of what makes an employee successful, the researcher identified components that should be included in a NEO. This needs assessment based study resulted in identifying the components of a comprehensive NEO program that allowed the researcher to create a NEO framework. This framework can be used to recommend improvements to the existing NEO program at the UHC.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to serve as a needs assessment to identify if gaps exist in the current UHC new employee orientation programs and to evaluate if a more comprehensive NEO would benefit employees of the UHC. New employee orientations are often evaluated on their successfulness by return on investment matrix or the increased revenue of an organization. “The majority of government agencies do not use profits and losses to gauge success. Thus there is a need for reliable and valid outcome measures for return on investment, customer satisfaction, and other mission-related criteria” (Muldrow, Buckley & Schay, 2002, p. 351-352). Because the institution being studied is not focused on increased revenue, for the purpose of this study the researcher will focus on the NEO benefits to employee socialization, job satisfaction, employee engagement and employee performance.

**Research Questions**

**RQ 1:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the socialization (informal rules, mentorship and organizational culture) category as part of its new employee orientation?
RQ 2: Does the University Health Center include all components of the job standard (job skills, rules & regulations and goals & performance standards) category as part of its new employee orientation?

RQ 3: Does the University Health Center include all components of the structural framework (mission, vision, values; policy and procedures and organizational expectations) category as part of its new employee orientation?

Null Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that the outcomes of the research will yield the following:

HQ 1: The University Health Center includes the socialization (informal rules, mentorship and organizational culture) category components as part of its new employee orientation.

HQ 2: The University Health Center includes the job standard (job skills, rules & regulations and goals & performance standards) category components as part of its new employee orientation.

HQ 3: The University Health Center includes structural framework (mission, vision, values; policy & procedures and organizational expectations) category components as part of its new employee orientation.

Thesis Statement

Thesis Statement: A more comprehensive new employee orientation will have a positive impact on University Health Center employees in the following areas: socialization, knowledge of job standards and the organizational structural framework.
Anticipated Benefits of the Study

This study will add to the existing literature on NEO programs by examining areas of a new employee orientation including the benefits and components of a NEO. This study will also begin the investigation of evaluating the components that make up a comprehensive NEO.

One of the benefits of a new employee program is it brings about an awareness to the organization of the components that assimilate a new employee such as socialization, job skills training and organizational knowledge so those needs can be better meet. A benefit to bringing about this awareness is that the NEO program can be regularly evaluated, modified and improved to continually meet the needs of new employees in a more effective way. Continuous improvement will lead to improved employee performance and attitude, as well as the overall efficiency of the organization (Caruth et al., 2010; Schlabig, 2010; Schmidt & Akdere, 2007). A NEO program also assists in easing or even alleviating the high levels of anxiety often experienced by new employees (Connelly, 2005; Hacker, 2004; Rollag et al., 2005; Homisak, 2007; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Employees report increased self-confidence and enhanced relationship-building skills within the organization when they have been exposed to effective NEO programs (George & Miller, 1996).

A NEO program is the opportunity to provide employees with interesting and accurate information about an organization’s culture (Dean et al., 2011), it is also the time to present compliance education (Jacoby, 2006). A new employee orientation “is perhaps the most crucial opportunity to provide education regarding compliance” (p. 47). In UHC, orientation in compliance regulations for clinicians is mandated for
accreditation. In a medical setting such as the UHC, compliance information as well as HIPAA education needs to be clearly communicated to ensure safety for both patients and employees (Jacoby, 2006).

While a comprehensive NEO includes several components such as employee socialization and job skills training, implementing a mentorship program can combine both employee socialization and job-skill training (Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Holton, 1996; Messmer, 2000; Wipple, 2010). The use of mentorship to combine employee socialization and job-skill training for the new employee is an example of integrating the new employee into the organization using a strategic process of workplace learning, while also gaining task knowledge (Fenwick, 2008; Holton, 1996; Rollag et al., 2005). Current literature also suggests that organizations need to communicate their structural framework to new employees. “One of the overall objectives of a NEO is to assure that new associates understand the mission and goals of the organization” (Jacoby, 2006).

Learning theories that assist employee learning in a NEO are also reviewed. Knowles has had considerable influence on adult learning. In a critique of Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy, Hartree (1984) challenges the distinction between andragogy being a theory of learning or assumptions about learners. Whether a theory of learning or assumptions of learning, andragogy is premised on at least four crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners. These characteristics will be discussed in more detail in the following literature review. Additionally the researcher will investigate Bandura’s (1970) social learning theory as it applies to NEO.
Assumptions and Limitations

The following are assumptions and limitations of this needs assessment, based research study. Assumptions include:

- Individuals surveyed will see the importance of participating in this study for the benefit of having a more comprehensive NEO program in their department.
- Information acquired in this study will be used by the University Health Center to develop a more comprehensive NEO program.
- Individuals surveyed will be truthful in their responses.
- The researcher will effectively evaluate the responses received and produce meaningful data.

Limitations include:

- Results of this study are specific to the University Health Center at the institution being studied and may not be generalized.
- The researcher created the survey instrument based on current NEO literature. Thus, the instrument is not normed or validity tested.
- Some of the questions were based around the self-perception of the employee’s NEO. Employees who have been employed for several years may not remember the specifics of his or her NEO.
**Key Terms and Definitions**

To research the impact of NEO some key terms need to be defined.

Table 1.

*Key Terms and Definitions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive</strong></td>
<td>Complete; including all or nearly all elements or aspects of something (<a href="http://dictionary.reference.com">http://dictionary.reference.com</a>).</td>
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<td><strong>Department</strong></td>
<td>For the purpose of this study, department refers the University Health Center (UHC) in the institution being studied.</td>
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<td><strong>Employee</strong></td>
<td>An employee is a person who works in the service of another person under an express or implied contract of hire, under which the employer has the right to control the details of work performance (<a href="http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mentor/mentorh.htm">Garner &amp; Black, 2009</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>“The mentor’s role is to teach and advise new employees” (<a href="http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mentor/mentorh.htm">Miller, 2006</a>).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“A developmental partnership through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” John C. Crosby.</td>
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<td><strong>New Employee Orientation</strong></td>
<td>“Orientation programs are a form of employee training designed to introduce new employee to their job, the people they will be working with and the larger organization” (<a href="http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mentor/mentorh.htm">Klein &amp; Weaver, 2000, p. 48</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For the purpose of this study, New Employee and New Hire will be used interchangeably.</td>
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| **Organizational Socialization** | “The process by which employees learn about and adapt to new jobs, roles, and the culture of the workplace (Ballard & Blessings, 2006, p. 240).

“The process of adjusting to a new organization. It is a learning process, whereby newcomers must learn a wide variety of information and behaviors to be accepted as an organizational insider” (Werner, 2004). |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Social Learning Theory (Later changed to Social Cognitive Theory)** | A theory posits by Albert Bandura that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977).

For the purpose of this study, Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory will be used interchangeably. |
| **Training** | “A training program is most successful when the right participants (selection) receive the right knowledge, attitudes, and skills (KAS, or content) taught by means of the right methods, media, and instructor (process) at the right time (need to know) and place (location) so as to meet or exceed the organization’s expectations (learning objectives and performance outcomes)” (Parry, 1997).

Organized activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient’s performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.  
(http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/training.html) |
Summary

Many organizations do not give enough attention to the needs of their new employees. As a result, new employees experience frustration and lack the guidance needed to effectively perform their jobs and assimilate into the organization. An orientation process communicates key information about the organization and the employee’s role in it. A properly implemented NEO creates an organization in which employees are more productive and feel more connected.

This study will address the components of a NEO in further detail. It will also address gaps in the existing UHC new employee orientation and provide the framework for a comprehensive NEO within the UHC.

The next chapter will explore the research literature on NEO programs. By researching the components of NEO programs, the categories that make up an effective and efficient NEO are proposed, a conceptual framework is designed, and a learning theory framework is created.
II. Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines literature on NEO and its components. A review of literature was conducted on existing NEO programs in university health centers to identify a model that would comprehensively cover all the things a new employee needs to know in order to do his or her job effectively. University departmental NEO’s were also explored.

Gaps in the Literature

A search of the literature on NEO models within university health centers failed to produce an adequate literature base. As a result NEO programs outside of university health centers were explored. While there is literature on various individual components of a NEO, the researcher was unable to locate an existing model or conceptual framework for a comprehensive NEO model. Literature could not be located that specifies orientation design; however, a study (Dean et al., 2011) conducted for new student affairs professionals recommends the following items be included in the NEO:

- Introducing new employees to the organizations culture and acquainting them with specifics about job performance expectations.
- Individual time spent with their direct supervisor.
- An orientation schedule so new employees can anticipate when and how specific information will be presented and when they might get their questions answered.
- A varied instructional approach and various session times. In addition, it should be both formal and informal to ensure all information is presented and that the new employees have opportunities to form relationships with fellow employees.
• Information on the overall organization, which extends beyond the department or division.

Similarly, a study conducted at the University of Minnesota’s Facilities Management Department (Starcke, 1996) examined the “wants” of new employees. As part of the study, focus groups were formed to discuss what new employees most wanted to know. In the study, 29 employees were randomly selected from various job categories. Below is a list of items submitted from those focus groups on the top things new employees most wanted to know:

1. What is really expected of me?
2. How do I gain acceptance around here?
3. How do I get rewarded for a good job?
4. What is the boss really like?
5. I know the policies and procedures, but what are the real rules of the game?
6. How do I fit into the total picture here?
7. Just how much security do I have?
8. What in the devil does this company really do?

Using the employee “wants” as a guide, the researcher examined the various new employee components of an orientation program. What the researcher discovered was a preponderance of literature supporting the importance of having an organized, intentional orientation program (Ashcraft, 2004; Ballard & Blessing, 2006; Connelly, 2005; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Gioia, 1999; Hand, 2008; Holton, 1996; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Ragsdale & Mueller, 2005; Randolph & Brian, 2003; Rocchetti, 2006; Schlabig, 2010; Whipple, 2010). While authors and researchers have different opinions on what makes a successful
NEO program, they do agree that new employees need to feel welcomed, they need to acquire information about the organization, and they need to be trained in an organized and intentional way (Connelly, 2005; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Holton, 1996; McLaren, Adams & Vocino, 2010; Rollag et al., 2005). However, it was also found there are different assumptions, beliefs, perceptions and viewpoints on what an organized and intentional NEO program is; much less what components it should contain. Since there were no existing models, various articles and studies were researched in order to ascertain the most oft cited individual components of NEO programs. These are included in Table 2.
### Table 2.

*A Comparative Analysis of the Literature on Critical Components of New Employee Orientation Programs (as adapted by D. Smith, 2012)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Research Study’s Variables</th>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tr>
<td>An employees first impression and making new employee feel welcome</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Connelly, 2005; Hacker, 2004; Martinez, 1992; Parry, 2005; Wallace, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying a foundation with training, goals and role clarity</td>
<td>Job Standards</td>
<td>Acevedo &amp; Yancy, 2011; Celia &amp; Gordon, 2001; DeKastele, 2010; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; Hand, 2008; Jacoby, 2006; Kim, 2007; Klein, Fan &amp; Preacher, 2006; Wallace, 2009; Wescott, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee retention, satisfaction and commitment</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Ashforth &amp; Saks, 1996; D’Aurizio, 2008; De Vos, 2005; Dunn &amp; Jasinski, 2009; Egan &amp; Song, 2008; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; Klein et al., 2006; Miller, 2006; Myers &amp; Oetzel, 2003; Rochetti, 2006; Rehman, &amp; Waheed, 2011; Schlabig, 2010; Wallace, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee safety</td>
<td>Job Standards</td>
<td>Burt, Sepie, &amp; McFadden, 2008; Jacoby, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building collaboration and employee performance</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Adler et al., 2011; Cooper-Thomas &amp; Anderson, 2002; Dunn &amp; Jasinski, 2009; Egan &amp; Song, 2008; Gibb, 1994; Hacker, 2004; Markos &amp; Sridevi, 2010; Muldrow et al., 2002; Pulich &amp; Tourigny, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee attitudes and perceptions</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Cooper-Thomas &amp; Anderson, 2002; Egan &amp; Song, 2008; Rubel &amp; Davis, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting the new employee in becoming successful, engaged within the organization, as well as getting acquainted with new colleagues</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Altman, 2005; Ballard &amp; Blessing, 2006; Dunn &amp; Jasinski, 2009; Funderburk, 2008; Gioia, 1999; Hacker, 2004; Miller, 2006; Lavigna, 2008; Markos &amp; Sridevi, 2010; Russo &amp; Russo, 2010; Saks &amp; Gruman, 2011; Wallace, 2009; Wing, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding an organization’s mission, vision and values</td>
<td>Structural Framework</td>
<td>Ballard &amp; Blessing, 2006; Bart, 1996; Dean et al., 2011; Dunn &amp; Jasinski, 2009; Gazza, 2008; Hand, 2008; Russo &amp; Russo, 2010; Verma, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship, coaching and/or role models</td>
<td>Socialization/Job Standards</td>
<td>Altman, 2005; Egan &amp; Song, 2008; Filstad, 2004; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; Gibb, 1994; Kim, 2007; McLaughlin, 2010; Wallace, 2009; Miller, 2006; Wing, 2009</td>
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</table>
While the individual components of a NEO are important, it is the intent of this research to focus on the importance of creating a framework and combining the individual components of a NEO into a comprehensive NEO model. Rather than look specifically at each of the individual components, which various researchers have studied in many different ways, the researcher will examine the way each component is linked to a comprehensive NEO and how being a part of the comprehensive framework benefits both the employee and the organization.

**Conceptual Framework**

It is proposed that the previous components mentioned be placed within a comprehensive taxonomy including: employee socialization, an organization’s structural framework and employee job standards. This taxonomy is illustrated in Figure 1 on page 20. The conceptual framework (see Figure 1 on page 20) for this research focuses on the application of this taxonomy to a new comprehensive new employee orientation program. The researcher hypothesizes that when a NEO consists of these characteristics: employee socialization, employee knowledge of the organization’s structural framework, and employees understanding of job standards, that the employee will be more satisfied and perform at a higher level. Some of the components such as mentorship and mission, vision and values are part of more than one category.
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of a Comprehensive NEO Program
Mentorship

While mentorship programs are often implemented to socialize a new employee, mentorship is also used in job skills training. One of the values of mentorship is assisting the new employee in being successful and learning how to function in a new environment (Altman, 2005). Altman (2005) has seen the benefit of mentorship with new pharmacists entering the work force.

Every new practitioner can benefit from mentorship. Whether you need specific advice on how to best perform job duties or balance your personal and professional lives or just need someone with more experience to place perspective on your successes and failures, mentors can provide the insight you need to establish a successful and rewarding career (Altman, 2005, p. 2477).

Mentorship can also provide an opportunity for employees to form important relationships with fellow employees. Mentors can be a resource to new employees concerning job expectations, work routines and standards, and can also assist in integrating a new employee into the organization’s culture (Altman, 2005; Egan & Song, 2008; Farmer, Stockham & Trussell, 2009; Gazza, 2008; Gibb, 1994; Harden, Clark, Johnson & Larson 2009; Miller, 2006). Whether through job skills training or socialization, mentorship connects employees, and interpersonal relationships are a major reason people stay with organizations. Research has shown that newcomers in supportive mentor relationships are more satisfied and committed to their organizations (Rollag et al., 2005).
Gibb (1994), in attempting to create a conceptual framework of mentorship, believes mentoring fits well with Human Resource Development (HRD), since HRD is about developing employees within an organization. Kim (2007) also suggests a conceptual model for formal mentoring in leadership development. Included in this model are 3 key constructs: learning goal orientation, mentoring functions, and leadership competencies. Both Gibb (1994) and Kim (2007) focus on the benefits of developing the employee, imparting information and knowledge, and helping to improve employee performance. Kim (2007) proposes Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory as an application of providing the opportunity to gain mastery experience, experience by observing others, and to receive feedback and encouragement from the mentor. Gibb (1994) looked more at the overall phenomenon of mentoring. However, they both agree that the implications of formal mentorship on HRD and organizational life are worth further investigation.

The Role of Socialization in New Employee Orientation

Holton (1996) defines NEO as “all development used to advance new employees to desired levels of performance” (p. 233). Holton (1996) proposes a conceptual framework comprised of 4 domains: individual, people, work task, and organization. Two of the dimensions that are mentioned in the researcher’s Conceptual Framework, socialization and task-related training are included, but Holton’s model does not include knowledge of the organizational structure. In fact, Holton (1996) primarily focuses on socialization learning and its importance rather than defining the role of socialization in a NEO. Figure 2 shows Holton’s three different learning interventions (orientation programs, job-training programs, and learning in the workplace).
Figure 2. New Employee Development Integrated System (Holton, 1996, p. 246)

While there is an organizational attribute in this framework (Holton, 1996), the three domains of the framework focus on the organization’s culture, its success factors, and the role of the new employee. It does not include any aspect of presenting the organization’s mission, vision or values (Verma, 2009).

Organization Vision and Leadership

Schmidt and Akdere (2007) conducted an empirical study to “investigate the effectiveness of NEO training to help employees understand and adopt existing organizational vision and learn about the leadership approach the organization fostered” (p. 3). This study examined new employee perceptions of the organization’s vision and leadership at three different times. The first time period was before the employee attended a NEO training, the second time was immediately after attending a NEO training and the final period was a month after the NEO training. The results of the study indicate
that the training program was effective and yielded significant results, especially after the new employee attended the first orientation training. This study also found that while the NEO training was successful in helping employees learn and become aware of the organizations vision and leadership approach, the training program itself was not successful in getting employees to integrate what they learned into their daily tasks. Therefore, it was suggested that ongoing training and exposure to organizational information be conducted to reinforce the initial learning (Schmidt & Akdere, 2007).

**Conflict in Transferring Organizational Goals and Values**

As in Schmidt and Akdere’s (2007) study, Klein and Weaver (2000) also point out that presenting organizational goals and values once does not necessarily ensure the new employee will accept them; however both Schmidt and Akdere (2007) and Klein and Weaver (2000) agree presenting and explaining the organizational framework in a systematic and intentional way will ensure employee acceptance (Ragsdale & Mueller, 2005; Wallace, 2009).

**The Need for an Organizational Structural Framework**

One reason a more comprehensive orientation program is necessary is because having a NEO ensures a structure is in place that would emphasize important information in various ways and at various times and assist in the success of the new employee (Ragsdale & Mueller, 2005; Wallace, 2009). While knowledge transfer is beyond the scope of this research paper, it is important to note that different internal and external conditions are necessary for not only learning but in the transfer of knowledge. For cognitive strategies to be learned, there must be a chance to practice and develop solutions. To learn attitudes, the learner must be exposed to a credible role model or
persuasive arguments (Gagne, 1985). The researcher proposes that this exposure can be built into a comprehensive NEO model.

Socialization

Previous research shows that the component of socialization in a NEO needs to be very intentional. Previous research also shows that socialization has an impact on employee commitment, general satisfaction, adjustment, ability to cope, job tenure, and job performance (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Celia & Gordon, 2001; D’Aurizio, 2008; De Vos, 2005; DeKastle, 2010; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Egan & Song, 2008; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; Hand, 2008; Kim, 2007; Klein et al., 2006; Miller, 2006; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Rehman, & Waheed, 2011; Rochetti, 2006; Schlabig, 2010; Wallace, 2009; Wescott, 2011).

Employee commitment. An aspect of employee commitment is cultivating truly engaged employees. An organization needs to create “linking opportunities” (Russo & Russo, 2010). Strategically planned new employee orientations can meet the needs of both the organization and the needs of the employee (Rocchetti, 2006; Wallace, 2009). New employee orientations also create “linking opportunities” by strategically answering important questions a new employee needs answered. Some of those needs (Rocchetti, 2006) include:

- Knowing and understanding why you are there. That is, the purpose of the organization.
- Having a sense of group identity/belonging.
- Having trust in your own competence and the competence of group members.
- Feeling safe enough to make a contribution.
• Having a clear sense of the mission, goals, objectives, and expectations.
• Understanding the community’s culture and its way of being in the world (i.e. how to make a contribution).
• Understanding your role and the way you contribute.
• Having some clarity about the vision that the unit is pursuing and its priorities.

When these questions are answered, the new hire has a better opportunity to become a productive member of the organization. “The orientation process is about setting the proper infrastructure so that the long-term issues of survivability and sustainability are better enabled at the individual, group, and organizational levels” (Rocchetti, 2006, p. 42).

The debate over socialization and orientation. Much research has been conducted on employee socialization and the positive impact culture can have on an organization (Adler et al., 2011; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Van Maanen, 1978; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Organizational socialization is considered to be a process by which an employee comes to an awareness of and an appreciation for the organization’s culture, its expected behaviors, and a basic understanding of how and why things are done in the organization (Klein & Weaver, 2000; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Klein and Weaver (2000) and Wanous and Reichers (2000) both view employee socialization and orientation as being separate entities. They view socialization as a process and orientation as a more focused topic. This separation is questionable because human resource development examines the new employee’s overall development, and socialization is an important component of a new employees overall development. By separating the two, the value of a NEO is reduced.
Schein’s organizational culture. Schein (1988) examined the process new employees experience as they adjust to an organization’s culture. Schein (1988) refers to this as “organizational socialization.” He identifies the process of “learning the ropes” as “the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organization or some subunit thereof” (p. 54). Organizational culture, job training, and important organizational information (e.g. mission, vision and values) are seen as being an integral part of the NEO. Wallace (2009) concluded, that providing a comprehensive orientation program also protects investments incurred in the hiring process. It reduces new employees’ anxieties as well as improves their work. She believes a NEO should be a process not just an event.

According to a study by Mellon Financial Corp., the time for a new employee to perform at full productivity, on average, extends from eight weeks for clerical jobs to 20 weeks for professionals, to approximately 26 weeks for executives (Williams, 2003). Orientation is not just about setting the stage (Whipple, 2010) or welcoming new employees (Connelly, 2005). While these are important components, orientation must also be about laying a foundation (DeKastle, 2010) and creating employee commitment (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Celia & Gordon, 2001; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Egan & Song, 2008; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; Hand, 2008; Kim, 2007; Klein et al., 2006; Miller, 2006; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Rehman, & Waheed, 2011; Rochetti, 2006; Schlabig, 2010; Wallace, 2009; Wescott, 2011). According to Society of Human Resource Management Research Quarterly (Lockwood, 2007), “Employees with the highest levels of commitment perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave the
organization, which indicates that engagement is linked to organizational performance” (p. 2).

**Psychological contracts and employee commitment.** Research has linked psychological contracts with employee commitment finding that an individual’s perception of how and if they contribute to the overall organization are good predictors of both affective and normative commitment (McInnis, Meyer & Feldman, 2009). Psychological contracts are developed during the socialization process of being a new hire in the organization. In a longitudinal study (De Vos, 2005) conducted on new employee psychological contracts. Results showed: “the personal characteristics and experiences individuals bring to their new organization and the experiences they encounter during the initial stages of the employment relationship shape their subsequent perceptions and evaluations of their employment relationship, and that this, in turn, effects their adjustment to the organization” (p. 386).

A psychological contract, for employees, is the perception of a shared agreement with their organization. It has been found to lower anxiety associated with uncertainties in a new employee, and to increase employee contentment (De Vos, 2005). Some experts also suggest that an intentional and comprehensive NEO sets the tone for employee commitment to the organization (Dellasega et al., 2009; Holton, 1996; Randolph & Brain, 2003).

**Socialization and employee’s first day.** While NEO should also be considered a process, the organization should not overlook the importance of an employee’s first day. Literature supports making a new employee’s first day the launch of an orchestrated, ongoing process, supporting him or her in developing strong relationships, personally
connecting them with the organizations culture and assisting them in fully understanding how his or her job contributes to the organization’s mission (Chase, 1999; Lowe, 2006; Randolph & Brian, 2003; Robbins, 2002; Rollag et al., 2005; Wallace, 2009).

Sherri Merbach, Disney’s Business Facilitator of Seminar Productions, was interviewed by Michelle Neely (1992), Senior Editor for HR Magazine. According to Merbach (1992), “Disney manages 33,000 employees and makes it look easy, 28,000 professionals participated in Walt Disney Productions’ management seminar in 1992” (Martinez, 1992, p. 53). According to Merbach (1992), day one is the most important day of training; this is where pride in the company begins. Thus the first day only begins the process of orientation.

**Job Standards**

While literature supports mentorship in assisting with socialization and educating an employee about the organization’s structure (Gassa, 2008; Miller, 2006), mentorship is also important and beneficial in an employee having the proper job skills training to perform their new job. Wanous and Reichers (2000) recommend a behavior-modeling approach to job skills training. They see skill training, during the NEO, as being a more focused area than generalized socialization of the new employee.
Mentorship as means to impart job standards. From reading the literature, mentorship has different meanings to different people and is used in multiple situations to attain different outcomes. However, in the behavior-modeling approach to skills training, “mentorship” or “preceptorship” are used most often. Job training is an important component of the NEO. While the job skills training of an orientation program can differ from one employee to another, the overall NEO structure can remain intact. To the extent possible, orientation should be customized to an individual employee’s experience as well as their particular needs.

In an exploratory study (Dellasega et al., 2009), conducted on the orientation needs of experienced nurses in comparison with novice nurses, important differences appeared in the orientation needs of experienced nurses. The experienced nurses exhibited little anxiety about their ability to perform the new job and they obtained their confidence from past successes. It was also noted the experienced nurses tended to use fellow employees/their peers more as a support system to become integrated into the organization. The field of nursing often uses preceptorship, which is a form of mentorship, in the training of new nurses (Altman, 2005; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008; McLaughlin, 2010). While job skill training is important, it is only one of the components in a comprehensive NEO program.

Organizational Structural Framework

Another important component of a comprehensive NEO is informing the new employee about the organization’s structural framework. Ingersoll, Witzel and Smith (2005) state, “An organization’s mission, vision, and values statements are the guiding forces behind the institution’s administrative strategic planning and performance
assessment activities” (p. 86). According to management literature when organizational values are not shared with the new employee within the first few weeks, the new employee will educate themselves through informal means (Ballard & Blassing, 2006). While organizational history, goals and values are unique to an organization, the observed impact of sharing this information with new employees can be highly generalized (Klein & Weaver, 2000). Organizational values support an organization’s internal belief system and have an impact on many, if not all aspects of a NEO. “Value statements define the organization’s basic philosophy, principles, and ideals” (Ingersol, Witzel & Smith, 2005, p. 87). In a quasi-experimental field study done by Klein and Weaver (2000) to evaluate the impact of a formal organization-level training, results indicate new employees who attended the orientation program were more committed to their organization than those who did not attend the orientation program. While this study acknowledges that there are numerous other factors that impact employee commitment, it suggested that even a brief exposure to the goals and values of an organization are effective and valuable to an employee.

In presenting and clearly defining the organizational framework (which consists of an organization’s mission, vision, and values; organizational policy and procedures; and organizational expectations) a new employee receives answers to some very basic questions such as what is our purpose and what are here to do (Bart, 1996)? By communicating the mission, vision, and values statements of an organization, it creates a culture that motivates employees to grow personally as well as professionally (Ingersoll et al., 2005).
An additional benefit of sharing this information is, that organizations often design their performance assessments using the organizations mission, vision and values. An organization’s structural framework components are often used as a way to engage new employees (Markos & Sridevi, 2010) and used to drive and reward employee performance (Ingersoll et al., 2005).

Likewise, in a study conducted by Bart (1996), it was shown that mission statements are often a powerful tool used in setting the tone and direction for specific types of employee behaviors such as flexibility, creativity and quick decision-making. The above study also provided insight to managers on the effectiveness of using the mission statement to encourage employee innovation, in addition to how the mission statement links employee behavior and performance to the organization’s expectations. While organizational innovativeness is beyond the scope of this research, it must be noted that an organization’s mission appears to be a strong influence on its ability to be innovative (Bart, 1991).

**Communicating organization’s mission statement.** While mission statements can be a powerful management and organizational leadership tool, it is equally important for employers to understand how the new employee perceives the organization’s structure base. Do employees feel good and are they enthusiastic about the organizational mission (Verma, 2009)? In a study, Markos and Sridevi (2010) discuss employee engagement and improving employee performance. When employees are engaged and are emotionally attached to their organization, they exhibit enthusiasm for their job and work towards the success of the organization, even if it means going beyond what they were hired to do. Organizations where employees are highly engaged were found to have
almost 10 times as many committed, high-effort workers than those employees who were low-engaged (Lockwood, 2007).

**New employee orientation information approach.** Various components of a NEO were examined. Most organizations use an informational approach to orienting new employees. In an informational approach new employees are provided with information in various formats such as a handbook or handouts. These handouts include information about the employer’s routines and technologies. By providing a large volume of information, some employers expect new employees to have the background, skills, and cognitive ability to process, filter, comprehend and apply the information when needed to complete foundational jobs (Rollag et al., 2005). In research conducted (Rollag et al., 2005) over several years, 65 newcomers in 57 entrepreneurial high-tech organizations kept written diaries of their new employee experiences. 2,500 pages of data were analyzed to identify activities and experiences that new employees said were important and meaningful. This research showed that new employees are generally more concerned about deciphering organizational norms and routines than they are with career development. This study indicates that a more relational orientation may better meet the new employee needs than a strictly informational one. Rollag, Parise and Cross (2005) note that changing from an informational approach to a relational one is hardly a simple matter. To do so, managers need to adopt a whole new mind-set. Instead of asking “What does my new hire need to know?” they have to ask, “Who does my newcomer need to know?” (p. 41).
New Employee Program Assessment

One of the first steps in making the change from an informational approach to a relational one is assessing the current NEO program. “[A]…an essential first step in building or revamping employee orientation is to evaluate carefully what the company already does to make sure new hires get off to a good start” (Starcke, 1996, p. 107). Data from health center employees was collected to begin this assessment process for the University Health Center’s New Employee Orientation program.

New Employee Orientation Component Summary

Literature was examined on NEO components that make up a comprehensive NEO program. Literature on how adults learn and the learning theories used in adult learning were also examined. Knowles’ Andragogy Model of Learning (1970, 1984), Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), and e-Learning were also researched as they are applicable to a NEO design. How the orientation information is presented, whether formally or informally, can be a powerfully strategic tool when efficiently implemented within the framework of a NEO design based on cognitive theory of how people learn and scientifically proven research studies.
Andragogy

Up to this point this research has been focused on researching the components of a NEO. It is now important to investigate the “how” new employee information is effectively and efficiently conveyed to new employees during an orientation program. Knowles’ Adult Learning Theory (known as Andragogy) is both a system of alternative sets of assumptions and a transactional model that speaks to those characteristics of a specific learning situation (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2011). Knowles (1984) originally made four assumptions about adult learners:

1. Adults tend to be more self-directed because of their maturity.
2. Adults have prior knowledge and information that define who they are and serves as a resource of experiential learning that can be applied in a new learning environment.
3. Adults are motivated towards more socially relevant learning.
4. Adult learners are interested in immediate application of new knowledge towards problem solving.

In later years a fifth assumption was added.

5. Learners need to have a climate, which provides a safe environment (McGrath, 2009).

In andragogy, great emphasis is placed on the involvement of the learner self-diagnosing his or her need for learning. Learner’s diagnosing their own need is in direct conflict with traditional practices that include the teacher telling students what they need to learn. When instructors or teachers begin taking the stance and start “teaching” adult learners, the adult learner experiences inner conflict due to their deep psychological need to be self-directing (Knowles, 1984). This psychological need can have implications on how adults acquire information. Some of these implications include:

- The learning climate – the physical environment should be one where adults feel at ease.
- Diagnosis of needs – adults are more deeply motivated to learn that which they see the need to learn.
- The learning process – adults perform better if the learning process is a mutual one between the learners and the teacher.
- Conducting learning experience – learning situations where shared responsibility for helping one another learn is adopted.
- Evaluation of learning – andragogical theory is a process where adults perform self-evaluation. Evaluation is a mutual undertaking between the teacher and adult-learner.
For corporate learners, who are primarily adults, the instructional premise around which training programs are designed should be andragogy (teaching to adults), not pedagogy (teaching to children). For new employee orientation training, Knowles’ theory is used, which has four key postulates:

- **Self-concept and Motivation to learn**—Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. This includes pre-assessments and custom learning paths for different knowledge prerequisites.
- **Experience**—Experience (including mistakes) provide the basis for learning activities. This includes practice activities with feedback and remedial reviews.
- **Readiness to learn**—Adults are most interested in learning those subjects that can immediately be applied to their job or personal life. Job-specific content and job-aids are provided for this reason.
- **Orientation to learning**—Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. For this, scenarios and simulations are provided for real-life problem-solving experience.
Figure 4. Visual Representation of Knowles’ Andragogy Showing the Four Postulates of Adult Learning. (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Knowles has had considerable influence on adult learning. In a critique on Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy Hartee (1984) challenges the distinction between whether andragogy is a theory of learning or assumptions about learners. Whether a theory of learning or assumptions of learning, andragogy has proven to be an effective way of assisting adults in learning.

The andragogy model moves away from lecture, assigned readings, and canned audiovisual presentations and moves towards more participatory experiential techniques (Knowles, 1970). In the context of a NEO, the orientation would not start with the history and philosophy of the organization. According to Knowles (1970), concerns such
as “Where will I work? With whom will I be working? What will be expected of me? How do people dress in this company? What is the time schedule? To whom can I go for help?” (p. 53) would be more relevant information an employee might want to know. When new information is being designing for new employees, it is appropriate to begin with concerns the new employees might have on his or her minds as they enter an organization. Employee motivation is beyond the scope of this research paper; however, it is noted that research into adult learners indicates that adult learners respond less to external rewards than to their own internal motivation (McGrath, 2009). While internal motivation to engage in learning is associated with adult learners (Knowles, 1970), self-direction is seen as more of a situational attribute of the learner in general, not necessarily an adult learner trait (Pratt, 1988).

Adult learners desire to learn what it takes to make themselves good employees within the new organization. “The quality and amount of learning is therefore clearly influenced by the quality and amount of interaction between the learners and their environment and by the educative potency of the environment” (Knowles, 1970, p. 56). It is up to the organization to create an environment where the new employee is introduced to his or her job, the department’s culture, its value and behaviors; all while demonstrating to the new employee a commitment to help the new employee become successful.

Andragogy is a model “originally defined as the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1970, p. 43). In Knowles’ (1974) andragogical model, “Climate setting is probably the most crucial element in the whole process of HRD. If the climate is not really conducive to learning, if it doesn’t convey that an organization
values human beings as its most valuable asset and their development its most productive investment, than all the other elements in the process are jeopardized” (Knowles, 1974, p. 119).

Andragogy is just one of the critical theories upon which NEO structure must be based. A properly designed comprehensive NEO posits this type of multifaceted learning structure. This complex structure is a set of processes that interacts with cognitive, environmental, and behavior influences (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Wingreen & Blanton, 2007).

**Social Learning (Cognitive) Theory**

Albert Bandura (2001), a professor in the department of Psychology at Stanford University developed a learning cognitive theory, later named Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) that explained this complex structure. “Social cognitive theory provides explicit guidelines about how to equip people with the competencies, the self-regulatory capabilities, and the resilient sense of efficacy that will enable them to enhance both their own well-being and their accomplishments” (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 380). SCT was first known as social learning theory because it was based on the established principles of learning. It was later changed to SCT to incorporate the concepts from cognitive psychology that integrated the growing understanding of how human information processing capabilities and biases influence learning from experience, observation and symbolic communication (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). SCT claims that behavior, cognitive and other personal factors and environmental events operate as interacting determinants that influence each other. An example is Bandura’s triadic reciprocal causation structure, which includes behavior, cognitive and other personal factors along
with environmental events that are interacting determinants of each other bi-directionally (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Schematization of the Relations among behavior (B), cognitive and other personal factors (P), and the external environment (E) (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 362)

In this triadic reciprocal causation, employee’s performance is the product of the three-way, interaction of the collective organization (Bandura, 2001). Reciprocity does not mean that the different sources of influences occur simultaneously. It takes time for a causal factor to exert its influence and to activate reciprocal influences. Because of the bidirectionally of influence, people are both products and producers of their environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 362).

Bandura (2009) in his SCT states, “as people develop competencies that improve their lives, they serve as models, inspirations and even tutors for others” (p. 505). An
example of this is the process that takes place, over time, in the socialization of new employees. SCT is most known for the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief an individual has that they can do a job. For instance, when an individual or mentee observes another (mentor) accomplishing a task, the observer or mentee is more likely to believe they can successfully complete the task (Bandura, Davidson & Davidson, 2003). In addition, modeling also conveys the necessary skills and knowledge a new employee needs to know to be successful in his or her job. Modeling/mentoring is also a type of cheerleading where the mentor, through social persuasion creates an environment that places the new employees in situations where they can succeed. Thus improving the employee’s performance (Bandura et al, 2003).

**Social cognitive theory and person-organization fit.** Wingreen and Blanton (2007) researched SCT with respect to person-organization (P-O) fitting with an emphasis on maintenance and development of employee’s professional technical competencies. While Wingreen and Blanton’s (2007) focus was on maintaining technical competencies (also known as patterns of competencies), they also noted “pattern of competency is concerned not only with the technical skills themselves, but also with the related cognitive, [non-technical] behavioral, and even situational and environmental factors” (p. 636).

**Literature Review Summary**

Literature was examined on various components of communicating job standards, organizational structure and employee socialization to a new employee. Each component was examined in relationship to creating a more efficient way to integrate a new employee into the organization and the importance in conveying organizational
information to the new employee in a clear and concise manner. There were no empirical studies found explaining the specific components that make up a comprehensive NEO model.
III. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter begins with a summary of the purpose of this study and its research questions and is followed by a description of the research design and variables used. Data collection is also explained in detail. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis methods and limitations of this study.

Research Problem and Purpose Overview

The focus of this study is to conduct research on the essential components of a NEO program to establish a framework for a needs assessment of the current UHC new employee orientation program. This research will identify if gaps exist in the UHC new employee orientation and will evaluate if a more comprehensive NEO would benefit employees of the UHC. A Human Subject Research Protocol Approval request was submitted to the Institutional Research Board (IRB) in November 2011. IRB approval was obtained from the James Madison University Sponsored Programs Administration on November 23, 2011. The research method chosen for this study was a mixed method consisting of a survey and an interview. The survey was sent to 66 employees of a UHC in a medium-sized Mid-Atlantic public university. In addition, an interview was conducted with the Director of the same UHC to assist in the assessment of the current NEO. As a means to evaluate the existing NEO, data was collected on employees’ perceptions and knowledge of their new hire experience at the UHC. Research and empirical studies were used from current literature to establish a framework for components that are needed in a NEO. This framework was then used as a basis to measure gaps within the Health Center’s NEO. This research paper evaluates the existing
Health Center NEO and will determine, based on current NEO literature, if a more comprehensive NEO would benefit new employees in the UHC.

**Description of Research Design**

The researcher used the Qualtrics™ Survey database System to create an on-line survey. UHC employees were notified of the survey via email, and a link to the survey was included in the email. The author developed the web survey for the purpose of this research. The survey consisted of various types of questions as shown in table 3 below:

**Table 3.**

**Summary of the Types of Survey Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Questions of This Type</th>
<th>Type of Question/Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice/general question rating NEO experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice/where does new employee go with questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Open-ended/ recommendation and suggestion for changes and/or improvements to NEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice/demographic questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice, 4-point Likert scale/questions used to assess gaps in NEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice, Yes or No/opinion of NEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Closed-ended, multiple choice, 5-point Likert scale/used to assess gaps in NEO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A complete list of the specific survey items used in this study can be found in Appendix A. Questions were created to assess the UHC new employee orientation with regard to the categories of socialization, job standards and the organizational structural
framework. Table 4 indicates which survey items targets each category (items one and two are demographic questions; item four provided survey instructions).

**Table 4.**

*Target Survey Items using Conceptual Framework*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated with all 3 Categories</th>
<th>Socialization</th>
<th>Job Standards</th>
<th>Organizational Structural Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q3:</strong> As a new UHC employee, please rate your experience in the new employee orientation with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Q5:</strong> I reviewed my work goals with my supervisor within…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q8:</strong> I was assigned a formal mentor within… (could also be included in job standards)</td>
<td><strong>Q6:</strong> I reviewed job performance expectations with my supervisor within…</td>
<td><strong>Q7:</strong> I was informed of the Health Center’s goals and values within…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q12:</strong> Did your new employee orientation meet your needs and expectations as a new employee of the University Health Center?</td>
<td><strong>Q11:</strong> As a new employee in the UHC, when I had an office question, I went to ____ for answers.</td>
<td><strong>Q10:</strong> Did you receive technical training during the first 3-4 weeks of your employment in the University Health Center?</td>
<td><strong>Q9:</strong> As a new employee, I was informed of the location of the University Health Center’s policies &amp; procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q13:</strong> As a new employee in UHC I was familiar with most of the acronyms used by fellow employees (e.g. UHC, SAP, SWO, CSDC, CARE, REACH, UTI, URI). (could also be included in job standards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q15:</strong> What changes/improvements, if any, would you recommend for UHC’s new employee orientation?</td>
<td><strong>Q14:</strong> I believe having a formal mentor, within UHC would have improved by new employee experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

The research study was guided by the following research questions:

**RQ 1:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the socialization (informal rules, mentorship and organizational culture) category as part of its new employee orientation?

**RQ 2:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the job standard (job skills, rules & regulations and goals & performance standards) category as part of its new employee orientation?

**RQ 3:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the structural framework (mission, vision, values; policy & procedures and organizational expectations) category as part of its new employee orientation?

Null Hypotheses

The researcher has the following hypotheses:

**HQ 1:** The University Health Center includes the socialization (informal rules, mentorship and organizational culture) category components as part of its new employee orientation.

**HQ 2:** The University Health Center includes the job standard (job skills, rules & regulations and goals & performance standards) category components as part of its new employee orientation.

**HQ 3:** The University Health Center includes structural framework (mission, vision, values; policy & procedures and organizational expectations) category components as part of its new employee orientation.
Research Subject Selection

The participants selected for this survey represent a convenience sample. This census survey included the entire population of employees (66 individuals) in the UHC. Of the 66 individuals who received the survey link, 52 individuals opened the survey, but only 50 completed it. In other words, 2 individuals abandoned the survey before completion. Thus the sample for this research study consisted of 50 participants (76% of the population).

Survey data was collected from each respondent. Included in this population are administrative and professional faculty/staff, classified employees, wage employees, graduate assistants and student employees. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and anonymous. The participants could choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. The participants could withdraw from the survey anytime they wished prior to submitting the online survey to the Qualtrics database (prior to hitting the submit button). Once the online survey was submitted participants could not be identified to cancel their responses. Figure 18 and 19 on page 70 and 71 show the composition of UHC employee respondents’ tenure and length of employment.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The 16-question survey was administered through an e-mail sent by the Administrative Assistant to the Director of the University Health Center. The intent in sending the survey through the Director’s Administrative Assistant was to increase the participation rate while ensuring anonymity. The participants received an email with a cover letter that included the website link to the Qualtrics™ Survey. They were also asked to read the consent form, which identified the risks and benefits of participating, as
well as the procedures for keeping their participation voluntary and confidential. The researcher was the only one to have access to the responses. Participants were given the contact information for the researcher, research advisor, and the review board official. Those who choose to participate were given three weeks to complete the survey. The survey remained open for this length of time due to the University holiday closure. The data from the completed surveys was collected and stored by James Madison University’s Qualtrics™ Web Survey System.

In an attempt to maximize the overall response rate, an encouraging email was sent to each participant, prior to the survey being sent out, from the UHC Director. It requested participation in the survey process, not only to support the researcher but also to aid in the possible creation of a more comprehensive NEO for the UHC. The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 16 questions directed at obtaining UHC employees’ perceptions of their new hire experience. It included 15 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question for further comments and explanation. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questions were created based on current literature of NEO research. Survey questions were specifically aimed at discovering gaps in socialization, job standards and structural framework categories of the current new employee orientation program. To ensure questions asked on the survey were relevant and understandable the researcher piloted the survey to fellow thesis peers prior to sending it out to UHC employees. Along with the survey an interview was conducted with the Director of the UHC.

Qualitative data collection included a semi-structured interview with the Director of the University Health Center and consisted of 4 questions (see Appendix D).
researcher’s purpose for the interview was to obtain the Director’s perceptions of the department’s current NEO, get her opinions of its effectiveness and to gain insight into the survey responses. The interview was also conducted to understand her vision for a more comprehensive departmental NEO program. A signed consent form was obtained before participation in the interview. The interview took approximately 20 minutes and was tape-recorded and transcribed not only to ensure accuracy but to refer back to while analyzing the survey data (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis Methods

After the survey answers were recorded, the responses were summarized in order to assess the employee’s perception of his or her new hire experience. The raw scores (number of responses) and their percentages were used to analyze the data. Literature (Adler et al., 2011; Bates, 2004; Caruth et al., 2010; Chase, 1999; Connelly, 2005; George & Miller, 1996; Jentz & Murphy, 2005) suggests a timeframe within which a new employee should receive certain information. Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 assess the actual timeframe for which said information was received. A gap is determined to exist if a greater percentage of new employees received the information outside of the suggested timeframe (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Gaps were measured by current literature recommendations and responses were evaluated and presented using histograms for each question. For example, a reported result might be as follows: “For question 5, regarding whether employees reviewed work goals with their supervisor: 22 respondents reported they reviewed work goals with supervisor within the first week of employment, 17 respondents reported they reviewed work goals with their supervisor within 2-weeks of employment, 3 respondents reported they reviewed work goals with their supervisor
within 2 months of employment, 5 respondents reported they reviewed work goals with their supervisor within 6 months of employment and 4 respondents reported they have not reviewed work goals with their supervisor.

Current literature (Lowe, 2006; Messmer, 2000; Robbins, 2002) states supervisor should review work goals within 2 weeks of employment. Gaps were reported based on respondents reviewing work goals within 2 weeks of employment. Responses for questions 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 were measured by total responses and reported using percentages. The percentages of respondents who chose each alternative for each question are reported.

**Study Limitations**

The results of this study should be considered in light of two limitations. The first is that data was self-reported and, as such, are subject to inaccuracies. The second limitation concerns the fact that the participants were not randomly selected and, as such, suggests that the results from this study may not be generalizable to all University Health Centers or University Departments.

**Threat to Internal Validity**

One of the possible threats to internal validity might be the attitude of surveyed subjects. If the participants felt their answers would not remain anonymous, they may have hesitated to answer the questions honestly. An additional threat is the subject’s job satisfaction level; there was no way to know if dissatisfied employees responded honestly. There may also have been a location threat in that the survey of employee perceptions toward their UHC new hire experience may have been taken while at work in the University Health Center.
Methodology Summary

The design, methodology, research subject selection, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis methods, threat to internal validity and the study limitations for this research were discussed. Specifically, the design and execution of the survey instrument was explained in detail. The results from the survey and interview are explained in detail in the next chapter.
IV. Presentation of the Data Analysis, Findings and Interpretations

The previous chapter described the methodology of this research; this chapter presents a brief review of the research design, researcher’s own experience as an employee of the UHC and data analysis of descriptive statistics using percentages to evaluate gaps in UHC’s new employee orientation.

Review of Research Design and Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to conduct a needs assessment based on employee perceptions of the existing NEO at a University Health Center (UHC) in a medium-sized, Mid-Atlantic public university. If the UHC new employee orientation program met the needs of employees (i.e., no gaps) then the observed survey responses would support the literature recommendations and survey answers would have indicated the orientation program had no gaps.

This research was conducted as a needs assessment with the implication of evaluating if gaps existed in the current UHC new employee orientation program. It is noted that the researcher has been employed by the UHC for 7 years. This research is part of the researcher’s thesis as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

A survey of 16 questions was administered to the entire population of UHC employees. The Qualtrics™ Survey System was used to create the survey and collect the responses. All survey responses are maintained within the Qualtrics™ Survey System.

The framework of components that are needed in a NEO was created by the author through a review of current literature on the topic. The conceptual framework was used as a basis for assessing gaps in the UHC new employee orientation. The literature
(Chase, 1999; Hacker, 2004; Homisak, 2007; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Lavigna, 2008; Lowe, 2006; Messmer, 2000; Robbins, 2002; Wallace, 2009) suggests certain components be addressed within a specific timeframe after an employee starts work. Many of the survey questions look for specific components of a comprehensive NEO and the timeframe in which these components were communicated to new employees. The data for such questions was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008; Agresti & Franklin, 2007) by assessing the percentage of responses that indicated the component/need was within the recommended timeframe as opposed to outside the recommended timeframe.

Note: Item 4 on the survey was not scored. This item was used as an instructional explanation leading into question 5 (Please answer the questions below in reference to your new employee experience in the UHC). The analysis below is organized by research question.

**RQ1:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the socialization (informal rules, mentorship and organizational culture) category as part of its new employee orientation? Question 8, 11, 13 and 14 (see Table 4 on page 46) assess possible gaps in this category. While literature does not identify exactly where employees should go to get office questions answered, responses indicate fellow employees appear to be the likely resource. Question 11 indicated the importance of employees obtaining the needed information through a NEO rather other resources.

**Question 8 survey results.**

**Q8 -** I was assigned a formal mentor within:

- one week of starting my job
• two weeks of starting my job
• two months of starting my job
• six months of starting my job
• haven’t been assigned a formal mentor in the University Health Center

Based on the literature, having a mentor assigned within 2 weeks of an employee starting work is an important part of helping the employee be assimilated into the organization (Altman, 2005; Funderburk, 2008; Gazza, 2008). The expected answer to question 8 is that UHC did assign a mentor to each new employee within 2 weeks of starting work. Figure 6 gives the results of this survey question. 24% responded that they received a formal mentor within 2 weeks or less of starting work, while 76% were not given a formal mentor within 2 weeks of starting work. The much greater percentage of those that did not receive a formal mentor within 2 weeks indicated there is likely a gap in this area.

Figure 6. New Employee Assigned a Formal Mentor
**Question 11 survey results.**

**Q11** - As a new employee in the University Health Center, when I had an office question, I went to _____ for answers.

- my supervisor
- a fellow employee
- the department employee handbook
- other

Figure 7 gives the responses to this question. 52% of the respondents went to a fellow employee for the answer to an office question. The remaining 48% of the respondents went to their supervisor for the answers to an office question.

Note: No employee answered that they used the departmental employee handbook to get answers to office questions.

*Figure 7. Office Questions*
Question 13 survey results.

Q13 - As a new employee in the Health Center, I was familiar with most of the acronyms used by fellow employees (examples: UHC, SAP, SWO, CSDC, CARE, REACH, UTI, URI, etc.).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Literature (Van Maanen, 1978) indicates that a new employee should be informed of acronyms used by fellow employees. Question 13 is part of the Socialization category but could also be included in the Job Standard category. The expected answer to question 13 is that an employee is familiar with acronyms used by fellow employees. Figure 8 gives the results to this question. 54% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed they were familiar with most of the acronyms used by fellow employees. The remaining 46% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed they were familiar with most of the acronyms used by fellow employees. The greater percentage of those that were familiar with acronyms used by fellow employees indicates there is likely not a gap in this area.
Question 14 survey results.

Q14 – I believe having a formal mentor, within the University Health Center, would have improved my new employee experience.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Figure 9 provides the results to this question. 86% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that having a formal mentor, within UHC, would have improved their new employee experience. The remaining 14% of the respondents disagreed that having a formal mentor, within UHC, would have improved their new employee experience. The much greater percentage of those that believe having a mentor
would have improved their new employee experience indicated a desire for a formal mentorship program within UHC.

![Bar Chart](image.png)

*Figure 9.* Formal Mentor Would Have Improved New Employee Experience

**RQ2:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the job standard (job skills, rules & regulations and goals & performance standards) category as part of its new employee orientation? Questions 5, 6, and 10 (as previously seen in Table 4, p. 46) assess gaps in this category. Question 13 is included in socialization but could also be included in the job standard category. Literature indicates that job standards should be communicated within 2 weeks of the employees starting work (Chase, 1999; Hacker, 2004; Homisak, 2007; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Lavigna, 2008; Lowe, 2006; Messmer, 2000; Robbins, 2002; Wallace, 2009).

**Question 5 survey results.**

**Q5** - I reviewed my work goals with my supervisor within:

- one week of starting my job
two weeks of starting my job
• two months of starting my job
• six months of starting my job
• haven’t reviewed my work goals with my supervisor

The expected answer to question 5 is that the employee received their work goals within 2 weeks of starting work. Figure 10 gives the results of this survey question. 78% stated they had receive their work goals within 2 weeks or less of starting work, while 24% had not received their work goals within 2 weeks of starting work. The much greater percentage of those that did receive their work goals within 2 weeks indicated there is likely no gap in this area.

![Work Goals Communicated](image)

*Figure 10.* Reviewed Work Goals with Supervisor

**Question 6 survey results.**

Q6 - I reviewed job performance expectations with my supervisor within:

• one week of starting my job
• two weeks of starting my job
• two months of starting my job
• six months of starting my job
• haven’t reviewed job performance expectations with my supervisor

The expected answer to question 6 is that the employee’s supervisor did review job performance expectations within 2 weeks of starting work. Figure 11 gives the results of this survey question. 68% responded that they reviewed job performance expectations with their supervisor within 2 or less weeks of starting work, 32% did not review their job performance expectations within 2 weeks of starting work. The much greater percentage of those that did review job performance expectations within 2 weeks indicated there is likely no gap in this area.

![Job Performance Expectations](image)

**Figure 11.** Reviewed Job Performance Expectations
**Question 10 survey results.** Literature indicates that new employees should receive technical training during the first 3–4 weeks of their employment (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; Burt et al., 2008; Gazza, 2008; Jacoby, 2006).

Q10 - Did you receive technical training during the first 3-4 weeks of your employment in the University Health Center?

Yes

No

The expected answer to question 10 is that UHC new employees received technical training during the first 3-4 weeks of employment. Figure 12 gives the responses to this question. 54% of the respondents did receive technical training during the first 3–4 weeks of employment. The remaining 46% of the respondents did not receive technical training during the first 3–4 weeks of employment. The greater percentage of those that did receive technical training during first 3-4 weeks indicates there is likely not a gap in this area.
**RQ3:** Does the University Health Center include all components of the organizational structural framework (mission, vision, values; policy & procedures and organizational expectations) category as part of its new employee orientation? Questions 7 and 9 (as previously seen in Table 4, p. 46) assessed gaps in this category. Literature indicates that goals and values of an organization should be communicated within 2 weeks of the employee starting work (Chase, 1999; Hacker, 2004; Homisak, 2007; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Lavigna, 2008; Lowe, 2006; Messmer, 2000; Robbins, 2002; Wallace, 2009).

**Question 7 survey results.**

Q7 - I was informed of the Health Center’s goals and values within:

- one week of starting my job
- two weeks of starting my job
- two months of starting my job
- six months of starting my job
• haven’t been informed of Health Center goals and values

The expected answer to question 7 is that the UHC goals and values were communicated within 2 weeks of starting work. Figure 13 gives the results of this survey question. 68% responded that they were informed of UHC goals and values within 2 weeks of starting work, 32% were not informed of UHC goals and values within 2 weeks of starting work. The much greater percentage of those that were informed of UHC goals and values within 2 weeks indicates there is likely no gap in this area.

![Figure 13. Informed of UHC Goals and Values](image)

**Question 9 survey results.** Literature indicates a new employee should be presented the organization’s policy and procedures in their NEO program (Ballard & Blessings, 2006; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Gazza, 2008). At a minimum, new employees should be informed of the location of policies and procedures.
Q9 - As a new employee, I was informed of the location of the University Health Center policies and procedures.

Yes

No

The expected answer to question 9 is that UHC employees were informed of the location of the organization’s policy and procedures. Figure 14 gives the results of this survey question. 62% responded that they were informed of the location of UHC policies and procedures, 38% were not informed of the location of UHC’s policies and procedures. The much greater percentage of those that were informed of the location of UHC’s policy and procedures indicates there is likely not a gap in this area.

![Figure 14. Informed of Location of UHC Policy and Procedures](image)

Questions Directed at Employee Perception

The following questions were general questions directed at obtaining the employee’s perception of their new employee orientation experience (as previously seen
in Table 4, p. 46). Also included is the open-ended question 15 and the themes found in employee responses.

**Question 3 survey results.**

**Q3** – As a new University Health Center employee; please rate your experience in the new employee orientation with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent.

The expected answer, if there are no gaps in the current orientation program, is that employees would feel their orientation was average to excellent; that the UHC new employee’s orientation program met their needs and expectations. If the employees found the orientation program lacking then this result would tend to indicate there were gaps in the new employee orientation program, but it does not give insight into where those gaps might exist.

Figure 15 gives the results of this survey questions. 72% (36) respondents rated their NEO experience average and above. The remaining 28% (14) respondents rated their NEO experience below average. The much greater percentage of those that rated their experience average or above indicated there was likely no gap in this area.
**Figure 15.** UHC Employees Rate Experience in Their New Employee Orientation

**Question 12 survey results.**

Q12 – Did your new employee orientation meet your needs and expectations as a new employee of the University Health Center?

Yes

No

Figure 16 gives the responses to this question. 68% responded that their NEO experience met his or her needs and expectations. The remaining 32% believed their NEO needs and expectations were not met.
Figure 16. Did NEO Meet Your Needs and Expectations

**Question 16 survey results.** Literature indicates that employees benefit from having a new employee orientation (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; Ahsforth & Saks, 1996; Connelly, 2005; Hacker 2004; Funderburk, 2008; Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

**Q16** – I believe the University Health Center would benefit from a more comprehensive new employee orientation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Figure 17 gives the results to this question. 82% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed UHC would benefit from a more comprehensive new employee orientation program. The remaining 18% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagree that UHC would benefit from a more comprehensive new employee orientation.
program. The much greater percentage thought that the UHC would benefit from a more comprehensive NEO program.

![Bar chart showing survey results]

**Figure 17.** UHC Would Benefit From a More Comprehensive NEO

**Question 15 survey results.**

**Q15** – What changes/improvements, if any, would you recommend for the University Health Center’s New Employee Orientation program.

The researcher examined themes in this open-ended question. Below are the more prevalent themes.

- Employees would benefit from having a mentorship program.
- Having extended orientation time would be beneficial.
- Having all employees go through the same NEO (A&P, classified, wage, graduate assistants and students) would ensure consistency.
- A greater focus on connecting individual sections of the Health Center.
- A review of policy and procedures during the NEO would be beneficial.
- The use of a multi-faceted approach to presenting information to the new employee (use of both live and online orientation).

Two respondents believed the NEO was greatly improved from previous years and two respondents were not aware the University Health Center has a NEO.

The survey was sent to 66 University Health Center employees with an employment status ranging from A&P faculty, classified, wage employee, graduate assistant and student employee. Their length of employment ranged from less than 1 year to 25+ years. A total of 52 employees (79%) opened the survey with 50 (76%) completing the entire survey. Employee status or length of employment was not found to be a significant factor with regard to this assessment of the NEO. These questions are included here for completeness. Figure 18 and Figure 19 represent the demographic information obtained from respondents regarding employment status and their length of employment.

![Figure 18](image)

*Figure 18.* Q1: Respondents Employment Status
Figure 19. Q2: Respondents Length of Employment

Director’s Interview

The UHC Director, in an interview with the researcher, acknowledged that the current NEO is inadequate in several areas including HIPAA, FERPA, and OSHA Compliance. (See Appendix D for transcript of that interview.)

Table 5.

Highlights of Director’s Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UHC Director’s Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Move was disruptive to NEO; aware there are gaps in the current NEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for departmental HIPPA, FERPA, and OSHA Compliance training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need emphasis on confidentiality within department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for additional time to get to know leadership team and become familiar with the building as well as the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for a review of policy and procedures, along with going over the dress code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for a more informational presentation and greater focus on employee satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feasibility of developing an on-line NEO information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UHC Director’s Interview

- NEO currently consists of
  - Meeting administrative team
  - New employee receives packet containing (information about Valley, Harrisonburg and JMU; Student Affairs and UHC’s Mission, Vision and Values, as well as UHC’s internal values)
  - As part of the interview process with Director, she goes over mission, vision and values.
  - Other pertinent information about Health Center.

Research Design and Data Analysis Summary

Analyzing the employee responses for each question allowed the researcher to report results and to examine the possible gaps in the categories of socialization, job standards and organizational structural framework of the current NEO program. The remainder of the research paper will include the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on survey responses and the interview with UHC Director.
V. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter includes a brief overview of the study, a summary of the research methods used and a discussion of survey findings. This chapter will also include recommendations to the Director of the University Health Center for improvements to the UHC new employee orientation based on the research findings. This chapter concludes with the implications of this study in the field of human resource development and recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

There is considerable research on the benefits of having a NEO (Caruth et al, 2010; Chase, 1999; Lavigna, 2008). Characteristics such as socialization (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ballard & Blessing, 2006; McClaren et al., 2010; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson 2002; Klein & Weaver, 2000), job standards (Burt et al., 2008; Jacoby, 2006) and organizational structural framework (Ballard & Blessing, 2006; Bart, 1996; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Verma, 2009) in a NEO are often individually researched; however existing research does not propose a dynamic model of the components included in a comprehensive NEO program. Empirical studies on NEO show benefits to employees in areas such as job satisfaction (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; De Vos, 2005; Egan & Song, 2008; Funderburk, 2008), heightened confidence resulting in better performance (Acevedo & Yancy, 2011; DeKastle, 2010; Klein et al, 2006), and a feeling, by the employee, of appreciation by the organization which in turn creates a greater commitment by the employee to the organization. A robust new employee orientation program also benefits the organization by:

- promoting employee commitment,
• improving worker morale,
• creating more knowledgeable and informed employees,
• providing employee innovation,
• creating better trained and more efficient employees,
• reducing employee stress,
• increasing employee retention, and
• creating a more valuable employee overall.

As one can see from the above examples, having a comprehensive NEO program is equally as beneficial to an employer as to the employee.

A poor orientation impacts not just the present, but may impact the organization’s future new hires. An ineffective introduction to the organization can quickly overshadow all the positive attributes of the organization (Hacker, 2004).

Research in the literature review focused on NEO components and the impact they have on an employee. These components were arranged into a conceptual framework consisting of 3 categories:

• Socialization, which is “the manner in which the experiences of people learning the ropes of a new organizational position, status, or role are structured for them by others within the organization” (Van Maanen, 1978, p. 19).

• Job standards, where the new employee is made aware of his or her job, the rules and regulations associated with that job as well as the employee job goals and job performance standards.
• Structural framework includes the new employee’s awareness of the organization’s mission, vision and value statements, the organizations policy and procedures and the organization’s expectations of their employees.

New employees benefit from exposure to all the components.

Survey Results Summary

Answers did not specifically identify major gaps in the current UHC new employee orientation except in the socialization category. This gap exists because UHC does not currently have a formal mentorship program. Although 86% strongly agreed or agreed that a formal mentor would have improved their new employee experience.

While the greater percentages indicated no major gaps, table 6 identifies areas where the percentages are of concern based on survey respondents. Follow up should be done to address the high percentage of employees who did not receive adequate NEO information.

Table 6.

Those Survey Items with High Percentages That are Cause for Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those Survey Items Where the Percentages are Cause for Concern and Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
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<td>Question 7</td>
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<td>Question 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Those Survey Items Where the Percentages are Cause for Concern and Follow-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 12</th>
<th>32% of survey respondents NEO needs were not met.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 14</td>
<td>46% of survey respondents are not familiar with commonly used acronyms (UHC, SAP, SWO, CSDC, CARE, REACH, UTI, URI, etc.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the researcher was able to identify a number of recommendations for improvement in the existing NEO based on survey question 16 responses, where 82% responded that UHC would benefit from a more comprehensive NEO.

**Implications for the Current UHC NEO**

It is the researcher’s recommendation, based on survey responses from the University Health Center’s needs assessment of their current new hire experience, along with research done on new employee orientations that the UHC employees would benefit from a more comprehensive NEO. As mentioned in the previous data section, specific recommendations from survey responses include:

- The implementation of mentoring/preceptor/shadowing program within the NEO.
- A review of the departments within UHC, meeting other departmental supervisors and review of acronyms that correspond with each department in the Health Center.
- An introduction to other department employees within the Health Center.
- Include introductions to all of the Health Center staff.
- Include a tour of all departments within the Health Center.
- Include expanded time for adjustment and learning, along with campus familiarity.
• Include an orientation program for graduate assistants that would provide policy and procedures, office structure, as well as a time to get to know more of the Health Center staff

• A resource person to channel questions through.

In the literature review conducted by the researcher, the above items were all shown to benefit new employees. While some of these items are currently presented to new UHC employees, a more proactive approach in NEO planning and design would assist in an employee’s knowledge of and assimilation to both the university and the UHC department.

While a gap was identified in only one category (Socialization), the percentages in other categories should be examined for improvement. In an interview with UHC’s Director, she noted several areas such as safety training and employee assimilation as areas needing improvement. The UHC Director is aware the current NEO is not adequate and she believes UHC could improve on several levels such as familiarizing new employees with the entire UHC department. An additional recommendation to the University Health Center’s Director is to implement a voluntary mentorship program. There is empirical evidence that indicate the benefits of mentorship both in job training and in the socialization of a new employee.

Below are recommended objectives for beginning the process of re-designing the UHC New Employee Orientation Program.

• Provide employees with information that help them integrate smoothly and quickly into the organization.
• Introduce employees to the organization as a whole; it’s structure, philosophy, purpose, values and mission.
• Help new employees identify the importance of their roles within the organization and how what they do affects others.
• Introduce employees to their department’s job goals and performance standards.
• Promote communication between the employees, supervisors and management.
• Communicate expectations regarding both job policies, procedures and performance expectations, as well as organizational policies, procedures and performance expectations.
• Make new employee feel welcome and assure them that they made the right decision in joining the UHC team.
• Get employees excited about being a part of the organization and motivated to do the best job possible (Lawson, 2006).

The literature covered in this research study provided guidelines on how to present NEO information. Handbooks do not appear to benefit the new employee with his or her day-to-day questions. While handbooks are useful, the information within a handbook should also be presented to the new employee in additional ways. Based on Director’s interest in the feasibility of developing an on-line NEO, it is recommended that follow-up investigation into theories of instruction be researched with the implication of designing an e-learning module for a NEO. Clark & Mayer (2008) define e-learning as “instruction delivered on a computer by way of CD-ROM, Internet, or intranet with the following features:
• Includes content relevant to the learning objective
• Uses instructional methods such as examples and practice to help learning.
• Uses media elements such as words and pictures to deliver the content and methods.
• May be instructor-led (synchronous e-learning) or designed for self-paced, individual study (asynchronous e-learning).
• Builds new knowledge and skills linked to individual learning goals or to improve organizational performance” (p. 10).

E-Learning guidelines provide an excellent structure to begin designing a NEO. It must be noted that all e-learning projects should begin with a performance analysis to determine that there is a need. There are several factors (goals, objectives, learner differences and environment) involved in planning and implementing a NEO. This planning needs to begin with the Director along with input from the administrative team and it is the goal of this research to begin the conversation of better meeting the needs of University Health Center new employees. The researcher also recommends a formal follow-up program within UHC to ensure these components are addressed with each new employee within the recommended timeframe.
**Recommendation for Future Research**

The researcher recommends further research into the new employee components and investigation into a standardized comprehensive NEO model. This in-depth research will benefit both UHC and the field of human resource development by proposing a conceptual framework, which could be generalized to other university departments. Further study is also recommended by conducting field studies to examine how the various components of a comprehensive NEO work together in creating an employee that is satisfied with both their job and their work environment. While there is no one-size-fits-all NEO program, research indicates that NEO consists of more than a one-day presentation (Hacker, 2004; Hand, 2008; Lowe, 2006; Wallace, 2009). It is a process by which the employee is integrated into an organization in a complete, efficient and thorough way.

While the researcher has provided evidence from literature review of the importance of each component, more comprehensive testing would better equip human resource professionals, as well as organizational leaders in providing the foundation for a complete and more comprehensive, theoretical and empirically based model in a more standardized NEO program.

Many organizations have attempted to identify what it takes to have happier and more productive employees. It is clear from this research that having happier and more productive employees begins with an effective, comprehensive new employee orientation program.
Appendix A – Survey

This survey is anonymous and will not ask for your name. If at any time you wish to discontinue this survey, please do so by exiting; there are no consequences for doing so.

This survey has been created to examine your perception of the University Health Center's New Employee Orientation.

Please be honest with your responses.

Please note: You will not be able to return to a previous page once you have moved on.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Your responses will be recorded until April 9, 2012.

The following two questions ask about employment status and tenure.

Please select your employment status.

- A&P Faculty Employee
- Classified Employee
- Wage Employee
- Graduate Assistant
- Student Employee
- Other

Please specify your length of employment at James Madison University. May include other University Departments.

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 9 years
- 10+ years
As a new University Health Center employee, please rate your experience in the new employee orientation with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent.

1-Poor 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10-Excellent

Please answer the questions below in reference to your new employee experience in the University Health Center. This is separate from your James Madison University Human Resource "Onboarding" experience.

I met my supervisor within one week of reporting to my job.

Yes No

I reviewed my work goals with my supervisor within

- one week of starting my job
- 2 weeks of starting my job
- 2 months of starting my job
- 6 months of starting my job
- haven't discussed my work goals with my supervisor

I reviewed job performance expectations with my supervisor within

- one week of starting my job
- 2 weeks of starting my job
- 2 months of starting my job
- 6 months of starting my job
- haven't reviewed my job performance expectations with my supervisor

I was informed of the Health Center's goals and values within

- one week of starting my job
- 2 weeks of starting my job
- 2 months of starting my job
- 6 months of starting my job
- haven't been formally informed of the Health Center's goals and values
I was assigned a formal mentor within

- one week of starting my job
- 2 weeks of starting my job
- 2 months of starting my job
- 6 months of starting my job
- haven't been assigned a formal mentor in the University Health Center

As a new employee, I was informed of the location of the University Health Center policies and procedures.

Yes  No

Did you receive technical training during the first 3-4 weeks of your employment in the University Health Center?

Yes  No

Did your new employee orientation meet your needs and expectations as a new employee of the University Health Center?

Yes  No

As a new employee in the University Health Center, when I had an office question, I went to _________ for answers.

- my supervisor
- a fellow employee
- the departmental employee handbook
- Other

As a new employee in the Health Center, I was familiar with most of the acronyms used by fellow employees (examples: UHC, SAP, SWO, CSDC, CARE, REACH, UTI, URI, etc.).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
I believe having a formal mentor, within the University Health Center, would have improved my new employee experience.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I believe the University Health Center would benefit from a more comprehensive new employee orientation program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What changes/improvements, if any, would you recommend for the University Health Center's New Employee Orientation?

Survey Powered By Qualtrics
Appendix B – Survey Cover Letter

“Web”/ “Email” Cover Letter (used in anonymous research)

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Smith, a graduate student from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of the University Health Center’s new employee experience. This study will contribute to the researcher’s completion of her master’s thesis project. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Research Procedures
This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through email. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to your perception of your new employee experience within the University Health Center.

Time Required
Participation in this study will require approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Risks
The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits
By participating in this study there are no direct benefits for you, as the participant. Findings from this research will benefit the University Health Center by the implications for a more comprehensive new employee orientation.

Confidentiality
The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University during a Thesis defense with three James Madison University professors present. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through the Qualtrics software, data is kept in the strictest confidence. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be shredded. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.
Appendix B – Survey Cover Letter – Continued

Questions about the Study
If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Diane M. Smith
Adult Education/Human Resources
James Madison University
(540) 568-1725
smithdm@jmu.edu

Dr. Jane Thall
Learning Technology & Leadership Education
James Madison University
Telephone: (540) 568-5531
thalljb@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject
Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

http://jmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eS9nEFaNxfnT0lS

Diane M. Smith                                                           10/14/10
Name of Researcher (Printed)                                            Date
Appendix C – Amended Interview Consent Form for Health Center Director

Amended Interview Consent Form (Consent Form Amended 3/22/2012. Director authorized use of interview in thesis.

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Smith a graduate student from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of the University Health Center’s new employee experience. This study will contribute to the researcher’s completion of her master’s thesis project. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Research Procedures
This study consists of a semi-structured interview that will be administered to an individual participant through face-to-face conversations. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to opinions about your departmental new employee orientation.

Time Required
Participation in this study will require 20-30 minutes of your time.

Risks
The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits
By participating in this study there no direct benefits for you, as the participant. Findings from this research will benefit the University Health Center by the implications for a more comprehensive new employee orientation.

Confidentiality
The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University during a Thesis defense with three James Madison University professors present. Data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. The data collected during the interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet and then destroyed after (April 9, 2012). Information obtained by this interview will be included in the Thesis Report. All data will be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all voice-recorded data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research period (April 9, 2012). Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.
Appendix C

Amended Interview Consent Form for Health Center Director - Continued

Participation & Withdrawal
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study
If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:
Diane M. Smith
Adult Education/Human Resources
James Madison University
(540) 568-1725
smithdm@jmu.edu

Dr. Jane Thall
Learning Technology & Leadership Education
James Madison University
Telephone: (540) 568-5531
thalljb@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject
Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent
I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. I give permission for data obtained from this interview to be included in Thesis Report.

☐ I give consent to be audiotaped during my interview. ________ (initials)

__________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant (Printed)
__________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant (Signed) ______________ Date
__________________________________________________________________________
Name of Researcher (Signed) ______________ Date
Appendix D - Director of the UHC Interview Questions and Transcript of Interview

1. Does the University Health Center currently have a new employee orientation?

2. Do you believe the University Health Center’s New Employee Orientation is adequate? If not, how do you envision it being structured?

3. How do you think the Student Affairs and UHC’s mission, vision and values are communicated to health center employees and do you believe they are adequately being communicated?

4. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Transcript of Interview with Director of the James Madison University Health Center: Interview conducted March 1, 2012 at 10:30 am

Interviewer: Hi Cannie, first I would like to thank you for meeting with me to answer these questions for me, so I will just start in on the questions.

The first question is. Does the University Health Center currently have a new employee orientation?

Director: We have a, have had a new employee orientation. Currently, honestly I don’t think it’s been done in the last year that I know of, because of our move but we’ve done a uh small orientation over the past couple of years for new employees to meet the administrative team, to get a copy of our values, to share some just pertinent information about the health center, but that’s basically it.

Interviewer: Um, ok. My second question, Do you believe the University Health Center’s New Employee Orientation is adequate and if not, how do you envision it being structured.

Director: I don’t think it’s adequate. Um, I think that we could do a lot more for our employees as they come in, on several levels, um they do get the Onboard program through HR but I think that internally, since we are such a specific type of organization
with health care that we probably need to do more with HIPAA vs. FERPA, OSHA Compliance, Confidentiality and that’s not just not with our clinical team any more that applies to everyone since we are all in the same building now and we will continue to be in the same building, I think we’ve missed the boat on that. I think um we could use more time for them to get to know the leadership team, get to know the buildings, the policy and procedures, we’ve never gone over some of those more important things, dress code an um. It’s hard though I know, because people come in sporadically throughout the year, but I think if we had something set or something on-line or something that we could put them in front of, um it would be helpful. The same thing with students, I think we have a number of students we need to have oriented and we don’t do a really good job of that.

**Interviewer:** Ok, um question number 3. How do you think the Student Affairs and UHC’s mission, vision and values are communicated to health center employees and do you believe they are adequately being communicated?

**Director:** Um, I know from my perspective when I have an interview candidate and my assistant is doing the interviews that they are given a packet of information, which includes stuff about the Valley, Harrisonburg, JMU, usually a Breeze kind of some social sort of things and then I always include in their packet a copy of the Student Affairs and the Health Center’s Mission, Vision and Values and our um (snapping finger) our internal values, our health center internal values, I couldn’t think of the word (thank you, sorry I couldn’t think of the word) so I always include that and I try to go over that when I interview them, that’s part of what I interview, but again that’s one time, with every interview candidate and then I hope, I think that stuff is given back to them when they do
an orientation, but I can’t be 100% sure on that. Um, that is actually something I would think maybe in the future as part of their orientation, maybe sit down with the Director in their first week, as part of the orientation and go over these values, just so they know what we have but that has been part of my role, I’ve tried to at least during the interview part, have them be aware of it but again, I’m not sure if it’s consistent at all. So

**Interviewer:** Ok, thank you. My last question is um are there any other comments you would like to make Um about the new employee orientation or new employees in general.

**Director:** I know one thing we’ve talked about over the years and I’m not sure how valuable it would be but I think it’s worth looking into Um we’ve talked about people spending time in each area, really learning what they do. I know that was hard before because we were in different locations but that might be something too as we look at a more formal orientation process is do they spend a certain amount of time, over their first month, spending 2 hours in SWO, 2 hours in SAP you know. Um interviewing those leaders those administrative positions like Beau and Paige, and learning about that so that regardless of where you are in the Health Center you can answer a questions about anything or anyone or anybody or any program we have. I don’t think we are always able to do that right now. If I went downstairs and asked the nurses what they knew about Dukes in Recovery, I’m not sure they could answer much about that, except to say go see Paige. Um, but I think if we would be a stronger Center if we knew more about what other people did and could answer those questions. For me that’s a big one, a more unified front. Especially like when we go out for things like Choices and stuff, we always send clinical out about because there tends to be a lot of clinical questions, but are
they answering SWO or SAP’s questions appropriately. I don’t know but I think that goes back to the orientation, and just making people feel um informed when they get here and on board, I think we have missed that with some people, they have not felt connected right away and what does that have to do with our retention of those employees or their satisfaction at work and so there’s a lot that ties into that.

Interviewer: Ok, well thank you very much and uh I’ll be happy to share a transcript of this conversation, since I am taping it. And again thank you.

Director: Your welcome, thank you
References


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Williams, S.R. (2003). These numbers are for external hires. Internal hires get up to speed about twice as fast, “Mellon Learning Curve Research Study” (New York, Mellon Corp.).
