

NACUFS (2025)

Employee Development Program of the Year

Serving Up Success

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Introduction:

At Carolina Dining Services, success is not a privilege, but an opportunity for anyone willing to seize it. By providing the right tools, the right mentors, and the right mindset on day one, Serving Up Success, the CDS Supervisor Onboarding and Development Plan wins by making success increasingly accessible to our next generation of leaders. Serving Up Success was piloted at UNC Chapel Hill by the HR team and is currently supported by a team of managers in multiple locations across campus. The program is mandatory for all newly hired or promoted supervisors.

Essay:

The goal is to ensure new leaders have opportunities to practice, receive real time feedback, and refine approaches in a supportive environment. This translates into more empowered employees, a magnetic culture, elevated productivity, and a strong manager “bench” as we root our leadership talent pool in these front-line supervisors. CDS utilizes the NACUFS Train the Trainer learning modules to better understand adult learning styles and create a mix of classroom, shadowing, and hands on learning events.

Serving Up Success was designed by a team of CDS leaders to address inconsistencies in supervisor performance levels that were ultimately traced back to a lack of uniform onboarding and training for rookie supervisors. The program is a six-week, performance measured training plan that starts from day one orientation and ends with implementation of next level leadership skills. Along the way, our new supervisors gain a detailed spectrum of experience that includes practicing

workplace safety, equipment operation, food safety, service excellence, employee relations, labor management, and advanced systems training. Picture a relay race, in which all functions of collegiate dining pass the baton of knowledge, ensuring the new supervisor gains confidence, personal resources, and momentum with each leg of the track.

Introduction:

Proving UNC can develop and grow high performing supervisors from our own existing team has had a significant impact on employee retention. As of today, CDS employs approximately 35 residential and retail supervisors. Around 62% of these supervisors have been with CDS over one year, compared to 26% just one year ago, before Serving Up Success was implemented.

Essay:

Success is recognized in stages as the participant navigates weekly topics. A combination of classroom and online learning (i.e. ServSafe, Allergen training, NACUFS Body of Knowledge), shadowing mentors, and hands on exercises are graded based on a variety of factors at the conclusion of the program. The evaluation scale measures all elements of the program including interactions with guests and employees, participation in audits, adherence to safety standards, understanding of systems and functions, and leadership capabilities. Supervisors are also rewarded with custom Carolina Blue Adidas polos with their new title embroidered on the chest, so they are easily identified by both guests and staff. While the structured program concludes after six weeks, learning does not stop there. Supervisors are included in continuous learning and training sessions that are scheduled throughout the year that were previously held for just managers.

Introduction:

Serving Up Success started with employees that were easily identified as needing additional training guidance and quickly blossomed into an obvious must-have for all supervisors. The program is marketed to the entire team of supervisors, while maintaining that personal attention that each person deserves. Through the use of print and digital versions, engaging videos, personal demonstrations, and inclusion in appreciation events, the CDS team has created a buzz around the program that has inspired our current and future supervisors to take full advantage of the program.

Essay:

When candidates learn that employees are well-equipped and personally supported for an extended period of time, they are more likely to view CDS as a desirable place to work. Imagine how much more attractive an employment opportunity would be if there were a guaranteed, detailed onboarding and training plan awaiting you on day one! Serving Up Success is a recruitment tool that installs confidence in prospective employees that CDS invests in the immediate success of new supervisors. In 2023 CDS struggled to fill both retail and residential supervisor vacancies across campus. As of today, we've said goodbye to those hiring headaches as supervisor roles are nearly 100% staffed.

Introduction:

One of the biggest messages received through employee engagement surveys and solicited feedback is simply the desire to learn and grow and how much that affects job satisfaction. We have embraced that money is not always the driving factor to satisfaction...as a matter of fact, more employees crave opportunities to meet new people, have purpose at work, and build a career. The supervisor role is pivotal as these are our future managers. Serving Up Success is the foundation of the supervisor's journey with CDS as we continue to practice turning attainable goals into accessible success!

Essay:

As we piloted the program, regular feedback was noted from participants. Each week completed brought more positive feedback than the week before, with several supervisors commenting on how much they appreciate the structured, personal guidance. CDS also conducted a formal, companywide Employee Engagement Survey. Carolina Dining employees registered the highest satisfaction scores in the areas of Growth and Development opportunities, Empowerment, and Morale/Wellbeing, a testament to the success of this program. Managers have become more and more committed to the

program as they see the confidence of our young leaders expand into new areas. Trainers and mentors critiqued the program and have responded with reactions such as, “This is exactly what we have needed for a long time!” and “This is a great framework for any new supervisor to learn from...a real game changer.”

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