Food Services Project Report

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Executive Summary

In collaboration with the Food Services department and in connection to our Applied Anthropology class (ANTH 447), our group has spent the last three months practicing applied business and corporate anthropology in an effort to understand and provide solutions for the significantly high student-worker turnover rate. We have worked in and with a variety of sections and people within Food Services, including Preparation, the Club, Receiving and Accounting, the Food Services management team, and the student-workers in an effort to holistically understand the issue.

Through our ethnographic fieldwork we were able to gain a greater understanding of the multiple facets of this issue. We have composed a final report, which includes our intervention suggestions, results and findings, and key specifics of our research methods and challenges. In addition, through collaboration with the Food Services Marketing and Social Media Manager, we created and developed a three-minute marketing/advertising video for Food Services, which can be posted on the Food Services website, Food Services social media platforms, or used for any other purposes the Food Services department sees fit.

Project Deliverables

1. This Project Report

2. Food Services Marketing/Advertising Video:

   https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-k9ZeP-YCai4hpIb2LILVgnhMBFj__Ia/view

Intervention Suggestions

1. Keep an eye out for applicants who have a more introverted disposition and those who have 2.5 years or less until their graduation.

2. Implement a short training program for new hires.

3. Managers should get to know and create a relationship with each person who works in their department. Having specific department activities and get-togethers outside of work would create an environment where students can connect with their managers while having fun. The time could also be used to discuss problems within the department and collectively come up with solutions.

4. Managers could benefit from some leadership training so they have greater knowledge about how to interact effectively with their co-managers and the people they oversee (full time, part time, student), and know what kind of communication/leadership techniques are most effective.

5. Managers could benefit from regular, required team building exercises and/or have weekly meetings to touch base, communicate goals and expectations, and communicate issues or concerns. More cohesion and cooperation would

promote a more positive working environment (the tension amongst them can be translated to the working environment).
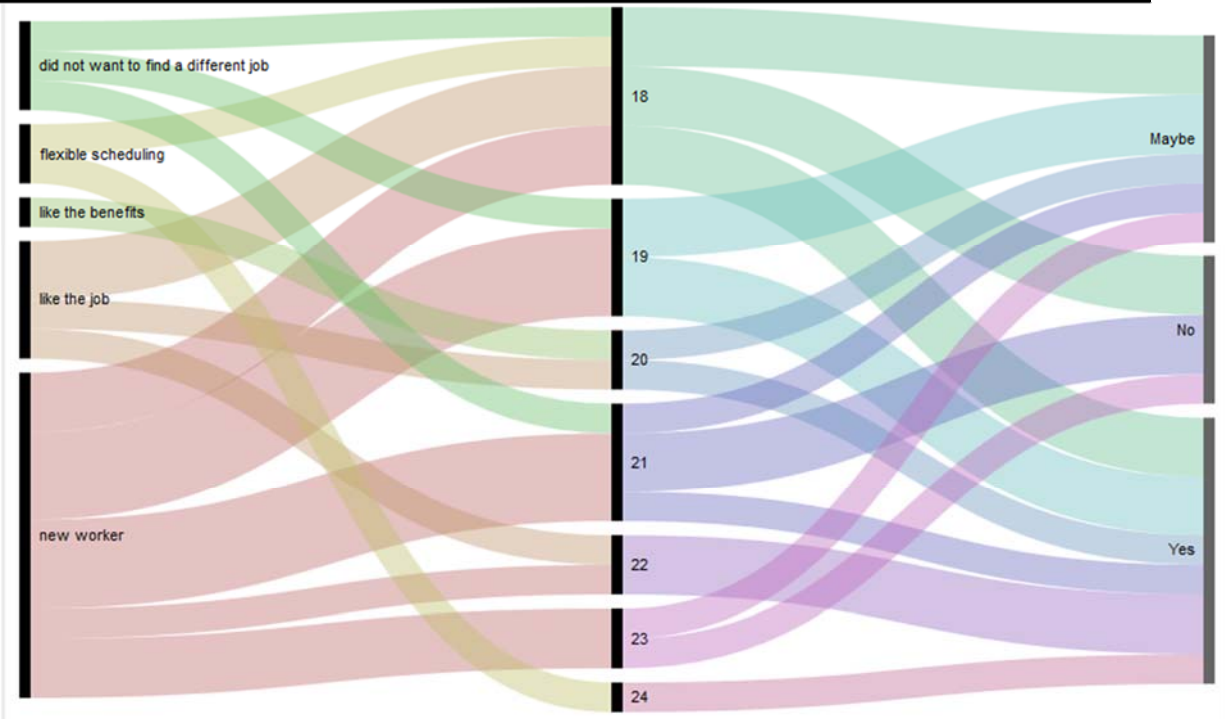
6. Require team-building exercises within each specific subsection of Food Services.

7. Conduct team-building exercises for all employees across departments to participate in.

8. Prioritize cleanliness and sanitation standards.

9. Implement a reward system that could boost morale and effort. One suggestion: start doing an employee of the month program. Each manager picks an employee of the month in their department, they announce the result each month, put up the student's picture on the wall, and reward them with something, such as $20 Flex dollars, an extra free meal, a gift card somewhere, etc. This can increase workers' ambition to perform at a higher level.

10. In the dish room, consistently implement a job rotation system - this would make the job more bearable for students.

11. Jobs were noted to be repetitive, so switching things up from time to time could increase productivity and interest in the student workers.

12. Place a bigger emphasis on the trash can near the student dish drop off and encourage students to clean off the food on their plate before placing it on the conveyor belt. This will help keep the dish room more sanitized.

13. Organize a dinner and activity with all the members of Food Services every couple of months would help the relationships between the workers and the managers.
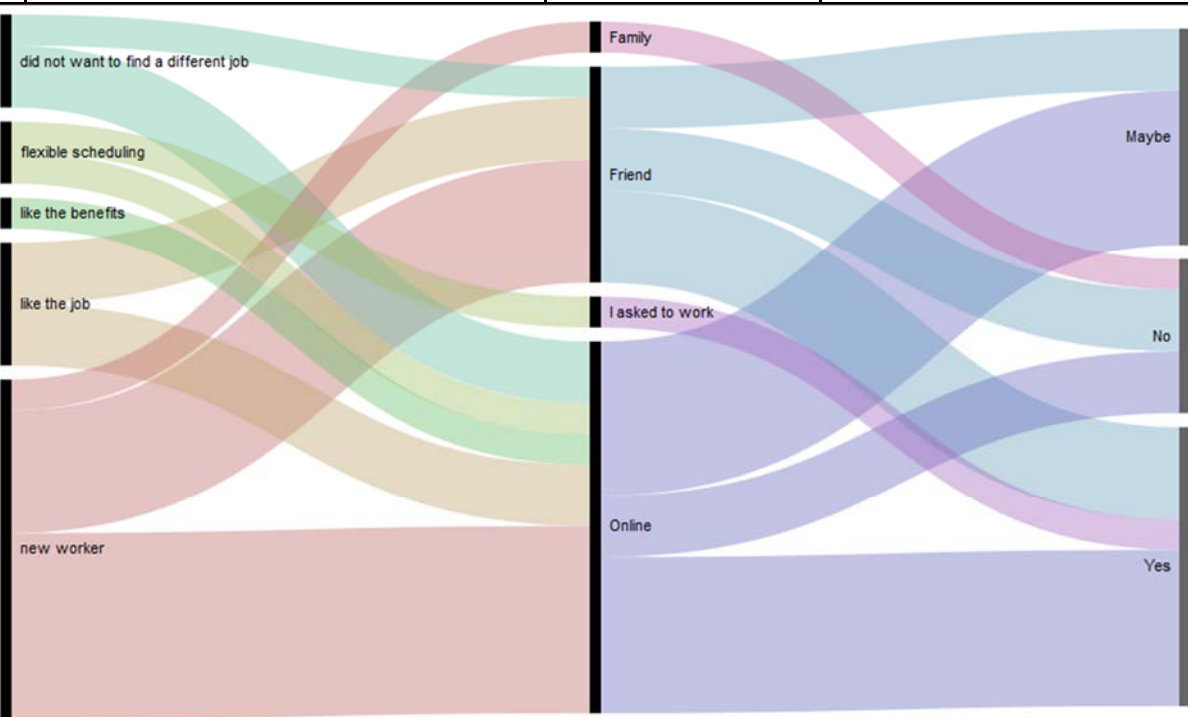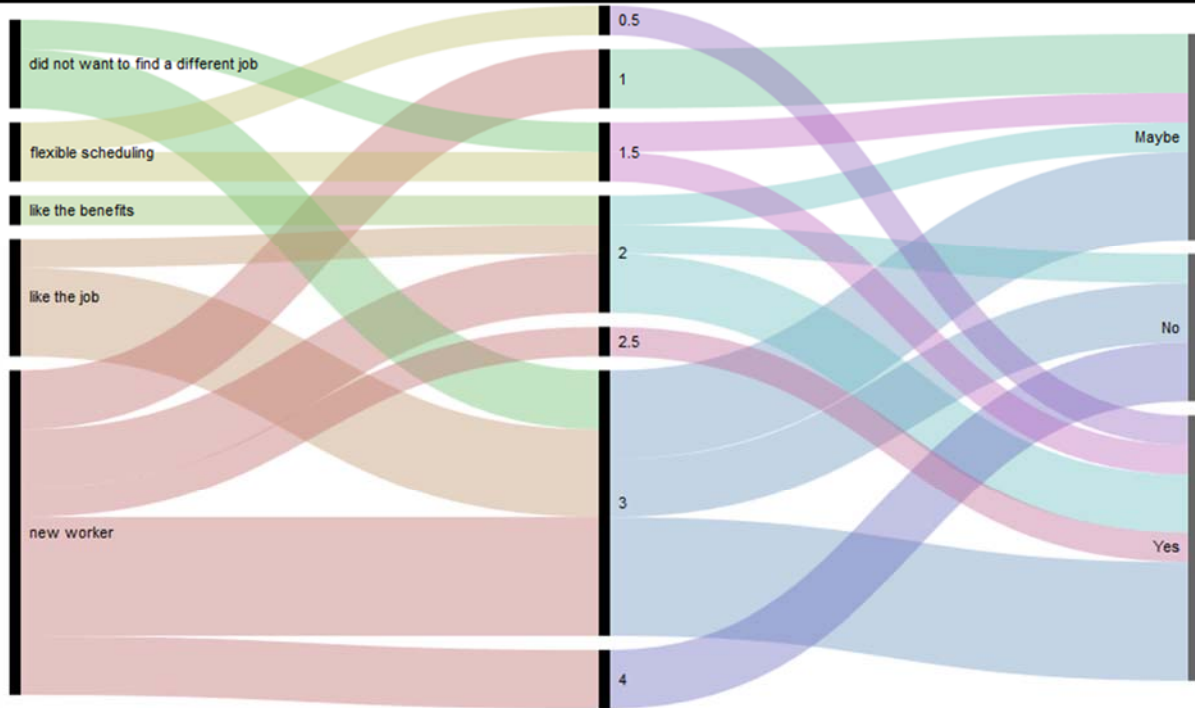
Results   *Survey results (N=21)*

| 1) | Why employee came back for Winter semester | Age | Will employee work Spring semester? |

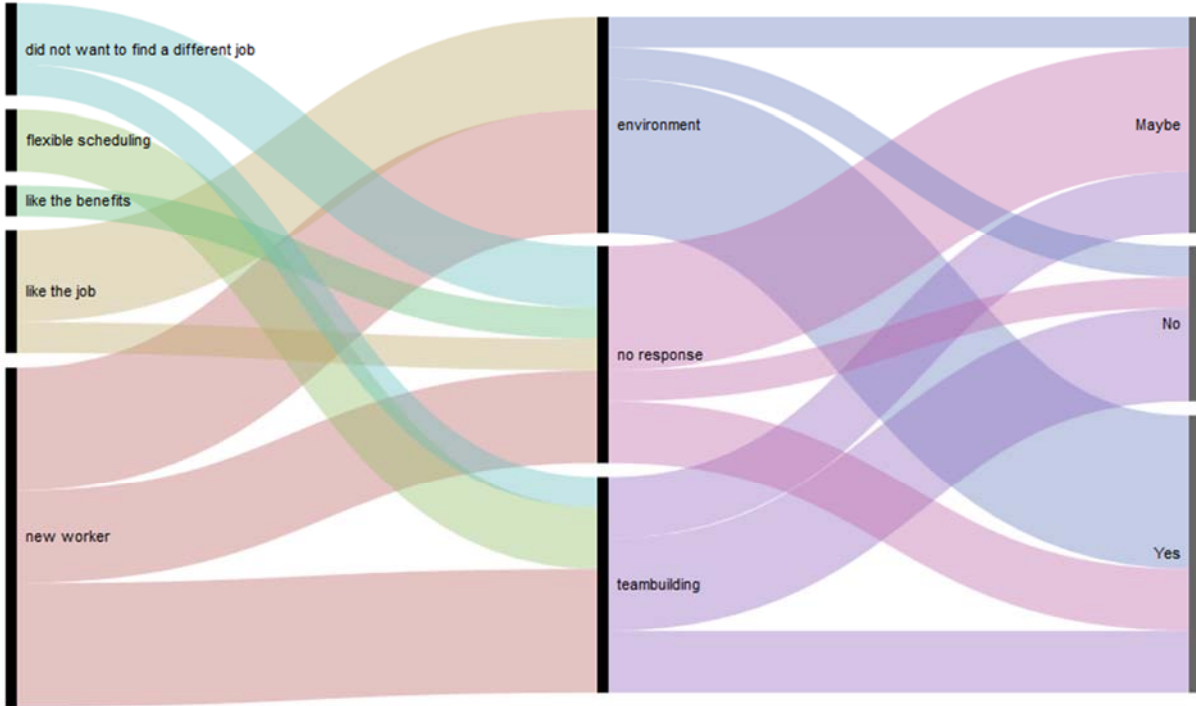| 2) | Why employee came back for Winter semester | How they found the job | Will employee work Spring semester? |

3)	Why employee came back for Winter semester	How many years before graduation	Will employee work Spring semester?

4)	Why employee came back for Winter semester	Recommendation gave for hiring new employees	Will employee work Spring semester?
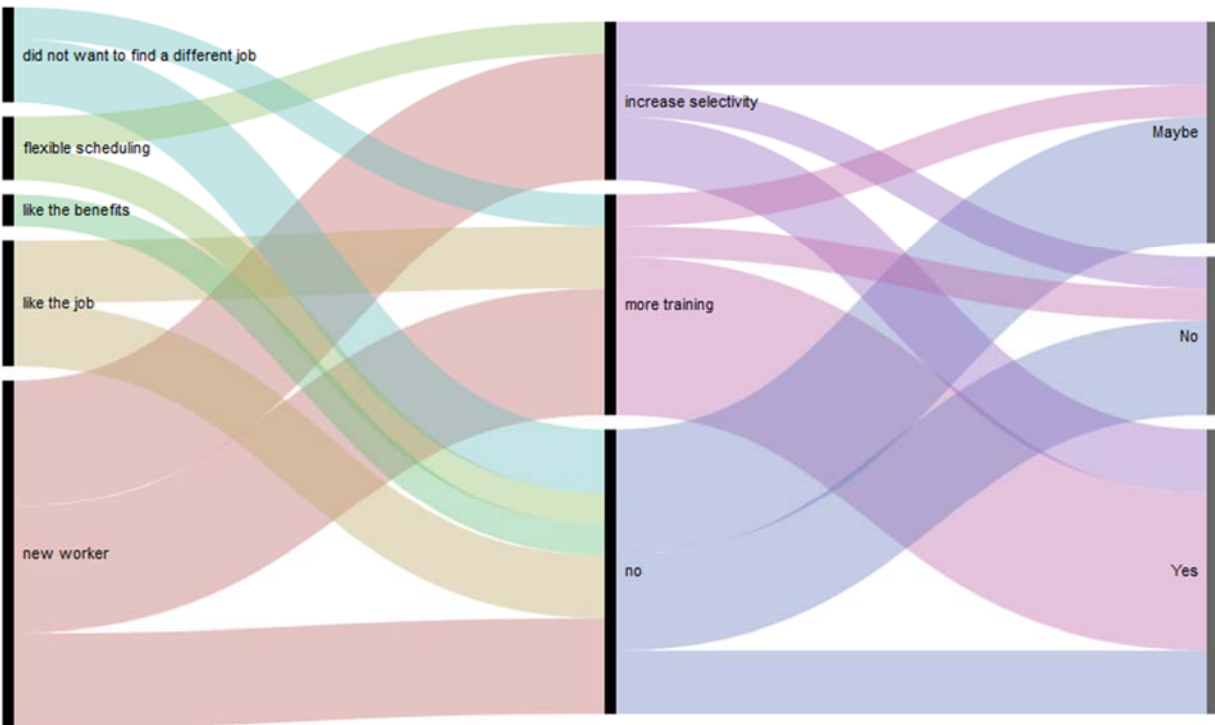
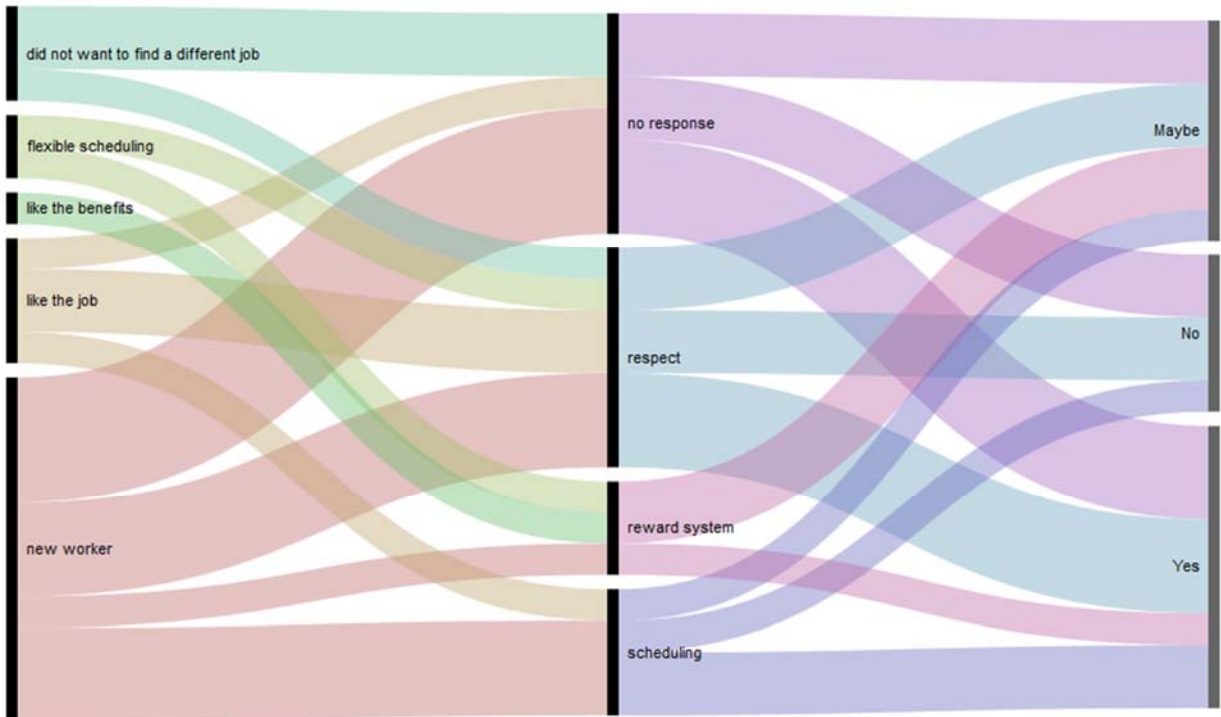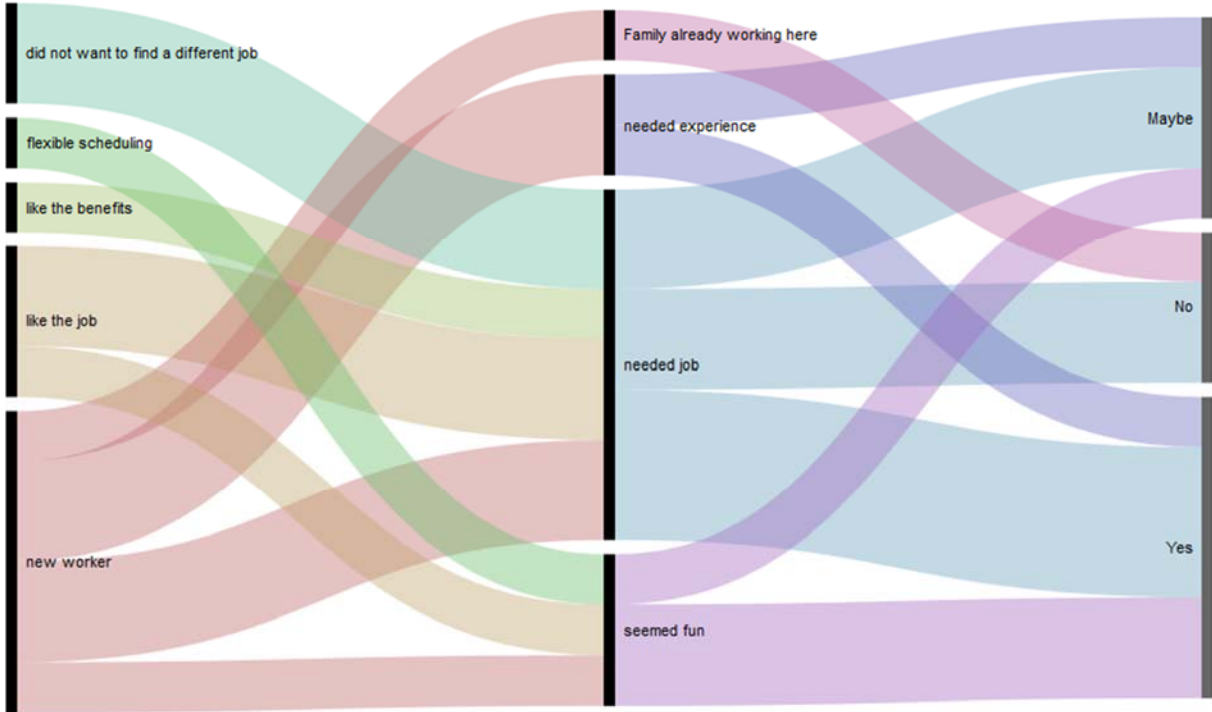| 5)	Why employee came back for Winter semester	Recommendation gave for improving workplace	Will employee work Spring semester?

6)	Why employee came back for Winter semester	Recommendation given to retain employees	Will employee work Spring semester?

7)	Why employee came back for Winter semester	Why they applied to work in food services	Will employee work Spring semester?

Sankey diagram with left nodes: did not want to find a different job, flexible scheduling, like the benefits, like the job, new worker. Middle nodes: Family already working here, needed experience, needed job, seemed fun. Right nodes: Maybe, No, Yes.

8)	Employee sentiment of food services before applying	Employee sentiment of food services after hire	Age of employee

Sankey diagram with left nodes: negative, neutral, positive. Middle nodes: negative, neutral, positive. Right nodes: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.
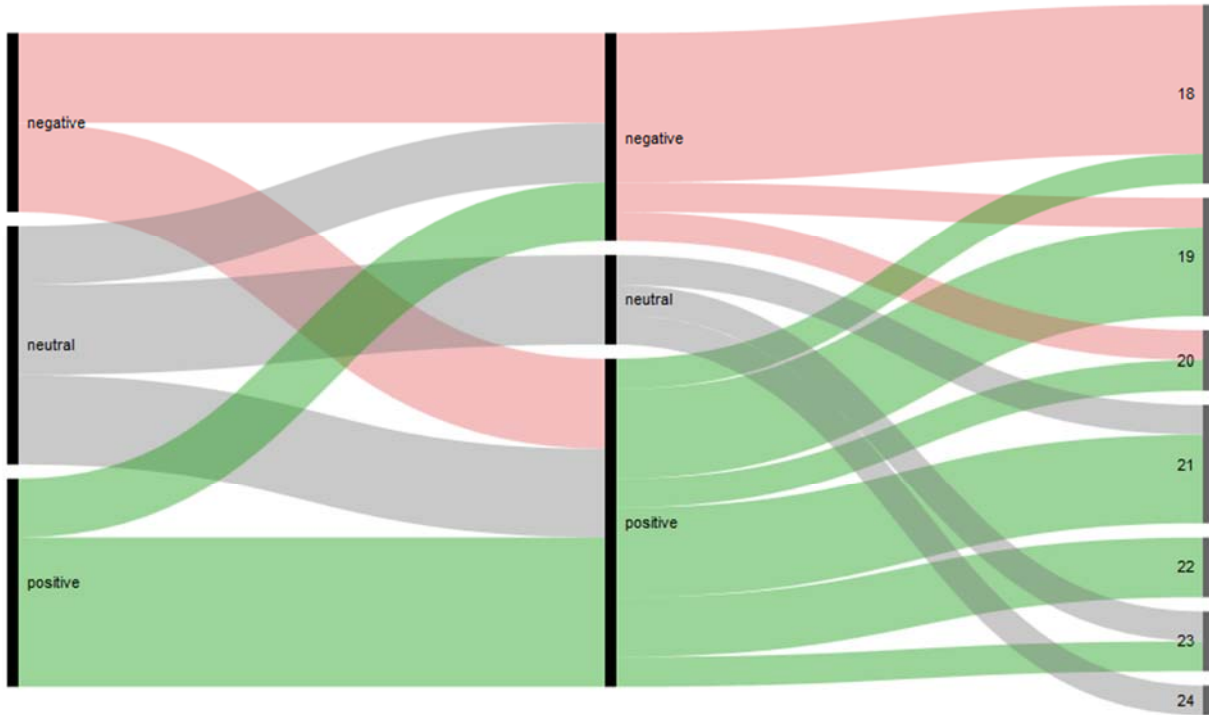
Do you have any recommendations about how to hire new employees?
- do a quick training on food safety before hiring   - don't overhire, hire people with experience cashiering or have previously worked a food service job   - experienced and friendly   - freshmen are perfect for this job because it doesn't require previous experience to do well   - have more difficult interviews   - have regular training and meetings   - hire more males   - hire who are willing and ready to do their job here   - if they can be trained before starting to work that would be great   - make sure they are responsible to handle food and clean up after themselves   - talk to Career Services and make some kind of project where they would send some students to help out with some jobs around campus including catering so that they build a general idea around the work environment?   - tell them they need to work until they're on their break or they're going home for the day
What do you not like about working at your current position?
- hard to communicate, boring, gross   - mundane   - mundane   - not enough hours   - not enough hours   - not enough hours   - not enough to do   - not enough to do   - people standing around when there is plenty of work to be done   - sometimes it seems like there is nothing to do   - sometimes when there is a lot of people working there is nothing for me to do and it looks bad if I stand around   - the heat of the grill and the slippery dish wash room (seasider)   - when people don't help each other

Do you have any recommendations about how to keep employees?
• ask who would like more work or less work, building the schedule around that • be nice to employees and not insanely strict. Let them use creativity • be understanding and give hours that work with their schedule • employee competitions with prizes • increase hours • increase hours • just have a reward system, value employees more, never talk down to them. Their days are very hard, being a student is stressful, and they need to feel safe and comfortable in their job. • make it like a team! let employees feel they are cared • make them feel included on decision making. treat with respect and offer opportunities for growth • more friendly supervisors • reward hard-working and loyal workers, don't take their hard work for granted • treat them better because the work isn't fun, they should want to be there for other reasons • treat them with more respect
How could your work environment be improved?
• better updated equipment to make it feel more modern and clean • do some team building exercises or something • everybody could be nicer • I hope there will be music on the dining area not only on the grill or deli so that people who were there will have some music too (seasider) • if supervisors had more respect • if there is a way to communicate news other than the bulletin, sometimes I don't work while a sign is put up and I miss the news • it could be cleaner. There are rats and cockroaches sometimes • less gross haha • less vocal bullying by supervisor • make it not smelly (smoke is killings us). More decorations not only on holidays or events. • more sanitation. Please more sanitation, more sanitation. It is really gross working in the back. Also, the full time staff can be very rude to workers and that is why people quit. Please train the full time workers on how to treat student employee. • more teamwork • increase inclusion. no racial favoritism or discrimination • overall pretty clean except some things we use are very outdated

Student Interview Findings

- Student workers generally like the job itself, especially when there are clear expectations for them and they can feel like they accomplished something. Some of them prefer working when the cafe is busy, some of them prefer it when it is less busy.

- Long-term food service student workers seem to have a more introverted disposition. It could be because the stress of finding a new job is higher than continuing their current job. For extroverts finding a new job is less stressful so they are more likely to find a new one if they don't like the current one.

- Student workers feel a bit disconnected in the work environment

- Management team seems to be a bit disconnected from each other and students feel some tension among them. Students sometimes feel uncomfortable when they are the "messenger" between managers.

- Some student workers feel a little mislead about the job; they are told they will be doing variety of things in a job rotation but then are stuck doing one job (like dishwashing).

- Some student workers feel that the work environment is unclean / unsanitary

- Student workers in the dish room want to be able to not just work back there all of the time. There biggest concern is that they are not being rotated to the other jobs that are packaged with the dish room (such as the check- in person).

- Student workers collectively think that the dish room is pretty "disgusting", the silverware, cups, and area in which the dishes are cleared need to be sanitized more often.

Manager Interview Findings

- They genuinely like working with the students for the most part; they enjoy building relationships with them, connecting with them, and helping them.

- They sometimes lack patience with the student-workers and feel frustrated that some are so inexperienced and require a lot of training, occasionally miss their shifts, and do not work hard enough.

- They admitted to utilizing possibly detrimental leadership and management techniques with their student-workers, such as favoritism.

- They feel that working with, getting along with, and communicating with their fellow managers can be very difficult and stressful due to cultural differences, work experience differences, and differences in personal backgrounds.

<u>Anthropological Research Methods</u>

In an effort to gain the most in-depth and thorough understanding possible, we incorporated multiple types of anthropological research methods:

- Online research. This was important for us at the beginning of our project. We researched simple strategies to boost workplace morale and to creatively boost the mood that increases performance in the workplace. It is important to train employees to develop a positive attitude and take time to creatively celebrate accomplishments.

- Meetings with David and Alex (the Marketing and Social Media Manager). They both provided valuable information that gave us a clearer vision of how to set our project in motion. They provided authentic information as to the needs of Food Services and the employees and workers throughout the course of our project.

- Volunteered in different Food Services departments. All five of us had the opportunity to work in different Food Services departments. We each spent a few of hours per week working with students-workers, full-time employees, part-time employees, and managers. As fieldworkers we learned about the job, learned how to do the job, learned about the work environment, and learned how to execute the job effectively to add value to the team. By doing this, we were able to get face time with employees and receive raw information that helped us come up with intervention suggestions. Anthropologists want the most authentic information they can find. This is found through fieldwork, volunteering, and building relationships with the "locals."

- Interviewed managers and student workers. Through ethnographic interviewing we gained an understanding of the behaviors and culture within the cafeteria from the employees' point of view, and their concerns and opinions.

- Created and sent out a survey for student workers. This allowed students to answer important questions freely and honestly, as the responses were anonymous. This also allowed us to hear from a greater number of students.

- Created a marketing/advertising video for Food Services to portray Food Services in a positive light and help attract more students. The video gives an inside look as to what it's like to work in Food Services, what they strive to do for the students, and how important the students are for its successful operation. We believe this could help the students become aware of what Food Services has to offer and feel inspired to apply.

Issues / Problems / Challenges

- Our first idea was to work on sustainability initiatives with Food Services. As we talked to the managers and workers of Food Services, we realized that there was not much for us to do in that regard. It was while talking to one of the student workers that we realized we could refocus our project onto student employment in Food Services. As our project would require working with the different departments within Food Services, people on the management level, and the student-workers, we needed to propose our project to the director of Food Services and receive his approval to move forward with our project. We received feedback from him, had to make revisions, and submitted it to him again before we were able to receive his approval and start our project. Due to this series of events we weren't able to start our project until mid-February, a bit of a late start, which meant we had to work with and adapt to many time constraints.

- We tried to get the statistics for the turnover rate from HR to help us build the background for this project and so we could create a comparative data set for before and after our project, but unfortunately that information is kept on a

managerial level and they did not have access to this information/were not able to provide us with this information.

- We tried to get interviews with as many student workers and managers as possible as we felt it was important to hear the voices of both the workers and management. A couple of managers were not very responsive to our interview inquiries or were too busy, so we did not get as many manager interviews as we would have liked. In addition, some of the student-workers were not very responsive or open to doing interviews with us, were too busy, or their schedules conflicted with ours, so we also did not get as many student-worker interviews as we would have liked.

- We created an online survey in order to better hear from as many students as possible, but we did not make the survey until the end of the semester, which limited the amount of responses we received. Also, we gave the survey to Food Services and the managers were supposed to distribute the surveys to their workers, but we noticed that some departments and students did not receive it.

- We would have liked to reach out to more of the workers, but as there are many more workers than there are of us, and we only had a couple of months to complete this project, we were unable to achieve this goal to the degree we wanted.