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Use of a Procedure Manual as an Effective Training Method for Distance Learning Site Personnel of Old Dominion University

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USE OF A PROCEDURE MANUAL AS AN

EFFECTIVE TRAINING METHOD

FOR DISTANCE LEARNING SITE PERSONNEL OF

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

A Research Study Presented to the Faculty of

the Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies

at Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the

Degree Masters of Science in Occupation and Technical Studies

By

Jennifer M. Allen

December 2012

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Jennifer M. Allen under the directions of Dr.

John M. Ritz, in SEPS 636, Problems in Occupational and Educational Studies. This paper

was presented to the Graduate Program Coordinator as partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Master of Science degree.

Approved By _____ Date _____
                        Dr. John M. Ritz
                        Graduate Program Coordinator

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Old Dominion University Distance Learning Program consists of extended sites that span across the states of Virginia, Arizona, and Washington, as well as, offering courses to members of the military around the world and degree seekers in other states and nations. The majority of the sites are located on military bases or at higher education centers and community college campuses in Virginia.

Distance Learning Sites function as "mini-campuses" that provide students with support in most all aspects of college life. With this large number of sites, the distance between the sites, and the increasing number of student enrollments at the sites, there is a strong need to improve the effectiveness of site operations by reducing employee training time. This might be accomplished by employing a Site Procedure Manual for all site employees as a training and resource guide.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine if employees at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites would require less on-the-job training if a Site Procedure Manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were used to direct this study:

RQ$_1$: Would a site procedure manual be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees?

RQ$_2$: Would a site procedure manual be considered an effective resource guide for all

employees?

RQ$_3$: What advantages would be gained across Distance Learning by using a set of

standardized procedures as set forth in a procedure manual?

RQ$_4$: What content should be covered in a site procedure manual?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Old Dominion University Distance Learning has over 40 extended campus sites.
The majority of the sites are located on VCCS community college campuses, military
centers, and higher education centers in Virginia, as well as, several locations in the states
of Arizona and Washington.

Since there are so many sites that have a great distance between each of them and
the increasing number of student enrollments at the sites, there is a strong need to
improve the effectiveness of site operations by reducing employee training time. This
could be accomplished by providing all site employees the training and resources
necessary by employing a Site Procedure Manual.

Each Distance Learning Site functions as a mini-campus. There are typically four
or five employees at a Site. The staff consists of the Site Director, the Assistant Site
Director, and several Office Assistants. The site staff is responsible for assisting
prospective and current students with the following student services: academic advising,
admissions, career services, course delivery, exam proctoring, and financial aid, as well
as many other tasks. When it comes to classroom support, the site staff is responsible for
classroom scheduling, course delivery, exam proctoring, and technical support. As for the

office administrative procedures, the site staff is responsible for enrollment management, staff supervision, and site marketing.

Day-to-day, semester-to-semester, and year-to-year operations at the sites are constantly changing and evolving as procedures, techniques, and policies are altered, either locally or from the main campus. Since the Distance Learning Sites have much responsibility, a training and resource tool that is flexible and fluid could be an effective tool in the management of site operations.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study may seem broad in scope, it utilized the following limitations. It was limited to:

1. Information collected from the administrative and staff members at the Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites.

2. The methods of operations used at the Old Dominion University and Distance Learning sites.

3. The use of a Site Procedure Manual as a training application at the Old Dominion University Distance Learning sites.

ASSUMPTIONS

When conducting research certain circumstances must be assumed. This study used the following assumptions:

1. Old Dominion University Distance Learning administrative and staff members have prior knowledge of general office and customer service practices.

2. Old Dominion University Distance Learning administrative and staff members are responsible for the training and development of new and current employees at the distance learning sites.

3. Various Distance Learning sites already may or may not use a guide that includes standard operating procedures.

PROCEDURES

This research was structured to determine the effectiveness of using a Site Procedure Manual at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning sites in order to produce more efficient employee training and site practices. In order to project the value a Site Procedure Manual would provide as a training and resource guide for employees, a survey was administered to all full-time Distance Learning Site employees throughout Virginia, Arizona, and Washington. The survey inquired about operations that should be covered in a Site Procedure Manual and if such a manual would be considered a useful training tool and resource guide.

This survey contained an array of questions on previous and current training methods used at the sites, length of training time needed at the sites, areas covered in training at the sites for all employees, as well as what resources are available to employees in order to help perform job tasks. The results of the survey were then tabulated and analyzed to determine the site operations that may be covered and the appropriateness of a Site Procedure Manual as a training and resource guide for Old Dominion University Distance Learning site employees.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Following is a list of terms that were defined to provide a clearer understanding of the research project.

Old Dominion University (ODU) – A public research institution based in Norfolk, Virginia, known for its use of ground breaking technology to lead the way in distance learning over the past three decades.

Distance Learning (DL) – a non-traditional classroom setting where courses can be completed through an extended campus, online, or through video streaming technologies.

Site – Extended satellite campus that provides student enrollment services for distance learning students.

Site Director (SD) – Site academic advisor, site administrator, and site marketing specialist.

Assistant Site Director (ASD) – Site enrollment specialist, office manager, and marketing assistant.

Regional Director (RD) – Oversees regional administrative and marketing efforts, responsible for hiring, training, and supervising Site Directors.

Site Procedure Manual – A manual that would allow site employees to be able to deliver enhanced customer services to prospective and current students, by directing the flow of information, to manage classrooms, and to efficiently perform other office administrative services. It should be a flexible and fluid management tool, constantly changing and evolving as procedures, techniques, and policies are altered, either locally or from the main campus. The use of this manual would ensure that all prospective and

current students will receive uniform and consistent customer service and that all site staff will have the satisfaction of confidently and accurately performing their tasks.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) – Teaches employees in a one-on-one working environment the skills necessary to perform job tasks.

Virginia Community College System (VCCS) – Twenty-three community colleges located throughout the state of Virginia that deliver higher education and workforce development.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This study looked at using a Site Procedure Manual at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites in order to produce more efficient employee training. A survey was developed in order to help project the effectiveness of a Site Procedure Manual for use in training and as a resource guide for employees.

Chapter II presents a review of literature from researchers and expert authors concerning the effectiveness of employing procedure manuals in order to perform tasks and daily business routines. Chapter III will describe the methods and procedures employed in this research study. Chapter IV will supply the survey findings from the research. Chapter V will summarize and provide conclusions for the research study, as well as, make available further research recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When managers or administrators of a business or organization decide to develop

an employee procedure manual they demonstrate the importance placed upon providing

quality customer service, as well as, promoting and maintaining good employee relations.

A procedure manual familiarizes employees with the specific mission, background,

expectations, and benefits of the business or organization (Fisher, 2002).

According to White (2010), "the policy and procedure manual plays an important

role in every business or organization and is integral to the orientation and training of

new and current staff" (p. 54). In order to perform daily operations a procedure manual

serves as a beneficial tool and can ensure all members of the staff will have been

provided with the same information in order to conduct business and represent the

company in an appropriate manner (Allen, 2010). The preferred result of a well

developed and written procedure manual is that mistakes in tasks will be fewer and

quality will be better (Brewton, Culbreth, & Groeger, 2011).

This chapter will review the most important aspects, such as the development and

benefits of Procedure Manuals. Reviewing the literature on these different aspects of

procedure manuals will help determine the most effective methods for developing and

employing a procedure manual for Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites.

DEVELOPMENT

The initial stages of developing a procedure manual for a business or organization

can be very time-consuming. Devoting the time to carefully and accurately developing

and maintaining a procedure manual, however, can serve as a great investment to any

company (White, 2010). In order to successfully develop and implement a procedure manual, the proper preparation needs to be done in gathering the information that will be included in the content, as well as, deciding on the design that will be most beneficial to the company.

In developing a procedure manual, a business or organization must take an in-depth look at what exactly is to be done in most any situation in order to develop the content of the manual (Larson, 2008). The procedure manual will need to, according to Allen (2010), "cover everything from the staff dress code to procedures in case a client does something inappropriate" (p. 25). The knowledge needed to gather this information can be done through policy and task analysis, in which a complete understanding of the guiding principles and skills are required in order to convert the information into written procedures (Larson, 2008). This will help provide the employees with the know-how to act according to policies and perform assigned duties or services.

Even though no literature were located that stated exactly what should be covered in a company's manual, following are some of the most common policies and procedures that might be covered:

- Attendance

- Dress Code

- Customer Service (Telephone, Walk-ins, Emails, etc.)

- Equipment (Telephone, Copier, Scanner, Fax, Computer, Printer, etc.)

- Filing System

- Opening and closing

- Clocking in and out

- Security Protocol

- Ordering supplies

- Shipping/receiving

- Troubleshooting office equipment

- Reporting data and

- Reporting accidents.

The characteristics of a quality procedure manual include being: clear, concise, easy to read and understand, accurate, comprehensive, consistent, up-to date, and positive (White, 2010). This can be accomplished by selecting the appropriate media and having well-written procedures in order to communicate the necessary information.

When considering the best way to communicate the information and the suitable media to use a procedure manual, Larson (2008) stated:

> Choose the media that best communicates the content. Some things can be communicated through checklists or written procedures. Others are best communicated with a video or a series of photos. Audio clips can be very powerful when used in the right situation. (p. 32)

Written procedures can be expressed through checklists or scripts. When procedures are written as a checklist, it most always insures that the standard is being met in order to perform the task. Scripts serve as a guide for handling the situations that could possibly occur, especially with dealing with the customer service.

Conveying a procedure through visual presentation is one effective method to relay the necessary information (Brewton et al., 2010). Computer screen shots, for example, will provide the know how to perform some computer activities (Brewton et al.,

2010) or a video can demonstrate the correct procedure for troubleshooting a piece of equipment. Audio clips can be very helpful in businesses or organizations that deal with high volumes of telephone conversations. These can show employees, for example, the tone of voice to use when dealing with customers (Brewton et al., 2010). When the necessary time and effort is put into developing a business or organizations procedure manual, the benefits will most certainly out weight the costs of producing the procedure manual.

BENEFITS

Even though no research findings were located as to the benefits of using a procedure manual for training, it is safe to assume that every business or organization should use a procedure manual as a foundation to train new employees, improve performance in current employees, and simply manage daily operations. According to Fisher (2002):

> Employee procedure manuals provide a level of comfort to your employees. It is natural that an employee will feel more comfortable knowing what is expected of him or her to comply with guidelines and cultures. It follows that employee comfort will result in improved productivity, decreased turnover and improved employee/management relations. (para. 10)

Businesses and organizations will always have to deal with the unexpected when managing daily operations and situations. The use of a procedure manual helps to mentor and give direction to staff while also holding them accountable according to performance standards (Dydek & Tomich, 2006). By educating the staff with a procedure manual, they will be better prepared in dealing with day-to-day routines and emergency situations

(Allen, 2010). A procedure manual will save businesses and organizations time and

money, by serving as a training tool, helping prepare for problems before they arise, and

guiding all employees to better job performance.

SUMMARY

Business and organizations can only be as good as the procedures they have put

into place (Brewton et al., 2010). By developing a procedure manual that is well-written

and uses the appropriate media, not only will time and money be saved, but it will make

it easier to train new employees and keep current employees up-to-date on procedures

(White, 2010) with the knowledge necessary to handle the tasks of daily operations.

Chapter III will discuss the methods and procedures used in conducting this

research study. The chapter will cover in detail the surveyed population, instrument used

for data collection, and statistical analysis of the research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND RESEARCH

Chapter III describes the instrument used to survey this study's population, the processed used for collecting of data and statistically analyzing the results gathered from the study. Chapter III will also clarify how the research was proposed for this study.

POPULATION

The population of this study consisted of 27 Assistant Site Directors (ASD), 23 Site Directors (SD), and four Regional Directors (RD) from Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites. The total population was 54. The responses of those surveyed were analyzed to determine the essential components that should be included in a Site Procedure Manual to be used as part of the training process and as a reference guide to more efficiently perform site tasks and operations at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

This study was done in order to determine if employees at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites would require less on-the-job training if a Site Procedure Manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations. In order to determine possible solutions, a survey of 10 questions was used to collect the necessary data from the 27 ASD's, 23 SD's, and the four RD's at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites.

Survey Questions 1 through 3 were formulated in order to grasp an understanding from the ASD's, SD's, and RD's on whether or not they would consider a Site Procedure Manual to be an appropriate training tool for new employees, an effective resource guide

for all employees, and to determine if advantages would be gained across Distance Learning by using a set of standardized procedures as set forth in a procedure manual. Survey Questions 4 through 9 were written in order to best determine the likely importance of what content should be covered in the Site Procedure Manual. Survey Question 10 was an open-ended question that allowed respondents to make further recommendations on any topics that may not have been covered in the previous survey questions. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of this study was to determine if employees at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites would require less on-the-job training if a Site Procedure Manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations. On June 5, 2012, a cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the rationales for the study, along with a link to the survey were sent each ASD, SD, and RD at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning sites. The letter included a request to complete the survey no later than June 26, 2012. On June 26, 2012, a follow-up letter (Appendix C) extending the deadline and asking for participation in the survey by those who had not already completed it.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The survey questions given to the ASD's, SD's, and RD's at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning sites were analyzed on an aggregated bases. By tabulating the number of responses to each question and rating the frequencies of responses were reported in percentages for each question.

SUMMARY

In Chapter III, the Methods and Procedures used for this study were presented. The content provided the population, method of data collection, instrument design, and statistical analysis of the study. The hope of this study was to determine if employees would require less on-the-job training if a Site Procedure Manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites.

Chapter IV will provide the findings of the research study by stating the response rate of the survey. The chapter will also provide the responses to the survey questions that were provided to the ASD's, SD's, and RD's at the Distance Learning Sites at Old Dominion University.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter will report the findings of this research study. The purpose of this study was to determine if employees at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites would require less on-the-job training if a Site Procedure Manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations.

Participation Rate

This study consisted of a set of questions concerning the opinions of the 27 ASD's, 23 SD's, and the four RD's about a Site Procedure Manual to be developed and used at Old Dominion University Distance Learning sites as an effective training tool and resource guide, if having standardized procedures would benefit the Distance Learning community, and what procedures would be most beneficial in a Site Procedure Manual. The survey was forwarded to a combination of 54 ASD's, SD's, and RD's of which 49 responded to the survey, resulting in a 91% response rate. Table 1 shows the number of ASD's, SD's, and RD's who participated in this study.

Table 1

Response Rate

| Number Sent	Number Collected	Total Response Rate
54	49	91%

Report of Data

Survey Question 1 asked respondents to select whether or not a site procedure manual should be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees. From the

data collected, 46 (85%) respondents selected "Yes" and three (6%) respondents selected "No" in answering the question. Ten respondents wrote in the additional following responses:

- This would help with keeping everyone using the same basic operating procedures.

- Yes, as a new employee my mentor prepared one for me. It was a very valuable tool. However, a site procedure manual would need to be updated regularly.

- There are so many different areas that we deal with on a daily basis, that I feel this would be an appropriate training tool.

- Need information on the web where it is in one place and updated on a regular basis if it is broken down into manageable sections.

- Unless it comes from the specific site as each one is very different, I see an overview procedure manual from main campus needing to be manually reviewed/revised at each site anyway, so might as well have individual site manuals.

- Along with mentor partnering and hands-on training.

- On blackboard.

- Instruction on trouble shooting technical problems, and who to interact with at main campus for specific questions or student record error resolution would be helpful.

- It would help to define and standardize processes from site to site.

- As long as it was kept updated. There are constant changes so addendums or updates would have to be sent.

As noted in Figure 1, a Site Procedure Manual would seem to be considered by the majority as an appropriate training tool for new employees.
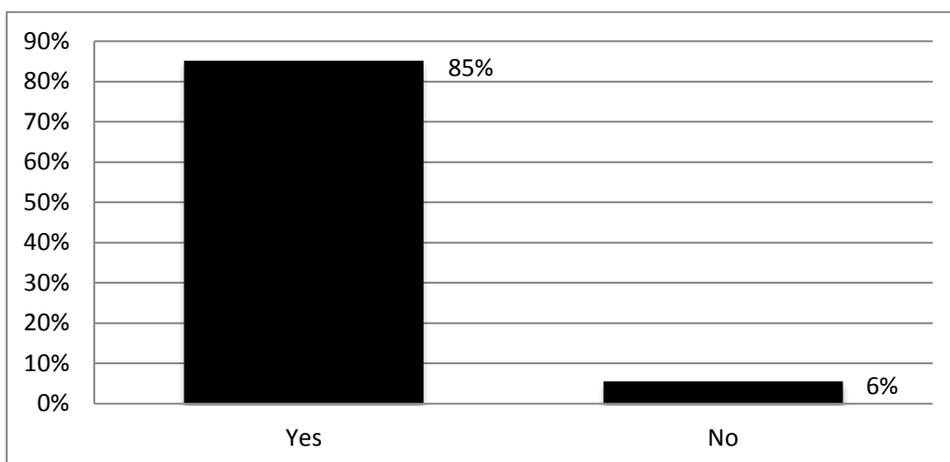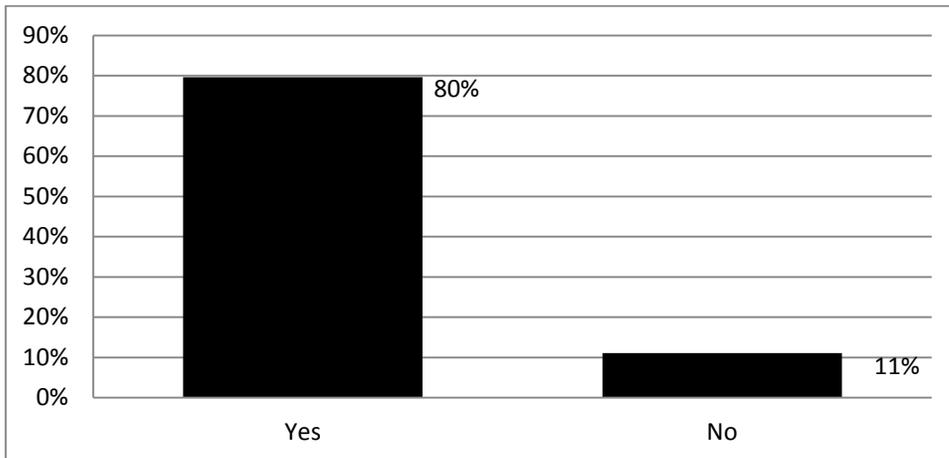

Figure 1. Site procedure manual considered beneficial as training tool.

Question 2 asked respondents to select whether or not a site procedure manual should be considered an effective resource guide for all employees. From the data collected, 43 (80%) respondents selected "Yes" and six (11%) respondents selected "No" in answering the question. Nine respondents wrote in the following responses:

- Very valuable for cross training.

- I'm not sure if one "across the board" manual would be best or one that is specific to SD's, ASD's and part-time would be better. One manual for all employees would probably need to be more general in nature.

- Not if they work on Main Campus. Please be more specific in your question.

- If it is an up-to-date searchable web resource.

- As a guide, to be revised for individual sites but not as a dictum.

- There are some things that only an SD or ASD should handle.

- It would help to lessen the confusion when determining who the best resource for answers to questions.

- Possibly for all site employees and the regional directors.

- SD's and ASD's wear so many hats that sometimes it is difficult to keep up with all the changes. Also, if the Assistant is out a Site Director would have access to the material, especially since their main job is advising and marketing. But then again who has time to look for the information - it is easier to pick up the phone and call or email another site representative.

As noted in Figure 2, a site procedure manual would seem to be considered by the majority an effective resource guide for all employees.

*Figure 2.* Site procedure manual considered effective resource guide.

Question 3 asked respondents to select whether or not a set of standardized procedures, such as those that would be included in a procedure manual, to be an advantage to the Distance Learning sites. From the data collected, 44 (81%) respondents selected "Yes", three (6%) respondents selected "No" in answering the question, and two

(4%) did not respond to the question. Five respondents wrote in the additional following responses:

- Particularly for staff turnover.

- Not sure.

- As long as it was revisable as each site has different ways of doing things and I find over-all instructions to never quite fit.

- Because each site is so different, it would be difficult to standardize procedures. However, a manual that explains how to do things (such as how to request curriculum evaluations) would be beneficial.

- I feel it depends upon the site. All sites have set up their offices that are conducive to them. Large sites function differently than smaller sites. A manual that works for one site may not work for another.

As noted in Figure 3, a set of standardized procedures, such as those that would be included in a procedure manual, would seem to be considered an advantage to the Distance Learning sites.
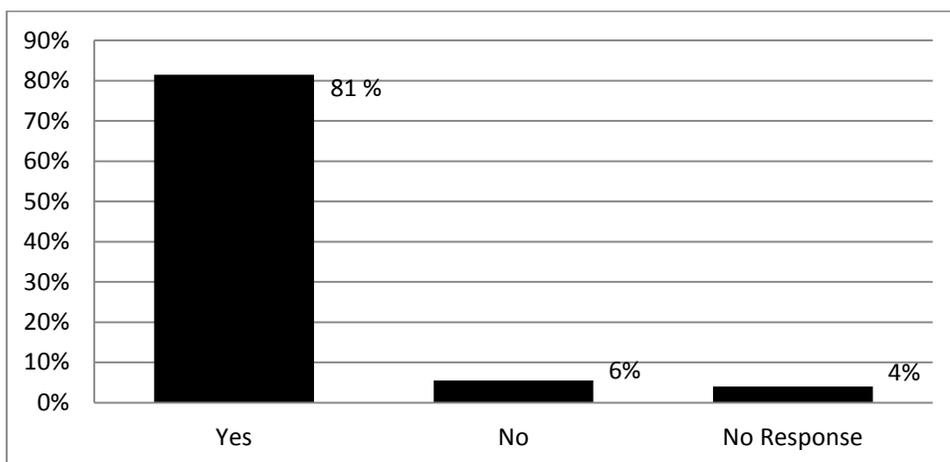
Figure 3. Standardized procedures an advantage.

Question 4 asked respondents to list any possible advantages to having a site procedure manual. From the data collected, 29 (54%) respondents wrote a response to the question and 20 (37%) did not respond to the question. Those who answered the question wrote the following responses:

- It would serve as a great training source and ongoing reference for employees.

- It would make it easier to train employees.

- It would make sure that all employees are trained the same.

- It would be a great way to standardize the training at the sites.

- Regulated training procedures would be a great benefit to our distance learning system.

- Good reference for things that are only done during each semester.

- Resource guide information in one place to maintain history of administrative procedures/policies for training staff turnover.

- The most obvious advantage is consistency in compliance with procedure goals, so if a student moves from one site to another, all sites are doing the procedures the same way.

- This would insure that nothing is overlooked in the training process.

- Consistency in administration of sites.

- Uniform understanding of procedures, training manual, and update for continuing employees.

- 1. An overview of procedures at hand. 2. Consistency. Everything is so overwhelming it would provide access to material review away from the office for continued review. 3. Possibly provide it in traditional and virtual

formats. This would help with learning styles: audio, visual, Braille, self paced. 4. The procedure manual could accommodate webinar training sessions such as a textbook concept. 5. Again consistency. Each staff member through cross training would have the same information. 6. A consolidated web site for DL procedures.

- Having a point of reference is always an advantage when you are learning.

- Standardization and centralization of expectations, processes, and services.

- Would not have to re-invent the wheel.

- It would alert all sites to procedures they may be doing incorrectly and then they could update their own individual site procedures to more closely meet those sent from main campus.

- The biggest advantage I could see in having a site procedure manual is that we would all be handling everything the same way.

- Hourly employees will be able to look up (and complete) procedures when full time staff is out of the office. --Expectations of employees will be in black and white, and there can be no misunderstanding. --Hourly employees will be held more accountable for work that is not done--there will be no cries of 'but I didn't know how to do it' --Students will receive a uniform response to their questions from each site staff member.

- Consistent service delivery of services to students.

- Accountability would be the main one.

- Documentation of procedures that are many and complex.

- 1. Consistency 2. Connectivity to the main campus is critical and we are not always made aware of changes in procedures.

- Improve employee training; use as a reference guide.

- All employees are following the same set of standards. This would assist in performance evaluations and be consistent with ODU ethics and mission.

- A site procedure manual would give employees a reference tool for a number of situations that just don't occur daily or weekly.

- Consistency of procedures.

- Helpful for new Site Director, ASDs and Regional Directors.

- It would be very helpful to new employees. In addition, it would be helpful for situations that don't occur often. For example, if I haven't had a student using veterans' benefits for a long time, then I don't remember how to handle veterans' benefits.

- Good resource guide and training tool.

Question 5 asked respondents to select all the topics that should be included and/or write in suggestions about dealing with personnel and administrative matters and what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site. Of the ASD's, SD's, and RD's participating in the survey, 29 (54%) selected Dress code, 40 (74%) selected Leave (Requesting and Reporting), 40 (74%) selected Timesheet, 42 (78%) selected Travel, and 11 (20%) responded Other. Of those responding Other, participants wrote in the following responses:

- A clear understanding of the role and importance of attitude. Process of facilitating problem resolution with students.

- Chain of command/authority, organizational chart site system, and Gornto contact information, equipment management, professional communication with community college staff and administrators.

- Hosting/paying for meals purchased for meetings and information sessions.

- Registrar Issues & Procedures for DL Advisors, Financial Issues & Procedures for DL Advisors.

- Code of Conduct for employees and appropriate work place behavior.

- Petty Cash Reconciliation, Equal Staffing/Hiring ratios across the Distance Learning sites.

- Confidentiality.

- Procedures for site closings as they relate to main campus notifications.

- Disciplinary actions and policies, and Workman's Comp. procedures.

- None of the above. Everything is available on line.

- Hiring, HR training site, benefits administrators/information

As noted in Figure 4, the topics that should be included about dealing with personnel and administrative matters in a procedure manual are displayed.
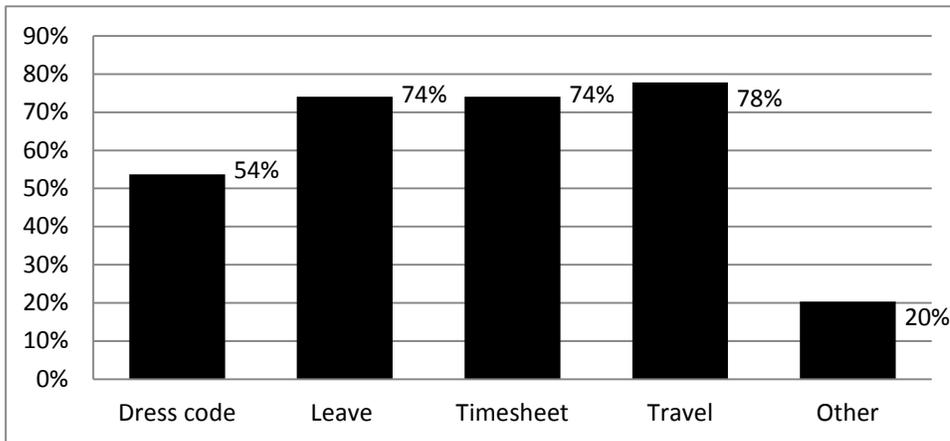

Figure 4. Topics dealing with personnel and administrative matters.

Question 6 asked respondents to select all the topics that should be included and/or write in suggestions about when dealing with students, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site. Of the ASD's, SD's, and RD's participating in the survey, 45 (83%) reported Admissions, 41 (76%) reported Confidentiality, 36 (67%) reported Educational Accessibility, 45 (83%) reported Financial Aid, 43 (80%) reported Graduation, 40 (74%) reported Inquiries, 43 (80%) reported Registration, 46 (85%) reported Student Accounts, 42 (78%) reported Transcripts, and 15 (28%) responded Other. Of those responding Other, participants wrote in the following responses:

- Policy regarding children in classrooms.

- DEGREEWORKS.

- Case scenarios for resolving difficult students.

- Proctoring student/classroom conduct and local emergency procedures - fire drills, weather and other threats.

- Information that is specific to Distance Learning sites and to each individual site.

- Need a current directory of campus personnel--who is responsible for what!

- Special attention should be paid to the applicable deadlines and dates for readmission/reapplying as they pertain to student status.

- Paperless student files.

- Academic advising.

- Honor Code information.

- In my opinion there should be a separate category for Inquiries and Transcripts - they should fall under office administration duties - not student services which would cover all other items listed above.

- Who gets what piece of paper at Main Campus and where it goes, order of file folder for all the unusual pieces of paper we get.

- Acceptable classroom behavior.

- Some of this information, though, wouldn't apply for some employees, particularly the part-time site staff. There should be some sort of indication that specifies those employees' responsibilities.

- Veterans Information.

As noted in Figure 5, the topics that should be included when dealing with students in a procedure manual are summarized.
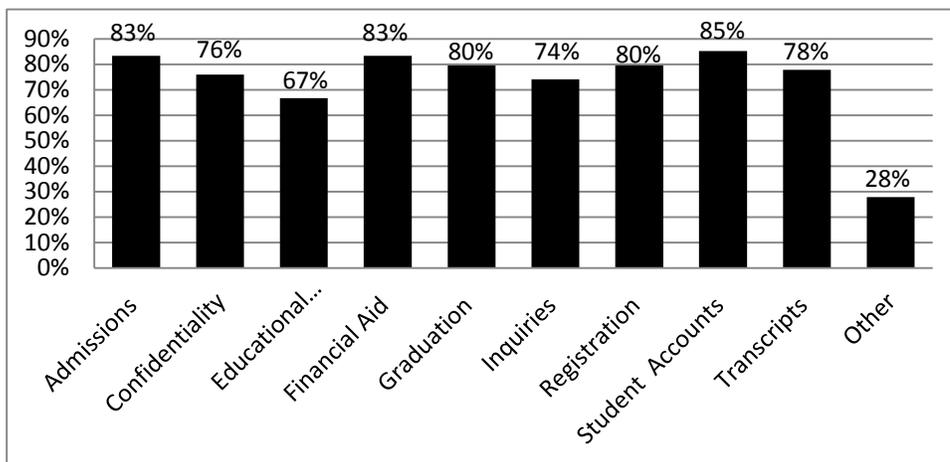

Figure 5. Topics dealing with students.

Question 7 asked respondents to select all the topics that should be included and/or write in suggestions about dealing with documents/correspondence, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance

Learning site. Of the ASD's, SD's, and RD's participating in the survey, 39 (72%)

selected Attendance, 40 (74%) selected Distribution Sheets, 33 (61%) selected Emails,

29 (54%) selected Faxes, 42 (78%) selected Financial Aid, 20 (37%) selected Memos, 39

(72%) selected Student Files, 26 (48%) selected Work Orders, 34 (63%) selected Student

Returned Homework, 40 (74%) selected Transcripts, and six (11%) responded Other. Of

those responding Other, participants wrote in the following responses:

- How to track inquiries

- Email etiquette

- FERPA regulations, Appropriate use of email and email etiquette

- Transcript Evaluation Procedures and Processes

- UPS, exam security

- Digital sending

As noted in Figure 6, the topics that should be included when dealing with

documents and correspondence in a procedure manual are summarized.
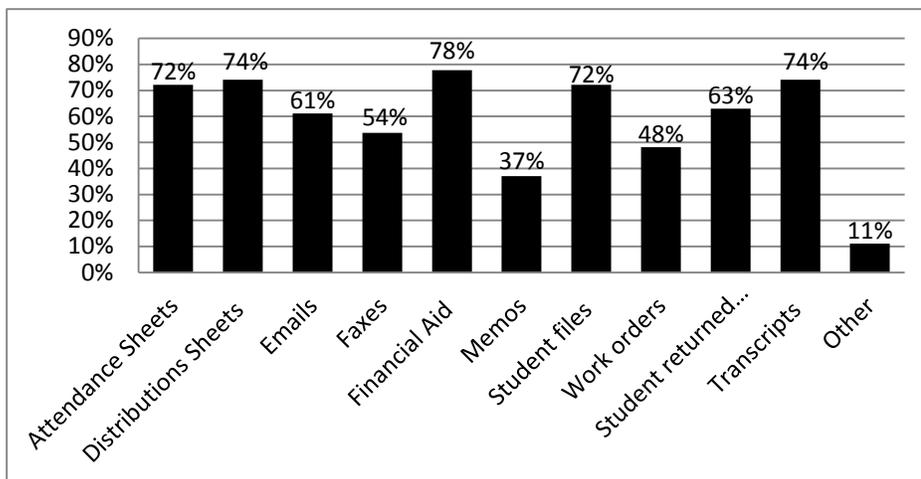

Figure 6. Topics dealing with documents and correspondence.

Question 8 asked respondents to select all the topics that should be included and/or write in suggestions about dealing with student exams and classroom conduct, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site. Of the ASD's, SD's, and RD's participating in the survey, 44 (81%) replied Proctoring Exams, 34 (63%) replied Staffing During Exams, 32 (59%) replied Updating Proctor Schedule, 37 (69%) replied Filing Exams, 42 (78%) replied General Exams, 31 (57%) replied Student Attendance, 40 (74%) replied Classroom Conduct, 35 (65%) replied Computer Lab Conduct, and three (6%) responded Other. Of those responding Other, participants wrote in the following responses:

- Not all sites have the exact same staffing set up, so my feeling is that some of these things are handled differently from site to site.

- Semester schedule format.

- I feel all other items above should be covered under the Site Operations.

As noted in Figure 7, the topics that should be included when dealing with student exams and classroom conduct in a procedure manual are summarized.
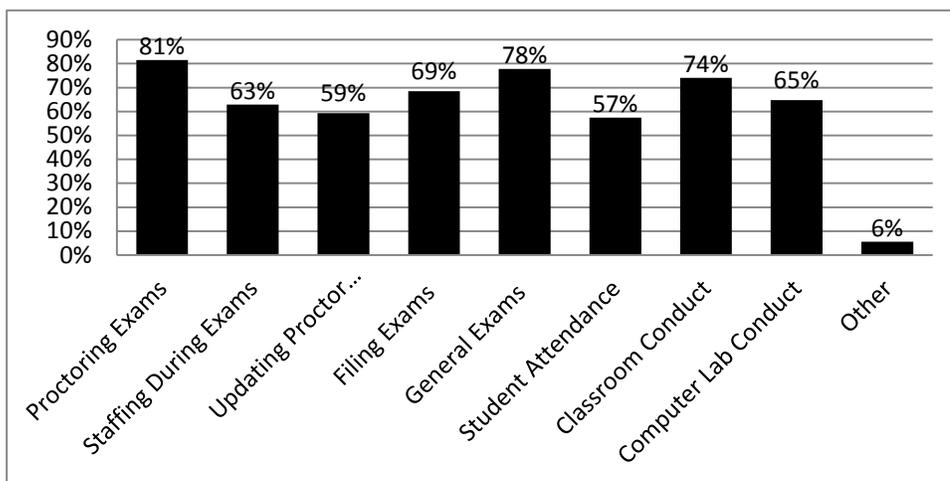

Figure 7. Topics dealing with student exams and classroom conduct.

Question 9 asked respondents to select all the topics that should be included and/or write in suggestions about dealing with site operations, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning Site. Of the ASD's, SD's, and RD's participating in the survey, 38 (70%) suggested Office Opening/Closing Procedures, 37 (69%) suggested Office Equipment, 38 (70%) suggested Staffing, 37 (69%) suggested Scheduling Appointments, 41 (76%) suggested Filing System, 42 (78%) suggested Ordering Office Supplies, 44 (81%) suggested Preparing UPS Shipments, 36 (67%) suggested Crisis Management, and six (11%) responded Other. Of those responding Other, participants wrote in the following responses:

- Under "crisis mgmt" you need to include "inclement weather guidelines for students and staff."

- Many of these need to be site specific and individualized so while some guidance would be good, in the long run, these could not be standardized from main campus.

- Inventory.

- Closings and delays due to inclement weather, Appropriate contact information, and Process for contacting ATS for trouble shooting.

- These are all important, but I think some of these points might be uniquely handled at each site rather than appropriate for establishing a broad policy.

- SharePoint, Banner, Site Web-site, Etc.

As noted in Figure 8, the topics that should be included when dealing with site operations in a procedure manual are listed.

28
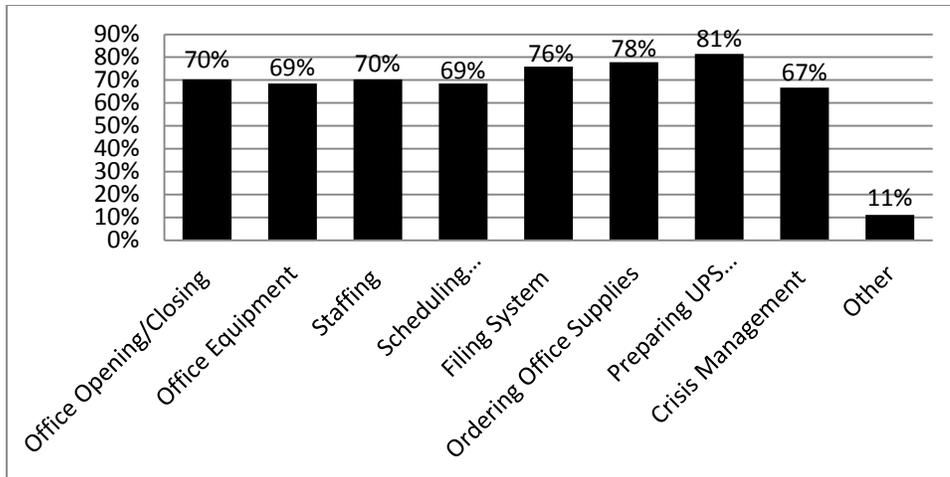
Figure 8. Topics dealing with site operations.

Question 10 asked respondents to list any further recommendations for topics that may not have been covered in the previous Survey Questions. From the data collected, 12 (22%) respondents wrote a response to the question and 37 (69%) did not respond to the question. Those that answered this question wrote the following responses:

- Relationship with the community college.

- I have had the wonderful opportunity to be mentored (peer) and supervised (regional director) by individuals who are on standby to ask my numerous questions since arriving in my position. There might be a section on the role of mentors and their importance.

- While a procedures manual would be a good resource, my opinion is that some things seem to be moving targets and the procedures and processes often change, so keeping a manual of this nature up to date is hard to do. It has been attempted at least a few times, I believe.

- Participation in training opportunities, developing collegial relationships across sites, educational opportunities.

- This manual will undoubtedly rival the length of War and Peace. Nothing is too small to include--good luck writing this all down, and then editing it every time there is a revision in procedure!

- Information outlining procedures for Petty Cash Accounts, Business Related Meal Expense Forms, Purchase Orders, etc. Thank you for working on this!

- Community college/partners communication plan.

SUMMARY

Chapter IV presented the data from 91% (n=49) of the population. Data were collected and summarized. The questions addressed whether or not a Site Procedure Manual at the Old Dominion University Distance Learning would be considered an effective training tool and resource guide, if having standardized procedures would benefit the Distance Learning community, and exactly what procedures would be most beneficial in a Site Procedure Manual. Additionally, the respondents were able to expand on certain responses by writing in their opinions and offering further comments on topics that should be covered in a Site Procedure Manual.

Chapter V will summarize these findings and conclusions drawn from this research study. This chapter will also provide suggestions for the use and content of a Site Procedure Manual as well as further research recommendations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the large number of Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites, the distance between the sites, and the increasing number of student enrollments at the sites, it is evident that there is a strong need to improve the effectiveness of site operations and reduce employee training time. This chapter includes a summary of the study and its population, conclusions as to what the data collected represents, and recommendations as to whether a procedure manual would be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees and an effective resource guide for all employees. Also, what advantages would be gained across the distance learning sites by using a set of standardized procedures and what content should be covered in a site procedures manual.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine if employees at Old Dominion University Distance Learning Sites would require less on-the-job training if a site procedure manual was used as part of the training process and as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations. It was undertaken for determining if a site procedure manual should be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees, if a site procedure manual would be considered an effective resource guide for all employees, what advantages would be gained across Distance Learning by using a set of standardized procedures as set forth in a procedure manual, and what content should be covered in a site procedure manual. Since Distance Learning consists of many sites that have a great distance between each of them and the increasing number of student enrollments at the sites, this study was deemed significant due to the strong need to

improve the effectiveness of site operations by reducing employee training time. This could be accomplished by providing all site employees the training and resources necessary by employing a site procedure manual. This study was limited to the participants of the administrative and staff members, the methods of operations used, and the consideration of the use of a site procedure manual as a training application at the Old Dominion University Distance Learning sites. The population of the study consisted of 27 Assistant Site Directors (ASD), 23 Site Directors (SD), and four Regional Directors (RD). The instrument used to address the problem was a survey created that contained 10 questions addressing the four research goals. In order to collect the data for the study, a cover letter explaining the rationale for the study, along with a link to the survey, was sent to each ASD, SD, and RD at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning sites. The data were analyzed on aggregated bases, tabulating each question's frequencies of responses which were then reported in percentages.   The information collected in the study reviewed the opinions of the ASD's, SD's and RD's and the findings were based on a 91% response rate of the surveyed population. The survey focused on determining the effectiveness of using a site procedure manual as a training tool and resource guide.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data collected it appears the majority of the population would consider a site procedure manual at the Old Dominion University Distance Learning to be appropriate training tool for new employees and an effective resource guide for all employees. The population of the study deemed it advantageous, as well as, identified the content and procedures that should be covered in a Site Procedure Manual. This study

also identified that the greater part of the population felt that a set of standardized procedures would be considered an advantage to the Distance Learning sites.

Based on the data, the following conclusions were developed for each of the research goals. RQ_1 was to determine if a site procedure manual should be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees. The majority of the population selected "yes" (85%), with 6% selecting "no." The two main consensus of the written comments were it would need to updated regularly and have site specific procedures.

RQ_2 was to determine if a site procedure manual would be considered an effective resource guide for all employees. The collected data for this question was similar to Research Question 1, in that the majority of the population selected "yes" (80%), with 11% selecting "no." The main points of the written comments were that again it would need to be kept updated, that it should have a section for local sites to assign responsibilities for individual tasks, and that it could be categorized by sections.

RQ_3 was to determine what advantages would be gained across Distance Learning by using a set of standardized procedures as set forth in a procedure manual. Data from Question 3 reported that the majority of the population selected "yes" (81%), with 3% selecting "no", and 4% no responding to the question. The main points of the additional comments were that certain procedures could be standardized, but the manual would need to be tailored to each site. Fifty-four percent of the population answered Question 4 and the consensus was that it would help with training by providing a consistent and standardized method for ensuring employee training would be done correctly.

RQ_4 was to determine what content should be covered in a site procedure manual. The compiled data from Questions 5 through 9 confirmed that the majority of population

was in agreement with the procedures concerning Personnel and Administrative Matters, Dealing with Students, Student Exams and Classroom Conduct, and Site Operations. Question 10 provided the respondents a space to add further recommendations. These are reviewed in the following sections.

Personnel and Administrative Matters

In response to Question 5, which focused on the category of "personnel and administrative matters", the percentages of agreement with the choices provided were as follows:

- 78% Travel

- 74% Leave (Requesting and Reporting)

- 74% Timesheet

- 54% Dress code

Twenty percent of the respondents made additional comments, which focused upon chain of command, role definition, employee code of conduct, confidentiality, disciplinary actions, and human resources.

Dealing with Students

In response to Question 6, which focused on the category of "dealing with students", the percentages of agreement with the choices provided were as follows:

- 85% Student Accounts

- 83% Admissions

- 83% Financial Aid

- 80% Graduation

- 80% Registration

- 78% Transcripts

- 76% Confidentiality

- 74% Inquiries

- 67% Educational Accessibility

Twenty-eight percent made additional comments, which focused on handling difficult students, deadlines, honor code information, veterans information, as well as, suggestions for categorizing some of the topics in other areas.

Documents and Correspondence

In response to Question 7, which focused on the category of "documents/correspondence", the percentages of agreement with the choices provided were as follows:

- 78% Financial Aid

- 74% Transcripts

- 74% Distribution Sheets

- 72% Student Files

- 72% Attendance

- 63% Student Returned Homework

- 61% Emails

- 54% Faxes

- 48% Work Orders

Eleven percent made additional comments concerning FERPA, email etiquette, UPS procedures, and digital sending of information.

Student Exams and Classroom Conduct

In response to Question 8, which focused on the category of "student exams and classroom conduct", the percentages of agreement with the choices provided were as follows:

- 81% Proctoring Exams

- 78% General Exams

- 74% Classroom Conduct

- 69% Filing Exams

- 65% Computer Lab Conduct

- 63% Staffing During Exams

- 59% Updating Proctor Schedule

- 57% Student Attendance

Three percent made additional comments focusing on how staffing may be handled differently at each site and how there should be a semester schedule format.

Site Operations

In response to Question 9, which focused on the category of "site operations," the percentages of agreement with the choices provided were as follows:

- 81% Preparing UPS Shipments

- 78% Ordering Office Supplies

- 76% Filing System

- 70% Office Opening/Closing Procedures

- 70% Staffing

- 69% Office Equipment

- 69% Scheduling Appointments

- 67% Crisis Management

Eleven percent made additional comments focusing on the inclusion of information about inclement weather procedures and the need for the manual to be tailored to site specific operations.

Additional Respondent Recommendations

In response to Question 10, which asked respondents to list any further recommendations for topics that may not have been covered in the previous Survey Questions, 22% of the population made further recommendations. The consensus of these recommendations was that it would be a good resource but difficult to maintain and include a section on building better community college relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, a Site Procedure Manual could enhance the training process and serve as a reference guide for performing site tasks and operations, in turn reducing the amount of time spent on on-the-job training. In addition, a mixture of procedures that are standardized from the main campus of Old Dominion University, as well as, procedures that can be individualized by each site seems to be a better combination than all the procedures being standardized across the board.

In order to develop a Site Procedure Manual as a training and resource guide, the following recommendations were made:

1. Establish defined procedures for operations.

   - Determine a comprehensive set of procedures to be standardized by the Office of Distance Learning.

- Determine procedures that may be individualized by Distance Learning Sites.

2. Establish a process for reviewing, evaluating, revising, and updating all site procedures.

   - Determine a timeline for the process.

   - Determine specific staff responsibility for each process.

3. Establish a detailed list that specifies the training needs for site employees by job title.

   - Determine specific training needs for Regional Directors.

   - Determine specific training needs for Site Directors.

   - Determine specific training needs for Assistant Site Directors.

   - Determine specific training needs for Site Office Assistants.

Based on this research, a Site Procedure Manual would enhance the training process and serve as an effective reference guide for ASDs, SDs, and RDs in performing site tasks and operations, in turn reducing the amount of time spent on on-the-job training. Although a Site Procedure Manual will be complex in nature, the study revealed that the use of a set of standardized procedures will allow training to be performed in a consistent manner for all ASDs, SDs, and RDs in order to improve the upfront investment of time saved in training, to identify procedures, as well as to standardize delivery of customer service and site operations. A Site Procedure Manual used for training would not only reduce the amount of time spent with on-the-job training, but it would also effectively serve site personnel in cross training of duties between site employees, as well as, between the different site locations. It would also help in the reduction of anxiety for new employees, in turn lowering the turnover rate of Site Personnel. Additionally,

further study is recommended to determine the criteria of a successfully trained staff

member as well as to establish if a Site Procedure Manual shortens the length of time

needed in training new employees.

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Site Procedure Manual Training Resource and Reference Guide Survey

Old Dominion University's Distance Learning Sites

The following survey has been designed to gather your thoughts about a Site Procedure Manual being considered an effective training tool and resource guide; if having standardized procedures would benefit the Distance Learning community; and exactly what procedures would be most beneficial in a Site Procedure Manual.

1. Would a site procedure manual be considered an appropriate training tool for new employees?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you would like, you may provide an explanation to your answer here.

2. Would a site procedure manual be considered an effective resource guide for all employees?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you would like, you may provide an explanation to your answer here.

3. Would you consider a set of standardized procedures, such as those that would be included in a procedure manual, to be an advantage to the Distance Learning sites?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you would like, you may provide an explanation to your answer here.

4. Please list any possible advantages to having a site procedure manual here.

5. When dealing with personnel and administrative matters, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site? Please check all that apply and/or write in suggestions.

☐ Admissions (Undergraduate, Graduate, Non-Degree, Reactivation/Readmission, In-state Tuition)

☐ Confidentiality

☐ Educational Accessibility Services

☐ Financial Aid (FAFSA, Enrollment Form, Consortium Agreements, VA Benefits, Third Party Billing)

☐ Graduation (Undergraduate, Graduate, Diplomas)

☐ Inquiries (Drop-ins, Phone Calls, E-Mails, Recording/Processing Inquiry Data)

☐ Registration (Tuition/Fees, Ordering Textbooks)

☐ Student Online Accounts (Midas/MyODU, Leo Online, Email, Blackboard, FSCS, Video Streaming, Adobe Connect, Technical Problems)

☐ Transcripts (How to handle for Inquiries, Student's that are applying, Current Students, and Graduating Students)

☐ Other (please specify)

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6. When dealing with students, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site? Please check all that apply.

☐ Admissions

☐ Confidentiality

☐ Educational Accessibility

☐ Financial Aid

☐ Graduation

☐ Inquiries

☐ Registration

☐ Student Accounts

☐ Transcripts

☐ Other (please specify)

7. When dealing with documents/correspondence, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site? Please check all that apply.

☐ Attendance Sheets

☐ Distributions Sheets (Assignments & Exams)

☐ Emails

☐ Faxes

☐ Financial Aid (FAFSA, Enrollment Form, Consortium Agreements, VA Benefits, Third Party Billing)

☐ Memos

☐ Student files (hard copy & electronic)

☐ Work orders

☐ Student returned homework

☐ Transcripts (How to handle for Inquiries, Student's that are applying, Current Students, and Graduating Students)

☐ Other (please specify)

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8. When dealing with student's exams and classroom conduct, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site? Please check all that apply.

☐ Proctoring Exams

☐ Staffing During Exams

☐ Updating Proctor Schedule

☐ Filing Exams (Exam Security)

☐ General Exams (Writing Sample Placement Text, Exit Exam of Writing Proficiency, Comprehensive Exams)

☐ Student Attendance

☐ Classroom Conduct

☐ Computer Lab Conduct

☐ Other (please specify)

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9. When dealing with site operations, what information/procedures should be included in a procedure manual for a Distance Learning site? Please check all that apply.

☐ Office opening and closing procedures

☐ Office equipment (Computer, Telephone, Fax, Scanner, and Copier)

☐ Staffing (day, evening, and weekend)

☐ Scheduling appointments on shared calendar

☐ Filing System (Inquires, Pending, Current Student, Graduates, Inactives, Preparing Student Files, Processing Student Homework)

☐ Ordering Office Supplies

☐ Preparing UPS shipments (logging student work, packaging, and labeling)

☐ Crisis Management (Security, Accidents, Tornados)

☐ Other (please specify)

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10. At this time, would you like to make further recommendations for on any topics that may not have been covered in the previous Survey Questions?

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter

June 5, 2012

Dear Assistant, Site, and/or Regional Director:

Since there is a great distance between each Old Dominion University Distance Learning Site, as well as, main campus in Norfolk, it can be difficult to provide employees with the necessary on-the-job training and resources that allow for the most quality in performing site tasks and operations. With the growth that is being experienced at Old Dominion University's Distance Learning sites, it is vital that well-organized and effective training and resources are provided in order to efficiently increase employee, as well as, site performance.

The following survey has been designed to gather your thoughts about a Site Procedure Manual being considered an effective training tool and resource guide; if having standardized procedures would benefit the Distance Learning community; and exactly what procedures would be most beneficial in a Site Procedure Manual. This survey will be conducted through SurveyMonkey.com to insure confidentiality and can be found at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WXQMM6S. You will not be required to provide your name and when you submit the survey, the results will be sent to me as a number total and with no individual identification.

This survey is part of my graduate degree program that I am pursuing with Old Dominion University. Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey by

June 26, 2012. If you have any questions, you can contact me by email at

jallen@odu.edu or by phone at 434-386-4694.

Thank you for your participation and helping me to complete my Master's degree

in Business and Industry Training.

 Best Regards,

Jennifer M. Allen
Assistant Site Director

Follow- Up Letter

June 26, 2012

Dear Assistant, Site, and/or Regional Director:

If you have completed the survey that was mentioned in my previous letter to you on June, 5, 2012, I greatly appreciate your quick response. If you have not yet had time to take the survey I would be tremendously grateful if you would please take a few minutes to complete it. This survey was designed to gather your thoughts about a site Procedure Manual being considered a beneficial and effective training tool and resource guide.

 This survey is being conducted through SurveyMonkey.com to insure confidentiality and can be found at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WXQMM6S. You will not be required to provide your name and when you submit the survey, the results will be sent to me as a number total and with no individual identification.

Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey by July 3, 2012. If you have any questions, you can contact me by email at jallen@odu.edu or by phone at 434-386-4694.

 Thank you for your participation and helping me to complete my Master's degree in Business and Industry Training.

 Best Regards,

Jennifer M. Allen
Assistant Site Director