

Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Director

Douglas Ellison, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies
College of Education, Health and Human Services

Committee Members

Stephen Mitchell, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs and Graduate Education
School of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies
College of Education, Health and Human Services

David Dees, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Foundations, Leadership and Administration
College of Education, Health and Human Services

Graduate Faculty Representative

Tricia Niesz, Ph.D.
Professor
School of Foundations, Leadership and Administration
College of Education, Health and Human Services

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

of

Christopher L. Baker

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Interprofessional Leadership

**Examining the Leadership Experiences of Campus Recreation
Student Employees Utilizing Near-Peer Leadership**

October 10, 2023
9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

[Microsoft Teams](#)

Christopher L. Baker

M.A. Sport and Recreation Management
Kent State University, 2011

B.S. Sports Administration
Kent State University, 2009

Chris turned his love for swimming and lifeguarding into a professional career in recreation when he became the Aquatics Coordinator at Kent State University in 2012. In this role, Chris was directly responsible for the safety of the patrons who visited the Student Recreation and Wellness Center as well as supervising and supporting student employees working within the facility. In his career at Kent State, Chris has served in three professional roles within Recreation and Wellness Services with each role giving him the opportunity to train, supervise, and develop student employees. This experience helped Chris to recognize his passion for student development and leadership. He is currently serving on the Senior Leadership team for Recreation and Wellness Services at Kent State University as the Associate Director for Facility Management and Operations and has been in this role since 2018. Chris aspires to make a positive impact on the student employees he supervises through positive co-curricular experiences.

Examining the Leadership Experiences of Campus Recreation Student Employees Utilizing Near-Peer Leadership

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine how the implementation of a near-peer leadership framework for student employee leaders, referred to as Operations Leads (OLs) in my practice as the manager of the Operations area at a university student recreation center, influences the supervisory and leadership ability of the student OLs. This new OL position was created to help support the area I oversee following organizational changes and challenges because of the post-pandemic impact on our department. Interviews (group and individual) served as the primary data source to explore the OLs perspectives on the influence the near-peer leadership framework had on developing their supervisory and leadership ability as student employees. Additional data sources included my researcher's journal and the OLs' reflection journals. Findings from this research included three themes categorized as benefits and two themes categorized as challenges. The benefit themes were (1) the OLs grew personally through their experiences, (2) the OLs provided professional support to the Operations area, and (3) the OLs experienced instances where they were seen as leaders by their peers. The challenge themes were (1) the OLs experienced growing pains as near-peer leaders and (2) the OLs experienced difficulty balancing personal relationships as near-peer leaders. This study provides insight into future implementation of a near-peer leadership framework in a campus recreation department.