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**THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA CHEMISTRY WORKSHOP PROGRAM:  
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS**

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Abstract: Presented here is an overview of the recruitment and selection process undertaken by the workshop staff and “super leaders” (experienced Peer Leaders) at the University of West Georgia (UWG). This includes, but is not limited to recruitment posters, classroom information presentations by veteran leaders, encouragement by current leaders of potential leaders within their workshop groups, group interviews of potential new leaders by workshop staff and super leaders, and the actual selection process. The retention and hiring of new leaders into the workshop program can be an overwhelming process with a large pool of applicants and a finite number of spaces, and the process has been streamlined. This paper will review the processes, applications, and recruitment material used by the workshop program at UWG.

The University of West Georgia Chemistry (UWG) Workshop Program has been operating for over a decade. During this time, the program has faced many challenges, which have forced the program to change and adapt. Finding new peer leaders is a challenge that arises every semester. At UWG, we have standardized and streamlined the process in order to give us a large and diverse applicant pool every semester. From this applicant pool, we select leaders based on several criteria after conducting group interviews. This process all starts with recruitment. In order to conduct interviews we must have applicants, and in order to get applicants we have to get people interested in becoming peer leaders. Spiking this interest is where we start the recruitment process.

The Recruitment Process: Who, What, Where, and How?

*Who are we looking for?*

We want applicants who have previously succeeded in college level Chemistry. However, a job such as peer leading requires more than good grades. There are certain intangibles that all good peer leaders possess. For this reason, we look for people who have shown promise in workshop, class, and lab. In order to know who these people are, we ask our current workshop leaders, professors, and laboratory teaching assistants for their thoughts and input on students who have shown exemplary promise as a peer leader.

*What are we looking for in a recruit?*

A strong candidate possesses many attributes. For example, a workshop leader first needs

to have an interest in the program itself. We want leaders who share a vision and a passion for our program and who are motivated to help others through peer leading. Also, the perfect applicant possesses certain leadership qualities that include, but are not limited to a good personality, past leadership experience, a positive attitude, the proper knowledge to be a competent leader in Chemistry, and a certain level of maturity.

*Where do we find qualified students?*

Qualified students are hard to find, and for this reason we recruit in several ways and in several locations. Recruitment starts in the workshop from the very first time a student steps into the room. Creating a positive experience in the workshop is the first step to cultivating successful leaders. We want all students to enjoy their time in workshop and to see actual results in their own learning as well as others. When certain students see this, they often want to be a part of that learning after their time as a student. Therefore, recruitment is an ongoing process within the workshop, whether the students or leaders realize it or not. Around the midpoint of each semester the recruitment process intensifies inside and outside of workshop. Inside of workshop, leaders hand out applications, encourage students to apply, and inform students about the program and position.

Outside of workshop, we recruit in the hallways and in the classroom. Recruiting in the classroom involves a certain level of communication and coordination with the course instructors. Workshop staff and student *Super Leaders*, who are experienced workshop leaders promoted to take on extra leadership responsibilities, enter the classroom and pitch the idea of workshop. We tell them about the program, what workshop leaders do, the benefits they receive, hand out applications, and answer any questions anyone may have. Lecture professors also often enjoy the opportunity to give their own reasons as to why students should be workshop leaders

In addition to the classroom, we also use recruitment posters. In the hallways, classrooms, workshop rooms, and laboratories, we hang up posters featuring a picture of a workshop leader or professor along with a quote from that person describing why they believe students should apply to become a workshop leader. These posters serve as friendly reminders to those who may be interested in applying of the due date for the applications.

*How do we convince students to apply?*

The experience a student has in workshop has a major impact on convincing students to apply. We also offer several other incentives to students. At UWG, students in the position of a workshop leader earn an hourly wage for their time spent conducting workshops. Also, during students' first semester as workshop leaders, they are enrolled in a class, which fulfills a core area of every degree offered at UWG. In addition, we also tell students about the skills they can obtain and refine as a workshop leader and that the position is a hardy resume builder. One of the real motivators is reminding students that becoming a workshop leader can help them retain and practice their Chemistry skills, which will help them on tests such as the MCAT, PCAT, and GMAT.

## The Application, the Group Interview, and the Selection Process

### *The Application*

Approximately 100 workshop leader applications are distributed every Fall and Spring semester at UWG. From the applications given out, around 30-40 applications are turned in. The number of people hired varies from semester to semester depending on need. We do not undergo a complete turnaround of leaders every year. We let our leaders grow and mature over several semesters as long as they continue to perform at the level we desire. For this reason, every semester requires a delicate balancing act between hiring new leaders and keeping successful veteran leaders. With this being the case, we must be that much more thorough in our hiring process. The first step of the application process requires applicants to fill out contact information, personal information, GPA, classes being undertaken in the next semester, available predetermined interview times, and answers to questions such as why they want to be a workshop leader.

### *The Group Interview*

After the application deadline, we contact all of the applicants and ask them to come to an interview at one of the times they marked as being available on their application. We invite every applicant for an interview as we do not make any decisions on who to hire until after the interview process is complete. Before the interview commences a picture is taken of the applicants sitting at the table. This is done for reasons to be discussed later.

Conducting a group interview allows for a dynamic and unique interaction among applicants. We are able to observe how these candidates interact and which applicants stand out as "natural leaders." We also see which applicants stand out in other ways. For example, some students reveal that they do not interact well with certain types of people. It may be clearer now why we invite every applicant to the interviews. We want as much interaction between as many types of people that we can get in order to reveal these attributes. However, these details cannot be revealed without first opening up discussion and interaction between the applicants.

In order to do this, we ask several types of questions. The first involves posing hypothetical situations that often arise in workshop and asking applicants to discuss, as a group, how they would resolve the issue as a workshop leader. In addition to the situational group discussions, we also pose questions to individual applicants. These questions are usually clarifying questions from information given on the application. For example, we may ask someone in a fraternity or other organization what their duties are and how many hours per week they dedicate to that organization. We also put applicants on the spot with some questions. For example, the applicant may have had trouble with workshop attendance. In this situation, we do not hesitate to ask that person why they have not been showing up to workshop. However, there are two sides to every coin. We also ask light-hearted yet insightful questions, such as "What animal best represents you and why?" The balance between hard-hitting, light hearted, insightful, and thoughtprovoking questions is important as we need a full spectrum view of each applicant in order to make the best assessments possible in preparation for the selection process.

### *The Selection Process*

After the completion of the interview process, we then begin the selection process. Following the final interview, the interviewers retreat for a few days to review their notes and think about the interview process. When reconvening, it is important that everything is as structured and organized as possible. As a group, we proceed through the applicants, one interview at a time. On hand are pictures of each group of applicants to serve as a refresher and so we can put a face to the name we are discussing at the time. Applicants are sorted into one of three groups: *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*. The groups are placed into columns on a whiteboard in order to keep track of them. Generally, in order for an applicant to be immediately placed into the *yes* or *no* column there must be a consensus vote among the workshop staff. As a result of requiring a consensus vote on the first round of deliberations, the *maybe* column is generally the largest group. After the first round of deliberations we must decide which of those in the *maybe* column are to be moved to the *yes* column. This stage of deliberations involves discussing the pros and cons of each applicant individually. Often there are disagreements, but these must be discussed until a decision is made. After we have assigned the necessary number of applicants to the *yes* column it is time to assign them into the subject for which they will be a leader. Again, the column approach is used. Once this final step is taken, the selection process is complete.

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