

Field Journal Two

Date: March 19, 2025

Location: UTSA CMAS Lobby, John Peace Library (JPL) 1.12

University of Texas at San Antonio

Observer: Mark Anthony Brennan

Observation Time: 12:30 - 13:42

General Observations

While in the CMAS lobby, I observed multiple student inquiries regarding ROTC, VA benefits, enrollment verification, and course certification. The front desk was staffed by three Hispanic females (HFs), two wearing hats and sweaters. When not assisting students, staff engaged in personal conversations, often about coursework and personal matters. The office environment was relatively informal, with student workers being very chatty when no one was at the desk. A professional development session was conducted toward the end of my observation period, indicating ongoing training for student workers.

Detailed Observations

(Note: HF/M = Hispanic Male/Female, WF/M = White Male/Female, BF/M = Black Male/Female, AF/M = Asian Male/Female)

12:30 – Arrival & Initial Observations

- I checked into CMAS. Three HFs staffed the front desk, two of whom wore hats and sweaters. They appeared comfortable in their roles and engaged in casual conversation.
- Office culture appeared relaxed, with workers engaging in conversations when unoccupied.
- **Observer Comment:** Despite the casual nature, the staff was attentive when approached by students, quickly transitioning from personal discussions to professional interactions.

12:42 – Student Inquiry About ROTC

- HF inquired about the location of the ROTC office. The front desk quickly provided directions. The student seemed satisfied and left shortly after.
- **Observer Comment:** The speed of response suggests familiarity with frequently asked questions.

12:57 – VA Benefits Inquiry

- In a blue shirt and white shorts, HF approached the front desk to ask about VA benefits. She seemed to have some knowledge already but was seeking clarification. The staff provided information and directed her to additional resources.

- **Observer Comment:** This interaction highlights the importance of front desk workers having a solid understanding of benefits to ensure students receive accurate information.

13:02 – Student Worker Joins Front Desk

- HF, wearing a black sweatshirt, white shirt, and blue jeans, joined the front desk team as a student worker. She seemed comfortable engaging with the other workers and immediately began assisting with inquiries.
- **Observer Comment:** The seamless transition suggests prior training and familiarity with the office workflow.

13:14 – Enrollment Verification Inquiry

- Wearing a brown shirt and blue shorts, HM asked about verifying his VA enrollment. The front desk assisted the student by explaining the steps involved. The student seemed appreciative and left with a clearer understanding.
- **Observer Comment:** Enrollment verification appears to be a typical inquiry, and the staff handled it efficiently.

13:19 – Staff Conversations

- Other staff members and student workers discussed coursework and personal lives, shifting from work-related to social topics.
- **Observer Comment:** While some personal conversations are expected, excessive chatting could impact attentiveness to incoming students.

13:21 – Personal Conversations Continue

- Staff continued talking, shifting topics to hair and personal grooming.
- **Observer Comment:** Although casual conversation fosters workplace camaraderie, frequent non-work discussions may present a distraction during peak hours.

13:22 – Course Certification Inquiry

- In a black Adidas t-shirt and blue jeans, WM asked about certifying courses. The front desk explained the process, and the student took notes.
- **Observer Comment:** The student seemed well-prepared. He brought questions with him and suggested that some students do their research before approaching the desk.

13:23 – CMAS Director Leaves for Field Trip

- Dr. Michael Logan left with a student worker to scout potential tabling event locations. He returned five minutes later.
- **Observer Comment:** The active planning for outreach events indicates an effort to increase student engagement with CMAS services.

13:25 – Chapter 35 & Payment Plan Inquiry

- HM, wearing a black ball cap, white t-shirt, tan shorts, and yellow shoes, inquired about course certification under Chapter 35 and payment plans. He appeared confused and concerned about his financial situation.
- The staff explained the options and reassured him that he had several avenues for financial support.
- **Observer Comment:** Financial concerns remain a key issue for students, particularly those relying on veteran benefits. Clear, structured guidance is essential in these interactions.

13:32 – Professional Development Begins

- WF staff member (wearing a brown blouse, black shirt, and black flowered dress) initiated a professional development session with student workers.
- **Observer Comment:** Including training opportunities suggests that CMAS is actively investing in the skills of student workers, which could lead to improved service quality over time.

13:38 – Hazelwood Inquiry

- HM (wearing a blue polo shirt and blue jeans) and HF (wearing a blue shirt and blue jeans) approached the desk to ask about Hazelwood benefits. The staff provided a thorough explanation.
- The student and parent (potentially) took notes and appeared satisfied with the information.
- **Observer Comment:** The pair displayed a proactive approach, which suggests that the student seeking Hazelwood benefits may already have some prior knowledge but require specific clarifications.

13:42 – Conclusion

- Left for the day after wrapping up final observations and farewells.

Observer Comments

- The front desk was consistently engaged with students seeking information on various topics related to financial aid and certification.
- Staff members engaged in frequent personal conversations when not assisting students, indicating a relaxed and informal office culture. While this may foster camaraderie, it may also impact attentiveness during busier times.
- A professional development session toward the end of the observation period suggests ongoing efforts to train student workers, which could enhance their ability to assist students effectively.

- Some students displayed signs of confusion or concern, particularly regarding financial aid and payment options, highlighting a potential need for more transparent communication or additional support.
 - The CMAS office is a crucial hub for student veterans. Its effectiveness relies on well-informed staff who can provide accurate and timely information. Ensured ongoing training and refining processes could further enhance the student experience.
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End of Field Notes



Date taken – March 06, 2025