Using Project Management Tools and Skill Development Frameworks for Student Learning in the Co-Curriculum

Katie Ansong, Matt Pistilli, Amanda Puffett – June 25, 2024

Overview
Cy GROW (Guided Reflections On Work) is based on a program started at the University of Iowa and uses brief, structured conversations between student employees and their supervisors to help make the learning that occurs through student employment more "visible" to the students. At Iowa State, Cy GROW is a collaboration between the Division of Student Affairs, University Human Resources, and the Office of Student Financial Aid in the Division of Academic Affairs.

Approach
- Supervisors were recruited, trained, and given relevant resources.
- A baseline survey was sent in the fall to student employees and Cy GROW supervisors.
- Supervisors led three structured conversations, utilizing four guiding questions per academic year.
- A post survey was sent to student employees and Cy GROW supervisors in the spring.
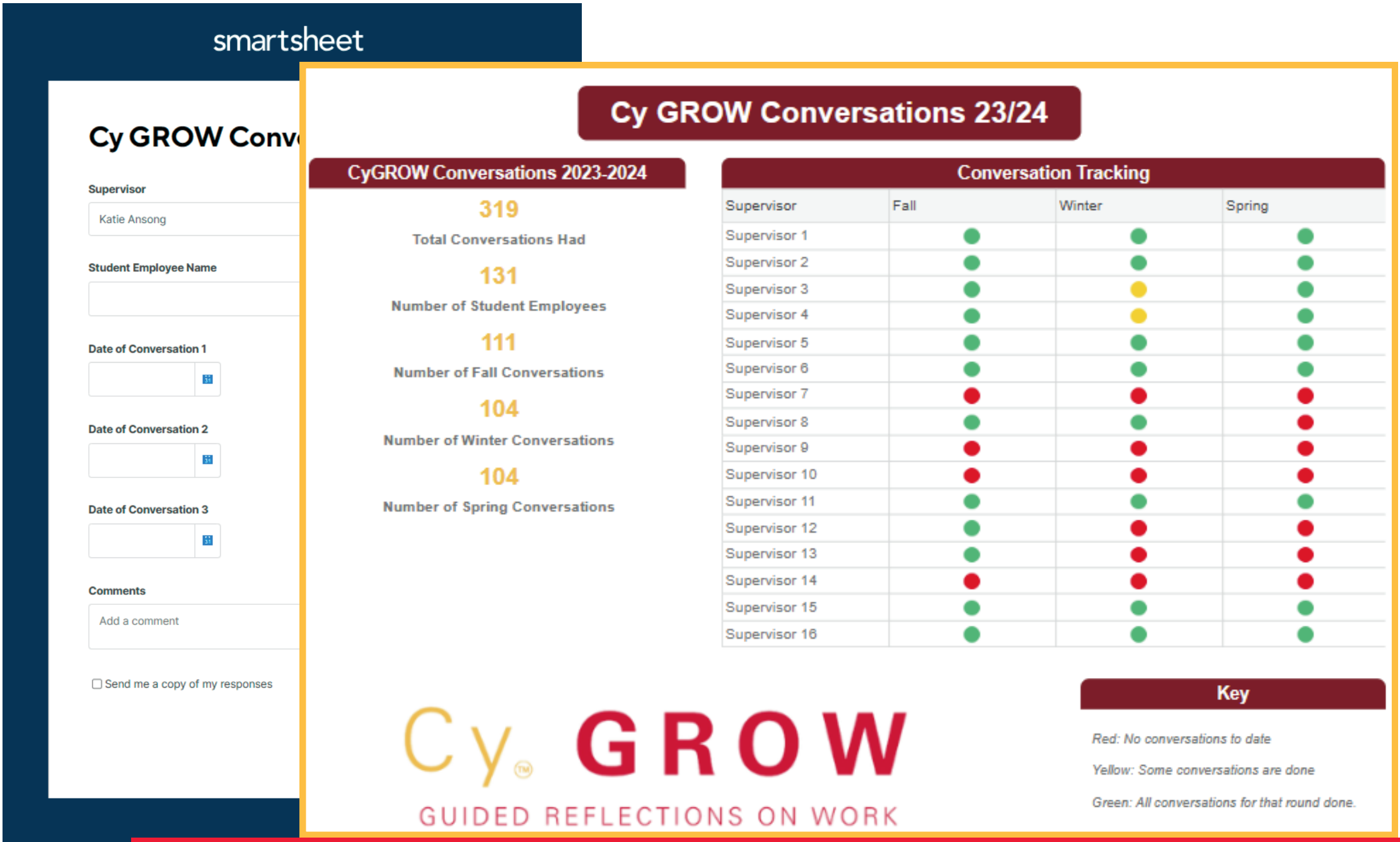
Program Goals
- Enhance student employment to boost retention and graduation rates.
- Establish a high-impact practice linking work experiences at on-campus jobs to classroom learning and post-graduation employment.
- Improve training and development for student employees and supervisors.

Data Collection
A Qualtrics survey was sent to all student employees in fall 2023 and spring 2024 to gauge the effectiveness of the program. Supervisors also received surveys asking about their level of confidence in assisting students, as well as overall satisfaction with the Cy GROW program.

Conversation Tracking
Smartsheet project management software was used to track each conversation a supervisor had with their student employees. Schedules were sent to supervisors to help ensure that there was adequate time for growth between conversations and reminders were sent to supervisors as they neared a cut off date. Smartsheet was used to keep track of conversations and which supervisors might need assistance.

Cy GROW Conversations 23/24

CyGROW Conversations 2023-2024	
319	Total Conversations Had
131	Number of Student Employees
111	Number of Fall Conversations
104	Number of Winter Conversations
104	Number of Spring Conversations

Cy GROW
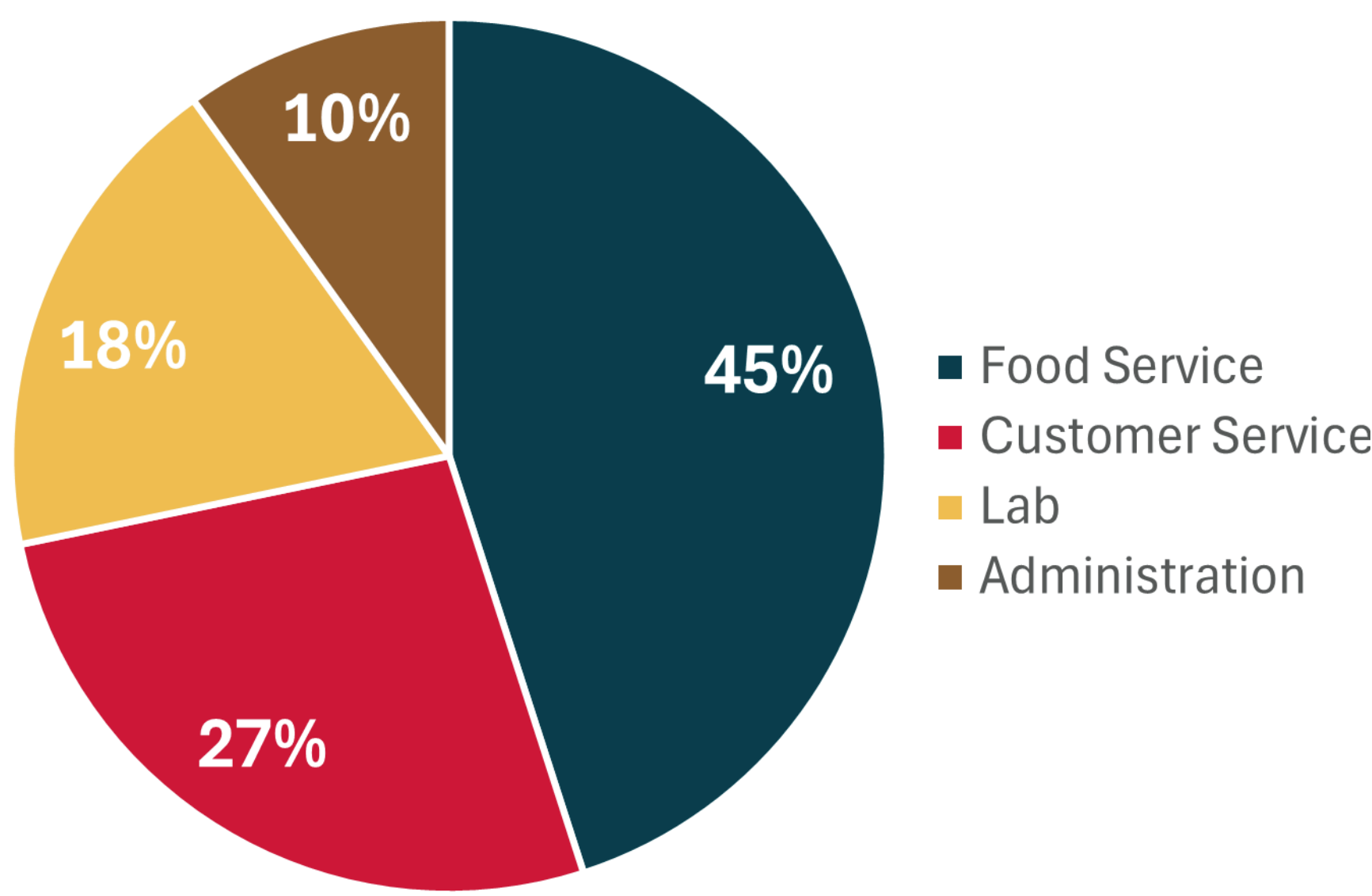GUIDED REFLECTIONS ON WORK

Four Guiding Questions
1. How does this job fit in with your academics?
2. What are you learning here that's helping you in school?
3. What are you learning in class that you can apply here at work?
4. Can you give me a couple of examples of things you've learned here that you think you'll use in your chosen profession?

Participants

16 Supervisors

131 Student Employees

Cy GROW participants and supervisors came from a variety of areas/roles on campus. While most supervisors had under ten student employees, some had over 50. Over 70% of student employees who started the program completed it.
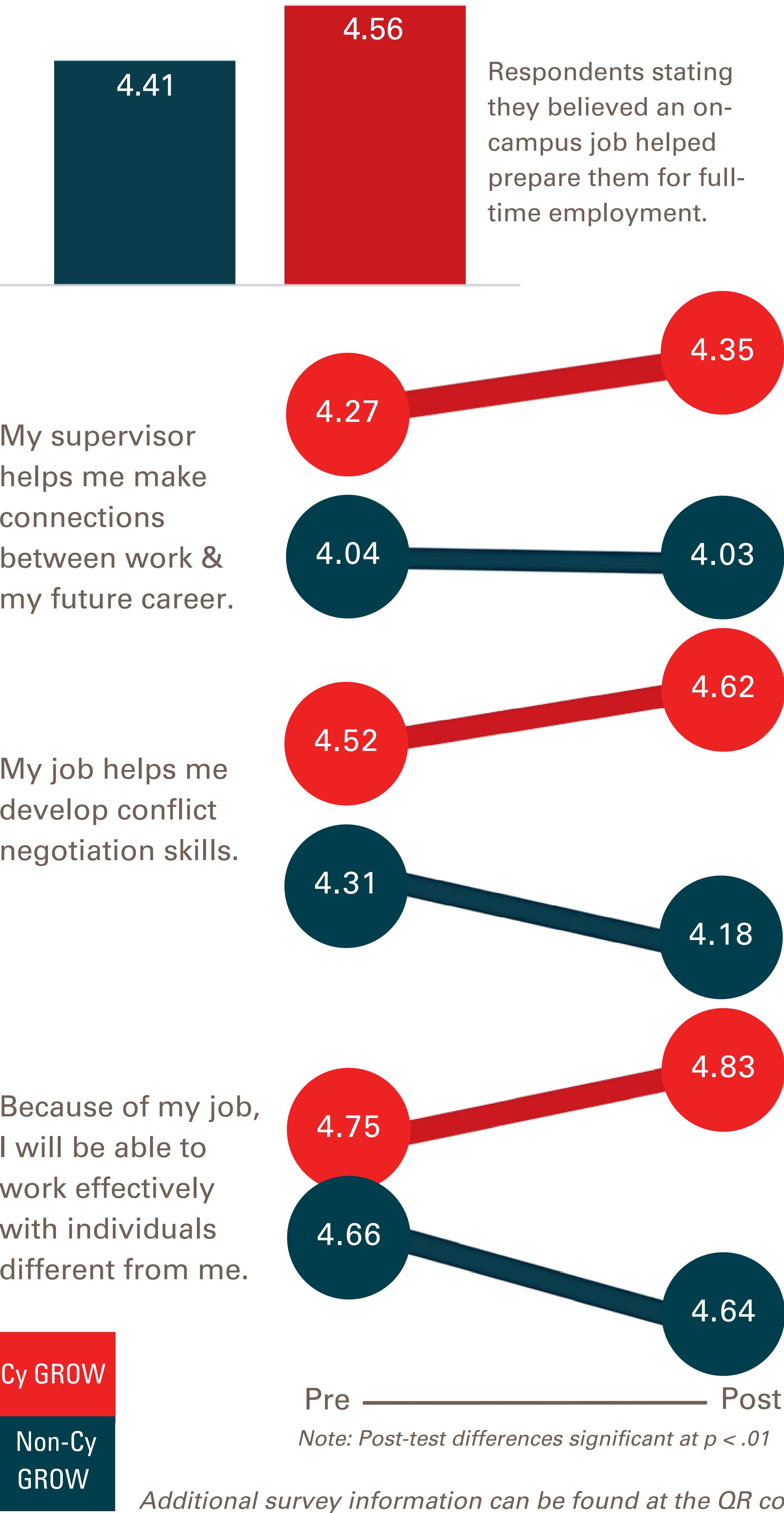
Student Employee Roles
- Food Service — 45%
- Customer Service — 27%
- Lab — 18%
- Administration — 10%

Outcomes

Student Employee Average Agreement
All means on a five-point scale where SD = 1 and SA = 5

4.41 | 4.56 — Respondents stating they believed an on-campus job helped prepare them for full-time employment.

My supervisor helps me make connections between work & my future career.
- Cy GROW: 4.27 → 4.35
- Non-Cy GROW: 4.04 → 4.03

My job helps me develop conflict negotiation skills.
- Cy GROW: 4.52 → 4.62
- Non-Cy GROW: 4.31 → 4.18

Because of my job, I will be able to work effectively with individuals different from me.
- Cy GROW: 4.75 → 4.83
- Non-Cy GROW: 4.66 → 4.64

Legend:
- Cy GROW
- Non-Cy GROW

Pre ——— Post

Note: Post-test differences significant at $p < .01$

Additional survey information can be found at the QR code.

When evaluating this year's pilot, results were very encouraging. Cy GROW students consistently showed greater growth compared to non-Cy GROW participants. Student employees made more connections and had more conversations with their supervisors.

Participating student employees also indicated they were more likely to return to on-campus employment than non-participants.

As shown below, supervisors' confidence levels greatly improved between the fall and spring as well, indicating program benefits for all involved.

Supervisor Confidence

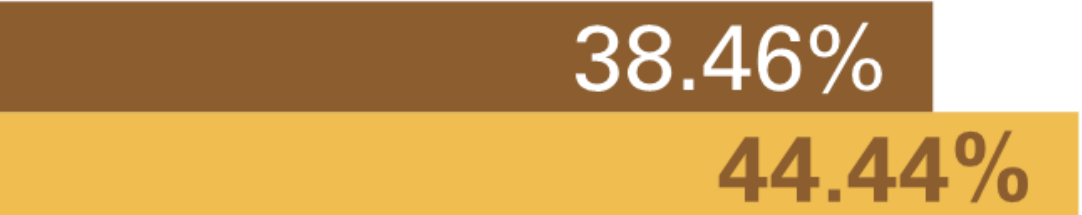I can identify connections between their job and their academic major/coursework.
- Pre: 50.00%
- Post: 66.67%

I can help student employees make connections between their current work and their eventual career.
- Pre: 30.77%
- Post: 77.78%

I can help student employees make connections between their work and their life as a student.
- Pre: 38.46%
- Post: 88.89%

I can help prepare student employees learn more about career options.
- Pre: 38.46%
- Post: 44.44%

I can help prepare student employees for the world of full-time employment.
- Pre: 46.15%
- Post: 55.56%

Legend: Pre / Post

Future
- Program automations in Smartsheet to help manage conversation updates and provide a more comprehensive and live dashboard.
- Utilize the supervisor survey to tailor training and create workshops.
- Integrate Cy GROW protocol into the student employee evaluation system with the use of a digital career skill reflection tool.

Limitations
- Not all supervisors recorded conversations.
- Supervisors were not always able to schedule time for all three conversations with students who did not work the same shift.
- Conversations happened during work hours, which can lead to a loss in productivity during that time.
- Most supervisors who volunteered to be a part of this pilot were already predisposed to viewing themselves as mentors.

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