

**2006 National Student Employee of the Year Winner**  
**Chris Lauer**  
**St. John's University**

We are happy to nominate Chris Lauer for the SJU Student Employee of the Year. We've supervised Chris for three years as an employee of the Outdoor Leadership. Christ stated as an Associate, was quickly promoted to a Lead Associate and Assistant Manager and then selected as the OLC Manager.

As the OLC Manager, Chris hires, trains and supervises 22 student employees; Chris is responsible for the individual and collective performance of this group and for providing continuous training. Chris is very effective due to his strong leadership and communication skills, his collaborative style and respect for others, and his strong teaching skills.

Chris uses strong communication skills with our customers while conveying information about equipment and programs, teaching at the Climbing Wall, teaching outdoor-related skills, and demonstrating outdoor equipment. He is the employee who you want teaching a group at the Climbing Wall (individuals and groups range from children to college students to adults from the community) because he can engage his audience while using his listening skills, patience, and observational abilities to ensure a productive, positive and safe experience. Chris ensures that every OLC program and the Climbing Wall have an evaluation piece; he utilizes this information to make informed decisions about programs, equipment, and facilities.

Chris is an outstanding employee whose innovativeness enhances the OLC. During his three year tenure, Chris' efforts have lead to an improved OLC employee training program, the financial viability of the OLC, enhanced programming, and more effective use of staff. In our fifteen years of supervising student employees (10 years supervising OLC employees) we've worked with hundreds of students. Chris is at the top because of his maturity, judgment, work ethic, motivation to succeed while helping others and the organization be successful, his passion for the work he commits to, and his interest in learning and improving his performance. We're so impressed with Chris that he is the first student employee we're nominating for S.J.U.'s "Student Employee of the Year" award.

We believe Chris' contribution to the university community is unique for several reasons:

- The Outdoor Leadership Center has to generate its own revenue to continue to exist since the OLC does not receive budgetary dollars from the university or support from other areas on campus (e.g., Co-Funding Boards, Sexton Fees). Consequently, the OLC Manager has to not only manage the day-to-day functioning of the OLC (including the Climbing Wall), but the Manager also has to ensure the financial viability of the operation. Chris has been the most outstanding OLC Manager when it comes to this key responsibility. He has successfully coupled the OLC mission and operations, with a vision of the OLC developed through great analysis and feedback from the OLC employees. Chris has combined his ideas for financial stability and growth with the OLC mission and operations to put the OLC in a strong position and to ensure the financial viability of this function on our campuses. Through Chris' stewardship and leadership, the OLC is moving forward on expanding some of our operations and programming (e.g., Climbing Challenge at the Wall, & equipment purchases).
- Chris impresses us because he's independently taken on external roles that he thinks will be beneficial to the work of the OLC and ultimately the campus community. For example, on his own Chris serves as the SJU representative to the Quarry Park (Stearns County Park) Advisory Committee. He saw the potential for partnering with Quarry Park on behalf of our institutions. He felt his presence on the committee would enhance connections to the outdoor opportunities for our students, staff and faculty.
- In his role as Manager, Chris as been outstanding in his ability to work with varied constituency of the OLC. The OLC constituents include all our on-campus members, but also external community fo9lks. For

example, Chris has worked hard with his staff to connect local Boy Scout Troops to the Climbing Wall for one of their merit badges. This is great outreach for our campus and a wonderful opportunity for the OLC staff to work with these youth. Chris has also worked hard to implement new programs or enhance existing programs for broader reach. For example, Nature Photography workshops draw folks to the OLC who were not previously connected to our very active outdoor activities. Eliminating a winter competition of activities such as Nordic skiing and snowshoeing in favor of a Winter Week of activities that more folks might want to engage in (e.g., moonlight snowshoeing, sledding and hot chocolate, ice fishing) was another idea implemented under Chris' watch. Chris excels when it comes to truly understanding and implementing how the OLC can be of service to more individuals and groups.

- Chris has handled OLC risk management in a very professional and responsible manner. Whether it's ensuring proper training of belaying at the Climbing Wall, teaching folks how to work with camping stoves or ensuring waivers meet the Business Office's specifications. Chris is always professional and uses great judgment. As Manager, he needs to sure all OLC staff are in compliance with our procedures, needs to understand where liability could be an issue, needs to act on potential risk issues before they're a problem, and needs to train all employees on changes to risk management protocols. Again, Chris goes above and beyond the call of duty. For example, all OLC employees have to be First Aid and CPR Certified. On his own initiative, Chris went beyond that minimum and became EMT Certified; Chris realized he could be a stronger asset to the OLC with the additional certification. Chris' extra effort has paid major dividends to the functioning of the OLC (e.g., he's been the Safety Coordinator for events such as the Triathlon due to his EMT Certification).
- A definition of initiative has to include Chris. For example, Chris came to us suggesting a Volunteer Setter Program for the Climbing Wall. His rationale for the program was very well thought out; however, we told Chris he had to prepare a written proposal that he would discuss with us at a future meeting. Many times when the proposal process has been suggested to employees they either drop the idea or turn in a brief report. Chris just blew us away! He hand an extensive proposal that included a summary of research on his findings from other campuses with Climbing Walls, selection criteria for volunteers, a training outline for the volunteers, an operations protocol, data supporting the number of hours invested in the volunteers and the return for the Climbing Wall, a discussion of risk management issues, etc. Chris submitted this proposal to John and I before the follow-up meeting so we'd have time to review it and consider his arguments. Obviously, we were more than impressed and immediately gave Chris the go-ahead to implement the Volunteer Setter Program. Chris has ideas and he knows how to move those thoughts into the action stage.

Chris has been a wonderful student employee, but more importantly, a professional colleague. It's great to not only have him on the team, but more importantly, leading the team of OLC employees. Chris has differentiated himself from other OLC employees by his high standards of professionalism, initiative, judgment, dependability, work ethic, and leadership. Consequently, we're proud to nominate Chris Lauer for the Student Employee of the Year.

Sincerely,

Heidi S. Harlander & John Clarkson  
Co-Supervisors: Outdoor Leadership Center