

SELECT STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH ON-  
CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEE SUPERVISION: A CASE STUDY

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

Sam Houston State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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by

Meredith L. Conrey

December, 2021

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my late maternal grandparents. My Granddaddy grew up in a rural farming community and had to quit school after the third grade, but he later obtained his GED through his service in the U.S. Navy. My Granny, whose mother died when she was 13 years old, completed the seventh grade before leaving school to care for her siblings. Because of their challenges, my grandparents shared expectations for their children and grandchildren to obtain a proper education. Although a doctoral degree is a terminal degree, there is nothing terminal about education. Learning is a lifelong pursuit, and I will continue learning, developing, and growing in their honor.

## ABSTRACT

Conrey, Meredith L., *Select student affairs administrators' experiences with on-campus student employee supervision: A case study*. Doctor of Education (Higher Education Leadership), December, 2021, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

On-campus student employment helps students gain transferable skills for their future careers, but how students develop through employment has been inconsistent because differences in knowledge, training, and resources available to supervisors has led to varying developmental opportunities. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the experiences student affairs administrators had with supervising on-campus student employees in higher education. This study involved five select supervisors at an institution with a student employment program that focused on the development of student employees and supervisors. I applied Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to explore the supervisory journey to understand the inputs supervisors brought into a supervisory experience, the environment experienced while supervising part-time, on-campus student employees, and what outcomes, if any, resulted from various supervisory experiences. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and documents, and then analyzed using constant comparison, protocol coding, and document analyses processes before being harmonized with Astin's model.

Through this research, I uncovered and described the meaning administrative supervisors made of their experiences when supervising on-campus student employees with the intent that my findings may apply to familiar contexts for the reader. This study resulted in several findings that aligned with Astin's input-environment-outcome model. The most influential inputs that contributed to the preparedness of student affairs administrators to supervise student employees included undergraduate college

experiences, former student employment, other work experiences, and training and coursework. The supervision environment revealed that the student employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations, professional development, challenges, and support from others were the most important factors influencing the supervisory process. Lastly, confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritizing personal and professional development, and reflection and application resulted from experiences of supervising student employees over time. Rather than thinking about student employees as a means to serve the institution, higher education policy makers and leaders should consider how the institution can serve the student. Supervisors are uniquely positioned to help student employees grow, develop, and gain marketable skills to propel them towards future career success. With proper training and support, supervisors can make the difference in helping student employment become an educationally purposeful high-impact practice.

KEY WORDS: Supervision; Student employees; Student affairs; Astin's input-environment-outcome model; High-impact practices; Training and development; Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Timing is everything. I always knew I wanted to pursue a doctoral degree, but I never knew when or where that would happen. Beginning coursework in January 2018 was ideal for many reasons, and I am thankful to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support along this journey.

First, I extend my most sincere gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Peggy Holzweiss, and committee members, Dr. Matthew Fuller and Dr. Ricardo Montelongo. Your support, encouragement, and feedback throughout this process have helped me turn a small interest and idea into a quality research endeavor with an informative potential for other scholars and practitioners. Dr. Holzweiss, I cannot thank you enough for your support and the resources you provided during my dissertation work. You set up your students for success, and you have been an incredible mentor for me along this journey. Thank you to Dr. Fuller for helping me identify the potential to apply Astin's model to qualitative research and for loaning me some books along the way. Thank you to Dr. Montelongo for challenging me to think deeply about various nuances related to student employment. Your input helped me to refine my study and to make future research recommendations. I am grateful to all of you for your investment in my development as a scholar-practitioner.

Working full-time while pursuing a doctoral degree would not have been possible without the support of my supervisor, staff, faculty, and classmates. Thank you to my supervisor, Frank, for supporting my studies and providing me with weekly educational release time to engage in coursework and writing during my dissertation process. My staff has been incredibly supportive during my doctoral journey. Thank you to both the

professional staff and students who kept the department going on days when I had class or when I took off time to research and write. You were all great listeners when I needed to talk through my research questions, to vent, or to share an exciting finding. I want to thank the faculty of my doctoral program. Many of you contributed to my success in various ways through teaching me about doctoral research and writing. My classmates have also been remarkable. I desired an in-person, cohort-based doctoral program because I cherish relationships and personal interactions. Thank you to my cohort for bringing your experiences and wisdom into classroom discussions and for the constant support. I also want to thank my carpool team. So many great conversations occurred, laughs were shared, and memories were made as we commuted to and from class.

Thank you to all the participants in this study. You made time to meet with me during a global pandemic, and you thoughtfully shared your experiences. I am grateful for your willingness to meet with a total stranger and for your support of my research. I enjoyed hearing each of your stories and experiences with student employee supervision, and I hope this study will help other administrators who have a connection to supervision. I am honored to have connected as colleagues, and I hope our paths cross again in the near future.

I have also had an incredible village supporting me from near and far along this journey. Thank you to my fabulous writing partner, Jennifer, who was also starting her dissertation journey about the same time as me. Having your constant support throughout this process has been very appreciated. Between all our texts, emails, and phone calls, you have always been a tremendous resource, and I could not have done this without you. To my best friend Vicki, thank you for showing me that I could earn a doctoral degree

and for lending me lots of books to use for writing. I had the pleasure of watching you cross the stage in August 2017. Seeing you finish gave me the motivation to begin this doctoral journey, and I have appreciated the constant support you and Lori have provided along the way. My long-time friend Sharia also graduated with her doctoral degree right before I started my classes in January 2018. Thank you, Sharia, for being there for me and for inviting me to come for a visit when I needed a vacation to rejuvenate myself. To Chelsea, Katy, and Amanda, thank for your help with different pieces of my research process, you all were a tremendous support. Additionally, I want to thank my dear friend Christina for always being willing to listen and for your kind words of encouragement anytime they were needed.

Last, but certainly not least, to my family, thank you for your love and support along this journey. Thank you to my parents, who always inspired me to pursue my dreams and to value education. You encouraged me to eat the elephant one bite at a time, and you respected my need to serve “dissertation jail” time every week. To my siblings and their families, thank you for loving me through this process and for providing me with fun family weekends to relieve stress along the way. It is time to celebrate!



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of the Study .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	7
Research Questions .....	9
Conceptual Framework .....	10
Definition of Terms .....	12
Delimitations .....	14
Limitations .....	14
Assumptions .....	15
Organization of the Study .....	16
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
Supervision .....	18
The Role of a Supervisor .....	19
Skills Needed for Supervision .....	19

Supervisory Models .....	24
Learning to Supervise .....	30
Supervision of Student Employees in Higher Education .....	47
Student Employment Characteristics.....	48
Student Employment Programs .....	61
Training and Development of Supervisors in Higher Education.....	63
Summary .....	67
CHAPTER III: METHODS .....	73
Research Design .....	73
Context of the Study .....	75
Participant Selection .....	76
Data Collection .....	80
Data Analysis.....	86
Trustworthiness.....	89
Summary .....	91
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS .....	93
Methods in Context.....	94
Epoche .....	95
Case Context.....	98
Characteristics of the Participants .....	101
Data Analyses .....	105
Findings by Research Questions.....	110
Conceptual Framework Analysis Approach Reasoning .....	134

Summary.....	135
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION .....	137
Introduction.....	137
Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Research Questions .....	138
Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Conceptual Framework .....	142
Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature .....	143
Recommendations for Practice .....	148
Recommendations for Future Research.....	156
Summary and Conclusion.....	159
REFERENCES .....	162
APPENDIX A.....	181
APPENDIX B .....	182
APPENDIX C .....	186
APPENDIX D.....	188
VITA.....	189

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Participant Characteristics Including Years of Experience, Number of Student Employees Supervised, and Functional Area of Employment .....	102
2 Interview Findings by Research Question and Protocol Code With Example Quotes .....	111

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

As the cost to attend college rises, many students turn to employment to help them pay for their education. According to a 2018 national survey, 43% of full-time and 81% of part-time college students had jobs while attending school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). With so many students working while they are learning, many researchers have studied the connections between college student employment and a variety of factors such as development (McClellan et al., 2018), GPA (Deros & Ryan, 2008; Dundes & Marx, 2006; Elling & Elling, 2000; Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Lang, 2012; Logan et al., 2016; Mounsey et al., 2013; Pike et al., 2008), engagement (Elling & Elling, 2000; Lang, 2012; Lundberg, 2004; Pike et al., 2008), and persistence (Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Noel, 1996). As the percentages of working students rise, colleges and universities can benefit from exploring the challenges and successes of students who work.

According to Mintz (2019a), colleges and universities must adapt. Students have changed (i.e., more are working), college debt has increased, and accreditors, legislators, and parents all share high expectations for students to graduate in a timely manner (Mintz, 2019a). There are also concerns a college education may be too theoretical for application in the real world, college graduates lack the necessary skills and experiences desired by employers, and students do not develop realistic career expectations or plans to achieve their goals (Mintz, 2019b). As a result, career readiness has become a hot topic in higher education.

In 2017, over 32,000 U.S. college students from a random selection of 43 colleges and universities responded to a survey distributed by the Strada Education Network and Gallup. Responses from the Strada-Gallup 2017 College Student Survey indicated that only one-third of students strongly agreed that they would obtain the required skills and knowledge needed for post-collegiate success by the time they graduated, and only one-half of students believed their academic major would lead to obtaining a good job (Strada-Gallup, 2017). Strada-Gallup (2017) also learned that students who did feel prepared to enter into a career reported that they engaged in conversation with faculty or staff about possible career choices, they had one or more faculty or staff members start conversations with them about their future profession, and they felt their institution was dedicated to assisting students in identifying a satisfying occupation.

Student employment can provide opportunities for students to connect to faculty and staff, to gain employability skills, and to assist students in becoming career ready (Kuh, 2008). With close proximity and a working relationship, student employees may likely engage in conversations about their future careers with their supervisors. As a result, the supervisor plays a critical role in helping a student employee grow, learn, and become career ready; however, there is a shortage of literature on the supervisor's experiences with student employment.

Supervision serves as the foundation for employee development (Robke, 2016), and supervision should be a priority because it can help facilitate employee development, organizational growth, and the achievement of goals (Wilson et al., 2020). The success of a supervisor requires the development of both hard and soft skills (Klaus, 2007), such as understanding standards, laws, and regulations and tailoring one's supervisory approach

to meet the developmental needs of the supervisee (Peck Parrott, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). The challenge is that there are inconsistencies in how supervisors learn to supervise. In certain disciplines and fields, supervision is included in academic preparation programs, but many supervisors indicate that they learn to supervise through trial and error (Lamb et al., 2018).

In higher education, there is a focus on the development of skills and competencies for professional preparation and growth (Finney & Horst, 2019), and communities of practice are also viable places for individuals to learn about supervision (Wenger, 2000; Smedick, 2017). Several researchers have also cited supervision as a skill lacking for new professionals (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007), and a substantial challenge is that not all graduate preparation programs for higher education and student affairs include formal graduate coursework on the topic of supervision (Cooper et al., 2016). Furthermore, supervision was identified as a needed skill for new professional training in several studies (Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007). Regardless of where supervision is taught, Holzweiss et al. (2019) posited that intentional investment in the development of new professionals would “help improve the practice of higher education as well as the success of students who attend college” (p. 59); therefore, providing training in supervision is important to the success of higher education as a whole.

## Statement of the Problem

On-campus employment provides experiences for students to gain necessary soft skills (e.g., collaboration and teamwork) that can later be transferable to their future careers (Kuh, 2009); however, experiences to help students develop both personally and professionally through employment are inconsistent (Frock, 2015). Differences in knowledge, training, and resources available to supervisors often lead to varied experiences for student employees, thus leading to varying developmental opportunities (Frock, 2015). Many studies related to student employment fail to explore the administrative supervisor's experiences associated with supervising on-campus student employees.

Inconsistencies also exist with student access to engagement opportunities. A smaller portion of students often populate high-impact activities and practices on college campuses, and Kuh (2009) argued for student affairs administrators to create environments with high-impact elements for student employees to make the experience developmentally powerful. Due to a gap in the literature related to administrator experiences associated with supervising on-campus student employees (Burnside et al., 2019; Frock, 2015), inconsistencies regarding how supervisors learn to supervise (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009; Aragon & Valle, 2013; Bjornestad et al., 2014; Cooper et al., 2016; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Gazzola et al., 2013; Greer, 2013; Guerin et al., 2015; Johnston, 2005; Lamb et al., 2018; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Neyland-Brown et al., 2019; Rapisarda et al., 2011), and because supervision is cited as a necessary skill for student affairs administrators in higher education (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019;



Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007), new studies are needed to explore the experiences of administrators to learn about the factors and perceptions that contribute to their supervision of student employees.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the experiences student affairs administrators have with supervising on-campus student employees in higher education. I will apply Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to guide this study. Astin's (1991) model emphasizes the need to understand the qualities a person brings into a given situation (inputs), the actual experience, practice, and environment a person experiences (environment), and the resulting qualities and characteristics a person has after an experience (outcomes/outputs). This model can be applied when the researcher is interested in studying human development and the factors that influence any development (Astin, 1991). Each piece of Astin's model will correlate with one of the three objectives in this study.

The first objective is to explore administrators' previous experiences with student employment. Specifically, I will review the development, training, and support received for supervision (inputs). The second objective will explore administrators' experiences while supervising student employees (environment). The final objective is to explore how these combined experiences influence a supervisor's continued practice for developing and supervising student employees (outcomes/outputs). Astin (1991) uses the term *outcomes* in his model to refer to the desired results or end-goals for what someone is trying to develop.

Certain colleges and universities emphasize the development of administrators who supervise part-time, on-campus student employees. For this particular study, I will focus on a select sample of administrators at one institution that has a robust student employee development program that also focuses on the growth of the supervisor. The participants in the study will be administrators who have been supervising student employees for 3 or more years from a student affairs division at a large 4-year public Midwestern university in a metropolitan area. The selected university is classified as a doctoral university with very high research activity by the Carnegie Foundation (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2020).

Through this instrumental case study, much can be gained from the meaning administrative supervisors make of their experiences when supervising on-campus student employees. Merriam (2009) suggested findings from case study research may apply to certain contexts familiar to a reader; therefore, my goal is to provide detailed descriptions so that the findings may be informative for other researchers and practitioners. Understanding prior experiences, education and training, and how supervision may change over time will likely shed light on administrative supervisors' developmental and training needs. Additionally, by conducting this research at a campus that emphasizes the development of supervisors, I have three aims for my study: (a) I will add to the existing literature related to the supervision of student employees working on college campuses; (b) I will provide insight for higher education leaders and policymakers to help them understand the potential of student employment to become a high impact practice, and that the supervisor serves as the cornerstone to a successful

student employment experience; and (c) I will highlight some potential promising practices for student affairs professionals who supervise on-campus student employees.

### **Significance of the Study**

With increased percentages of students turning to college student employment as a means to help them pay for their education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), supervisors have an opportunity to make a difference. On-campus employment provides experiences for students to gain necessary soft skills (i.e., collaboration and teamwork) that can later be transferable to their future careers (Kuh, 2009). Additionally, Kuh (2009) indicated that working on campus might be an opportunity that could provide a “developmentally powerful experience” (p. 698) for students if supervisors were intentional. Supervisors of student employees “serve as the primary facilitators of professional development and learning opportunities for student employees, and the extent to which supervisors are supported can determine whether an employment experience is menial or meaningful” (Burnside et al., 2019, p. 3). The key to a successful student employment experience is the supervisor.

When a student employee works with a knowledgeable, skilled, and intentional administrative supervisor in higher education, they may be positively impacted and grow more through their student employment experience. For instance, an administrative supervisor who is knowledgeable about college student development, skilled in providing clear expectations, and intentionally provides meaningful work would likely craft an environment for student employee development. Not only would the student grow as a person, but they would also have the opportunity to develop soft skills, such as handling customers with care, and hard skills, such as understanding how to navigate computer

systems. These intentionally designed practices would expose the student employee to various experiences that would provide them with transferrable skills for their future career. Engaging in work and gaining new skills also allows students the opportunity to experience a professional environment before graduating and obtaining their first post-college job.

Because student affairs administrators focus on developing the whole student, on-campus student employment is a learning lab. It is a place where students can experience a professional working environment, develop skills, and grow. For example, an employee may be immediately terminated if they arrive late to work in specific jobs and industries. If a student employee arrives late to work in higher education, they may have an opportunity to learn from the infraction and improve. This learning lab is beneficial in helping to prepare the next generation that will enter the workforce.

In 2014, the Gallup organization learned that only 29% of recent college graduates reported feeling well-prepared for life after college. In that same year, in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Hart Research Associates determined that 44% of the employers rated recent college graduates as not being prepared to apply knowledge and skills in their post-collegiate lives (Hart Research Associates, 2015). Additionally, after the United States experienced an economic recession in 2008, the White House developed a College Scorecard that included a measure for the number of students obtaining employment post-graduation from higher education institutions (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). The college scorecard has placed pressure on higher education institutions to ensure college graduates are prepared for the workforce. On-campus student employment can help fill these gaps, which not only helps

the student feel more prepared for life after college, but it also allows employers to gain confidence in students coming into the workforce with relevant work experience.

Supervision has been cited as a necessary skill for student affairs professionals in higher education (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007); therefore, it is valuable to study an organization that places a strong emphasis on both student employee development and the development of the administrative supervisor. Learning about the experiences administrators have with student employee supervision will help fill gaps in the existing literature on this topic. It will also inform educational leaders and policymakers about promising practices that can help students become career ready. Because higher education is expected to prepare students to enter into the workforce, we must further explore the role of the administrative supervisor in developing the next generation of leaders.

### **Research Questions**

By utilizing Astin's input-environment-outcome model as the conceptual framework, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. How do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees?
2. What external factors do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive influences their abilities to supervise student employees?

3. As student affairs administrators at the selected institution gained supervisory experience, how did their perceptions of supervision evolve or remain the same?

These research questions will serve as the foundation for data collection and data analysis in this research study. To answer each research question, I will conduct interviews with the selected participants for this study, and I will review associated documents before data analysis.

### **Conceptual Framework**

To understand the experiences administrators have with student employment, training received, and how these experiences translate to developing student employees, it is helpful to use Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model. With colleges and universities striving for excellence, Astin introduced an approach focused on talent development, which looks at the college or university's ability to facilitate positive scholarly and personal growth within students and faculty (Astin, 1991). To describe educational excellence, Astin (1991) shared that institutions should focus on students' knowledge and personal development. As a result, Astin developed the input-environment-outcome model to allow for a holistic assessment of a student.

Three parts comprise Astin's (1991) model: inputs, environment, and outcomes/outputs. Inputs refer to the qualities a person brings into a given situation. Environment encompasses the experiences, practices, and environment in which a person operates, and the outcomes/outputs are the resulting qualities developed from the experience. This model allows for assessment and evaluation of educational

environments so educators can learn how to craft environments that promote talent development or growth (Astin, 1991).

Astin's model is mostly used with quantitative research, but he added "the logic underlying the model would seem to apply equally to *qualitative* problems . . . [because] it seeks to identify causal connections between certain events or conditions (environments) and certain subsequent events (outcomes)" (Astin, 1991, p. 21). Applying Astin's model in qualitative research allows for observations of natural environments, allowing researchers to compare and contrast multiple approaches to understand if an educational practice has any merit (Astin, 1991). Because this framework can be applied qualitatively and to more than just students, Astin's input-environment-outcome model will be used as the conceptual framework to understand the experiences of administrators who supervise part-time, on-campus student employees.

Inputs help researchers understand what individuals bring into the environment. In this study, the inputs will consist of the experiences administrators had with student employment, whether those experiences were from their undergraduate careers as a student employee or as a supervisor at a previous institution. The environment constitutes the experience and surrounding factors that shape the administrator's experiences while supervising part-time, on-campus student employees. Lastly, the outcomes/outputs serve as the final piece to measure progress towards the desired outcome, and I will ask administrators to reflect on how their perceptions of supervision evolved as they gained experience and encountered different situations while supervising and developing student employees.

## **Definition of Terms**

After reviewing related literature, it became evident that certain terms were defined similarly. To provide clarity, I have included definitions for the following terms: administrative supervisor, on-campus student employee, student affairs administrator, supervisee, and supervision. These definitions provide context for this specific case study.

### ***Administrative Supervisor***

An administrative supervisor, also referred to simply as a supervisor, is “responsible for providing oversight for student employment” (McClellan et al., 2018, p. 10). The administrative supervisors involved in this study are defined as full-time student affairs professionals who supervise on-campus student employees. They create employment opportunities, shape the employment experience, and provide employment supervision and guidance (McClellan et al., 2018). More broadly, a supervisor is a person who is responsible for the performance of other individuals who report directly to them (Scheuermann, 2011).

### ***On-Campus Student Employee***

For this study, an on-campus student employee is defined as “students who are paid by the institution and officially report to a supervisor, as opposed to students who may be in a role where they receive a stipend or other remuneration for their service, time, or leadership role” (Perozzi, 2009, p. x). This definition includes work-study (i.e., positions funded through federal student aid), and it excludes off-campus employment, “volunteer positions on student governments and programming boards, [as well as]



internships, practica, and some undergraduate research roles” (Perozzi, 2009, p. x), even though students can gain similar skills from these involvement opportunities.

Students in this role will be referred to as student employees versus student workers. Using employees in the term provides a level of professionalism. The term also is “more educationally purposeful, in that it helps clearly identify the opportunity for students to see their role on campus as helping them prepare for their future employment” (McClellan et al., 2018, p. 10).

### ***Student Affairs Administrator***

Student affairs administrator, student affairs practitioner, and student affairs professional are used interchangeably in the literature, but all refer to the same type of person. For consistency in this study, I will use the term student affairs administrator. A student affairs administrator refers to a professional practitioner who works full-time as a staff member within an administrative student affairs unit in higher education.

### ***Supervisee***

A supervisee refers to a person who is supervised (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). In this study, the supervisees will be on-campus student employees.

### ***Supervision***

Bernard and Goodyear (2014) defined supervision as “an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior colleague or colleagues who typically (but not always) are members of that same profession” (p. 9). Essentially, supervision is a process whereby a supervisor engages in supervising a supervisee (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are decisions made by the researcher that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study (Creswell, 2013). This study will be delimited by selecting a single, large, public, not-for-profit, 4-year Midwestern university in the United States that focuses on student employee and supervisor development. The sampling criteria for this study will also serve as a delimitation. I will restrict eligibility to participate to current student affairs administrators with at least 3 academic years of student employee supervisory experience at the institution under study. Having at least 3 years of experience with student employee supervision at the selected institution should provide participants with a reasonable period of supervisory practice to reflect upon, through which to offer more insight and reflection for meaning-making.

**Limitations**

Limitations of a research study include factors that are not within the control of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Because this case study will focus on a small set of administrators' perceptions and experiences at one single institution of higher education, the specific context may not be fully transferrable. The findings, however, may apply to other contexts that may have similarities (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Merriam, 2009); therefore, I will provide detailed descriptions so other researchers and practitioners can evaluate their practice.

This study will focus on the perceptions and experiences of administrators who supervise student employees. I will interview administrators who have direct experience with student employee supervision, but it is likely that their experiences will be different and may provide a wealth of information. The study will be limited by the response of the

administrators who are willing to participate and the truthfulness and detail of their answers. Additionally, this study will not include the perspectives of student employees. The experiences and perspectives of student employees may present alternative views to consider in future studies.

### **Assumptions**

The conceptual framework of this study (i.e., Astin's input-environment-outcome model) is most widely used in quantitative studies and for studies related to faculty and staff. Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model has been used in qualitative research, but I am relying on the assumption that the model can be applied to university staff. Astin's model only mentions faculty and students, but I assume it can be applied to administrative staff, which will be the focus of the model's application in this study.

Additionally, my research will involve qualitative interviews. I will assume that my participants will respond with openness and honesty during their interview and that the participants construct meaning and understanding of themselves and others through the process of supervision of student employees. I will also assume that the participants will have varied experiences and perceptions of supervision based on their own social interactions; therefore, I will ask open-ended questions to solicit responses that will help me interpret the meanings each participant makes about their unique experiences with supervision. Furthermore, I will assume that their responses are an accurate representation of their personal experiences.

## **Organization of the Study**

The purpose of this case study is to explore student affairs administrators' experiences concerning supervising student employees. In this chapter, I have provided a background for this study, stated the problem, detailed the study's purpose and significance, identified the research questions, introduced the conceptual framework, defined terms, and provided delimitations, limitations, and assumptions related to this study. In Chapter II, I will provide a review of the literature covering supervision, how supervision is learned, characteristics of student employees in higher education, and I will conclude with the training and development of supervisors. Chapter III will detail the specific research process for this study, including the research design, context of the study, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, researcher role, and trustworthiness strategies. In Chapter IV, I will present the methods in context, an epoche, a context for the case, characteristics of the participants, and the findings from this research. In Chapter V, I will provide a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the literature. I will also include recommendations for practice and future research before I offer a summary and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

Conducting a transdisciplinary review of the literature is beneficial to gain a holistic understanding of a research topic. Transdisciplinary approaches transcend discipline-driven boundaries and focus on inquiry (Montuori, 2013). This broad approach allows researchers to engage with complex ideas that can lead to the development of a rich depiction of the phenomenon under study (Montuori, 2013). I used a transdisciplinary approach as the foundation for this literature review because I wanted to explore varying disciplines to cover the topic of supervision.

The body of literature related to student employment focuses heavily upon factors related to the student. Often cited topics about student employees include: development (McClellan et al., 2018), GPA (Deros & Ryan, 2008; Dundes & Marx, 2006; Elling & Elling, 2000; Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Lang, 2012; Logan et al., 2016; Mounsey et al., 2013; Pike et al., 2008), engagement (Elling & Elling, 2000; Lang, 2012; Lundberg, 2004; Pike et al., 2008), and persistence (Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Mamiseishvili, 2010; Noel, 1996). In comparison to the amount of literature focusing on the student employee, there is a shortage of literature on the experiences of the supervisor in the student employment experience.

To review the literature related to this topic, I will first begin by providing a broad overview of supervision. I will then describe the role of a supervisor, including the skills needed for supervision, and I will also explore supervisory models. Next, I will highlight the concept of learning how to supervise with examples from clinical supervision, business management, and higher education.

After discussing supervision broadly and introducing how supervision is learned, I will specifically highlight topics related to the supervision of student employees in higher education. I will share student employee characteristics by presenting a brief history of student employment and factors related to student employment, such as development, GPA, engagement, and persistence. Last, I will cover the training and development of supervisors who supervise student employees in higher education.

### **Supervision**

There are many definitions of supervision but simply stated, “the term *supervision* means, etymologically, ‘surveillance’” (Dan, 2017, p. 147). More broadly, a supervisor is a person who is responsible for the performance of other individuals who report directly to them (Scheuermann, 2011). Wilson et al. (2020) shared that although there are many positive stories about supervisory relationships, people often hear more about challenging supervisory experiences. Supervision serves as the cornerstone of employee development, and the need for supervision has increased as various professions have grown (Robke, 2016). Additionally, effective supervision should occur at all levels within organizations, and it should be a priority because it can help facilitate success and the achievement of goals for both individuals and organizations (Wilson et al., 2020).

It is essential to note that supervision stems from pragmatism and results from a relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee (Dan, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). Supervision is a process whereby both the supervisor and supervisee should grow and develop (Robke, 2016). Over time, however, the meanings associated with supervision have changed and evolved as supervision has adapted to meet the needs of varying professions (Dan, 2017). Theories and the structures of different organizations have also

influenced the meaning of supervision (Dan, 2017; Robke, 2016). Ultimately, supervision is a type of professional support (Dan, 2017), and supervisors should strive to meet each supervisee's unique needs in a way that helps them develop and grow in meaningful ways (Ardoin, 2019; Wilson et al., 2020).

### **The Role of a Supervisor**

Supervision involves relationships that are complex and multifaceted (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). With a role that involves people, supervision is often confused with other functions such as mentoring, managing, and advising (Peck Parrott, 2017). The primary role of a supervisor is to ensure the organization meets its objectives, and developing supervisees comes second to achieving organizational goals (Peck Parrott, 2017).

Because supervisory relationships are complex, it can be helpful to describe the role of a supervisor. Supervisors must be able to provide supervisees with guidance, support, feedback, and evaluation (Ardoin, 2019). Supervisors benefit from developing working relationships based on trust, and supervisors must adapt to their supervisees' differing needs (Ardoin, 2019). Determining one's supervisory philosophy is also beneficial to guide the supervisor in their approach to supervision (Ardoin, 2019).

Overall, a supervisor must understand that their role as a supervisor is highly influential in helping supervisees achieve organizational goals (Peck Parrott, 2017).

### **Skills Needed for Supervision**

Many skills contribute to the success or failure of a supervisor, and supervisors must lean on both hard and soft skills. Hard skills include the knowledge and technical skills needed to perform a job (Klaus, 2007). Soft skills encompass many abilities and

characteristics related to personal connections and behaviors (Klaus, 2007). Soft skills assist individuals in putting hard skills into action (Klaus, 2007). The following sections explore the various hard and soft skills needed for supervision.

### ***Hard Skills***

**Standards, Regulations, and Laws.** Supervisors must be aware of standards, regulations, and laws from employers, government, and professional organizations that impact employment (Robke, 2016). For example, employers are responsible for complying with laws such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, among many others. Laws often change, and the law only defines minimum expectations; therefore, supervisors must determine how to comply and act in accordance with the minimum expectations outlined in the law (Peck Parrott, 2017). Understanding and meeting expectations set forth by these governing agencies will ensure the supervisor complies with employment requirements.

**Orientation and Training.** The supervisor is often responsible for providing thorough onboarding for new supervisees that ensures new hires are familiar with the organization's history, values, and culture (Peck Parrott, 2017). Training should be ongoing, so the supervisor can help supervisees navigate their environment in order to achieve success (Peck Parrott, 2017). A variety of topics should be covered, such as professional behavior, processes and procedures, and how decision making occurs, but discussions about the organization should continue beyond the start of employment (Peck Parrott, 2017).



**Technology.** Technology skills can contribute to a supervisor's success, especially if the supervisor is comfortable and proficient in using various mediums such as e-mail, text messaging, video conferencing, and even social media. Adopting and using multiple forms of technology can make a supervisor more accessible to a supervisee, and it can also provide opportunities for a supervisor to provide feedback (Robke, 2016). The use of technology can also provide continuity of practice (Robke, 2016). For example, if a supervisee and a supervisor cannot meet in person, using another medium for a meeting, such as a phone or a video conference call, can help continue the supervisory relationship.

**Documentation, Feedback, and Appraisals.** Learning to document supervisee progress, early in a supervisor's tenure, is an important skill to learn (Peck Parrott, 2017). Documentation of supervisee communication, performance, and general notes can help a supervisor provide timely feedback that is direct and specific (Peck Parrott, 2017). Documentation can also help when preparing an appraisal of supervisee performance, and when a supervisor offers constructive feedback in a performance appraisal meeting, they should provide clear direction for improvement (Peck Parrott, 2017).

### ***Soft Skills***

**Effective Communication.** Effective communication can help provide clear direction for supervisees, which may increase their willingness to respond and exhibit desired behaviors in the workplace (McCrea & Brasseur, 2003). It is also helpful if a supervisor can adapt their communication style to meet their supervisees' needs. For example, Generation Y or Millennial supervisees born between 1982 and 1999 are generally comfortable with using technology and may prefer to communicate via text or

social media, but supervisors from another generation may value face-to-face conversations (Abdul Malek & Jaguli, 2018); therefore, a supervisor may need to learn how to communicate with various technologies if they want to meet the unique needs and preferences of supervisees. Regardless of the communication medium, regular and consistent communication is key to effective supervision (Peck Parrott, 2017).

**Knowledge of Supervisees.** Supervisors should know their supervisees well enough to understand their strengths and weaknesses (Arminio & Creamer, 2001). Supervisors can also benefit if they know their supervisee's long-term goals and aspirations (Arminio & Creamer, 2001). Knowing what a supervisee excels at, struggles with, and where they aspire to go professionally can assist the supervisor with assigning meaningful work and identifying needed training.

Additionally, supervisors should consider the diversity of each supervisee when working with them. As the population and workplace become more diverse, supervisors can benefit from exhibiting cultural competence when interacting with supervisees (Robke, 2016; Wilson et al., 2020). Understanding differences between cultures can help supervisors approach their supervisees' varying needs with greater awareness and sensitivity (Robke, 2016). For example, there are differences in how cultures perceive eye contact (Akechi et al., 2013). Individuals from Eastern cultures typically make less eye contact with others because eye contact is considered aggressive, whereas eye contact is common in Western cultures (Akechi et al., 2013). This information would be necessary for a supervisor from Western culture to know, so they do not make a negative judgement about a supervisee from Eastern culture and vice versa when there are differences in eye contact levels in the workplace.

Awareness and sensitivity are also helpful with generational differences in diverse work environments. Supervisors must understand and respond because generational experiences may influence an individual's values, attitudes, behaviors (Robke, 2016), and preferred communication styles (Abdul Malek & Jaguli, 2018). When considering generational differences, a supervisor must assess their own generational tendencies and the generational trends of the individuals they supervise because they may be different. For example, a supervisor from the Baby Boomer generation (i.e., someone born 1964 or earlier) may get some push back from a Generation X or Millennial supervisee (i.e., individuals born 1965 and later) when they are asked to work more than 40 hours per week to accomplish a work project. The pushback would likely be attributed to Generation X and Millennial's desire for work-life balance. In contrast, Boomers are from a generation that values results, even if it requires additional time and effort (Twenge et al., 2010). By apprising oneself of the characteristics and tendencies of each generation, the supervisor will be better informed to understand their supervisee's responses, and when possible, the supervisor may be able to adapt their approach to meet the needs of a supervisee.

**Relationships and Employee Development.** Relationships are vital in supervision (Dan, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). One of the critical components of a supervisory relationship is trust (Scheuermann, 2011). Trust can be built by following through with what one commits to doing, modeling ethical behavior, providing regularity and consistency, and through effective communication (Peck Parrott, 2017). When trust exists in a supervisor-supervisee relationship, it is easier to engage in conversation and development.

Employee development should be tailored to the individual supervisee's needs (Peck Parrott, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). For example, a new supervisee may require more direction to build skills versus a seasoned supervisee looking to advance in their career. Supervisors can help supervisees develop skills and autonomy early in their careers. As the supervisee progresses, the supervisor can help groom the supervisee for future promotions and career advancement opportunities (Peck Parrott, 2017).

The role of a supervisor is complex and requires many skills to achieve success. Developing hard skills, such as building one's knowledge of standards, regulations, laws, and policies, or adequately using various technologies, can help supervisors fulfill their responsibilities. Soft skills such as effectively communicating and developing working relationships with supervisees can also contribute to supervisory success. Lastly, supervisors can lean on research to learn about various supervision models to further aid and guide them in how they can approach supervising employees.

### **Supervisory Models**

Models of supervision exist in many fields and disciplines, and some have more wide-ranging applicability. In the educational discipline of communication sciences and disorders, supervisors have relied on models such as Anderson's (1988) continuum of supervision and Hudson's (2010) CORE model of supervision and mentoring. In higher education student affairs, supervisors have leaned on Winston and Creamer's (1997) synergistic supervision model, and in 2020, Wilson et al. released a new model, the inclusive supervision model. I will cover these four models because the developers of each model introduced a new concept related to supervision that translates well for supervisors of student employees in higher education. In the following sections, I will

detail each model noting the four unique outcomes: (a) that supervision is an ongoing process, (b) reflection on performance is essential for both the supervisor and supervisee, (c) both the organization and the employees matter, and (d) inclusivity can help further a relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee.

### ***Continuum of Supervision Model***

Anderson's (1988) continuum of supervision model focused on developmental stages for a supervisee to move from interdependence to independence as a professional through three developmental stages (i.e., evaluation-feedback, transitional, and self-supervision; Robke, 2016). In the evaluation-feedback stage, the supervisor is more directive with their supervisee by providing regular evaluation and feedback on their performance (O'Connor, 2008). In the transitional stage, the supervisor and supervisee operate under a more collaborative supervision style wherein the need for evaluation and feedback lessens over time (O'Connor, 2008). In the self-supervision stage, the supervisee becomes independent, and the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee becomes consultative (O'Connor, 2008).

An actionable example of Anderson's continuum of supervision model could begin when a new supervisee begins a job. As the new supervisee starts to work, they would be more dependent upon their supervisor's knowledge and guidance to learn how to execute their work. The supervisee would likely meet regularly with their supervisor during these beginning days and weeks (i.e., evaluation-feedback stage). As the month's progress, the supervisee may develop confidence and could begin to operate more independently. They may also need to meet with their supervisor on a monthly or bi-monthly basis (i.e., transitional stage). Finally, after a full year of work, the supervisee

may have all of the necessary knowledge to accomplish their job, and they would only meet with their supervisor on an as-needed basis (i.e., self-supervision). Anderson's stages reveal that supervisees can become more independent with experience and time. The supervisor's level of involvement can also change from being more directive to consultative as the employee advances in their own knowledge and develops skills.

Anderson recognized that supervision requires different approaches at different times and in different contexts (O'Connor, 2008). The model was also predicated on the idea of growth, and the level of involvement of the supervisor will change over time, meaning a supervisor should meet a supervisee where they are at and work with them to help them advance and grow towards becoming more independent. Anderson's model was the first to acknowledge supervision as a process that encompasses addressing the needs of both the supervisee and supervisor based on specific contexts (Robke, 2016). The introduction of the concept of supervision being a process helped to illustrate the ongoing nature of supervision.

### ***CORE Model of Supervision and Mentoring***

Building upon the work of Anderson and others, Hudson (2010) developed the CORE model of supervision and mentoring that included four elements: collaboration, observation, reflection, and evaluation. By focusing on these elements, supervisors are encouraged to establish collaborative relationships with their supervisees, provide observation of work, and the model allows supervisees the opportunity to reflect on their work (Robke, 2016). Afterward, the supervisor should provide an evaluation utilizing objective feedback to augment supervisee performance (Robke, 2016).

For example, in the collaborative phase, the supervisee and supervisor learn to work together and develop trust. Observation requires the supervisor to document supervisee progress. The reflection phase encourages supervisees to evaluate their own work through journaling, self-evaluation tools, or creating a portfolio. Finally, once the supervisor's observations and the supervisee's reflections are complete, the supervisor will engage in the evaluation phase. In this final phase, the supervisor will provide feedback to the supervisee about their work performance. The reflective processes for both the supervisee and the supervisor in the last two phases are critical to inspire and augment employee performance.

### ***Synergistic Supervision Model***

Winston and Creamer (1997) developed the synergistic supervision model, which stressed the importance of the supervisor/supervisee relationship in achieving organizational and individual goals. When this model was introduced, it was the first time a supervisory model focused on the goals of both the organization and the individual employee, taking a more holistic approach to the supervisory process (Peck Parrott, 2017; Tull, 2006; Wilson et al., 2020; Winston & Creamer, 1997). This model incorporated elements of trust, identifying professional and personal goals, encouraging professional development, discussions of organizational culture, and providing frequent feedback on performance, whether negative or positive (Peck Parrott, 2017).

Supervisors who engage in synergistic supervision will have a dual focus of needing to balance the needs of their organization and the needs of their supervisees, but the model allows for a collective effort of both supervisors and supervisees partnering together to achieve organizational goals. For example, suppose a university's student

involvement office must provide mandatory risk management training to student organization leaders to comply with state regulations. The goal is to ensure student leaders receive the necessary training. Within a synergistic supervision model, both the supervisor and supervisees would work together to determine how the training will be developed and delivered to achieve the organizational goal. The process would require trust, collaborative goal setting, and a working method that harnesses each person's individual efforts into a collective sum that is greater than one person accomplishing the task alone. Finding a balance between organizational needs and individual efforts to achieve goals can result in employee growth and development.

### ***Inclusive Supervision Model***

In a recent study, Wilson et al. (2020) argued for a new supervision model for higher education concentrating on inclusive supervision. The inclusive supervision model was derived from a qualitative study of student affairs administrators from across the United States who identified their supervisor as someone who exhibited multicultural competence. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 participants and then coded, revealing six initial themes that were reduced to four themes that eventually comprised the model: creating safe spaces, cultivating holistic development, demonstrating vulnerability, and building capacity in others (Wilson et al., 2020).

Creating safe spaces serves as the foundational piece of the model, meaning supervisors must create a safe environment for discussions about diversity and multiculturalism (Wilson et al., 2020). A safe space can be a physical location or merely the freedom for a supervisee to feel secure in discussing their job, diversity in the workplace, and even their thoughts on their relationship with their supervisor (Wilson et



al., 2020). For some supervisors, the safe space can be the supervisor's office, or in other instances, it could be as simple as a nonjudgmental phone conversation.

Cultivating holistic development involves an obligation to honor the individual identities of supervisees (Wilson et al., 2020). Taking a holistic approach means that supervisors must look beyond their supervisee as a professional. Instead, they must “intentionally seek out ways to both engage and support the multiple aspects of an individual's identity that they bring to the workplace, recognizing the impact it may have on performance and satisfaction” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 29). This ongoing act of inclusion involves the supervisor allowing supervisees to share their identities, the supervisor being willing to learn about their supervisees, and for the supervisor to embrace all aspects of their supervisee's unique identities.

Demonstrating vulnerability is required of the supervisor to share their own weaknesses and growth needs related to multiculturalism (Wilson et al., 2020). This process can include the supervisor admitting mistakes or knowing that they do not have the knowledge or experiences to understand a multicultural concept fully. Demonstrating vulnerability also involves a supervisor being open to learning, seeking out feedback on how they supervise, and their openness to making changes to grow towards being more multiculturally competent.

Building capacity in others focuses on the need to help others grow in their multicultural competence in order to meet institutional goals related to diversity and inclusion. (Wilson et al., 2020). For example, a supervisor may assign or recommend that a supervisee attend a training or professional development session to learn more about multicultural competence. The process of building capacity in others should be ongoing,

and the overarching goal is for staff to become more inclusive in their daily practice (Wilson et al., 2020).

The inclusive supervision model is informed by the importance of approaching supervision through the lens of multiculturalism (Pope et al., 2019). Pope et al. (2019) asserted that multicultural awareness and knowledge alone were not enough; rather, supervisors must develop competence and demonstrate it through actions of being culturally responsive in their supervisory relationships. Furthermore, a multiculturally competent supervisor could also advance their supervisees' multicultural competence through open and trusting relationships (Wilson et al., 2020).

### **Learning to Supervise**

Uncovering the ways individuals learn to supervise can clarify the topic of supervision. According to Watkins (2012), “supervisor development is of considerable importance to better understand because the supervisor plays a central, substantive, and pivotal role in the whole of the supervisory process, affecting all aspects of supervisee learning and growth” (p. 47). Supervision is present in all fields and disciplines, but some areas focus on supervision in either college coursework or through ongoing professional development. I have selected the fields of clinical supervision from the mental health professions and school counseling, business management, and higher education to illustrate how supervisors learn to supervise because each of these fields includes intentional approaches to supervisor training and development, they share some common challenges, and they all have specific constituents that they serve.

### ***Clinical Supervision Training in Mental Health and School Counseling***

Graduate preparation programs for the mental health professions and school counseling often include programs with supervision training curricula (Guerin et al., 2015; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Rapisarda et al., 2011). Counselor supervisor training programs can be delivered in a variety of formats, but training usually occurs through individual preparation (i.e., one-on-one meetings with another supervisor to learn about supervision), group training (i.e., meetings between supervisors to discuss supervision), web-based training (i.e., training delivered online both synchronously or asynchronously), and seminars (i.e., intentional sessions with an instructor delivering content to a group of supervisors; Bjornestad et al., 2014). Training can also occur through conference sessions, graduate preparation programs, and work-related professional development sessions, such as in-service sessions (Neyland-Brown et al., 2019). The diverse array of training methods demonstrates the value placed on supervisor training, and programs must determine what format best meets their needs and resources (Merlin & Brendel, 2017). Additionally, accrediting and licensing bodies may require supervisors, in certain disciplines, to receive training to supervise (Crook-Lyon et al., 2011; Gazzola et al., 2013; Kiley, 2011; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Nelson et al., 2006).

**Supervision Training and Self-Efficacy.** In a 2011 study, authors DeKruyf and Pehrsson discovered school counseling site supervisors had a higher self-efficacy after completing at least 40 hours of supervision training, indicating that supervision training may increase supervisory practice confidence levels. Neyland-Brown et al. (2019) utilized DeKruyf and Pehrsson's Site Supervisor Self-Efficacy Survey to explore the effects of supervision training in relation to the self-efficacy of site supervisors. Neyland-

Brown et al. (2019) indicated that training for individuals serving as supervisors resulted in greater self-efficacy in supervision skills; yet, no differences were discovered between supervisors who engaged in a course on supervision and supervisors who did not.

Conversely, Merlin and Brendel (2017) reported that their study's participants achieved increased confidence with only 13.5 hours of training. As a result, Merlin and Brendel (2017) recommended researchers continue to study how the number of training hours relates to supervisor confidence.

**Supervision as a Process.** Several researchers described the supervisory process as a constant process of 'becoming' (Halse, 2011; Watkins, 2012). This process of becoming is vital because once counselors become practitioners, they may be promoted to the role of supervisor even if they have not had any formal training or experience (Paulson & Casile, 2014). In a qualitative study, authors Duffy and Guiffrida (2014) sought out the perspectives of nine supervisors-in-training to explore the transition process to becoming a supervisor. Duffy and Guiffrida (2014) learned that each participant began their supervisory experience feeling "overwhelmed, anxious, and unsure of themselves" before progressing to a "sense of role clarity, confidence, and competence" (p. 157). Although this study was based on a training and development program offered during a graduate preparatory program, other researchers argue that supervisory growth should continue as a life-long educational process (Goin, 2006; Watkins, 2012).

**Developing Supervisory Strategies.** In a narrative study, Guerin et al. (2015) sought out the experiences of supervisors who had been nominated for Excellence in Supervision awards at an Australian university. Guerin et al. (2015) aimed to understand

supervisory models and strategies that guide supervisory work. Based on the findings, the research team revealed that supervisors often base their supervisory approach on prior personal supervisory experiences, influencing how they supervise (Guerin et al., 2015). For example, a supervisor who had a good supervision experience in the past may likely replicate the actions of good supervision that they encountered. Conversely, if the supervisor had a poor supervision experience, they may reflect on what they did not like and attempt not to supervise others in the same way. Additionally, the narratives exposed no singular model of supervision leading to success, and a cross-disciplinary approach to supervisor development could help introduce supervisors to additional supervisory models (Guerin et al., 2015). Similarly, Rapisarda et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative case study to determine which supervisory models best fit a supervisor's style. Rapisarda et al. (2011) added that supervisors must also be able to adapt their model to meet their supervisees' needs.

Training and development programs for clinical supervisors in mental health and school counseling are intentional, beginning with coursework in graduate preparation programs. This field recognizes the need for supervisors' ongoing growth, and additional training and development opportunities can be found through professional development conversations, in-service sessions, and presentations at conferences. Several studies noted increased self-efficacy or confidence for supervisors who engaged in training (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Neyland-Brown et al., 2019), and that supervision should be viewed as a process whereby one can learn, grow, and continue to improve as a supervisor (Goin, 2006; Watkins, 2012). Lastly, several researchers urged clinical supervisors to lean on their own supervisory experiences and review supervisory

models to help them better inform their supervisory practice (Guerin et al., 2015; Rapisarda et al., 2011).

It is evident that the field of clinical supervision values training and development for clinical supervisors. Starting with training during graduate preparation programs leading into ongoing learning through attending conferences and in-service sessions, practitioners in this field understand that there is always room to learn, grow, and improve. As a result, clients seeking services through counseling should benefit and receive the best possible care because their provider is well educated, skilled, and prepared to meet their needs.

### ***Business Management Supervisor Promotion and Training***

Similar to clinical supervision, many college academic programs in business management include coursework in supervision, and many business organizations devote substantial amounts of time and money into training (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004); however, a challenge in business practice is many organizations do little to prepare employees to become supervisors before they assume their supervisory role (Greer, 2013). It is not uncommon to see organizations promote their best employee to the position of supervisor, but in making the promotion, the organization loses its best employee and will likely end up with their best employee being ill-prepared to supervise due to inexperience and lacking supervisory training (Greer, 2013). For example, when a supervisory position becomes vacant within an organization focused on sales, upper management may promote the sales employee with the highest gross in sales assuming that they would be the best fit for the promotion because they are the most successful in closing sales for the organization. Without prior training and development in supervision,

the organization could be making a mistake in offering this promotion because the sales employee may lack the necessary skills to serve as a supervisor.

Many supervisors also lean on the supervisory styles they have experienced or observed in others (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009; Gazzola et al., 2013; Greer, 2013; Johnston, 2005). If the supervisor lacks training or does not implement the skills needed for supervisory success, they could make mistakes and provide inadequate supervision for their supervisees (Gazzola et al., 2013; Johnston, 2005). As a result, Johnston (2005) urged that behavior should be included in job descriptions for supervisors, so they are held accountable for poor or inappropriate behavior in their supervisory relationships with supervisees. Johnston (2005) concluded by recommending that organizations: (a) develop orientation programs covering essential skills for new supervisors to occur during the first 90 days of employment, (b) provide ongoing mentoring and coaching, (c) understand the risks of poor supervisor behavior on employee retention, and (d) provide outlets for supervisors to network with other supervisors for continued growth and learning.

**Training for Supervisory Skills.** Johnston (2005) defined a supervisor's role as someone responsible for the satisfaction, productivity, and retention of employees, and the first 90 days in a supervisory position can dictate potential success. Supervisors must develop skills in various areas such as managing risk, addressing personnel issues, and complying with legal and ethical concerns to help supervisees contribute to the overall success of an organization (Johnston, 2005). Greer (2013) added that providing leadership training is just as crucial as job-specific skills for supervisors because

supervisors must also mentor, train, motivate, discipline, evaluate, and lead others under their supervision.

**Growth Mindset.** Related to Johnston's work on understanding skills needed for supervision is the research of Dweck (2006), a renowned scholar who is well known for her research on growth mindset in helping individuals succeed through learning and feedback. Growth mindset is a concept rooted in the belief that individuals can grow, improve, and change (Dweck, 2006). Baldwin (2019) posited that the idea of a growth mindset could be equally applied to both supervisees and supervisors. Baldwin (2019) suggested that if supervisors expect growth in their supervisees, the supervisors must first adopt, implement, and model a personal growth mindset. For example, a supervisor with a growth mindset would set high expectations but be supportive and helpful when a supervisee experiences a challenge that keeps them from meeting expectations. Rather than assuming the supervisee is not skilled enough to meet the expectation, the supervisor would be open to helping them to learn and grow.

**Leadership.** Leadership skills, like a growth mindset, are also necessary for supervisor training. Drennan and Richey (2012) shared that supervisors must learn how to motivate their teams to achieve goals. When conducting training and carrying out business practices, supervisors serve as "powerful role models" (Drennan & Richey, 2012, p. 51). Additionally, because supervisors are essential to an organization's success, both upper management and the overall organization must provide support and resources to help supervisors because, with proper training and support, an average supervisor has a better chance of becoming great (Drennan & Richey, 2012). In addition to providing leadership training for supervisors, Drennan and Richey (2012) recommended



organizations provide coaches (i.e., well-trained individuals who have mastered supervision) for new supervisors as they learn to supervise and motivate their teams. This mentorship aspect is relevant because “without feedback, no learning occurs” (Drennan & Richey, 2012, p. 52).

**Training and Transfer of Knowledge.** To study the impact of supervisors, Aragon and Valle (2013) conducted a study wherein they surveyed supervisees from Spanish firms about their supervisor’s effectiveness, including abilities, involvement, and innovativeness. A statistically significant difference was determined in the effectiveness of supervisors who were trained versus supervisors who were not trained (Aragon & Valle, 2013). Overall, Aragon and Valle (2013) concluded training is necessary to improve supervisor abilities, involvement, and innovativeness. Additionally, supervisors are the most valuable individuals to develop in organizations (Aragon & Valle, 2013).

Work factors can also influence a supervisor’s transfer of knowledge from training programs. In a study by Cromwell and Kolb (2004), four work-environment factors (i.e., organization support, supervisor support, peer support, and participation in a peer support network) were reviewed to determine how each factor related to a supervisor’s transfer of knowledge and skills gained during training at three points in the year following a supervisor training program. All of the factors had a statistically significant positive correlation with a supervisor’s ability to apply skills learned during the supervisor training program, with supervisor support having the highest statistical significance. The results from this study indicated that all four support structures could assist supervisors in applying learned knowledge to actual supervisory practice (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004).

With so many organizations spending time and money on training and development, it is easy to see how supervisor growth is essential in the business field (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). Individually, supervisors can achieve success by developing leadership skills, implementing a growth mindset, and receiving others' support, but achieving success as an organization matters considerably in the business world. The supervisor is essential and needed to facilitate organizational success. Without a good supervisor, organizations may lose employees, fail in meeting their goals, and ultimately, the organization, as a whole, could crumble. Much can be learned from business management. Although these lessons come from a field outside of higher education and student affairs, they are easily transferrable to understanding what components and factors contribute to the success of individuals who serve in a supervisory capacity.

### ***Higher Education***

Skills, competencies, and characteristics of student affairs administrators have long been a focus of study in higher education and student affairs. Morris and Laipple (2015) argued that organized training is desired for ongoing professional growth to create developmentally competent professionals at all levels. Skill development and competencies have been documented through organizations such as the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), ACPA College Student Educators International (ACPA), and NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA; Finney & Horst, 2019). These professional practice standards and competencies provide an outline of the necessary knowledge and skills needed for success, including success in supervision (Finney & Horst, 2019).

**CAS.** CAS was founded in 1979, chartered in 1980, and the organization developed standards of professional practice that assist with program development and evaluation (Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019). Rather than providing standards for individual professional competencies, CAS provides standards for higher education programs such as career services and student leadership programs. CAS also provides standards for master's level student affairs preparation programs, which specifically call for supervision to be included in a program's curriculum (Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019). Supervision is included within Organization and Administration of Student Affairs section, which is part of the Professional Studies portion of the curriculum.

**ACPA and NASPA.** ACPA and NASPA (2015) jointly created professional competencies for student affairs administrators in 2009, with the first set of competencies being adopted in 2010 and later revised and republished in 2015. Within ACPA and NASPA's Professional Competencies, supervision is noted within the competency area of Organizational and Human Resources. As a foundational outcome, student affairs administrators must be familiar with supervision principles and be able to apply them (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

CAS standards and competencies from ACPA and NASPA are used widely to guide the curriculum of graduate preparation programs for higher education and student affairs in the United States. The goal is to ensure new professionals are prepared with the needed knowledge and skills to succeed as higher education administrators (Finney & Horst, 2019). Since the last publication of ACPA and NASPA's competencies, many researchers have continued to study competencies and skills needed within the profession (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein

et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007).

**Communities of Practice.** Supervision is a component of professionalism in the workplace that can be shaped by interactions with other administrators through what Wenger (2000) described as a community of practice. A community of practice involves a group of people focused on similar activities, whereby they learn from each other through their social interactions (Wenger, 2000). Smedick (2017) described a community of practice as a grouping of concentric circles, with experienced administrators situated within the inner circles. The lesser experienced or new administrators would be placed in the outermost rings. As newer administrators gain more experience and knowledge, they can move towards the inner circles and then assist other administrators in need of more experience and skill development (Smedick, 2017).

Communities of practice can be seen in various places in higher education, such as an office environment or within a professional association (Smedick, 2017). Within an office environment, new administrators will come in with some knowledge and skill related to the work for which they were hired. Supervisors and seasoned administrators can help the new administrator learn about the organization's history and context, office politics, and how to navigate processes within the organization (Smedick, 2017). Additionally, involvement in professional organizations can serve as a community of practice for administrators. During conferences, webinars, and other networking experiences, administrators can learn from the social exchange of ideas to improve their own individual practice (Smedick, 2017).

**Supervision Training.** Supervision is necessary at all organizational levels, and effective supervision can not only lead to achieving organizational goals, but it can also lead to student success in higher education (Wilson et al., 2020). Student affairs administrators often take part in supervisory activities due to the nature of their work, whether it is supervising lower-level administrators or supervising students, and many administrators learn more about supervision while actively engaging in the act on the job (Wilson et al., 2020). According to Lamb et al. (2018), “effective supervision provides the foundation for staff competence and growth, attainment of organizational goals, and quality student service” (p. 740). Although effective supervision is essential, many student affairs administrators lack supervisory support and training (Harned & Murphy, 1998). Ineffective supervision is especially noticed with entry-level staff members who often lack supervisory experience (Waple, 2006; Winston & Cramer, 1997). For example, many graduate programs pair curricular learning with a graduate assistantship whereby the student can gain professional experience. Many assistantships include a supervisory role, but some do not. Additionally, not all graduate programs include supervision in the curriculum, which could be another learning opportunity. Including supervision experiences through curricular learning and practical application in assistantships can allow graduate students to gain supervisory experiences in a supportive environment before they become new administrators in the field.

Lamb et al. (2018) discovered findings consistent with much of the literature, noting many administrators lack formal supervisory training and that degree programs rarely provide coursework or content related to supervision. In a study specifically looking at skill deficiencies in 136 student affairs graduate preparation programs, only 12

programs (i.e., 9%) offered coursework in supervision (Cooper et al., 2016). Due to a lack of formal preparation for supervision, participants in Lamb et al.'s (2018) study shared that they learned how to supervise through a process of trial and error or from observing other supervisors and mentors. Additionally, when supervisory training was provided, which was rare for most participants, there was little consistency across their experiences (Lamb et al., 2018). The need for continued training and development aligns well with Worthington's (1987) research conclusion that supervisors might not improve with experience alone. Worthington (1987) further shared that supervisors who lack training "may perpetuate the mistakes of their own supervision" (p. 206). All of these factors are important because continued professional development and training are necessary for administrators to be prepared to meet students' evolving needs (Henning et al., 2011).

**Career Readiness.** In higher education, the most important customer or client is the enrolled student. Student needs are evolving in many ways and preparing students for a future career is a high priority for colleges and universities. The costs associated with higher education have steadily increased, which has caused individuals to question whether earning a college degree is worth the investment (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Fox, 2018); however, many feel that earning a college degree is the only way to set oneself up for future financial success (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). After the recession of 2008 in the United States, the White House developed a College Scorecard that included a measure for the number of students obtaining employment post-graduation from higher education institutions (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). As a result, questions from the public, along with economic concerns, have placed enormous pressure on institutions to perform and to

“quantify and qualify their value to society and the economy” (Cruzvergara et al., 2018, p. 28).

In 2014, the Gallup organization conducted interviews with more than 30,000 U.S. college graduates, whereby they discovered that only 29% of recent college graduates reported feeling well-prepared for life after college (Gallup, Inc., 2014). In 2014, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey of 400 U.S. employers from organizations that had a minimum of 25 employees and reported 25% or more of their new employees having earned a degree from either a 2-year or 4-year higher education institution (Hart, 2015). They uncovered that 44% of the employers rated recent college graduates as not being prepared to apply knowledge and skills in their post-collegiate lives (Hart, 2015). These two studies illustrated a growing need for preparing students for post-collegiate success.

In response to the public outcry for accountability and pressure from the U.S. government and employers, higher education has had to prioritize career readiness to communicate the value of a college education to society (Fox, 2018). To address career readiness, professional organizations including The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Collegiate Employment Research Institute conducted studies regarding what career readiness meant to employers, with NACE leading the charge to define career readiness for higher education (Cruzvergara et al., 2018).

In 2014, NACE assembled a committee of career services administrators and employment recruiters to define career readiness and to name a set of associated competencies (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). Competencies are defined as “knowledge,

values, abilities, and behaviors that help an individual contribute to or successfully engage in a role or task” (Seemiller, 2013, p. xv). The study of competencies gained prominence in the 1960s in various business organizations and industries as a means to predict success on the job (Seemiller, 2018). Burns et al. (2012) conducted a study in 2011 of major businesses from across the world, and they revealed that approximately 75% of the organizations surveyed in the study utilize competencies. Nonprofit organizations also use competencies (Seemiller, 2018), so it is not surprising that NACE, a professional organization, aimed to identify relevant competencies for career readiness for college students.

After receiving responses from 606 U.S. employers through a survey, the committee from NACE defined career readiness in 2015 as “the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace” (2020, para. 3). The committee from NACE further identified seven competencies, and in 2016, the organization added an eighth competency. The competencies identified by NACE included critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communications, leadership, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, professionalism/work ethic, career management, global/intercultural fluency (2020, para. 4). NACE’s career readiness definition and competencies were designed to assist higher education administrators in preparing students for post-collegiate employment by providing a common language for campus-wide collaborative efforts (Fox, 2018). Competencies grounded in research also allow for a theoretical foundation for developing curriculum, programs, and services (Seemiller, 2018).



As an institutional priority, developing career-ready graduates should involve an entire campus community's coordinated effort from academics to the cocurricular (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Fox, 2018). To fully integrate career readiness into the overall college experience, senior leaders need to set budgetary priorities that allocate funds to programs, resources, and services that directly support career readiness (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). Expectations for the intentional development of career readiness must also be defined and disseminated to campus constituents (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). Career readiness components can be infused into curricular offerings through experiences such as senior capstone projects, service-learning projects, and faculty can also identify and call out the career readiness components students are learning through collaborative group assignments (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). Students can develop career readiness in the cocurricular through student organization involvement, leadership development, and career education (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Seemiller, 2018). Lastly, competencies allow opportunities for assessment and evaluation measurements that can result in producing quantifiable evidence to promote further the value of a college education (Seemiller, 2018).

**Student Employment as a High-Impact Practice.** Student employment can serve as a vehicle for students to become career ready. In 2008, Kuh identified a set of teaching and learning practices in higher education that contribute to improved persistence and academic performance. Specifically, Kuh's (2008) high-impact practices are defined as "institutionally structured student experiences inside or outside of the classroom that are associated with elevated performance across multiple engagement

activities and desired outcomes, such as deep learning, persistence, and satisfaction with college” (McClellan et al., 2018, p. x).

Conditions that define high-impact practices include (a) time devoted to purposeful tasks; (b) substantive interactions with faculty and peers; (c) opportunities to experience diversity; (d) regular performance feedback; (e) ability to connect learning beyond the experience through reflection; and (f) active, collaborative, and connected learning (Kuh, 2008). After naming all of the necessary conditions for a high-impact practice, Kuh (2008) then named 10 specific higher education experiences that contain all of the elements to be high-impact practices: (a) first-year seminars and experiences; (b) common intellectual experiences (i.e., core curriculum); (c) learning communities; (d) writing-intensive courses; (e) collaborative assignments and projects; (f) undergraduate research; (g) diversity/global learning; (h) service learning, community-based learning; (i) internships; and (j) capstone courses and projects. Although student employment was not identified by Kuh in 2008, in 2018, he stated that student employment, especially on-campus student employment, could be designed to mirror the attributes and experiences he defined as high-impact practices (McClellan et al., 2018).

Supervisors in higher education must lean on standards of professional practice and competencies when approaching their work. To prepare students for post-collegiate success, supervisors can improve by learning within their communities of practice and engaging in ongoing supervision training and development. Additionally, supervisors must prepare and meet the ever-evolving needs of students. With a current focus on career readiness, supervisors should prepare students for success in the workforce. Supervisors should also intentionally craft student employment experiences to elevate

student performance, to engage them in deep learning, and to help students develop skills that will be transferrable to their post-collegiate success. Ultimately, higher education administrative supervisors play a critical role in developing and shaping the next generation for the workforce.

### **Supervision of Student Employees in Higher Education**

Supervision is prevalent in higher education, not only between administrators but also between administrators and student employees. According to a 2018 national survey, 43% of full-time and 81% of part-time college students had jobs while attending school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Working while attending college is often concerning because it could result in students having less time to devote to their studies, which could lead to lower academic performance (Pike et al., 2008). Conversely, working can have a neutral or even beneficial influence (Riggert et al., 2006). Kuh (2009) added many individuals researching student employment suggested positive outcomes associated with student employment are more important than the potential adverse effects because employment might provide students with the necessary people skills to be successful after graduation. Furthermore, supervisors who have a high level of contact with student employees have a unique opportunity to help students grow and develop (Frock, 2015). Specifically, supervisors can facilitate learning and developmental opportunities for student employees to help with retention and the acquisition of career readiness skills, which are highly desired by employers (Burnside et al., 2019).

A research team of higher education administrators associated with NASPA conducted a mixed-methods study that included a national survey administered to senior-level student affairs administrators from a diverse array of institutions across the United

States (Burnside et al., 2019). This study included institutions of various sizes and types, and the survey was to be completed by the senior-level administrator with input from other campus administrators who had differing levels of responsibility regarding their on-campus student employment. The researchers gleaned that over 60% of the responding institutions provide supervisors with access to online resources related to student employment, 50% offered some sort of orientation and training for supervisors of student employees, but only 31% provided ongoing professional development activities for supervisors (Burnside et al., 2019).

### **Student Employment Characteristics**

With so many students working while they are learning, it can be beneficial for supervisors of student employees to have awareness and knowledge of research related to student employment. Through gaining a foundational understanding of student employment, in general, supervisors can approach supervision with greater intentionality. The next sections explore the history of student employment and factors related to student employment, including development, GPA, engagement, and persistence.

### ***History of Student Employment***

Familiarity with the origins of student employment can provide a foundation for understanding how long students have been working and contributing to college campuses while being enrolled. Students have been employed on college campuses since the beginnings of the colonial colleges in the United States (McCormick et al., 2010). Student employment grew tremendously after the passage of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 because more campus facilities were erected, such as research labs, residence halls,

and dining facilities, and these facilities required the employment of students for operation (McClellan et al., 2018).

After the Great Depression and the New Deal, the U.S. federal government expanded student employment by laying the foundation for student work programs (McClellan et al., 2018). A flood of adult students entered into higher education after World War II due to the establishment of the GI Bill, but many of these students already had jobs (McClellan et al., 2018). In the 1960s, what is now known as Federal Work-Study was introduced to support college students as a means to earn part of their federal financial aid (McClellan et al., 2018).

The number of institutions and student enrollment have both grown substantially since the emergence of the colonial colleges (Thelin, 2011). Colleges and universities have also grown in their curricular and cocurricular offerings, such as growth in libraries, residence halls, and support programs for students, all of which have provided student employment opportunities (McClellan et al., 2018). Work colleges, “four-year, degree granting, liberal arts institutions that engage students in the purposeful integration of work, learning, and service,” emerged in the late 1800s, highlighting a unique relationship between higher education and student employment (Work Colleges Consortium, 2020, para. 1).

Each of these historical examples illustrates how higher education operations have changed over time. The examples also remind readers that student employment has been an ongoing arrangement in higher education within the United States since the early 1800s (McClellan et al., 2018; Rowh, 2014). As institutions grew in size and programmatic offerings, higher education required the assistance and involvement of

student employees (McClellan et al., 2018). Without student employees, continued growth and success would not have been possible (McClellan et al., 2018).

Due to the large numbers of student employees working on college and university campuses, it is important to consider how they contribute to the success of an institution and how they may grow and develop while employed. Additionally, student employees provide needed services to other students, staff, faculty, and guests within an institution's community. As a result, it is valuable to consider how the students are supervised within these roles.

### ***Student Employment and Development***

College student development theories aim to explain the holistic growth and development of college students in postsecondary education (Patton et al., 2016). Development can occur both inside and outside of the classroom, such as through student employment on campus. Specifically, identity development theories can help inform student affairs administrators about how their student employees are growing and changing during their collegiate career. McClellan et al. (2018) shared that identity development in college involves many facets, such as understanding what one believes, who they are, and what is their purpose in life.

Supervisors can play a pivotal role in supporting student employees as they learn more about themselves during college (McClellan et al., 2018). Students have multiple identities, such as gender, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, and differing abilities, and these identities may be visible or invisible (Jones & Abes, 2013). Supervisors can engage student employees in conversations that go beyond job responsibilities to help students

better understand themselves and to assess how they are learning and growing holistically as a student, as an employee, and as a person (McClellan et al., 2018).

Student employment allows students to develop morally and ethically, which leads to developing personal character (McClellan et al., 2018). Working on campus provides an opportunity for supervisors to model moral and ethical behaviors for student employees. Student employment can also involve ongoing developmental opportunities for students to engage with their supervisors about ethics via training and regular conversations (McClellan et al., 2018). By understanding how college students develop and by being intentional to help student employees grow, supervisors can help facilitate the development of their student employees in a variety of ways, including helping them to become career ready.

In 2018, the Project CEO (Cocurricular Experience Outcomes) survey was launched by a research team from Stephen F. Austin State University. Through the survey, based on the NACE competencies, the researchers connected employability skills to student experiences, and Project CEO became a national benchmarking study and a national movement after other campuses adopted the survey (Hernandez & Smith, 2019). Respondents to the Project CEO survey were asked to rate their career readiness levels on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest level (Peck & Callahan, 2019). Afterward, the responses were further divided to represent three employment categories for students: (a) not employed, (b) on-campus job, and (c) off-campus job (Peck & Callahan, 2019). Students who worked reported higher levels of career readiness than students who did not work, and for six of the NACE competencies, students who held an

on-campus job rated themselves higher for career readiness than nonworking students or students who worked off campus (Project CEO Benchmarking Report, 2018).

The development of student employees is important because if students do not grow to become competent workers, there could be broader consequences for both the institution where they are employed and for employers who will hire these students once they graduate. Within the institution, an incompetent student employee could provide incorrect information to a constituent or possibly breach confidentiality. In a future place of employment, an employer may assume a former student employee would understand how to make ethical decisions, but later learn that they do not.

College students should grow, learn, and develop during their time in postsecondary education through challenges posed to them both inside and outside of the classroom. Higher education's broad goal is to prepare students for post-college success; therefore, this goal must be met for society to continue to value higher education. Supervisors of student employees are uniquely positioned to help challenge students to grow, learn, and develop so they are career ready and well prepared to succeed after graduation.

### ***Student Employment and GPA***

Grades are a standard measure of academic performance in colleges and universities, often serving as a predictor of persistence and future success (Pike et al., 2008). As a result, many studies have focused on student employment and GPAs. Some research studies revealed a negative relationship between student employment and academic performance (Elling & Elling, 2000; Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Logan et al., 2016; Pike et al., 2008), whereas other studies discovered positive outcomes (Deros & Ryan,



2008; Dundes & Marx, 2006; Lang, 2012; Mounsey et al., 2013). Understanding student employment and GPAs are meaningful because although student employees provide a vital work function within the institution, they are students first, and supervisors must recognize that student employment can help or hinder academic success.

**Negative Findings.** Elling and Elling (2000) conducted phone interviews to investigate student employment in relation to cocurricular involvement and academic progress. The data analysis consisted of cross calculations between hours worked, variables related to involvement, and academic progress. Statistically significant results indicated that working 30 hours or more per week negatively influenced academic progress and relationships developed with professors. These results were likely related to a student not having enough time to meet with a professor or not having enough time to study because they were working 30 or more hours in addition to attending classes.

In two additional studies, researchers discovered that an even lower threshold of working 20 hours or more per week resulted in a negative GPA outcome for student employees (Logan et al., 2016; Pike et al., 2008). Logan et al. (2016) engaged in a quantitative study using the College Student Experience Questionnaire with 380 undergraduates. Their research noted a negative impact on GPAs for students who worked at an off-campus job for 20 or more hours per week, although no statistical significance was identified. In a study by Pike et al. (2008), statistical significance was revealed in the decline of academic performance for students working in excess of 20 hours per week. Using the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement data, Pike et al. (2008) employed a series of one-way ANOVA and ANCOVA models to determine potential connections between grades and the number of hours worked by employed

students. Due to a very large sample size, results revealed statistical significance in the decline of academic performance for students working in excess of 20 hours per week (Pike et al., 2008). Additionally, Kulm and Cramer (2006) also reported that GPAs correlated negatively with employment. Using exploratory factor analyses, reliability, and correlations to analyze online survey data from approximately 500 undergraduate participants, Kulm and Cramer (2006) concluded that increased hours worked equated to a lower GPA, although no specific amount of work hours was cited. Statistical significance was not evidenced in this study, but the findings were consistent with other studies indicating that employed students often earn lower GPAs.

The inclusion of both on-campus and off-campus student employees was inconsistent, with some studies not making a distinction between the two types of employment. Hours worked per week contributed to the negative relationships discovered between student employment and GPAs. Although some of these studies indicated statistical significance and others did not, the overall message was that student employment could harm GPAs. These studies provide valuable information for supervisors who schedule work hours for student employees. Based on these studies, supervisors may want to consider how the scheduled weekly work hours could influence a student employee's grades, connections with professors, and overall academic progress.

**Positive Findings.** Although some researchers discovered negative outcomes between student employment and GPAs, other researchers learned that there are positive outcomes. Mounsey et al. (2013) conducted a mixed methods study comparing GPA and student employment utilizing inventory data and a questionnaire related to student employment. The authors analyzed data from 110 students at a mid-sized university. One

important finding was that GPAs between working and nonworking students were similar; however, working students averaged 0.02 GPA points higher than nonworking students. In another study, Lang (2012) analyzed the National Survey of Student Engagement data to explore the relationship between working and nonworking students' academic performance. Using logistic regression models, Lang (2012) learned that on-campus student employees had slightly higher GPAs than students who worked off campus.

Although working 20 or more hours per week contributed to a negative relationship between student employment and GPA, Dundes and Marx (2006) learned that students who worked 10 to 19 hours per week earned higher GPAs than all other populations of students (i.e., students who work more or less than the noted hours and nonworking students). Dundes and Marx (2006) postulated that working in the 10 to 19 hour range weekly may be suitable to allow students enough time to balance their coursework, student employment, and study time, which could account for why students working in this range achieved greater academic success which was reflected in higher GPAs. Similarly, Derous and Ryan (2008) reported that students' attitudes towards academics were positive when engaged in jobs where demands were high, but working hours were low, resulting in a positive relation to academic performance.

Working on campus also appeared to have a positive relation to GPAs. This outcome aligns with Astin's (1984) student involvement theory that suggested that students who hold part-time employment in an on-campus job would have a greater chance of being involved. Extra time for involvement could provide students with opportunities to connect with faculty and to improve their academic performance.

Supervisors of student employees should recognize the positive outcomes associated with student employment so they can be intentional in helping their student employees achieve academic success. Assigning work in the 10 to 19 hours per week range was associated positively with student employees earning higher GPAs. The 10 to 19 hours per week range could also provide enough time for the student to balance their employment, coursework, and involvement that may result in a more positive GPA outcome. By being mindful of the total number of hours students are working, supervisors could assign work hours that may assist their student employees in earning higher GPAs.

**Additional Factors.** Noteworthy findings from the literature also included levels of anxiety and stress, time management, and the connection of college student employment to one's future career. Mounsey et al. (2013) acknowledged that employed students reported more anxiety and stress than their nonworking peers, although the level was mild. As a result, Mounsey et al. (2013) concluded that colleges and universities should look at the total student when providing support. The authors also postulated that working students might be more resourceful in balancing their roles as both employees and students. This involvement may be why they are mildly more successful, as indicated by their slightly higher GPAs.

The concept of balance is also essential to consider when studying student employment and academic performance. In Dundes and Marx's (2006) quantitative study, an important finding was that 74% of off-campus student employees indicated that they had to be more efficient with their time in order to balance work, class, and other obligations. Dundes and Marx (2006) concluded that the optimal number of work hours

for off-campus student employees should be between 10 to 19 hours per week. They argued that this range of hours would allow more time for studying and thereby could enhance academic performance. Deros and Ryan (2008) mentioned the importance of a balance between academics, employment, and other activities so academic performance would not suffer. They also added that student employment was beneficial for students when the work related to a future job or career.

All of these studies related to student employment and GPA provide a myriad of findings that can be informative for student employee supervisors. Although very few of these studies identified statistical significance, many reported positive results related to student employment and academic performance. GPAs are an important indicator of academic success, and supervisors must remember that student employees are students first. Sometimes working can provide additional stressors in a student employee's life, and a supervisor may be able to assist or provide resources to support the student to help reduce stressors related to work or their academics. Most importantly, supervisors should strongly consider the hours of work they assign per week for each student employee to ensure the students have enough time to balance all of their responsibilities. Being academically successful should be a priority for both the student and the supervisor.

### ***Student Employment and Engagement***

With so many students working while they are learning, it is vital to explore the diversity of experiences student employees have on their college campuses. Levels of engagement with a college campus through educationally purposeful activities such as cocurricular involvement or connections to faculty and staff are essential parts of the total student experience (Kuh, 2008). Because student employees hold multiple roles, their

engagement level is an important factor in their overall academic performance and their preparation for post-college success (Lang, 2012; Pike et al., 2008). Several studies highlighted both negative (Elling & Elling, 2000) and positive (Lundberg, 2004) results related to engagement and student employment.

Elling and Elling (2000) determined off-campus employment had negative influences on academic progress and relationships with professors. In contrast, working on campus had a positive influence on relationships developed with faculty members and time spent involved in cocurricular activities such as student organizations. This contrast might be related to more time and geographical proximity to engagement opportunities in the collegiate environment. Lundberg (2004) also explored how off-campus student employment affects engagement with professors, other students, and learning. Lundberg (2004) uncovered that working while attending school might lessen some engagement opportunities with faculty and other students through cocurricular involvement, but it might provide an opportunity for learning from discussions between students during work hours.

Using the National Survey of Student Engagement data, Pike et al. (2008) and Lang (2012) also discovered findings related to student employment and engagement. In the study by Pike et al. (2008), the authors assessed engagement measures such as connections between students and faculty. They discovered that students who worked less than 20 hours per week reported higher levels of engagement and connection to their college campus (Pike et al., 2008). Accordingly, Pike et al. (2008) recommended that first-year students (i.e., the subjects of their study) should work less than 20 hours weekly if they want to be engaged on campus and strive for academic success. Lang (2012)

revealed on-campus student employees spent more time engaging in cocurricular and social activities versus nonworking students. Lang (2012) concluded that there were no distinct differences between working and nonworking students regarding their GPAs, class preparation, and other variables, but Lang did suggest that students who work on campus might have more time to connect to campus than students who work off campus.

Student engagement can help students encounter educationally purposeful activities that can help them grow and prepare for life beyond college (Kuh, 2008). Engagement through building relationships across campus and cocurricular involvement is important, and supervisors may be able to help facilitate connections for student employees by encouraging them to develop relationships with their peers and faculty through various cocurricular involvement opportunities. Additionally, supervisors should consider assigning less than 20 hours of work weekly for student employees, so the students have enough time to participate in cocurricular and social activities.

### ***Student Employment and Persistence***

Another factor emerging from the literature was the connection between student employment and persistence. Kulm and Cramer (2006) investigated the effect of undergraduate student employment concerning several variables including academic persistence. Exploratory factor analyses, reliability, and correlations showed a positive association between academic persistence and graduation rates for employed students. In another study, Mamiseishvili (2010) selected a sample of 1,140 low-income, first-generation students enrolled at 4-year colleges from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study and analyzed various characteristics of the sample. Mamiseishvili's (2010) central finding was that employed students who prioritized their

primary role as a student were more likely to remain at the institution than students who put employment first.

Student employment can serve as a means to help students adjust and integrate into the collegiate environment, which may increase their feeling of connectedness to the institution (Noel-Levitz, 2010). Supervisors of student employees can help cultivate a sense of belonging and serve as a “retention agent” (Noel, 1996, p. 32) in helping students stay and complete their degree. Supervisory actions that may influence student persistence and retention include: making student employees feel valued, providing monetary incentives for positive performance, clarifying how student employee work connects to the broader goals of the university, promoting training and growth, being flexible to the needs of the student, providing recognition, and having fun (Brigham Young University, 2020). Overall, student employment can greatly aid in whether or not a student is retained at the institution and whether they persist towards degree completion (McClellan et al., 2018). Because student employment can lead to academic persistence and graduation, it is critically important that supervisors help student employees prioritize their role and responsibilities as a student first (Mamiseishvili, 2010). Furthermore, supervisors should be intentional when working with student employees, such as making the students feel valued and helping them connect their work to bigger goals, to help foster a sense of belonging that can aid student employees in persisting at the institution.

Overall, supervisors should approach their work with student employees with greater intentionality by increasing their knowledge and awareness about student employees’ characteristics and needs. Student employees are vital to the success of the institution, as they assist in providing programs and services at institutions of higher



education. Student employment can serve as a vehicle through which students can grow, develop, and become career ready during their time in college, and on-campus student employment leads to greater developmental outcomes for students. Because student employees are students first, supervisors must recognize how the hours worked per week can connect to a student's academic GPA, their level of engagement on campus through both academic and cocurricular activities, and how employment can help the student persist and graduate. With knowledge, training, and support, supervisors can be the cornerstone for facilitating total student employee success.

### **Student Employment Programs**

In the past decade, many colleges and universities began to develop student employment programs that incorporated a developmental focus. Several research studies focused on student employment have identified the integration of elements of high-impact practices (Markgraf, 2015; Perozzi, 2009; Rinto, 2019; Savoca, 2016); but learning is not always emphasized in student employment; therefore, these programs may lack a framework that facilitates a process for reflection and knowledge transfer (Hansen, 2019; Perozzi, 2009). As colleges and universities design or redesign student employment programs, they should create structures to incorporate many aspects of high-impact practices, which can also foster career readiness for students.

#### ***Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>***

Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> (Guided Reflection on Work) is likely the most well-known student employee program in U.S. higher education. Reflection is the core of the University of Iowa's Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> program for student employment (Hansen & Hoag, 2018). Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> has served as a framework for many student employee

development programs across the United States. The program is structured around four reflection questions to allow for conversations between student employees and supervisors and create a high-impact activity (University of Iowa, 2020). The following four questions comprise the heart of the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> program:

1. How is this job fitting 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? (University of Iowa, 2020, para. 3)

Through Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>, supervisors are expected to engage in two conversations with student employees each semester based on the four questions associated with this program (University of Iowa, 2020). Data from this program is collected annually.

Students engaging in the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations reported growth in skill development, and they agreed that student employment helped them achieve success with the university's outcomes associated with student employment (University of Iowa, 2020). Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> has also shifted the focus from working to earn pay to a culture focused on what students will learn through their on-campus employment.

With more and more students working on campus, supervisors can play an integral role in shaping the student employment experience to be reflective and aligned with high-impact practices (Hansen & Hoag, 2018; McClellan et al., 2018).

Developmental programs and intentional conversations, such as those outlined by Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>, allow supervisors to foster student development and career readiness.

Supervisors must also take care in preparation for this type of engagement. To successfully engage in a student development program, supervisors need adequate training and development.

### **Training and Development of Supervisors in Higher Education**

In 2009, ACPA and NASPA created a joint task force to identify 10 competencies for student affairs administrators. This document was adopted in 2010 with the recommendation that it would be reviewed periodically. In 2014, a team conducted a review that led to revisions in 2015.

Each competency area has foundational, intermediate, and advanced stages, indicating that professional development should be an ongoing task for administrators at all levels in student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Supervision is included as a key piece under several competency areas, but it is prominent in the Organizational and Human Resources competency. According to this seminal document, student affairs administrators must demonstrate proficiency in supervision to succeed in higher education today and in the anticipated future for higher education (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Although this document includes descriptive outcomes for each competency area, it does not prescribe how to teach competencies, and there is no standardized accountability to ensure all administrators develop the necessary competencies.

In a study focused on identifying specific skills for training for new administrators in higher education, Holzweiss et al. (2019) received 168 unique responses, from 139 student affairs administrators in the United States to an open-ended survey question asking participants to explain an administrative event they experienced that would be important for future new administrator training programs. After coding the results, the

research team identified five primary themes: foundations of the job, self-management, institutional culture, personnel management, and decision-making (Holzweiss et al., 2019). The theme of personnel management included 18 comments related to managing and supervising staff, such as handling difficult employees, providing critical feedback, and supporting employees (Holzweiss et al., 2019).

Herdlein et al. (2010) also conducted a survey of 147 faculty members, representing 58% of the graduate preparation programs in the ACPA Directory of Graduate Preparation Programs, to identify key skills for new administrators. Supervision was identified as a needed and necessary skill for new administrators. Additionally, Ardoin et al. (2019) engaged in a qualitative study of 19 senior student affairs administrators from a variety of institution types across the United States. After coding interview data, Ardoin et al. (2019) revealed that senior student affairs administrators valued employees who completed a master's degree in student affairs due to their knowledge of student development theory, diversity and inclusion, and assessment; however, Ardoin et al. (2019) also noted that the respondents cited deficiencies in their employees' ability to understand higher education from a systems perspective and that many lacked administrative skills, including supervision.

In a review of websites from higher education and student affairs master's programs, Cooper et al. (2016) noted that only 9% of the sites mentioned supervision as something associated with their academic program. Furthermore, supervision was identified as a needed skill for new administrator training in several studies (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007). All of these studies

indicated the importance of including supervision in training programs and curriculum for student affairs administrators (Ardoyn et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007).

The challenge of supervision in higher education is that very few student affairs administrators have received formalized training and education in supervision (Wilson et al., 2020). Several studies note that many administrators base their supervisory style on what they have learned from their own supervisory experiences (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Barham & Winston, 2006; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003). With little formalized training occurring, Morris and Laipple (2015) reasoned for administrators to receive ongoing training in a variety of competencies, and Dickerson et al. (2011) shared that both faculty and administrative leadership should share the responsibility for providing training that helps professionals build necessary skills. Even though there should be a shared responsibility, Holmes (2014) uncovered dissonance between graduate preparation program faculty and student affairs administrators as to who should be responsible for teaching graduate students about supervision, meaning faculty thought student affairs administrators should teach supervision, and the administrators believed supervision should be covered in the classroom.

Another challenge is that not all student affairs administrators come into the field from a traditional master's preparation program. With higher education being so diverse and attracting staff with a variety of backgrounds, there is currently no consistency with training and development for supervision. As a result, there have been discussions about credentialing and certification programs for student affairs. Arvidson and Baier (2003)

describe the debate on credentialing in student affairs as “the on-again/off-again ‘credentialing’ movement” (p. 35) because although the idea has been discussed many times, no program has been broadly adopted by the profession. Since at least the 1980s, there have been discussions about credentialing, and professional organizations such as ACPA and NASPA have attempted to create such programs, but they have not always achieved the success or adoption that the organizations likely desired (Arvidson & Baier, 2003). Each of these programs would potentially provide more consistency with training and development for student affairs professionals, but they may not be widely accessible if the programs are not offered for free to all student affairs administrators.

As an alternative to credentialing, programs like Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> have been adapted and implemented at many campuses in the United States. Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> focuses on student employee development, but it also provides training and resources for the administrative supervisor. The use of the program materials is free, accessible, and there is a suggested implementation timeline. There are also guidelines for how to use the program’s trademarked name. Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> allows administrators to bring intentionality into the development of student employees and supervisors, and the program serves as a roadmap that can lead to success for both the student and the supervisor. Regardless of where supervision is taught, Holzweiss et al. (2019) posited that intentional investment in the development of new administrators would “help improve the practice of higher education as well as the success of students who attend college”(p. 59); therefore, providing training in supervision is important to the success of higher education as a whole.

## Summary

Research on supervisors and supervision involves a variety of factors such as defining supervision, the role of a supervisor, needed skills, and supervisory models. In this literature review, I have shared the definition of supervision, noting that supervision serves as the cornerstone of employee development (Robke, 2016). I have explored the complex and multifaceted role of a supervisor (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), highlighting that supervisors must provide guidance, support, feedback, and evaluation (Ardoin, 2019) in the process of helping employees achieve organizational goals (Peck Parrott, 2017). The success of a supervisor requires the development of both hard and soft skills (Klaus, 2007), such as understanding standards, laws, and regulations and tailoring one's supervisory approach to meet the developmental needs of the supervisee (Peck Parrott, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020). Additionally, I detailed a few widely adopted supervisory models, including an exploration of the newest model in higher education, the inclusive supervision model (Wilson et al., 2020), which emphasizes the importance of approaching supervision by creating safe spaces, cultivating holistic development, demonstrating vulnerability, and building capacity in others.

To examine how supervisors learn to supervise, I included perspectives from clinical supervision, business management, and higher education. Many academic programs in clinical supervision included training programs for supervisors (Guerin et al., 2015; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Rapisarda et al., 2011). Through clinical supervision, academic programs, and curricula, supervisors have opportunities to learn and increase their confidence levels for supervisory practice (DeKruyf & Pehrsson, 2011; Merlin & Brendel, 2017). Training and development are also emphasized in clinical supervision

because there are often requirements from accrediting and licensing bodies for clinical practice (Crook-Lyon et al., 2011; Gazzola et al., 2013; Kiley, 2011; Merlin & Brendel, 2017; Nelson et al., 2006). Training and development are valuable in clinical supervision to ensure clients seeking counseling services receive the best care possible.

In business management, the relationship between supervisors and employees is critical to an organization's success (Johnston, 2005). Interpersonal, management, and leadership skill development contribute to the growth of business supervisors (Johnston, 2005); however, it is not uncommon to see organizations promote employees with little to no experience to the role of supervisor (Greer, 2013). In addition to skill development, researchers have concluded that adopting a growth mindset can help supervisors achieve success (Baldwin, 2019; Dweck, 2006), and internal support structures can help supervisors succeed (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). Success in business and goal achievement are priorities for sustained growth and profitability, and the supervisor plays a critical role in the organization's success or failure.

For higher education, skills and competencies were the main focus of professional growth (Finney & Horst, 2019), but communities of practice were also viable places for individuals to learn about supervision (Wenger, 2000; Smedick, 2017). Similar to business management, many administrators lacked formal supervisory training (Lamb et al., 2018), and only 9% of graduate preparation programs for higher education and student affairs included formal coursework in supervision (Cooper et al., 2016). As a result, supervisors need ongoing training and development to meet the evolving needs of students.



With the cost to attend college steadily rising, colleges and universities must justify their existence (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Fox, 2018) and ensure students are career ready upon graduation. With only 29% of recent graduates feeling well prepared for life after college (Gallup, Inc., 2014), higher education has some work to do. As a result, NACE introduced a set of competencies colleges and universities should focus on to help students prepare for their future careers (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2020). Administrative supervisors can use NACE's competencies to prepare student employees for future career success.

Next, I explored the supervision of student employees in higher education by providing a brief history of student employment, factors related to student employee success, the pressures for developing career-ready students, and how student employment could be considered as a high-impact practice. The history of student employment provides a foundation to understand the important role students have played in the success of higher education as a whole (McClellan et al., 2018). Because supervision involves a relationship (Dan, 2017; Wilson et al., 2020) and supervisors should know their employees (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Peck Parrott, 2017; Twenge et al., 2010), it was necessary to share research related to student employment and factors such as development, GPA, engagement, and persistence.

Studies on GPA and student employment had mixed findings noting both positive (Derous & Ryan, 2008; Dundes & Marx, 2006; Lang, 2012; Mounsey et al., 2013) and negative (Elling & Elling, 2000; Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Logan et al., 2016; Pike et al., 2008) outcomes; however, working 10 to 19 hours per week was determined as the ideal range of hours to work for positive academic performance associated with GPA (Dundes

& Marx, 2006). Regarding engagement, students working less than 20 hours per week or students working on campus were more engaged with faculty and in cocurricular activities such as student organizations (Pike et al., 2008). Student employment was also positively related to academic persistence, especially for students who prioritized their primary role as students compared to students who put employment first (Mamiseishvili, 2010).

Student employment can also help students become career ready, and student employment can be designed to incorporate aspects of Kuh's (2008) high-impact practices. The most noteworthy student employment program in the United States is Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>, a program wherein the supervisor plays an integral role in shaping the student employment experience (Hansen & Hoag, 2018; McClellan et al., 2018). The Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model can assist administrative supervisors in intentionally preparing students for post-collegiate career success by providing a roadmap for them to follow as they work with students.

Lastly, I focused on the training and development of supervisors in higher education, noting that although ACPA and NASPA jointly developed professional competencies for student affairs administrators, the organizations do not prescribe how to teach competencies, and there is no standardized accountability to ensure administrators at all levels develop the necessary competencies. There have been discussions by ACPA and NASPA about developing credentialing programs, but none of these programs have seen broad adoption and success. Several studies cited supervision as a skill lacking for new administrators (Ardoyn et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger,

2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007), and only 9% of U.S. higher education and student affairs master's programs mention supervision on their academic program websites (Cooper et al. 2016). Additional research studies concluded that supervision in training programs and curriculum for student affairs administrators were necessary (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007). Furthermore, with little formalized training, there are generations of supervisors who have likely only learned about supervision through their own experiences (Arminio & Creamer, 2001; Barham & Winston, 2006; Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003).

The literature related to student employment focuses broadly on student outcomes, with little attention paid to the administrative supervisor's perceptions and experiences. Because more studies reveal a need for student affairs administrators to receive training and development in supervision, it is imperative to investigate this topic further. Through this case study, I will seek to uncover the supervisory experience at an institution that has adopted the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model. I will specifically look at what experiences student affairs administrators bring into their supervisory practice, what external factors influence the supervisory process, and how their perceptions of supervision evolve or remain the same. This research will advance understandings of the supervisory process and experience at a campus with an intentionally designed student employee development program. It may also provide insights into how the supervisor development within this program could be strengthened and how this type of program could benefit other campuses and supervisors. With purposeful research, we might be

able to improve higher education and the success of students as a whole if we better understand the experiences administrators have with student employee supervision; therefore, this study is timely and needed. In Chapter III, I will describe the procedures that I will employ to conduct a qualitative research study to learn more about student affairs administrators' supervisory experiences with student employees.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this case study was to explore student affairs administrators' experiences concerning supervising student employees. Supervision, viewed as a process (Goin, 2006; Halse, 2011; Robke, 2006; Watkins, 2012), involved many factors including, but not limited to, previous supervisory experiences, training and development, experiences that occurred during supervisory work, and how one's supervision might have changed over time. As a result, I applied Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to explore the supervisory journey and to understand the inputs a supervisor brought into their supervisory experience, the environment experienced while supervising part-time, on-campus student employees, and what outcomes, if any, resulted from various supervisory experiences. Astin's model served as the framework for this qualitative case study. The following sections are addressed in this chapter: (a) research design, (b) context of the study, (c) participant selection, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, and (f) trustworthiness.

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative researchers explore the meanings people make of various situations, problems, and experiences within the participants' natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018), and case study research is a qualitative design used for in-depth exploration of potential hypotheses within a bounded context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gerber et al., 2017; Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). Yin (2018) clearly defined that "a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries

between phenomenon and context are not evident” (p. 15). Additionally, an instrumental case study helps researchers gain awareness of issues that may be transferrable to other similar cases (Gerber et al., 2017).

My intent in conducting this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of student affairs administrators’ experiences and the meanings made from supervising student employees at a single institution of higher education. An instrumental qualitative case study design was suitable for this research (Stake, 2005) because it allowed me to gain awareness of issues that might be transferrable to similar cases. With the selection of a single university focused on the development of administrative supervisors, an instrumental case study was used to collect comprehensive data and to learn more about what shaped supervisors’ experiences at this specific institution.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees?
2. What external factors do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive influences their abilities to supervise student employees?
3. As student affairs administrators at the selected institution gained supervisory experience, how did their perceptions of supervision evolve or remain the same?

To answer each research question, I conducted interviews with the participants for this study. I also conducted an analysis of publicly available documents associated with the student employment program, and any documents provided to me by each participant at

the conclusion of their interview. Afterward, I triangulated the data, as recommended by Yin (2018).

Utilizing a case study design allowed me to reveal noteworthy characteristics of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). I also included clear definitions and delimitations to define the scope of this research (Alpi & Evans, 2019). In case study research, the outcomes from a study are not generalizable, but the findings may be applicable to certain contexts familiar to a reader (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Merriam, 2009); therefore, I provided rich descriptions so the findings were informative for other researchers and administrators looking to evaluate their practice.

### **Context of the Study**

A large, public, not-for-profit, 4-year Midwestern university in the United States that focused on student employee and supervisor development was selected as the institution for this case study research. This site was selected as the case of interest because not all colleges and universities offer programs focusing on the development of both the student employee and the supervisor. The site was purposefully selected because the student employee program was well developed and intentionally designed. Additionally, my familiarity with this institution resulted from attending a presentation at a national conference wherein the training and development programs offered by this university were presented. The student employment program was built upon the foundation of the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> (Guided Reflection on Work) program, which originated at the University of Iowa, but the particular program at the institution under study offered a format that worked well for the needs of their division of student affairs. Learning about student affairs administrators' experiences concerning student employment, from this

institution, provided unique insights into the supervisory process in connection with an intentional student employment program.

The university was classified as a doctoral university with very high research activity, and it had a total student enrollment of approximately 60,000 students (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2020). The flagship institution had a robust student affairs division with an ongoing intentional development program for student employees. The division of student affairs also provided training and resources for both student employees and the professional administrative staff who served as their supervisors. Units within the division included, but were not limited to, residence life, recreational sports, student activities, orientation, sorority and fraternity life, student union, multicultural center, health, counseling, career services, and disability services. The division also contained a human resources department that was directly responsible for the student employee program. The program included an intentional development of supervisors who directly supervised student employees within the divisional units. The focus of the program was to help student employees achieve success in their employment role on campus, in their academics, and in their future careers. The program was guided by learning competencies that were infused into each student's employment role, into reflective conversations based on Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup>'s model, and through development workshops for both student employees and supervisors.

### **Participant Selection**

A researcher must make a variety of decisions for selecting participants for their study. Deciding who to study, in what setting, and what data to collect are examples of the multitude of decisions that must be made prior to conducting a study (Miles et al.,



2014). Sampling in research usually occurs before data are collected. Sampling can take two forms: probability sampling (e.g., random sampling), which is more common in quantitative research, or nonprobability sampling, which is more common in qualitative research (Gerber et al., 2017). To gain insight into a particular case, a nonprobability sampling scheme fit best.

The considerations and decisions influencing the selection of a sample in qualitative research are incredibly important because they will influence the data collection process and interpretation of the results (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Ultimately, the selection of sample size and the sampling scheme requires the researcher to reflect on what types of individuals they are interested in studying. Reflection is critical to ensure a variety of factors have been considered and that the best possible sample is selected to meet the needs of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Researchers should also pay attention to the sample size they select to ensure the data will reach a point of saturation, when possible (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

### ***Sampling Strategy***

I implemented purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify a sample for my study. Johnson and Christensen (2012) have shared that purposive sampling involves identifying specific desired attributes for participants from the total population and then locating participants who have the desired qualities. Purposive sampling is comprised of purposeful sampling and criterion sampling. Patton (2002) described purposeful sampling as an intentional process of selecting individuals or cases known to provide information to address the purpose of a study, and LeCompte et al. (1993) described criterion sampling as a strategy whereby the researcher develops a set of

criteria from which to select the individuals or cases. I applied purposive sampling in this study to identify a sample that meets a set of predetermined criteria. I also engaged in snowball sampling at the conclusion of my first few interviews. Snowball sampling is a process where existing study participants are asked if they know someone else who may meet the criteria of the study and can provide additional information (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019).

**Sample Criteria.** To qualify for this case study, participants must have been employed in the division of student affairs at the institution selected for study, and they must have had at least 3 academic years of experience supervising on-campus student employees at the institution where the study was situated. The years of supervisory experience did not have to be consecutive, but at least 3 years of their experience needed to have occurred while employed at the institution. Selecting participants with this level of experience provided a reasonable period of supervisory practice to reflect upon, through which participants offered more insight and reflection for meaning-making.

**Sample Size.** I selected a sample of five participants to interview, which Creswell and Creswell (2018) contended was a sufficient number of participants for case study research. I chose participants from different departments, as much as possible, to inform the case. This strategy helped me identify a sample that sufficiently reflected different perspectives, and I collected varying viewpoints through individual interviews (Seidman, 2013).

**Sample Recruitment.** To determine a sample from the selected institution for this case study, I first located publicly available contact information and biographies for members of the student affairs division from the institution's website. Published

biographies typically included the employee's name, title, contact information, and a brief professional history, including job responsibilities such as student supervision. Once I identified the total population of potential participants, I then selected five administrators who worked in varying departments within the division of student affairs. Next, I sent an introductory email to each potential participant, in which I introduced myself, the study, and the Institutional Review Board approval for my research. The email served as an invitation for the administrator to become a participant in the study, and I asked for a response within 1 week. For those that responded with a willingness to participate, I provided details about participant consent, as outlined in the Institutional Review Board section regarding informed consent. Regarding those that did not wish to participate or did not respond, I removed them from my contact list. I then strived to identify another potential participant from the total population. Additionally, as I began interviewing my first few participants, I implemented a snowball sampling technique. I asked my participants if they knew of any colleagues who may qualify and be willing to participate in this study, which yielded a few potential contacts. I repeated the email invitation process until I had five administrators who were willing to participate in the study and who met the established criteria. A copy of the recruitment email can be reviewed in Appendix A.

After receiving confirmation for participation, I sent a second email with instructions for scheduling an individual interview. Once a meeting was scheduled, I utilized Zoom, a video conferencing software, to conduct the interview. Each semi-structured interview consisted of open-ended and in-depth questions about the

supervisor's experiences with student employee supervision. Questions asked during the interview related directly to the research questions for this study.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred in three phases for this case study. In the first phase, I collected data by gathering publicly available documents (e.g., webpages and training documents) available online from the student employment program. In the second phase, I conducted interviews with the selected participants for the study. In the third phase, I collected additional documents associated with the student employee program, provided to me by my participants. As a result, I served as the instrument through which data were collected and analyzed. In the following sections, I have provided detail for the three phases in two sections (i.e., documents and interviews). I also offered an overview of the research paradigm I adopted for this study. Lastly, my role as the researcher is contained in this section.

#### ***Documents***

I gathered and reviewed documents related to my research topic from the university under study. Prior to conducting interviews, I located and saved documents posted online associated with the student employment program. These documents were reviewed before the interviews to provide me with context to familiarize myself with the institution's development program. At the conclusion of each interview, I requested that participants email me any documents associated with the student employment program that they used for supervision.

After reviewing the additional documents provided by my participants, I conducted a second review of the publicly available documents that I collected and

inspected before interviews. The second review occurred after all interviews concluded, which allowed me to review the online documents in relation to the data collected during the interview process. Documents provided to me by participants were reviewed once, after the interviews.

### ***Interviews***

Semi-structured, formal interviews conducted via online video software assisted me in collecting data for this study. I utilized a semi-structured interview outline for this study because it allowed me to use a predetermined set of questions. The semi-structured format also allowed me to remain flexible to ask follow-up questions during the interview, and it gave me an opportunity to become an active knowledge-producing participant during the interview process (Brinkman, 2018). A formal interview protocol was also desired to ensure that each participant was asked the same set of questions from the interview protocol. Additionally, clarifying and follow-up questions were asked, as needed, which increased the quality of the interview (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2013).

Interview questions were derived from the research questions, literature, and conceptual framework for this case study. The questions were open-ended to solicit detailed responses from the participants about their experiences supervising on-campus student employees. Interviews were video recorded via Zoom technology. Zoom, a video communications tool operated through the internet, allowed me to conduct my interviews from a distance. Employing Zoom as a data collection tool improved data collection efficiency because the interviews were completed without cost and were also recorded with permission. In addition to conducting and recording the interviews via Zoom, I used

a secondary recording method, my cell phone audio recorder, as a backup. Furthermore, I took handwritten notes to maximize opportunities for data collection.

Each participant selected an interview location of their choosing (e.g., their personal office or home) with access to a reliable internet source, and I conducted the first interview from my office on my institution's campus, with permission from my employer. The remaining interviews were conducted from my parent's home, where I was caregiving and remotely working during the final data collection phase of this research. Each interview was scheduled for 1 hour in length and was recorded, with participant permission, via Zoom and with my laptop for later transcription and data analysis.

Once a participant agreed to interview, I emailed an informed consent document ahead of the scheduled interview for the participant to review. At the beginning of the interview, before I began recording, I reviewed the informed consent document to ensure the participant gave their consent and that they were comfortable with me recording the interview. I ensured the participant understood their participation was voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time. I also described how I would maintain confidentiality, discussed the member checking process, and how each participant could receive a copy of the study after its completion. The informed consent document is located in Appendix B.

Next, I began with an introduction, the purpose of the research, and the interview format. Additionally, I spent time at the beginning of each interview building rapport with the participant so they would be motivated to respond with honesty (Privitera &

Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). All participants in the study were asked the same set of questions with clarifying questions being asked when necessary.

The interview questions were crafted to elicit responses from the participants about their perceived preparation to supervise, external factors involved with supervision, and how their perceptions may have changed while supervising student employees. The goal was that data collected from the interviews would assist me in answering the research questions for this study. Interview questions for this semi-structured, formal interview were representative of different types of questions (i.e., experience/example and basic descriptive), as defined by Janesick (2016). After drafting my interview protocol, I submitted it to my dissertation chair for review to ensure the questions were worded in a manner that would stimulate thoughtful responses from the participants.

After obtaining feedback from my chair, I finalized my interview protocol, and I piloted my questions with a colleague who supervised student employees. By engaging in a pilot interview, I was able to solicit their feedback to further revise my interview protocol for the study. The interview protocol is detailed in Appendix C.

After each interview, I transcribed the recording, and I redacted any identifying information to allow for each participant's anonymity. Completed interview transcriptions were emailed as a digital copy, with a read-receipt request, to the corresponding participants for member checking. The process of member checking allowed each participant to review their transcript to ensure it was accurate, adequate, and that it authentically represented what they said during the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). Each participant had 1 week to complete the member checking process. If they felt the transcript required editing, they were invited to send edits to me

via email within the 1-week timeframe for member checking. If they did not have revisions or did not respond within the requested timeframe, I moved forward with their original transcript.

### ***Research Paradigm***

This instrumental case study, which consisted of individual interviews and document reviews, was grounded in social constructivism assumptions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited that individuals construct their own reality seeking to understand the world in which they operate. Under a social constructivism paradigm, research depends on the participants' views of the situation and the social interactions that occurred within the situation under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this case study, I assumed that the participants constructed meanings and understandings of themselves and others through the process of supervision of student employees. I also assumed that the participants had varied experiences and perceptions of supervision based on their own social interactions; therefore, I asked open-ended questions to solicit responses to help me interpret the meanings each participant made about their unique experiences with supervision.

Additionally, I adopted Roulston's (2010) romantic conception as my frame for conducting each interview. My process of interviewing involved a social relationship (Seidman, 2013), and the romantic conception frame for interviewing generated an intimate conversation between myself and each interviewee, allowing for honest and open disclosure (Roulston, 2010). The romantic typology helped me concentrate on my participants' perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions, which allowed me to understand better each person's unique viewpoints (Roulston, 2010). This typology also



permitted flexibility in the interview process, whereby the participant could ask questions of me, to which I was able to respond (Roulston, 2010).

### ***Role of the Researcher***

As I approached this study, I recognized that I had connections that directly related to my topic. As a higher education administrator working in student affairs, I had over 15 years of professional experience with supervising student employees. Although I had not directly supervised any students for the past 5 years, I still had daily contact and indirectly supervised students who worked within my campus department. I was also aware that I lacked the student employee experience, as I was never employed on campus while enrolled as an undergraduate student.

My familiarity and interest in the institution selected for this study grew after attending a presentation at a national conference where administrators from the institution highlighted their student employment program. I was intrigued by the institution's model because I have not worked under such a model at any higher education institution where I have been employed for my entire professional career. Ultimately, attending the session is what sparked my interest in pursuing this study.

Because of my inherent connections to the topic under study, I might have had underlying biases as the researcher. To lessen any bias, I used a reflexive journal to record and bracket any preconceptions I had related to the study in order to avoid bias during the research process. Tufford and Newman (2012) have shared that bracketing allows researchers to mitigate potentially adverse effects due to their closeness to the research, and it also allows for deeper reflection in making research decisions, which can enhance the rigor of the study. The goal was to approach data analysis with an open mind

and to bracket (i.e., set aside) any knowledge and assumptions I had related to the topic (Creswell, 2013).

To ensure my personal assumptions and interests did not bias the research, I specifically recorded and described my own experiences, perceptions, and knowledge related to supervising student employees. I then set aside my descriptions before examining the experiences of those included in my study. Additionally, I enlisted the help of a critical debriefer to help me process interviews and further bracket out any personal assumptions (Yin, 2018). By identifying and recognizing my positionality related to the study, I alleviated personal bias in this research.

### **Data Analysis**

To enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative findings, researchers should triangulate sources by using multiple methods for data collection (Merriam, 2009). For this instrumental case study, I analyzed data from documents and from individual interviews. Data were analyzed using multiple methods, depending on the data type.

For the document analyses, I engaged in the process of analytic memo writing. The analytic memos included personal comments and thoughts about the data from the documents. Creating analytic memos served as a meaning-making process for understanding the context of this case study.

Interview data were first analyzed using Glaser's (1965) constant comparison analysis to identify emergent themes. After completing the constant comparison analysis, I implemented a protocol coding analysis to identify inputs, environment, and outcomes/outputs to align with the conceptual framework for this study. To conduct

interview analyses, I utilized Dedoose, a qualitative data and mixed methods analysis application for research based within mediums such as text, photos, and videos.

### ***Document Analysis***

I conducted an analysis of documents associated with this case study. Saldaña (2016) has shared that documents reflect the interests and perspectives of their authors, and as a result, they should be reviewed with a critical approach. After collecting the documents associated with this case, I initiated a process of analytic memo writing. Although analytic memo writing could be comparable to my reflexive journal, I kept a separate document for memos related to the document analysis process to distinguish the two sets of notes.

The analytic memos consisted of my personal comments about the data I was investigating, and it went beyond recorded field notes (Saldaña, 2016). These memos differed from simple field notes because they included personal and subjective explanations of what I observed (Saldaña, 2016). The analytic memos assisted me in understanding the context of the case study.

### ***Interview Analyses***

**Constant Comparison Analysis.** Constant comparison analysis is helpful when researchers are “interested in utilizing an entire dataset to identify underlying themes presented through the data” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 565). The process of constant comparison analysis begins with the researcher reading through the full dataset (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The researcher then begins to chunk the data into small parts, referred to by Glaser (1965) as incidents. The first incident is assigned a descriptive code, and each new incident is compared with previous incidents to ensure similar

incidents are labeled with the same code (Glaser, 1965). Codes are grouped by likeness into categories, and themes are then identified based upon the categories (Glaser, 1965). Creating categories is an essential step in constant comparison analysis, and the components of origination, verification, and nomination must be used according to Conastas (1992).

Codes identified through constant comparison in this study were specified a posteriori (Conastas, 1992), meaning they were created after data collection. As the researcher, I developed all the codes from an investigative perspective (origination) based on my interests, views, and intellectual constructions (Conastas, 1992). Nomination focuses on how the categories are named (Conastas, 1992), and because I named the categories a posteriori, the participants' responses and words dictated the category labels.

**Protocol Coding Analysis.** For a second coding analysis, I implemented protocol coding, which is a prescriptive procedural coding method wherein qualitative data were coded according to a pre-established system (Saldaña, 2016). Because I used Astin's input-environment-outcome model as the conceptual framework for this study, I used each part of the model (i.e., input, environment, outcome/output) as an a priori code for this analysis. Data that did not align with the predetermined a priori codes associated with the conceptual framework were coded as "not aligned with input-environment-outcome." All codes were reviewed and analyzed for additional meanings. Using this prescribed coding system allowed me to harmonize the data with Astin's model (Saldaña, 2016).

## **Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness, qualitative researchers must carefully plan and assess the rigor in carrying out their study (Merriam, 2009). Validity and reliability are the measures of trustworthiness in quantitative studies, but trustworthiness in qualitative research is assessed by credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). The following sections contain details about the trustworthiness of this study.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the study (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). To increase credibility for this study, I collected data from participants through individual interviews, and I also conducted a document review. Once I completed each interview transcription, I emailed a digital copy to each interviewee for them to review. Through the process of member checking, each interviewee checked their interview transcript for accuracy, truthfulness, and adequacy of the documented information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997).

### ***Dependability***

Dependable studies are conducted with consistency so that observed results would be similar if another study were duplicated in a similar context (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). To enhance dependability, I utilized triangulation, an audit trail, and researcher reflexivity, as recommended by Merriam (2009). Because I used multiple data collection methods, I triangulated and incorporated all the collected data together to confirm emergent findings (Merriam, 2009). I also utilized a reflexive journal to create an audit trail and to engage in researcher reflexivity (Merriam, 2009). The journal served as

an audit trail by allowing me to keep detailed records of how I conducted the study from data collection through data analysis. I also used the journal to capture critical self-reflections regarding my assumptions, experiences, biases, and relationship to the study to ensure I bracketed out any knowledge and assumptions I had related to the topic (Creswell, 2013).

### ***Confirmability***

To increase confirmability in this study, I engaged in a series of peer debriefing interviews with a trusted doctoral colleague after completing the member-checking process (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008). Peer debriefing involved an interview with a peer who was uninvolved in the research process. I selected a trusted administrative colleague, who held a doctoral degree, for peer debriefing because they had knowledge of the peer debriefing process and were familiar with my research topic. The debriefing process allowed me to reflect upon the original interview and to examine any effects my biases might have had on the interview process and data analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008). This process was important because it allowed me to maintain neutrality, which is critical in qualitative research so that the researcher can accurately and adequately describe each participant's experiences, rather than letting their own explicit or implicit biases cloud the findings (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019).

A formal, semi-structured debriefing interview occurred within a week of conducting each interview. The four questions for debriefing interviews were adapted from Onwuegbuzie et al. (2008), as follows:

1. Which part of the interview, if any, impacted you the most?

2. How are your findings similar to or different from your thoughts prior to collecting interview data?
3. To which findings are you responding positively and why?
4. To which findings are you responding negatively and why?

Each debriefing question was descriptive because the interviewer knew that I had conducted an interview, and the questions also were based on my experience (Janesick, 2016; Spradley, 1979).

### ***Transferability***

To increase transferability in this case study, I provided thick, rich, and detailed descriptions of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). I also included sufficient detail about the situation, participants, experiences, and activities involved in the study so that other researchers could evaluate how the study may be transferrable to their own contexts, participants, or settings (Merriam, 2009; Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). This process was vital because when the findings from a study are applicable, useful, or transferrable to other settings or contexts, the trustworthiness of the study increases (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019).

### **Summary**

This chapter contained detailed descriptions of the methods I employed for this research study. A case study design was used to learn more about the experiences of supervisors at an institution that had a student employee program. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and documents.

Data analyses included multiple approaches, including constant comparison, protocol coding, and document analyses processes. Astin's (1991) input-environment-

outcome framework helped to harmonize the data. Findings that emerged from this qualitative case study are discussed in Chapter IV.



## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences student affairs administrators had with supervising on-campus student employees in higher education. The instrumental case study research was conducted through a document review process and individual interviews with student affairs administrators who supervised student employees at a single higher education institution in the United States. Through this study, I examined the experiences these administrators had with student employment supervision utilizing Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to guide my research and analyses processes.

I employed a case study research design to address the three research questions:

1. How do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees?
2. What external factors do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive influences their abilities to supervise student employees?
3. As student affairs administrators at the selected institution gained supervisory experience, how did their perceptions of supervision evolve or remain the same?

The goals of this research included: (a) adding to the current body of literature; (b) providing insight for higher education leaders and policymakers to help them understand the potential of student employment to become a high impact practice, and that the supervisor serves as the cornerstone to a successful student employment experience; and (c) highlighting some potential promising practices for student affairs professionals who

supervise on-campus student employees. This chapter includes details from my research process (i.e., the methods in context), my process of bracketing (i.e., epoche), and the context of the case, including details about participants. To conclude, I will present the findings from both the document and interview analyses.

### **Methods in Context**

Data were gathered through a document analysis process and interviews for this study. Participants were identified by reviewing publicly available biographies from the institution's website and occasionally cross-referencing biographical data listed on LinkedIn, a public, professional networking website where many users list their employment history. I initially sent out five email invitations for interviews and received two positive confirmations for participation. Before interviews were conducted, each participant was provided with the interview questions ahead of time through email. Because the participants had the questions in advance, some of their responses were prepared before their interviews, but I asked probing questions to allow for more spontaneity, detail, and clarification to be added to various answers.

At the conclusion of each interview, I invited each participant to email me any documents from their institution's student employment program that they used for supervision. This request yielded one document provided by a single participant. Additionally, I requested that each participant share the names of colleagues they felt met the participant criteria and who might be willing to participate. This request resulted in receiving a few names, but only one individual qualified and responded to join as the third participant. Additionally, I continued to identify individuals who might meet the qualifications to participate. I sent out two additional rounds of invitations and even made

a few follow-up phone calls until I received responses and secured the final two participants for this study.

In selecting potential participants, I unknowingly chose a professional staff member who worked on one of the university's satellite campuses. Before beginning this research, I was unaware that the institution had several satellite campuses; therefore, even though the experiences of this participant were very different, I decided to include his participation as part of this study because his comments contributed richly to this research topic. In addition, his inclusion within this study also illustrated how the main-campus student employment program seemed to disconnect from the satellite campuses.

Lastly, to expand my understanding of the case, I requested an informational interview with the professional staff member responsible for the student employee program. The goal was to learn more about the context of the case beyond information posted on the internet and outside of what my study participants shared with me. This informational interview occurred after all participant interviews were completed, it lasted 1 hour, and it was focused on helping me learn more about the history of the student employment program, the roles of both students and supervisors in the program, information regarding assessment efforts, and goals for the future of the student employment program.

### **Epoche**

It is important for researchers to recognize if they share any prior experiences or beliefs related to their study. When there are previous experiences or beliefs, the researcher must engage in the process of epoche, otherwise known as bracketing or temporarily setting aside their personal experiences or beliefs in order to remain neutral

in trying to depict the essence of the topic being studied (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). To lessen my personal biases in this research, I engaged in a reflective process of recording and describing my own experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of supervising student employees using a reflexive journal.

In my reflexive journal, I detailed my initial thoughts, assumptions, and potential biases related to my interest in the topic of supervision. I reflectively recorded my personal supervisory experiences with student employee supervision. I also recorded reflections on how the conceptual framework (i.e., Astin's input-environment-outcome model) applied to my former role as a student affairs administrator who supervised on-campus student employees. I also felt it was prudent to record my own personal direct responses to my three research questions and any assumptions I had related to this study.

Engaging in the epoche process allowed me to specifically record and describe my own experiences, perceptions, and knowledge related to supervising student employees. I approached each journal entry with intentionality because of my experiences as a former supervisor of on-campus student employees. Through my entries, I documented not only my personal experiences, but also my reactions and thoughts related to my research process of reviewing documents and conducting individual interviews.

When reflexively journaling about reviewing documents, I began by recording notes and observations through an analytic memo process. In these journal entries, I bolded any personal comments or questions that emerged from reviewing each document so I could quickly review my thoughts and opinions in an effort to set them aside. I made notes of how document content tied to the literature and how the content related to my

personal experiences. I also formulated and wrote questions that emerged from the content presented in the documents. Many of the emergent questions pertained to things that I wanted to know more about from each interviewee or the case in general. Some of the documents I reviewed had assessment data and qualitative responses from supervisors about their experiences with the student employment program. The analytic memo process and reflexive journaling allowed me to set aside my experiences and opinions related to the case study before moving into individual interviews.

To lessen bias in the individual interviews, I used an interview protocol to guide each interview conducted with my participants. The protocol, determined before any research commenced, was a helpful tool to lessen bias because it required me to ask each participant the same questions. The protocol also did not allow me to ask any leading questions in the interviews associated with my personal biases or experiences.

After conducting individual interviews, I prepared to engage in debriefing the researcher interviews. Before engaging in these follow-up interviews, I documented my reactions and thoughts about each interview and what emerged as similar and different from what I had learned from the literature or my own experiences. Debriefing the researcher interviews allowed me to share my reactions, observations, and thoughts about each interview. The debriefings also allowed me to be questioned by a trusted doctoral colleague to ensure I would not bring any personal bias into my future steps with data analysis. These processes helped me identify and set aside particular areas where my biases could affect how I would analyze data from this research.

Overall, my experience as a former supervisor of student employees might have influenced this study, but I took intentional steps along the way to reduce any bias.

Through the epoche process of reflexive journaling and debriefing the researcher interviews, I was able to set aside my descriptions, thoughts, and assumptions before examining and analyzing the experiences of those included in my study. By identifying and recognizing my positionality related to the study, I set aside my personal bias in this research.

### **Case Context**

The student employment program selected for this research began almost a decade ago within the student affairs division at the institution where this research was situated, and it was recently moved to human resources to be positioned to serve all of campus. A pilot program began with a handful of divisional departments, which helped create some professional staff champions to support the program's expansion to other departments. In the second year, the student employment program rolled out to all departments as a requirement from the division. Within the past academic year, the program was available to all of campus, and it served almost 500 supervisors and about 7,000 student employees.

After the first year, the program's coordinator hired a learning development manager and a learning development consultant to support the program. These staff members were tasked with supporting the division staff with the program and other tasks such as hiring and termination practices. The staff members in these positions were also responsible for crafting supervisory training and development initiatives. In the third year, the program branched outside of student affairs to include an academic college, and it continued to expand across campus in subsequent years.

The institution's student employment program, comprised of developmental employment workshops and conversations based on the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model, was designed to create educationally purposeful student employment. In developing the program, the institution worked with the University of Iowa for permission to add a question that relates to one of their cocurricular learning competencies. So, each year, supervisors ask the usual set of GROW<sup>®</sup> questions along with one unique question tied to one of the program's learning competencies.

Support from senior leadership in a department or division was required for supervisors involved in the program. Once involved, supervisors received on-boarding training on how to facilitate the GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations. They also became familiar with the overall components of the student employment program, such as workshop offerings for students and roundtable events for supervisors. Involved supervisors received monthly communication pieces from the student employment program's staff with schedules and reminders. They received encouragement and assistance to fulfill their duties as a developmental supervisor, and they had access to review the learning objectives associated with the program and sessions. After each academic year, supervisors were required to report data back to the student employment program.

Supervisors were encouraged to send their student employees to attend workshops focused on different learning competencies and to pay the students for the time they spent attending and participating in the sessions. Supervisors were also required to engage in GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations or empower student managers in larger departments, such as residence life and the student union, to lead those conversations with their peers. GROW<sup>®</sup> discussions could occur in one-on-one or group settings. With the onset of the

coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, all the workshops were moved to a virtual offering for students, which expanded some accessibility across campus. The program's overall goal was for the supervisor to recognize that they were an educator first and a supervisor second.

Students became engaged in the student employment program through their supervisors. Once both were committed, students gained access to the workshop schedule and other events directly from their supervisor. The student employees then selected sessions based on their interests with support from their supervisor. Attendance was incentivized by offering hourly wage payments for any developmental event the student employees attended. The financial tie to attend sessions communicated investment in the growth and development of the student employees. Additionally, assessment data from the program indicated that students associated with the student employee program were about two times more likely to make connections between their career aspirations and their student employment. These involved student employees were also two times more likely to make connections between their academics and their student employment than any other group of students (i.e., employed on campus and not participating in the program, not employed at all, or employed off campus).

The program has always focused on the working student, but the program's leadership has been exploring a curriculum for employer development to implement in the future with off-campus entities. The program's coordinator also recognized that student employees keep the campus afloat and that supervisors should be well trained to support them. As a result, there has always been inherent value in the student employee program being a high-impact practice, but with a focus on the supervisor as the highly



impactful practitioner, student employees have reaped benefits of obtaining developmental experiences through student employment.

Over the years, there has been a debate on whether the program should remain as an opt-in program or whether it should be required. As an optional program, it has attracted caring supervisors, which has led to meaningful relationships and outcomes. In addition, positive outcomes associated with the program are reported each year in the program's assessment data for this unique high-impact practice; therefore, there has been consideration to continue with the program being desired versus required.

### **Characteristics of the Participants**

All the participants in this study were full-time professional staff members employed within the Division of Student Affairs at the institution for this case study. Each participant had at least 3 years of supervisory experience with student employees at their current institution, which was the minimum criteria for this study. Most of the participants only had supervisory experience with student employees, but two participants also supervised a full-time, professional staff member. Table 1 contains an overview of the participant characteristics, including a column noting the differences in the number of student employees each participant supervised in a typical year compared to the number of students they have been supervising since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because interviews happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt it was prudent to share how the student employee supervision load remained the same or changed for each participant. Specific characteristics of each participant are detailed in the subsequent sections.

**Table 1**

*Participant Characteristics Including Years of Experience, Number of Student Employees Supervised, and Functional Area of Employment*

Participant	Years of Professional Higher Education Experience	Years of Supervisory Experience at Current Institution	Number of Student Employees Typical Year/COVID-19	Functional Area of Employment
Melissa	6	6	22/17	Student Activities
Matias	15	5	9/9	Housing & Residence Life
Gene*	8	8	80/35	Student Union
Clifford	4	4	22/10	Student Activities
Misty*	5	5	11/11	Housing & Residence Life

*Note.* Participant names are pseudonyms to provide anonymity. Names that include an asterisk(\*) indicate that the participant also supervised a full-time, professional staff member in addition to supervising student employees.

### ***Melissa***

Melissa was a full-time professional serving in the department of student activities. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Melissa began her career in higher education when she was hired as a full-time professional. For the past 6 years, she has been supervising students as part of her work. In a typical year, Melissa has supervised up to 22 students at a time, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Melissa's student supervisory load decreased to 17 student employees. Prior to obtaining her professional position, Melissa served as an undergraduate student employee for roughly 3

years in the same functional area, wherein she now works full-time. As a student employee, Melissa assisted with supervisory duties and functions with the help of a senior professional staff member when her immediate supervisor went on maternity leave.

### ***Matias***

Matias has served in the department of housing and residence life for the past 5 years. He had 15 years of full-time professional experience in higher education, and he worked in housing and residence life at other higher education institutions before his employment at the institution involved in this study. Each year Matias supervised nine students, and that number did not change when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Matias earned both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. While pursuing his degrees, Matias held student employee roles as both a resident advisor and a graduate residence hall director. Unlike the other participants in this study, Matias worked on a satellite campus connected to the main campus involved in this study.

### ***Gene***

For the past 8 years, Gene has served as a full-time professional in the student union. During his first 4 years, Gene served as an entry-level, full-time professional, and then he was promoted to be the supervisor for that role. Besides supervising one professional staff member, he supervised up to 80 student employees in a typical year; however, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the university adapted to reduced capacities and resources, Gene's supervisory load for student employees dwindled to 35 students. Prior to his professional work, Gene served as a student union employee for

about 2.5 years, including serving in a student manager position. Gene's educational background included earning both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree.

### ***Clifford***

After earning his bachelor's degree and working out of the state for 2 years, Clifford returned to his alma mater to become a full-time professional in student activities. For the past 4 years, he has supervised up to 22 student employees. When COVID-19 occurred, Clifford had to reduce the number of student employees he supervised to a maximum of 10 students. At various times over the first few months of the pandemic, Clifford had less than 10 student employees on his payroll, but over time he slowly added additional students back to his team. Before graduating with his bachelor's degree, Clifford spent several years serving as a student employee in the student union at the institution involved in this study.

### ***Misty***

Misty has been a full-time professional at the institution under study for the past 5 years. Before her professional work in housing and residence life, Misty served as a resident advisor, a resident manager supervising front desk student staff, and as an assistant residence hall director. She earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the institution where she is currently employed, and she became a full-time professional during the second year of her graduate program. Misty was a supervisor for one full-time professional staff member and 11 student employees, four of which were undergraduates and seven were graduate or professional students. Her student employee staffing remained the same throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Data Analyses**

Data were collected in this study by reviewing publicly available documents and by conducting individual interviews. The document analysis process aided in providing me with context about the case, and the interviews provided information to assist with answering the research questions for this study. After completing a constant comparison analysis and a protocol coding analysis, interview data were analyzed to align the findings with the conceptual framework for this study (i.e., Astin's input-environment-outcome model). Detailed descriptions of the analyses follow in two main sections focused on the document analysis and the interview analyses.

### ***Document Analysis***

I conducted an analysis of the documents related to the student employment program associated with this case study. Publicly available documents were reviewed prior to interviews and again after interviews. Additionally, participants were invited to submit documents they used for supervision, which were examined after the interviews concluded. The purpose of the analyses performed was to provide me with context surrounding the student employment program. The analyses were conducted through analytic memos, which allowed me to collect my personal comments about the data and to capture what I observed.

**Initial Document Review.** A thorough review of the documents revealed that the institution involved in this case study had a comprehensive student employment program. The online program materials were housed within the Division of Student Affairs website, and the documents provided a clear programmatic mission that involved a dual focus on both student employee growth and the preparation of supervisors to play an

active role in the student employment process. The employment program also included a significant focus on development that was designed for processing through reflection. Learning competencies for the program were focused on cocurricular learning and engagement, which aligned with the literature for student employment.

Several research and assessment reports were also available for review. These documents included data from several semesters of the student employment program, and the measures included both home-grown assessments developed by the institution and benchmarking data against national assessment measures such as the National Survey of Student Engagement. Comparative data between student employees associated with the program and student employees who were not associated with the program were highlighted. What remained unclear was how the institution intentionally used the results from these data sources in relation to the student employment program.

The online documents clearly defined the role of a supervisor associated with the student employment program, and details were provided related to training experiences offered for supervisors. References were made to an internal shared computer drive where supervisors could access resources to assist with onboarding, with managing day-to-day supervision, and with the exit process when student employees departed their positions. Documents related to interview questions, appreciation and recognition, performance appraisals, and exit interviews were listed as the types of documents available to supervisors on the internal computer drive. The online documents also referenced the use of the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> framework. Details were provided for the types of training provided to supervisors, such as focused training on coaching employees and setting expectations. For support, the institution also offered roundtable-style discussions

for supervisors to gather to discuss student employee supervision, successes, challenges, and best practices. Furthermore, there were links to other campus resources that the program felt all supervisors should know to be effective as supervisors, such as contact information for the counseling center, career center, or human resources.

Other documents defined what it meant to be a student employee associated with the student employment program. These documents detailed the mission and tenets of the student employment program, expectations, descriptions of developmental workshops, and advice for how to get the most out of the student employment program. The documents also clearly explained the employment process for becoming a student employee on campus, frequently asked questions related to the hiring process, paperwork, taxes, and additional policies from the institution's human resources department about student employment.

**Participant Provided Documents.** Only one of the five participants shared a document from their institution's student employment program that they used for supervision. The document provided was a one-page reference sheet with facilitation tips for conducting GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations. The participant mentioned that they reviewed this document each semester before engaging in GROW<sup>®</sup> discussions with students. The document included three tips to consider before beginning a GROW<sup>®</sup> conversation. The first tip was comprised of three parts: (a) inform the student about the upcoming conversation, (b) provide sample questions to the student, and (c) frame the conversation as a positive learning opportunity for both the student and the supervisor to achieve success. The second tip included open-ended question prompts, paraphrasing techniques, follow-up question examples, and body language suggestions for conducting the

conversation. The final tip from the document included wrap-up reminders (e.g., thanking the student, allowing the student to ask questions, planning next steps for training and development, and reminding the student that they will have another GROW<sup>®</sup> conversation in the following semester, so they should keep thinking on these topics). This document was well designed, easy to read and follow, and it made an impression on the participant who provided it because they pulled it out each semester and reviewed the contents before conducting their GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations with students.

**Final Document Review.** In reviewing the documents, a second time, after interviews were finished and after completing the informational interview to learn more about the case, a few pieces stood out because I had a better context of the program. First, the program's mission mentioned that supervisors would take an active role in the student employee program. The concept of action was essential, as the program aimed to actively involve both the student and the supervisor. I saw evidence of active involvement based on the responses from my participants. Second, several of the participants mentioned elements of the program they have engaged with that were also highlighted in the documents, such as training and assessments. Third, although the program's information and documents were housed on the student affairs website, the program was recently reorganized into the campus human resources unit. Fourth, even though there was an online repository of materials mentioned in the documents, most of the participants in this study said they acted only off documents and materials provided directly to them via email from the program's coordinator. Last, even though assessment data were directly available on the public website, one participant mentioned that they were unaware of where they could access data from the program.



**Document Analysis Summary.** Including a document analysis was vital in providing context for this case study research. Because of COVID-19 protocols, I could not travel to the case study site to make direct observations, so I learned more about the program through documents posted publicly on the university's website. During the initial review, I developed questions that I wanted answered to help me fully comprehend the context of the case. These questions were then utilized to create the interview protocol for the informational interview with the student employment program coordinator. The informational interview protocol is detailed in Appendix D.

All the participants were invited to share any documents they used for supervision. One participant offered a document that they used from the student employment program that was not publicly available. The document provided was an essential resource to the participant, and it was simple and easy to understand. After reviewing that specific document, I understood why the participant reread it each semester before engaging in GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations with her students. Additionally, the final review of the publicly available documents, after interviews were finished, provided me with clarity for the context of this case. Several of my observations were confirmed, questions were answered, and discoveries were made.

### ***Interview Analyses***

I completed an analysis of the interview data related to the student employment program and the experiences of student employee supervisors. Interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim, reviewed, and coded using constant comparison and protocol coding approaches. The purpose of these analyses was to uncover findings related to the research questions and to make meaning of the student affairs administrators' experiences

with student employee supervision. The coding and analyses processes were facilitated within Dedoose, a web-based qualitative and mixed methods analysis application.

### **Findings by Research Questions**

To determine the findings for each research question, I reviewed the codes and categories I derived from completing both the constant comparison analysis and the protocol coding analysis. After establishing which data related to each research question, I analyzed the associated responses from each participant. Data from individual responses were examined first, and then comparisons were made across the responses from all participants to uncover any similarities and differences.

To harmonize these data, I utilized Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to make meaning of my data concerning each research question. This conceptual framework served as the medium through which I analyzed all of these collected data. Astin's model helped me identify what qualities the participants brought into becoming a supervisor (inputs), what the actual experiences, practices, and environments were for these supervisors (environment), and what resulting qualities and characteristics the participants developed from the experience of supervising student employees (outcome/outputs). Astin's (1991) model also allowed for assessment and evaluation of an educational environment so other educators might learn how to craft environments that promote talent development or growth. The findings associated with the conceptual framework are summarized in Table 2 and detailed in the subsequent sections under findings by research questions.

**Table 2***Interview Findings by Research Question and Protocol Code With Example Quotes*

Research Question	Protocol Code (# of Instances)	Finding	Example Quote
1	Inputs (64)	Undergraduate college experience	“I think I had an advantage when I started [working full-time] because I was a student. And so, I kind of already knew a little bit about their train of thoughts and how they process things and what was important to the general student.”
		Former student employment	“That was my first time supervising and learning everything. I felt like I learned a lot about supervising from that position that I didn’t necessarily learn or would not have learned if I did not have that experience.”
		Other work experiences	“I worked in a factory of garbage trucks . . . it was about getting stuff done. They didn’t care about me, they didn’t care if I was sick, they were kind of evil, is how I would put it.”
		Training and coursework	“[The class included] different supervision theories and then a lot of case studies to prepare us, again, as much as you can in a classroom setting.”
2	Environment (173)	Student employment program	“It just reinforces that what I am doing with my students, even though it does feel repetitive [at times of] things I feel like I already knew or learned at some point throughout my supervisory experience. It makes me feel better . . . also reminding me about things that maybe I did know, but maybe aren’t practicing as well as I should be.”
		GROW <sup>®</sup> conversations	“I feel like it’s almost more beneficial for the students than it is the supervisors, but they’re still giving us that tool and helping us develop our students, which is, you know, part of supervision.”

(continued)

Research Question	Protocol Code (# of Instances)	Finding	Example Quote
3	Outcomes/Outputs (60)	Professional development	“There [are] . . . discussion boards for student employee managers and supervisors, and so I like to pull from all that, [and] the ACUI Bulletin usually has some good points in there too.”
		Challenges	“For me, it’s been a little bit of a struggle . . . everybody, including my students especially, are Zoom fatigued [and] don’t want to sit here and listen to another screen.”
		Support from others	“I just feel like I’ve made friends with a few of my other colleagues at work in the union that also are in student supervisory roles. So, feedback from them about how they may be doing something or working with them [students] has been helpful.”
		Confidence and competence	“I’m getting a lot more competent in my supervising skills than I have in the past, where when I first started, I didn’t know what I was doing.”
		Individualized approach	“Every student is an individual. And so there’s no blanket kind of concept you can have . . . that’s going to work for every single student . . . you have to figure out how they learn, how they process, how they like to be instructed, [and] how they like to be supervised.”
		Prioritize personal and professional development	“Recognizing that I can prioritize my professional development, so that I can grow, so that I can be better for my supervisees. So just giving myself that permission to take some time away to really grow and learn, which sometimes it’s hard to do when we have so many tasks that need to get done.”
		Reflection and application	“Sometimes you’re going to suck at it. Sometimes you’re going to fail. But I think you need to be able to sit back and learn from those failures.”

(continued)

*Note.* Codes were identified a priori by the researcher and documented using Dedoose. Instances were compared for similarity, and findings were synthesized from coded instances.

### ***Findings for Research Question 1***

The participants in this study were invited to reflect on their process of getting started as supervisors and to share their experiences by responding to interview questions regarding how they perceived their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees. Each participant was directly asked if they felt prepared when they first became a supervisor. Participants were also asked to describe any experiences that helped prepare them to supervise. Overall, most of the participants shared that they were unprepared to supervise student employees, but each of them brought experiences into becoming a supervisor that were helpful.

**Inputs.** To uncover the findings, I applied the conceptual framework of Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model in my analysis. The analysis for this portion of the model was focused on the need to understand the qualities each participant brought into supervision (inputs). I identified 64 instances of "inputs" related to what the participants transferred into the supervision environment and whether it helped them feel prepared. Many of these instances were duplicative, so I compared them to determine the most influential inputs related to answering the first research question.

Participants only cited their undergraduate college experience and former student employment as helping prepare them to become supervisors. In addition, I determined other valuable inputs from each of their interviews including, other work experiences and

engaging in training or coursework related to student leadership and supervision. These inputs are detailed in the following sections.

***Undergraduate College Experience.*** All five participants attended college and earned a 4-year undergraduate bachelor's degree prior to becoming a full-time, student affairs professional with supervisory responsibilities for student employees. Four of the five participants earned their degree from the institution where the study was situated, and one participant earned their degree from another higher education institution. Having previously been a college student seemed to have aided the participants in feeling prepared to supervise because it gave them a shared experience, which allowed them to understand their student employees better. For example, when discussing experiences that contributed to his preparedness to supervise, Gene shared:

I think I had an advantage when I started [working full-time] because I was a student. And so, I kind of already knew a little bit about their train of thoughts, how they process things, and what was important to the general student.

Being a former college student was a useful input that gave the participants an emic (i.e., insider) perspective of students because they had once participated in that culture themselves, whereas not having a college experience or not having earned a bachelor's degree might cause challenges for a supervisor to understand and be able to relate to the college student experience.

***Former Student Employment.*** Serving as a former student employee appeared to be an asset for these participants. Through the interviews, I quickly discovered all the participants in this study were student employees during their undergraduate college careers. Two of the five also advanced to roles that included peer supervision. Serving as

a student employee was pivotal to the experiences of each participant in becoming a supervisor. All of them mentioned they learned about supervision from their undergraduate employment role, and they saw being a student employee as a benefit, especially if it included a supervisory function.

Gene and Misty had the added advantage of elevating in a leadership role as a student employee, whereby Gene began supervising his peers as a building manager and Misty as a resident manager. When specifically recalling her resident manager position, Misty detailed, “That was my first time supervising and learning everything. I felt like I learned a lot about supervising from that position that I didn’t necessarily learn or would not have learned if I did not have that experience.” Gene added, “There’s not really a substitute for experience . . . you can prepare and prepare and prepare, but I think the most valuable and most effective learning comes, comes from that experience.” Both of their statements expressed the value of experiential learning in becoming a supervisor, which is worthy of recognition because the experience was likely a powerful teaching tool for these participants.

Additionally, Melissa had the unique opportunity to fill in some of the roles of a full-time, professional student affairs supervisor when her boss went on maternity leave. She felt that those experiences led to her landing her full-time professional position. She shared:

I kind of got really lucky in how I fell into this role . . . [In] the previous summer I had taken over for my supervisor; she was out on maternity leave. And so, I just kind of did her job, with the help of her boss as well . . . I knew a lot already, so she trusted the desk in my hands for that summer, and then that fall, she came

back for a little bit, but decided to just stay home full-time with her baby, so the role was vacant, and I was graduating . . . I wasn't sure if this was what I wanted to do full-time, but I loved it obviously from being a student there, so I decided to apply, and I got the job. It was a bunch of perfect timing and perfect things aligning.

Melissa's comments spoke to being entrusted with additional responsibilities as a student employee, which helped enhance her skillset for becoming a supervisor. Additionally, the participants' experiences suggested student employment may provide useful, transferrable, and possibly scalable experiences for full-time employment in the same career field.

***Other Work Experiences.*** Previous employment was a worthwhile input for future employment, especially when combined with reflection for meaning-making. Matias was the only participant to share about a work experience outside of student employment in higher education. After graduating high school, he pursued full-time employment before deciding to go to college. In reflecting upon his prior work experience and what it taught him about supervision, Matias shared:

I worked in a factory of garbage trucks. My dad worked in the same factory for almost 30 years, and I lucked into a job after I graduated high school. I worked there for almost 3 years. . . . When I worked in the factory, it was about getting stuff done. They didn't care about me, they didn't care if I was sick, they were kind of evil, is how I would put it. . . . It wasn't until I went to [university name], and I worked on a tech crew with our campus activities board, and I had a wonderful supervisor there. That [her supervisory style], I kind of model, she just



cared about everybody. She was always in a good mood. She was always happy.

I'm not always in a good mood, but I do genuinely care about all of my staff

members, and I think that, I've been told, sets me apart from other supervisors.

Working in the factory and on the campus activities board served as valuable inputs in helping Matias learn about supervision, which may have added to him feeling more prepared to become a supervisor. Any work experiences individuals have prior to taking on a new supervisory role appeared to provide them with beneficial information if they took time to reflect and make meaning of those experiences. In Matias' case, he was able to compare his work experiences to learn about supervision, which he has used as an input to guide his approach to becoming a supervisor.

***Training and Coursework.*** I also identified engaging in training and taking classes related to student leadership and supervision as an input that could influence the personal preparedness of future student affairs supervisors of student employees. All three participants who earned both bachelor's and master's degrees said supervision was not included in any of their graduate coursework; however, two participants mentioned they took an undergraduate training or class that included content they could apply to supervision. To serve as a bridge mentor for the multicultural program on campus, Clifford engaged in a 10-week course to help him prepare for his student leadership position. Additionally, Misty shared that "upon being hired [as a resident manager], we were to enroll in the class to be a resident manager, and the class still exists now." She added that the class included "different supervision theories and then a lot of case studies to prepare us, again, as much as you can in a classroom setting." Training and coursework inputs appeared to potentially shape these participants, as they probably

provided formative learning experiences that could later be transferred to supervisory situations.

**Additional Preparedness Findings.** As mentioned previously, most participants shared that they were unprepared to supervise student employees when they first stepped into their professional roles in student affairs with supervisory responsibilities. The only participant who affirmed that they felt prepared was Matias, and when asked if he felt prepared, he responded:

I think so, because I went into such a small building . . . When I was in college, I did scheduling for my staff. I did work orders. I was more of a supervisory RA, I was like a co-hall director with my grad hall director, so I think I had some skills already in place that I needed to be able to run such a small staff. Had I been thrust into a situation where I had a larger hall with more staff . . . I don't think I would have been prepared.

Matias recognized that he gained many transferrable skills from his undergraduate student employment, providing him with a sense of preparedness to supervise a smaller staff.

Conversely, both Gene and Misty had previous supervisory experience as undergraduate student employees, but neither mentioned feeling prepared. Misty even took a class that taught supervision and incorporated situational case studies. This finding was surprising because one would assume a student manager would report feeling prepared to supervise because they had supervised in the past, but both Gene and Misty's responses could be related to how each of them defined "prepared" for themselves; therefore, supervisors must be aware that no matter what the employee's

background may be, employees may or may not feel prepared to engage in supervision when they first take on that role.

**Summary.** Overall, even though most participants did not cite feeling prepared to supervise on-campus student employees, they all had various experiences and inputs that they brought into their supervisory roles. I identified each of these experiences as being informative inputs for supervisory preparedness based on my analysis. Prior experiences as a college student, serving as a student employee, having other work experiences, or engaging in training or coursework related to leadership and supervision seemed to be valuable to the preparedness of these participants.

### ***Findings for Research Question 2***

Engaging in supervision was an inherently experiential process that involved a variety of influential factors for these participants. Through the interviews, participants recounted their supervisory experiences by answering questions related to how they learned to supervise, what their involvement looked like with their institution's student employment program, successes and challenges they encountered, and what support was available for supervisors. The participant responses referenced a variety of factors, many of which appeared to shape their experiences.

**Environment.** To delineate what factors were influential, I applied Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model for my analysis to look at the "environment" surrounding the supervisory experiences of the participants. The analysis for this portion of the model was focused on understanding the actual experience, practice, and environment the participants encountered with student employee supervision. Through this process, I identified 173 instances that I determined were factors related to the

“environment” of supervision. I then grouped the similar instances, and I determined that the following factors seemed to be the most influential: student employment program, GROW® conversations, professional development, challenges, and support from others. These environmental factors, which influenced the participants’ abilities to supervise student employees, are outlined in the following sections.

***Student Employment Program.*** The student employment program offered at the institution involved in this study was the unique environmental factor for why this case study research was selected. Four of the five participants in this study were actively involved in the student employment program as supervisors along with their student employees. The single participant who was not involved had a job location on one of the satellite campuses.

All four participants mentioned that they engaged in training through the student employment program, and they partook in various programs offered throughout the year as their schedules allowed. Training for the program began with onboarding, and then topically based sessions were offered throughout each academic year. The participants shared that training was more helpful at the start of their supervisory tenure, but over time the trainings did not include anything radically new to change how they approached student employee supervision. In reflecting on attending trainings as a supervisor with the student employment program, Melissa offered:

It just reinforces that what I am doing with my students, even though it does feel repetitive [at times of] things I feel like I already knew or learned at some point throughout my supervisory experience. It makes me feel better or like, “Okay I am doing something, you know, I’m not a terrible boss.” And just kind of

reinforcing that, and just also reminding me about things that maybe I did know, but maybe aren't practicing as well as I should be, just kind of like helping out in that area.

Training, even when repetitive, seemed to add some value for the participants because it served as a reinforcement and reminder of good supervisory practices.

The participants also established connections to other supervisors through the roundtable breakfast discussions, which they found to be the most beneficial part of the program. Learning tips and tricks from peer supervisors in these casual settings seemed to help the participants learn more about varied approaches to supervision versus attending training sessions. One participant also mentioned that a mentorship component was recently added to the student employment program wherein a more seasoned supervisor was paired with a newer supervisor. Melissa served as a mentor, but she said her mentee had "a completely different type of role and only had two students to supervise;" therefore, she felt like they were not the best match because she supervised so many students and the nature of their work was very different.

Onboarding and trainings hosted at the beginning of a supervisor's tenure with student employee supervision appeared to have been the most useful. The participants had an opportunity to learn about their supervisory role within the institution's context and to become familiar with the expectations of the student employment program. As the participants gained supervisory experience, peer-to-peer learning opportunities within the student employment program seemed to hold the most promise for helping them learn. The casual setting of the breakfasts likely provided a more organic environment for

conversation to emerge. Lastly, the mentorship program, which was in its beginning stages, could also merit value if the match between mentor and mentee were successful.

***GROW® Conversations.*** Besides training and development, the student employment program also embodied GROW® (i.e., Guided Reflection on Work) conversations between supervisors and student employees. The participants mentioned that they gained satisfaction from engaging their students in GROW® conversations each semester. These conversations were rewarding because the participants saw how their student employees changed and how they made connections between their student employment experience with both their academics and chosen future career paths.

Some facilitated the conversations individually with their student employees, and others involved several student employees in a group conversation. In reflecting on how the GROW® discussions related to supervision, Gene voiced, “I feel like it’s almost more beneficial for the students than it is the supervisors, but they’re still giving us that tool and helping us develop our students, which is, you know, part of supervision.” Clifford added, “I think GROW® has helped me with some guided discussion to help for growth and development,” which was valuable to him as a supervisor. Misty added that each conversation “helps them [student employees] make meaning of something that they might not find to have meaning to begin with.”

The participants received training to facilitate GROW® conversations and reminders throughout the year about hosting and reporting assessment data from the chats. The GROW® conversations, although designed for student reflection, seemed to aid the participants in developing their student employees. The guided conversations also

appeared to assist the participants in having intentional conversations that helped students make connections and meaning from their student employment.

***Professional Development.*** Professional development opportunities appeared to be an external factor that positively influenced the participants in this study. All the participants were supported to engage in professional development related to their work as student affairs administrators. Two participants mentioned being members of ACUI, a nonprofit educational organization focused on uniting college union and student activities professionals from seven different countries. Professional organizations, such as ACUI, have provided training, development, and support for professionals through various mediums such as publications, online web content, and conference experiences. These organizations have offered positive benefits to assist professionals in learning and growing their skills as student affairs administrators.

In reflecting on training and development received over the years, Clifford shared that he looked to ACUI because “there [are] . . . discussion boards for student employee managers and supervisors, and so I like to pull from all that, [and] the ACUI Bulletin usually has some good points in there too.” Melissa added that she would attend “every session about student employees” at conferences because they were the most “relevant” to her. In addition, engaging in professional development through organizations like ACUI allowed the participants to connect and learn from one another, to establish and build networks, and to sharpen skills. Although fees are usually associated with participation in these types of organizations, the participants said they received financial support from their institution to obtain memberships and to attend conferences.

**Challenges.** Like many supervisors, the participants experienced difficulties with their work. Challenges, although likely undesired, often served as learning opportunities for supervisory growth. Common challenges that emerged from the interviews included miscommunications, performance management, and most recently, challenges from the global COVID-19 pandemic that impacted the United States beginning in March 2020.

Participants referenced successes and frustrations with communication between them and their supervisees, such as when messages were sent and received. Melissa expressed that “the most challenging part for me is when they [student employees] come and ask me a question that we’ve already gone over in an email or it’s on the whiteboard, and they can go back and read it very easily.” Learning how to communicate effectively seemed to be a common challenge for many of the participants and an area for growth as they continued to work with student employees.

Performance management was also a challenge for the participants. Learning how to establish expectations and then hold student employees accountable was not easy for the participants in this study. Misty voiced that she has learned to approach performance management conversations with intentionality “from an educational piece, rather than a punitive piece, even though sometimes it does feel punitive.” This type of intentional approach appeared to help the participants focus on the behavior and actions of their employees to work towards improving performance overall.

With interviews occurring 6 to 8 months into the global COVID-19 pandemic, the associated environmental challenges were fresh on the participants’ minds. Each participant shared related challenges such as reducing working hours and staff, student employees not returning to campus to work, and lacking daily physical presence with



student staff. For example, Melissa, Gene, and Clifford saw an immediate reduction in building hours for the student union, which resulted in them needing to reduce student staffing. Clifford shared that he had to reduce his student staff down to three in the beginning due to his office receiving less traffic and the building's operating hours being truncated; however, later, he was able to expand his staff to 10, even though that was still much smaller than his usual crew of 22 student employees. In reflecting on how the pandemic has impacted his work as a supervisor, he offered:

It's really just been hard to be a supervisor, to give them what they asked for. I know I have really hard workers . . . that will work over 15 hours a week, and they love coming to work, and now I had to cut it back to 12 hours to make sure everybody's spread out and got what they need. So, that has been hard, to not be able to give them the hours that . . . [they were promised] when they were first hired.

Gene added that his students "still want to work, they still need jobs . . . they still need to pay their bills and pay their rent," but finding work for them was challenging. Gene added, "So, it's kind of forced us as supervisors to become more creative with how we can get them work that's not setting up events," and Gene also recognized:

I think we haven't truly felt the full impact of it [COVID-19] either . . . we haven't been able to train the way that we usually train because there's nothing to train them on. There are no setups to do. . . So, whenever we do go back to, if we go back, hopefully we go back to a full event load and full operations, we're going to have a bunch of managers that have not had the experience . . . so we're

going to really have to focus on training and getting them up to speed as quickly as possible.

External factors related to the pandemic greatly challenged the participants to adapt to new realities and needs in addition to finding meaningful work for student employees in a changed environment. Many challenges from the pandemic may linger and affect student affairs supervisors as the world continues to adapt to the ongoing pandemic, so being agile and adaptable appears to have become necessary.

In contrast to the experiences of the three participants who worked in the student union, Matias and Misty experienced different challenges with their supervisory work in residential life. Both were permitted to keep their entire student staffs, but Matias had trouble with students not wanting to return to work on campus:

I lost an RA, and then I lost my desk manager right at the start of the semester, he decided he didn't want to be here for the craziness that [the university] was trying to pull with the [COVID-19] testing. . . so then I had an RA transition over to that role. So now we're down two [student employees], so it was messy. It was pretty, pretty tough. And I don't think that would have happened in a regular year.

In this case, Matias' staffing shortage was due to the student employee's decision not to return to their employment position rather than Matias having to cut work hours or their position entirely. Misty did not mention having any similar staffing challenges, but she highlighted how her supervisory conversations changed, "My students and some of my, my staff have struggled a lot more personally, so I think a lot of our conversations have turned more to how they're doing as humans, rather than focusing as much on the position." Misty also shared that her resident advisors had difficulty connecting with

residents and with other staff members because “there isn’t that natural . . . hangout area . . . and people keeping their doors open . . . just doesn’t exist anymore.” Staffing challenges and interactions among residential life staff appeared to have challenged both Misty and Matias’ supervisory work because they, too, had to adapt to new realities related to the challenges of COVID-19.

When reflecting on training and in-person interactions, all the participants mentioned that training transitioned to remote delivery during the 2020-2021 academic year for both internal departmental needs and the institution’s student employment program. These online trainings caused a lack of physical interactions between students and supervisors. Many staff meetings were also converted to virtual engagements because of the need to provide a safe environment that met guidelines for social distancing. As a supervisor conducting staff meetings via Zoom, Melissa recounted, “For me, it’s been a little bit of a struggle. . . . everybody, including my students especially, are Zoom fatigued [and] don’t want to sit here and listen to another screen.” Additionally, many professional staff members were required to work remotely for various periods or even weekly. Melissa shared an additional supervisory struggle when working from home, “And so sometimes I work from home . . . and I just feel like they [my student employees] think I have the day off and I’m not doing anything.” Supervising in the virtual environment seemed to cause many concerns for these participants. Although work could be accomplished effectively, the online experience was not the same, and it lacked personal connections, which have often helped foster productive working relationships in the past.

***Support From Others.*** Another external factor the participants felt influenced their ability to supervise student employees was support from others. The participants in this study leaned on others for help, whether it was at the beginning of learning how to supervise or through supervisory challenges. Support came from their departmental leadership, supervisors, and colleagues. Misty voiced:

I think just knowing that the department is supportive of us asking questions and that there isn't such a thing as a silly question, even though I've been in this position for a few years or in a similar position for a few years, you know I don't feel like it's a bad thing to call up and say, "Hey I'm really struggling with a supervisee for this reason, have you had similar experience?" So, I think that culture of supporting each other is really, really helpful and something I think that has kept me at [university name], that it's okay to ask.

A culture of support within a department appeared to be helpful for Misty because her colleagues could offer ideas, suggestions, and support for supervisory questions.

Direct supervisors also provided support to these participants who supervised student employees. Most of the participants described this support as occurring through one-on-one conversations with their supervisor. In these meetings, the participants found support with an appropriate level of challenge that also helped them grow. For example, Misty described how she sought support from her supervisor:

So really talking to my supervisor . . . and explaining, "Hey, this situation is going on with the staff, how would you handle it?" And then she [my supervisor] would always turn it back on me and would say, "Well, how do you think you should

handle it and then I'll tell you what I think," which helped me grow so much and then, of course, now I use that with my staff, with my supervisees.

This challenge and support strategy appeared to work well enough for Misty that she also mentioned implementing it with her supervisees.

The final support system for these participants came from colleagues across campus, whether the support surfaced from casual connections or intentionally sought-out conversations. Melissa described:

I just feel like I've made friends with a few of my other colleagues at work in the union that also are in student supervisory roles. So, feedback from them about how they may be doing something or working with them [students] has been helpful.

She shared it was not uncommon for her to call up a colleague and say, "Hey, you know this student is struggling with this, what can I do?" or "Hey, what have you done in the past in this experience?" to obtain advice. Clifford echoed Melissa's comments adding, "I'm learning a lot from other supervisors too. I'm learning a lot about, you know, some best practices that they've used, and I've tried to incorporate those." Matias, the only participant who did not work on the main campus, took a more intentional approach, which he described as, "So, I really do try to go to lunch with people and pick their brains and learn from them." Being on a satellite campus lessened the number of professionals he interacted with daily compared to the other participants in this study, so he found ways to seek out support with intentionality.

Support from others came in many forms for the participants in this study. A culture of support was established through departmental leadership, participants were

able to learn from their own supervisors and then model their behavior, and the participants leaned on best practices from fellow colleagues. Regardless of whether the approach was casual or intentional, all the participants cited that they felt supported by other colleagues from their campus, which allowed them to approach supervision with greater care because they knew someone was behind them, backing their efforts.

**Summary.** Supervision experiences for the participants were inherently shaped by a variety of surrounding factors. In this study, I learned that the participants attributed much of their supervisory success to opportunities to engage in professional development and training, including the student employment program offered by their institution, a variety of challenges, especially the current COVID-19 pandemic, and support they receive from their departmental leadership, supervisors, and colleagues. The environments the participant's experienced shaped them, but training and support sustained them towards achieving success with student employee supervision.

### ***Findings for Research Question 3***

At the conclusion of each interview, participants offered reflections on how their perceptions of supervision evolved or remained the same as they gained supervisory experience over time. In addition, participants were asked to compare their beginning experiences as a supervisor to who they were now. In comparing, they were invited to consider if and how they have changed, what or who influenced any changes, why they think they might have changed or not, and what aspects influenced their development the most if they felt that they did indeed develop. All the participants in this study affirmed that they have grown and changed as supervisors and that their perceptions of supervision have evolved.

**Outcomes/Outputs.** To determine how the participants' perceptions evolved or remained the same, I applied Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model one final time to look at the "outcomes/outputs" expressed by the participants. The analysis for this portion of the model was focused on the resulting qualities and characteristics the participants had after their experiences with student employee supervision. First, I identified 60 instances from the interview transcripts that I decided were outcomes or outputs resulting from the participant's supervisory experiences. I then compared the instances, which resulted in the following common findings: confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritize personal and professional development, and reflection and application. These outcomes are outlined in the following sections.

***Confidence and Competence.*** Two of the participants stated that they felt they gained confidence and competence as they supervised over time. Digging deeper, I had the participants explain why they felt more competent and how they knew they had gained confidence. For example, Melissa shared that she would often reflect to see:

How well they [her student employees] do when I'm not there. [It] is a reflection on me and how well I trained them or supervised them . . . that's clearly a reflection on my role and what I did or didn't do to help them.

When her students performed well without direct oversight and supervision, she gained confidence in knowing she trained and prepared them well. Clifford added that "I'm getting a lot more competent in my supervising skills than I have in the past, where when I first started, I didn't know what I was doing." He also shared that he used to ask lots of questions to gain others' input, but he did not have to do that anymore because he became more confident in his own decisions regarding supervision.

***Individualized Approach.*** As the participants gained more supervisory experience, several found greater success when they took an individualized approach to supervision. This outcome helped them modify how they approached supervision to help their student employees grow and develop. Gene elaborated on what he learned about supervising different student employees:

Every student is an individual. And so there's no blanket kind of concept you can have . . . that's going to work for every single student . . . you have to figure out how they learn, how they process, how they like to be instructed, how they like to be supervised, all of that kind of stuff. Because if you try to take a one-stock approach, it's just not going to work.

Gene also offered that most of how he has changed as a supervisor was because of responding to the individual needs of his student employees. Similarly, Misty voiced that how she approached supervising a college sophomore versus a medical student “is very different,” and it has “been really beneficial for me to adapt to their needs.” Finally, Clifford added that each year “they’re a whole different group,” and approaching them individually is “the most influential piece of supervising for me.”

***Prioritize Personal and Professional Development.*** Sometimes, the participants’ resulting qualities after an experience meant that continued development and learning were necessary for growth to extend beyond that one singular experience. From the interviews, I identified the need to prioritize personal and professional development as a meaningful outcome from student employee supervision. Over time, the participants in this study learned that they needed to continually invest in themselves if they wanted to be an effective supervisor. Misty described:



Recognizing that I can prioritize my professional development, so that I can grow, so that I can be better for my supervisees. So just giving myself that permission to take some time away to really grow and learn, which sometimes it's hard to do when we have so many tasks that need to get done . . . So just being given that permission to continue to do so and recognizing that that's only going to help me be a better supervisor and be a better professional.

Most of the participants mentioned attending conferences to engage in professional development, but some also said taking time to read was beneficial to their growth as a supervisor.

***Reflection and Application.*** So much learning happened for these participants when they took time to reflect and prepare for the future; therefore, I determined that learning to reflect and apply what is learned is an outcome of supervision. All the participants were able to share meaningful stories of how they reflected and prepared, but Matias summed it up best, "Sometimes you're going to suck at it. Sometimes you're going to fail. But I think you need to be able to sit back and learn from those failures."

Reflection and application required intentionality, and the results provided great meaning and understanding, but one participant recognized that she and her colleagues did not always take time to reflect with a deep level of purpose unless prompted. Misty offered the following thoughts and advice:

For the most part, a lot of our . . . full-time staff, you know they can do the reflection on their own, but will they take the time to do so? So really encouraging them to, to think a little bit further and prompting some of those conversations and really . . . encouraging that reflection and thinking about what they are

learning from their experience . . . because I don't think we have conversations about supervising very frequently unless we are bringing them up. So really just encouraging that, as you know, maybe something that's consistently held during department meetings or during one-on-ones with supervisors.

Individual reflection appeared to help the participants gain wisdom from their supervisory practices, but sometimes they needed to be encouraged or reminded to reflect so they could make connections and meaning from their experiences with student employee supervision.

**Summary.** All the participants in this study shared how their perceptions of supervision evolved over time. Each of their reflections offered unique insights, but I identified developing confidence and competence, approaching supervision from an individual standpoint, the importance and need to prioritize personal and professional development, and engaging in reflection and application as the outcomes or outputs that emerged from the participant's supervisory experiences. These resulting qualities and characteristics developed from their experiences supervising student employees, and they provided valuable information for what could emerge for supervisors who work at an institution with a dedicated student employee development program.

### **Conceptual Framework Analysis Approach Reasoning**

By utilizing Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model as the framework for data analysis, I was able to make meaning of the collected data in relation to each research question. Astin's model allowed me to uncover the valuable qualities each participant brought into becoming a supervisor, to explore the experiences, practices, and environments surrounding their supervision, and to identify the resulting qualities,

characteristics, and perceptions the participants developed from their experiences of supervising student employees. To illustrate the intricacies of this qualitative case study, I included detailed descriptions of the findings. Although transferability can only be determined after considering context, the descriptions may aid other researchers and practitioners in learning how to craft environments that promote development and growth in similar settings. In addition, Astin's model has not often been used with qualitative approaches or with populations other than students or faculty, which makes this study unique.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a summary of the methods in context to help readers understand how the research unfolded, an epoche to share how I remained neutral as the researcher, and I shared the context of the case to illuminate the setting for this research. I then offered a description of the participants and details from data analyses of both documents and interviews. Finally, the chapter concluded with my presentation of the findings concerning each research question, harmonized with the conceptual framework (i.e., Astin's input-environment-outcome model).

From the data analyses, I determined that undergraduate college experiences, former student employment, other work experiences, and training and coursework were the most influential inputs contributing to how the participants perceived their preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees. Next, I explored the environment of supervision. I learned that the student employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations, professional development, challenges, and support from others emerged as the most important factors influencing the participant's abilities to supervise student

employees. Lastly, I reviewed the outcomes and outputs that resulted from supervising student employees, which led me to uncover four findings: confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritize personal and professional development, and reflection and application. In the next chapter, I will summarize the study, situate the findings within the existing literature, discuss the implications of my findings, and conclude by making recommendations for future practice and future research.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the experiences student affairs administrators had with supervising on-campus student employees. Specifically, this case study was situated at a single higher education institution with a student employee development program that focused both on students and supervisors. As previously mentioned in Chapters III and IV, I utilized Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model to describe how student affairs administrators perceived their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees, what factors they perceived influenced their abilities to supervise student employees, and how their perceptions of supervision evolved or remained the same as they gained supervisory experience. For this case study, I selected five participants for interviews. To provide context for the case, I also included a document review process and an informational interview with the staff member who oversaw the student employment program.

Through this research, I uncovered and described the meaning the participants made of their experiences when supervising on-campus student employees with the intent that my findings may apply to familiar contexts for the reader (Merriam, 2009). This study resulted in several findings that aligned with Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model. The most influential inputs that contributed to the preparedness of student affairs administrators to supervise on-campus student employees included undergraduate college experiences, former student employment, other work experiences, and training and coursework. The supervision environment revealed that the student

employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations, professional development, challenges, and support from others were the most important factors influencing the supervisory process. Lastly, confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritizing personal and professional development, and reflection and application resulted from experiences of supervising student employees over time. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the literature. I will also share recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research before concluding with a final summary.

### **Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Research Questions**

Through this case study, I focused on exploring and describing the experiences of student affairs administrators who supervised on-campus student employees. In this section, participant responses were analyzed in relation to each research question. The subsequent sections contain a discussion of the findings for each research question.

#### ***Research Question 1***

The first research question asked: How do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive their personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees? Perceptions about personal preparedness to supervise on-campus student employees were explored through interviews with the participants from this study. Each participant offered insights into their journey to becoming a supervisor. They were also directly asked if they felt prepared to supervise when they first stepped into their supervisory roles. Four of the five participants verbalized that they were initially unprepared to supervise student employees. The only participant who mentioned feeling

prepared clarified that he only felt prepared because he was placed in a smaller residential community that he could easily manage.

After reviewing all the interview transcripts, I determined that even though most of the participants perceived they were unprepared, each participant brought transferrable skills that served as valuable inputs to inform their readiness to supervise, whether they fully recognized it or not. Of all the experiences shared by the participants, serving as a former student employee was the most formative input for becoming a supervisor. Each participant commented that they learned about supervision from observing their supervisors when they served as student employees. Additionally, two participants elevated to manager positions that included peer supervision, and their experiences served as a powerful teaching tool. The individual participant who said he felt prepared to supervise shared that his readiness resulted from his experiences from serving as a student employee. On-campus student employment was a meaningful experience that provided applicable, transferrable, and likely scalable practices that each of these participants leaned on as they transitioned into their roles as full-time student affairs administrators with student employee supervisory responsibilities.

### ***Research Question 2***

The second research question asked: What external factors do student affairs administrators at the selected institution perceive influences their abilities to supervise student employees? I uncovered external factors the participants perceived influenced their abilities to supervise student employees through the interview process. The unique environmental factor for which this case study was selected was the student employment program offered by the institution that incorporated GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations. The majority

of the participants participated in the program, and they felt the training provided for supervisors was more helpful at the start of their work as a supervisor. Over time, some of the training became repetitive and less relevant; however, it did help reinforce and provide reminders for good supervisory practice. The most valued part of the supervisor training was the roundtable breakfast discussions where participants could learn from their colleagues in a casual setting. GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations allowed the participants to help student employees make meaning of work experiences in relation to their academics and future career aspirations. These guided conversations assisted the participants with intentionally developing their student employees.

The student employment program was developmentally unique to the institution involved in this study. With defined onboarding, regular training and roundtable discussions, and reminders of the training offerings sent through email, the participants benefited from this intentional approach. The participants mentioned that many of the trainings and resources served as tools to help them supervise students in meaningful ways that helped promote growth and development.

The participants shared other environmental factors such as engaging in professional development and training related to supervision, experiencing supervisory challenges, and the support they received from others as highly influential in their growth as supervisors. All these factors were essential to shaping the participants, but support from others within their network was the single factor that influenced the other factors, including the student employment program and the GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations. For example, the participants had to have support from others to engage in professional development and training. As challenges arose, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants



leaned on the support of others to help them cope. Additionally, support from others helped the participants learn and grow, primarily through the student employment program and the GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations. These support structures came through departmental leadership, supervisors, and colleagues for the participants in this study. The relational aspect of support from others strongly influenced the participants' abilities to supervise student employees successfully.

### ***Research Question 3***

The third research question asked: As student affairs administrators at the selected institution gained supervisory experience, how did their perceptions of supervision evolve or remain the same? The final research question focused on the outcomes associated with supervising student employees. As the participants at the selected institution gained supervisory experience, their perceptions of supervision evolved. The participants developed confidence and competence in their supervisory abilities, and they learned to take an individualized approach to supervision because no two students were alike nor had the exact same needs. The participants discovered that they needed to prioritize their personal and professional development because they needed to invest in themselves to develop students. The participants also determined that reflection and application of lessons learned were valuable to the evolution of their supervisory perspectives.

Of the resulting qualities that emerged from supervisory experience over time, reflection and application were the most valuable outcomes for these participants. Learning to reflect and make meaning of their own supervisory experiences allowed them to determine that they had grown and changed as supervisors. Meanings were made

through reflection, but the application was where meaning inspired future action such as learning to address supervisee behaviors immediately rather than waiting until a scheduled performance evaluation.

### **Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Conceptual Framework**

I selected Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model as the framework for this case study because it allowed for a holistic assessment of the participants' experiences with student employee supervision. Astin's (1991) model helped identify the qualities the participants brought into their supervisory work (inputs), the actual practice and environment they experienced (environment), and the resulting qualities and characteristics each participant had after their experiences with student employee supervision (outcomes/outputs). Astin's model has been primarily used in quantitative research and in studies of university faculty and students (Duran et al., 2020; Savoca, 2016; Strayhorn, 2008). When applied to this qualitative case study of university staff, it allowed for identifying connections between what the participants experienced and how it affected them. Additionally, Astin's model allowed for assessment and evaluation of the educational environment in which this case study was situated (i.e., at an institution with a dedicated student employment program).

In designing this study, I intentionally imbedded Astin's input-environment-outcome model into the three research questions and then into my interview protocol for participant interviews. Findings for the first research question (i.e., undergraduate college experience, former student employment, other work experiences, and training and coursework) aligned with the first part of Astin's model as "inputs." Findings for the second research question (i.e., student employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations,

professional development, challenges, and support from others) aligned with “environment” from the model. Lastly, findings for the third research question (i.e., confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritize personal and professional development, and reflection and application) aligned as “outcomes” with Astin’s model.

Astin’s model allows for assessing and evaluating educational environments to determine if they have merit; therefore, findings associated with the model provide insight for crafting environments that promote talent and growth. As a result, if one were to determine an ideal input-environment-outcome model for student affairs administrators who supervise part-time, on-campus student employees based on these findings, emphasis should be placed on: (a) hiring supervisors with previous experience serving as on-campus student employees; (b) a campus-wide supportive educational environment with a focus on supervisor development in all divisions and departments; and (c) a campus where every division and department prioritizes opportunities for reflection, meaning-making, and action plans for the application of lessons learned.

### **Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature**

In Chapter II, I presented a summary of the literature related to supervision, demonstrating that supervision served as the cornerstone of employee development (Robke, 2016). The literature highlighted a need for supervisor training because new administrators have lacked supervisory skills (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007), and only 9% of graduate preparation programs for higher education and student affairs included formal coursework in supervision (Cooper et al., 2016). Additionally, the cost to attend college

has been steadily rising. As a result, colleges and universities have focused on ensuring students are career ready upon graduation to justify their existence (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Fox, 2018), and student employment has been one area where universities have helped students to become prepared for post-collegiate success. This study aimed to uncover the experiences of student affairs administrators who supervised student employees. By analyzing the data from this study, I aligned the findings to Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model, which I have connected to the literature in the following sections.

### ***Input Connections***

Findings that served as inputs from this study (i.e., undergraduate college experience, former student employment, other work experiences, and training and coursework) had some alignment with the literature. Having a former undergraduate college experience allowed the participants to have a shared experience with their supervisees which gave them knowledge for how to approach supervision. It also gave the participants a starting point to understand their students' strengths and weaknesses, long-term goals, and career aspirations (Arminio & Creamer, 2001), which assisted the participants in assigning meaningful work and providing necessary training. Previous employment, either as a former student employee or from other work experiences, helped each participant learn more about supervision while actively engaging in the job because they could reflect and compare their previous employment experiences to their supervisory work (Wilson et al., 2020). Some of the participants engaged in coursework or training during their undergraduate tenure related to leadership development or peer supervision, but none of the participants who earned a master's engaged in graduate

coursework related to supervision. This finding aligned with the Cooper et al.'s (2016) research that identified only 9% of student affairs graduate preparation programs offered coursework in supervision. Lamb et al. (2018) also noted that many administrators lacked formal supervisory training and that degree programs rarely provided coursework or content related to supervision.

### ***Environment Connections***

Findings from this study, determined as environmental factors (i.e., student employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations, professional development, challenges, and support from others), aligned with the literature in different ways. Peck Parrott (2017) shared that training should be ongoing so the supervisor can help supervisees navigate their environment to achieve success. The student employment program from this study included ongoing training focused on the success of both the student and the supervisor. Seemiller (2018) argued that learning competencies should be embedded into curriculum, programs, and services, and the GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations were based on Iowa's model and developmental competencies that were unique to the institution. Training for the participants in this study extended through professional development opportunities offered by various professional organizations. Morris and Laipple (2015) reasoned for administrators to receive ongoing training covering different competencies, which these participants acquired through the student employment program, GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations, and professional development.

The participants also encountered a multitude of challenges during their supervisory work with student employees. For instance, some of the participants experienced communication challenges. McCrea and Brasseur (2003) posited that

effective communication could provide clear direction for supervisees, but the participants struggled to connect and get their messages across from time to time. The participants also had to learn how to manage supervisee performance effectively. Peck Parrott (2017) shared that documentation was the foundation for providing constructive feedback and clear direction for improvement, which helped the participants navigate performance conversations. The participants' biggest challenge was responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, to which there was little to no published research.

Lastly, support from others was widely discussed in the literature. Cromwell and Kolb (2004) described support structures as assisting supervisors in applying learned knowledge to actual supervisory practice. These support structures came through departmental leadership, supervisors, and colleagues for the participants in this study. Many of them also based their supervisory approach on prior personal supervisory experiences with their own supervisors, which influenced how they supervised. Leaning on supervisory styles experienced or observed in others was well documented in the literature by several researchers (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009; Gazzola et al., 2013; Greer, 2013; Johnston, 2005). Additionally, Smedick (2017) and Wenger (2000) presented research regarding communities of practice, defined as a group of people focused on similar activities, whereby they learn from each other through their social interactions. The participants in this study found communities of practice in their departments through friendships with colleagues and through professional organizations. All of these communities supported them as supervisors.

### ***Outcome Connections***

Findings from this study that emerged as “outcomes” of student employee supervision (i.e., confidence and competence, individualized approach, prioritize personal and professional development, and reflection and application) also connected to the literature. Duffy and Guiffida (2014) concluded that new supervisors felt “overwhelmed, anxious, and unsure of themselves” before progressing to a “sense of role clarity, confidence, and competence” (p. 157). Several participants reported that their confidence increased, and they developed competence over time with student employee supervision, which aligned well with the literature. Of all the outcomes, learning to take an individualized approach connected well to previously published studies. Ardoin (2019), Peck Parrott (2017), and Wilson et al. (2020) concluded that supervisors should strive to meet each supervisee’s unique needs in a way that helps them develop and grow in meaningful ways. The participants in this study learned this lesson over time as they supervised student employees. They discovered no two students were alike, and they must approach supervisees individually to meet their unique needs. Learning to take an individualized approach helped them succeed as supervisors.

The participants in this study also mentioned that development and learning were necessary for their personal and professional growth and that they must intentionally prioritize their continued development. The participants mostly turned to conferences and utilized resources from professional organizations to fill these needs. Neyland-Brown et al.’s (2019) research highlighted that development could occur through conference sessions and work-related professional development sessions, such as in-service sessions. Merlin and Brendel (2017) added that the development format must best meet the

learners' needs and resources. Lastly, several researchers described the supervisory process as a constant process of 'becoming' (Halse, 2011; Watkins, 2012), viewing supervision as a process whereby one can learn, grow, and continue to improve (Goin, 2006; Watkins, 2012). In order to learn, grow, and improve as a supervisor, the participants mentioned that they needed to take time to reflect on their experiences and then apply lessons learned.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Students must be career ready upon graduating college, and student employment can serve as a learning lab where they can gain necessary transferrable skills. With regular connections to a supervisor during student employment, it is imperative that supervisors are knowledgeable about student development, skilled in performance management, and trained in intentional supervisory practices. I will share recommendations for higher education leaders, policy makers, and professionals related to training and development and supervisory support in the following sections.

### ***Training and Development***

**Graduate Preparation Programs.** Several researchers have recommended that the topic of supervision should be incorporated into training programs and curriculum to prepare professionals for their supervisory roles (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007). With few graduate preparation programs offering coursework in supervision (Cooper et al., 2016), graduate programs that prepare future student affairs administrators should include dedicated coursework surrounding the topics of college student development and supervision.



Besides incorporating theory and best practices, classroom activities and assignments should also include case studies with real-life examples to situationally explore supervision. Time should be devoted to reflection and meaning-making to allow students to make connections for future practice.

Additionally, programs should require or strongly encourage that all students obtain a graduate assistantship or work role where they can begin supervising student employees. If these types of supervisory opportunities are not available, graduate students should be encouraged to shadow professionals who supervise student employees. Graduate students could also seek out other employment opportunities where they may have a chance to supervise employees, even if those experiences occur outside of the college campus. Supervisory work experiences of any kind could provide opportunities for individuals to gain transferrable skills for student employee supervision.

Work experiences related to supervision should also include regular one-on-one conversations between the graduate student and their professional staff supervisor or a faculty member. These conversations should be intentionally aimed at helping the graduate student make meaning of supervisory experiences, whether their experiences occurred directly or through shadowing. Engaging in the practice of supervision with support would provide an ideal setting for graduate students to learn how to supervise early in their careers.

**Student Employment Program.** Developing career-ready graduates should involve the efforts of an entire campus community from academics to the cocurricular (Cruzvergara et al., 2018; Fox, 2018). To create career-ready students, campus leaders need to develop budgetary priorities that allocate funds to programs, resources, and

services that directly support career readiness (Cruzvergara et al., 2018). All colleges and universities should develop and fund a student employment program that supports both the students and the supervisors.

To start, college and university leaders should partner with the University of Iowa to become partners with the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model, which is free and accessible to all institutions of higher education. Adopting the use of this model will help student employees make connections and meaning of their experiences. If the entire campus does not adopt the model at the start, I would recommend that a division of student affairs create the initial partnership. After the program would grow in the division of student affairs, it could be extended to other divisions within the institution. The Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> curriculum should also be the basis for a more comprehensive student employment program that can be built over time as resources are available.

As institutions develop their programs, they should consider a structure that focuses on elevated performance through various engagement activities with desired outcomes to mirror Kuh's (2008) high-impact practices. For institutions that already have a student employment program or those developing one, each should consider the training they provide to both new and returning student employees and supervisors. Participants in this study mentioned onboarding and other trainings offered early in their practice as a supervisor were incredibly helpful. Careful attention should be paid to what needs new supervisors have so they can be addressed to best prepare these individuals for their work with student employees. The participants also mentioned that as time went on, training topics often seemed repetitive and not as meaningful because the content was not new or fresh, but they did find value in being reminded of best practices to ensure their

supervisory actions aligned. Scaling the curriculum by providing different tracks for new and returning employees could help provide new training experiences. Of all the training pieces offered, the participants spoke most highly of the roundtable discussion sessions. As colleges and universities develop programs, they should incorporate casual roundtable discussions between supervisors because these conversations allow for sharing ideas. Additionally, mentorship programs should receive consideration, especially with how matching is made between mentors and mentees.

In this study, Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations helped student employees make meaning of their work experiences in relation to their academics and future career aspirations, but a student employee program should also incorporate reflective opportunities for the supervisor to process their supervision with their boss. The Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model provides resources for supervisors, including a basic supervisor reflection. Consideration of additional reflection questions would help the supervisor deepen meaning-making efforts from their supervisory experiences, which could benefit both them as a supervisor and their supervisees of the present and future.

Furthermore, institutions must pay attention to the program and assessment design when developing a student employment program. According to Seemiller (2018), institutions should ground their curriculum in theory and research. If the institution selects the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model, assessment pieces are readily accessible. Assessment and program outcomes should be transparent, and the results from any assessments should be easily accessible along with action steps for continuous improvement.

If an institution or a division cannot adopt the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model or create a student employment program, individual departments could explore how they

intentionally develop student employees. Professional staff could self-educate in student development theories by reviewing publicly available books and articles on the subject. They could craft educationally purposeful trainings for student employees to develop career-ready skills through their work. Professionals could also engage in developmental conversations to help students make meaning of the work they are performing and how it could contribute to their success as a student, and how it may contribute to their future career success. Adopting the Iowa GROW<sup>®</sup> model would provide a structure for the process, but an in-house, homegrown approach could also be practical if institutional or divisional support for adoption is not present.

**Departmental Student Development.** With all five of the participants in this study serving as former student employees during their undergraduate collegiate careers, it is plausible that student employment may serve as a pipeline into the profession of student affairs. Two participants elevated to manager positions that included peer supervision, and one participant took on professional staff responsibilities when her supervisor went on maternity leave. Each of these participants said the extra experience was a powerful teaching tool. As a result, departments should consider how they are developing and preparing student employees for post-undergraduate success.

Departments often operate with greater autonomy; therefore, each department could consider the future career aspirations of their student employees and craft developmentally appropriate experiences to help prepare their student employees for future success. For example, suppose a student employee has interest in pursuing a career in higher education. In that case, supervisors may look for opportunities to help them become a peer supervisor, teacher, or mentor for other departmental student employees.

With longevity in the department and supported ability, student employees could elevate to roles where they are entrusted with the supervision of their peers, which would give them the educationally powerful experiences necessary to help prepare them to become a professional supervisor in the future.

This endeavor may be easier in larger departments with a multitude of student employees wherein there could be various levels of student employment; however, in smaller departments, it could be entrusting training pieces to veteran student employees, rather than the professional staff member holding the responsibility for the complete training of a new student staff member. Additionally, even if a student employee does not desire to enter into higher education after graduation, supervisors may explore other professions the student aspires to join. If supervision may be part of a student's future career, the same peer supervision and training opportunities should be extended. Ultimately, departments and individual supervisors can share supervisory responsibilities with student employees who display readiness, which can result in powerful experiences to help prepare them for future supervisory endeavors.

### ***Supervisory Support***

The participant outcomes in this study provide great reminders for how institutions and individuals can best support student affairs administrators who supervise student employees. First, time and experience with supervision may help supervisors gain confidence and competence to supervise student employees. The participants in this study reflectively shared that they did not feel prepared to supervise, yet I determined each had transferrable skills that contributed to their readiness to supervise, such as being a former student employee. Because feeling confident or competent will likely not come

immediately, it is vital to give supervisors time to grow their supervisory skills so they do not develop imposter syndrome or a lack of confidence in their ability to supervise, which could erode their supervisory practices. To help individuals grow and develop confidence, supervisors of individuals who supervise student employees should regularly offer feedback on how the individual is approaching supervision. There should be opportunities to discuss supervisory successes and challenging supervisory situations so reflection and meaning-making can occur for the individual. Although these conversations should be ongoing as supervisory problems arise, supervisory feedback should also be part of the performance evaluation for the individual supervising student employees. Additionally, supervisors should be provided with training, which could add to the development of confidence and competence, but new supervisors need an extension of grace to learn how to supervise their employees best.

Supervisors must also remember that supervision is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Individuals who oversee supervisors of student employees should regularly discuss student employee supervisory situations in one-on-one conversations to help the employee identify the needs of each employee in their care. Then, the supervisor can clarify how to best approach each supervisee as an individual to meet their unique developmental needs.

In addition to allocating funds to support professional development for supervisors of student employees, the individual supervisors must also prioritize their personal and professional development. As the supervisor grows and develops, they should give themselves space and permission to engage in development. There needs to

be organizational support for these activities and endeavors if there is a desire for supervisors to perform at their very best.

Departments and divisions can also shoulder the responsibility for the development of supervisors of student employees. Divisions and departments should craft their own developmental opportunities that are accessible to all supervisors. These sessions could be offered via video-conferencing software such as Zoom, or in-person sessions could be hosted. As a profession that values the holistic growth of students, each area could conduct a needs assessment from supervisors and then develop programs to meet those needs.

Last, reflection helps individuals make meaning from experiences. Just as student employees make meaning of their experiences through student employment programs, so should supervisors. Being intentional by incorporating reflection into a student employment program, one-on-one conversations, or engaging in discussions about supervision with others would assist in helping supervisors make meaning of their experiences. These reflective conversations should occur during the student employee trainings and roundtable discussions, in meetings with one's boss, in departmental meetings, and in divisional or departmental trainings. These intentional opportunities for reflection will help the supervisors decipher how to apply what they have learned about supervision to future situations. The key is that individuals apply what they learn through reflection.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The literature related to this study concluded that the topic of supervision should be incorporated into training programs and curriculum to adequately prepare student affairs professionals for their supervisory roles with student employees (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007). This case study, being situated at an institution with a dedicated training program, addressed the supervisory experiences of student affairs professionals from a single institution of higher education. In future studies, researchers should examine other higher education institutions that have student employment programs to compare the experiences of administrative supervisors and how different programs compare with one another. Future research should also be conducted at an institution that does not have a dedicated student employee development program that supports both students and supervisors. Studying a set of administrative supervisors who have no connection to a student employment program that supports students and supervisors would allow researchers to engage in comparative case study research to uncover similarities and differences that may or may not exist between the different cases.

Because training programs and curriculum were cited as necessary to prepare student employee supervisors, researchers should also critically examine supervisor training and curriculum. What is being taught? What hard and soft skills are being explored? The most recent literature in this study highlighted Wilson et al.'s (2020) inclusive supervision model. How are student affairs administrators being prepared to supervise with an inclusive perspective? Professional organizations are also answering



the call to prepare professionals for work in student affairs. What curriculum, training, and strategic imperatives are being shared by these groups to prepare supervisors for understanding how to supervise student employees from diverse backgrounds with varying intersecting identities? In addition to what is being taught, how are professionals responding and implementing what they learn? Answering these questions through research could provide insight into the current state of supervisor training and identify best practices and potential gaps to best prepare supervisors for their work with student employees.

In this study, I relied on purposive sampling methods, which resulted in locating five participants who worked in similar functional areas at the university (i.e., two participants worked in residence life, two in student activities, and one in the student union). Future studies should consider sampling methods that may provide participants from other functional areas not represented in this study (e.g., recreational sports, health and counseling, facility services, student conduct, etc.). The selected participants all held a bachelor's degree, and some had also earned a master's degree. Future research should also consider including supervisors who have no college degree to compare experiences. Further diversifying participants would allow additional perspectives to be explored and compared.

Considering the functional area and student employee role may also add value to supervision discussions. For example, within the functional area of residence life, student employees (i.e., resident assistants) often serve in paraprofessional roles with work extending beyond the traditional work week. Because their roles are different, researchers

should research the similarities or differences in the supervision of student employees who hold paraprofessional positions.

Future studies should also consider any potential long-term impacts of various crises, such as COVID-19, on supervisors of student employees. This study allowed participants to share their supervisory experiences during the pandemic; however, the pandemic was far from over at the time of this research. Researchers might ask, how might a crisis influence supervision in the immediate situation? How might a crisis influence the future of supervision based on lessons learned in an environment of crisis? What adapted supervisory practices should remain after a crisis lessens or ends? How should supervisors prepare for future challenges that may result from a crisis? These questions should be considered in future research because various crises can affect the environment for student employee supervision in higher education.

Finally, Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model was a valuable lens for which to explore the experiences of university staff. This model has been chiefly used in quantitative studies of faculty and students, so it should be applied in other studies related to university staff. The model should also be used in more qualitative studies. Future researchers should qualitatively explore the experiences of the student employees involved in student employee programs, such as the one from this study. Furthermore, studying both students and supervisors at the same institution could yield new understandings about intentionally designed student employment programs.

Overall, there are several opportunities to explore the experiences of student affairs administrators who supervise student employees in higher education. Studying other institutions with student employee programs and institutions with no program

would add valuable data to this research topic. Taking a critical look into training and curriculum for supervisor development would provide information to help identify best practices and potential gaps that need to be filled. Expanding sampling methods to include participants from other functional areas and levels would further diversify data for comparison. Considering unique student employee roles (i.e., residence life) would provide information about how supervising paraprofessional student employees may be similar or different from supervising student employees in other roles. Studying impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic or other crises may help highlight adapted practices that should remain for the future and lessons learned from the challenges associated with this unique environmental impact. Lastly, researchers should consider using Astin's input-environment-outcome model in more qualitative studies, as it assists with helping to understand human development.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Increased percentages of students are turning to college student employment as a means to help them pay for their education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Student employment can provide opportunities for students to make connections, gain employable skills, and become career ready (Kuh, 2008) if their experience is approached with intentionality. Supervisors "serve as the primary facilitators of professional development and learning opportunities for student employees, and the extent to which supervisors are supported can determine whether an employment experience is menial or meaningful" (Burnside et al., 2019, p. 3). The key to a successful student employment experience is the supervisor.

Supervisors play a critical role in facilitating student employee growth, but little research exists concerning the experiences of supervisors of student employees, how they learn to supervise, and how they grow as professionals. Inconsistencies also exist in how students develop both personally and professionally through employment (Frock, 2015). As a result, several researchers have cited supervision as a necessary skill for student affairs professionals in higher education (Ardoin et al., 2019; Cuyjet et al., 2009; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein et al., 2010; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006; Young & Janosik, 2007); therefore, it is valuable to study supervisors within an organization that places a strong emphasis on both student employee development and the development of the administrative supervisor.

To better understand the experiences of student affairs administrators who supervise on-campus student employees, I engaged in case study research at an institution that focused on the development of both the student employee and the supervisor through their student employment program. Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome provided a framework to qualitatively explore the meaning the participants made of their experiences with student employee supervision. Through data analysis processes, I learned that even though most of the participants did not feel prepared to become a supervisor of student employees, each of them brought informative experiences that helped shape their abilities to supervise. Along their journey, each participant experienced a variety of external factors that influenced their supervision, and they ultimately evolved and grew as supervisors over time.

In 2009, Perozzi wrote, “Employment of students, particularly on-campus employment, is relevant and germane for the student experience, yet the academy rarely embraces employment as a means to education and student development” (p. vii). Rather than thinking about student employees as a means to serve the institution, higher education policy makers and leaders need to consider how the institution can serve the student employee. Supervisors are uniquely positioned to help student employees grow, develop, and gain marketable skills to propel them towards future career success. With proper training and support, supervisors can make the difference in helping student employment become an educationally purposeful high-impact practice.

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## APPENDIX A

### Recruitment Email

Dear [Insert Name],

My name is Meredith Conrey, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. As a fellow student affairs professional, I am asking for your assistance in completing research for my dissertation. I have identified your institution as site worthy of study because of the student employment program housed at the study institution. My research focuses on student affairs administrators' experiences with student employee supervision.

I am writing to you to request your participation in this research study. To be eligible to participate, you must have at least 3 academic years of experience supervising on-campus student employees at the study institution, and you must currently work within the division of student affairs. Individuals meeting these criteria and whom are willing to participate are invited to respond to this email to schedule an interview.

This study is Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved, and data will be collected through 1-hour virtual interviews. I will conduct and record interviews with Zoom, an online conference technology. For your protection, I will use a password-protected Zoom meeting with an enabled waiting room to ensure your interview remains confidential and protected. Interviews will be semi-structured and occur on a day and at a time that is convenient for you. Additionally, all identifying information for participants will be removed from the study.

Attached is an informed consent document with additional details about the research study. If you are eligible and willing to participate by sharing your experiences, please fill out the informed consent document and return it to me at [meredithconrey@shsu.edu](mailto:meredithconrey@shsu.edu) by [Insert Date].

If you have any questions, please email or contact me at [meredithconrey@shsu.edu](mailto:meredithconrey@shsu.edu), or 936-294-3602. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Peggy Holzweiss at [pholzweiss@shsu.edu](mailto:pholzweiss@shsu.edu) or 936-294-1144 with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Meredith Conrey

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

#### Sam Houston State University Consent for Participation in Research

#### **KEY INFORMATION FOR *SELECT STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEE SUPERVISION: A CASE STUDY***

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about student affairs administrators' experiences with on-campus student employee supervision. You have been asked to participate in the research because of you are a student affairs administrator with on-campus student employee supervisory experience and may be eligible to participate.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, PROCEDURES, AND DURATION OF THE STUDY?

By doing this study, we hope to learn about supervisory practices and experiences associated with on-campus student employment. Your participation in this research will last about 1.5-hours. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 1-hour regarding their supervisory experiences. Following the interview, participants will be provided with a transcript of the interview to review for accuracy purposes. Participants will also be invited to share any documents associated with their institution's student employment program that they use for supervising.

#### WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

By participating in this study, you will help add to the literature surrounding on-campus student employment and supervisory experiences in higher education. Additionally, this research will provide recommendations and strategies for university administrators to utilize in evaluating their own supervisory practices and in evaluating student employee programs.

For a complete description of benefits, refer to the Detailed Consent.

#### WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

Participants will be invited to speak freely about their supervisory experiences with on-campus student employees in a recorded interview with the researcher for approximately 1-hour in length. Participants will be asked to reflect on previous supervisory experiences, which could bring forward potential discomfort or cause minimal risk.

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

## DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

## WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

The person in charge of this study is Meredith L. Conrey of the Sam Houston State University Department of Educational Leadership who is working under the supervision of Peggy C. Holzweiss, Ph.D. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study his/her contact information is:

Meredith L. Conrey  
Principal Investigator  
936-294-3602  
meredithconrey@shsu.edu

Peggy C. Holzweiss, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership  
936-294-1144  
pholzweiss@shsu.edu

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or e-mail ORSP at [sharla\\_miles@shsu.edu](mailto:sharla_miles@shsu.edu).

**Sam Houston State University**

**Consent for Participation in Research**

**DETAILED CONSENT *SELECT STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS’  
EXPERIENCES WITH ON-CAMPUS STUDENT EMPLOYEE SUPERVISION: A  
CASE STUDY***

**Informed Consent**

My name is Meredith L. Conrey, and I am a doctoral student of the Department of Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a research study of student affairs administrators’ experiences with on-campus student employee supervision. I hope that data from this research will provide recommendations and strategies for university administrators to utilize in evaluating their own supervisory practices and in evaluating student employee programs. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a student affairs administrator with on-campus student employee supervisory experience.

The research is relatively straightforward, and we do not expect the research to pose any risk to any of the volunteer participants. If you consent to participate in this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your experiences related to on-campus student employee supervision in a single, 1-hour, recorded interview. After the interview, you will be invited to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy purposes, and you will be asked to share any documents associated with your institution’s student employment program that you use for supervising. Any data obtained from you will only be used for the purpose of learning about supervisory practices and experiences associated with on-campus student employment in this study. Under no circumstances will you or any other participants who participated in this research be identified. In addition, your data will remain confidential.

This research will require about 1.5-hours of your time. Participants will not be paid or otherwise compensated for their participation in this project. Interviews will be recorded, and participants will be invited to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy purposes. Audio files from the Zoom interview will be saved as an encrypted

file to the researcher's private password-protected computer. All audio recorded files will be deleted within one year of the recording.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me using the contact information below. If you are interested, the results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the project.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me, Meredith L. Conrey, or Peggy C. Holzweiss, Ph.D. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as research participants, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below.

Meredith L. Conrey SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-3602 E-mail: meredithconrey@shsu.edu	Peggy C. Holzweiss, Ph.D. SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-1144 E-mail: pholzweiss@shsu.edu	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4875 Email: irb@shsu.edu
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☐ I understand the above and consent to participate.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the current study.

#### **AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT**

As part of this project, an audio/video recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project for transcription purposes only. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the audio/video recording, your name will not be identified. Participants will be invited to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy purposes. The audio recording will be saved as an encrypted file to the researcher's private password-protected computer. All audio recorded files will be deleted within one year of the recording. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

☐ I consent to participate in the audio/video recording activities.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the audio/video recording activities.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

1. How do you define supervision?
2. What role do supervisors have in developing employees?
3. How would you describe your approach to supervision?
  - a. Does your approach change when supervising student employees vs. full-time professionals? If so, how?
4. What guides your supervisory practice?
5. Please share three words that illustrate who you are as a supervisor?
6. Tell me about your journey in supervising on-campus student employees.
  - a. Give me a general overview of your current supervisory responsibilities.
  - b. How long have you supervised?
  - c. How many students have you supervised?
  - d. What is easy about supervising student employees?
  - e. What is challenging about supervising student employees?
7. How did you learn to supervise?
  - a. Describe any experiences that helped prepare you to supervise?
    - i. What kinds of work experiences did you have prior to becoming a supervisor?
  - b. Tell me about any training and development you have received to help you supervise.
    - i. Was supervision ever taught in your academic preparation?
  - c. When you first became a supervisor, did you feel prepared? Please elaborate.
  - d. Has your level of preparedness to supervise changed over time? Please elaborate.
8. What is a big learning lesson you have had as a supervisor?
9. Describe the support available for supervisors of student employees?
  - a. Does your supervisor provide support?
  - b. Does your institution provide support?
  - c. Do others provide support?
10. Tell me about your division's student employment program and any involvement you have had with the program.
  - a. What resources are available to you through your institution's student employee program?
    - i. Which resources have you used?
    - ii. What did you learn as a result of using those resources?
  - b. What effect has the program had on you as a supervisor? (OR) Why are you not involved with that program?
  - c. Is there anything not provided in the program that could be helpful if it were added? Please explain.

11. Comparing your beginning experiences as a supervisor to now, have you changed as a supervisor?
  - a. *What* or *who* influenced how you've changed?
  - b. *Why* do you think that is?
  - c. What aspects have influenced your development the most?
  - d. (If they didn't change) Why do you think you have not changed as a supervisor?
12. Given what you know about student employee supervision, what do you think higher education should be doing to prepare administrators for supervising student employees?
13. How has COVID-19 shaped your supervisory experiences?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not discussed?

Other questions:

15. What experiences, if any, did you have with student employment before becoming a supervisor?
16. Does knowing your students well help you to supervise?
17. How do you approach supervising different students?
18. What skills contribute to your success as a supervisor?
19. What function do student employees fill within your office?
20. What challenges have you encountered while supervising?
21. How do you prepare students for post-collegiate success through supervision?
22. Tell me about your professional background. What kind of professional experiences have you had both work and education prior to your current supervisory role?
23. How many hours of work do you assign per week per student?

## APPENDIX D

### Informational Interview Protocol

1. Can you please provide me with a brief history of your Student Employment program?
2. What is your role with the program?
3. What divisions across campus participate in the student employment program?
  - a. Where is the program housed on campus? Who owns the program?
  - b. Does the program look different in Student Affairs vs. other areas? Please elaborate.
4. Students:
  - a. How are students involved in the student employment program?
    - i. Is it mandated? Voluntary? Incentivized?
    - ii. Is the student employment program only for on-campus student employees?
  - b. How long do students participate in the student employment program? Who decides?
  - c. A comment in the assessment data mentioned that the GROW<sup>®</sup> Questions can be repetitive for returning staff members.
    - i. How should the GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations work with returning staff each year?
5. Supervisors:
  - a. The website says supervisors self-select into the program...
    - i. Is this encouraged by upper administration? Incentivized?
  - b. How are supervisors trained and supported?
  - c. How do supervisors get trained for GROW<sup>®</sup> conversations?
  - d. Tell me about ongoing support for supervisors by the program and your office.
6. Assessment:
  - a. How do you use assessment reports from student employment program?
    - i. What do you do with the data?
  - b. How does your office respond to questions and suggestions found in the various assessment reports?
  - c. Do supervisors get a summary of the data with suggestions?
  - d. The website mentions that students take a specific assessment to see how they've changed and grown over time...
    - i. How is this longitudinal data tracked?
    - ii. How do supervisors get access to this data to guide their students?
  - e. What timelines do you use for assessment of the student employment program each year?
7. Do you share the curriculum with other areas that coordinate their own training experiences for students?



## VITA

**Meredith L. Conrey**

### EDUCATION

Doctor of Education, Sam Houston State University, Higher Education Leadership

Master of Science, Texas A&M University, Educational Administration

Bachelor of Arts, Texas A&M University, Speech Communication

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2011–Present      Sam Houston State University, Leadership Initiatives  
Director, June 2015–Present

2006–2011      Baylor University, Campus Living & Learning  
Residence Hall Director

Baylor University, Schools of Business & Education  
Lecturer, Part-time, 2008-2011

2004–2006      Texas A&M University, Department of Residence Life  
Graduate Hall Director, McInnis Hall

### PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach

*StrengthsQuest* Educator Certification

7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students Certified Facilitator

QPR Suicide Prevention Certified Gatekeeper

### PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

**Conrey, M. L.**, Roberts, G., Jr., Fadler, M. R., Garza, M. M., Johnson, C. V., Jr., & Rasmussen, M. R. (2020). Perception after completing the degree: A qualitative case study of select higher education doctoral graduates. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 15, 305–327. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4572>

Holzweiss, P. C., Walker, D. W., & **Conrey, M.** (2018). Preparing new professionals for administrative leadership in higher education: Identifying specific skills for training. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 23(2–3), 54–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2018.1543217>

## SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

**Conrey, M. L.** (2020, February 20-21). *Critical race theory & student development in higher education* [Poster presentation]. Universality of Global Education Conference, Huntsville, TX, United States.

Eaton, P., Johnson, B., **Conrey, M.**, & Van De Walker, D. (2020, February 20-21). *Examining diversity through photo-elicitation projects* [Conference session]. Universality of Global Education Conference, Huntsville, TX, United States.

**Conrey, M. L.** (2019, August 6). *Discover your strengths* [Conference session]. Texas Academic Leadership Academy, The Woodlands, TX, United States.

**Conrey, M. L.** (2019, February 6-8). *Select administrators' experiences with student employee supervision: A case study* [Paper presentation]. Southwest Educational Research Association 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, San Antonio Texas, TX, United States.

**Conrey, M. L.**, Roberts, G., Fadler, M. R., Johnson, C., Rasmussen, M., & Garza, M. (2019, February 6–8). *Perception after completing the degree: A qualitative case study of select higher education doctoral graduates* [Paper presentation]. Southwest Educational Research Association 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, San Antonio Texas, TX, United States.

## TEACHING

Baylor University

LDS 1101/3201/3101 – Introduction to Leadership, Instructor

UNIV 1000 – First-year Seminar, Instructor

Texas A&M University

AGED 301 – Personal Leadership Development, Teaching Assistant

## REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

NASPA Undergraduate Fellow Program (NUFP) Mentor, 2017–Present

Region III Board Member, 2016–2020

Nominations & Awards Co-Chair, 2017–2020

2017 Region III Summer Symposium Co-Chair, 2016–2017

Center for Women, Candid Conversations 365 Mentor, 2016–2018

Region III Summer Symposium Budget Chair, 2013–2016

SWACUHO – Southwest Association of College & University Housing Officers  
Conference Program Committee, 2005–2007

**HONORS AND AWARDS**

Dean's Award for Exceptional Graduate Student Research, 2019  
Southwest Educational Research Association

Excellence in Service to Students Award, 2016  
The National Society of Leadership & Success

Outstanding Staff/Faculty Leader Award, 2015  
National Collegiate Leadership Conference

Exceptional Work with Students Award, 2012  
Sam Houston State University Division of Student Affairs

Outstanding Advisor, Residence Hall Association, 2006  
Texas A&M University