

Supporting Graduate Students
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Supporting Graduate Students
Advancing Supervision

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Supporting Graduate Students by Strengthening Supervisory Relationships

Compiled By:
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Iowa State University
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Introduction

Dear Reader:

During our presentation at the 2005 ACPA Annual Convention, we shared with our colleagues in attendance how to improve the experiences of graduate students by strengthening the supervisory relationship between the graduate student and the supervisor. Ideas developed before and during the presentation have led to the creation of this document, which is a reflective plan for creating positive learning experiences, for both a graduate student (supervisee) and a supervisor.

Credit must be given to the resources listed in this document and to the people who attended our presentation at ACPA. Shared learning is not only the key to our successful working relationship, but also key to the success of any student affairs professional who wishes to develop him/herself as a supervisor. Credit is also due to the people with whom our previous interactions have shaped us into who we are, including colleagues, students, family, friends, and teachers.

Organization of this document is based on Janosik, et al. (2003). The five parts of this text divide the experience of supervising new professionals into five sections. These sections are: Orientation, Synergistic Supervision, Professional Development, Performance Appraisal, and Separation. Our presentation at ACPA utilizes the first four sections.

Neither the presentation nor this document has been based on any empirical data or any formal student of best practices. Rather, this has come out of communication, sharing, listening, assessing, valuing, and creating...all for the purpose of developing positive relationships.

As you pursue developing your supervisory skills, please keep in mind that our graduate students are the future of higher education leadership, and your attention to the details while mentoring the graduate students you work with will be carried with them throughout their career. Do you have a scientific formula for the positive supervisory relationship? If you do, please share it with others! Until then, keep yourself dedicated to the people you work with—you are the $f(s)$! (A function of their success!)

We wish you the best of luck in your own higher education career, and may you spread the good will and dedication to education through our new professionals. Feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments, and please let us know how we can continue to improve this resource for others.

Sincerely,

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Personal Supervisory Reflections: Our Best Experiences

Have you listened to your supervisor, supervisee, or peers lately? The words of these individuals will inspire us all to learn and grow. The statements listed below, shared with you by your colleagues, provide us with perspective about the characteristics of positive supervisory relationships.

(Note: It was not recorded whether the comment was written by a graduate student or a supervisor. Some phrases, it is clear from which perspective the message was written, but this is not true for all.)

- Supervisor was intentional about exploration of the field.
- Graduate student was allowed to take on additional responsibilities to feel prepared.
- Supervisor was cognizant of the fact that I was a graduate student.
- Supervisor provided autonomy and authority to make decisions, offered support, and provided constant feedback (positive and constructive), encouraged and appreciated.
- Supervisor had energy and vitality, was an excellent listener
- Supervisor provided thoughtful feedback and had humor.
- Deliberate one-on-one time, looking beyond day-to-day work.
- Relationship was intentional.
- Appreciation—seeing thank you notes in my mailbox, recognizing and noticing what I have done.
- Clear roadmap.
- Cared about other aspects of my life.
- Supervisor had integrity/secure, had fun, was present.
- I feel supported at the job and trusted.
- The relationship had trust, autonomy, dialogue, honesty, and integrity.
- A mentoring relationship.
- Collegial but hierarchical.
- I learned, was supported, challenged, and taken seriously.
- Equal partnership in decisions, given responsibility and freedom, was appreciated.
- Challenged to grow and explore.
- Supported not only in work but in life.
- Friendship.
- Good working relationships (roles), responsibilities and expectations clearly defined.
- Respected differences on views and compromised when making decisions.
- Supported each other with our staff.
- Able to learn from each other.
- Supportive and challenging.
- No micromanaging.
- Positive growth.
- Autonomy.
- Continually created learning opportunities.

Personal Supervisory Reflections: Our Worst Experiences

If you are listening, then you will know that everything is not always peachy. Unfortunately, our experiences are not always positive. But if every experience was positive, would we ever know greatness? Would we ever learn anything?

Well, if we want to learn and improve, we need to talk about the bad experiences as well. This listing of phrases provides us perspectives of negative or challenging experience with our supervisors, or the graduate students we supervise.

(Note: It was not recorded whether the comment was written by a graduate student or a supervisor. Some phrases, it is clear from which perspective the message was written, but this is not true for all.)

- Supervisor questioned everything.
- Supervisor was always right despite lack of knowledge or experience.
- Relationships seen as adversarial and hierarchical.
- Overcoming criticism of organization.
- Balance ideas and learning.
- Personal/professional lines crossed.
- No autonomy.
- Inflexible.
- Different expectations.
- Lack of trust and power differential.
- Gender expectations.
- Lack of confidence.
- Difference in view of purpose.
- Not student affairs oriented.
- Working with supervisor who was burned and had no interest in the field.
- Working with supervisors who do not like change.
- Given no direction but held accountable to made up standards.
- Not trusted to do job.
- Not maximized opportunity given.
- Supervisor didn't know our job or didn't know details/specifics of job.
- Poor management/supervision of subordinate group.
- Supervisor not qualified to be in position.
- Working with someone not from a student development background.
- Low competence without support.
- Ambiguous.
- No clear expectations.
- Not present, not engaged (disconnect).
- Supervisor seemed "gossipy" and malicious.
- Supervisor more needing (not reciprocal).
- Losing perspective on other areas of life, become too engrossed in a project/job and not seeing it earlier enough as a supervisor.
- Lack of communication.
- Blame, frustration, and lack of feeling valued.
- Struggle with negative attitudes from previous year.
- Not competent and self-sufficient yet don't look for guidance.
- Rarely ask for advice/feedback.
- Unstructured and no feedback
- Not included in making decisions or informed about changes, not appreciated, made to feel like an administrative assistant or graduate student instead of professional with a degree and experience.

Synergistic Supervision and Chaordic Organizations

Synergist supervision in higher education “is a management function intended to promote the achievement of institutional goals and to enhance the personal and professional capabilities of staff” (Winston and Creamer, 1997, p. 186). The collaboration of staff is greater than the sum of the efforts of each individual (Saunders, et al., 2000, p. 183).

A **Chaordic organization** in education is “an organization that seamlessly blends theoretical and experiential learning” (Hock, 2000, p. 21). “A clear, constructive purpose...shared by all participants should be the essence of every relationship in every institution” (p. 22).

In a Chaordic Organization, you have a responsibility to manage:

1. Yourself.
2. Those with authority over you. “Without their consent and support, how can we follow conviction, exercise judgment, use creative ability, achieve constructive results, or create conditions for others to do the same?”
3. Your peers. Develop respect, support, confidence, etc.
4. Those who you supervise. Hire people with strong self-management and provide an orientation...

Advancing Supervision Strategies

Although many of us have had supervisory challenges in working with others whose style (or other characteristics) may be different than our own, the supervisory relationship can nonetheless be rewarding if you focus on the learning taking place in helping you refine what you want your style to look like. In circumstances where you may not be getting what you want as a supervisor or supervisee, make sure you communicate what your needs are, and work to address those in an appropriate manner. If your needs simply cannot be met within that supervisory context look for other professionals and/or avenues to get the type of experience you may be seeking.

There are many other strategies. The next few pages outline strategies based on Janosik, et al. (2003), our working relationship, and the ideas of our peers.

Advancing Supervision Strategies: Orientation

Ideas based on *Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*

1. Use the recruitment process as the start of staff orientation (p. 23).
2. Maintain strong communication with a new graduate student before his/her start date (p. 28).
3. Ensure comfort for a new professional by preparing in advance orientation documents, technology requires, offices, etc. (p. 32).
4. Provide resources for a new professional about the new community, such as housing, health care, childcare, etc. (p. 37).
5. Set goals and objectives with the new professional based on the job-related responsibilities (p. 34).

Ideas from the Experiences of Craig and Ryan

1. Create a shared vision. For us, this is our “Building Plan,” a document outlining outcomes, action steps, and assessment.
2. Discuss the way things are and the way things ought to be.
3. Use personality (or other) inventories to learn more about each other. For example, discussing MBTI type will help you learn more about each other’s personality.
4. Consider the special needs of a second-year graduate student or other new professional who may be new to your supervision, but not new to the department or institution.

Ideas from ACPA

1. Provide welcoming gifts and resources.
2. Ensure office space is clean and organized.
3. If a live-in position, ensure space is clean, organized, and maintenance needs are complete.
4. Offer moving assistance.
5. During recruitment, ensure candidates meet positive employees and students. Converse with disgruntled employees prior to campus interviews about their role and attitude in the process.
6. Provide perspectives about transition to the institution. Know the environment the new employee is coming from, and provide advice to ease adjustment.
7. Give a walking tour of entire campus. Provide introductions to other employees.
8. Be proactive about answering questions.
9. Continually assess the transition. Provide a caring attitude. Reevaluate goals and learning curve.
10. Make yourself vulnerable. Showing that you are imperfect sets precedence for learning from mistakes.
11. Provide departmental/institutional “roadmap.”
12. Know the transition you and others in previous years experienced. Track the “how do I…” “Where do I…” and other similar questions to improve the transition for future new professionals.
13. Sit in on classes with your graduate students. Learn from the perspectives they are being taught in class.
14. Help the new professional find a mentor besides the direct supervisor.
15. Know your own strengths as a supervisor.
16. Use personality style inventories to discuss your strengths and balance your areas of improvement.

Advancing Supervision Strategies: Synergistic Supervision

Ideas based on *Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*

1. Develop responsibilities for which the graduate student has autonomy and/or power in planning (p. 49).
2. Supervisors should act as a sounding board for new ideas. This requires encouragement and constructive feedback for the ideas (p. 51).
3. Supervisors should use their power for effective means (p. 57). For example, delegate appropriate responsibilities.
4. Do not micromanage a graduate student (p. 59).
5. Supervisors should serve as a mentor, or help the new professional find another person to be a mentor. The mentoring relationship is the catalyst for long-term professional development (p. 79).

Ideas from the Experiences of Craig and Ryan

1. Use the expectations of the graduate department as a basis for learning experiences. For example, the Iowa State University Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies uses well-defined rubrics that can be used to determine areas of growth in the work setting or special projects. You can also develop a series of competencies for your organization. (Idea also noted under “Performance Appraisal.”)
2. Dedicate time each week to conversation about translating in-class learning to practical work experiences.
3. View the supervisory relationship as a partnership. Even though the supervisor must maintain overall responsibility, you can create a peer-to-peer partnerships with many responsibilities.
4. Develop understanding of your supervisory partnership commitment. See Hock (2000) for an example, but find a strategy that works for you.
5. Supervisors should assess their own abilities, and find ways to learn from the graduate student.

Ideas from ACPA

1. Use thorough evaluation at the end of each semester.
2. Set goals during formal evaluation.
3. The supervisor should manage laterally.
4. Supervisors are not always trained to supervise. Develop a training within your department, or with other departments for a combined training.
5. Trust + Competence = Confidence.
6. Be sure to meet one-on-one regularly. (Note that what is regular for the supervisor may not be the same for the supervisee.)
7. Supervisor should be prepared for one-on-one meetings. Meet with each other outside of the supervisor’s office.
8. Make sure graduate students are prepared for the one-on-one meetings.
9. Supervisor should let go of the ego.
10. If you do not get the information you need from your supervisee, change how you ask.
11. Set clear expectations.
12. Be cooperative/collaborative, rather than competitive. Meet to discuss what is going well. Move towards improvement.
13. Do not focus on weaknesses alone. Capitalize on strengths.
14. If there is a relationship duality between classroom and environments, discuss how that impacts supervision.
15. Train those we supervise how to confront us.
16. Hold supervisors accountable.

17. Help understand difference between graduate students and fulltime staff members. Most of the graduate students time should not be spent on tedious work. They need experiences that will allow them to learn and develop.
18. Break the “cycle.” Remember what you thought you wanted when you were a graduate student, and listen to what they want when they are you.
19. Being jaded trickles down. Learn how to manage your frustrations.

Advancing Supervision Strategies: Professional Development

Ideas based on *Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*

1. Distinguish between staff development and professional development (p. 91). Make professional development an individualized plan.
2. Take proactive (not reactive) approaches to professional development. For example, expand a graduate student's knowledge and skills, rather than focusing on deficiencies (p. 96).
3. Develop cross-functional (inter-departmental) opportunities for graduate students (p. 98).
4. Encourage and support participation by graduate students in professional organizations (p. 103).
5. Help a graduate student create a personalized professional development plan and help assess the progress.

Ideas from the Experiences of Craig and Ryan

1. Make sharing professional goals part of your supervisory relationship. This may sound obvious, but it is easy to overlook commitment to conversations about goals.
2. Collaborate with other professionals at your institution to create a professional plan within your department or institution.
3. Support participation in activities outside your department, including: conferences, collateral experiences, committee work, teaching classes, etc.
4. Make graduate students part of the decision making process. Their ideas provide perspective and creativity.
5. Support personal interests of graduate students, such as volunteerism, community organizations, etc.

Ideas from ACPA

1. Model good professional behavior example, if you work long hours, your grad will think s/he has to as well.
2. Keep checking in on your grad. S/he may not be able to set all goals in the beginning of the semester. Allow time to assess goals.
3. Help the graduate student find experiences that build transferable skills.
4. Provide resources: money for conferences, contacts in other departments or institutions, collateral assignments, and volunteer opportunities.
5. Make graduate students make decisions.

Advancing Supervision Strategies: Performance Appraisal

Ideas based on *Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*

Based on the Winston and Creamer (1997) model of performance appraisals, there are 8 components: (p.128)

1. Performance appraisals should have the dual purpose of providing graduate students feedback that can increase their contributions and improve their effectiveness.
2. Relate the appraisal process to your institution's system of productivity and rewards.
3. Apply contextual standards, such that the graduate student's position is derived from the context and culture of the department and/or institution.
4. Create a participatory and interactive appraisal by involving graduate students in the planning of the appraisal process.
5. A quality appraisal process has clarity, openness, and fairness.
6. Ensuring your process has "no surprises in the end" is the outcome of ongoing review of the position and performance.
7. Positive appraiser leadership attributes mean the appraiser models positive behaviors for the graduate student.
8. The performance appraisal should be carried out in workable formats that avoid systematic biases.

Ideas from the Experiences of Craig and Ryan

1. Use the expectations of the graduate department as a basis for learning experiences. For example, the Iowa State University Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies uses well-defined rubrics that can be used to determine areas of growth in the work setting or special projects. You can also develop a series of competencies for your organization. (Idea also noted under "Synergistic Supervision.")
2. Develop reflective methodologies for graduate students to assess their own performance and achievement.
3. Create areas of performance where the appraisal is a review of both the graduate student and the supervisor. This becomes an evaluation of collaborative skills and teamwork.
4. Relate performance appraisals to professional ethics and standards set by your institution or professional organizations.

Ideas from ACPA

1. Decide on whether you are using a Likert or behavioral assessment model for performance evaluations.
2. The Supervisor should be offering comments and explanations, not just numbers.
3. Utilize the 360 evaluation where colleagues, peers, and others are all offering insight to your feedback.
4. If you supervise a non-housing academic grad, include areas that can be applied to their future profession.
5. Create an academic area where they can be evaluated - remember they are students.
6. Conduct the evaluation with enough time for them to look for another assistantship or re-assignment if they are not meeting expectations.
7. Make performance appraisals part of the professional development process.

Reflections and Considerations for the Future

Reflections from a Supervisor (Craig)

Throughout my experiences in higher education, I have learned much from the experiences of supervising or being supervised. Reading books and talking with other professionals has been helpful supplements, but nothing can replace lessons learned through direct experiences. This year, conversations with Ryan have been priceless for my own professional development.

While working with first-year graduate students, I have learned the extent to which the supervisory relationship maximizes the graduate student's transition and fresh ideas. As a supervisor, I am responsible for helping a graduate student determine how to work with their strengths and deficiencies. I am responsible for recreating this relationship as needed.

When working with experienced graduate students, I have three recommendations: increase their responsibilities and decision-making; make frequent connections between scholarship and practice; and increase reflection. An experience graduate student is managing lessons learned in preparation for the transition to a fulltime professional career. Your collaborative work before graduation helps ensure a healthy, productive career.

Reflections from a Graduate Student (Ryan)

I feel fortunate; my supervision experiences at Iowa State University have led me to a better understanding of both myself and my professional identity. It has been a journey that has cultivated a heightened awareness of how I respond to situations in the work setting; dealing with stress, working with difficult people, gaining competency, finding confidence, articulating when I need more from a supervisor, setting boundaries as a student and professional, and always making sure I am talking with my supervisor about how I am taking care of myself. Such lessons were not a product of scholarship, they were a product of risking conversations in navigating supervisory relationships.

I have learned a lot from my supervisors. They have been mentors and allies, students and scholars, friends and activists, and educators and professionals. My experiences have brought me to deduct several assertions about the roles in which they served for me. First, be intentional about developing a plan that meets the graduate student's needs; what passions do they have, what experiences do they want, what are their long-term goals, what professional development do they expect, etc. Cater your supervision around their passions. Second, be attentive to what they need from you personally; conversations about wellness, helping them with balance, talking about family, etc. Some graduate students need this connection to thrive, others do not. Third, make connections to scholarship; what theoretical constructs are they seeing manifest in their work, what is not fitting, etc. Finally, take time to have fun; talk about what is going on in the world, be creative with your meetings, find innovation in unexpected places, go for coffee, etc. If you are enjoying what you do you feel motivated and accountable to do your best work.

I leave you with this—create a culture in your work-setting that communicates to graduate students that they can and should make mistakes! This is the time, in the right place, with people who understand the complexity of what we do; try on different hats, mix up style, pursue “different” approaches, etc. In the end the result is someone experienced and tested; what better way to enter the workforce as a full-time professional.

Resources

- Barr, M. J., & Desler, M. K., Eds. (2000). *The handbook of student affairs administration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Many chapters in this book are relevant. Part two contains chapters about management, part three overviews various competencies of student affairs professionals and will assist a supervisor in developing a plan for helping a graduate student move from theory to practice, and part four outlines professional development. Suggested chapters to read are:
- * "Organizational and Management Issues"
 - * "Selecting, Training, Supervising, and Evaluating Staff"
 - * "The Political Dimensions of Decision Making"
 - * "An Overview of Relevant Theories and Models for Student Affairs Practice"
 - * "Translating Theory and Assessment Results to Practice"
 - * "Creating Effective Staff Development Programs"
- Blanchard, K., Lacinak, T., Tompkins, C., & Ballard, J. (2002). *Whale done: The power of positive relationships*. New York: The Free Press.
A satirical approach to learning about working with others, this book will help a reader visualize the power and practice of developing positive recognition of work done well and redirecting energy of behaviors that are not positive.
- Bryan, W. A., & Schwartz, R. A., Eds. (1998). *Strategies for staff development: Personal and professional education in the 21st century*. New Directions for Student Services No. 84. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
This monograph provides a reader with a collection of ideas and perspectives valuable for creating professional development opportunities for staff members.
- Delworth, U., & Hanson, G., Eds. (1989). *Student services: A handbook for the profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Many chapters in this book will help a reader link their job functions and purpose to the purpose of service students. Chapters in part three, including Chapter 21 by Jon Dalton titled, "Enhancing Staff Knowledge and Skills," inform the reader about creating staff development programs.
- Hock, D. W. (1999). *Birth of the chaordic age*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
Concepts in this book have help Craig makes sense of our working environment in higher education. "Chaordic organization is about releasing what people desire in the depth of their being—the passion they have for it—the integrity they bring to the attempt" (p. 2).
- Hock, D. W. (2000). The art of chaordic leadership. *Leader to Leader*, 15, 20-26.
This article is the short version of Birth of the Chaordic Age. If you want to review the concepts read this article. To learn more, read the book.
Available online at: <http://leadertoleader.org/leaderbooks/121/winter2000/hock.html>
- Janosik, S. M., Creamer, D. G., Hirt, J. B., Winston, R. B., Jr., Saunders, S. A., & Cooper, D. L. (2003). *Supervising new professionals in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
If you supervise new professionals in student affairs, this is a must read. This book will help you create a quality experience for new professionals, or embellish your current program. A new professional will also benefit from reading this book by learning how to maximize their first professional experience.
- Saunders, S. A., Cooper, D. L., Winston, R. B., Jr., & Chernow, E. (2000). Supervising staff in student affairs: Exploration of the synergistic approach. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(2), 181-191.
- Winston, R. B., Jr., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is also a must read, regardless of what level employee you supervise. New and experienced professionals alike will learn about making their working experience stronger for themselves, their peers, and the people they supervise.

The developed advanced supervision procedure has been tested in simulation as well as in a practical case study using a real two-storey family house.Â Advanced Supervision of Smart Buildings Using a Novel Open-Source Control Platform. by. Peter MinarÃk. Supervision is a quasi-managerial function. Important functions of supervisor are moving group towards performance, attaining of predefined tasks and goals.Â Activating the communication channels. Evaluating performance. What is supervision? Supervision is a quasi-managerial function. Supervision involves directing and overseeing the job of subordinates which normally include, rank and file employees, blue collar technicians and workers carrying out their operations in an organization. What is Supervision? To Truly Understand Supervision, Be Acquainted With Its Broad Content --- Know How Organizations Are Typically Structured and Operate --- Know Major Functions in Management in Organizations --- Know Which Leadership Approach to Use and When in Organizations Typical Roles in Supervision --- Advocate --- Boss --- CoachÂ - Motivating Employees --- Sharing Feedback --- Performance Reviews --- Addressing Performance Problems --- Terminating Employees. Team Performance