Perceptions of Supervisory Behaviors Among Student Affairs Professionals

at a Community College

by

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ABSTRACT

In student affairs departments in higher education institutions, supervisors are responsible for meeting the changing needs of both students and employees while staying attuned to the evolving college environment. A student affairs supervisor's effectiveness relies heavily on social skills, particularly on the ability to communicate through an institution's ever-changing environment. Effective communication at the management level can continually improve the institution's ability to meet students shifting needs in educational spaces. A key component of effective communication among student affairs supervisors is offering employees feedback and coaching. Nevertheless, many student affairs supervisors are underprepared to provide feedback and coaching to their employees, especially when it includes difficult conversations. Guided by social constructivism, this survey method study is built on research related to synergistic supervision and performance management to explore the perceived practices, experiences, and needs of student affairs supervisors at Central Community College. The purpose of this study was to examine how student affairs supervisors utilize best practices, including frequent communication of feedback and coaching, goal setting, and employee development outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision theories. This study's findings add to the current research body on student affairs supervisors' limited training and preparation within the community college context.

Keywords: supervisor, synergistic supervision, performance management, community college, student affairs, supervisor behaviors, higher education

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Thank you to all the positive and supportive people I've encountered throughout my life; you made this accomplishment possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In student affairs departments in higher education institutions, supervisors are responsible for meeting both students' and employees' changing needs while staying attuned to the shifting college environment (Amey et al., 2020; Rosser, 2004). Student affairs supervisors' effectiveness relies heavily on their social skills, particularly their ability to communicate in their ever-changing environment. In educational spaces, communication at the management level can ensure a continual improvement in the institution's ability to meet students' changing needs (Bradley & Campbell, 2016; Bryman, 2007). In particular, communication between supervisors and their employees allows the student affairs department to set clear customer service expectations, plan effectively for future changes, and improve overall services to students, employees, and the college. A supervisor's ability to effectively use communication skills to provide feedback and coaching to employees can contribute to professional and personal growth, as well as the growth of the institution in realizing its mission (Amey et al., 2020; Bryman & Lilley, 2009; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

This chapter provides a brief introduction to student affairs, student affairs supervisors, and the role of feedback and coaching as a management concept. This is followed by the context in which this research study took place, describes the researcher's leadership role, and explains the purpose of this research study. Chapter one concludes with a summary of the problem of practice.

Background

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Student Affairs

Student affairs broadly consists of multiple services focused on students within higher education institutions, including financial aid, admissions, registration, residence life, counseling, tutoring, and disability services (McClellan & Stringer, 2009). According to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), "student affairs is a critical component of the higher education experience. The work done by student affairs professionals helps students begin a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration" (NASPA, n.d.). The services within student affairs are largely non-academic and vary based on institution type and mission, student needs, and fiscal resources availability (Komives, 2003; McClellan & Stringer, 2009). NASPA describes this dynamic as follows:

> Opportunities for teaching and development exist everywhere on campus, and it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to seize these moments and promote positive interactions. Encouraging an understanding of and respect for diversity, believing in the worth of individuals, and supporting students in their development are just some of the core concepts of the student affairs profession (NASPA, n.d.).

Through their scholarly review of student affairs midlevel leadership at community colleges, Márquez & Hernández (2020) explain student affairs professionals...

> in community colleges may help foster a sense of belonging on campus, a sense of purpose through goal setting, and guide community college students to completion (Montero, 2018). Additionally, student affairs professionals promote civic engagement, diversity, and inclusion on community college campuses

(Montero, 2018). Student affairs professionals are tasked with providing an array of services to students, such as academic planning and admissions (Gulley, 2017) (p. 82).

The concept of facilitating student learning is interwoven throughout the profession of student affairs. Colleges establish student affairs departments and services, as Komives (2003) explains, to fulfill the "notion that the 'whole' student must be considered in every education endeavor" (p. 99). Student affairs practices such as advising, coaching, mentoring, programming, and even judicial systems are designed to engage students, advance their understanding, and provide learning opportunities (Komives, 2003; McClellan & Stringer, 2009). Overall, student affairs divisions facilitate student engagement and support outside the classroom through programming, activities, and support through tutoring, advising, and counseling, all of which greatly influence student and institution success.

Supervisors in Student Affairs

According to Márquez and Hernández (2020), there is "no clear definition of the role of a student affairs midlevel leader in community colleges" (p.83). Therefore, they have varied titles, including supervisor, manager, director, advisor, and coordinator. As Elrod et al.'s (2019) research of student affairs staff at community colleges indicated, "supervision is considered an integral function of managing student affairs personnel" (p. 149). Supervisors are support personnel within higher education who often operate in the middle and must find a balance between their upper administration's directions, employees' needs, and students' needs (Rosser, 2004). In other words, while supervisors

within higher education may not have consistent titles, their roles are undoubtedly crucial to institutional success.

In their scholarly review of current literature on community colleges and midlevel leadership, Amey et al. (2020) found that midlevel leaders often empower others, make operational decisions, and engage in "relationship building, bridging people and units, and serving as a communication channel" (p. 128). Sandwiched between upper administration and front-line staff, midlevel leaders are "firing-line managers who have the responsibility to monitor policies and procedures, but rarely have the responsibility to change or develop the regulations they must enforce" (Rosser, 2004, p. 319). Thus, supervisors in student affairs must serve students and employees by executing the upper administration's vision and mission. In doing so, a supervisor's ability to effectively communicate with direct reports is critical to their success as a supervisor (Ellis & Moore, 1991; Mather et al., 2009; Young, 2007).

Leadership Role

Since January 2018, the researcher served as the Dean of Enrollment Management at Central Community College (CCC). Their responsibilities include leadership oversight, processes, and policies for the Enrollment Management Division, including admissions, financial aid, college registrar, and registration offices. As a supervisor and the Dean of Enrollment Management, it is their responsibility to facilitate employee growth by providing feedback and coaching as well as development opportunities for employees within enrollment management. Many supervisors whom the researcher supervises have shared that they are uncomfortable or lack the critical communication skills needed to provide feedback and coaching to employees. This indicated an opportunity to improve

this set of supervision skills and behaviors within the Enrollment Management Team. Therefore, as a practitioner-scholar, the researcher sought to dig deeper and examine how this problem occurred across the student affairs division.

<center>**Statement of the Problem**</center>

According to research on student affairs supervisors, most enter their position with little or no formal supervisor training (Elrod et al., 2019; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Rosser, 2004). As Lamb et al. (2018) and Elrod et al. (2019) found through their qualitative research with nineteen student affairs supervisors, all of whom had at least three years of supervisory experience, many had little supervisor training or development. Lamb et al. (2018) explained that although "effective supervision provides the foundation for staff competence and growth, attainment of organizational goals, and quality student service," their research found "many student affairs professionals receive little or no supervisory training" (p. 740). Similarly, Elrod et al. (2019) also identified "a lack of formal training for supervisors within community college student affairs prior to them serving in a supervisory role" (p. 151). Consequently, as these studies indicate, supervisors are often underprepared for a significant function of their job and instead learn how to manage through trial and error. This can be detrimental to the supervisor, staff, students, and institution and often results in ineffective practices and inefficiencies (Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015).

Student affairs supervisors oversee student services, manage employees, and follow directives and policies from upper administration. In other words, supervisors working within student affairs lead from the middle to provide essential services to

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students, support their employees, and further their institutions' mission and goals (Amey et al., 2020; Rosser, 2004). Student affairs supervisors' lack of training and preparation results in missed opportunities for effective management and employee growth and service to students (Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Lamb et al., 2018; Rosser, 2004). Consequently, the institution suffers the inability to grow as well. This is particularly troubling within student affairs divisions at community colleges (Márquez & Hernández, 2020; Rosser 2004). These institutions typically serve a relatively more diverse student body who are often less prepared for college, attend part-time, are first-generation college students, and are low income (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016; Community College Research Center, nd, FAQ section). Student affairs professionals provide various services (i.e., admissions, financial aid, registration, counseling, tutoring) and foster programming and learning opportunities that are critical to the success of many community college students. This diverse student body deserves an effective student affairs division that will adjust programming and services to serve students best. The concerns shared by the Central Community College Enrollment Management Division's supervisors are shared with their peers across the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this survey study was to explore the perceived practices, experiences, and needs of student affairs supervisors at Central Community College. Building on existing research and framed using social constructivism theory, this study intended to examine to what extent student affairs supervisors utilized best practices, including communication skills, feedback and coaching, and employee development as outlined in performance management and synergistic

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supervision theories. This study used survey research methods and included two parts. Using 32 survey questions, the first part of the survey explored employees' perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills. Using open-ended survey questions, the second part of the study explored supervisor experiences and skills that supervisors want to improve as well as the challenges they face. By examining how employees perceive supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and supervisors' experiences and practices, the study identified which best practices are being used, and areas of growth the college could address through training. Additionally, the study also examined the relationship between supervisors' years of experience as a supervisor and the skills the supervisor wants to improve.

Research Questions

Guided by the problem of practice and existing scholarship, this study is framed by constructivism to examine the following questions:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college?

RQ2. How did supervisors in student affairs at a community college develop their supervisory practice?

RQ3. What areas do supervisors in student affairs at a community college want to develop or strengthen?

RQ4. What supervisory practices do supervisors in student affairs at a community college identify as challenging?

RQ5. Does the length of experience as a supervisor or educational attainment impact self-identified areas to develop or strengthen?

RQ6. Does employees' educational attainment influence their perceptions of supervisory practices among mid-level student affairs employees at a community college?

Nature of the Study

This study deployed survey design to query employees in student affairs at a community college about their perceptions of their supervisors' use of best practices and to capture supervisors' experiences, challenges, and identified areas of growth. The primary survey instrument used was the validated Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (PMBQ). Additionally, several questions from the validated Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) were used. Both the PMBQ and SSS measure employee perceptions of supervisors by using a 5-point Likert Scale. The survey included additional multiple-choice questions to collect demographic information. Supervisors were invited to answer a few questions to identify their supervisory experiences, practices, and challenges. In conducting this survey, all 87 full-time employees within the student affairs division at a rural community college were invited to participate in this study; 60 employees completed the study.

Limitations and Assumptions

This study was limited by selecting participants from one student affairs division at one rural community college. All full-time employees of the student affairs division were invited to participate in the anonymous study; out of the 87 eligible respondents, 86% of the invited participants were female, and 93% were white. The total response rate

was 68.9%. Thus, this population and response rate only describe the study participants and cannot be assumed to reflect student affairs divisions at other colleges.

The researcher assumed study participants were honest when completing the survey instrument and correctly interpreted instrument directions. Self-reporting bias may have occurred due to employees' desire to respond in socially desirable ways (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). The instrument used in the study measured perceptions that may or may not accurately reflect employees' experiences, resulting in study limitations. The instrument relied solely on the employee respondents reporting of data.

Significance of the Study

This study's findings added to the current research body on limited training and preparation for supervisors within student affairs and within the community college context. Furthermore, this research expands upon existing research to include seasoned employees' perceptions of their supervisor's supervision skills. Currently, much of the student affairs research utilizing employee perceptions of supervisors are limited to new professionals in student affairs. Additionally, the study identifies potential areas of future supervisor training within the local context. Using survey methods framed by social constructivism theory that focused on employee development, this study asks sometimes difficult, direct questions, which are necessary to explore the current student affairs management practices within a rural community college.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 2, provides an overview of the literature regarding community colleges, student affairs supervisors, and the supervision theories of synergistic supervision and performance management. Located at the end of

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the literature review is a description of social constructivism theory for organizational

success and justification for framing this study. Chapter 3 covers the research methods

used for this study, including the rationale for the research design. Chapter 4 includes the

study's results and analysis. The final chapter, Chapter 5, offers interpretations,

conclusions, recommendations and reflections.

Definition of Key Terms

Supervisor- Given the interchangeable use of the term manager and supervisor in

research, this research study defines a supervisor as someone who completes performance

reviews, provides coaching, feedback, developmental opportunities, addresses

performance behaviors and outcomes, and oversees the day-to-day operations of a

department.

Student Affairs- Given the interchangeable use of student affairs and student services in

research, this research study defines student affairs as the departments that provide

academic and non-academic support to students within but not limited to admissions,

financial aid, tutoring, counseling, advising, and housing.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

Overview

Student affairs divisions play a crucial role in student development outside the classroom and directly impact student success and college completion rates (Amey et al., 2020; Rosser, 2004). While colleges and universities strive to improve student success and completion, they often overlook the research that highlights how limited management training for student affairs supervisors can negatively impact the growth of its employees, which in turn can influence the success of students and the overall institution (Bryman & Lilley, 2009; Elrod et al., 2018; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008).

This literature review broadly explores two areas of scholarship related to the research questions in this dissertation study. The first area is the role of student affairs supervisors and their development needs. This section provides an overview of student affairs supervisors, their responsibilities with high education institutions, and the skills needed to manage the division and programs effectively. Additionally, a review of existing research on areas of professional development among student affairs supervisors is included in this section. The second area is an overview of management theories that focus on developing employees. This section draws from scholarly literature to describe two management theories, synergistic supervision and performance management. This section concludes with a summary of how these two theories apply to student affairs.

Community Colleges

Two-year colleges, commonly called community colleges or junior colleges, emerged in the early twentieth century and have evolved to meet the needs of their

surrounding communities (Cohen et al., 2014). For this dissertation, these institutions will be referred to as community colleges. State and local governments created community colleges to offer instruction for the first two of four years to university-bound students, and have expanded their mission to include vocational and non-credit education (Cohen et al., 2014). In their national study of perspectives on community college leadership, Amey et al. (2002) describe the evolution of community colleges in the following:

> Since the early 1980s, community colleges have grown in number, size, and organizational complexity. The ''comprehensive community college'' of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century offers a wide array of credit, non-credit, and lifelong learning experiences across a seemingly endless array of disciplinary and technical foci. The strength and size of occupational education/vocational education units, and the development of new and enhanced infrastructure administrative systems such as business-industry incubators, continuing education units, instructional technology centers, and centers for teaching excellence are among the many collegiate innovations that have taken hold in the last 20 years (p. 573).

As the excerpt above indicates, community colleges have evolved into an educational system designed to meet students' needs regardless of their educational goals. This often results in students taking advantage of multiple educational opportunities, whether for credit or non-credit. By examining supervisory practices in student affairs, this dissertation offers an implicit exploration of how student affairs supervisors contribute to their institution's mission by supporting credit-seeking students in their educational journey.

In Fall 2016, United States community college enrollment accounted for over 39% of undergraduate students or about nine million students (Community College Research Center [CCRC] 2018). Students attending community colleges are more likely to be at-risk of not completing due, in part to open enrollment policies. According to Cohen et al. (2014), open enrollment "translates to ease of entry. Students may register with little advanced commitment and enroll in classes without a completion plan of study" (p.70). Sixty-eight percent of community college students enter college academically underprepared and take one or more developmental courses to become college ready (CCRC, 2014). Additionally, community college students often belong to other demographic groups who are more likely to be at higher risk of not completing a postsecondary degree (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017). For instance, as of 2017, these demographics include 62% who attend part-time, 36% who identify as first-generation college students, and 58% who receive financial aid (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017).

Over 80% of community college students intend to transfer to a four-year college after completing either an associate degree or taking as many transfer courses as possible (Jenkins & Fink, 2015, p. 1). In addition to educating students who intend to transfer, community colleges confer vocational awards in business, health, and skilled and technical sciences. They also meet the service area's short-term workforce non-credit training needs and deliver community education (Cohen et al., 2014). As a result of their multiple missions and diverse student body, community colleges experience unique challenges and opportunities. As Amey et al. (2020) explain, community colleges' successes and challenges are impacted by their "multiple missions including transfer,

retraining and workforce development, and foundational instruction for English learners and others who have not found sufficient support elsewhere," along with "shifting state and local resources, increasingly diverse learners, transient instructional and labor markets" (p 127). Thus, professionals at community colleges and their student affairs departments and services are tasked with supporting students who are often underprepared for college-level coursework, students who have not been successful elsewhere, and students who may only attend the institution for a short time. These factors create conditions that require community colleges to have student affairs divisions, including supervisors, that are even more attentive and effective than their four-year institutional counterparts.

Supervisors in Student Affairs

In their study of community college supervisors in student affairs, Márquez & Hernández (2020) found that there is "no clear definition of the role of a student affairs midlevel leader in community colleges" (p. 83). They expanded on the common refrain that midlevel leaders "wear several hats":

> For example, midlevel student affairs positions may carry the titles of advisor, counselor, manager, program coordinator, or various iterations of director such as assistant director, associate director, co-director, and executive director. A midlevel leader may hold the title of dean of student affairs, residence life advisor or manager, student activities coordinator, and/or assistant director or director of sororities and fraternities.

Márquez & Hernández's finding aligns with Rosser's (2004) national study of higher education supervisors. Rosser's study defined supervisors as academic or non-academic

staff who work within higher education to serve students, employees, faculty, and alumni. Both Márquez & Hernández, and Rosser indicated that the role and title of a supervisor are not clearly defined. In his review of scholarly research, Kent (2005) strengthens Márquez & Hernández and Rosser's argument about the lack of distinction between a leader and supervisor and explains that "one person's 'leader' was another person's 'manager'" (p. 1011). Both Márquez & Hernández and Rosser referenced directors, coordinators, and managers in the same breath as mid-level leaders, which intensifies the confusion between leading and managing in student affairs.

Even without a universal title, Cooper and Saunders (1999, as cited in Mather et al., 2009) claimed that "leadership skills were the most important attributes for successful mid-managers in student affairs" (p. 249). Additionally, in their study of orienting mid-level student affairs professionals, Cooper and Saunders (1999, as cited in Mather et al., 2009) expanded leadership skills to include personnel management and found that skills "such as resolving interpersonal problems and conflicts, building effective working teams, collaborating with others, implementing effective decisions, persuading others and understanding organizational behavior were most essential for success" (p. 249). Kent (2005) agrees that leading and managing are vital indicators of any organization's success, and he argues that these roles are inseparable. Specifically, he states that leading and managing "theoretically and conceptually, they can be differentiated. They can be studied, to some extent, separately. But in reality, they reside within, and are practiced by single individuals" (Kent, 2011, p. 1014).

Effective supervisors often possess specific competencies and skills that influence their success as supervisors. Gentry and Leslie (2007, as cited in Visagie et al., 2011)

identified "the leadership competencies most favoured in organizations included 'building and mending relationships,' 'bringing out the best in people' and 'listening'" (p. 228). Adding to these leadership competencies, Visagie et al. (2011) included communication, effective interpersonal, and inter-group communication as essential for effective supervisors to embody. According to Visagie et al. (2011), leaders should "provide open, honest, constructive feedback on performance" through a meaningful conversation (p. 234). Based on research conducted via surveys and interviews focused on the leadership needs among midlevel community college administrators, Wallin (2006) found participants understood the importance of interpersonal skills. Nevertheless, participants also expressed concerns about "developing teams, motivating and supporting employees, resolving conflict and effective communication with employees" (Wallin, 2006, p. 515). While research findings support and express the importance of supervisors use of communication for essential functions, including employee and team development by providing feedback and coaching, these are skills that not all supervisors possess (Aguinis, 2013; Aguinis et al., 2011; Visagie et al., 2011; Wallin, 2006).

To better understand student affairs supervisors' essential functions and characteristics, Rosser wrote the (2000) book chapter, *The Work and Career Paths of Midlevel Administrators*. Rosser's research on midlevel supervisors within higher education, universities, and community colleges offers an overview of crucial characteristics among student affairs supervisors. Rosser explains that student affairs supervisors often report to a top-level officer or dean, usually possess a graduate degree, and have a strong commitment to their profession. However, as indicated by Mather et al.'s (2009) review of existing research exploring the relationship between a supervisor's

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position within the institution and the challenges mid-level student affairs professionals experience, these supervisors experience dilemmas mainly because their positions put them in between upper administration and front-line employees. They explain this in the following:

> Middle managers are often in the delicate role of taking values and expectations from above and translating them to the practical realities, in light of student and employee behavior. An added complication for higher education managers is that they are occupying this position in organizations that are highly complex, such as larger, more bureaucratic intuitions (Strange & Banning, 2002). Small colleges can also present high levels of ambiguity as "roles and policies may be less formalized than in larger institutions" (Oblander, 2006, p. 32) (p. 247).

As this excerpt and other scholarship points out, supervisors in student affairs have administrative roles and functions that support the institution's goals and mission by bridging the gap between front-line staff and upper administration (Mather et al., 2009; Rosser, 2004). Additionally, Márquez & Hernández (2020) indicate student affairs supervisors' responsibilities are complex because they include day-to-day operations of departments, programs, services, as well as supervision of entry-level professionals and ongoing efforts to meet student needs.

Overall, the complex responsibilities juggled by supervisors in student affairs impact employee development, loyalty, and the services students receive. These outcomes ultimately contribute to the success or failure of students and the overall institution (Horne et al., 2016; Power, 2013). As CCC explores ways to improve student, community, and institutional success, supervisor development and training needs to be

explored because these opportunities can significantly influence student services employee performance.

Supervising Effectively in Student Affairs

As noted in the previous section, student affairs supervisors serve students and employees by carrying out the upper administration's vision and mission. Existing research has shown skillful communication and investing in employees' professional development are among the several competencies needed to manage effectively (Mather et al., 2009). In terms of professional development, Garza Mitchell and Eddy's (2008) research at a medium-size rural community college which sought to identify the career pathways into midlevel leadership found mentoring is critical. In particular, the researchers identified that the "lack of a formal mentoring program or leadership development plan meant that the individuals placed into new administrative roles were often left to figure out things for themselves" (Garza Mitchell and Eddy, 2008, p. 807). These findings align with other research on student affairs supervisors and the lack of training available to them (Elrod et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Sermersheim & Keim, 2005). Although midlevel supervisors rank essential leadership and personnel management practices as necessary for effective management, many supervisors do not receive this type of training in the educational programs which claim to prepare them to work in student affairs (Elrod et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Sermersheim & Keim, 2005).

In a national study to identify student affairs supervisors' professional development needs, Sermersheim and Keim (2005) surveyed 450 student affairs supervisors at four-year institutions. The results indicated leadership and personnel

management are the most crucial skill for supervisors in student affairs. Moreover, an abundance of research emphasizes the need for managers to acquire specific skills and knowledge to communicate with colleagues and employees effectively and meaningfully (Mather et al., 2009; Porter-O'Grady, 2003; Rosser, 2004; Williams, 2006). These skills include listening, conflict management, collaborating with others, and managing one's own emotions (Mather et al., 2009; Sermersheim & Keim, 2005).

Overall, student affairs supervisors play a crucial role in the success of the institution, its employees, and, most importantly, its students. They are responsible for providing services to students that help students succeed both in and out of the classroom. Additionally, their position in the middle, between front-line staff and upper administration, makes them responsible for explaining and altering practices to meet the institution's changing focus and policies. Student affairs supervisors must develop and utilize communication skills to effectively lead, supervise, and ensure student, employee, and institution success. However, mid-level leaders in higher education with little or no formal management training can hinder institution, student, and employee success, as well as their own success. In student affairs, the lack of adequate training impacts how student affairs, as a division, is able to serve students (Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Márquez & Hernandez, 2020; Mather et al., 2009; Rosser, 2004).

The Role of Communication in Supervision

An abundance of scholarship examining the role of communication in management has been conducted outside of higher education, in such fields as business and human resources (Aguinis, 2013; Day et al., 2014; Visagie et al., 2011). However, this broad scholarship can be applied to student affairs supervisors. For instance,

Herman Aguinis is a leading researcher in performance management in the field of economics and business. In his work, he found high-performance organizations have supervisors whose communication focuses on offering frequent feedback and coaching to recognize and increase the employee's value. In turn, this contributes to increased employee performance, motivation, and self-esteem (Aguinis, 2013). Focused on supervision communication and employee support and performance, Neves and Eisenberger (2012) conducted a three-year study with 236 participants. This study found that "management communication affects performance mainly because it signals that the organization cares about the well-being and values the contributions of its employees (p. 452). Likewise, Williams' (2006) research on the Fujitsu Services Management Academy found that this company's custom management training program led to supervisors' increased use of difficult conversations to provide feedback and coaching, which enhanced overall company success. As these studies show, high-performing organizations and teams typically have supervisors who utilize frequent communication, coaching, and feedback to develop employees; these are critical components of synergistic supervision and performance management practices (Aguinis, 2013; Horne et al., 2016; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012; Williams, 2006). These styles of management encourage and develop the performance of employees through goal setting (Aguinis, 2013), frequent communication (Visagie et al., 2011; Winston & Creamer, 1997), and feedback and coaching for improvement and guidance (Aguinis, 2013; Murari & Kripa, 2012).

When onboarding new employees or providing feedback and coaching to current employees, research suggests that supervisors -- including those in higher education and

student affairs – need to be clear about performance expectations and what support and resources are available to help increase employee success (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012). Den Hartog and Verburg (2004) and Mauer's (2001) reviews of existing research found supervisors and employees alike benefit from feedback and coaching and additional opportunities to develop job and career-enhancing skills. In particular, supervisors who provide continuous feedback and coaching develop employees who are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses (Murari & Kripa, 2012; Winston & Creamer, 1997). In turn, they seek guidance from their supervisors as needed to improve their performance. This promotes opportunities for cyclical and ongoing development among all employees, primarily when supervisors utilize feedback and coaching to increase the competence of their employees (Aguinis et al., 2011).

While employee feedback and coaching are a significant component to bringing organizations toward an ideal performance level, supervisors often lack the necessary training and preparation to deliver feedback and coaching (Elrod et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2018; Williams, 2006). Given this lack of training, many supervisors avoid the conversation because it is perceived as difficult (Lamb et al., 2018; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008). As Ashford and Derue (2012) found in their study of leadership development, "Because people often worry about hurting others' feelings, creating tension or conflict in groups, or coming across as overly judgmental, people often do not share important feedback with others" (p. 150). Similarly, student affairs supervisors often avoid providing feedback and coaching due to limited training or fear of how others will respond. While research of student affairs supervisors' lack of training has been

conducted, future research in this field could explore whether or not Ashford and Derue's finding on feedback avoidance exists within student affairs.

Additionally, supervisors who are more skilled in difficult conversations often supervise employees who notice improved production, greater engagement, higher quality of relationships, and increased job satisfaction (Aguinis 2013; Day et al., 2014; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). For instance, Levine et al.'s (2020) review of existing research found that,

> ...by focusing on the short-term harm and unpleasantness associated with difficult conversations, communicators fail to realize that honesty and benevolence are actually compatible in many cases. Providing honest feedback can help a target learn and grow, thereby improving the target's overall welfare (pp. 41-42).

As this above excerpt asserts, supervisors who avoid providing feedback and coaching potentially limit the growth and success of their employees.

Bradley and Campbell's (2016) review of existing research, including three studies they conducted, offers an understanding of the challenges of workplace conversations, and identifies goals and strategies to address these challenges. They found that difficult conversations between peers and supervisors and employees in the workplace have many risks. Specifically, they indicated how these conversations might "(a) hurt the other person, (b) result in resistance and/or retaliatory action from that person, (c) have adverse consequences for the initiator, (d) damage the relationship between the parties, and/or (e) adversely affect other interests and stakeholders" (Bradley & Campbell, 2016, p. 447). Similarly, Patton's (2016) review of existing research identified that "all too often in business, managers sidestep this vital work, telling

themselves that most people are unable or unwilling to change, so why bother with the unpleasant conversation" (p. 553-554). Thus, peers and supervisors who do not engage in difficult conversations often miss the growth opportunity to truly engage with others, to hear their perspective, and in the case of a supervisor, to provide constructive feedback to employees. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, difficult conversations offer significant benefits, but many supervisors avoid this type of communication because they are uncomfortable, lack the skills, or worry about how their employee may receive such coaching and feedback (Bradley & Campbell, 2016; Levine et al., 2020; Staller, 2014; Williams, 2006).

Supervision Theories

Broadly, scholars emphasize two supervisory approaches that center on communication and employee development - synergistic supervision and performance management. Synergistic supervision offers a framework to assist student affairs supervisors in developing employees (Sermersheim & Keim, 2005; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Synergistic supervision promotes employees' personal and professional capabilities through dual focus, joint effort, two-way communication between the supervisor and employees, and focus on competence (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Notably, synergistic supervision emphasizes the need for supervisors to have strong communication skills as an avenue to provide necessary feedback and coaching to employees (Sermersheim & Keim, 2005; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

While similar to synergistic supervision, performance management is studied and applied in organizational behavior and human resource management. Performance management is an ongoing interaction between supervisors and employees that "focuses

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on setting goals and objectives, observing performance, and giving and receiving ongoing coaching and feedback" (Aguinis, 2013, p. 2). Alignment of these measurable supervision theories strengthens the case for organizations to explore current supervisory practices to identify areas of training aimed at improving success among employees, customers, and the organization. Next is a deeper discussion of both synergistic supervision and performance management.

Synergistic Supervision

Synergistic supervision is a framework for supervisors and employees to discuss expectations, performance, goals, feedback, and coaching. Winston and Creamer (1997) provided a mathematical metaphor of "1 +1 = 3" (p. 196) to explain the strength of a supervisor and employees working together; they can accomplish more together than alone. Synergistic supervision supports achieving organizational goals and objects and assisting employees to realize and reach their personal and professional goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

In 1997, Winston and Creamer shared the concept of synergistic supervision as a framework for supervisors in student affairs to approach employees' supervision and holistic development. Winston and Creamer (1997) define supervision in higher education as "a management function intended to promote the achievement of institutional goals and enhance the personal and professional capabilities of staff" (p. 42). Synergistic supervision includes nine essential characteristics (see Table 1), along with the following practices focused on communication "(a) discussion of exemplary performance, (b) discussion of long-term career goals, (c) discussion of inadequate performance, (d) frequency of informal performance appraisals, and (e) discussion of

personal attitudes" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, pp. 42-43). With a foundation of frequent communication between the supervisor and employee which is centered on shared goals and expectations, synergistic supervision requires persistent feedback and coaching to assist in employee personal and professional growth.

Research demonstrates that communication is an essential part of actualizing synergistic supervision both within and beyond higher education. For instance, Visagie et al.'s (2011) study of leadership competencies for managing diversity, which included a survey of 2669 participants, found that communication is an essential component. Specifically, they explain that "The leadership competencies most favored in organizations included 'building and mending relationships,' 'bringing out the best in people' and 'listening.' Vision, inspiration and communicational goals were regarded as further important competencies for people in leadership positions" (p. 228). Additionally, they noted that key competencies for supervisors include communication (clear expectations, non-verbal), managing skills (motivation, conflict resolution, managing personnel), and effective interpersonal and inter-group communication (Visagie et al., 2011). However, Ashford and Derue's (2012) review of existing research concerning the lack of leadership talent within higher education found "because people often worry about hurting others' feelings, creating tension or conflict in groups, or coming across as overly judgmental, people often do not share important feedback with others" (p.150). Still, the positive impact of effective communication can outweigh the challenges by achieving these essential characteristics of synergistic supervision.

Table 1

Essential Characteristics of Synergistic Supervision

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Dual Focus	"Staff are much more likely to show loyalty to the supervisor and the institution and unit when they perceive that the supervisor is sincerely interested in them as individuals and is able and willing to assist them in accomplishing personal and professional objectives." "Synergistic supervision requires a cordial, mutual respectful relationship (not necessarily friendship) as a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for successful supervision." (Winston & Creamer, p. 197-198)
Joint Effort	"Supervision is not something done to staff but rather a cooperative activity in which each party has an important contribution to make." "Both parties must be willing to invest time and energy in the process" "When goals are clearly identified and plans for accomplishing goals are worked out jointly between the supervisor and the staff member, then success or failure also falls on both sets of shoulders." (Winston & Creamer, p. 198)
Two-Way Communication	"Two-way communication is essential for effective supervision. Synergistic supervision is dependent on a high level of trust between staff members and their supervisors, so staff members must be willing to allow supervisors to learn about them personally and the details of their daily work life without being defensive. Staff members also must feel free to give supervisors honest, direct feedback. Supervisors must check frequently on whether or not they are setting up situations in which it is comfortable for staff to give them feedback, especially negative feedback." (Winston & Creamer, p. 198)
Focus on Competence	"Supervision concentrates on four areas of staff competence: knowledge and information, work-related skills, personal and professional development skills, and attitudes." "Knowledge and Information: to be effective, staff members must understand how college students develop and must have accurate information about laws and other legal parameters of practice, standards of professional practice, ethical standards, and institutional rules and policies, services, programs, and other institutional resources." "Work-related skills: staff need a wide range of skills (for example, interpersonal communication, goal setting, public relations, leadership, confrontation, conflict resolution, computer usage, book-keeping, and clerical skills) to be effective." Synergistic supervision concentrates on identifying current levels of skills and devising methods through which staff can acquire new skills or refine already developed skills." "Personal and professional skills: to be effective as persons and professionals, staff members need another wide range of skills (for instance, time management, personal management such as diet or exercise, retirement planning, anger control, career planning, or stress management). Being an effective staff member means making serious

	efforts to acquire new skills; likewise, to be effective professionals, staff members need to keep their job-specific skills current." "Attitudes: working in student affairs is seldom a mechanical or solitary process; it usually involves working with other people. Consequently, the attitudes staff members display are often as important as what they actually do. Whether a staff member approaches tasks with attitudes of enthusiasm or sarcasm often determines his or her ultimate success. (Winston & Creamer, p. 198-200)
Growth Orientation	"Synergistic supervision attends to both personal and professional areas of practitioners' lives. Of particular importance is career development. Supervisors should provide assistance, if desired, to staff as they pursue work that is meaningful and personally satisfying." "To the extent possible, synergistic supervision seeks to make dealing with staff shortcomings a positive learning experience rather than a punitive one." "Because the primary focus of synergistic supervision is not to correct problems or discipline staff, the activity can produce important personal benefits for the staff and should make the workplace stimulating and personally rewarding." (Winston & Creamer, p. 201-208)
Proactivity	"Rather than reacting to problem situations after they have gotten so difficult that they cannot be denied or ignored, synergistic supervision emphasizes early identification and development of strategies by the supervisor and staff member jointly to prevent or lessen their effects." (Winston & Creamer, p. 208-209)
Goal-Based	"For synergistic supervision to be effective, both supervisor and their staffs need to have a clear understanding about the expectations each has for each other. One effective way to manage this is through the development of goals and statements of expectations that are periodically reviewed and evaluated for accomplishment." (Winston & Creamer, p. 209-210)
Systematic and Ongoing Processes	"For supervisors and staff to communicate effectively and to take shared responsibility, there must be ongoing, systematic, regular attention to the supervision process." (Winston & Creamer, p. 210-211)
Holism	"It is impossible to separate people and their attitudes and beliefs from their professional lives. Who one is determines to a large extent the kind of job one is able to do. Synergistic supervision concentrates on helping staff become more effective in their jobs and personal lives, and supports them in their quest for career advancement." (Winston & Creamer, p. 211)

(Winston and Creamer "Improving Staffing Practices in Student Affairs" 1997, pp. 196-211)

While all nine synergistic supervision characteristics (see Table 1) are essential to leading and managing, this research explores the characteristics of goal-based, growth orientation, dual focus, and two-way communication for this study. These four characteristics align with this study's focus on identifying if supervisors provide feedback, coaching, and development opportunities to better the employees and the organization. Synergistic supervision provides supervisors in student affairs with tangible and actionable strategies, including focusing on communication and employee growth, aligning with performance management.

Performance Management

Performance management as theory and practice is often confused with the performance appraisal or an annual review system (Den Hartog et al., 2004; DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006; Kinicki et al., 2013). Performance appraisals are conducted in a non-continuous manner, once or twice a year, to review employee strengths and weaknesses (Aguinis, 2009; Aguinis et al., 2011; DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). The performance appraisal, which includes employees receiving feedback about their performance to help organizations decide on promotions and pay raises, dates back to the 1920s (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). In the 1990's the concept of performance management grew out of the performance appraisal system to address frustrations experienced by employees and employers of the performance appraisal process (Bennis, 1989; Locke & Latham, 1990; Pulakos, 2009). The frustration with appraisals included but was not limited to measurement issues, inconsistent alignment of performance to scores, the review not encompassing the whole year of performance, and limited growth opportunities based on supervisor feedback (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). Scholars still see performance appraisal

as part of the performance management process; however, they are not the same because performance management is a daily ongoing process instead of the singular performance appraisal event (Den Hartog et al., 2004; Kinicki et al., 2013).

Performance management "is a broad set of activities aimed at improving employee performance" and as the employee improves, so does the organization (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006, p. 255). In 2013, Kinicki et al. defined performance management "as a set of processes and managerial behavior aimed at defining, measuring, motivating, and developing the desired performance of employees" (Aguinis, 2009; Cardy, 2004; DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). Unlike many other management theories, performance management is a "process consisting of managerial behaviors aimed at defining, measuring, motivating, and developing the desired performance in employees" (Kinicki et al., 2013). Figure 1 represents the performance management cycle.

Figure 1

Integrated Performance Management Process (Kinicki et al., 2013)

Figure 1

- Provide sufficient and valued consequences

- Set performance goals
- Establish and communicate performance expectations.

4. Provide Performance Consequences

1. Define Performance

3. Review Performance

2. Evaluate Peformance

- Deliver feedback to employees
- Coach employees

- Monitor performance
- Communicate performance strengths/weaknesses
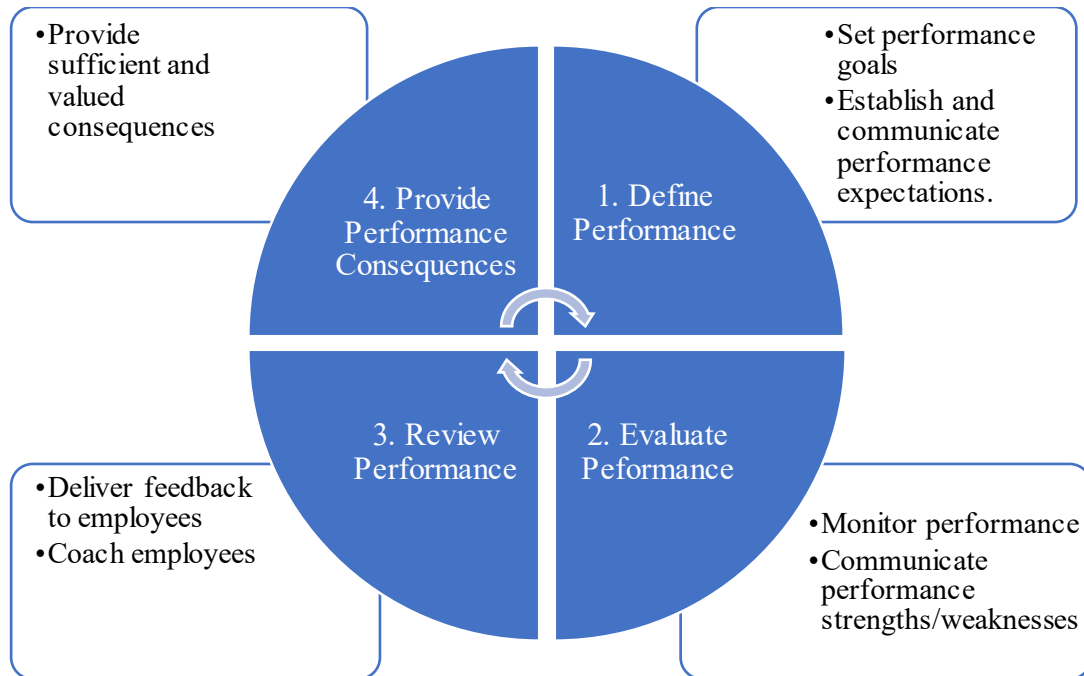
As indicated in the Figure 1, performance management consists of four behaviors/practices by the supervisors to improve employee performance. The first step is to set the performance standards and communicate expectations and action plans to achieve them with the employee (Kinicki et al., 2013). Communication is critical because it ensures both the employee and supervisor have the same information and understanding. This step connects the performance of the employees with the organization's vision and strategic goals (Kinicki et al., 2013, p 5).

The second step of performance management involves the supervisor and employee evaluating performance and behaviors and identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses (Cardy, 2004; Kinicki et al., 2013; Pulakos, 2009). Supervisors identify how employees are performing and what growth areas exist, then identify ways to support employee improvement, leading to the third step. The third step of performance management focuses on supervisors providing performance feedback and coaching to

employees to address growth areas. Coaching and feedback aimed at developing employees is one of the most critical factors of high-performing organizations (Aguinis, 2013; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). This feedback needs to be specific, frequent, and framed positively to lead to employee performance growth (Kinicki et al., 2013). Liu and Batt (2010) defined coaching as a process "through which supervisors may communicate clear expectations to employees, provide feedback and suggestions for improving performance, and facilitate employees' efforts to solve problems or take on new challenges" (pp. 270–271). The combined effect of feedback and coaching is shown by research to positively impact employee performance and loyalty (Heslin et al., 2006; Liu & Batt, 2010; Kinicki et al., 2013).

The fourth step of performance management focuses on providing consequences when performance is not improved and rewarding positive behaviors (Kinicki et al., 2013). In this step, supervisors take appropriate steps to address performance concerns and reward good behaviors and performance. Following this step, the cycle starts over. To better understand the benefits of performance management, review Table 2.

Table 2

Some of the Benefits Resulting from Performance Management

For Employees
• Employees experience increased self-esteem
• Employees better understand the behaviors and results required of their position.
• Employees better identify ways to maximize their strengths and minimize weaknesses.
For Managers
• Managers develop a workforce with heightened motivation to perform.
• Managers gain greater insight into their employees.
• Managers make their employees become more competent.
• Managers enjoy better and timelier differentiation between good and poor performers.
• Managers enjoy clearer communication to employees about employees' performance.

For Organizations
- Organizations make administrative actions that are more appropriate.
- Organizations make organizational goals clearer to managers and employees.
- Organizations enjoy reduced employee misconduct.
- Organizations enjoy better protection from lawsuits.
- Organizations facilitate organizational change.
- Organizations develop increased commitment on the part of employees.
- Organizations enjoy enhanced employee engagement.

(Aguinis et al., 2011, p. 505)

In summary, synergist supervision and performance management focus on developing employees and building strong working relationships by providing feedback and coaching effectively. However, even though effective communication influences employee competency, performance, and loyalty to the institution, supervisors do not typically engage in such communication because it is difficult. Moreover, in student affairs, supervisors are often underprepared to incorporate effective management practices.

Research on synergistic supervision has focused on onboarding new employees within student affairs, whereas performance management has been primarily studied outside higher education. Combining these frameworks to find out more about new and seasoned employees within student affairs can add to existing research focused on higher education and student affairs supervision. This study is unique because it studies performance management within student affairs, which has not been done to date. Additionally, this study expands on the research regarding employees' perceptions of student affairs supervisors as well as supervisors' developmental opportunities, experiences, and challenges in student affairs. As the next section on social constructivism theory indicates, supervisory practices can significantly influence

employee growth throughout an institution. In the case of student affairs, this growth can offer students more support toward their educational success.

Theoretical Framework: A Case for Constructivism

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a sub-theory of constructionism and focuses on how individuals learn through interactions with others (Tayler, 2018). Lev Vygotsky developed the concept of social constructivism in the 1930s to explain the collaborative process of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who died in 1934, did not see the influence or application of his work because the Russian government censored it until the 1960s (Deulen, 2013). Vygotsky identified learning "as a social process formed by human intelligence in the culture or society the learner lives" (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018, p. 600). Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a critical component of social constructivism (Pritchard & Woolard, 2010). The ZPD is "the distance between the actual development level as determined through independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In simple terms, ZPD explains two things: 1) what a person can do by themselves and 2) what they can do with help or guidance from a more knowledgeable person. Although social constructivism and ZDP are typically applied to how children are taught, these concepts also apply to professional development programs for adult learners.

Philpott and Batty's (2009) review of current social constructivism literature and its application to medical education recognized that discussion is crucial to learning. In the following, these authors explain:

Social constructivism builds knowledge most often through verbal interaction including questions, confrontations, and negotiations. Every opportunity to converse is an opportunity to learn. It can be tremendously challenging, but ultimately beneficial, to embrace a discourse about widely held beliefs (p. 923).

Thus, through the lens of social constructivism, learning typically happens through verbal interactions using discussions and questioning aimed at developing a deeper understanding.

Using a social constructivism approach for this research honors each member of the student affairs division's current knowledge, understanding, and experiences. Additionally, utilizing social constructivism theory for this research aligns with the employee development outcomes addressed through synergistic supervision and performance management. As in ZPD and social constructivism, a cornerstone of synergistic supervision and performance management theories is how managers and employees collaborate and work together to improve performance. Applying social constructivism and ZPD to this study acknowledges the importance of feedback and coaching to employee development, which can ultimately improve services to students and the institution.

Summary

The literature presented above demonstrates the connection between student affairs supervisors, the role of communication in effective supervision, and the crucial

roles supervisors play in developing employees and serving the diverse student body of community colleges. The literature suggests that student affairs supervisors are underprepared for their supervisory functions. Although scholars have pointed out the need for training of supervisors in student affairs over the past 20 years, there still seems to be a lack of supervisor training opportunities across higher education institutions. Additionally, this chapter identifies the gaps in research and practices concerning limited manager training focused on communication within student affairs. Also, the scholarship on feedback and coaching reflects significant reasons why managers in student affairs would benefit from improved communication with their employees about their performance. The literature aligns with the current practices at CCC, which offers no formal training to student affairs supervisors concerning communication, feedback, and coaching.

In this chapter, two supervisory theories- synergistic supervision and performance management are highlighted. Both are designed to provide steps for supervisors to develop employees through feedback and coaching. Both are designed to provide clearly defined skills and practices that supervisors need to perform their supervisory responsibilities effectively. These two theories stand apart from other supervisory and leadership theories because they provide transparent processes and outline skills and behaviors that supervisors can develop through training. Additionally, both have verified instruments to measure the extent to which supervisors are implementing these skills and behaviors.

The literature on social constructivism aligns with the literature and practice of synergistic supervision and performance management. Applying social constructivism to

synergistic supervision and performance management explains why employees increase their knowledge, skills, and performance through feedback and coaching. Additionally, this theory suggests that increasing development opportunities that include employee engagement with their colleagues can help contribute to improving their competencies. Social constructivism, ZPD, synergistic supervision, and performance management adhere to the understanding that individually we can only go so far, but through interactions and engagement with others, individuals will grow as a collective more than they could alone.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods used to collect and analyze survey data regarding perceptions of supervisory practices in the student affairs division at a community college. It includes a short description of the research questions, previous cycles of action research, the study's setting, the role of the researcher, research design, philosophical position, study participants, instruments used to collect data, and procedures and methods of analysis.

This research study used a survey design, which as defined by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), "is a set of research procedures in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population" (p. 385). Survey design does not involve a treatment or innovation by the researcher (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Survey research cannot be used to explain cause and effect. Instead, it describes trends by correlating variables to learn more about the population (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

As previously stated, this research employs a survey design utilizing quantitative terms to explore student affairs employees' perception of direct supervisors' use of performance and synergistic management skills and behaviors (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The validated Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (Kinicki et al., 2013) and part of the Synergistic Supervision Scale (Winston & Creamer, 1997) were used in this study designed for employees to evaluate their direct supervisors use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. Additionally,

quantitative and qualitative, open-response questions were used to expand the research on current student affairs supervisors' training, desired skill development, and challenges they face (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

RQ1. What are the perceptions of supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college?

RQ2. How did supervisors in student affairs at a community college develop their supervisory practice?

RQ3. What areas do supervisors in student affairs at a community college want to develop or strengthen?

RQ4. What supervisory practices do supervisors in student affairs at a community college identify as challenging?

RQ5. Does the length of experience as a supervisor or educational attainment impact self-identified areas to develop or strengthen?

RQ6. Does employees' education attainment influence their perceptions of supervisory practices among mid-level student affairs employees at a community college?

Previous Cycle of Action Research

Initially, this study was designed using mixed-methods action research to study the use of feedback and coaching for supervisors within the Enrollment Management Division before and after an innovation. The study innovation included the use of the VitalSmart Crucial Conversation Online training, group meetings, and data collection from both pre- and post-surveys as well as interviews. However, the research did not go as initially planned due to concerns from institutional leadership regarding the researcher

working in and knowing the potential study participants. The researcher still desired to explore supervisory practices within the local context. The research design was changed to survey research to use this study's findings to potentially develop and implement an appropriate innovation that could help improve supervisory practices at CCC.

In designing the survey research, previous cycles from the proposed mixed-methods action research design were utilized to inform the current survey design. While this survey research does not implement an innovation, it is crucial in future action research. To better understand the current research design, it is vital to understand action research and the initial action research design and how it influenced the current survey design.

Overview of Action Research

Action Research is often used in educational settings to improve teaching practice by allowing practitioners to identify a problem or opportunity, which invites inquiry and action related to practices (Ivankova, 2015). This research was conducted by a practitioner "whose primary education and training is not in research methodology" (Mertler, 2017, p. 3). Action research is conducted by practitioners who are actively engaged in the environment and is done to benefit the practitioner and the people they serve by better understanding their practice (Mertler, 2017). Boog (2003, as cited by Bargal, 2008) states that "action research is designed to improve the researched subjects' capacities to solve problems…increase their chances for self-determination and to have influence on the functioning and decision-making processes of organizations" (p. 17). Bargal (2008), drawing from the works of Checkland (1991) and Dickens and Watkins (1999), states that "characterize action research as an interactive cycle of problem

identification, diagnosis, planning intervention, and evaluation of the outcomes to estimate what has achieved and to plan subsequent interventions" (p. 17).

Although stages of and approach to action research vary, most methodologists agree that action research consists of research cycles to improve the research practitioners' practice (Ivankova, 2015). Kurt Lewin, who coined the term action research, identified the following four cycles: reflect, plan, observe, and act (Ivankova, 2015). The cycle begins when the practitioner-researcher identifies a problem within their workplace or community setting. Once the problem is identified, the practitioner-researcher reflects on the problem to identify what is known and possible solutions. Next, the practitioner-researcher develops a plan for possible solutions or to gather more information. The plan is then carried out, and results are observed. The practitioner-researcher reflects on the results and observations and makes changes toward improvements and repeats the cycle. Other researchers have expanded the framework to include more stages or cycles but still maintain the idea that data collection and research design are changed based on experience from previous research cycles (Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2017). In the *SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Reason and Bradbury (2008) define action research as a method that supports a researcher's aim to make a positive contribution to their environment:

> Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical
> knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring action and
> reflection, theory, and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of
> practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the
> flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 4).

Through various action research cycles, researchers can refine their understanding of the research problem and their practice, allowing for adjusting research goals and design. Simply stated, the researcher can amend their processes based on previous cycles.

The Role of Action Research in this Study

Two research cycles were conducted to explore the problem of practice. These cycles indicated additional research was needed to explore employees' and supervisors' perceived performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. The first cycle utilized survey design to explore participants' experiences as a supervisor, their comfort level holding employees accountable, providing feedback and coaching to employees, and how they developed as a supervisor. The survey consisted of 17 multiple-choice questions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix A). One question was an open-ended response, allowing participants to identify challenges they face as a supervisor. The survey was administered via email through Google Forms, inviting nine supervisors at Central Community College (CCC) within the Enrollment Management Division to participate; eight completed the survey. The survey took approximately seven minutes to complete. The survey results aligned with current research; supervisors had not received formal training, resulting in them learning through trial and error. Additionally, they indicated they were not comfortable providing feedback and coaching or holding employees accountable for their actions or behavior.

In the second cycle of research, two semi-structured interviews with supervisors at CCC were conducted. These interviews included one male, non-white instructional associate dean between 35-45 years old and one female, white associate dean of students between 35-45. These two associate deans were selected because they excelled at

providing clear expectations and prompt feedback and were viewed by the researcher as strong performers and supervisors. Overall, the researcher deemed these types of supervisors effective. Thus, by interviewing them, researcher sought to better understand how they developed their supervisory skills, what skills they believe made supervisors effective and ineffective, and what characteristics or qualities they believe make leaders/supervisors successful. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes and consisted of eight questions (see Appendix B). The Otter application was used to record and transcribe the interviews.

Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase framework was used to conduct thematic analysis. This framework was used because it is flexible and guided the researcher in identifying themes and patterns to better understand the participants' experiences. This analysis highlighted the need for professional growth and training outside of formal degrees. The interviewees shared that leaders/supervisors need to be reflective of their practice and effectively communicate with employees. They also explained supervisors need to be strong listeners, provide coaching and feedback, and not limit an employee's success and growth. Additionally, they argued that building relationships with peers and employees is essential; however, supervisors need to hold employees accountable and provide coaching and feedback even if it is not popular.

This survey research design is informed by action research and the previous cycles of inquiry to explore current supervisory practices and experiences at CCC. The researcher plans to implement the initial action research design at a future date. The data collected and analyzed in this study informs future cycles of this action research.

Study Setting

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The study took place in May 2021 at Central Community College (CCC), a rural community college located in Nebraska. CCC provides educational opportunities to a 25-county service area covering over 14,000 square miles, with over 300,000 residents (Central Community College, 2020). The National Center of Educational Statistics recognizes CCC as a rural school due to the service area's location and population ("Rural Education in America," n.d.). CCC has 37 program areas and fields of study include skills and technical science, health, business, and academic education, and offers 175 different awards (certificates, degrees, diplomas) (Central Community College, 2020). Overall, CCC has three main campuses and three learning centers spread across the geographic service area and is increasing the number of online classes and programs (Central Community College, 2020). Each campus operates with similar services, offices, and staffing, overseen by one college-wide president. The learning centers are served by permanent staff and few rotating staff.

Employee and Student Demographics

The CCC faculty, staff, and student demographics are majority female and white (see Table 3 for details); CCC employee and faculty demographics came from the November 1, 2018, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) report. CCC credit-seeking student demographic information is from the 2019-2020 IPEDS and CCC's Voluntary Framework of Accountability report (see Table 4).

Table 3

CCC Employee and Faculty Demographics

	Total	Male	Female	White	Hispanic/Latino	Asian

Full-time employees	498	37%	63%	94%	3%	N/A
Full-time instructors	171	47%	53%	96%	NA	1.8%

Table 4

CCC Credit-seeking Student Demographics

Total	Male	Female	White	Hispanic/Latino	First time college student	Attend Part-time	Receive Pell Grants
6,354	31%	59%	73%	22%	78%	70%	36%

CCC employs 498 full-time employees (63% female, 94% white, 3% Hispanic/Latino) and 171 full-time instructors (53% female, 96% white, 1.8% Asian) across the 25-county area (IPEDS, 2018). According to the 2019-2020 IPEDS report, CCC had 6,354 credit-seeking students in the 2019-2020 academic year. The student body demographic includes students with the following demographics: 59% female; 70% attend part-time, 73% white, 22% Hispanic/Latino (National Center for Educational Statistics, CCC IPEDS); 78% are first-time college students, and 36% receive Pell Grants (AACC, CCC Voluntary Framework of Accountability, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher became the Dean of Enrollment Management at CCC three years ago. The researcher realized each of the supervisors within the division had various levels of comfort and ability to hold employees accountable, provide feedback and coaching, and address performance issues.

It was discovered that some supervisors did not have the skills, knowledge, or confidence to address employee performance issues. To address this, the researcher

trained supervisors as needed by providing feedback and coaching. They practiced engaging in difficult conversations to address employees' poor performance more effectively in the future. This led to the desire to conduct a research study exploring employees' perceptions of supervisors' use of supervisory best practices. Additionally, the researcher wanted to study how supervisors developed their supervisory skills, what areas supervisors wanted to develop, and the challenges they identified as supervisors. In this survey research study, the researcher's role was to develop and administer the survey, conduct the data analysis to identify current supervisory practices and experiences to inform future training and add to the research on supervisors within student affairs.

Research Design

This survey study was designed to explore supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college and expand the research on the experiences and preparation of student affairs supervisors. The study examined how student affairs supervisors developed their skills and explored areas they identified as needing development. The study also examined employees' perceptions of skills utilized by supervisors within the student affairs division at a community college. The data analysis used independent variables such as supervisors' characteristics, years of experience as a supervisor, and areas identified for improvement. This research adds to the current research on the development of student affairs supervisors.

Survey Research

The purpose of this survey study was to explore the perceived practices, experiences, and needs of student affairs supervisors at Central Community College. This study examines how student affairs supervisors utilize best practices

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outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision theories to assist

employees' development and growth. This survey research study includes two parts. First,

using 32 survey questions, employees' perceptions of their supervisors' use

of performance management and synergistic supervision skills was explored. By

examining employees' perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management

and synergistic management skills and behaviors, this research a) identified current

supervisory practices and b) identified training topics the college could implement to

develop supervisory best practices within student affairs. The second part of this study

used open-ended survey questions to identify what supervisory skills supervisors want to

improve. Data analysis includes the description of demographic variables such as age,

years of experience as a supervisor, highest degree earned, and the use of performance

management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors.

This research utilized a cross-sectional survey design, meaning data was collected

at one time (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The survey research was designed for a

quantitative approach that allowed employees to respond anonymously (Mertler, 2017).

Supervisors received the second part of the survey that had additional open-ended and

closed response questions. Closed-ended responses or fixed responses were used to

collect demographic information. Questions concerning employees' perceptions were

asked and answered using Likert scales. The open-ended questions that supervisors

received allowed participants to write their responses and thus more freely share their

thoughts and experiences. This allowed the researcher to gain meaningful insight into the

perspectives of the participants (Swart, 2019). Qualtrics software was utilized to deploy

and record survey responses anonymously, quickly, and cost-effectively and to reduced

user error when analyzing the data (Creswell, 2014). This approach assisted the researcher in more efficiently analyzing perceptions of supervisors' skills.

Philosophical Position

Constructivism

This research design is framed with a constructivism philosophy. Constructivism is the learning theory applied in this study by soliciting participants' ideas, thoughts, and feelings to honor each participant's experiences and knowledge and to build new meaning concerning supervision in student affairs. Constructivism does not view each person as a blank slate ready to absorb and regurgitate skills and training. Instead, this view assumes that each person will question what they experience and learn based on what they already know and understand. Crotty (1998; as cited by Creswell, 2014) explained several assumptions of constructivism, including that people construct meanings as they engage with the world, make sense of the world based on their historical and social perspectives, and shape meaning about the experience through interaction with others. As Mittwede (2012) explains, the "goal of constructivism is to produce or re-construct 'better' knowledge, which in turn is subject to continual revision" (p. 27).

Study Participants

The target population for this research was selected because of membership in the student affairs division at Central Community College. The Student Affairs (Student Services) Division at CCC comprises two areas: Enrollment Management and Student Services. The Student Affairs Division has 87 full-time employees; 86% are female, 93%

are white, 6% are Hispanic/Latino, and 27 are supervisors. All 87 full-time employees were invited to participate in the study.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this research consisted of two parts. The instrument was designed utilizing Qualtrics software and included skip-logic, so all participants received the first thirty-six questions, and supervisors received the second part with additional questions. The first part used the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (PMBQ) in its entirety (27 Likert Scale Questions), five modified Likert Scale questions from the Synergistic Supervision Scale, and four demographic (multiple choice) questions for all participants. Employees and supervisors completed the first part of the survey to report their perceptions of their supervisors. The second part, which only supervisors received, consisted of 11 open and closed response questions.

Before launching the final survey, six peer colleagues were invited to complete the survey. Each completed the survey via mobile device and computer and provided feedback on the demographic questions, visual design, and if the survey functioned correctly. This feedback was used to adjust how questions and answers were displayed. The complete survey instrument is found in Appendix C.

The PMBQ was designed by Kinicki and Associates, Inc, who own the copyright for the questionnaire and provided permission to use it for research (see Appendix D). Kinicki et al. (2012) developed the PMBQ based on previous literature on performance management and organizational behavior to measure performance management behaviors. The validation and reliability of the PMBQ, which evaluates perceptions of supervisor's behaviors, was established "using evaluations of over 1,323 focal managers

from samples of 676 undergraduate students, 2,717 direct reports, 2,181 peers, and 348 direct supervisors from companies operating in diverse industries" (Kinicki et al., 2012, p. 34). According to Kinicki et al. (2012), the 27 items that make up the PMBQ have an internal consistency that ranges from .76 to .91, and the "composite construct reliabilities ranged from .70 for establishing/monitoring performance expectations to .84 for coaching" (p.14). The result shows that the PMBQ can analyze training needs and compare deficiencies or strengths to develop and deliver training around the performance management process.

Data Collection

The participants received an email invitation to the study, including clarification about voluntary participation and anonymous data collection (See Appendix E for the invitation template). The first question of the survey was used to collect consent from participants. If they did not provide consent, they did not receive the survey questions and were not included in the study. The researcher communicated to the participants using their CCC email addresses. Two reminder emails were sent to encourage the completion of the survey. Due to the anonymous data collection format, no follow-up contact could be made with participants who did not respond to the survey. See Table 5 for the timetable of the data collection and analysis.

Table 5

Timeline of data collection and analysis

Objective	Timeframe
IRB Approval received from CCC	April 28, 2021
IRB Approval received from ASU	May 11, 2021

Email invitation to participate in a research study	May 11, 2021
Reminder email about completing the survey	May 17, 2021
Reminder email about completing the survey	May 24, 2021
Survey closed at midnight for responses	May 25, 2021
Data analysis	July 3-August 28, 2021

Operational Definition of Variables

Demographic information was used to describe the population of individuals who took part in the study. The dependent variables included perceptions of supervisory practices, supervisory skills development, and development areas. Some of these independent control variables are gender, level of educational attainment, age, and years of experience (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Table 6 identifies the connection between the variables and the research questions and what items in the survey were used to collect the data.

Table 6

Relationship Between Research Questions and Survey Questions for Data Analysis

Research Question	Type of questions	Items on Survey
RQ 1. What are the perceptions of supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college?	Closed-response Likert Scale	Questions 1-32
RQ2. How did supervisors in student affairs at a community college develop their supervisory practice?	Open-response	Questions 41 and 42
RQ 3. What areas do supervisors in student affairs at a community college want to develop or strengthen?	Open-response	Question 48
RQ 4. What supervisory practices do supervisors in student affairs at a	Open-response	Questions 43

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community college identify as challenging?		
RQ 5. Does the length of experience as a supervisor or educational attainment impact self-identified areas to develop or strengthen?	Open-response and closed response for demographic information	Questions 48 - 50
RQ. 6 Does an employee's educational attainment influence perceptions of supervisory practices among mid-level student affairs employees at a community college?	Closed-response Likert Scale and closed response demographic information	Questions 1-38

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Out of the 87 participants invited to participate in the study, 60 completed the survey. Of those, two responses were eliminated because the participants were not full-time employees, and two participants did not provide consent. This resulted in 56 eligible participants for a 64.3% response rate. This pool of eligible participants included 27 supervisors, and 24 completed the survey, resulting in an 88.8% supervisor response rate. The supervisors completed the first part of the survey to report their perceptions of their supervisors. The second part of the survey addressed experiences as supervisors. Response bias was limited due to the homogeneous nature of the population and the 64.3% response rate (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Of the 87 full-time student affairs professionals invited to participate in the study 86% are female, 93% are white, 6% are Hispanic/Latino.

After collecting the survey responses, the data was uploaded to IBM SPSS Statistics software for data analysis.

Closed-response Questions

Due to the small number of participants, I used descriptive statistics to analyze the closed-response questions. Descriptive statistics were completed using SPSS for the

independent and dependent variables to identify the mean, standard deviation, and range of scores. The independent variables included employee demographic information (age, gender, education) and supervisor demographic information (age, gender, education, years of experience as a supervisor). The dependent variables included: (a) perceptions of supervisory practices, (b) development of supervisory practices, (c) supervisor-identified areas to develop or improve, and (d) areas of supervision that supervisors find challenging.

The closed-response Likert Scale questions were grouped into the following subscales: (a) process of goal setting (questions 1-5), (b) communication (questions 6-9), (c) feedback (questions 10-14), (d) coaching (questions 15-19), (e) providing consequences (questions 20-22), (f) establishing/monitoring performance expectations (questions 23-27), (g) synergistic supervision skills not addressed in PMBQ (questions 28-32). Subscales a-g were grouped based on the design of the PMBQ, and theme g included questions from the synergistic supervision scale not addressed in the PMBQ.

The use of a Likert Scale, not just Likert Scale questions, allowed for analysis using interval data. As referenced in Harpe's (2015) article *How to Analyze Likert and Other Rating Scale Data*:

> 'When aggregated rating scales like Likert scales are developed, the initial psychometric evaluation examines the performance of those items as a group. When these aggregated scales are used in a study, they must be analyzed as a group. If the scale contains validated subscales, then these may be examined separately since the development of the scale supported the presence of those subscales' (2015, p. 841).

Cronbach's Alphas was used to measure the internal consistency of the Likert Scale subscales and the overall scale to measure how the subscale questions are interrelated.

Bivariate Correlation is a "statistical technique that is used to determine the existence of relationships between two different variables" (Allen, 2017, Simple Bivariate Correlation; Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods). This statistical technique was used to identify if a relationship existed between age or education and the instrument subscales. Bivariate correlation does not identify causations, but if and at what rate the presence of one variable may impact another.

Open-response Questions

Open-response questions were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and better understand the participants' perspectives (Saldaña, 2016, Swart, 2019). Only supervisors received the open-response questions to provide insight about their experiences as a supervisor. Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis was used to identify themes and patterns relevant to the study's research questions. The six phases consist of becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up (Braun & Clark, 2006).

<center>**Ethical Standards**</center>

The researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). The program served as an educational platform to educate future researchers about ethical considerations of research, including informing potential participants about the study and their rights, ensuring the research participants' integrity, and data collection.

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Each participant received an email explaining the voluntary nature of the study and provided consent to participate in the research before receiving the survey.

Summary

This study explored the perceived practices, experiences, and needs of student affairs supervisors at Central Community College. This study examined how student affairs supervisors utilize best practices outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision theories, which aim to assist employees' development and growth. This research and its implications are essential to the field of student affairs and supervision training. This chapter included an overview of the research paradigms, data collection, and analysis procedures. Chapter four describes the study findings. Chapter five will further discuss the results, implications for practice, limitations of the study, and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented information on the study's design and

methodology. This chapter presents the data analysis of a survey conducted in May 2021

that examined the perceptions of supervisory skills and behaviors among student affairs

professionals at a community college. It is important to note this research was conducted

to explore perceptions and did not include a treatment or innovation by the researcher

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The survey design for this research utilized quantitative

data collection to explore student affairs employees' perceptions of their direct

supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and

behaviors. Regardless of their job title or responsibilities, all participants completed the

first part of the survey: a total of 32 questions focused on participants' perceptions of their

supervisor's supervision skills and behaviors and included four demographic questions.

The second part of the survey was only available to supervisors and consisted of

qualitative data collection about their experience as a supervisor. These questions were of

a mix of open and closed response questions.

This chapter includes four main sections that provide detailed results from the

survey. The first section highlights the data collection and response rates presented in

Chapter 3. The second section provides demographic information of the survey

participants. The third section includes information on the reliability of the scales that

were used in this survey. The final section includes data analysis and is organized by

research question.

Data Collection and Response Rate

Data for this study were collected through a two-part survey. In the first part of the survey, employees and supervisors within student affairs answered questions about their perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. The first part of the survey consisted of the validated Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire (PMBQ) in its entirety (27 Likert Scale questions) and five modified Likert Scale questions from the validated Synergistic Supervision Scale and four demographic (multiple choice) questions.

The online survey utilized skip logic to allow only supervisors to receive eleven additional questions about their experiences as a supervisor. Three of the questions were closed-response, and eight were open-response questions. Appendix C contains the instructions and the questions provided to the participants.

Eighty-seven participants were invited to participate in the study; 60 participants completed the survey, resulting in a 68.9% response rate. However, two responses were eliminated because the participants were not full-time employees, and two more because the participants did not provide consent, which resulted in 56 eligible participants for a 64.3% response rate. Twenty-seven of those invited to participate were supervisors. Of the 27 supervisors, 24 completed the survey, resulting in an 88.8% supervisor response rate. The researcher examined the data to ensure that all cases had values and items were coded correctly. The final count of usable surveys was 56, and the final response rate was 64.3%.

The higher-than-expected response rate to the survey could be attributed to a variety of factors. The use of an online Qualtrics survey allowed participants to access and complete the survey efficiently. Another factor may have been the time of year the

survey invitation was sent. The invitation, along with the survey, was sent at a time when participants would have time to complete the survey. Participants received the invitation and survey after spring graduation and before Registration Days and New Student Orientations were held because student affairs employees were involved in these events. Additionally, the researcher sent two reminder emails encouraging the completion of the survey.

Demographics

The following demographic information was collected from the first part of the survey, which employees and supervisors received to discover their perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. Regarding gender, the majority (N=48; 85.7%) of the 56 study participants indicated they were female; seven (12.5%) participants indicated male; one (1.79%) participant did not indicate their gender.

Of the 56 study participants, 50 (89.3%) indicated they were white, four (7.1%) participants indicated they were Hispanic/Latino, two (3.6%) participants did not provide their ethnicity. The demographics of the gender and ethnicities of the participants are representative of the Central Community College employee population.

Regarding education, a slight majority (N=23; 42.6%) of the 56 study participants indicated they had a master's degree, and nearly the same number (N=22; 40.7%) of the participants had a bachelor's degree, seven (13%) indicated they had an associate's degree, and two (3.6%) participants indicated they have a doctoral degree, and two (3.6%) did not answer the question. Table 7 provides the educational information of the participants.

Table 7

Highest Degree Obtained by Participants Who Completed the First Part of the Survey (Q 1-38)

	N	**%**
Associate's	7	12.5%
Bachelor's	22	39.3%
Master's	23	41.1%
Doctoral	2	3.6%
Missing	2	3.6%

The final demographic question from the first part of the survey asked participants to indicate their age. The majority (N=11; 19.6%) of the 56 study participants indicated they were 35-39 years old. Table 8 provides additional details regarding the age of participants.

Table 8

Age of Participants Who Completed the First Part of the Survey (Q 1-38

	N	**%**
25-29	3	5.4%
30-34	8	14.3%
35-39	11	19.6%
40-44	5	8.9%
45-49	3	5.4%
50-54	9	16.1%
55-59	10	17.9%
60-64	4	7.1%
65 or older	2	3.6%
Missing	1	1.8%

Additional demographic information was collected in the second part of the survey that only supervisors received. Out of the 56 study participants, 42.8% (N=24)

indicated they supervise employees, leaving 32 (57.1%) to indicate they do not supervise employees. Regarding education, a majority of supervisors (N=14; 58.3%) indicated they have a master's degree. An additional 29.2% (N=7) indicated their highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. Information regarding supervisors' highest degree can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

Supervisors Highest Degree Who Completed the Second Part of the Survey (Q40-50)

	N	%
Associate's	1	4.2%
Bachelor's	7	29.2%
Master's	14	58.3%
Doctoral	2	8.3%

When examining the gender of supervisor participants in the study, a majority (N=20; 83.3%) indicated they were female, and 16.7% (N=4) participants indicated male. Twenty-three (95.8%) of supervisors participating in the study indicated they are white; one (4.2%) did not respond to the question. Regarding the age of supervisors, 45.8% (N=11) indicated they were between 50-59 years old. Information regarding the age of supervisors can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Supervisors Age

	N	%
30-34	2	8.3%
35-39	4	16.7%
40-44	2	8.3%
45-49	2	8.3%
50-54	5	20.8%
55-59	6	25.0%
60-64	2	8.3%

	N	%
65 or older	1	4.2%

The final two demographic questions supervisors received was about years of experience as a supervisor. Regarding the length of time a participant had been a supervisor at Central Community College, the majority (N=9; 37.5%) indicated 2-7 years. Table 11 provides additional details about the supervisor's length of supervision at CCC.

Table 11

Years Participants have been a Supervisor at CCC

	N	%
0-1	2	8.3%
2-3	3	12.5%
4-5	3	12.5%
6-7	3	12.5%
8-9	1	4.2%
10-11	2	8.3%
12 or more	10	41.7%

The final demographic question asked to participants who indicated they were supervisors was how many years they were a supervisor outside of CCC. Fifty percent of supervisors (N=12) indicated they had three or fewer years of experience as a supervisor outside of CCC. While 16.7% (N=4) indicated, they had 13 or more years of experience as a supervisor outside of CCC. Table 12 provides additional details regarding years of experience as a supervisor outside of CCC.

Table 12

Years Participants Worked as a Supervisor Outside of CCC?

Years	N	%
0-3	12	50.0%
4-6	3	12.5%

7-9	3	12.5%
10-12	2	8.3%
13 or more	4	16.7%

Scale Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure used to measure the internal consistency and reliability of scales and surveys and ranges between 0 and 1. The Sage Encyclopedia of Survey Research (2008) noted that the greater the alpha value, the more the scale is "coherent and thus reliable." Survey items with an alpha of 70% or above indicate that variance is shared among the survey items and can be scaled together (Lavrakas, 2008). The Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire developed by Kinicki et al. (2012) has an internal consistency that ranges from .76 to .91, and the "composite construct reliabilities ranged from .70 for establishing/monitoring performance expectations to .84 for coaching" (p.14). Internal consistency and composite construct reliability are measurements used to assess the correlations between multiple items to ensure they measure the same concept. For example, the internal consistency and composite construct reliabilities are used to ensure that the five questions within the coaching theme measure coaching behaviors when assessed together. A score of .60 or higher indicates that the items are measuring the same concept. The five Synergistic Supervision Scale questions have an alpha coefficient of .89. The alpha coefficient is a test used to "measure the internal consistency of a scale or test; it is expressed as a number between 0 and 1" (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 53).

The 27 items from the PMBQ and the five SSS items asked participants, regardless of their job title or responsibilities, to rate their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision behaviors. The participants rated

the frequency of the 32 behaviors associated with performance management and

synergistic supervision using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = rarely/never, 2 = once in a

while, 3= sometimes, 4= fairly often, 5 =very frequently/always). When combined, the 27

PMBQ items and the 5 SSS items have an alpha coefficient of .97. Table 13 provides the

descriptive statistics for the survey instrument.

Table 13
Descriptive Statistics for Survey Instrument

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ensures that performance goals are linked to the strategic or operational goals of the company	55	3.91	1.143
Participatively sets goals	56	3.66	1.083
Assists others in setting specific and measurable performance objectives	56	3.45	1.174
Assists others in developing action plans that support performance goals	56	3.43	1.219
Encourages others to set challenging yet attainable goals	56	3.55	1.205
Has a communication style that causes others to become defensive.*	56	4.21	1.202
Is a good listener	55	4.31	.979
Is approachable and available to talk with others	56	4.32	1.046
Provides more positive than negative feedback	55	4.33	.963
Gives others timely feedback about their performance	56	3.93	1.042
Gives others specific feedback about what is good and bad about performance	56	3.57	1.173
Assists others in their career planning	55	2.85	1.297
Gives honest feedback	56	4.18	1.064
Explains how someone's behavior affects him/her and the work group when providing feedback	56	3.30	1.205
Shows others how to complete difficult assignments and tasks	56	3.45	1.143
Provides the resources needed to get the job done	56	4.27	.963
Helps identify solutions to overcome performance roadblocks	56	3.96	1.144
Helps people to develop their skills	56	3.84	1.108
Provides direction when it is needed	56	4.27	1.000
Gives special recognition for exceptional performance	55	3.42	1.449
Rewards good performance	56	3.52	1.236
Links recognition and/or rewards to performance	55	3.22	1.301
Checks work for accuracy and/or quality	56	3.66	1.066
Keeps people informed about changes, deadlines, or problems	56	4.18	.974

Communicates expectations relating to quality	56	4.00	.991
Monitors his/her own work performance	56	4.09	1.014
Prioritizes tasks and goals	56	4.14	1.034
Shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement	56	3.52	1.335
Takes negative evaluations of programs or feedback and uses them to make improvements.	56	3.77	1.044
Is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses	56	4.04	1.095
Assists me with developing yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses and blind spots.	56	3.34	1.468
Expects staff to present and advocate different points of views.	56	3.68	1.390

Note* a negatively worded question that required the response to be reversed

The high alpha coefficient indicates the instrument and the questions are consistent and reliable. The mean for each question represents the mathematical average of all the responses for the question. Standard deviation measures the dispersion of the data relevant to the mean. For example, in Table 13, the statement "Is a good listener" the mean is 4.31 on a 5-point scale, indicating that the average is above 4 on a scale of 1-5. The standard deviation for the same question is .979, indicating that the responses are statistically dispersed close to the mean of 4.31.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the qualitative and quantitative results are presented jointly when appropriate for each research question.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college?

The information was obtained by examining the survey instrument's scores and the mean score for the 32 behaviors on the scale (Table 13). Overall, 31 behaviors scored well and were perceived to be practiced at meaningful levels. Thirty of the behaviors

gathered mean scores above 3.0 (sometimes), with twelve having a mean score above 3.5. Twelve behaviors had a mean score above 4.0 (fairly often).

The overall mean score for the survey instrument was 121.36, which equates to an average behavior score of 3.79. The median has an average score of 4. The median is found by arranging the data points from smallest to largest; the median is in the middle. The mode score was 5, which is the most frequent response to the questions. After analyzing the mean information and data on central tendency, it appears that most survey participants perceive their supervisors within student affairs at Central Community College sometimes to fairly often practicing behaviors associated with Performance Management and Synergistic Supervision.

Behaviors perceived to be practiced most frequently included: has a communication style that causes others to become defensive (mean = 4.21), is a good listener (mean =4.31, is approachable, and available to talk with others (mean = 4.32) and provides more positive than negative feedback (mean = 4. 33). These four behaviors are grouped under Communication on the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire. Table 14 provides more information on the descriptive statistics for the subscales of the survey instrument.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Subscales

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Process of goal setting	3.63	1.121
Communication	4.33	.972
Feedback	3.68	1.130
Coaching	4.07	1.076
Providing consequences	3.34	1.297
Establishing/monitoring performance expectations	4.13	0.955
Synergistic Supervision	3.68	1.281

Behaviors that were perceived to be practiced least frequently included: assists others in their career planning (mean = 2.85), links recognition and/or rewards to performance (mean = 3.22), explains how someone's behavior affects him/her and the work group when providing feedback (mean 3.30), and assists me with developing yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses and blind spots (mean = 3.34).

Analysis of the descriptive statistics of behaviors of supervisors as perceived by employees within student affairs indicates overall supervisors are utilizing performance management and synergistic supervision behaviors. Communication, coaching, and establishing/monitoring performance expectations are the most robust behaviors employees perceive supervisors to use fairly often. However, providing consequences, feedback, and the process of goal setting are areas within performance management and synergistic supervision that could be further developed.

RQ2. How did supervisors in student affairs at a community college develop their supervisory practice?

The information was obtained by completing thematic coding on two open-ended questions that explored how supervisors developed their supervisory practices and the most significant influence on their supervisory skills development. Three codes emerged by analyzing the question "Briefly describe how you developed your supervisory skills": on the job, through education, and learned by watching other supervisors. The codes were identified using thematic coding that represented ideas expressed by the participants.

Codes "on the job" and "experiences with supervisors" were coded separately based on the participants' answers.

Out of the 21 responses to the questions, overwhelmingly most supervisors (N = 11) indicated that they developed their supervisory skills by watching other supervisors. Supervisors referenced watching other supervisors. One participant shared "I have had a good amount of great supervisors in the past, so I take some of their techniques and apply them to my supervisory techniques", and another shared "Through being supervised, I have learned from good and bad supervisors on the type of supervisor I want to be. I have taken courses on how to supervisor and on how to work with people".

Additionally, supervisors (N = 8) expressed they learned while on the job and/or through education. Participants who mentioned learning on the job provided answers that indicated they learned through practice. One participant stated, "I learn what works for me and what doesn't by my experiences" and another participant expressed the following "I developed my skills through my former position as X and through previous positions I held". Table 15 provided the code themes for how supervisors developed their supervisory skills.

Table 15

Codes for Themes of How Supervisors Developed Their Supervisory Practice

Code	Exemplifying quotes
Experiences with *Supervisors*	"I have had a good amount of great supervisors in the past, so I take some of their techniques and apply them to my supervisory techniques." "Through being supervised, I have learned from good and bad supervisors on the type of supervisor I want to be. I have taken courses on how to supervisor and on how to work with people".

	"I watched former supervisors over the years sugar coat things with their staff and made no strides to help their staff improve or frankly just do the job they were hired to do".
	"Watching other leaders at previous jobs and at CCC".
	"Practice and input from my supervisors".
	"Learning from previous supervisors what to do/what not to do."
On the job	"Watching what does and doesn't work with a broad range of employees."
	"Other institutions have spent time and energy developing me. I've really been given zero development opportunities here".
	"I learn what works for me and what doesn't by my experiences."
	"Practice and input from my supervisors."
	"I developed my supervisory skills through my education and practice".
	"On the job"
	"I developed my skills through my former position as X and through previous positions I held. It's an ongoing process in which I have not perfected".
Education	"Completed Master's program in School Counseling during my time as a supervisor, and that helped build supervisory skills as much as anything."
	"I am continually developing supervisory skills. I develop my skills by taking part in trainings that are offered, by evaluating myself based on others' responses to me, by comparing myself to other supervisors, and by seeking out my own trainings as I am able".

	"My grad program focused on it! I learned a lot about different styles of supervision while in grad school and really reflected on it and how I liked to be supervised, and how I wanted to be as a supervisor. I connected early on with synergistic supervision and still try to implement some of those practices/theories today".
Communication and Feedback	"Always advocated for open and honest communication".
	"Have an open door policy to discuss what the employee needs/wants to discuss. I'm human and I can make mistakes...no one is perfect. Honesty is simpler and less exhausting than making up excuses. I won't ask anyone to do anything that I wouldn't do myself".

Two different codes emerged by analyzing the questions "Please describe what you believe is the greatest influence in your supervisory skill development": experience with supervisors and communication/feedback. Out of the twenty responses, eight supervisors indicated experience with supervisors was the most significant influence.

Participants who indicated experiences with supervisors expressed that former supervisors influenced their skill development. One participant shared that "Having had a couple of what I would consider good supervisors made a difference – an example of what to do. But I've also had a bad supervisor experience, and I learned a lot from that too," and another participant shared "My greatest influence may have been through prior supervisors. I did not want to mimic those who I felt were bad supervisors". Participants who indicated that communication and feedback were the greatest influence expressed that communication plays a role in their development. One participant expressed the following "My greatest strength/influence is my ability to listen and really hear my staff. I provide them with feedback and assist them in their growth. I can have hard conversations, and I use them to help grow and develop my staff. I am empathetic". Table

16 provides the coded themes for what supervisors believe to be the most significant influence in their supervisory skill development.

Table 16

Codes for Themes of What Supervisors Believe is the Greatest Influence in Their

Supervisory Skill Development

Code	Exemplifying quotes
Experiences with Supervisors	"Having had a couple of what I would consider good supervisors made a difference – an example of what to do. But I've also had a bad supervisor experience, and I learned a lot from that too!" "My own experience with supervisors and feedback from employees." "My greatest influence may have been through prior supervisors. I did not want to mimic those who I felt were bad supervisors." "I have had several different supervisors in my time at CCC. I keep my experiences with me as a reminder of how I want to supervise others". "Caring supervisors willing to offer suggestions". "Good supervisory examples to follow" "Being led by great leaders. Trying to use their skills in my own work".
Communication and Feedback	"My greatest strength/influence is my ability to listen and really hear my staff. I provide them with feedback and assist them in their growth. I can have hard conversations and I use them to help grow and develop my staff. I am empathetic." "Communication…lots and lots of communication". "Expectation of staff to present and advocate different viewpoints".

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"Open and honest feedback from bottom up and top down".

"Listening, Conflict resolution and communication."

Upon comparing and interpreting all of the codes from the qualitative data sources, the data shows most supervisors learned through experiences with other supervisors. While it is a different code, experience with a supervisor could also be included with learning on the job. The supervisors indicated that they learned by watching others supervise and from their previous supervisors. While several supervisors mentioned education, only one specifically mentioned supervisor training within education. Overall, the analysis aligns with previous research on student affairs supervisors, which indicates that the majority have little to no formal supervisor training (Elrod et al., 2019; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Rosser, 2004)

RQ 3. What areas do supervisors in student affairs at a community college want to develop or strengthen?

The information was obtained by completing thematic coding on question 48; supervisors spoke specifically about what areas of supervision they want to improve. Twenty supervisors provided answers to this question. For the most part, supervisors desire to improve their communication skills. The following themes emerged: communication skills (N=7) and providing feedback/difficult conversations (N=6).

Thematic coding for this question was guided by some supervisors mentioning communication and other supervisors specifically stating feedback, coaching, and difficult conversations. Supervisors who indicated communication skills needed to be developed shared the following: "Communicating effectively to employees with varies

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skill sets and responsibilities that also have a wide range of personalities and communication styles" and "Keeping everyone on the same page and supporting each other for the department goals." Others only stated communication.

The participants who expressed a desire to develop their feedback and difficult conversation skills also indicated they wanted to address employee performance. For instance, one participant shared the following "Blending personalities to bring out their strengths while addressing and correcting hindrances to team progress." That quote combines communication and providing feedback. Another participant shared, "When it's time for more difficult conversations, even though I am a good communicator, getting the motivation to just do it is hard." Even with communication skills and providing feedback/difficult conversation, there are other areas participants want to develop.

Supervisors indicated a desire to develop and/or strengthen the following: find a work-life balance (N=1), support the mental health of employees (N=1), build team rapport (N=1), their ability to set boundaries (saying no) (N=2) and motivate employees (N=2). The participants shared the following about setting boundaries "setting more professional boundaries" and "ability to say no when needed to requests that aren't best for the department." Participants who expressed the desire to motivate employees, specifically wanted to be able to "pull stalled or stagnant employees out of their current position to become more engaged and passionate about their position" and "motivating supervisees to do their best." If follow-up questions could have been asked, the researcher believes the motivation and setting boundaries responses may have been coded under either communication skills or providing feedback/difficult conversations. While

these codes are used infrequently, they provide additional insight into supervisors'

experiences within student affairs at community colleges.

Table 17

Codes for Themes of What Supervisors View as the Most Significant Challenge of

Supervising Full-time Employees

Code	Exemplifying quotes
Communication Skills	"Communicating effectively to employees with various skill sets and responsibilities that also have a wide range of personalities and communication styles."
	"Keeping everyone on the same page and supporting each other for the department goals."
	"Again...communication is big. We can always strengthen communication skills".
	"Communication skills, no matter how great, can always get better. Being direct is something I am always making a conscious effort to be better at".
Providing Feedback/Difficult Conversations	"Blending personalities to bring out their strengths while addressing and correcting hindrances to team progress."
	"When it's time for more difficult conversations, even though I am a good communicator getting the motivation to just do it is hard."
	"Having the time to fully evaluate and provide feedback to the employees I supervise."
	"giving employees feedback"
	"I'd like to gain more confidence in giving difficult feedback."

These areas of development align with Cooper and Saunders as cited in Mather et

al. (2009) and Visagie et al. (2011) that supervisors need to be able to build effective

working teams through communication, including interpersonal and intergroup communication to supervise effectively. Supervisors within student affairs at Central Community College understand the value of these skills but need assistance developing them. These findings align with Wallin (2006), who found participants expressed concerns about "developing teams, motivating and supporting employees, and resolving conflict" (p. 515).

RQ 4. What supervisory practices do supervisors in student affairs at a community college identify as challenging?

The information was obtained by completing thematic coding on question 43, where supervisors spoke specifically about what areas they find challenging. Twenty-one supervisors provided answers to this question. Communication (N=7) was the most frequently identified code and aligns with supervisors' previous answers. The second most commonly identified themes were employee performance/attitudes (N=4) and building rapport (N=4). They also identified the following as challenges: growing employees (N=3) and physical separation from employees (N=3). Table 18 provides examples of the codes and quotes from the participants in response to the question "What do you view as the most significant challenge of supervising full-time employees."

Table 18

What Supervisors Perceive as the Most Significant Challenge Supervising Full-time Employees

Code	Exemplifying quotes
Communication	"Keeping everyone on the same page and supporting each other for the department goals."

	"Communicating effectively to employees with various skill sets and responsibilities that also have a wide range of personalities and communication styles."
	"When it's time for more difficult conversations, even though I am a good communicator getting the motivation to just do it is hard."
	"Knowing how to communicate with each different person because they all have different communication ways. I always try and strive for supporting yet challenging each of them."
Build Rapport	"Balance of the amount of time staff desire to build a relationship/connection weekly to monthly."
	"Learning to give enough individual attention, but also balancing it with the overall team."
Employee Performance/Attitude	"My most significant challenge has been managing an employee with a lot of outside "noises" affecting attendance and performance at work. The struggle was learning what I can and can't do to address these issues and try to improve the performance of the employee."
	"Blending personalities to bring out their strengths while addressing and correcting hindrances to team progress."

RQ 5. Does the length of experience as a supervisor or educational attainment impact self-identified areas to develop or strengthen?

The information was obtained by utilizing the thematic coding from questions 48 and the closed response demographic information from questions 49 and 50. Twenty supervisors responded to question 48-50. The participants answered two questions that collected demographic information using a range of years to indicate their years as a supervisor at CCC and the years they were a supervisor outside of CCC. The participants were separated into groups: those with more than 12 years of combined supervisors

experience (N=11) and those with 11 or fewer years of experience (N=9). Four thematic codes for areas of development were present in both groups: communication skills, feedback/difficult conversations, setting boundaries, and time management.

Participants with eleven or fewer years of supervisory experience identified communication skills (N=2) and feedback/difficult conversations (N=2) as areas they wanted to improve. One participant expressed they wanted to improve "Communication skills, no matter how great, can always get better" and another indicated, "I'd like to gain more confidence in giving difficult feedback." The focus on communication and feedback aligns with communication literature which indicates that supervisors do not feel prepared to have challenging conversations.

Like less experienced supervisors, supervisors with more than 12 years of experience identified communication skills (N=5) and feedback/difficult conversations (N=3) needing improvement. The research indicates supervisors with 12 or more years of experience identify the importance of communication, stating, "I think communication is always something I can improve." Additionally, more seasoned supervisors want to improve their feedback/difficult conversations. These supervisors expressed a need to improve "handling difficult conversations" and "giving employees feedback," indicating that communication skills, including feedback/difficult conversations, are areas of development by supervisors with all years of experience.

After completing the data analysis and finding that supervisors' years of experience did not impact their desire to improve communication and feedback/difficult conversations, the researcher decided to investigate if educational attainment was a

factor. The analysis identified that over 50% of the participants (N=6) had a master's degree, regardless of their years of experience.

Specifically, the data analysis indicates that supervisors (N=8) with 11 or fewer years of experience have a master's or doctoral degree. Six supervisors with 12 or more years of experience had a master's or doctoral degree. The finding shows that educational attainment is not correlated to areas supervisors identified as needing strengthening or developing.

RQ. 6 Does an employee's education attainment influence perceptions of supervisory practices among mid-level student affairs employees at a community college?

Bivariate Correlation was used to explore the relationship between an employee's education and how they perceived their supervisor's use of supervision behaviors. Correlation examines the relationship between two variables to indicate "how the value of one variable change when the value of another variable change" (Nishishiba et al., 2014, p. 225). The correlation coefficient is "used as a numerical index to represent the relationship between two variables" (Nishishiba et al., 2014, p. 225). The correlation coefficient can be found utilizing Pearson, which produces an (r) value or using Spearman Correlation. For this analysis, Pearson and Spearman were used to measure the correlation as a way to verify findings and ensure consistency. The correlation coefficient falls between -1 and + 1, and the relationship between two variables can be strong or weak (Nishishiba et al., 2014).

As indicated in Table 19, six subscales of supervisory behaviors have no relationship with an employee's education. The feedback behavior subscale has a weak

negative relationship with an employee's education, indicating that the other variable decreases when one variable increases. Based on the results, employees' education does not seem to influence how they perceive their supervisors' use of supervision behaviors.

Table 19

Influence of Education on Perceptions of Supervisors Use of Supervision Behaviors

Supervision Behavior Subscales	Pearson's R Value	Spearman Correlation Value
Process of Goal Setting	-.144	-.114
Communication	-.113	-.063
Feedback	-.266	-.215
Coaching	-.162	-.082
Providing Consequences	-.107	-.079
Establishing/monitoring performance expectations	-.092	.001
Synergistic Supervision	-.090	-.102

N=54

Table 20

Influence of Age on Perceptions of Supervisors Use of Supervision Behaviors

Supervision Behavior Subscales	Pearson's R Value	Spearman Correlation Value
Process of Goal Setting	.118	.073
Communication	.009	.068
Feedback	.033	.012
Coaching	-.015	-.028
Providing Consequences	.115	.098
Establishing/monitoring performance expectations	.057	.081

Synergistic Supervision	.011	-.012

N=55

As indicated in Table 20, the seven supervisory behaviors have no relationship with an employee's age. Coaching behavior has a slightly negative relationship with an employee's age and indicates no association. The slightly negative relationship indicates that as employees' age increases, perceived coaching behaviors decreases. Based on the results, employees' age does not seem to influence how they perceive their supervisors' use of supervision behaviors.

Summary

The results and findings of this study indicate that supervisors in student affairs developed their supervisory practice based on their experiences with other supervisors while on the job or through trial and error or their educational programs. The participants in this study credited experiences with other supervisors and feedback and coaching from others as the primary way they developed their supervisory skills. Additionally, supervisors expressed a belief that communication, providing feedback/difficult conversations, and employee performance/attitudes are their biggest challenges. The experiences of these supervisors aligns with supervisory literature focused on supervision practices within student affairs. Even though supervisors expressed the need to develop their communication skills, employees perceived that their supervisors had a high level of communication skills. This difference between the perception of employees and supervisors may be the result of not clearly defining the differences between communication skills, feedback, and coaching. However, it is essential to acknowledge that employees perceived their supervisors practicing behaviors aligned with best

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practices outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision; and the data analysis indicates there is room for improvement.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

This research aimed to explore current supervisory practices at Central Community College (CCC) by investigating student affairs employees' perceptions of direct supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. Based on survey research that utilized open and closed-ended questions, it can be concluded that student affairs supervisors at CCC are using some of the best practices and behaviors outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision theories and research. The results indicate student affairs supervisors at CCC desire to improve their communication skills, feedback, and difficult conversation skills. Moreover, perceptions of supervisors are not correlated with employees' educational achievements but are slightly correlated (negatively) with employees' age.

Review

The content presented throughout the first four chapters of this study supports the need to intentionally develop and train supervisors within student affairs.

Chapter 1. The first chapter introduced the study, including a brief background of student affairs and supervisors within student affairs, my leadership role within Central Community College, the statement of the problem, and the study's nature. The ideas presented in this chapter support current literature that supervisors within student affair departments typically do not receive formal supervisory training to encourage supervisor specific skills and behaviors (Elrod et al., 2019; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Rosser, 2004).

Chapter 2. This chapter examined the role of student affairs and a brief history of community colleges. Supervision within student affairs was explained, including effective supervision, the role of communication in supervision, performance management, and synergistic supervision theories were explained using relevant literature. The study's theoretical framework of social constructivism was introduced and justified for the theoretical framework. The research spotlighted in this chapter further validated the importance of effective supervision, including best practices outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision theories.

Chapter 3. This chapter included an overview of the methodology for this survey research design, including procedures used for data collection and its eventual analysis. The study's context was explained and the researcher's dual role as a CCC administrator and researcher. Fifty-six student affairs employees at Central Community College voluntarily participated in this study by completing an online survey. The survey explored the perceived practices, experiences, and needs of student affairs supervisors at CCC. The study consisted of two parts. Employees, including supervisors, completed the first part that consisted of 32 survey questions to explore their perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors. The second part was completed only by supervisors using open and closed-ended survey questions to identify their experiences as supervisors and areas they want to improve.

Chapter 4. This chapter revealed the survey results from the open and closed-response questions. Each of the six research questions were addressed by discussing the

relevant data that addressed each question. The results indicate employees sometimes perceived their supervisors used performance management and synergistic behaviors. The data suggests supervisors learned how to supervise by experiences with supervisors, on the job through trial and error, and through attaining higher education degrees. The study demonstrates supervisors want to improve their communication skills, including providing feedback and having difficult conversations. This data is analyzed further in the following sections, including interpretations of the data and implications for practice.

Summary of the Findings

The survey results and analysis of the survey questions provide insight into employees' and supervisors' experiences within the student affairs division at Central Community College, and this section offers a summary of the findings. The summary is organized around the research questions and follow a similar format to Chapter 4.

RQ1. What are the perceptions of supervisory practices among student affairs employees at a community college?

The survey included the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire, questions from the Synergistic Supervision Scale, and demographic questions. The closed-ended survey questions provided statistical insight into the employees' experiences with their direct supervisors. The analysis of these survey questions indicated employees perceived their supervisor sometimes to fairly often exhibited behaviors that align with best practices outlined in performance management and synergist supervision. The results of this study do not fit within existing research because there are no published research utilizing performance management and the PMBQ within the field of student affairs.

Therefore, this research introduces the study of performance management behaviors within student affairs. The results also indicate employees perceive their direct supervisors can improve their goal-setting, feedback, providing consequences, and synergistic supervision behaviors. This research creates a foundation for future research within student affairs and performance management behaviors.

RQ2. How did supervisors in student affairs at a community college develop their supervisory practice?

The analysis of the open-ended survey questions that correspond with this question suggests that supervisors learned how to supervise based on their experiences with other supervisors, on the job through trial and error, and through their higher education degrees. The findings expand and align with the limited research that focuses on how student affairs supervisors develop their supervisor skills and behaviors. Contrary to the literature, one participant indicated that their master's program focused on learning supervision theories and skills (Watson et al., 2019). Still, the findings of this study indicate that supervisors often learn to supervise by chance and are not intentionally developed by their employer or academic program. These results build on existing research and supports the need for institutions or the student affairs division to develop and train supervisors.

RQ3. What areas do supervisors in student affairs at a community college want to develop or strengthen?

The study demonstrates supervisors desired to improve their communication skills, especially providing feedback and difficult conversations. The results provide a

clearer understanding of existing research and the need to intentionally train supervisors (Staller, 2014; Watson et al., 2019). The results suggest supervisors might not be prepared to address employee performance, provide feedback, or have difficult conversations with employees. This finding aligns with existing research that encourages institutions and organizations to intentionally train supervisors, so they may encourage employee growth by providing feedback and having difficulty conversations (Watson et al., 2019).

RQ4. What supervisory practices do supervisors in student affairs at a community college identify as challenging?

The results suggest supervisors struggle with having difficult conversations, providing feedback, and balancing their employees' needs and communication styles. These results support existing research by Bradley and Campbell (2016), Farrel (2015), and Levine et al. (2020). The data analysis of this question provides new insight to existing research of supervisors within student affairs and provides areas they to improve including communication skills, providing feedback and coaching.

RQ5. Does the length of experience as a supervisor or educational attainment impact self-identified areas to develop or strengthen?

Contrary to the researcher's expectations, supervisors' experience or educational attainment does not influence the skills and behaviors they want to improve or strengthen. The results indicate supervisors with any number of years of supervisory experience want to improve their communication skills, especially in providing feedback and having difficult conversations. Based on the literature review for this dissertation, it appears that

this is the first study that explored student affairs supervisors' length of experience and areas they want to develop and strengthen. These findings suggest a that student affairs supervisors with various years of experience all identify the need to improve their communication skills, provide feedback, and have difficult conversations. This research and findings provide a foundation for future research since it is the first study to explore supervisor's length of experience and areas for improvement.

RQ6. Does employees' educational attainment or age influence their perceptions of supervisory practices among mid-level student affairs employees at a community college?

The results indicate that employees' perceptions of their supervisors' use of performance management and synergistic supervision skills and behaviors are not correlated with their educational attainment. However, there is slight negative correlation between employees' age and the perception of their supervisor exhibiting coaching behaviors. The slightly negative correlation indicates that when employees age increases, the perception of coaching behaviors decreases. This is the first study that the researcher is aware of that explored performance management within the student affairs field; as a result, future research can expand on this study's findings.

<div align="center">

Implications

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This research aimed to explore the current practices of supervisors within student affairs at CCC with the intention to identify what skills and behaviors student affairs supervisors are perceived to use frequently and to identify areas for improvement. Previous research by Tull (2006) focused on synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, and

the intention of new professionals in student affairs to leave the field. Shupp and Arminio (2012) researched the impact of synergistic supervision and retaining entry-level student affairs professionals. Adams-Manning (2019) researched the impacts of synergist supervision and student affairs employees' job satisfaction. While previous research of supervisor practices within student affairs has focused on synergistic supervision, specifically job satisfaction and retaining entry-level professionals within the field of student affairs, this research studied performance management behaviors, as well as synergistic supervision within student affairs. This study is the first to the researcher's knowledge to utilize the Performance Management Behavior Questionnaire within student affairs; therefore, it creates a framework for future research about the perceptions of supervisors' use of performance management skills and behaviors.

This research is significant to the field of research because it expands the literature and research for supervisors within student affairs, specifically, how each developed their supervisory skills and behaviors. Not only does this research add to the pool of understanding of supervisors in student affairs, but also to supervisors in higher education. The results of this study confirm existing research about supervisors in student affairs' lack of intentional skill development through training and the need to provide training to cultivate supervisor best practices. Watson et al. (2018) encouraged higher education institutions to intentionally develop middle managers, which is applicable to student affairs. Sermersheim and Keim's (2005) research echoes this study's findings and outlines the skills that supervisors in higher education need to possess and the need for professional development to encourage skill development. Additionally, Mather et al.'s (2009) research focused on the need for institutions to effectively orient and train

supervisors within student affairs, which aligns with this study's findings that supervisors are not adequately prepared because of the lack of training.

Additionally, the data contributes to a clearer understanding of the importance of supervisors' communication skills, specifically feedback and difficult conversations. Supervisors at CCC said limited communication skills made supervising challenging, and thus their communications skills need to be developed. The experiences of this study's participants aligns with current literature and research, which indicates that communication skills, specifically providing feedback and having difficult conversations, are essential skills for supervisors and that they often need to be developed. Bradley and Campbell's (2016) research identified why supervisors often avoid difficult conversations and providing feedback and the importance of supervisors having these conversations. Additionally, their finding aligns with this study finding that years of experience as a supervisor does not impact difficult conversation skills. Elrod et al. (2019), Lamb et al. (2018), and Williams (2006) research focused on the importance of feedback and coaching in developing employees and the organization. However, as this study indicates, supervisors often lack the training and preparation to provide feedback and have effective difficult conversations.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher's personal familiarity with participants included in the study; as well as being the supervisor of some of participants resulted in the institution limiting the research to survey research only. The results and credibility could have been expanded by adding interviews or focus groups to allow participants to discuss their experiences. For

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example, if the researcher could have asked clarifying questions specifically to the supervisors, richer details about their experiences as a supervisor would have been gathered. Being able to ask additional clarifying questions may have offered more detail about how they developed their supervisor skills and behaviors, their challenges as a supervisor, and why they want to develop their communication skills, including providing feedback and having difficult conversations.

The generalizability of the results is limited by the small sample size and only conducting research at one institution. From a race and gender perspective, this study lacked diversity of participants. The participants in this study were predominantly white females. Expanding the research to include other institutions within the state of Nebraska or the United States has the potential to provide evidence of different experiences by employees and supervisors and strengthen the reliability and credibility of the study. It is recommended that future research utilize mixed methods and include student affairs divisions from multiple institutions. This would allow for a more extensive and diverse population with the possibility to identify differences based on age, gender, and educational attainment from the lens of the employee and the supervisor.

Future research is needed to explore the development of skills and behaviors critical to performance management and their impact on student affairs supervisors and employees. This research could be expanded in the local context to create a framework for future research that could be replicated at other institutions.

Implications for Practice

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Supervision has the power to impact student and employee retention, growth, and development (Márquez and Hernández, 2020; Rosser, 2004; Sermersheim and Keim, 2005). Within student affairs, supervision impacts students' experiences with employees, which can impact if a student feels welcomed and connected to the institution, the services they receive, and their retention and completion rates (Winston and Creamer, 1997). The first part of the study's results indicates that employees sometimes to frequently perceive supervisors utilizing best practices outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision. Overall, based on this study, the data indicates supervisors could benefit from training focused on goal setting, providing feedback, providing consequences, and synergistic supervision.

According to both previous research and this study, there is a clearly a need to provide training to supervisors to improve their communication, feedback, and ability to have difficult conversations. Therefore, the researcher advances two implications for practice: 1) implementing supervisor training focused on best practices and theories and 2) implementing training focused on developing communication skills, including providing feedback, coaching, and difficult conversations.

Implementing supervisor training grounded in best practices and theories focused on developing communication skills, specifically feedback and difficult conversations, can prepare and equip supervisors with the knowledge and skills to improve their current practices by utilizing best practices outlined in performance management and synergistic supervision. As indicated by Aguinis (2013), preparing supervisors to effectively communicate, provide feedback and coaching, and have difficult conversations can

encourage employee growth and development and improve the organization's performance.

Provide Supervisor Training Focused on Best Practices and Theory. In this study, supervisors identified the need to improve communication skills, specifically feedback, coaching, and difficult conversations. To meet the needs of student affairs divisions, institutions should provide training that focuses on the best practices outlined in Winston and Creamer's Synergistic Supervision Theory and Aguinis' Performance Management Theory to ensure that supervisors and employees are developed and encouraged to grow through feedback, coaching, and difficult conversations. Higher education institutions, like CCC, can create the training based on Van Der Locht et al. (2011), Mauer (2001), and Deaton et al.'s (2013) research focused on developing supervisory skills and knowledge.

Provide Training to Increase Communication, Feedback, and Difficult Conversation Skills. When asked, many supervisors at CCC expressed the need to improve their communication, feedback, and employee development, which all can fall under the umbrella of difficult conversation training. The findings of this study support institutions or student affairs divisions providing training that focuses on communication skills with an intentional focus on feedback and difficult conversations. Watson et al. (2019) found that when supervisors become more skilled at providing feedback and coaching, both the supervisors and employees will likely increase their effectiveness which benefits the organization.

Currently, at CCC, the term 'difficult conversations' does not have a shared meaning. Based on this study and literature, it is recommended that CCC define difficult conversations, feedback, coaching, and outline ways they can be utilized to address employee performance.

Reflection

The role of student affairs professionals and their impact on student success is critical to student success (Floyd, 2018; Levy and Polnariev, 2016; NASPA, 2018). Student affairs professionals at community colleges are even more essential given that they are tasked with serving students who are more often among the most high-risk demographics and who have complex needs that put them at risk of not completing college. For instance, community colleges serve many students with food and housing insecurities, who are academically underprepared for college, have mental health illnesses, are adult learners, and the list goes on. However, the professional development of supervisors within student affairs departments is often overlooked (Mather et al., 2009; Rosser, 2004; Sermersheim and Keim, 2005; Watson et al., 2018). Consequently, many student affairs' supervisors lack the skills and knowledge necessary to support the growth of student affairs professionals aimed at meeting the needs of the students effectively.

Strong supervision and leadership in student affairs are needed to create and maintain a culture that meets the holistic nature of student affairs (Mather et al., 2009; Rosser, 2004; Sermersheim and Keim, 2005; Watson et al., 2018). This often requires training and coaching professionals who new to student affairs about student development theories and practices that cultivate the desire to serve students' academic

and personal needs. Supervisors within student affairs are responsible for employee growth. Employee growth and development, indirectly and directly, impact how employees engage with and serve students, which ultimately contribute to student retention and completion. Such professional growth requires leadership that can shape the skills and dispositions of student affairs professionals and an entire student affairs division toward fulfilling an institutions' mission, which in the case of community colleges, is to help students succeed.

However, as this research indicated, some supervisors are not comfortable or confident in prompting the necessary growth, particularly in the areas of providing feedback, coaching, or having difficult conversations. The findings in this study align with employees' and supervisors' experiences in other student affairs departments across the country. Student affairs professionals enter the field through various educational and professional backgrounds. They may not have a background in student affairs and student development. Additionally, supervisors have likely not received training or professional development focused on supervision (Elrod et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2018; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Sermersheim & Keim, 2005). In order to strengthen student affairs divisions and professionals, both the supervisors and employees need to grow in their respective roles.

Employees within student affairs, including supervisors, need to receive professional development focused on the role of student affairs in student development. For this researcher's context, the professional development could be held one day a month for an hour. During these professional development training, topics covered would cover student development theory, including Kuh, Tinto, Maslow, Sanford, and

Schlossberg. Additionally, all student affairs employees would benefit from bi-annual training focused on communication and student/customer service principles. These professional development opportunities will assist student affairs employees in developing and cultivating the knowledge, disposition, skills, and behaviors to serve students holistically.

As this research indicated, student affairs supervisors are doing the best they can but need additional training to enhance their supervisor skills and behaviors. This researcher proposes professional development training that focuses on (1) communication, including verbal and non-verbal communication, (2) small group communication, (3) difficult conversations, (4) receiving and providing feedback and coaching, (5) setting, communicating, and monitoring expectations; and (6) developing employees holistically. The researcher anticipates having approximately 4-7 day-long or half-day in-person trainin with the supervisors. Outside professionals and programs will be consulted and utilized to provide professional development training that aligns with the supervisors' needs. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the topics to be covered in the proposed professional development trainings for employees and supervisors.

Figure 2

Topics to be Covered in the Proposed Professional Development Training

Student Affairs Employee Training (including supervisors)	Student Affairs Supervisor Training
• Student Development Theories (Kuh, Tinto, Maslow, Sandford, Schlossberg, etc.) • Communication • Student/Customer Service Principles	• Verbal and Non-verbal Communication • Small Group Communication • Difficult Conversations • Receiving and Providing Feedback and Coaching • Setting, Communicating, and Monitoring Expectations • Holistically Developing Employees

Closing

The objective of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of supervisors within student affairs at Central Community College. This goal was expanded upon in the past five chapters, including the introduction of the problem, the presentation of related literature, the explanation of the methodology, the results and findings, interpretations of those findings, and implications for practice. The six research questions that guided this survey research study and the answers to those questions have increased the understanding of student affairs supervisors' current behaviors and experiences in a community college setting. Supervision is an essential function of organizational success, and organizations and departments can operate more effectively and grow employees by implementing supervisor training programs. Literature and research have focused on the deficiencies of supervisors within student affairs and higher education, and perhaps it is time to design a training program that focuses on the best practices outlined in both synergistic supervision and performance management to bridge the gap between what is

known about supervisory challenges and to address them through training. This study added to the limited research about what is known of supervisors in student affairs; specifically, how they developed their supervision skills and behaviors and if experience or educational attainment impact areas they want to improve. Overall, this study's results, in connection with existing research and theory, can be applied to support the development of supervisors in a higher education setting through training as a way to support the institution's goal and mission to serve students.

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APPENDIX A

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS

	Question
Q1	How many years of management experience did you have before your current position?
Q2	How many management positions have you held?
Q3	In your career, how many years have you worked as a supervisor?
Q4	Coachable feedback provides specific and meaningful commentary intended to improve performance, competence, and confidence. How promptly do you provide coachable feedback to employees?
Q5	How comfortable are you with holding employees accountable for their actions and behaviors?
Q6	How did you develop your management skills? Select all that apply
Q7	What is your biggest challenge as a supervisor?
Q8	When faced with a difficult management situation, how do you process the situation and choose a plan of action? Select all that apply
Q9	How important is it to you that your employees like you?
Q10	When you started your first management position, did you believe you had the knowledge and understanding of what was required of you to be successful?
Q11	During your career, have you ever received management training from an employer on their specific management expectations?
Q12	When you started your management career at CCC, did you believe you knew what the college expected of you as a supervisor?
Q13	Do you believe CCC prepares staff to advance to management positions?
Q14	Are you preparing and training your staff to move into management roles?
Q15	Do you have someone in your life who mentors you professionally?
Q16	Have you held or do you hold a leadership position outside of work?
Q17	Do you utilize role-playing when coaching employees or when preparing for an upcoming encounter?

APPENDIX B

MANAGEMENT PERCEPTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

	Question
Q1	Considering outstanding leaders or supervisors you have known, name at least three qualities or characteristics that can attribute to their success.
Q2	How do you currently acquire and develop your leadership and management skills?
Q3	Consider a current leader or supervisor - and you do not have to name them - describe a couple of areas of potential improvement that would positively affect his or her success.
Q4	How does CCC encourage you to further develop as a leader or supervisor? What opportunities are you provided to further develop?
Q5	What leadership and management skills do you want to develop or strengthen?
Q6	What qualities make a leader or supervisor ineffective?
Q7	What other things would you like to add about leadership and management?
Q8	What questions do you have?

APPENDIX C

SURVEY TOOL

Note. Respondents were given the following instructions.

"After reading each statement, please rate your direct supervisor in terms of how frequently they engage in the behavior. Indicate your answer by selecting the description that best represents your observations or experience. The descriptions range from rarely/never, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often, and very frequently/always. There are no right or wrong answers. The correct answer is the answer which expresses your honest observations or experience."

Process of goal setting

Q1. Ensures that performance goals are linked to the strategic or operational goals of the company

Q2. Participatively sets goals

Q3. Assists others in setting specific and measurable performance objectives

Q4. Assists others in developing action plans that support performance goals

Q5. Encourages others to set challenging yet attainable goals

Communication

Q6. Has a communication style that causes others to become defensive.

Q7. Is a good listener

Q8. Is approachable and available to talk with others

Q9. Provides more positive than negative feedback

Feedback

Q10. Gives others timely feedback about their performance

Q11. Gives others specific feedback about what is good and bad about performance

Q12. Assists others in their career planning

Q13. Gives honest feedback

Q14. Explains how someone's behavior affects him/her and the work group when providing feedback

Coaching

Q15. Shows others how to complete difficult assignments and tasks

Q16. Provides the resources needed to get the job done

Q17. Helps identify solutions to overcome performance roadblocks

Q18. Helps people to develop their skills

Q19. Provides direction when it is needed

Provides consequences

Q20. Gives special recognition for exceptional performance

Q21. Rewards good performance

Q22. Links recognition and/or rewards to performance

Establishing/monitoring performance expectations

Q23. Checks work for accuracy and/or quality

Q24. Keeps people informed about changes, deadlines, or problems

Q25. Communicates expectations relating to quality

Q26. Monitors his/her own work performance

Q27. Prioritizes tasks and goals

Synergistic Supervision

Q28. Shows interest in promoting my professional or career advancement

Q29. Takes negative evaluations of programs or feedback and uses them to make improvements.

Q30. Is open and honest with me about my strengths and weaknesses

Q31. Assists me with developing yearly professional development plans that address my weaknesses and blind spots.

Q32. Expects staff to present and advocate different points of views.

Demographic Questions

Q33. What is your highest degree obtained?

  a. Associate's

  b. Bachelor's

  c. Master's

  d. Doctoral

Q34. Please specify your ethnicity.

  a. White

  b. Hispanic Latino

  c. Black or African American

  d. Native American or American Indian

  e. Asian/Pacific Islander

  f. Other

Q35. What is your age?

  a. 20-24

  b. 25-29

  c. 30-34

  d. 35-39

  e. 40-44

  f. 45-49

  g. 50-54

  h. 55-59

  i. 60-64

  j. 65 or older

Q36. What is your gender?

  a. Female

  b. Male

Note question 37 was a skip logic question. If participants answered no, the survey ended. If participants answered yes, they received the supervisor questions.

Q37. Do you supervise (approve leave/complete annual reviews) one or more full-time employees?

  a. Yes
  b. No

Supervisor questions

Q38. How many full-time employees? Please select one.

  a. 1
  b. 2
  c. 3
  d. 4
  e. 5
  f. 6
  g. 7
  h. 8 or more

Q39. Briefly describe how you developed your supervisory skills.

Q40. Please describe what you believe is the greatest influence in your supervisory skill development.

Q41. What do you view as your most significant challenge of supervising full-time employees?

Q42. Coachable feedback provides specific and meaningful commentary intended to improve performance, competence, and confidence. How frequently do you provide coachable feedback to your supervisees?
rarely/never, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often, and very frequently/always

Q43. Please describe what makes it challenging for you to provide coachable feedback to your supervisees.

Q44. How would you rate your interpersonal communication skills and ability focused on frequent verbal and written communication, sharing of ideas, listening, receiving feedback and ideas from employees you supervise?
Not skilled, somewhat skilled, skilled, unsure

Q45. How would you rate your skills and ability to frequently provide coaching and development to address employee performance needs?
Not skilled, somewhat skilled, skilled, unsure

Q46. What supervisory skills do you want to develop or strengthen?

Q47. How many years have you worked as a supervisor at CCC?
     a. 0-1
     b. 2-3
     c. 4-5
     d. 6-7
     e. 8-9
     f. 10-11
     g. 12 or more

Q48. In your career, how many years have you worked as a supervisor?
     a. 0-3
     b. 4-6
     c. 7-9
     d. 10-12
     e. 13 or more

APPENDIX D

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX
Final Items Within the PMBQ©

Process of goal setting
 1. Ensures that performance goals are linked to the strategic or operational goals of the company
 2. Participatively sets goals
 3. Assists others in setting specific and measurable performance objectives
 4. Assists others in developing action plans that support performance goals
 5. Encourages others to set challenging yet attainable goals

Communication
 6. Has a communication style that causes others to become defensive. (R)
 7. Is a good listener
 8. Is approachable and available to talk with others
 9. Provides more positive than negative feedback

Feedback
 10. Gives others timely feedback about their performance
 11. Gives others specific feedback about what is good and bad about performance
 12. Assists others in their career planning
 13. Gives honest feedback
 14. Explains how someone's behavior affects him/her and the work group when providing feedback

Coaching
 15. Shows others how to complete difficult assignments and tasks
 16. Provides the resources needed to get the job done
 17. Helps identify solutions to overcome performance roadblocks
 18. Helps people to develop their skills
 19. Provides direction when it is needed

Providing consequences
 20. Gives special recognition for exceptional performance
 21. Rewards good performance
 22. Links recognition and/or rewards to performance

Establishing/monitoring performance expectations
 23. Checks work for accuracy and/or quality
 24. Keeps people informed about changes, deadlines, or problems
 25. Communicates expectations relating to quality
 26. Monitors his/her own work performance
 27. Prioritizes tasks and goals

Note. Respondents were given the following instructions. "After reading each statement, please rate the person you are evaluating in terms of how frequently he/she engages in the behavior. Indicate your answer by selecting the description that best represents your observations or experience. The descriptions range from *rarely/never, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often,* and *very frequently/always.* There are no right or wrong answers. The correct answer is the answer which expresses your honest observations or experience." (R) represents a reflected item.

APPENDIX E
TEMPLATE OF THE EMAIL INVITATION

Good morning,

I am conducting a research study at CCC as part of my doctoral program through Arizona State University. This study examines perceptions of management techniques and supervision within Student Affairs/Services. The findings of this study will offer insight regarding how professionals in Student Affairs/Services understand and experience supervision. My goal is to use what we learn from this study to improve professional training and development for future managers within Student Affairs/Services.

If you have already completed the survey feel free to stop reading and delete this message.

I am inviting you to contribute to this study because you are a valued member of Student Services. To contribute, you may complete an anonymous survey. Please be assured that there is no requirement to be part of my research. If you choose to participate, you will engage with a Qualtrics survey that will take 8-15 minutes.

If you have not completed the survey, please follow this link. The survey closes at midnight on Tuesday, May 25.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or Marcie Kemnitz, my supervisor at CCC. Additionally, you can contact Dr. Carrie Sampson csampso4@asu.edu at ASU, who is supervising my research

Thank you,

Janel Walton, Ed.D. Candidate
Leadership and Innovation, EdD Program
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Arizona State University

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL/EXEMPTION OF HUMAN SUBJECT TESTING

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Carrie Sampson
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
-
csampso4@asu.edu

Dear Carrie Sampson:

On 5/11/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification / Update
Title:	Assessing the Perceived Use of Performance Management and Synergistic Supervision Skills by Student Affairs Managers at a Rural Community College.
Investigator:	Carrie Sampson
IRB ID:	STUDY00013824
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• JanelWalton-IRBCCC.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Updated Consent 5-10-21.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Walton recruitment_methods_email 05-10-2021.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/11/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Janel Walton
        Janel Walton