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CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT: THE NEEDS OF FIRST TIME PROFESSIONALS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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In student affairs, new professionals' transition from graduate school to professional positions have been studied to help identify needs and support strategies to increase retention. However, new professionals still leave the profession at roughly 60% within one to five years of completing a graduate degree. Further information on this transition is needed to help sustain our best practices with new professionals. This qualitative case study provided a description of four student affairs professionals' transition from graduate school to their first positions. The study used a traditional data collection method through interviews, and a non-traditional method through photojournals. Photojournals are a form of a photoelicitation method where participants captured photos of their own experiences and explained these photos through written word. Through the lens of challenge and support, findings from this study captured seven themes for new professionals: mentorship, resources, stability, pushed outside comfort zone, advocate, fostering growth, and surrounding support systems. The paper concludes with implications and recommendations for new professionals, their supervisors and colleagues, and graduate program faculty.

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Cultivating and developing student affairs as a profession starts with investing in new professionals and their transition from graduate school to their first professional position. Like any transition, many new professionals struggle with socialization into the profession, often leading to questioning their fit in student affairs (Tull, Hirt & Saunders, 2009). New professionals are critical to the future of the student affairs profession as their professional development keeps student affairs practices relevant (Amey, & Ressor, 2015; Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Fried, 2011; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2014). Even knowing how important new professionals are to student affairs, roughly 60% of new student affairs professionals leave the profession within one to five years post-masters graduation (Evans & Phelps Tobin, 1993).

While literature on new professionals has introduced factual information about new professionals' skill sets, lack of preparation, and limited transitional experiences, findings have not offered supportive ideas towards the retention of new professionals or represented the voices of new professionals (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Evans & Phelps Tobin, 1993; Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007; Renn & Hodges, 2007;). To advance the literature, this study explored the research question: What are the challenge and support needs of new professionals in transition in student affairs? The findings empowered new professionals' voices and experiences and offered relevant strategies and actions new professionals could take to be successful in student affairs. Findings also offered those who work with new professionals (e.g. supervisors and faculty) insight into experiences of transition for new professionals. The implications from this study advance, through a positive lens, new ideas for helping new professionals transition and succeed in student affairs careers.

Literature Review

Since the identification of retention issues with new professionals in student af-

fairs, many studies have uncovered issues in the preparation process. To give a foundation to this study, this section will present current research on new professionals. The section begins with how attention has been given to the process of socialization into student affairs for new professionals and what impact learning values and professional norms have on new professional retention. Then studies that have looked at the preparation process needed to do professional work and how prepared new professionals are with specific skill sets for a job will be presented. Finally, specific to this study, Sanford's Challenge and Support theory will be explained to help frame the research question.

Socialization into Student Affairs

Socialization is "the process by which new members of an organization come to understand, appreciate, and adopt the customs, traditions, values, and goals of their profession and their new organization" (Tull et al., 2009, p. x). The original process of professional socialization developed about adults who wanted to learn a new profession by spending considerable amounts of time in that profession. This time was meant to "transform lay people into professionals" (Brim & Wheeler, as cited in Barretti, 2004, p. 257). As socialization evolved, it was still a process in which a person intensely learned about a field, but rather than just accepting values and norms, the learning process included deep reflection and interpretation of values to be internalized by the person rather than accepted.

Socialization is significant to new professionals as they enter student affairs for the first time. This is the process by which new professionals' understand the values, skills and expectations of the profession and learn how to execute them in an effective manner. The orientation process helps new professionals understand the expectations of the position and the relationships around them. While the process of socialization does occur in professional work setting, the

beginning stages of socialization can occur in graduate preparation and programs. Recently, the studies on new professionals' development centered around creating a professional identity as an outcome of socializing new professionals in student affairs (Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy, & Boyle, 2014).

Preparation

Looking at the performance of new professionals, it could be implied from the literature the profession disagrees about new professional preparation. Supervisors of new professionals' stated new professionals lacked preparation in supervision, strategic planning, budget and fiscal management, organizational dynamics, advising, and collaboration (Waple, 2006). According to supervisors, new professionals need to learn budgeting and fiscal management, grant writing, as well as, writing for publication (Cuyjet, et al., 2009). However, other studies indicated new professionals were fairly competent in most areas of student affairs practice, being strongest in ethics and standards of practice, working with diverse populations, and knowledge of the college experience (Cuyjet, et al, 2009; Dickerson, et al, 2011; Waple, 2006). It is also argued new professionals may be trained or taught different theories, strategies, and practices more relevant to current student affairs practice than a SSAO depending on when they achieved their graduate degree (Fried, 2011). These findings represented the learning curve new professionals have with their practice, as well as, the mixed perspectives on the readiness of new professionals in student affairs. Missing from the findings were strategies and support mechanisms for further development where deficits existed in preparation for new professionals. Without support mechanisms or strategies for growth, new professionals can be left blindly navigating their own professional development which only contributes to this issue.

Responsibility for the preparation of new

professionals was also uncertain. Throughout the profession's history, some are of the opinion practitioners who hired new professionals had an ethical obligation to prepare new professionals for their work in student affairs (Magolda & Carnaghi, 2014). Others argued it was the responsibility of graduate programs to prepare skills and competencies for professional work (Amey & Ressor, 2015; Kuk & Hughes, 2003). It seemed both faculty and practitioners felt it was the responsibility of the other to educate new professionals (Dickerson et al., 2011; Kuk, & Hughes, 2003). As a result of these debates, new professionals were caught in the middle, and therefore, came into their first position perceived as underprepared and unable to identify their needs for professional development, making their success a challenge from the beginning.

Professional Skills and Needs

Until the early 2000s, new professionals' voices were not a part of the literature on new professionals. To fill the gap, studies sought to include the voices of new professionals to identify for the first time some developmental needs of new professionals' (Cilente et al., 2006; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2014; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Wilson et al., 2013). In 2005, the Standing Committee for Graduate Students and New Professionals from American College Personnel Association (ACPA) conducted a study entitled "New Professionals Needs Study" (Cilente, et al., 2006). The study gathered information from 270 new professionals about their transition to student affairs from graduate school. The primary need for new professionals from this study was receiving adequate support from mentors, supervisors, and colleagues (Cilente et al., 2006). Also identified was the need to enhance supervision skills with both students and professionals (Cilente et al., 2006). While this was helpful, no insight was offered as to how to support new professionals in these areas.

Beyond supervisory needs, relationships, fit in position, and competence were

the dominant needs of new professionals (Cilente, et al., 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007). Relationships, both personal and professional, were significant to new professionals especially when it came to personal and professional acceptance (Renn & Hodges, 2007). One participant shared "It's funny that my first hope/concern as a 'professional' was completely personal: Will they like me? This applied to my bosses, coworkers, peers, staff, and anyone/everyone I would encounter in my new position" (Renn & Hodges, 2007, p. 373). Positive relationships promoting a growth mindset created a sense of belonging in a position or department, which fostered success (Cilente, et al., 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Wilson et al., 2013).

Fit in a position was also important to needs of new professionals. "Fit" is a word used every day in student affairs but has an implied meaning unique to each person. The general way it is used in student affairs language is "adapted or suited" for a particular aspect of a position. It could be related to the position itself, or to the department, institution, role, or other factors. Renn and Hodges (2007) found "fit" could pertain to values both personally and professionally while others talked about positional fit and feeling competent in the position by the end of year one. Institutional type could also play a role in fit as student affairs work varied from liberal arts institutions to research one institutions (Hirt, 2006). Competence referred to the feeling of new professionals' abilities to do their job well (Renn & Hodges, 2007). New professionals felt they needed competence in the job (i.e. skills, training, and knowledge of procedures) and also felt they needed to display confidence from the start of the position (Renn & Hodges, 2007).

These studies were the first to start identifying needs of new professionals in order to impact the retention issues. They offered new insight into the lived experiences of new professionals while introducing the voices of new professionals into the literature. What these studies lacked was prac-

tical, action oriented strategies of new professionals. Specifically, a new professional might understand fit is important in a first job, but how do new professionals go about assessing fit in an interview process? Similarly, new professionals may understand the role a supervisor may play in their development, but how do they go about advocating for their supervisory needs this effectively? This left a gap for further research to provide tangible, practical findings to support new professionals' further development.

Challenge and Support

Challenge and support of new professionals is an area not covered within the current literature. Challenge and support is a student development theory often applied to new students as they transition and grow throughout their time in college (Sanford, 1967). To fully embrace the learning process in college, the balance of challenge and support is critical to a developing student (Evans, Forney, Guido, Renn, & Patton, 2010). The same can be said of new professionals, too. As new professionals socialize into the profession, it is yet to be understood what balance of challenge and support is needed to successfully transition into the profession.

While these studies give some insight into new professionals' experiences, there is a need to know more to better assist all new professionals. Many of these findings offered others (supervisors and SSAOs) perceptions of skills, competencies, and preparation of new professionals. Those articles highlighting new professionals' voices need further expansion of how to challenge and support new professionals' developmental needs. It is time to stop asking practitioners, faculty, SSAO, and others about their thoughts and feelings and go straight to the source of the experience. We need to hear directly from new professionals, empowering their voices to tell us what they experience in their transition and navigation of their first positions.

Methodology

The study conducted was a qualitative, constructivist case study to gain information about the transitional needs for new professionals. Constructivist case studies allow for a co-constructed (between the participant and the researcher) rich, thick description of the participants' lived experiences (Merriam, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A constructivist researcher needs to establish trustworthiness through the captured data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2010). Researchers in a constructivist nature are engaged with their participants, building relationships allowing for authentic sharing of stories and values from the participants (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Because of these enmeshed relationships, researchers cannot remain objective to their findings, but are more objective to their responsibility to share how reality is constructed within their participants' experiences. Collection and publication of these stories, according to constructivism, advances knowledge about peoples' experiences and how reality is constructed by individuals (Broido & Manning, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). From this collection, researchers are better able to understand different viewpoints, values, situations, and meaning making for all participants.

Participants

The four participants were found through purposeful, convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling was conducted to target new professionals between one to three years post graduate degree completion. Convenience sampling was conducted by reaching out to professional contacts and receiving referrals to new professionals. Two of the participants identified as male, and two identified as female. Two identified as Latino/Hispanic, and the other two identified as White. Two participants were one year post graduate degree completion, one participant was a two years post graduate degree completion, and one participant was three years post graduate school comple-

tion. Participants worked at either public or private universities in varying sizes across the nation. The participants' functional areas represented residence life, career services, and alumni relations. All participants signed a consent form and created a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a researcher's ethical responsibility "to go beyond simple repetition of data gathering to deliberative effort to find the validity of data observed" (Stake, 2010, p. 109). Researchers have an ethical responsibility to not only inform participants of research findings, but to work with participants to act on their own behalf based on the findings (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2010). Building a relationship to develop trust is crucial to both this study and constructivist research. The relationship between the researcher and the participant helped to understand how the participants made meaning of their own reality. Together, the researcher and participant(s) work to help uncover how the participant sees the world in which they exist. Because of the investment required in this relationship, constructivist researchers do not believe total objectivity is possible when conducting research (Alkove & McCarty, 1992).

In this study, trustworthiness was established through time spent in the research process. With each participant, the researcher spend considerable time in the first meeting getting to know the participant through intentional conversation. Because all participants were referred to the researcher through professional contacts, the shared relationship of the participant and researcher helped to gain credibility and establish trust. In addition, the researcher shared their own experiences as a new professional to relate and emphasize with the experiences of the participants. Transcriptions and initial findings were also shared with each participant to give insight and feedback throughout the research process

as a form of member checking (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews and Photojournals

Each participant went through two semi-structured, audio recorded interviews (Merriam, 2009). The first interview was conducted to learn more about each participants' perceptions of their daily work environments. Between the first and second interviews, participants were asked to complete a photojournal of pictures representing ways in which they felt challenged and supported in their roles. These photojournals were based on a photo elicitation methodology called autodiving.

Photoelicitation was "based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper, 2002, p. 12). In photoelicitation methods, participants can reflect on pictures to create their definitions and interpretations of the photographs (Harper, 2002). Previous projects using photos allowed for the participants' memories to sharpened and elicited "longer and more comprehensive interviews" (Harper, 2002, p. 14). Harper (2002) explained this occurred because of the way the brain processes visual information, "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than words do" (p. 13). The photos in this study added a layer of depth to the study specifically because "photographs get their meaning from the way the people involved with them understand them, use them, and thereby attribute meaning to them" (Becker, 1991, p. 2).

Rather than a traditional photo elicitation method of showing photos potentially picked by the researcher to elicit a reaction or response from a participant, autodiving puts the selection of photos in the participants' hands by having them capture or find photos representing their experiences (Heisley & Levy, 1991). A participant taking their own pictures is considered more critical in a research process since it empowers their voices rather than the researcher supplying the photos in a more traditional pho-

toelicitation process (Heisley & Levy, 1991). A reader could critique research from interviews because they did not participate in the interviews. Pictures, however, in this study were the same from the minute they enter the study to years beyond the study making it harder to argue findings (Harper, 2002). The image conveys deep meaning and purpose for the participant's experiences. The method of photojournaling was selected for this project because of the meaning participants created through taking photos. Each participant took or found separate pictures of five ways they felt supported and challenged in their positions. With each picture, participants were asked to share a small description of why they chose the picture and how it related to their work experience. The second one-hour interview focused on the participants' explaining their pictures for their photojournals. Interviews totaled 12 hours and 62 transcribed pages, and the photojournals totaled 10 pages with 40 pictures. To further the findings, some photos selected by participants are included in the manuscript below to help give visual representation to a theme.

Analysis

Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The action for the analysis was true to its name. As the researcher, I looked at all transcripts, photojournals in a constant repetitive process reviewing each document carefully looking for commonalities, similarities, and connections between all of the data. As I reviewed the data over and over, the comparative process allowed me to see themes connect across participant experiences. Specifically for this study, the constant comparative method also included the use of the challenge and support developmental theory by reviewing the data looking for themes through a lens of challenging and supportive experiences for the participants.

The first time transcriptions were read to look environmentally at the themes of both challenge and support and then reviewed

separately two additional times. As commonalities emerged, photojournals were then reviewed in a similar process. After reviewing both the transcripts and photojournals, individual photos and quotes were physically cut from the data and separated out onto a large blank canvas. I then grouped quotes and photos together by commonalities, differences, and connections. Words from the participants' explanation of each photo were reviewed to see how they connected the visual representation of the photo with their lived experiences as a new professional. From these processes, seven different themes emerged through the student development theory of challenge and support (Evans, et. al., 2010).

Findings

From interviews and photojournals, seven main themes emerged around challenge and support for new professionals in student affairs. Three themes emerged under challenge: lack of stability, fear of complacency, and pushed outside comfort zone. Three themes emerged around support: surrounding community, resources, and mentorship. One theme emerged under both: role of an advocate. The findings show insight and depth into the transitional needs for new professionals. Important to the study, challenge and support were defined by the participants, which resulted in challenge being defined both as positive and negative. These findings present opportunities for new professionals to anticipate needs in transition and how to create support strategies to encourage their professional development.

Challenge

The participants each felt the three biggest challenges in their positions were lack of stability in their position, the fear of becoming complacent, and being pushed outside of their comfort zone. All participants saw a lack of stability and the fear of becoming complacent as a negative challenge. In contrast, all three participants felt that

being pushed out of their comfort was a positive challenge. These findings present for the first time to the literature, the idea that new professionals seek challenge in a good way to promote growth and professional development.

Lack of Stability. The lack of stability was described as "uneasy" and "being led into the dark." Each of the participants in their own perspectives felt there was no vision, direction, or clear articulation of goals, mission, or values for their given departments or universities. Hermon best described this feeling by including a picture of a person running on a hamster wheel (see Figure 1) and sharing "it feels like there is no definite place to go, no one telling you to stop or change direction, or knowing when I should stop and get off the wheel." Anne included a picture of a bare tree and described there been "no life" around a purpose and plan for her position. Sam included a picture of the word leadership with a strikethrough symbol represented her feeling of lacking vision. This directly impacted the participants' professional development by contributing to a lack of purpose in their role and development.



Figure 1. Hamster wheel

Fear of Complacency. All participants defined complacent in many different ways including "bored," "stagnate," and "not wanting to try new things" all directed at the department leadership. Carlos included the picture below (see Figure 2) and used the analogy of a rubber band to explain what he felt should happen to challenge complacency.

When you think of a rubber band, when

you don't stretch it enough it's not useful. When you stretch it too much it breaks. We should be working our practice at the right tension to be useful and purposeful just like how rubber band would be when it is used correctly.

Sam included a picture of several growth stages of a plant. She explained this represented the constant way she wanted to grow as a professional and always be open to new ideas, practices, and changes throughout her career. All participants expected upper leadership in their department to foster this growth through intentional conversations, trainings and advancing their own professional development.



Figure 2. Rubber band

Push Outside of Comfort Zone. All participants talked about how they wanted to be challenged to grow in their positions. In a random coincidence, Hermon and Carlos both included pictures of a single fish jumping from one bowl to another representing for each of them wanting to be challenged to stand out from a group (see Figure 3). Anne saw challenge as personal growth related to confidence in her abilities and included a picture of what she described as "big girl shoes" which represented her challenge to fulfill her expectations as a real professional. Carlos saw his own growth and professional development as his responsibility to seek out support from mentors.

All participants believed growth was critical to their future as student affairs professionals and expressed the need to constantly be challenged in positives ways to grow. All participants also expected their supervisor to facilitate this growth within

their positions. While this is in line with other research about new professionals (Cuyjet, et al., 2009), this is the only way they saw their supervisor playing a role in supporting or challenging their position.

Figure 3. Outside comfort zone

While challenges of new professionals are not new to the literature (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Waple, 2006), this study advanced the literature by asking new professionals about how they see and experience challenges. This study is the first to introduce the idea that new professionals want challenge in their positions and seek it out in order to remain in a growth mindset. From practice, the impression with socializing new professionals is not to overwhelm their learning process (Tull, et. al., 2011). However, these findings present, when developmentally ready, new professionals want to be given new opportunities and projects to further develop the professional skill set and identity. The implications from these findings will be discussed in the next section.

Support

The three themes for support were surrounding people, resources, and mentorship. The participants found it more challenging to identify ways they were supported in their positions. This was evidence through language the participants used in the interviews like "this was hard for me to think about," or "I had a hard time finding the good stuff." Positive psychology theories would contribute this to a societal norm to focus on the bad, or deficit, rather than the good in situation (Seligman, 2004).

Surrounding People. All participants named departmental co-workers, colleagues around campus, and professional associations as huge sources of emotional and professional support. All four participants used these groups differently for the type of support they needed. Hermon talked about needing emotional support from colleagues and co-workers to "vent to" and feel "they

are in the same boat" in their positions and represented this through a circular group picture (see Figure 4). Sam specifically talked about how without supervisor support she "would not be able to do everything in her jobs he needed to do."

Adequate support for a new professional needed to come from those professionals around them in their daily work environments and aligns with findings from other studies on new professionals (Cilente, et al., 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007). These people included direct supervisors, departmental colleagues, and/or mentors familiar with the work environment. New professionals who did receive adequate support felt more competent at their job, were more willing to learn, and be challenged to grow (Cilente, et al, 2006). Specifically these relationships developed a sense of belonging and a "we're all in this together" mindset fostering competence and confidence (Renn & Hodges, 2007).

Figure 4. Surrounding people

Resources and Time. Having the resources as a tool to do their jobs was a big support for each participant. Anne and Hermon identified having the right technology to do their jobs was really important. Anne specifically represented this through a picture of an iPad (see Figure 5). Carlos also talked about having ample fiscal resources to do his job was the number one support he needed. In addition to tangible items as supportive resources, every single participant shared having the time to do their job was or could be a huge support to their job. Hermon talked about how the lack of time to execute primary responsibilities, because of secondary professional responsibilities, made it hard to feel supported.

This finding also aligns with other studies about time allotted to complete the job. The most common example was new professionals were told the job expectations were to work 40 hours per week, but in order to accomplish everything asked of them, going

over 40 hours a week was necessary on a regular basis (Cilente et al., 2006).



Figure 5. Resources

Mentorship. Mentorship was salient to the support of each participant. Mentors were identified as professionals outside of their current place of employment whom they had developed a relationship with prior to their current positions, often knowing them more in depth for longer periods of time. Throughout all eight interviews, each participant called at least one mentor by name, often identifying two or three mentors, and shared numerous examples of how mentors played a role in supporting each participant. Sam specifically included a graphic picture stating "mentoring matters" because of the significant role her mentor played in supporting her professional development (see Figure 6).

Mentors were used for conversations and processing experiences offering emotional support, motivation, encouragement, and validation. All participants talked about how this outside perspective was helpful to them in navigating success in their position. Literature on professional identity development in student affairs also highlighted the role other professionals serve in developing new professionals (Wilson, et. al., 2013).



Figure 6. Mentoring

The Role of an Advocate: Both Challenge and Support

Each participant identified an advocate as someone actively involved in their daily work environments who would speak on their behalf and give support to help establish their credibility as a professional. Anne told an experience about a staff meeting where she shared her idea with the group, and it was rejected. After the meeting, an established colleague validated the idea, and Anne asked her to share the idea at the next staff meeting. When the established colleague spoke about the idea, the group immediately accepted the idea, and it was implemented. This finding is significant because of the lack of trust in Anne's idea and the perception of her inexperience as a new professional. She used a picture of a person vocalizing their information (see Figure 7) to illustrate her feelings.

Hermon and Carlos also talked about not feeling heard with new ideas but when others spoke of them, they were accepted. Going back to Fried's (2011) finding of the strong knowledge new professionals have of best and most contemporary practices, this finding is concerning and contributes to the lack of forward momentum in student affairs practice and the retention of new professionals.



Figure 7. Role of Advocate

These findings tell us that new professionals have a desire to learn, foster a growth mindset, and want to be socialized into their professional identity. While they may come in to a first professional position with varying levels of preparation, common amongst all participants was the desire to grow. They understood both through chal-

lenges and supportive environment, they would learn and grow in their first professional years on the job. As a profession, we are missing an opportunity to capitalize on this energy and mindset. The next section will further explore ideas on how to continue the socialization process for new professionals and discuss actions student affairs professionals can take in this process.

Implications, Discussion & Future Research

A desire to learn, being a growth mindset, and socialization practices are not exclusive to new professionals. In any transition, all student affairs professionals can use the strategies and actions below. However, because this study focused on new professionals, implications from these findings impact specifically new professionals, their supervisors, and graduate preparation program faculty.

The findings from this study represent diverse identities and specifically functional areas. A large critique of new professional literature was an overwhelming sampling from residence life positions which may not speak to other functional areas lived experiences. Also, as higher education becomes more diverse, diverse and inclusive voices from student affairs professionals are critical to the advancement of the profession of student affairs. This study was able to capture both functional areas outside of residence life and racially diverse perspectives on student affairs practice which advances the literature in a new way.

Desire to Learn

New professionals in this study showed a strong desire to learn. The literature introduced the idea that further skill development is needed for new professionals. To capitalize on both of these areas, strategic onboarding and orientation processes are necessary when a new professional joins a team. Training around based job functions, skills needed for the position, and helpful resources are critical to the learning process

and socialization. The common student affairs practice of little to no training but learn by doing can hurt new professionals' learning process. Strategic, learning outcomes based training bring purpose and intentionality to the onboarding process that may be missing. Supervisors need to build training to be intentional, uninterrupted time for asking questions and reflecting on the experience.

Beyond onboarding, supervisors can work with new professionals in goal setting exercises to continue to identify learning opportunities. A helpful tool in facilitating this process is writing a professional development plan separate from a performance evaluation. A professional development plan allows for the space to learn and fail without the impact of an evaluation. Included in the professional development plan should be reflection on short term and long term goals, questions specifically asking about skills needing to be develop, and identifying professional development opportunities being sought by new professionals. While some of these findings may be common practice amongst practitioners in the field or faculty in classrooms, research has yet to provide data and findings to support these actions. These findings now offer data to support best practices within supervising, supporting, and onboarding new professionals in student affairs roles.

Growth Mindset

Participants from this study showed new professionals are often more resilient than given credit for as professionals. Some of the literature highlighted resistance and hesitancy from both supervisors and new professionals in fostering growth (Cuyjet, et al, 2009; Dickerson, et al, 2011; Waple, 2006). Much of the concern came from the perception by supervisors as to the lack of readiness of new professionals. However, if supervisors are only focusing on skill development or lack thereof, they miss the opportunity to foster growth. Participants in this study found themselves wanting to be chal-

lenged even if it was uncomfortable, hard, or required growth because they expected to grow in their professional identities.

Professionals and departments need to challenge themselves to understand why hesitation and resistance exist. Instead of denying a new professionals' idea, supervisors can help new professionals foster a new idea towards success. Supervisors may have a deeper understanding of why an idea it may not work the way they have conceptualized it in the beginning and have an opportunity to foster the idea in successfully working ways. Not only does this bring new energy and ideas to a department but also help foster the growth of new professionals.

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is one way any student affairs professional can foster a growth mindset in new professionals. AI is a change management strategies used to highlight strengths and opportunities to capitalize on them in positive and meaningful ways (Elleven, 2007). Specific to AI is the intentional questioning and reflective process communicated between colleagues to foster growth in positive ways around four areas: discovery, dream, design and destiny (Elleven, 2007). Supervisors and mentors of new professionals can learn AI questioning strategies to help new professionals identify their strengths, and reflect on their growing professional identities. AI can also contribute to the socialization process for new professionals' through reflecting on professional values. Further research could be done to understand the impact of AI on new professionals' professional identity development.

Also critical to fostering a growth mindset, new professionals specifically need to seek out mentorship from student affairs professionals in their lives. The participants in this study identified many mentors who knew them as student leaders in undergrad or played a role in their graduate school experience. Often looking back on their growth with a mentor was encouraging because the mentor represented a place and time for the participants' growth. Important to note,

these mentors were identified by the participants as people they aspired to be like professionally. They often represented an identity (e.g., racial, gender, sexual orientation), and/or espoused professional values and practices for the participants, and participants idolized the way in which the mentor navigated these aspects of practice.

Further Socialization

Socialization is critical to new professionals' development and there are a variety of ways to foster this process with new professionals. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, there needs to be an overall professional commitment to new professionals' socialization. In student affairs, there is much attention paid to getting people into the graduate school programs through organized actions like Careers in Student Affairs Month, the Next Generation Conference through ACPA, and the National Undergraduate Fellows Program through NASPA. Specifically, NASPA offers in collaboration a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offered for free to those seeking understand of the profession and how to achieve a graduate degree. However lacking are intentional and formal practices in getting to a professional position.

Graduate faculty in student affairs programs can focus on supporting the transition through a variety of platforms. Developing a MOOC for the transition into new professional life specifically focusing around the socialization process through shared values, professional competencies, and transition could give formal attention to supporting new professionals with potential to decrease the high departure rate of new professionals. An online community could further connect new professionals' across the world to a community which was critically to new professionals support in this study.

Future Research

While the voice of supervisors is represented and now the voice of new professionals is represented, there is yet to be a

study representing both voices in navigating the supervisory relationship and fostering growth. It would be worth exploring dynamics of the supervisory relationship and how it impacts professional growth and development for new professionals. For example, how a supervisor creates challenging opportunities in intentional ways could be beneficial for both the literature and practice. This study could provide insight into important aspects of supervisory relationships for both new professionals and supervisors.

Further research could study the role of the advocate more in depth. The role of the advocate highlights a need to understand new professionals' lack of credibility when starting as a professional. Understanding the dynamics of departments, universities, and student affairs culture could be critical to helping foster success of new professionals. This study could also highlight best practices for navigating a new professional environment. As mentioned above, further exploration around appreciative inquiry as a support strategy for new professionals' identity development is needed. AI has the foundation to support the growth new professionals' are seeking in their first positions. Could infusing AI into work with new professionals' impact retention? More research is needed to connect this change management strategy and new professionals' development.

Gathering data over time in a new professionals' experiences could also be considered. Since it is known new professionals leave within one to five years of completing graduate school, a longitudinal study during those years could provide further insight into why new professionals are leaving at a 60% rate (Evans & Phelps Tobin, 1993). As of now, a longitudinal study over the first five years in a professional position post graduate school completion does not exist. A study like this could show developmental changes, professional growth, and uncover retention issues for new professionals. This research could also attempt to update re-

tention numbers from the original statistic from the early 1990s.

Conclusion

From this and other studies, what we have to remember about new professionals is they are new. They need time to learn, transition, redevelop skills, and find success. If new professionals are given the options to do so, they may thrive in their positions. Findings from this study can be used to capitalize on the desire to learn from new professionals and foster their success. These themes introduce new ideas not yet present in the literature and take previous ideas about new professionals in the literature and advance them to a new level needed to understand professional development experiences for new professionals. Support from people surrounding new professionals, mentors, and resources to do their job could give new professionals what they need to persevere through the challenges. Challenges like lack of stability and fear of complacency are a difficult reality of student affairs work and new professionals need help navigating these realities. Figuring out how to challenge new professionals to be pushed outside their comfort zone to foster a growth mindset is critical to new professionals' development. Ultimately, the future of student affairs rests with our new professionals and our commitment to their growth and success. As a profession, we have a moral and ethical obligation to bring up the next generation of student affairs professionals. Using strategies and findings from this study will advance the work we do in socializing and supporting new professionals.

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