

“IT DEPENDS ON THE SUPERVISOR”: A MULTIPLE SITE CASE STUDY EXPLORING
STUDENT AFFAIRS STAFFING PRACTICES

by

MAGGIE J. L. FITZSIMMONS

(Under the Direction of Laura A. Dean)

ABSTRACT

This multiple site case study explored staffing in student affairs divisions and the experiences of practitioners. This research study used Creamer and Winston’s (2002) Integrated Model of Staffing Practices to structure the case study and analyze the data. A systematic approach to staffing is necessary to provide student affairs staff the resources they need to effectively work in their roles (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Eighteen individuals across three sites were interviewed during this case study and documents related to staffing practices were collected at each site. Participants represented different unit areas in student affairs including campus recreation, career services, counseling, residence life, student engagement, and student life. Participants also represented different levels of staff including vice presidents of student affairs, directors, associate directors, assistant directors, and coordinators. The most influential aspect staffing on practitioner experiences was a supervisor’s individual approach to supervision. Staff experiences were also shaped by the interconnectedness of orientation, professional development, and performance appraisal. Implications for practice include an update to Creamer and Winston’s (2002) model and reconsidering how supervision influences all staffing practices that goes beyond functional supervision. Recommendations for

research include examining how CAS General Standards can be applied to staffing practices and exploring supervision for mid-level staff that are also responsible for supervising practitioners.

INDEX WORDS: student affairs, staffing, supervision, hiring, training, development, evaluation, organizational development

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to student affairs staff everywhere. You continue to do wonderful work in the midst of significant obstacles. Your passion in serving students while navigating your own staffing experience demonstrates the commitment to the profession that is taken for granted. Your experiences as a student affairs practitioners are unique and those experiences make this research even more important.

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CHAPTER 1

Genesis

As I looked into Edgar Allen Poe's dorm room, made to look as it did when he attended, I wondered "what are we doing here?" I arrived to my first day at the University of Virginia as a recently graduated student affairs practitioner, ready to do the work I had grown so much enthusiasm for in my time as an undergraduate student and as a graduate student. I had experienced the transition that inevitably comes from moving from a part-time student staff member to a para-professional graduate assistant, as well as the transition from moving to a new institution. I felt ready to do the work I knew in a new place.

However, I did not feel prepared for this. Why was I learning about the coveted rooms on the lawn in the academical village? Why did I need to know that campus was called Grounds? Why did it matter that I called students first-years rather than freshman? With human resource emails already waiting for me in my inbox, I needed to know how to sign up for my retirement and healthcare plans. At the very least, I knew where I was supposed to park for the day and had an onboarding schedule already.

For a long time, I did not understand the point in that tour. If I learned where 'important to me' buildings would be, it was an unexpected benefit of learning where the illustrious secret societies placed their messages to the community. Frankly, it is an experience I often describe as one of the wild aspects of working in higher education. It wasn't until reflecting on my interest in researching staffing practices that I understood where it became important.

My socialization to the history of the University of Virginia became critically important when, a little more than a year later, white supremacists marched across Grounds chanting horrifically racist rhetoric. I was able to deeply feel with my student staff and the university

community the pain of those events and the disappointment and anger so many people experienced in the aftermath.

I could not have known that years after that on-Grounds tour, I would be diving deep into staffing practice. Even before starting this research, I have heard too many difficult stories of student affairs practitioners not feeling fully aware or prepared for the environmental, functional, or logistical demands of their roles. The students we strive to impact will only benefit from providing practitioners the staffing resources they need to be fulfilled in their roles. These feelings have been growing for years, and I am ready to dive in.

Introduction

The landscape of employment in student affairs has drastically changed in recent years. The pressures created for the working population in the United States by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing staffing issues in student affairs (Chessman, 2021; Mutambisi et al., 2021). Student affairs is being pushed to rethink its staffing practices in a highly competitive staffing environment. It is not enough to hire talented individuals. Universities and colleges are faced with considering their systematic approach to staffing to ensure that student affairs practitioners are prepared for facilitating student learning and student development.

Staffing in student affairs is defined as “the way an organization structures itself and the nature of the interactions among the people who compose it” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 3). Supervision is a key aspect of student affairs staffing and the functions of supervision influence how staffing practices are executed (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). However, current student affairs staffing models do not effectively illustrate the power and influence supervision has on a staff member’s environment and experience.

Higher education institutions are very complex, and human resources can either be a single unit area serving an entire institution or be decentralized and situated at divisional or unit area levels. While a centralized human resources department may exist in an institution, some functions of staffing may be carried out at a divisional or unit level specific to an individual role. This results in the staffing practices process being just as complex as the institutions offering employment opportunities. Moreover, human resources as a functional area does not fully meet the needs of the day-to-day staff experience in student affairs. Providing necessary resources for staffing as well as organizational awareness of staff needs in higher education is critical for success in student affairs roles and may prevent staff burnout (Anderson, 2020).

Regardless of institution type, higher education is increasingly operating in ways more characteristic of a private business, and with student affairs practitioners being facilitators of institutional learning outcomes for students, more attention needs to be paid to staffing practices. Student populations are increasingly diverse, and a comprehensive approach to staffing is necessary for colleges and universities to meet the needs of their student affairs staff. Practitioners will benefit from staffing practices that provide them the resources they need to be successful in their roles.

Staffing Practices in Student Affairs

Traditional student affairs staffing practices include recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation, all in the context of the institutional culture and the environment in which the institution exists (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). However, the challenges in developing comprehensive staffing practices include “economic, social, and political forces that have altered the funding patterns in higher education and resulted in major changes with the institutions”

(Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 11). Although Winston and Creamer identified these challenges 25 years ago, they are equally relevant today. These changes mean that student affairs practitioners, including senior student affairs officers, may not be fully in control of resources needed for staffing (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). However, these tenets of staffing practices are not effective without a systematic and embedded culture within the organization that acknowledges that the staffing environment may not be in the full control of a division or supervisor (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). A piecemeal approach to staffing practices or lack of systematic staffing practices that recognize the complexity of an organization can contribute to issues in socialization and the resulting burnout of student affairs staff.

Effective staffing practices consider a potential staff member's first interaction with the recruitment and selection process as the initial opportunity for socialization to a particular institution (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). This socialization is reinforced by staffing practices after recruitment and selection that are conducted as a part of employment, with supervision being one of the most influential areas for effective, or ineffective, staffing across institution types (Lamb et al., 2017; Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Moreover, effective supervision can provide a "(re)socialization process with [staff in] their new organizations and supervisors that can be positive and negative and consistent or inconsistent with how they were previously socialization" (Perez & Haley, 2021, p. 35). All of these staffing practices are interconnected, influence the whole staffing cycle, and reinforce the need for a systematic approach to staffing (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervision, in particular, shapes how a staff member is continually socialized to their institution.

An overreliance on the altruistic nature and enthusiasm of student affairs practitioners has resulted in less strategic oversight of staffing and put additional pressure on graduate preparation programs and professional associations to socialize and develop staff (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Perez, 2021; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Graduate preparation and professional associations are important aspects of socializing to the field of student affairs and gaining professional experience (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). However, they are best complemented by systematic staffing practices because entry-level staff experience challenges when they transition to new roles (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Because student affairs staff are continually resocialized through new roles or new institutions, comprehensive staffing practices influence staff at all levels (Perez & Haley, 2021). The key aspect of developing effective and comprehensive staffing practices is understanding that the higher education environment in which student affairs practitioners are socialized within is extremely complex and unique to each institution.

Complexity of Higher Education Institutions

The foundational charter between higher education and society was conceptualized by higher education's original mission to provide a public good and service (Kezar, 2004). However, critics suggest that higher education is foregoing its role as a social entity and behaving more and more like a privatized industry (Kezar, 2004). This is made more complicated by the diverse types of higher education institutional missions and raises the question of whether higher education continues to simply be a public good (Kezar, 2004).

Socialization that practitioners experience as a result of staffing practices in student affairs can often be centered on the public good of the service provided by student affairs (Ozaki

& Hornak 2021). Isdell & Wolf-Wendal (2021) discuss socialization to ideal worker norms as a reaffirming cycle of neoliberalism:

The culture of a profession like student affairs becomes entrenched from the beginning of the career pathway when undergraduates are hired to serve in paraprofessional roles... [and] are told what it takes to be successful in the field – that is, dedication to the whole student they service if it means working beyond prescribed hours (p. 19).

Graduate student staff and full-time staff alike often describe their desire to make an impact on the students they work with and accept lower wages, inflexible work conditions, and poor work life balance as an inherent part of their work (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021).

The complexity of higher education institutions is a result of the layers of interconnectedness and interactions of individuals with others and with the physical and non-physical environment. “For higher education leaders, this environment can be overwhelming as traditional approaches for managing institutions seem woefully underpowered to meet the multitude of economic-social-technical changes” (Siemens et al., 2018, p. 28). A traditional approach to staffing in these complex environments is not enough to meet the changing needs of higher education institutions, their staff, and the students they serve.

Staffing practices, as they are defined in student affairs, consider more than the traditional functions of human resources. The execution of systematic staffing practices demands awareness of the differences between the function of human resources and talent management. A supervisor who understands the interconnectedness of these environments, functions, and the individuals is necessary to effectively implement staffing practices within student affairs (Siemens et al., 2018).

Moving Toward Talent Management

Higher education continues to operate more and more like private industry, and its original status as a public good is becoming questioned (Kezar, 2004). Early in higher education's development as an industry, the private sector was looked to for operating guidelines (Hevel, 2016). Both society and higher education have a reciprocal effect on each other; however, higher education's relationship to society (its charter) stems from its status as a public good (Kezar, 2004). That status means that "society provides resources, political support, raw materials, and a guiding influence" to higher education, and as society has become more neoliberal, students are seen as customers and education is considered a product (Kezar, 2004, p. 436). Neoliberalism, which has become the main economic and political philosophy in the United States, is driving higher education to behave more like private industry and "center students as consumers and frames faculty and staff as human capital whose values comes not from the production of knowledge of the quality of service but in their abilities to generate profit" (Graglia et al., 2021, p. 124).

As resources from society change, like diminished financial support, higher education has incorporated new opportunities for funding. In turn, developing strategies to increase funding causes public financial support to continue decreasing (Kezar, 2004). "As higher education has been corporatized and commodified, the role of the university as a driver of the public good is diminished in favor of a more transactional environment" (Graglia et al., 2021, p. 124).

Moreover, changing technologies and new challenges within student affairs provide a strain as new responsibilities are given to practitioners who may not have adequate training (Kuk, 2012). As more diverse and specialized offerings through student affairs have evolved, a neoliberal approach to funding activities creates skilled workers out of the students that student

affairs practitioners influence (Kezar, 2004; Kuk, 2012). Developing skilled workers serves the goal of neoliberal society and continues to influence higher education funding (Kezar, 2004; Kuk, 2012). Acquiring resources to support higher education institutions has created a cycle that is difficult to navigate.

Across human resources literature that is targeted at private industry, there is growing acknowledgement that the practice of talent management within human resources is necessary for organizational success (Ashton & Morton, 2005; McDonnell et al., 2017). Because “human resources in higher education mirrors the human resources role in business,” student affairs can look to this literature as the needs of staff change (Crume, 2012, p. 85). Human resources is more than the acquiring of excellent staff, but is also the management of that staff and their skillsets (Ashton & Morton, 2005; McDonnell et al., 2017). A key aspect of talent management includes a strategic organizational commitment to supporting existing staff and potential staff through recruitment and retention strategies that include professional development and specialized programs (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Crume, 2012; McDonnell et al., 2017). Professional development that is collaboratively agreed on by staff and their supervisors has the potential to account for inevitable gaps in preparation and supervision capabilities (Tolman & Calhoun, 2019). As the environment of work becomes more complex in nature, staff is an increasingly important organizational resource. With the neoliberal academy pushing student affairs staff to meet increasing demands at their personal cost, higher education institutions need to strategically commit to their staffing practices.

Effective staffing practices and synergistic supervision need to be fully integrated across an organization for staff needs to be more comprehensively met. Individuals conducting the work of an organization are the facilitators of the organizational outcomes. A talent management

approach to staffing is necessary for supervisors as they meet the changing needs of their staff. Because colleges and universities are large and complex organizations, “collaboration and cross-department partnerships are integral to increasing communication and educating the campus community on the resources available” to staff (Crume, 2012, p. 91). Moreover, it is not enough for supervisors to develop staffing-related policies and procedures without considering the outcomes of the organization and how the practices will be implemented. Too often, staffing functions are developed before outcomes are determined and without a plan for implementation.

Individuals within an organization will only be as good as the systems that support them. Staffing practices rely on clear goals and objectives that an organization can improve upon with influence from the staff who have high levels of accountability for the organization’s outcomes. This systematic approach to talent management in the private industry setting is like student affairs, where practitioners are facilitators of student development and learning. Because staffing practices continuously socialize practitioners to their institutions and roles, clear outcomes on talent management provide useful resources for staff.

Socialization to Ideal Worker Norms

Acknowledging socialization as a part of staffing practices is critical to understanding its influence on student affairs practitioners. Socialization is the process by which individuals learn how to perform their social identities within their environments (Harro, 2000). It is a cycle that begins prior to birth and is highly determined by the culture and environment someone is born to and engages in throughout their life (Harro, 2000). Individuals are constantly being socialized as a part of interactions with the people, environments, and systems with which they interact (Harro, 2000).

Even prior to having full-time roles in student affairs, emerging practitioners are socialized by graduate preparation and professional associations through the curriculum of their program, interactions with peers, interactions with faculty, interactions with practitioners, professional practice through experiential opportunities, and assessment of their learning (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Perez, 2021). Graduate preparation in a student affairs, higher education, or counseling master's program is often a preferred and expected experience prior to employment in a full-time student affairs role and used to socialized students to their prospective field (Perez, 2021; Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). In addition to being an opportunity for entry into scholarship and employment, graduate preparation often includes experiential learning through assistantships, internships, or practicums as well as involvement in professional associations. What is known as graduate preparation may be considered the first step of socialization to the field of student affairs as a professional career (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Perez, 2021).

Continued involvement in professional associations, learning new roles, and moving to new institutions all contribute to the resocialization of student affairs practitioners. Preparation to meet the changing needs of students and work in student affairs does not end at graduate work. It is one of many stages of professional development. Each of these transitions requires socialization that often comes from staffing practices such as hiring, onboarding, supervision, and professional development. Graduate preparation for student affairs roles is often looked to as a necessary entry way into the field (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998), and preparation programs are heavily relied on to improve performance in full-time roles (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009).

However, graduation from a preparation program is not required to work in student affairs, nor a guarantee of employment, and graduate preparation programs cannot prepare all

students for all possible roles. Staffing issues arise in mid-level and senior level roles as the complexities of responsibilities increase. Like graduate preparation, previous professional experience, even if it is full-time, cannot prepare practitioners for all possible roles. Inadequate staffing practices do not provide the resources that student affairs staff need as they are being socialized to their roles, and this lack of resources leads to burnout and turnover.

Burnout is Happening

While burnout as a phenomenon is understood to be the result of “severe stress in helping professions,” the concept is relatively new in the context of student affairs work (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021 p. 141). While there are several variations of the definition of burnout, it can be widely characterized as intense stress and strain in the workplace that leads to pessimism and indifference about work and personal exhaustion (Schaufeli et al., 2018). Burning out is a process as well as a state of being that is becoming more and more common in student affairs (Mistretta & Dubois, 2021; Schaufeli, 2018). Understanding burnout in student affairs is further complicated due to the additional workloads, care for students, and lack of resources as a result of higher education’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic that caused additional stress on practitioners that is still not fully understood (Chessman, 2021). When experiencing physical and emotional fatigue, response disassociation, and ineffectiveness in their roles, practitioners’ job performance and health will suffer. Staff may stay in their roles despite feeling burned out; however, that will inevitably shape their environment and those they interact with.

Learning healthy, individualized work life habits is necessary for preventing burnout; however, student affairs as a field has little understanding of burnout and its causes, which makes prevention extremely difficult (Mistretta & DuBois, 2021). Early socialization into the field and ideal worker norms that graduate students and entry-level staff encounter and adopt are

reinforced through continuous socialization to accepted work behaviors. Ideal worker norms are the behaviors that practitioners learn in their roles that benefit the institutions they serve (Graglia et al., 2021).

Practitioners learn that, as ideal workers, they must execute their roles regardless of the resources they are provided and the individual needs they may have (Graglia et al., 2021). Staff are expected to be individually accountable for their self-care and put equal weight on both work and their well-being by creating work-life balance, a concept that assumes ideal workers do not need care or will make work a priority over their care (Graglia et al., 2021). “With burnout comes disengagement from the job, which may be manifest in absenteeism, a desire to quit, and employee turnover” (Mistretta & DuBois, 2021 p. 142). Institutions, whether intentionally or unintentionally, benefit from practitioners being socialized through ideal worker norms (Mistretta & DuBois, 2021). However, execution of their work at the expense of themselves leads to staff burnout and contributes to issues in staffing, such as negative influence on morale, turnover, and low productivity. There is a need to further understand staffing practices in student affairs.

Problem Statement

Staffing practices not only describe the system in which student affairs practitioners are governed in their roles, but also the relationship of staff to the nature of their work and the system itself (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The complex nature of higher education institutions makes it difficult to create accountability for the individual experience of practitioners as they navigate these systems. Moreover, these complex systems are difficult to change, and lead to piecemeal staffing solutions that address individualized needs. It is not enough to have strong individual approaches to staffing. A practitioner’s experience is

determined by the quality of the overarching system of staffing practices. Understanding how elements of staffing practices are interconnected is necessary to fully understand and potentially improve the experiences of practitioners who work within the staffing system.

Practitioners in student affairs are socialized to ideal worker norms that often lead to staff being burned out and pushed out of the field (Anderson, 2020; Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021). However, although all practitioners face challenges, some choose to leave and others do not. The influence of burnout on those who stay may not be fully understood because the act of leaving is a visible indicator of unhappiness. Practitioners may stay in their roles for a variety of reasons and are likely to continue experiencing challenges in those roles. Student affairs staff facilitate the experiences of their colleagues, including their supervisees, and their students through their work. The effect of these experiences, positive or negative, will come through in their work and in their environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed how the world approaches work. A competitive hiring environment has led to benefits such as increased salaries, hybrid or remote work options, and flexibility on required skills for roles (Mutambisi, et al., 2021; Williams, 2020). The neoliberal academy and ideal worker norms do not benefit student affairs staff, and a recent emphasis has been put on individual accountability for work-life balance (Anderson, 2020; Chessman, 2021; Graglia et al, 2021). Staffing practices systems dictate the experience of student affairs practitioners, and providing resources through those practices can support practitioners' well-being through their work (Anderson, 2020; Chessman, 2021).

Little research exists about staffing practices systems and how practitioners interact with those systems. Staffing practices have shape the experiences of practitioners, and more insights are needed on how staffing practices are interconnected.

Purpose of Study

Literature supports that systematic staffing practices are necessary in student affairs (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). There remains a need to understand current staffing practices in student affairs. The purpose of this research study was to learn about current staffing practices.

To guide this research study, I asked the following question:

- How do student affairs practitioners experience staffing practices at their institution?

To fully ensure that this research question was answered through the course of the case study, the following questions were asked for additional context:

- How do practitioners describe their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners perceive the interconnectedness of their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners describe their experiences with institutional staffing practices across their employment?

Definitions

The following section defines terms that will be used throughout this research study:

Organizational Context is the term used to describe external environmental factors and institutional context that shape staffing.

Staffing Practices are the collection of activities that practitioners may encounter during their employment including recruitment/selection, orientation, supervision, performance appraisal, professional development, and separation (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997 is the citation that will be used throughout the study to note the Model of Staffing Practices and Integrated Model of Staffing practices.

Each citation will be used individually when referring to the individual works.

Practitioners and Staff are the facilitators of student affairs work. When generally used, this definition will include director-level, mid-level, entry-level, and graduate-level staff. (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Supervisors are student affairs staff with supervisory responsibilities. When generally used, this definition will indicate staff who supervise full-time practitioners.

Student Affairs Divisions are unit areas where student affairs programming and services are largely offered. Student affairs divisions may go by other names (e.g., Office of Student Life); however, this term will be used to broadly describe the field of student affairs.

Talent Management is a specific function within human resources that directly manages the experiences of staff.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study explored student affairs staffing practices and the experiences of staff. This literature review encompasses an overview of early staffing practices in student affairs; higher education organizational theory, a description of the private industry characteristics within higher education and human resources theory in private industry; a review on current staffing practices and resources in student affairs; and a discussion of socialization, ideal worker norms, and burnout and implications for practitioners.

The Current Environment

Higher education institutions are incredibly complex and ever-changing organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Throughout higher education's history, colleges and universities have considered what private sector organizations have done to address staffing needs. There are common themes in how an institution is governed even though there may be individualized leadership approaches to staffing at each institution.

Since the earliest iterations of student affairs practitioner roles, there has been a need to consider staffing practices to meet the needs of student affairs staff to facilitate programs and services for students. Originally created as a way for administrative staff and faculty to work at institutions with fewer student oversight responsibilities, dean of women, dean of men, and dean of students roles became more and more common (Hevel, 2016). These roles adapted to provide direct oversight over student wellbeing to meet the public concern over more women entering higher education (Hevel, 2016). Student affairs as a profession, professional associations, and professional standards have grown and evolved since the original context of student personnel roles (Hevel, 2016).

Student affairs' early staffing practices were influenced by private and public business approaches to personnel management. In the 1920s student affairs continued to adapt as a professional field with the "application of the personnel movement in business and government – an effort to increase efficiency for organizations and happiness for individuals by aligning individuals' talents with specific jobs – to higher education" (Hevel, 2016, pp. 847-848). Looking toward private industry human resources practices increased a desire for efficiencies in early student affairs roles (Hevel, 2016). Examining ways to be more efficient in student affairs staffing practices led to consolidation of dean of women and dean of men roles as acceptance of coeducation increased (Hevel, 2016). This also increased the number of senior-level roles that became ways for student affairs practitioners to aspire to professional growth, which added to the continued professionalization of the student affairs field (Hevel, 2016).

While each higher education institution brings its individual approach to staffing practices, even in the early days of student affairs, legitimizing student affairs as an industry led to establishing graduate preparation programs, establishing professional associations, and creating professional standards. However, this professionalization reflects the sexist, racist, and homophobic backbone of American society that makes lack of resource allocation in staffing practices even more impactful on those who hold marginalized identities (Anderson, 2020; Hevel, 2016).

Current staffing practices, developed from the ever-changing and continued professionalization of student affairs as a field, are not effective without taking into consideration the environment that staffing practices exist and operate within (Creamer & Winston, 2002). "The cumulative result of these factors and their multiple interactions with the staffing practices... is the delivery of educational programs and services to students and the institution"

(Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 39). If student development and learning is the outcome of delivering educational programs and services, then the environment in which practitioners experience staffing practices will inevitably influence student experience.

The following sections in the literature review will describe the environment in which higher education exists, the continued privatization of higher education, staffing practices in student affairs, and how socialization shapes practitioners.

Higher Education Organizational Theory

Because “staffing practices in an institution are directly related to many other conditions and forces, some from outside the institution and others that are products of the institution’s culture,” the external and internal environments that impact an institution need to be understood (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 21). Higher education organizational theory provides additional history and broad application that helps to contextualize the complex, current environment of higher education.

Bolman & Deal’s Four Frame Model

Organizational development theory discussed in Bolman and Deal’s (2017) text, *Artistry, Choice, and Leadership: Reframing Organization (6th ed.)*, provides frameworks for understanding the complexities of higher education institutions. Because early student affairs staffing practices were influenced by private industry and government organizations, these frames can help practitioners navigate the current environment of higher education because higher education staffing practices continue to be influence by private industry (Kezar, 2004). Moreover, Bolman and Deal’s (2017) model specific addresses human resources as an aspect of organizational development theory in its Human Resources Frame. Despite professionalization of student affairs creating industry-specific needs, these frames provide perspective to the

intersection of business-like operations in the public service mission of higher education as higher education continues to behave more as a private sector industry (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar, 2004).

Before outlining the Four Frame Model, Bolman and Deal (2017) provide four key characteristics of organizations that help define the environment of higher education. Higher education institutions are complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous. Knowing this about the institutions that student practitioners exist and work in, it can be understood that the interactions between staff and their environment are limitless (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In higher education institutions, change is constant, institutions are incentivized to benefit themselves over individuals, and it is difficult for staff to untangle each of the previous characteristics (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Having awareness of the complexity of higher education institutions is the first step for student affairs leaders to address staffing practices from a comprehensive approach within their divisions. Awareness is critical because implementing comprehensive staffing practices requires an understanding of the external and internal institutional environment (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

The Structural Frame. Bolman and Deal's (2017) Structural Frame provides exactly that, a structure that positions people in the best direction, defines roles, and sets collaborative expectations. This framework does not center individuals, rather it "examines the social architecture of work" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 107). Complex organizations can be organized and structured in a variety of ways, but what is crucial to their success is defining the structure itself and the expectations of those who operate within the structure (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The Structural Framework provides metrics and goal-based structure that may be lacking in other frames and is necessary for a comprehensive assessment (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Colleges and universities are growing and changing institutions. The need to define organizational structures comes as organizations mature in size and age, as goals evolve, as technologies are incorporated into work, and as more educated and autonomous workers change the needs of the workforce (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Knowing that structures provide guidelines for practitioners, staffing practices in student affairs consistently need to be assessed to address the changing needs of the institution and the practitioners that operate in it.

The Human Resources Frame. The Human Resource Frame's core value is that organizations exist for the service and to the benefit of the people who operate within them (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This framework focuses on cultivating interdependence by encouraging staff to share knowledge and developing culture. It also provides a balance to the structure-centric approach from the Structural Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Capitalizing on the intrinsic motivation that comes through the Human Resource Framework can address cultural issues or lack of formal leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Historically, higher education has valued itself and its student outcomes over the experience of the individuals who facilitate the outcomes (Hevel, 2016). Examining organizations through the Human Resources Frame allows us to center the experience of practitioners responsible for facilitating student outcomes.

The Political Frame. The Political Frame discusses the political perception of organizations but emphasizes the coalition building that takes place in these organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The negative perspective is that there is significant in-fighting in organizations; however, the Political Frame describes negotiation as key to building and maintaining relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Decision making and goals are achieved through the negotiation process that occurs when stakeholders within a collaboration discuss their needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Because

organizations are inherently political, building up relationships in all aspects is crucial for the success of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Because these interactions are an expected aspect of working in higher education, institutions benefit from understanding the political nature of their organizations and how to facilitate productive collaboration within them through staffing practices.

The Symbolic Frame. The strength of the Symbolic Frame comes in its ability to disrupt traditional aspects of organizations. Individual perspectives and contributions are valued by allowing space for humor, rapport, and rituals (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The Symbolic Frame focuses on the meaning and purpose people may get from their work and balances the bureaucratic nature of the other frames (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This is critical for people to feel of sense of belonging and community during difficult times and manage through the difficulties of an organizational structure (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Staffing challenges in higher education did not appear overnight, and they will not be alleviated overnight. A Symbolic Frame on the organization will help staff build resiliency through continued turbulence while leadership addresses the issues at hand (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Because the environment of higher education is unpredictable, staffing practices that are influenced by the Symbolic Frame prepare practitioners to navigate these unpredictable waters.

While Bolman & Deal (2017) describe the context in which higher education institutions exist and how they operate, staffing practices rely on leaders to provide guidance on management and execution (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001). The ever-changing nature of higher education organizations challenges the institutions themselves to rethink organizational structure and hierarchy (Kuk, 2012). Evolution in staffing structures is influenced by the external

and internal environments, and leaders within these organizations are responsible for steering their institutions through change effectively to meet the changing needs of staff.

Privatization of Higher Education

With the multitude of factors that influence the environment of higher education, leaders need comprehensive staffing practices. Staffing practices supported with resources for the staff impact student outcomes of their college or university. Understanding the environmental landscape as well as having a systemic staffing practices approach is necessary to meet the changing economic demands in higher education institutions and the strain they put on their organizations. A part of the evolution of higher education has been, as an industry, increasingly reflecting and adopting characteristics of private industry.

Education as a Public Good

The position of higher education in society and how it operates in society is complex. The foundational charter between higher education and the culture it exists in was conceptualized by its original mission of public good and service (Kezar, 2004), and, more and more, higher education is thought to be a way to rise in socio-economic status (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). Critics posit that higher education is foregoing its role as a social entity and behaving more and more like a privatized industry (Kezar, 2004). This is made more complicated by the diverse types of higher education institutional missions and raises the question of whether higher education continues to be accessible (Kezar, 2004).

Higher education organizations are ever-changing; however, grounding those changes in organizational theory and the environment that an institution operates within is necessary to address organizational issues like staffing structures (Kuk & Banning, 2009). Referencing human resources practices in private industry can be a means to guide student affairs staffing practices

to meet the changing needs of organizations as they continue to privatize (Hevel, 2016).

Historically, private industry moves at a faster pace than higher education when it comes to addressing a changing environment and so can be seen as a way to guide decision making in student affairs staffing practices.

5 P's Model of Human Resources Management

A talent management perspective on staffing requires an organizational commitment to strategically retaining and developing staff. This is an improvement on traditional ways of thinking about human resources as a talent management perspective requires a holistic view of organizational and staff development (Ashton & Morton, 2005). An organization should have a strategic method of creating a talent management forward organization.

First introduced by Schuler (1992) to provide organizations a framework for excellence in human resource management, the 5 P's Model is a widely used approach for leaders to ensure organizational longevity and success. Schuler's (1992) original framework identified the 5 P's that organizations could use to intentionally address the needs of staff to increase productivity. Those 5 P's were developed into a process paradigm that demonstrated how all of the 5 P's were interconnected and provided guidelines for strategic management of staff (Pryor et al., 1998). Leveraging the 5 P's as staffing issues evolved further and developed into a model for strategic implementation (Pryor et al., 2007).

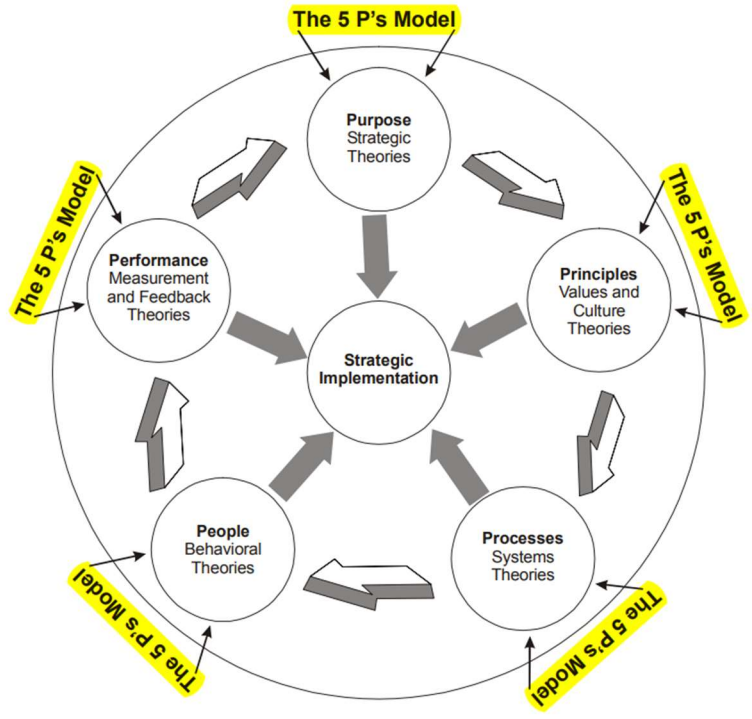
The 5 P's of the 5 P's Model are purpose, principles, processes, people, and performance (Schuler, 1992; Pryor et al., 1998; Pryor et al., 2007). The *purpose* is the organization's "mission, vision, goals and objectives, strategies, measure, and feedback" (Pryor et al., 2007, p. 7). Its *principles* are what drives the organization and how it should operate. An organization's *processes*, the third P, are determined by the inputs of its stakeholders and the outcomes that are

derived from those efforts. The fourth P, *people*, dives further into the stakeholders in the organization and includes “employees, customers, suppliers, and others” (Pryor et al., 2007, p. 12). A organization’s *performance*, the fifth P in the model, is the measured expected and actual outcomes that provide feedback to organizational leadership.

In previous models, the 5 P’s directly flowed from one to the others, starting with purpose and ending with performance. In the integrated model that focuses on the 5P’s in relation to one another, a leader’s strategic influence on implementing human resources practices is emphasized (Pryor et al., 2007). This approach to human resources management may inform an updated approach to student affairs staffing. In particular, the 5P’s model can be used by organizational leadership for strategic talent management (Pryor, et al., 2007).

Figure 1

The 5 P’s Model



Note. Image of the 5 P's Model. Adapted from: Pryor, M. G., Anderson, D., Toombs, L. A., & Humphreys, J. H. (2007). Strategic implementation as a core competency: The 5 P's Model. *Journal of Management Research*, 7(1), 3-17.

Similar to the 5 P's Paradigm developed by Pryor et al. (1998), Winston and Creamer's (1994 & 2002) Student Affairs Staffing Model is a process-oriented model that demonstrates how each of the tenets of the model progress linearly. However, the Student Affairs Staffing model does not demonstrate the interconnected nature of each staffing practice as the updated 5 P's Paradigm can illustrate. There is not only a need to provide a process for staffing practices, but to also understand how they are interconnected as staffing practices.

Staffing Practices

Managing a complex organization challenges leaders to understand the interconnected relationships in their environments to provide direction for staff. Because staffing practices are embedded across higher education and student affairs, it is imperative that leaders approach them systematically while understanding the complexity and changing nature of their environments. This awareness allows leaders to create a plan of action for staffing practices in student affairs. Awareness of the environment, plan of action, and implementation of staffing practices culminate into staffing that addresses the needs of practitioners. Systematic staffing can be utilized broadly across the field and have flexibility to be individualized to the needs of a specific organization.

Student Affairs Staffing Practices

Model of Staffing Practices

Winston and Creamer (1997) and Kuk (2016) both agree that the best way to positively shape student learning is to provide the resources necessary for staff to be successful.

Davenport's (2016) approach to staffing is a detailed approach that reflects the five key aspects of Winston and Creamer's (1997) staffing model. The quality of the staff and their experience are directly influenced by a hiring manager's ability to "recruit, select, supervise, and retain talented professionals" (Davenport, 2016, p. 408).

Staffing practices are an important aspect of leading and managing in student affairs (Tull, 2011; Winston et al., 2001). The Student Affairs Staffing Model provides three general principles for leaders to consider as they execute their institution's staffing practices:

- Staff at all levels need to be continuously engaged in staffing practices
- Staffing practices should be systematically and straightforwardly approached
- Staffing practices should feel natural and be simple

Staffing practices in student affairs lack a comprehensive strategy for implementation. Socialization to student affairs roles is a life-long learning process that occurs through staffing practices (Komives & Carpenter, 2016). From recruitment and selection to a separation plan, hiring managers need to be experts on the environment they are hiring individuals from and the environment those hired are entering (Davenport, 2016). Leaders are responsible for ensuring effective recruiting and selecting, orienting, supervising, developing, and appraising staff (Tull, 2011; Winston & Creamer, 1997;). The five tenets and the considerations that create success for each staffing practice of the Model of Staffing Practices are:

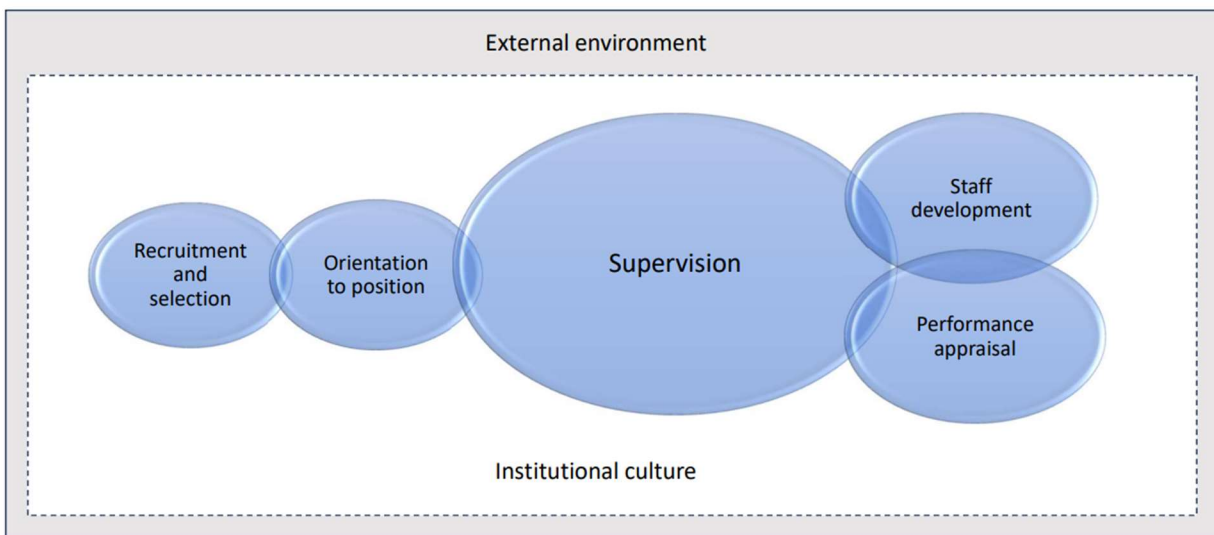
- *Recruitment and selection*: the process of hiring practitioners into a role.
 - Determining candidate fit for the role
 - Evaluating formal credentials and relevant experience
 - Reviewing position responsibilities and job description
 - Setting clear expectations for performance

- Setting clear expectations for a search committee
- Setting clear guidelines for the search process
- Observing all institutional and legal guidelines for conducting a search
- Considering opportunities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the search process
- *Orientation*: the process of preparing them to perform a role.
 - Starting during the recruitment and selection process
 - Ensuring total acclimatization to the institution and role
 - Providing detailed guidelines to complete during orientation
- *Supervision*: considered to be significantly critical to practitioners in their role, is the dynamic relationship between a staff member and their supervisor.
 - Setting clear expectations for each staff member
 - Basing supervision on goals and routine accountability to those goals
 - Creating opportunities for systematic and ongoing supervision
- *Staff Development*: tied to the supervision and performance appraisal processes, is the process of developing as an individual and improving organizational practices.
 - Developing and following a development plan for staff
 - Considering new skills as well as professional growth
 - Incorporating development into day-to-day work
 - Considering a variety of development approaches
 - Recognizing staff achievements, skill development, personal growth, and professional growth

- *Performance Appraisal*: tied to the supervision process and staff development, is a process that is used to improve the performance of practitioners.
 - Acknowledging appraisals are aimed to improve staff performance and institutional performance
 - Tying performance appraisals to rewards
 - Recognizing environmental context that shapes performance and performance appraisals
 - Setting clear expectations for performance appraisals
 - Reviewing role responsibilities regularly
 - Acknowledging appraiser role and influence in the performance appraisal process

Figure 2

Model of Staffing Practices



Note. Image of the Model of Staffing Practices. Adapted from: Winston, R. B., Jr., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*. Jossey-Bass.

Separation. An update to Winston and Creamer's (1997) Model of Staffing Practices added a sixth staffing practice: separation (Conley, 2001). Conley (2001) stated,

The Winston and Creamer (1997) model falls short, however, of explicitly acknowledging that people change jobs and leave them for a variety of reasons/ When these changes occur, they have significant effects on the departing staff member, members of the unit who remain, the unit supervisor, and perhaps the student clientele as well. (p. 58)

There are five general reasons why a staff member may leave their role: "(a) professional reasons, (b) personal reasons, (c) retirement, (d) involuntary separation, and (e) incapacitating illness or death" (Conley, 2001, p. 58). Intentions behind why a staff member may leave, in the case of professional or personal reasons, are varied and difficult for supervisors to predict (Conley, 2001). Regardless of the reasons for a staff member deciding to leave, having a systematic approach to supervision and staffing helps supervisors navigate the change and transition (Conley, 2001).

An important factor for supervisors to understand when it comes to managing a staff member's separation is the perception of the staff members who remain in their roles and are impacted by the separation (Conley, 2001). Conley (2001) provides Schlossberg's (1984) definition of transition as a helpful way for supervisors to pay attention to their staff's needs because it conceptualizes transition as an event that can cause "crisis, transformation, and change" (p. 61). Supervisors who are attentive to the emotional response of the staff when a colleague separates from their role can provide support for staff (Conley, 2001).

Conley (2001) stressed the importance of supervisors openly communicating with staff during the transitional time that occurs when a colleague leaves their role and suggested Schein's

(1978) guidelines for supervisors. During this period of change, supervisors should respond by cultivating “(a) intimacy with peers, (b) serious talk, (c) small adjustments, (d) supportive relationships, and (e) human resources planning” in the daily activities of the unit area (Conley, 2001; Schein, 1978, as cited in Conley, 2001, p. 6). It is a supervisor’s responsibility to create an open environment when staff will need to deal with the fallout of a colleague leaving their roles.

Synergistic Supervision

A key aspect of the Model of Staffing Practices is Winston and Creamer’s (1997) proposal for a specific type of supervision called *synergistic supervision*. In the original model, synergistic supervision is described as having “a dual focus on accomplishment of the organization’s goals and on support of staff in accomplishment of their personal and professional goals” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 43). It is necessary for a supervisor to have a collaborative relationship with their staff to achieve synergistic supervision. Achieving organizational or personnel goals is not dependent wholly on a supervisor, but also on the interrelationships a supervisor creates with their staff (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The tenets of Winston and Creamer’s (1997) synergistic supervision are:

- Dual Focus: understanding how to balance organizational goals and individual staff needs
- Joint Effort: understanding that supervision is a collaborative effort between supervisors and staff, “supervision is not something done to staff” (p. 198)
- Two-Way Communication: developing a high amount of trust between the supervisor and staff
- Focus on Competence: developing staff competencies in the following areas:
 - Knowledge and information about student development
 - Work related skills

- Personal and professional skills
- Attitudes about working collaboratively
- Growth Orientation: developing the staff's sense of self in their roles and future roles through Schein's (1978) six anchors in a staff member's career
 - Technical and functional competencies
 - Managerial competencies
 - Security and stability
 - Creativity
 - Basic identity
 - Service to others
- Proactivity: identifying problems within the staff before they develop into larger issues
- Goal-based: communicating with staff about the supervisor's expectations for staff and understand the staff's expectations for the supervisor
- Systematic and Ongoing Processes: Developing routine habits of supervision rather than supervising in response to staff crisis
- Holism: Understanding that staff cannot be separated from their beliefs as a supervisor works to develop their personal and professional skills.

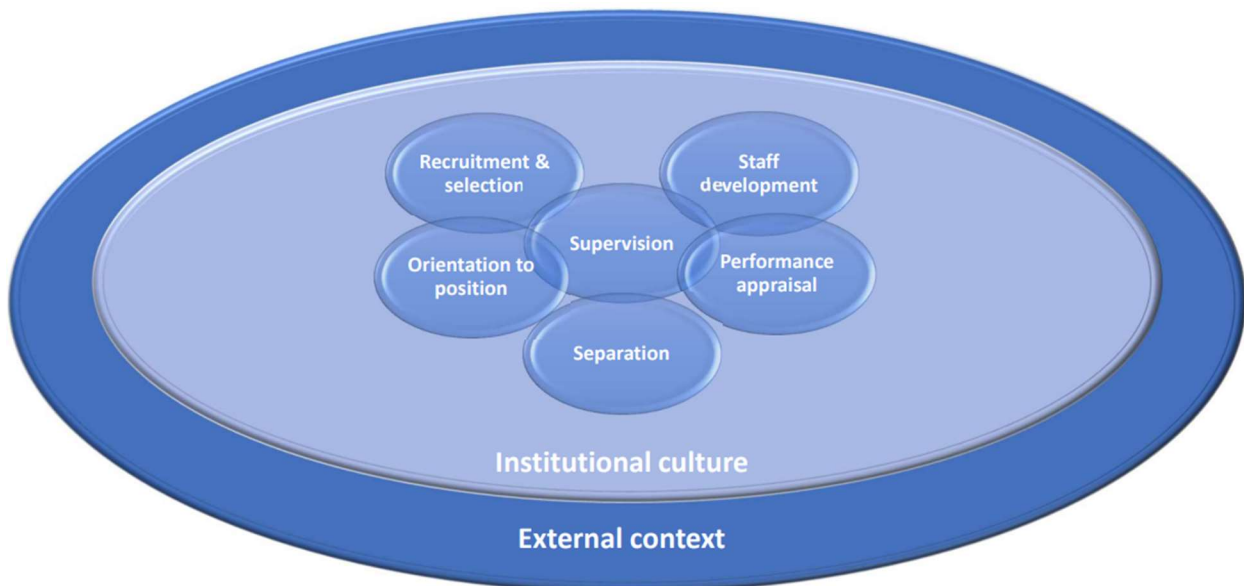
Winston and Creamer (1997) also provide broad recommendations on supervising enthusiastic and well-prepared staff as well as less enthusiastic or ineffective staff (particularly middle-managers). The tenets of synergistic supervision and recommendations Winston and Creamer (1997) provide on supervising staff illustrate how complex supervision is for supervisors. Conley (2001) as well as Creamer & Winston's (2002) updates to the Model of Staffing Practices continue to emphasize the important of synergistic supervision in student affairs.

Integrated Model of Staffing Practices

Following the publication of the original Model of Staffing Practices (Winston & Creamer, 1997) and Conley's (2001) addition of separation to the Model of Staffing Practices, Creamer and Winston (2002) published an *Integrated Model of Staffing Practices*. The updated model "[reflects] the interdependency of all staffing components and the modifications to the original model" (p. 2). Each of the six staffing practices (recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation) are included in the updated model and still sit within the context of the institutional culture. However, the staffing practices overlap in a circular formation rather than the linear formation of the original model. In the center of the staffing practices is supervision. That positioning is intended to reflect that supervision is at the center as a critical component of staffing.

Figure 3

Integrated Model of Staffing Practices



Note. Image of the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices. Adapted from: Creamer, D. G., & Winston, R. B., (2002). Improving staffing practices. *Net Results*.

<https://www.bgsu.edu/library/cac/collections/nsaa.html>

Unfortunately, these processes are often disjointed and create issues with the employee experience in higher education. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, student affairs experienced high turnover in its workforce because of lack of consistency between preparation and supervision (Perez, 2016). Staffing practices are not nearly as effective without an understanding of the often unclear and dynamic environment that staffing takes place in and the interconnectedness of staffing practices to that environment (Winston et al., 2001). “Although the functions of recruiting, selecting, supervising, and retaining staff are often considered as discrete, they should be view as related phases in a contiguous process with interconnected stages” (Davenport, 2016, p. 389). Staffing practices work in concert with one another, and it is necessary to implement staffing strategies by considering how staffing practices build from one another (Winston et al., 2001). However, current models do not fully illustrate the influence supervision has on each staffing practice and the staff experience.

Because the “successful administration of a student affairs division is primarily determined by the competence of the staff members who fill the positions,” effective staffing strategies and staffing practices are necessary (Winston et al., p. 7). However, benchmarking staffing practices across the field of student affairs can be difficult considering the complex nature of individual institutions. There is existing research that describes the functional aspect of staffing practices, but more insight is needed on what is considered good practice for staffing in student affairs and staff experiences (Winston et al., 2001).

Using CAS Standards in Staffing

An important resource for benchmarking good practice in student affairs is The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). CAS is a consortium of professional associations that

promotes intra-campus collaboration and reflects good practices agreed upon by the profession-at-large through the CAS Standards. The CAS Standards set of standards and guidelines developed by practitioners, leaders, and professional associations, are the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs since its inception in 1979. (CAS, 2019, p. 1)

The CAS standards are comprised of 12 “common criteria categories” known as the general standards that are applicable to every functional area in student affairs, regardless of the specialty of the office (CAS, 2019). Additionally, there are functional area specific standards and guidelines that provide structure to specialized areas (CAS, 2019). The term *standard* is used to describe the baseline expectation for a functional area while the term *guideline* “provide[s] suggestions and illustrations that can assist in establishing programs and services that more fully address the needs of student than those mandated by a standard” (CAS, 2019, p. 1). The CAS General Standards are 12 sections, with each section containing multiple standards. The 12 sections of the CAS General Standards are mission; programs and services; student learning, development, and success; assessment; access, equity, diversity, and inclusion; leadership, management, and supervision; human resources; communication and collaboration; ethics, law, and policy; financial resources; technology; and facilities and infrastructure (CAS, 2019). While each of these areas provide guidance on the work of student affairs practitioners, this case study will focus on the General Standards as they relate to staffing practices models (Creamer &

Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). These are the standards that address recruitment, orientation, supervision, performance appraisal, staff development, and separation.

Standards that address staffing practices can be found within the Guiding Principles for Organization, Leadership, and Human Resources (CAS, 2019). There are standards that apply to staffing practices including:

- *Leadership*
- *Management*
- *Supervision*
- *Strategic Planning*
- *Staffing and Support*
- *Employment Practices*
- *Personnel Training and Development*

With increasing attention being paid to how resources in higher education are distributed, CAS standards provide a benchmark for quality and improvement across student affairs (CAS, 2019; Gulley et al., 2017). CAS standards and guidelines can be leveraged across an entire student affairs division by infusing them in a divisional culture (Gulley et al., 2017). While there is little research in using CAS standards within staffing, one of the five core beliefs “underlying and informing CAS’s work [that] derive from theories and concepts germane to human development, student learning, group dynamics, organizational management, and administration” is *Organization, Leadership, and Human Resources* (Gulley et al., 2017, pp. 6-7). This core belief affirms that “each postsecondary institution is unique, and the specific missions and intended outcomes of programs and services should shape its structures and direct its efforts.

Successful programs and services require leadership, and individuals providing direction should be experienced, knowledgeable, and well qualified” (Gulley et al., 2017, p. 7).

CAS standards and guidelines are adaptable, and practitioners are encouraged to adapt them to address specific needs within their organizations while also “challenging the concept of ‘silo’ thinking” often found in higher education (CAS, 2019, p. 3). The collaborative approach to developing and regular updates to CAS standards and guidelines make them a useful benchmark to address the ever-changing environment of higher education. Because the General Standards are applicable across student affairs and are considered the benchmark for providing services in a functional area, the standards that directly address staffing practices can be used to establish a baseline expectation for staffing practices within student affairs. To best utilize them, it is important for leaders to understand how staffing practices influence practitioners.

Influence of Staffing Practices

Student affairs practitioners enter the field of student affairs through the process of socialization. This process begins as a practitioner enters the field and continues through roles, institutions, and relationships. Tenets of socialization are embedded within staffing practices as a result of the complex environments of higher education. Before diving into staffing practices shaping socialization, a summary of The Cycle of Socialization follows as it provides a framework for understanding socialization in higher education.

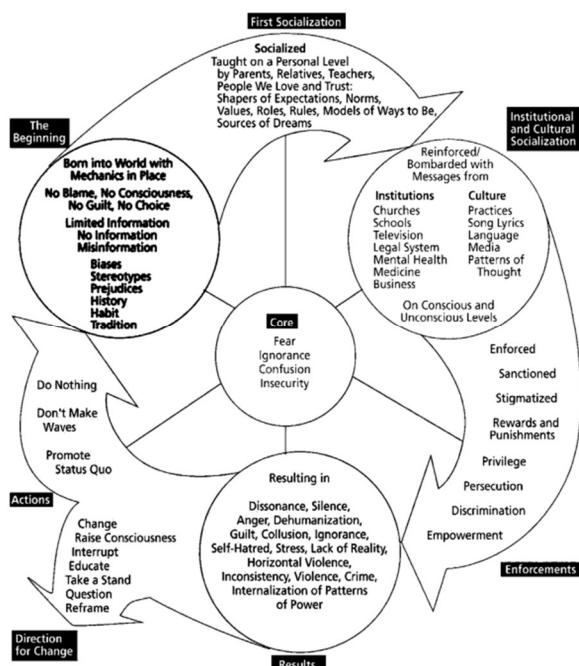
Socialization

Harro’s Cycle of Socialization (2000) is a model that provides a way to understand how the environments and social identities that individuals are born into influence them and the oppression they experience. The cycle is comprised of five major stages that are influenced by the core issue that keeps individuals in the cycle. Socialization begins when an individual is born

and begins the “first socialization” which shapes understanding of who to trust and self-understanding. This is followed by “institutional and cultural socialization” which sends messages about the individual based on the institutions they interact with. These messages are reinforced by rewards and punishments in the “enforcements” stage of the cycle. The “results” stage follows and outlines the negative outcomes of socialization for those who hold power and who do not hold power. Finally, there is a final stage where an individual will either begin the cycle again if nothing is done and the cycle continues, or an individual can break the cycle if a system is challenged where they can move toward liberation from the cycle. Often, this break in the cycle can be described as the last straw that pushes an individual to make a change for themselves.

Figure 4

Cycle of Socialization



Note. Image of the Cycle of Socialization. Adapted from: Harro, B. (2000). The cycle of socialization. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2, 45-51.

Because student affairs divisions and campuses are institutional environments that practitioners interact with, they will inevitably be socialized by the environment. Socialization in student affairs occurs across a practitioner's professional experience but it is particularly formative in socialization as a new professional (Tull et al., 2009). New professional socialization occurs in four stages that flow linearly beginning with the *anticipatory stage*, followed by the *formal stage*, *informal stage*, and *personal stage* (Tull et al., 2009). During the anticipatory stage, new professionals develop expectations of what their roles will be as an outsider. This perspective changes during the formal stage where new professionals enter their role and formal orientations and training take place that affirm or challenge their expectations. The informal stage follows when professionals observe the formal aspects of their roles and the informal ways they navigate in the environment around them which leads to them finding their individual style of work. Finally, new professionals enter the personal stage where work life and personal life become integrated, and they develop an individualized work identity (Tull et al., 2009).

This early socialization sets the stage for practitioners in student affairs that can carry through their future roles. Elements of The Integrated Model of Staffing Practices, particularly orientation, supervision, and professional development, are key aspects of socialization for new professionals (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Tull et al., 2009; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Understanding socialization of new professionals and the importance that staffing practices play in that socialization provides important perspective on the influence that staffing practices have on practitioners. Repeated lack of staffing practices resources for practitioners may lead student

affairs professionals to the point of frustration described in the Cycle of Socialization that causes individuals to leave that environment.

Ideal Worker Norms in Student Affairs

Socialization to ideal worker norms is pervasive in student affairs and causes harm to practitioners (Graglia et al., 2021). An ideal worker is an individual who does not have needs outside of the roles they play in an institution and is able to execute their role fully without complaint (Graglia et al., 2021; Williams, 2021). These norms exist to benefit neo-liberal and capitalistic forms of work that value outcomes at the expense of the individuals responsible for facilitating outcomes. Socialization to an organization that reinforces ideal worker norms takes advantage of the care-driven individuals who often seek work in student affairs (Graglia et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in some disruption of ideal workers norms. However, flexibility in work life, like remote work, is not a widespread expectation for workers (Williams, 2021). Organizations that reinforce ideal workers to accomplish outcomes rely on workers to execute their roles regardless of what is happening in the environment around them and the institution (Graglia et al., 2021). Student affairs practitioners are expected to facilitate student learning and development regardless of the resources at their disposal and without complaint (Graglia et al., 2021).

Experiencing Burnout and Burnthrough

Student affairs roles are among the “helping professions” that are understood to be affected by burnout in helping work (Anderson, 2020). Burnout itself is the experience of emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and lessening of personal accomplishment in a people-facing job (Schaufeli et al., 2009). It “refers to the smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a

candle. It implies that once a fire was burning but the fire cannot continue burning brightly unless there are sufficient resources that keep being replenished” (Schaufeli et al., 2009, p. 205). Experiencing burnout is particularly intense for student affairs practitioners working with students experiencing trauma and in diversity work (Anderson, 2020). The emotional toll of working in student affairs without adequate resources or personal fulfillment can lead burnout (Silver & Jakeman, 2014). When lack of resources leads to burnout, student affairs practitioners are pushed out of their roles (Anderson, 2020).

Because turnover leads to recruiting and hiring of new roles, staffing strategies and the frameworks that can comprehensively inform them can improve the experiences of practitioners. “When burnout is the sole frame for understanding the struggles of student affairs staff work – diversity or otherwise – the tendency is to propose self-care and work-life balance as the solution” (Anderson, 2020, p. 359). Adequate resourcing is critical when addressing burnout in student affairs as, too often, practitioners are encouraged to deal with burnout themselves (Anderson, 2020). Creating harmony between work and life is impossible to cultivate without the structural and monetary resources, such as comprehensive staffing strategies and implementation, that are necessary (Anderson, 2020). Individuals burn out in their student affairs roles when institutions burn through them (Anderson, 2020).

Conclusion

Current staffing practices in student affairs do not consistently account for the needs of the practitioners responsible for accomplishing the outcomes of the institutions and students they serve. Lack of understanding of staffing strategies, their implementation, and the influence they have on practitioners is leading to burnout in practitioners. Contextualizing staffing practices in organizational environments, the privatization of higher education, current staffing strategies,

and socialization can lead to making informed staffing decisions in student affairs that provide practitioners with the resources they need to execute the outcomes of their roles. In Chapter 3, I outlined how I explored this issue within the environmental context that practitioners work in.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this case study, I explored staffing practices in student affairs. This case study was guided by Winston and Creamer's Model of Staffing Practices and the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). In Chapter 2, I reviewed additional literature regarding organizational structure, the privatization of higher education, socialization, ideal worker norms, staffing practices, and burnout that all provided context on staffing practices and staff experience. The literature provided insights on the complexity of the conceptual frameworks that this study will be examining.

I approached this case study from a constructivist framework. This framework considers that "researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). This study sought to understand staffing practices as a part of the complex and interconnected staffing practices and systems they exist in. I took this perspective to describe and understand the phenomena that I wanted to explore through this case study. This was a necessary approach for this study because individuals brought their unique perspectives, and multiple realities existed through the course of the case study. Infinite meanings can be derived from individual experiences.

The constructivist perspective allowed for flexibility and evolution in research design characteristics that are necessary in qualitative research, as well as smaller sampling, a researcher being the primary data collection instrument, constant and comparative analysis, and holistic findings (Merriam, 2009). The tenets of a constructivist perspective aligned with the multiple case study methodology I designed and what I learned in this case study. This research design benefited from constructivism because of the emphasis on individual experiences and meaning-

making that qualitative research explores. I learned about staffing practices and the experiences of practitioners as they engaged with staffing practices at their institutions. Moreover, a multiple case study design requires a clear binding of the cases, and a constructivist perspective is inherently context bound (Merriam, 2009).

To guide this research study, I asked the following question:

- How do student affairs practitioners experience staffing practices at their institution?

To fully ensure that this research question was answered through the course of the case study, the following questions were asked for additional context:

- How do practitioners describe their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners perceive the interconnectedness of their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners describe their experiences with institutional staffing practices across their employment?

Reflexivity

I began my career in student affairs as a first-year student employee in campus recreation and spent the next 10 years progressing to become an experienced practitioner. I was interested in researching staffing practices because of my own experiences as a practitioner. As a result, it was imperative that I remained aware of potential bias during data collection and analysis. At the forefront of my mind for this project was capturing a meaningful snapshot of staffing practices in student affairs. In doing so, institutional and participant safety was critical. Participant safety for this project included maintaining privacy and providing a space of psychological safety during data collection.

Socialization is shaped by an individual's identities and life experiences related to their identities. It is also important that I name the identities I hold as a white, cisgender woman, and that these identities influenced the design and execution of this study. Because of the identities I hold, I inevitably experienced socialization to student affairs differently than those who hold different identities.

An additional important potential bias for me to be aware of was my lack of experience supervising full-time student affairs staff. As a practitioner, I supervised as many as 200 part-time student staff and three graduate assistants. However, I have not supervised another full-time practitioner. This is an important consideration as supervision is a highly influential element of staffing practices. While I have been the recipient of supervision staffing practices, I have not facilitated supervision staffing practices myself.

A salient aspect of my positionality to consider during this research study was my current, full-time role in the private sector. Like many other student affairs practitioners, I left the field in June 2021 to pursue an opportunity as an executive recruiter and consultant. In these roles, I work with organizations and people across industries including professional services, financial services, financial technology, biomedical manufacturing, and many more. I do not often work in higher education adjacent services, and as a result, my current work experiences are very different from my time as a student affairs practitioner. During my time in the private sector, I have found similarities to my work in student affairs, and the skills I learned as a practitioner have served me well in my new role. I also find that the typical jargon I use during my full-time role as an executive recruiter and consultant shows up in my writing and as I speak about staffing practices. This is something I have become keenly aware of that I make note of, and that I correct as necessary during this process.

Finally, I found myself flowing between quantitative and qualitative epistemological approaches as I wrote this methodology because of the fluidity of these methods in my consultative work. I paid close attention to maintaining a qualitative case study methodology to account for this.

My identities within and without student affairs, opportunities for researcher bias, and areas of awareness were important to reflect on and name during this case study because I did not personally relate to the current experiences of participants. During each introduction portion of the interview, I explained to participants that I was not currently in student affairs. I also explained the nature and origins of my doctoral work and passion for student affairs work. I also maintained awareness of potential bias because of my positionality as a researcher and my social identities by using a reflexivity journal through the research process. Self-accountability was critical in this process, and I actively reflected on my experiences throughout this study.

Research Design

A qualitative approach to a holistic, multiple-site case study was used to construct this research study. This study was a qualitative case study design because this type of design “[shares] with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding” (Merriam, 2009, p. 36). Case study research designs are an effective way to examine a specific, bounded phenomenon in depth and in real life (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Both Bolman and Deal (2017) and Winston and Creamer (1997 & 2002) emphasize the complexity of higher education systems and staffing practices within them. To understand such interconnected relationships and inner workings, a methodology that can meet the needs of the complex system is necessary. Case study research can provide deep insight to a specific phenomenon because the

case is bound in the research design and multiple forms of data collection can provide multiple perspectives (Merriam, 2009).

Case study research protocols are not structured or defined, which leads to case study design being perceived as a less legitimate form of methodology (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). Case study methodology can be used for qualitative and quantitative approaches (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). However, as a methodology, it is synonymous with qualitative research and often used interchangeably when describing general qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2006) outlines the five major misunderstandings of case study research:

- That practical and contextual knowledge is less important than general and theoretical knowledge,
- That individual cases cannot be generalized,
- That case study is best used for forming hypotheses as the first stage of a research design,
- That researcher bias leads to verification of the researcher's bias in the findings, and
- That propositions and theories are difficult to develop from case study.

These misunderstandings of case study design can be better understood as risks to using the methodology, and, like most methodologies, can be accounted for by strategic research design, outlining opportunities for bias, and naming limitations of the design and findings (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2018).

Of three major approaches to case study research as described by Merriam (2009), Stake (1995), and Yin (2018), the “single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of the study: the case” (Merriam, 2009, p. 37). Defining the bound system and the boundaries in which the study takes place is necessary to understanding a specific example of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Without bound definitions of the case, it is not a

case study (Merriam, 2009). Two other defining factors of case study research are the use of multiple sources of data collection and the opportunity for comparative studies known as multiple site case studies (Merriam, 2009). This study was be guided by Merriam's (2009) qualitative approach and followed the tenets of the bounded case, multiple sources of data, and multiple sites.

For case study research, "the unit of analysis, *not* the topic of investigation" binds the system which is being examined (Merriam, 2009, p. 38). In the case of this research study, the cases were bound by several factors. First, the case study sites were all located in the same large, metropolitan city located in the Southeast. Second, the cases were bound by focusing on student affairs divisions at the institutions. Third, the cases were bound by the limited population of potential participants as only student affairs staff at each institution were invited to participate in the case study. Each of these elements of research design ensured that the phenomenon being studied was specific to the case.

Multiple sources of data are a defining characteristic of case study research that strengthens understanding of the phenomenon and help to eliminate potential researcher bias (Merriam, 2009). Even though there is much variation in case study design, observations, interviews, and document analysis are the most agreed upon data collection methods (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2018) expands data collection methods to include different forms of observation and physical artifact collection to provide a further individualized approach to data collection based on researcher skills and the case study itself. This study utilized individual participant interviews that included a physical artifact as a topic of discussion and a document analysis for data collection. Additionally, I visited the sites in-person and observed each site. However, these observations were not used as a unit of analysis. Staff who participated often referenced the

physical environment of their institution when describing their experiences. While observations were not used as a unit of analysis, they affected how I was able to make meaning of what I discussed with participants.

Multiple site case studies provide an opportunity to look at a phenomenon within specific cases and across several cases (Merriam, 2009). A multiple site design allows for more powerful findings because of the strong external validity. Multiple sites design, which is defined as examining more than two cases, increases external validity as it allows a researcher to explore the phenomenon in multiple contexts (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). A qualitative multiple site design provides a strong justification for findings being relevant and contributing to general knowledge that comes from the deep understanding of a phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). Examining multiple cases provides an opportunity to draw lines between different subgroups, and analyzing each case separately and holistically provides the opportunity to find differences and similarities between cases. (Yin, 2018).

I chose a holistic, multiple site case study design because in-depth understanding is needed based on staffing practices. Higher education and the students at institutions have rapidly changing needs. Practitioners who are responsible for delivering student services and programs need effective staffing practices to support them in their roles.

Case Study Sites

In this case study design, two-tiers of sampling took place: identifying sites and selecting participants. In the first tier, I identified the site, and in the second tier, I invited participants within each site to participate (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, opportunities for maximum

variation sampling were identified during the site and participant selection process (Merriam, 2009). The following sections discuss site selection and participant selection.

Sampling

Site Selection

The first tier of sampling was identifying potential participating sites within the large, metropolitan southeastern city that reflected maximum variation in sites. Maximum variation focuses on creating a wide range in the sampling pool for wider applicability in research findings (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). For this study, maximum variation in sites was achieved by identifying potential participant institutions by size (mid-size vs. large), student populations (minority-serving vs. non-minority serving), and institution types (public vs. private). I achieved a unique combination of these factors in the sites that I worked with during the case study. I initially identified five institutions the target location and gauged initial participation interest by emailing the vice president for student affairs at three of the institutions. Each of those sites expressed initial interest in participating in the case study.

Once I received approval from my institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I formally invited each institution that expressed interested to participate by again emailing the vice president for student affairs to confirm their interest (Appendix D). Each site that expressed initial interest confirmed their participation. Once their participation was confirmed, I scheduled a time to visit the participating site in-person and interview the vice president for student affairs. The three sites I worked with are referred to as Metro College, Downtown University, and Hidden Gem University. Detailed descriptions of the sites are located in Chapter 4, and institutional information is in the following table.

Table 1

Multiple Site Case Study Institutional Information

	Metro College	Downtown University	Hidden Gem University
Type	4-year	4-year	4-year
Private vs. Public	Private	Public	Public
Size	Small	Large	Mid-sized
Institutional Information	Liberal Arts HBCU	Comprehensive R1	Regional

This sampling strategy identified “central themes that cut across a great deal of variation” (Patton, 2015, p. 235). This type of sampling poses a risk if cases in this study have too many differences between them, since central themes become difficult to identify. The first unifying factor between the sites was where they were located. This case study was geographically bound to a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast. This approach addressed potential issues in maximum variation sampling because it accounted for cost of living and compensation standards that working individuals face in deciding to work in that area. Additionally, based on their shared location, these institutions were dealing with similar governmental and environmental influences, even if they impact their institutions differently.

Participant Selection

The second tier of sampling was inviting divisional staff at each site to participate in this case study. During the initial interview, the senior student affairs officer and I identified

documents appropriate for analysis, and I also asked for a divisional staff contact list. Maximum variation was also aimed for in participant sampling. I interviewed at least five staff (besides the vice president for student affairs) from each site, based on different hierarchical levels of practitioners. Participants at each site included, at minimum, the vice president for student affairs, a director-level participant, a mid-level participant, and an entry-level participant.

I distinguished between vice presidents, directors, associate directors, and assistant directors for a few reasons. Vice president participants would be able to provide perspective on divisional staffing strategy as well as institutional challenges. Directors are often the bridge between divisional leadership and unit-level work. I hoped to gain insights on how directors implemented divisional priorities to their specific units. My intention for my conversations with associate and assistant directors was to learn more about the daily workings of staffing in unit areas. Depending on the institution, it is possible that directors, associate directors, or assistant directors may not supervise full time staff. By including each of these roles in my participant selection, I was able to discuss a wide range of supervisory responsibilities in department leadership and mid-level roles.

During this case study, it was my hope to also have a graduate-level participant and a divisional talent manager role. No graduate-level staff expressed interest in participating. This could be attributed to one site not having graduate assistants and the time of year I began data collection as well as the timing of the case study. Data collection began in late March 2023 when many graduate assistants would be preparing for job searches, internships, or graduation. No sites that participated had a divisional talent manager role to participate in the case study. Participant pseudonyms, position, and supervisory responsibilities are in the table below. Participants provided their unit area, but to protect individual confidentiality, unit areas are not

attributed to specific staff. Unit areas that were represented during this multiple site case study were campus recreation, career services, counseling, residence life, student engagement, and student life. Additionally, Downtown University had participants from three of the six campuses.

Table 2

Multiple Site Case Study Participants by Institution

Institution	Name	Position	Supervisory Responsibilities
Metro College			
	Vincent	VPSA	Yes
	Ayo	Director	Yes
	Rene	Director	Yes
	Casey	Associate Director	Yes
	Trixie	Associate Director	Yes
	Jaycee	Coordinator	No
Downtown University			
	Francis	VPSA	Yes
	Kit	Director	Yes
	Logan	Director	Yes
	Beverly	Associate Director	Yes
	Lou	Assistant Director	No
	Tracey	Coordinator	No

Hidden Gem University			
	Rowan	VPSA	Yes
	Ainsley	Director	Yes
	Ola	Director	Yes
	Dallas	Associate Director	No
	Chandra	Coordinator	No
	Sammy	Coordinator	No

Understanding practitioner needs across types and level of roles is necessary for the system of staffing practices, particularly when it comes to supervision (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The hierarchical levels of participant categories were chosen to provide insight into the staffing practices systems as they relate to the different ways practitioners may interact with the system based on their roles.

Recruitment

Once the senior student affairs officer was interviewed and provided the best method to contact divisional staff, an invitation to participate was distributed to director-level, mid-level, and entry-level staff in the division (Appendix B). In the participation invitation, potential participants were reminded that the study was approved by their divisional leadership, there were no consequences should they choose to not participate, and what they shared remained confidential as a part of the study. A participation questionnaire was included in the invitation to collect contact information and specifics about their roles (Appendix C). To be eligible to participate, director-level and mid-level practitioner participants had to have had at least three

years of experience and supervision responsibility over at least one other full-time staff member. Entry-level staff had to have had three years or less of experience.

This participant questionnaire collected participant names, contact information (should they choose to use different contact information than the provided email), role within student affairs, pseudonyms, and availability for their interview (Appendix C). This information allowed me to select participants based on their role in student affairs, contact them to confirm interview times, confirm the pseudonym they preferred, and send them informed consent. Participants' roles in student affairs were considered to ensure multiple unit areas within the division were represented. Staff who expressed interest in participating represented diverse roles in their division's hierarchy as well as the departments they worked in. I did not need to select between participants that expressed interest to achieve maximum variation.

Data Collection

A case study research design gives deep insight into a specific phenomenon because it requires data collection from multiple sources (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1998; Yin, 2018). To ensure high quality data was collected during this case study, and I successfully executed the research design, four guiding principles were followed. The research design for a case study should use multiple sources for data, create a database to store data collected, maintain a chain of evidence, and exercise care when using electronic data sources (Yin, 2018). These principles were used as I collected data for this case study.

Merriam (2009) discusses the three main methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews, observations, and documents. First and foremost, it is critical to remember that data does not identify itself and wait to be collected. Data must be identified by the researcher and used as data in a study (Merriam, 2009). As a result, the researcher perspective

and theoretical frameworks used influence how data is identified and collected (Merriam, 2009). However, multiple sources of data also allow a researcher to ensure that the data gathered accurately reflects the phenomenon being studied and the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018).

Of the three main sources of data in qualitative case study research, I used document collection and participant interviews as my data sources. Documents referred to either printed materials or other materials that were relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009). I collected staffing practices documents with help from the senior student affairs officer at each institution as one source of data. The second source of data was participant interviews. Interviews were semi-structured, qualitative interviews. During participant interviews, I discussed physical artifacts with each participant. Physical artifacts can be used as data and analyzed as a form of documents; however, in this study, the discussion around the artifact served only as an introduction activity in the interview and provided context on staffing at a participant's institution. That discussion was not used for standalone analysis, nor was the artifact itself.

Document Collection

“Using documentary material as data is not much different than using interviews or observations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 175). First, documents were relevant to the topic being researched. Second, they were authentic to the case being examined as well as the topic being researched. Third, I had a system in which to organize and code the documents. The documents used as sources of data were determined to be relevant and authentic through my conversations with participants.

I conducted a document analysis because society relies heavily on documenting records, both paper and electronic; those records served to confirm data collected through other sources,

such as participant interviews, and provide additional information relevant to the case (Merriam, 2009; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2018). An analysis of written staffing practices allowed me to build a foundational knowledge of the staffing practices in relation to the institutional context as these documents served as records for the institution. Document analysis occurred during the first phase of analysis.

During my initial interviews with the senior student affairs officers, we collaboratively decided which documents would be relevant for the case study. Each of the institutions indicated that human resources would be the best place to collect procedural staffing documents. At all three sites, procedural staffing documents could be found at the department level but not the divisional level. I decided it was best to collect documents that most staff would be exposed to during their experiences.

Documents were collected digitally and added to the coding software I used for the case study, Atlas.ai. At Metro College, I was only able to collect job descriptions through the human resources website and the student affairs division organizational chart as their human resources department did not allow sharing internal documents with external partners. At Downtown University, I was able to collect the organizational chart from the division. I was also able to collect documents like job descriptions, onboarding materials, staff development, evaluations, and supervision tips through the human resources website. I was not able to collect documents on separation like exit interviews. Finally, at Hidden Gem University, I was able to collect the division's organizational chart, orientation materials, an exit interview form, and a separation form from the division. I was also able to collect a job posting, hiring freeze memo, and evaluation resources. The following table provides information on the documents I collected at each institution.

Table 3*Multiple Site Case Study Documents by Institution*

	Metro College	Downtown University	Hidden Gem University
Organizational Context	Divisional Organization Chart	Divisional Organization Chart	Divisional Organization Chart
Recruitment & Selection	Six job postings	Five job postings	One job posting, hiring freeze memo, hiring freeze waiver
Orientation	None	Three supervisor onboarding and orientation checklists, three employee onboarding and orientation checklists, onboarding ‘buddy’ checklist, supervisor onboarding planning tool	Human resources onboarding checklist
Supervision	None	Two ‘how to guides’ on difficult conversations and one goal setting guide	None

Staff Development	None	Courses on human resources website	None
Performance Appraisal	None	Self-evaluation reflection form, copy of the 2022 evaluation form, supervisor guideline for conducting successful evaluations	Directions for completing evaluation form that included screen shots of the form
Separation	None	None	Separation checklist, exit interview form

These documents were used to reinforce observations and verify data from other sources as well as make inferences about staffing practices at each site (Yin, 2018). I reviewed documents prior to completing interviews to determine whether any follow-up information was needed. By reviewing the documents in conjunction with interviews, I was able to begin identifying common themes across the documents and interviews.

Interviews

Interviews are one of the most commonly used methods of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Interviews are a critically important data source, and semi-structured interview protocol is recommended in case study methodology (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). “The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information” that cannot be observed or discerned from documentation (Merriam, 2009, p. 107). Participant interviews

provided insights to the unseen interconnected staffing practices that exist at the institutions serving as case sites that would not have been apparent through documents. There are different types of interview structures: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Merriam, 2009). I used a semi-structured protocol to learn more about specific topics, but to also leave flexibility for participants to describe other topics that were important to their experiences. In addition to an interview protocol, the interview also included a discussion on a physical artifact that the participant brings and has meaning to them. I asked participants to describe a physical object they associate with the staffing practices of their institution. Physical artifacts, when relevant to the case study being examined, are a way to observe a case and provide additional perspective to a researcher (Yin, 2018). Discussing physical artifacts with participants shed light on their personal experiences with staffing practices.

Balancing research inquiry with conversational questions built rapport with participants. A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix J & Appendix K) was used to facilitate a discussion on the research inquiry as well as encourage a natural flow of conversation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The protocol for interviews was developed based on Winston & Creamer's (1997; Creamer & Winston, 2002) staffing models.

Initial Senior Student Affairs Officer Interviews. For this interview protocol, it was necessary to begin and end with the senior student affairs officer as they were able to speak candidly about the institutional context as it relates to staffing practices. This protocol is intended to identify ways in which staffing practices continuously interact with one another. To begin the first stage of interview data collection, I began by reaching out to interview the senior student affairs staff member.

For each institution, I began by scheduling the senior student affairs officer interview. I emailed them to reintroduce myself, confirm their interest in participation, reintroduce the study, provide informed consent information, ask for their preferred pseudonym, and request interview availability (Appendix D). The vice president for student affairs was available to serve as the senior student affairs officer representative for each site. Interviews took place in person and were scheduled for seventy-five minutes, but each interview went significantly longer than the originally planned length. This led me to extend the time scheduled for all participant interviews to ninety minutes.

During the interview, I reviewed informed consent and confirmed agreement (Appendix H). We began the interview protocol and ended with a discussion on relevant staffing documents. Once that interview took place, documents for analysis were identified, and contact information for potential participants was decided, I proceeded with the inviting staff to participate in the case study.

Staff Interviews. Following the interview with the vice president for student affairs, additional participant interviews with divisional staff were conducted. I emailed divisional staff to introduce myself, introduce the study, and invite them to participate (Appendix B & Appendix C). At two of the three sites, I emailed staff personally to invite them to participate. At one site, my invitation was distributed by the division through a staff listserv. Staff were invited to fill out the participation questionnaire to indicate their interest in the study. I interviewed 15 of the 17 staff who filled out the questionnaire. The two staff members I did not interview were no longer able to participate. Once I received participant interest from the participation questionnaire, I emailed them to confirm their participation and began scheduling the interview.

Upon confirming interview times, I asked participants to consider an artifact that represented their experiences with staffing practices at their institutions to discuss in the interview. Interviews were scheduled for ninety minutes and took place over Zoom. While I had the opportunity to visit each site in person when meeting with the senior student affairs officers, conducting participant interviews over Zoom provided maximum flexibility in scheduling for myself and participants while still allowing for some of the same benefits of face-to-face interactions.

At the start of the interview, we did brief introductions, and I asked each participant if they had a pseudonym in mind. Only one participant provided a pseudonym, so I randomly assigned participant pseudonyms. I reviewed the informed consent and verbal agreement for participation and confirmed the participant agreed to move forward with our conversation. Once informed consent was discussed, we began the interview protocol with a discussion of the artifact they chose (Appendix K).

Physical Artifacts. Physical artifacts are not always a relevant data source in a case study; however, including them can provide additional insights to the culture and environment at participants' institutions. Physical artifacts are observable, tangible aspects of an environment and are "the most visible aspects of a culture" (Boniva, 2009, p. 827). They can reflect an organization embracing strategic change or failing to embrace it, based on how individuals value them in the environment (Bonvia, 2006; Higgins & Mcallaster, 2010).

Once we completed introductions, reviewed informed consent, and confirmed the participant's pseudonym, the interview protocol began with discussing the physical artifact the participant provided. I asked them to describe why they chose that artifact and its significance to them. Most participants prepared an artifact in advance of our conversation. A few participants

described an artifact off the cuff. Two participants chose not to participate in the artifact discussion aspect of the interview.

Wrap-up Interviews with VPSAs. Once I completed interviews with the student affairs staff, I reached out to schedule a wrap-up interview with the VPSA at each institution. The second interview provided an opportunity for any clarification needed through the data collection process (Appendix L). It also provided the opportunity to review the documents I collected and ones that were be missing from the document collection process. The interview portion of data collection ended with the second senior student affairs officer interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a dynamic and emergent process that occurs concurrently with data collection (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis becomes more intense as a qualitative study moves along due to the researcher being able to continually refine the data collection process (Merriam, 2009). This was certainly the experience as I met with more participants.

Because simultaneous data collection and data analysis is preferred in qualitative research, and case study research requires multiple sources of data, a strategy for data analysis was necessary for this study. This allowed for the large volume of data that was collected to be organized and analyzed in such a way that the final analysis and findings were focused and directly examine the problem that was being studied. Merriam (2009) outlines that doing analysis during the collection has many benefits:

- Further focused decision making in the study,
- Further focused decision making about the type of study being conducted,
- More focused analytic questions,

- Opportunity for adjusting further data collection based on previous data collection,
- Opportunities for critical thought throughout the data collection and data analysis process,
- Opportunities for self-reflection,
- Opportunities for testing out ideas and themes with participants,
- Enhanced literature review based on preliminary observations,
- Opportunities to identify emerging themes and concepts, AND
- More clarity around analysis.

A “system for organizing and managing data needs to be devised early in [a] study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 199). In addition to logistical organization through technology or systems, a data management system also included *coding*. “Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of [the] data so that [I] can easily retrieve specifics of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 199). Identification notes, informed by the theoretical framework of the study, were needed for my own thoughts, interview transcripts, and documents during the collection process and the analysis process (Merriam, 2009).

Attention to data management is particularly important in qualitative case study because the volume of data can make meaning making overwhelming for researchers, which is even more so the case of multiple case study research (Merriam, 2009). While data analysis happens concurrently to data collection, preparation for the final, intensive phase of analysis once all data has been collected is critically important (Merriam, 2009). I certainly experienced the overwhelm that comes with managing a large amount of two different sources of data. I used a combination of manual processes and technological solutions to help me in managing and make meaning of the complex data.

Participant data was recorded and organized using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This enabled me to easily track participant contact information necessary for scheduling, pseudonym, current job role, and category of participation they met (e.g., entry-level full-time staff). I utilized a transcription software, Otter.ai, to do the initial transcription for each interview. I reviewed transcriptions and clarified issues in the transcription as necessary. I also used a qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti, to help organize transcripts and documents for analysis. Additionally, Atlas.ti was used to code interviews. Coding functionality for documents was limited based on the type of file the document was saved as, so I manually coded some documents using a Microsoft Word document. Notes on my observations of the data were recorded manually in a Microsoft Word document and stored.

Qualitative research data analysis is both *inductive* and *comparative* (Merriam, 2009). First-hand experience analyzing data in a qualitative study is the most meaningful way to understand data analysis, even after studying data analysis methods in qualitative research coursework (Merriam, 2009). Because the goal of data analysis is to make meaning of the vast amount of data, “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting” interviews, documents, and physical artifacts is the process through which data is analyzed.

A unique aspect of qualitative multiple case studies is that a cross-case analysis is conducted in addition to the single case analysis. These two processes occur in two stages. The first phase of analysis is the *within-case* analysis where each case (for this study, institution) is analyzed in and of itself (Merriam, 2009). The second phase of analysis, the *cross-case* analysis, takes place once the within-case analysis has been completed. I was able to build general explanations that made sense across each of the cases during the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018).

That process begins with identifying reoccurring topics in the data that are relevant and meaningful to the research questions and challenge the researcher to think toward implications of the topic (Merriam, 2009). Step by step, the data analysis process is outlined by Merriam (2009):

- Category construction – reviewing data and noting interesting or relevant topics
- Naming the categories – identifying themes or findings based on frameworks, myself, participants, or literature
- Deciding the number of categories – this number may change through the process, but it should be manageable to keep final findings focused
- Becoming more theoretical – the process of moving from describing data to making inferences about the data

Using the four guidelines, I began data analysis by analyzing documents and participant interviews. I coded documents and interviews in two phases. The first phase started with an *a priori* coding method. A priori coding is a way to organize data through predetermined categories (Merriam, 2009). I used Creamer & Winston's Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (2002): organizational context, recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation, as my predetermined categories. Each document was categorized to the staffing practice it most aligned with. The interview protocol, which was organized by staffing practice, aligned with the a priori coding method. In the second phase of coding, I used *open coding* within each of the previously determined categories where I “captured any data that [seemed] to be responsive to [my] research questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 207).

I conducted data analysis while I simultaneously collected data. I was able to identify topics that frequently came up and emerging themes by engaging with data analysis in parallel

with data collection. This also allowed me to ask more pointedly about specific topics and themes in the remaining interviews. I uploaded all documents to my case study database: Atlas.ai. By using Atlas.ai, I was able to label data and organize information into groups by the codes. For interviews, I listened to each transcript while reading it in its entirety to identify any errors in the transcription and refresh myself on the conversation. Following the initial read of the transcript, I reread the interview and coded topics with the a priori codes: organizational context, recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation. I reread each of the individual codes to derive meaning within each staffing practice. For the documents, I read and labeled each document with the aspect of Creamer and Winston's (2002) model that it most aligned with in a similar process to a priori coding. Once the documents were organized, I reread each document to code meaningful elements.

At the completion of data collection, I reviewed each interview and set of documents within each site. This allowed me to determine themes at the individual sites in preparation for the cross-case analysis. I recorded the emerging themes and my notes on them in a Microsoft Word document.

“Ultimately, cross-case analysis differs little from analysis of data in a single qualitative case study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 233). Using Merriam's (2009) approach, I reviewed the themes within each of the a priori codes derived from Winston and Creamer's (1997 & 2002) model from each site to develop a “unified description across cases” (p. 233). This review allowed me to create a general narrative that reflects each site, even though the details of staffing varied (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

Themes about the individual staffing practices and how they were interconnected emerged from this coding process in both the documents and participant interviews. Initially, I intended to align these staffing practices and themes to the 5 “P’s” model (Pryor et al., 1998; Pryor et al., 2007; Schuler, 1992) in the initial phase of analysis. This part of analysis was intended to illustrate the relationship between each staffing practice. However, this step was not necessary in the data analysis process, since staff I spoke with clearly illustrated the interconnectedness of staffing practices within Creamer and Winston’s (2002) Integrated Model of Staffing Practices.

Following the cross-case analysis, I reviewed the CAS General Standards related to staffing to discern which standards could be most effective for staffing practices. I identified standards that would address specific themes in the cross-case analysis. CAS General Standards are intended to be used across institution types and provided insights on how to implement theoretical models in daily work.

Trustworthiness

Because this study was a qualitative research design, the goal of the inquiry is understanding the phenomenon. There is little agreement on the best terms to describe the trustworthiness of a qualitative research design (Merriam, 2009). Measures of validity and reliability are historically applied to quantitative research, but qualitative research, while meaningful to the understanding of our experiences, cannot be generalized as measures of validity and reliability intend (Merriam, 2009). For the purposes of this study, I used the terms credibility, consistency, and transferability to describe the elements of trustworthiness in the design. These terms are clear and distinctive qualitative approaches to research. They are

applicable to this qualitative case study design because they outline the researcher's role in the study.

Tracy (2013) describes eight tenets for conducting outstanding qualitative research that were applied to ensure trustworthiness of this study:

- Be on a worthy topic,
- Rich rigor,
- Sincerity and transparency of methods,
- Credibility,
- Applicable to diverse audiences,
- Contribution to the literature,
- Study ethics,
- Meaning coherence.

These considerations were made throughout the research process, and notably, during the data collection and analysis processes.

Credibility

Based on practices around internal validity, establishing credibility ensures that findings match the reality of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Multiple case study research designs can establish credibility through *triangulation* of multiple sources of data. During data collection and analysis, I cross-referenced documents and interviews to triangulate the data collected.

Moreover, once participant interviews concluded, I interviewed the senior student affairs officer at the conclusion of data collection to clarify any other points necessary.

Member checks are another way to establish credibility in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). This is the process of asking for feedback on initial findings. Participants were emailed to ask for feedback on the findings at the conclusion of data analysis.

Consistency

In qualitative research, *consistency* as a measure of trustworthiness asks if findings are consistent with the data collected during the research process and make sense in the context of the research study. There can be many interpretations of the same data, so interpretations should be consistent with the context. Because reliability asks that results be replicated in a research study, the quantitative approach to “reliability is problematic in the social sciences imply because human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 2009, p. 249).

There were several ways ensure consistency through a qualitative research study. Two of those methods, triangulation of data and member checks, were used as a part of establishing credibility of the case study. There are two other methods that were used in this case study: *establishing my (the researcher’s role) in the study* and an *audit trail* (Merriam, 2009). I outlined my positionality and role in the study through reflexivity and the description of the design. Because multiple site case study research produces a high volume of data, diligent organization of the data and notes on my thoughts throughout was necessary. This naturally created an audit trail to ensure consistency through the process.

Transferability

“Although generalizability in the statistical sense cannot occur in qualitative research, that’s not to say that nothing can be learned from a qualitative study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 254). Transferability relied on my justification that the findings could be applied to other situations. Multiple site case study research is uniquely positioned for increasing transferability due to the

cross-site analysis that is a part of the data analysis process. Additionally, maximum variation sampling that was used for site selection and participant selection intentionally created variety that made findings more applicable outside of the case study.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology for this multiple site case study. The chapter began with the purpose of the case study as well as the research questions that guided the case study. My reflexivity statement provided insights into my positionality as a research and how it shapes my role as the facilitator of data collection. Sampling and selection for sites and participants was described including increasing the benefits of maximum variation sampling. Data collection through participant interviews and staffing documents was outlined. I provided a description of data analysis for both the within-site and cross-case analysis processes. The chapter concluded with a description of my approaches to increase credibility, consistency, and transferability.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will share the findings from the multi-site research case study I conducted in spring and summer of 2023. I took a hybrid approach to this case study by visiting each institutional site to kick off the data collection period. Following the site visit and initial, in person interview with each vice president of student affairs (VPSA), I invited staff to participate virtually. The flexibility this allowed for me and participants was crucial during some of busiest periods staff experience in an academic calendar. However, the onsite visit proved invaluable to understanding the organizational context each participant operated in. Paired with a robust number of documents from each site, this provided for a rich data set for analysis.

In beginning this project, the possibility of student affairs leaders opening their metaphorical doors for staff to have conversations about staffing felt like a significant request. Each VPSA and division I had the opportunity to work with actively supported staff having these conversations even with the understanding that data may reflect negative feedback just as much as positive feedback. The staff who decided to participate also did so with care, especially considering just how busy each of them was. They all came to the conversation with varying levels of skepticism or enthusiasm, but all of them shared with vulnerability and openness.

During data analysis, I examined the narratives staff provided as well as documents related to each staffing practice. I began data analysis by conducting a within site analysis using a priori codes that followed Creamer and Winston's framework (2002). The a priori codes were: organizational context, recruitment and selection, orientation, professional development, performance appraisal, and separation. Within those a priori codes, I identified themes using open coding to make meaning of each individual staffing practice. I followed the within-site

analysis with a cross-case analysis that compared each a priori code across sites. I developed a common narrative across from the themes that emerged. This allowed me to answer the research question and supplemental questions that guided this multi-site case study, which were:

- How do student affairs practitioners experience staffing practices at their institution?

To fully ensure that this research question was answered through the course of the case study, the following questions were asked for additional context:

- How do practitioners describe their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners perceive the interconnectedness of their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners describe their experiences with institutional staffing practices across their employment?

The findings in this chapter are organized using Creamer and Winston's (2002) staffing model that this case study is based on. Using this model, I answered the research question, how staff experience staffing practices, by examining how staff perceive staffing practices at their institutions. For each individual case, I examined each staffing practice in Creamer and Winston's (2002) staffing model. The single site descriptions will be from the point of view of my conversations with the vice presidents at each organization. Creamer and Winston's (2002) describe the importance of understanding institutional context to fully understand how staffing practices operate within that context. I will first describe the organizational context of each site individually, as well as a broad overview of staffing practices for each individual case.

For the cross-case analysis, I identified the common experiences across the three sites. The findings begin with a description of each site. I will provide context to support the cross-case analysis from the staff point of view. This is followed by the cross-case analysis. Each

single case provided valuable insights on the research questions, but I focused on the cross-case analysis and examining commonalities between each site to develop a broad understanding of staffing in student affairs.

Metro College

Organizational Context

I visited Metro College and spent a half day there meeting with Vincent, the VPSA, and observing the campus. Metro College is a small, private, historically Black college (HBCU) just outside the downtown area of a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast. It is a highly mission-driven, four-year private institution and is considered a prestigious institution with rich traditions. Its intentional mission is a specific one that attracts students and staff alike.

During my conversations with the VPSA and staff at Metro College, they described how the mission of the college inherently develops a strong sense of community and belonging for those who have been members of that community. Current students, alumni, parents of current students, and staff are all invested in the success of the institution. It is a space that allows for authenticity and creativity not only for students, but also for the staff.

The nature of a small, private school with an engaged community leads to decisions being fast-tracked to leadership. Vincent described how student affairs has an interesting role within Metro College,

Student affairs at Metro College can be a little complex in terms of it's a school with such a specific mission. A very intentional mission. Sometimes there are traditions that are embedded in the culture that can be difficult to change. And, so, you have to figure out a very innovative way of being able to implement change at a school that has such rich traditions and such rich history. Some of the histories and traditions actually aren't that

old. But they just caught on. And, so, one of the things you have to guide your team through at [Metro College] is, you know, okay, let's be thoughtful and mindful about what we introduce to the community. Because if you introduce something and it's popular, you have less opportunity to take it back. And I also have to get the team to really think about quality over quantity.

Being such a tight-knit community, Vincent spoke about teaching their staff to navigate campus politics. Colleagues across the college tend to bypass lower-level staff. They works to redirect colleagues and their staff to empower decision-making at the department level,

[In] our culture, they know the decisions rest at the top, and that's where they go and not necessarily go through the regular channels that I've been accustomed to [at other institutions]. So you have to figure out how to manage all that.

This can be difficult due to student affairs being perceived by the campus as less important than classroom activities. Setting staff up for success in their roles through staffing practices and working through conflict builds trust within the division and connections outside the division. After my meeting with the vice president for student affairs, I collaborated with the VPSA and Metro College's human resources department to collect documents. Due to college policy, I was unable to collect documents related to orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation. I was provided with the student affairs divisional organization chart and examined six job postings to use for recruitment and selection. Because of the limited documents provided, staff interviews were the primary source of data for Metro College.

Staffing Practices

The high touch culture and strong continuity of institutional knowledge has resulted in expectations for staffing practices being highly dependent on supervisors, particularly

department specific leadership. The student affairs division organizational chart effectively illustrates the division and its reporting lines, but it does not provide insights into the organizational culture. Vincent described Metro College's high touch, supervisor driven culture during our initial conversation.

We discussed each staffing practice at Metro College and how they worked. The recruitment and selection process is managed through human resources with heavy input from a hiring manager. Human resources is responsible for the logistics of a role being open (e.g., posting the role, formal offer letters) but also screens candidates and schedules interviews for the hiring manager. That practice has a varying degree of success for hiring managers, and some simply circumvent the process. While the division looks for specific skillsets, intuition and initiative were assets that Vincent described as necessary,

And I have learned, and I'm learning here that I can teach anyone to do work, right? I can teach someone how to be over housing. I can teach the students. I cannot teach common sense and passion.

Being able to navigate a close-knit, highly mission-driven environment was very important to staff. This is an interesting challenge at Metro College where staff highlighted that candidate pools are typically large due to the draw of working there, but the competitiveness of the candidate pools varies. There were a number of roles open when document collection took place. In reviewing the job descriptions, there was a variety of departments and levels represented. Job descriptions were very consistently written, and each role's responsibilities were outlined in detail. The level of detail in posted jobs reflected staff descriptions of the human resources high degree of involvement in the recruitment and selection process.

When possible, Vincent looks to the internal staff when new opportunities come up. We discussed how national searches can draw more candidates, but they may not meet the unique aspects of the institution,

Our institution is so unique. It has benefited me more to find the right person for the right role that's here, because they're already demonstrating the passion, and they already demonstrate [they] understand the culture, and they get the mission.

Once a candidate has been offered a role, human resources begins the formal onboarding process. Supervisors of the role are responsible for their new staff member's orientation. Both experiences can be inconsistent depending on the circumstances of the hire. Starting during 'non-traditional' times of year can cause delays in new staff having offices prepared or necessary equipment for the role. The focus for staff onboarding is more on how they should operate in the institution rather than the specifics of their roles Human resources provides a staff manual that contains the policies and procedures of the college, but Vincent described that it is not as useful as development

Now, we don't take information from a big manual any longer. I've never read the [Metro College] manual. The Human Resources manual that they got, I get it. I have it, and then I look for retirement stuff and all, but I'm not going to read that cover to cover. I think that's just moving us, you know, a little bit beyond where we are in higher ed as an industry. So, more people development, people investment, and less on the manual technical training.

Departmental manuals change so frequently that Vincent emphasizes training for new staff, "and, so, better to train people how to think should something happen, to me, is more valuable than the sheet says it"

Orientation to their role with their supervisor varies widely depending on the style and resources of a supervisor. Metro College's VPSA, Vincent, described that orientation is thought of in terms of ongoing development for new staff,

I spend more time with onboarding in terms of their development. You know, I invest.

I've just promoted some recent hires, and I'm getting a professional coach for them. Not that they necessarily need it. But when you step into a new role, and you've been in for a while, you need to get an objective feedback from somebody.

The same can be said for the supervisor of student affairs staff. Vincent strives to model supervising through their authentic style, so they can meet the needs of their staff. He stated it clearly, saying "It's important for me to know who I am as a leader in order to effectively supervise."

However, there are few explicit expectations around what good supervision looks like for supervisors. Besides having regular check-ins with staff and striving for open communication, supervisors bring their own style to supervision.

Supervision influences professional development and performance appraisals at Metro College. Particularly because budgets are limited for professional development opportunities like professional conferences, Metro College's VPSA, Vincent, is working to define professional development as building strong internal teams.

I have found I appreciate much more professional development as a critical part of what I do. Building strong teams, maintaining strong team, especially now in student affairs, because following the pandemic, I think everybody reset, and their expectations about what and what works means. And student affairs work has become such a grind that you

really have to find the right people and put them in the right places. So, I invest a lot in my team because I get the most reward out of that.

Regardless of the type of professional development, Vincent described how professional development has to be meaningful, “[Professional Development] has to be intentional. We can’t just... you can’t believe it’s just going to happen.” Intentionally developing staff themselves depends on a supervisor’s abilities and capacity to do so. In our conversation, Vincent illustrated how they are changing their approach to performance appraisals to meet the needs of their staff:

Maybe [staff] need [the] to-do way versus saying I expect you to do this and this and this.

So, I am enhancing that aspect of my supervision. It doesn’t mean I can’t still be who I am, but I think that people need more clarity now than ever before.

Vincent discussed that performance appraisals are difficult to manage because “There’s such a level of subjectivity in these evaluation processes.” The form itself is simple, with three qualitative questions and rankings. However, the quality of the conversation and lasting effects after the annual review process that human resources manages varies with a supervisor’s intentionality and time to conduct thorough reviews.

Metro College experiences a depth of institutional knowledge because it is not unusual for people to leave roles through promotions or new opportunities at the institution. Human resources manages a logistical transition process for equipment and institution affiliations (e.g., email, ID card), similar to the onboarding process but in reverse. Underperformance remains a difficult area to manage when it comes to staff exiting their role. Vincent illustrated a shift in their thinking about underperforming staff:

Understanding that people don't get fired, they lose their jobs. That's just a philosophical shift for me because it's easy for us to say 'I got fired,' but you don't hire people with the intent of firing them. You hire people with intent of them coming and doing a good job.

Staff at Metro College experience the benefits of being a part of a prestigious organization through staffing practices, noting consistently large candidate pools and staff wanting to stay at the college. Internal opportunities for career advancement and growth allow staff to remain at Metro College which staff indicated they appreciated in their roles.

Metro College's staff have a strong commitment to the institution and the community. It's a tight-knit organization, that is able to build institutional knowledge because the staff stay within the college. Staff express a sense of purpose when describing their work with students.

Downtown University

Organizational Context

Interwoven through the downtown area of a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast, Downtown University is a large, complex research institution. I was able to visit Downtown University to meet with the, Francis, the VPSA, and spent a half day observing that area of campus. It is a comprehensive four-year university with a frequently changing, dynamic environment due to what Francis described as the can-do, scrappy attitudes of the students and staff. A unique aspect of this large institution is a large, centralized campus and several relatively close satellite campuses. This has led the student affairs division to implement a dual large school and small school approach to student affairs staffing. Francis described their environment, saying, "You're in this environment where the campus and the city are very very comingled, which does make the [Downtown] campus a very different type of experience than the other five campuses."

The larger, centralized campus employs highly specialized roles while the smaller, satellite campuses employ student affairs generalists,

[Downtown University] need[s] to be hiring people who are student affairs generalists for [satellite campuses], because [satellite campuses] need dedicated staff. So, I merged a bunch of departments, and I create these three person teams. So, now I have three full time staff members on each campus who only work on that campus. [They] have no time on the road [between campuses]. But, they serve in a generalist position where they are the equivalent of six units [at the central campus]. Because, again, with the size and volume, [central campus] has the luxury of being able to have an office that just focuses on multicultural support, and one that focuses on black student achievement and civic engagement and leadership. [Central campus] has all these unique offices and staff here because [they] have the resources to do that. [Satellite campuses] can't pull that off. So, I had to find people who know how to do all of that.

Staff at Downtown University mentioned that this may not be a hard and fast rule, depending on the unit area, as a few student affairs departments cover all campuses; however, Francis described that the structure moves forward the institution's goal to create pride in individual campuses along with being in community with the institution,

I don't know if we have an easy answer for it right now, but how do we create a sense that every person who is part of [Downtown University] has a certain consistent sense of identify that is affiliated with the university, but that also allows that space that you can hold that additional, equally important [satellite campus] identity.

With Downtown University being in the midst of broader organizational change, the student affairs division has been strategically rebranding itself to meet the changing needs of the

institution and students. Downtown University's VPSA, Francis, described the nature of the changes,

...the university president made the decision to morph student affairs into this larger umbrella of student success, at which point we got rebranded and the philosophy being that when you look at all the different components that make up the 'out of the classroom' experience, how do you reduce barriers by getting the right people connected in the right ways around the table?

At such a large institution, organizational changes can move slowly. Interim changes can be made more quickly and, often, get approved by human resources easily. In a time of big change, like Downtown University is experiencing, the messaging around necessary changes and understanding from the staff is critical.

While enrollment in the institution overall has remained steady, the number of students on each of the physical campus has decreased. Francis considers the staff resourceful while they navigate challenging times in higher education,

So, there's a interesting sense of identity, I think. [Downtown University] is one of these place that I think our employees are similar to our students. We've got a lot of folks who are very scrappy, you know? I mean, there's just a certain work ethic because we're not a [flagship], but we are an R1.

However, Francis described how retention of staff can be difficult due to lower compensation, "The other challenge though, is we also don't compensate as well for most of our positions as our peers do." Francis also detailed the ways they have addressed their lower compensation. Actions like reorganizing the division have raised wages across the board, but at the cost of eliminating roles.

Here are the areas where we have a lot of bandwidth because we've got 10 positions that are all doing the same fundamental job. Could we survive with eight positions and take this pay from the other two and redistribute it and start moving the needle?

As Downtown University continues to grow and change, staff will continue to be asked to creatively solve problems and meet those changing needs.

Following my conversation with Francis, I collected documents using Downtown University's student affairs divisional website and institutional human resources website. The student affairs organizational chart was found on the division's website. The human resources website made a plethora of staffing practices documents available. Human resources provides documents related to recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, and performance appraisal. Documents related to exit interviews were not collected as they were not available through the website and could not be provided by staff at the time of the study.

I reviewed five positions postings that were open on the human resources website. The roles represented different hierarchical levels and departments within the divisions. And I reviewed the position announcements to understand recruitment and selection. The consistent information in each job posting was the location of the role, expected schedule for the position, and compensation. Each role also had a detailed list of responsibilities; however, how the responsibilities were organized and the level of detail varied. The information in the job posting reflects staff description of the human resources input on recruitment and selection with listing requirements for open roles (location, schedule, compensation) and the hiring manager's ability to personalize the job description through the list of responsibilities.

There were a variety of resources for onboarding and orientation. Documents that referenced how to access and sign up for employee benefits represented the onboarding process.

Human resources also provided guidelines and timelines for new employee orientation. Supervisors are responsible for seeking out the resources and using them with their incoming staff. The guidelines provided recommendations for orienting staff to the institution and their new roles by making sure they had the equipment they needed, knew locations for relevant resources, and understood the topics that should be covered. Timelines provided recommendations for preparing for a new employee's first day, the first day itself, the first week, the first six months, and the first year. There was also a resource for supervisors to manage an 'orientation buddy' for new staff, a colleague who would help orient a new staff member as a peer. Guidelines and timelines for orientation were provided for supervisors to use as well as for new staff to use for dual accountability. Orientation was the most highly represented staffing practice in Downtown University's document collection.

Documents for supervision were written for supervisors of full-time staff. General guidelines on supervision, managing performance, and having difficult conversations were provided by human resources. The documents reflected a supervisor's responsibility to set the tone for their staff through setting goals and providing feedback to staff. One document explicitly described how a supervisor who can be vulnerable, be compassionate, and take accountability for mistakes builds trust with their staff.

I reviewed staff development opportunities through the human resources website. There were many topics that ranged from leadership, coaching staff, and building trust to business writing and email etiquette. Many of the courses were targeted to supervisory topics like managing teams. All courses were free of cost to staff. Finally, human resources at Downtown University provided a copy of the 2022 state system performance appraisal for supervisors and

staff to reference, self-reflection forms for staff, and suggestions for how supervisors can facilitate productive performance appraisals.

Staffing Practices

The dynamic organizational culture and turnover in entry level staff creates a focus on hiring staff and quick skill development. The divisional organizational chart demonstrates the complexity of the organization by showing the sheer size of the division and reporting lines. The VPSA, Francis, described how it is important to the staff that candidates know what the complex environment is like before joining,

...as we're going through search processes, [we] say, you've got to understand and you've got to be able to accurately portray what is the [Downtown University] way and what makes [Downtown University} what it is and who it is. Because you don't want to hire people who have no clue what the environment they're coming into and what they're dealing with and then they're going to be dissatisfied and not comfortable.

While human resources does not manage aspects of recruitment and selection like scheduling interviews, they are responsible for job postings and formal offers. Of the several job postings I reviewed, there were consistent aspects that were included in the role: position location (as Downtown University has several campuses), compensation, and anticipated schedule for the position. Where the job descriptions were unique was the style of the how duties and responsibilities were outlined. Human resources manages the posting and the logistics of a search, but the hiring manager could provide the description for the role itself, which staff described in our conversations. Despite a hiring manger having leverage in the job description, the processes to post an open position and fill it can be unpredictable and slow. It creates frustration for the staff that are frequently covering work for unfilled roles.

The slow processes were compounded with lower compensation rates that lead to smaller and, sometimes, less competitive candidate pools. The staff who most recently had to go through onboarding or had an incoming staff member going through onboarding at Downtown University said that human resources timing is an issue with onboarding as well. Start dates, despite a newly hired staff's readiness to work, are unpredictable, especially for new staff that may be coming from another institution in the state system. While human resources provides a number of documents to support supervisors and new staff during onboarding and orientation, the slow timing to onboard creates even more frustration for new staff and supervisors who may already be experiencing frustration from the recruitment and selection process. Once a new staff member has been onboarded, orientation in their new role is guided by their supervisor. Francis recognizes that they need to build orientation up for new staff,

So the kind of pre-onboarding components that central HR does, and even the orientation day that they do when you show up and they do the whole in person. There are some very good elements there. And so, we take full advantage of those good elements and then we try to enhance them for the next level. So then as a larger division, once a month, all new employees who've been hired in the last month, get to spend the morning doing kind of a deeper dive session about [the division].

The division's orientation day described by Francis was a recently added experience. None of the staff I spoke with had gone through it as they had been at Downtown University prior to its inception, but there was excitement around having a divisional orientation for new staff that introduced them to the complexity of the division. Human resources provides orientation checklists as resources to supervisors and new staff, but their use is self-driven. None of the staff at Downtown University referenced the human resources documents as something they would

use for orienting a new staff member. Supervisors' need for new staff, especially those in entry-level roles, to make an immediate impact causes much of orientation to be "on the job."

Ultimately, the overall orientation experience depends on the style and needs of the supervisor.

An individual supervisor's approach to management determined how staff would be supervised. Human resources provides resources on supervision through the documents I reviewed as well as professional development opportunities. However, the documents were not referenced by staff during our conversations. Downtown University recognizes this, and Francis is working toward providing resources for supervisors and training staff to be supervisors in the future,

Supervision is something we've paid a lot of attention to. But, yet, it's an area we also know we have a lot work to still do. So, we've got great concepts, We just haven't really explored and employed the multiple level we want to get. And what's kind of ironic in some ways, we've done a better job with supervision of student staff than we have some of our professional staff.

Downtown University has strong financial resources for professional development conferences that they manage closely. Francis's recent move toward a centralized request system has promoted equitable distribution of those funds.

We're trying to add more structure and purpose and intentionality around professional development. And, also, part of this way just a financial resource for the school when I got here. One of the things that really kind of bothered me was that there was a significant disparity between units and the haves and have nots financially and if you happen to be a unit that had access to student activity fees and so you had your budget for [conferences].

During our conversations, staff were focused on conferences as the main aspect of staff development. There was awareness that human resources provided courses for staff; however, the courses were not where staff sought out development.

Performance appraisals can be more meaningful for staff if intentional development plans are in place. The state system form that was posted on the human resources website and used for performance appraisals has broad competencies that make it difficult for supervisors to individualize evaluations. Supervisors rank performance on each competency, but any personalization for specific staff and their roles relies on written feedback from their supervisor in the comments portion for each competency. Toward the bottom of the performance appraisal form, there is a section for staff comments. It is a proportionally small part of the six-page form. However, a staff member described using the self-evaluation form (also provided by human resources) to contribute to the conversation. Using the self-evaluation was prompted by this staff member's supervisor. Francis described the frustration they experience with the performance appraisal form.

And these are you know, system wide forms, and the institutions can tweak them, but you've got the form that's the standard employee form which is written for the lowest possible level of staff. It's a painful form.

The depth of a performance conversation or potential for a development plan, which would include the performance appraisal, depends on ongoing support from a staff member's supervisor. In our conversation, Francis described how performance conversations should occur outside of the annual performance appraisal, "[Performance Appraisal] needs to be more ongoing. So by the time someone gets their official written evaluation, there should be no surprises."

With turnover, particularly with entry-level and mid-level roles, being high at Downtown University, the fallout from staff leaving their roles can be time-consuming. The process of leaving itself is managed by human resources (e.g., exit checklists and equipment return), but the work left by open roles can be daunting. It is unpredictable when roles will be filled and how long it will take to fill them. Francis described the challenge of overcoming their high turnover while they're still working to fix the issues causing it,

And, you know, within a year, we've had 80% turnover within a year, most of it at our lowest paid positions. But what does this tell us? How are we going to ever get out from underneath this challenge? So, that's one of the things we talk about. We look at the whole bucket of kind of the appreciation and development, and you know, the whole professional realm and how to we help folks, which is going to have to look different for different people in different areas.

Staff at Downtown University are preoccupied by the volume of work and turnover in their roles. At a large, frequently changing, complex organization, it can be difficult to build cohesion. The staff experiences motivation from many of the students they work with and the difference they can make in their roles.

Hidden Gem University

Organizational Context

Hidden Gem University is a younger institution with a student affairs division that has experienced significant growth and development over the last ten years. I experienced its reputation as "hidden gem" firsthand during my visit to the campus to meet with the VPSA, Rowan. Located in the greater metro area of a large city in the Southeast, Hidden Gem University is a four-year, regional institution. They serve a majority of historically minoritized

and first-generation students, and the needs of the student population are rapidly changing as demand for online education options continues to increase. Rowan described how the institution has changed since they have been there,

It always felt like a blank slate a little bit, you know, for my tenure here, and that we continue to create and empower students to build the university. And, so, I mean, I think working with students obviously is a big part of the enjoyment of what we do and watching them grow and develop and become contributing members.

Staff describe the environment as one with a sense of urgency. Multiple years of low enrollment have drastically impacted the institutional budget. Rowan described how budget cuts reduced the number of staff,

So, the budget cuts have really hit us in terms of, you know, any positions. We gave up about three or four vacant positions in the division. Like, they're gone. And we actually had a [reduction in force].

Navigating those changes and providing programming despite limited resources takes up a significant amount of time. However, the desire and pressure to serve students who are looking for economic gains through education remains the main outcome for Hidden Gem University. Rowan illustrated how the staff continues to provide for the students,

Committed is the go-to word. That and committed like maybe no others would commit. So that gets to just about everything from being innovative and resourceful with not very many resources. But, you know, doing what it takes. Working long hours, which continues to be the case for us as we continue to reduce staff because of budgets. But, I mean, I think there's just, even for some of us coming into our division who haven't been

in student affairs, I think they quickly feel that dedication and commitment that is part of our values and in our mission for the division.

Partnering with Rowan after our conversation, I collected documents that shed light onto recruitment and selection, orientation, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation. Many of the documents were behind an institutional login through the human resources website that I was not able to collect firsthand and instead collected with help from the VPSA. I also received the division's organizational chart as a part of the data collection. I was not able to collect documents that provided insights on supervision.

The documents I collected that reflected the current state of recruitment and selection were the institutional memo informing staff of the hiring freeze, the hiring freeze waiver form should a hiring request be necessary, and one job description for a senior student affairs officer. The hiring freeze memo was dated September 2022, shortly before Hidden Gem University announced a reduction in force. There is no anticipated end date for the hiring freeze. The waiver is a straightforward form that requires justification for opening a role for hire. Generally, there were very few positions open across the institution. Three of the roles were significant institutional leadership positions, one being the senior student affairs officer role I reviewed. The job description itself was sparse and included a brief list of responsibilities and requirements.

Onboarding and orientation materials at Hidden Gem University were only accessible through the employee portal; however, Rowan provided me with the hiring manager/supervisor onboarding checklist provided when a new staff member is approved to onboard. The checklist is a combination of logistical aspects of onboarding (signed offer letter, background check, direct deposit, required trainings) and institutional orientations (hosted by human resources) that a new

hire has to attend. Rowan also provided me with their personal administrative orientation list for new hires to become familiar with the student affairs office and resources.

Staff development courses offered through human resources were also behind an employee portal. Staff at Hidden Gem University described their awareness of development opportunities through human resources; however, they also described not having time to learn more about them. I collected training documents related to supervisors and staff completing performance appraisals from the human resources website. These documents focused on providing supervisors and staffing successfully completing the state system performance appraisal form. Screenshots of the form were on these documents, but there was no sample form available. There were no guidelines on conducting a performance conversation.

Two separation documents were provided by the VPSA, Rowan, since they were behind the employee portal. The first was the staff separation checklist, which is an administrative checklist that the staff member has to sign once they have returned equipment like a university laptop or office keys and paid any outstanding fees. The second document was a detailed exit interview form. The form asked staff to rank their work environment, opportunities for learning and development, supervision, compensation, and general feedback questions. A few staff I spoke to had experience with the separation checklist if they were supervisors who had experienced a staff member leaving. However, staff had little awareness of the exit interview form.

Staffing Practices

Hidden Gem University's hiring freeze and overall budget concerns are having an impact on staffing practices. The student affairs organizational chart reflects a small staff that is covering many functional areas. Currently, recruitment and selection rarely take place since any

role posted has to go through an approval process to have the hiring freeze waived. Even when a position is approved for hire, as with a role that was recently filled, Rowan described how recruitment and selection can be logistically difficult,

HR really drives a lot of that now. And, to some degree, it's a big of a headache because, I think that the process of, you know, getting a position approved for hire, and then getting it into their system, job description, those kind of things. The mechanics of that can be very cumbersome. In recent time, I think they're starting to provide more or having more of a service mentality to our campus in setting those things up.

The roles that have been most recently filled have been senior administrative staff. Through that approval process, human resources has significant oversight over whether a position can be filled by waiving the hiring freeze. Human resources also advertises the job posting, but hiring managers decide who gets interviewed and manage the interview process. Rowan described the autonomy hiring managers have, "I think that it's really up to the manager to what degree they want to having a hiring committee or search committee or quickly, you know, posting a position and handling the interviews themselves."

The same challenges exist for human resources onboarding. Being under a hiring freeze means that not many staff are being onboarded to new roles. When onboarding does happen, the human resources process can be slow moving and difficult to navigate. The hiring manager/supervision onboarding checklist provides a resource to supervisors to use to help manage the onboarding process. The checklist has nearly 20 items on it that require multiple steps for supervisors and new staff to complete within each item. Rowan described the onboarding and human resources orientation as a baseline experience for new staff,

So, HR has, in the last few years, established a periodic onboarding training period for employees that is done by the HR department. That's probably more generic about the university. Staff handbook kind of things, expectations, general expectations, but it's not customized to the actual job position.

When staff move to new roles, orientation is managed by their supervisor, and the experience varies depending on the supervisor. Rowan described the orientation process,

I would say that the [orientation] within the department or a unit would depend on the unit. I would say there's not a strong process and that is, depending on the staffing levels, somebody could be thrown right into it. And they have their job description. And they're expected to go figure things out.

Supervision styles varied widely at Hidden Gem University. Some supervisors described their supervision responsibilities as an opportunity to develop their staff through one-on-one conversations while other supervisors focused on the functions of their staff during check-ins. Regardless of the style, supervision expectations are set by those in supervisory roles. The division does not set explicate supervision expectations, but the VPSA, Rowan, described the intentions for a communicative environment,

I think the expectation, as you've often hear is, you know, do your job. And, you know, let me know if you need anything and you know, I try to keep lines of communication open and doors open for issues that come up.

Because of budget concerns, staff development opportunities like professional conferences are not financially supported. Staff did not reference opportunities through human resources as a place where they often look for development. For development, staff are encouraged, and

sometimes required, by supervisors and Rowan to participate in institutional or divisional committee work,

...so, we made that more official going into this academic year that every division rep will sign up for a committee and be called up on to support the initiative. And then, that's going to vary. I'm not sure that some of them, probably haven't been as active as others. But you know, that was the initial expectation.

This can be an issue when conducting performance appraisals. Hidden Gem University uses the state system performance appraisal form, and while documents with guidelines are provided to help staff navigate the form, there are few guidelines on the content of the form or navigating the performance conversations. The extent that professional development like committee work is a part of performance conversations depends on the supervisor. Hidden Gem University's VPSA, Rowan, described how the form is cumbersome and staff see it as another task: "The reality is, people are just doing it to get it done."

Hidden Gem University student affairs staff described how they experienced colleagues leaving their roles for opportunities that provided more compensation at other higher education institutions and outside of higher education. An additional aspect of separation experienced by staff at Hidden Gem University was a reduction in force that took place at the end of 2022. Staff were moved to new roles if it was possible, but it was a challenging experience for the entire division. Rowan illustrated the conversations within each department,

But there were directed conversations within the units to say how probably at that level, who was going to be leaving, and not, you know, and how that job would be absorbed by others in the department.

Under typical circumstances, human resources manages the logistics of staff leaving through the separation checklist, and the social aspect (e.g., going away lunch) of a staff leaving depends on the supervisor. One staff member described they were aware of exit interviews, but they were unsure if anything would come of the feedback that staff who left the institution gave through the form. Overall, staff at Hidden Gem University did not discuss the exit interview form.

The term that Rowan used to describe their environment was “survival mode.” They are focused on making a difference with the resources they have and serving the students well,

I think over in the short amount of time, there has been so much going on, that you get to the point where you just take it as it comes, no matter how good or bad it might be. And that’s why I said, we just want to get it done. Because the next thing is coming right behind it.

At Hidden Gem University, there are aspirations set clear expectations around staffing, but it is not possible to make it a priority. Addressing budget and enrollment concerns are the focuses for the institution. Staff express their desire for improvement at Hidden Gem University as well as passion for the work they do with students.

Summary

At each of the three institutions, student affairs staff across the organization spoke about the organizational context and six staffing practices that they encountered in their work. Each practitioner described their unique perspective on staffing at their institution. Their collective insights on the environment they work in and staffing practices they engaged with in their work illustrated the need for systematic approaches to staffing.

Cross-Case Analysis

Within this section, I will discuss the common narratives across the three institutions and their staffing practices. In the single-site analysis, I addressed the organizational context of each site and provided a broad overview of their staffing practices. In the cross-case analysis, I will discuss in detail the common aspects of staffing at each site. In the first section, the cross-case analysis is organized by each staffing practice and the themes within each staffing practice. I follow this initial section with the findings related to staffing as a whole and how staffing practices influence the experiences of staff.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection, the way an individual joins an institution, was a topic that was very important to staff and was discussed in depth during our conversations. When we spoke about recruitment and selection, three themes emerged: awareness of organizational context, compensation is a challenge, and relationship with human resources. In the following section, I discuss these themes in detail.

Awareness of Organizational Context

Throughout conversations at each institution, organizational context was a significant factor in recruitment and selection. Because organization charts cannot provide deep background on an organization, my conversations with staff provided organizational context necessary to understand the reporting lines and structures in the division. At each institution, staff described that it is essential to provide context to candidates throughout the recruitment and selection process. When it comes to recruitment and selection, staff at Downtown University emphasized how supervisors have to have accurate job descriptions and share the cultural context of the roles

they are filling in the hiring process. Lou, an assistant director, shared their perspective on recruitment and selection,

I think that when it comes to staffing and hiring, it's a lot easier to make sure that those best practices are included in a job description when they start staff. Because what happens is that some supervisors, fearful for whatever reasons, don't share that information with employees. Employees get bad [at the job] or focus on other things leave the job and their behaviors and competencies continue to persist.

Staff described assessing alignment between a candidate and the institutional context as a major component for considering a candidate's fit for the role during the recruitment and selection process. A hiring manager is responsible for communicating the institutional context to candidates, so that they are aware of the environment they may be coming into. Not only does it prepare potential new staff for the resources or challenges they may experience, but they can make an informed decision about if it was the right environment for them. The hope is that an institution is more likely to retain staff if they have a better idea of what they are signing up for in their roles. Ola, a director, is very attentive to the hiring process,

I've tried to be very specific about hiring. I want to make sure that [candidates] know exactly what [they're] going to be doing and the type of environment that [they're] going to be doing it within. So, there's no lapse in communication at any point. So, that when I am, I guess I am training [them] towards what [they're] going to be doing. There's no question of, you know, why you might have moved across the state or why you might have, you know, done whatever.

Unfortunately, on-campus visits, historically a part of the recruitment and selection process for each institution, have become optional at two institutions due budget cuts.

Experiencing the environment first-hand may not be possible for all candidates during the interview process. Logan, a director, thinks it is a challenge to not provide opportunities for staff to visit their campus,

...they don't want to bring to campus anybody who's below a director level. And I just feel like, as a potential employee, I would want to have a chance to be on campus and meet people in person to have a sense of what's, you know, what the environment is actually like.

Ola further described how they tried to make up the experiential aspect if a candidate could not visit campus, "We send videos. We send activities. We give [them] our Instagram, which has a lot of, you know, activity videos, things like that on it."

One institution's mission is an advantage when it comes to recruiting potential staff members. Applicant pools for open roles remain large, with the real challenge coming from finding qualified candidates in those pools who will accept or who are appropriate for the compensation range for the role. Ola, a director who is currently hiring, is struggling with the candidate pool for the open position,

So the pool of applicants who are willing to take the salaries being offered are not the applicants with the skills and experience that I need. But, the individuals who have applied who have the skills and experience would be a salary grade above the one at this position.

Regardless of the specific institution context, staff at each institution described that a key aspect of those qualifications, outside of specific job-related experiences, is enthusiasm for the organizational mission. At one institution, hiring managers are challenged to balance commitment to executing the educational institutional mission with an applicant's desire to be

affiliated with the institution. An associate director, Trixie, is aware of the draw of working at Metro College when they hire,

I think it comes through a lot with those candidates who wanted to go to [Metro College] and those candidates who may be graduated from [Metro College]. I've noticed that in between are those candidates who know about [Metro College] but not necessarily the mission and vision.

Understanding the environment that a person will be working within is a significant part of selecting someone for a role. Internal promotions were referenced by all institutions as a way to retain staff and institutional knowledge. Historically at one institution, internal promotions within the division and to roles outside of the division are common as the dedication to the institutional mission is already proven. That pattern is shifting as the needs of the institution have changed. A recently promoted director, Rene, appreciated the growth they have experienced at their institution,

I think it is, can be a positive notion to train, to mentor, and then to allow for your current staff to have opportunities for growth. What I experience and what I think others have experienced, what I see most recently is that there is a shift to not just immediately promote.

Staff at each institution felt strongly that they needed to provide ongoing organizational context to candidates in the recruitment and selection process. They described how it would help to prepare them for the realities of what they would experience as staff members and their commitment to the institutional goals.

Compensation is a Challenge

Conversations around compensation challenges were similar with staff at every site. Each institution, knowing that their compensation rates may not be as competitive in a large city, was transparent in the recruitment and selection process. Participants at each institution described how lower compensation made recruiting and selecting qualified staff difficult.

One staff member described how recruiting and selecting candidates is an ongoing cycle because of small candidate pools that are not competitive. Lower compensation makes it difficult to attract highly qualified candidates for the roles they are filling. Beverly, a director, attributes less competitive candidate pools to lower compensation at their institution,

I think this is an [ongoing hiring] cycle that doesn't, and it's not just right now, it's been the whole time really. So, you know, we don't pay as well as other institutions or working in the private sector. So, hiring just, first, it's a real challenge to get a good candidate pool and I generally don't feel like we have a good candidate pool at all. And not for lack of, you know, posting on boards and things.

Staff discussed the sacrifices they were willing to make or the benefits that added value to their lower compensation that led them to continue working at their institutions. Benefits outside of cash compensation, like remote work and more accessible health benefits, are competitive when it comes to attracting candidates but that may not be guaranteed depending on the department or role. Beverly, a director, described how important remote work has been to retain their staff,

Because of the pandemic, we have kept two work from home days, which is not a practice across the university. I don't know what they are at other places, but it's not a given for sure. And that definitely has helped with retention and burnout of staff.

Benefits like remote work have become important to staff at each institution. Remote work has given staff flexibility during a time when they feel immense pressure in their roles. One staff member, Dallas described the balance they have because of remote work: “The main one is that work life balance. I think I’ve done very well at it.” However, benefits like remote work can depend on a supervisor’s willingness to provide them; as one director who supervises staff, Kit stated: “I reluctantly abide by my staff’s sense of entitlement and remote work, that’s going to make them happier on the job.”

Relationship with Human Resources

The relationship with human resources and awareness of its role in the hiring process is necessary for a hiring manager to successfully navigate recruitment and selection. None of the institutions I worked with could provide documents, institutional or divisional, that served as guidance for working with human resources during recruitment and selection. Throughout our conversations, staff described the challenges they experience and how they developed strategies to partner with human resources.

The recruitment and selection process at Metro College is significantly influenced by the relationship with the institution’s human resources unit area. Job description management, candidate screening, interview management, and job offer details are all handled through human resources. Trixie, an associate director, compared their experiences at previous institutions to their time at Metro College,

It’s very difficult at [Metro College], hiring, and the reason that’s difficult is because, well, at other institutions [I worked at] we were able to manage the entire process. We were able to manage the posting or where it was posted, We were able to go to conferences, to interview at conferences, so we managed every step of the process from

A to Z. We were able to schedule the interviews, right? But at [Metro College] that's not the case. Everything is managed through HR which means we are on HR's timeline.

At each institution, the parts of the recruitment and selection process that were managed by human resources were unpredictable and, often, slow moving. Because so much of the logistics of recruitment and selection, like job posting and extending an offer, are outside of the control of the hiring manager, several of the staff described ways they could exert more control in a hiring process like managing the interview formats and selecting a hiring committee. Hiring managers that have strong relationships with human resources can have additional oversight over those logistics as well. One director, Ola, described how they have spent years building an exceptional relationship with human resources,

I have a special relationship that I've honestly been just leaning on for the last couple of years with HR just to make sure that I can get people, and I'm not starting searches over again because things are lost in the sauce, and you know, colleagues confide in me on 'how did you do that?' Like, because they're struggling.

While hiring managers at each institution ultimately had autonomy over selecting a candidate to make an offer to, managing the process with human resources often made the experience disjointed for the hiring managers and candidates in their recruitment and selection process.

Orientation

Across each of the sites, orientation was a staffing practice that supervisors wanted to be an effective process for their incoming staff. However, many supervisors identified as orientation as a process for them to improve for their staff. During our conversations, two themes emerged when discussing orientation: onboarding vs. orientation and orientation is individual.

Onboarding vs. Orientation

At each institution, orientation to a staff member's role was different than onboarding to the institution. Staff at each institution described the difference between their onboarding and orientation. Onboarding refers to the logistics, typically managed entirely by human resources, that need to be completed by staff prior to starting their role. Two distinct types of orientation occurred at each institution. The first, is the formal orientation through human resources, which many referred to on as onboarding, and begins before the second phase of orientation. Beverly, who has recently hired staff for their unit area, described onboarding as disjointed: "Our onboarding is terrible, and so it makes a clunky start for anybody."

Each institution's human resources department had an orientation to the institution in addition to managing onboarding for an employee. Downtown University's human resources department had several resources for supervisors to orient their incoming staff to their roles. However, at each institution, there were few resources for navigating onboarding outside of checklists. It can take some time to complete all the documentation and required training. Sammy, a coordinator who does not supervise full-time staff, described the confusion they experienced when they completed onboarding,

The onboarding was a little bit stressful. Just because of the process. It just takes a while.

I would say now that I understand it's a bit of a hire folks. But all of the legalities and the paperwork and the thing that you have to do with HR, and I didn't understand it was being communicated. So, it took a while from when I got hired to when I started the position.

Staying aware of onboarding checklists and where new staff are in the process is self-driven by hiring managers. A hiring manager needs to track a staff member's onboarding to help facilitate

it with their new staff. Ola, a director, makes sure to keep track of where their incoming staff are in the onboarding process,

I'm confirming that everything [they've] sent has gotten to where it needs to be even though [they've] probably already check all kinds of email because I've told you to. It's just... it's that bad.

Orientation was the process of becoming socialized to and knowledgeable about their new role. Jaycee, a coordinator, described the cyclical nature of working in higher education and how that shapes orientation for new staff: "You know, the worst thing you can do is to have an employee come in, during a time which is very busy for the institution and ignore them."

Orientation was also described as an opportunity to address potential skill gaps in new employees, something that is becoming more and more frequent in applicant pools. However, as Rene, a director, stated: "Orientation just depends on your department."

An individualized orientation plan for a new employee was often a luxury for staff because of the demands on their time. Often, orientation was outsourced to other colleagues in a unit area or simply did not take place at all in a 'learn on the job' approach.

Orientation is Individual

At each institution, how a staff member is oriented to their role depends on a supervisor's approach to orientation and the capacity they have to orient a new staff member to their role.

When Sammy, a coordinator, started their new role, timing with their supervisor's planned leave led to on-the-job orientation,

I did have orientation, but... my supervisor, we joke about it all the time. She literally went on maternity leave and had her baby like a week after I started. [I started in COVID], orientation was virtual since a lot was going on. Yeah, so I learned the language

on the job. And then my coworker at the time really kind of stepped up for us, but it wasn't a traditional experience at all.

Despite Downtown University's human resources department having several resources for orientation, none of the staff referenced them when we discussed staff being oriented to their roles. Regardless of the resources, approaches to orientation varied widely at each site. As Trixie, an associate director, said, "It's really up to each department. Each department is responsible for that [orientation] and how [orientation] looks."

High levels of communication are needed for orientation to cover areas that a new staff member may need development in. Each supervisor I spoke with had a unique timeline for when a new staff member is ready to work autonomously, which created unique orientation experiences for their staff. Ola, a director who supervises full-time staff, hesitates to allow their staff to learn 'on the job,' "So, I cannot allow anyone to jump into their responsibilities. So, me, I know everyone's job."

Two staff I spoke with stated that every aspect of a role cannot be covered in a written manual and that some degree of hands-on, trial and error is required when beginning a new role. Tracey, a coordinator who does not supervise full-time staff, described orientation as: "It's like, you learn as you go. You make a lot of mistakes."

Because not everything in a job can be covered in the first few weeks of a new employee joining, one associate director, Beverly, described a large, departmental manual that they use for orienting their staff to their roles: "So right now, basically what we have is a OneNote. But's it's huge. I call it the Cheesecake Factory menu. It's just enormous and it's the way we train people is to say read this."

Rene, a director, described how it is inevitable that a staff member will have to learn some of their responsibilities on the job,

Because, even within orientation and training, there's so many things, and I think it's just the nature of student affairs. There are so many things that pop up that you sort of, kind of learn, hit the ground running and learn as you go through it.

Incoming staff's readiness to fully take on their responsibilities may even depend on a department's need for a new staff member to take on full responsibility as soon as possible.

Chandra described how their previous experience prepared them for their role when the department left for a retreat, "The second week that I was there, my entire staff went on a conference retreat for a whole week and left me in the office. That's how comfortable [they] was with me."

Supervision

Staff across each site, divisional departments, and roles described supervision as highly influential on staffing. When asked about supervision as a staffing practice, many practitioners responded that it depended on the supervisor. Two themes were identified in our conversations: no expectations for supervision and it depends on the supervisor.

No Expectations for Supervision

Staff at each site referenced supervision as a highly influential and time-consuming aspect of staffing for those with and without supervisory responsibilities. At each of the three sites, supervision skills were supported through staff development. However, staff described that opportunities were optional or sporadic. Regardless of their role and even within the same department, supervision is up to the individual style of the supervisors. Vice presidents, directors, and associate directors at each institution had supervisory responsibilities and

described that they had the autonomy to approach supervision in their individual way. Moreover, one associate director, an assistant director, and coordinators that did not supervise full-time staff described how their units were managed based on their supervisor's approach. One director, Ayo, who supervises other full-time staff, illustrated this lack of guidelines,

None of the people who I report to laid out any particular way that they wanted [supervision] done. It's one of the things that there's a lot of difference across the campus to how it's done. Even within the same division, you'll see difference because it isn't defined by the college.

An associate director, Trixie, stated plainly, "Yeah, it's most definitely my personal style. There's no expectations that come down about [supervision]."

One director, Logan, described that an unspoken expectation for supervision was ensuring their staff executed the work of their department,

I don't think anybody's ever said. Here's my expectations of you as a supervisor. Like, literally, I cannot ever think of a time when, I guess, like, I've inferred that my job was to like keep people on task and getting the work done. But no one's ever said, like, this is what we expect of you as a supervisor.

When it comes to accountability for completing the work a department is responsible for, it is up to supervisors to set expectations for their team on goals or improvements. As Sammy, a coordinator without supervision responsibilities, described in our conversation, "I think it's like the directors of the departments. I think they get a lot of autonomy and agency to be able to say, okay, you know, essentially, this is my department, and this is what we need."

Staff who did have supervisory responsibilities discussed how supervision was something they thought about or engaged in during their routine work. One director, Ainsley, described the

significance of supervision in their routine work, “Supervision is more ongoing and day to day and it’s not, it’s not like 99% of my job. But it’s probably the most significant on a day-to-day basis.”

Because there have been several iterations of messaging from university leadership, one supervisor discussed how they felt it was an expectation of their role to provide context on institutional politics. Ola, a director, considered their interactions with the staff they supervise as a part of staff development, “For me, I do think that those small conversations about, hey, this email that we got, everybody gather around my office. Let me talk about what this really means.” The divisions do not provide expectations around what supervision should look like, so there is autonomy for supervisors to have individual styles in their supervision responsibilities.

It Depends on the Supervisor

Staff that were highly engaged in their roles outside of executing job responsibilities had strong relationships with their supervisors at each site. Their supervisor was someone who could provide context on what was happening at their institution and help them read between the lines of organizational changes. One coordinator, Tracey, described how valuable it was for them to be able to openly communicate with their supervisor,

[They] understand... I go to [them], and I’m just fully open and just say, this is where I’m at, you know. This is what’s going on. Let me know if I need to make up for anything, or you know, stay a little bit later or whatever it is. Like, we talk it through, it’s a decision and it’s not a big deal. So that’s awesome.

Regardless of size, a higher education institution is a complex system. A supervisor is a significant way to understand the systems a staff member works in. Beverly, an associate director, described their responsibility to help their staff navigate the system they work in,

...But I do think that these systems, and it's tough working for a state system and saying this ought to be good for the people who work in them also. And in addition to providing really stellar services to students, and that's a hard task but it's, I really don't think it's an impossible one. Especially when treating staff like people. Even when the system limits choices. If I can explain what's happening, you know, that tends to, you know, [help].

Logan, a director, described how challenging it can be to have momentum with their staff and the work when they don't have the context they need when there are changes,

So like, I've had just a lot of different changes. So, I've just kind of come to see that as like, what I think the frustrating part of it probably for me has been, you know, every time there's been a shift, it's like building synergy with a new team and then with a new directive from [leadership].

Consistency in supervision is very valuable to staff. However, some supervisors pay attention to adjusting their supervision approach to the needs of the individual staff and creating flexibility where possible. This did not mean that supervisors had to have a high frequency of communication with their staff necessarily, but the touchpoints were meaningful and intentional. Ayo, a director, cultivates a trusting relationship with their staff through consistent communication,

I also believe that it's important to be in communication. And my experience has been that you will have some staff members who are going to share all the time because that's what they do. And they're going to take advantage of open door policy to ask questions and share things. And then you have some staff that are just going to be in their office doing the work, and you'll never be entirely sure what they're doing if you don't create a space, and intentional space, for them to share and for you to ask questions.

Regardless of their title or level in their unit area, student affairs staff with supervisory responsibilities each had a different approach to managing their unit area and staff. The supervision style of vice presidents and directors, in particular, influenced the experiences of associate directors, assistant directors, and coordinators. There was little consistency in how supervision responsibilities were carried out.

Staff Development

Staff at all three institutions were enthusiastic about staff development and wanted to engage in development. This staffing practice was effected by budget concerns, and each institution had a different way of managing development because of those concerns. Two themes were identified through my conversations with staff: conferences and committees are priority, and everything else is self-driven.

Conferences and Committees are Priority

The access staff had to development funding depended on the institution they worked at. A main concern for staff at each institution was the equity of available financial resources. Each institution responded differently to that concern. Downtown University developed a centralized staff development funding process. Metro College approved or denied staff development opportunities as they were requested. Hidden Gem University did not provide funding for staff development. These funds were a main topic of our conversations because all staff described conferences as the main source of professional development. With equitable allocation of professional development resources being a high concern at such at one institution, the division recently transitioned to a centralized request system, but expectations remain unclear for staff as Logan, a director, illustrated, “Like it’d be helpful if there were like, here’s like, what we expect.

Because there's not, like, there's no sense of how much money is available for [professional development].”

Even at sites with limited financial resources, professional conferences were what staff thought of when asked about professional development. One director, Ayo, described how they encouraged their staff to take advantage of development opportunities, “I encourage staff to find conferences that they feel will support their professional development, some of them take advantage of it.”

With a variety of student affairs conferences for professionals to attend, ranging from large, generalist conferences to functional area specific ones, there is no shortage of development opportunities. A part of attending a conference is the division understanding how it can contribute to a staff's current role and the students. This can cause staff to focus less on opportunities that would develop them for future roles. One coordinator, Tracey, expressed feeling held back from development to a bigger role, “They want us to really focus on just us as programmers and going to conferences that are just around programming.”

At one institution with few financial resources for development, committee work within the division was seen as the most accessible development opportunity. Sammy, a coordinator, who has limited financial support from their institution for professional development, described how their supervisor encouraged working on a committee for development, “In 2022, our whole department got an opportunity to go [to a conference] and that was really cool. This year, we weren't able to go, but [my supervisor] still encourages us to you know, participate in committees. Getting involved in different ways.”

Involvement in professional organizations through student affairs conferences was important to staff. Staff that had limited funding still described the conferences as a way they

were looking for professional development. Committee work in the division and across the institution become particularly important for professional development opportunities when funding was limited.

Everything Else is Self-Driven

Even though resources for staff to attend conferences varied at each site, other opportunities for development besides committee work were inconsistently explored. Intra-institutional development opportunities through human resources or educational opportunities depending on supervisor encouragement. Ayo, a director, encourages staff in their department to participate in professional development with human resources, “We all to varying degrees take advantage of the professional development offered by human resources.”

Staff at one institution described how human resources provides a variety of programs through an employee portal. Logan, a director, described how human resources offers professional development outside of their internal development opportunities, “[Human resources] actually really have moved to most of their stuff through, like, Lynda.com or LinkedIn learning.”

Supervisor oversight may be especially necessary given that some staff may need extra development based on skill gaps when they are hired. Other aspects of employment considered professional development by VPSAs were managing and maintaining teams, new roles as opportunities for growth, webinars provided by human resources, and speakers brought in by the division. Jaycee, a coordinator, takes initiative to participate in professional development provided by human resources because there were no funds available for conference travel: “HR does offer some free courses. They do. I’ve done networking, developing emotional intelligence,

which I've taken before I came here. They also talked about, you know, time management during the pandemic.”

Staff at each institution most often thought of conferences when asked about professional development; however, they described a variety of other opportunities as our conversations continued. Engaging in professional development, whether through conferences, committees, or otherwise, can depend on encouragement from supervisors. Professional development was something that staff across all sites valued as a part of their role.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisals, commonly referred to as evaluations by staff, were a frustrating topic for both supervisors and staff who were not supervisors. Each institution had an annual appraisal cycle that was accountable to the human resources department. The evaluation forms provided for the appraisal process were broad and created frustration for staff. Performance appraisal documents collected at Downtown University and Hidden Gem University were primarily on completing the evaluation function and did not support staff members being evaluated. I identified two themes about performance appraisal through my conversations with staff: evaluations are not effective and tracking underperformance.

Evaluations Are Not Effective

One of the more challenging aspects of performance appraisals is outside of staff's control. Staff described how the forms did not meet their needs, whether they used the state system form or, in the case of Metro College, their own institutional form. At Downtown University and Hidden Gem University, human resources provides guidelines on how to fill out the performance appraisal forms, but expectations on how to how to evaluate staff and provide feedback during performance conversations are inconsistent. Logan, a director, described the

conflicting direction they have received when preparing to conduct performance appraisals for their staff.

So, it's interesting, like, because at different points in time, like, I've been directed, like don't give anybody an exemplary because nobody is exemplary. And then recently, they told us this year that we really should not be giving anybody above meets expectations, because our expectation is that everyone is exceeding expectations. And that's meets expectations. Like, that's confusing.

These forms, intended to cover all roles within an institution, are incredibly broad in the skills they are designed to evaluate. Between the forms being difficult to navigate and little guidance on conducting the conversation, performance appraisals become an additional task that adds to the demands of a supervisor's role.

Even though staff agree that feedback on performance is necessary and important, it is difficult to make time for it outside of the annual process, given how busy everyone is serving the students. Performance appraisals can be meaningful to supervisors and staff when they are tied to development with more frequent check-ins, as one director, Ayo, described: "I think that the end of the year evaluation could be more meaningful if we have more check ins along the way but, you know, the only thing that's required by [my institution] is to do the one annual review."

How the performance appraisal conversation is held depends on the supervisor. Conversations about development or growth, outside of performance, were inconsistent. Dallas, an associate director, felt that their performance appraisals weren't taken seriously and that the focus was on their work output: "Me being evaluated was a joke. In the beginning, I never felt

like I was actually evaluated. That no one actually cared what happened. That, you know, all I needed to do was perform, perform, perform.”

Constructive feedback can be a challenge to give due to the negative consequences of any underperformance. The cadence of feedback (e.g., whether additional check-ins occur outside of the annual review) and topics covered heavily depend on supervisors setting the tone for performance expectations. Staff agreed that topics discussed in a performance review shouldn't be a surprise. Ola, a director, described how they manage performance appraisals with the staff they supervise,

One thing that I've talked to my staff about, even recently, when we had to do the last set that was due in March, is that their staff they supervise, at any point in the year, should never be surprised by what's going on.

Most supervisors also emphasized how important it was for feedback to be given consistently, so when evaluations were happening, their staff could expect what was coming. However, feedback from supervisors to staff was provided on an ad hoc basis.

Tracking Underperformance

Staff also discussed how performance appraisals are mostly experienced to track underperformance. Performance reviews are not tied to merit raises because of budget constraints at all three sites, so the reviews become another task to just get done. Dallas described how their institution uses performance appraisals to track underperformance: “Here, it's just documenting if someone's like, really bad.”

Regardless of institution, it is difficult to remove someone from their role for underperforming. Human resources expects a thorough and detailed record to address

underperformance. Beverly, a director who supervises full-time staff, described how performance appraisals did not have meaning at their institution,

Well, I would honestly say we mostly don't do [performance appraisals]. There's, I know that there's the yearly forms that we do fill out but my understanding has been that they don't really mean anything.

When addressing underperformance, supervisors described how human resources collaborated to address the situation. Human resources' primary concern is documenting staff underperformance. As Ayo, a director, described, it can be a difficult conversation that requires supervisors to carefully record any issues,

If you have an employee who you are dissatisfied with, the first question that HR is going to ask you is how is it that they suck? Was it going to show up on their evaluation? Have you been giving them, on the evaluation, successful standing? What needs improvement? Those are the only options. So, you've been marking them success? And, now you are dissatisfied? If so, full stop. Try again.

At each of the three sites, staff described how performance appraisals were not effective tools to discuss performance. The outcome most commonly tied to evaluations were tracking underperformance of staff that supervisors were hoping to remove from their roles. Performance appraisals were a bureaucratic exercise for supervisors and the staff they supervise.

Separation

When discussing separation, staff at each institution discussed the results of a colleague leaving their role rather than the functional processes of separation. Open positions in their departments meant that supervisors would have the extra work of hiring a replacement and staff would have the extra work of covering the responsibilities of the person who left. In this section,

I discuss the two themes that arose when I spoke with staff about separation: uncertainty about when a role would be filled and concerns about distributed work.

Uncertainty About When a Role Would be Filled

Separation as a process was not something staff were overly concerned with in their roles. News about a colleague leaving their role was more often met with concern about if and when the role would be filled. There is a risk of unfilled roles remaining open for too long. With recruitment and selection taking longer, supervisors have had to make difficult decisions.

Beverly, an associate director who is currently hiring for an open role, describes the conflict they are experiencing during the hiring process,

There's the tension between, you know, wanting to hire somebody really good but not wanting the candidates in the pool to go cold on you. So, do you just hire who's there? And also, if I don't hire for this position fast enough, are they going to sweep the position? Well, it just gets taken away from me and so, do you just hire somebody? Knowing that there's a six month probation period where it's easier to fire them? Frankly, to see if they work out or not? That's a really shitty feeling. Or, do you try to wait for a good candidate and fail a search and just go over and over and over again, and I've been on committees that have done both.

At Hidden Gem University, staff have left for reasons related to the reduction in force (RIF), new opportunities (inside and outside of the institution), and retirement. Because of the hiring freeze and budget constraints, it is unclear if or when those roles will be filled. Dallas described how timing plays a role in recruitment and selection, "Really what's been happening is if it's at the wrong time of the year, they cut the position, and they've done that here."

Staff are concerned about open positions and how they manage through. There can be a team mentality to help each other out because there is so much work to do. As one director, Logan, noted, “We have a lot of vacancies on our campus right now. I think everyone does, but you know, so it’s even more important that we help each other out.”

Concerns about Distributed Work

How someone leaves is highly dependent on the context in which they’re leaving their roles. Regardless, people leaving their roles will require extra work from their colleagues while a position is filled. Jaycee, a coordinator, described what it’s like when a colleague leaves: “It just means more work. And sometimes when you have the new person, it may mean more work, but not as much.”

More often than not, staff described when colleagues gave notice and the preparations they could make for the work that would need to get done once their colleague left. Kit, a director, knows that when one of their staff leave, they will have to ask their team to do additional work,

...somebody’s got to get the work done, which means that you’re going to add to the plates of those who are still sitting at the table, but you are not necessarily going to compensate them any extra for the added work load. And it’s that undetermined timetable for when that position will get rebuilt again. So you know there’s some dread on the part of those employees who remain after that person leaves. Yay for them for getting a new, good job, but what about us? I got to pick up what they were doing for who knows how long?

The main concern that staff had when discussing separation was the additional workload that would come from having one less team member. Dallas, an associate director, described the pressure to make up for the work when a colleague leaves,

Separation really depends on how people leave. We have had a high number of retirements lately. And that usually turns into, oh crap, we need to cover that job. So higher level, they've been asking the higher ups to stay a bit longer than the time they retire.

Whether that additional work was paid was inconsistent, depending on the individual situation. With roles being cut from budgets, being reorganized in the division, or taking a long time to fill, staff expressed fatigue from making up that work. Unpaid support for those who are understaffed or helping others in their roles still occurs across all institutions. Chandra, a coordinator, described how they supported a colleague without asking for recognition,

[My colleague] calls me, so [leadership] really don't know that I'm the one in the background on the work. And not only would do it because [they] and I are friends and I don't want to make them look bad/ And we broke into [student affairs] together.

At one site in particular, staff leave current roles for new ones at the same institution. This leads to institutional knowledge staying within the institution. Rene, a director, described how providing opportunities for growth helps retain staff at their institution,

And, I think often times once you learn a community and if you find that community to be welcoming of you than the likelihood is that people just kind of stay put and if there's opportunities to grow then people will definitely stay.

At each institution, staff were more preoccupied with the work that would need to be done when a colleague left rather than the logistics of separation like exit interviews and exit

checklists. Opportunities for staff to grow into new roles were described as a way to retain good colleagues and institutional knowledge even when staff were leaving their former roles.

It Depends on the Supervisor

The functional aspects of supervision and the supervisor's personal approach to managing staff were discussed throughout my conversations about each staffing practice. The influence of supervision was not limited to supervision as a staffing practice. Additionally, staff described how orientation, staff development, and performance appraisals were interconnected because of the influence of supervision. In this section, I will discuss the two themes I identified: supervision influences staffing and interconnectedness through supervision.

Supervision Influences Staffing

Staff described several ways that functional supervision and the approach of their supervisor decided how staffing practices were conducted. Supervision was described as the most influential staffing practice regardless of whether someone had supervisory responsibilities or not. Supervision is a task that leaders engage with daily, and that staff experience daily. A supervisor's approach shapes the staff's experience in their roles. One director, Kit, thought supervision was essential for managing the other staffing practices they were responsible for in their role, "I think you really need to excel in the supervision piece, so that you have knowledge related to the other [staffing practices] down the lines."

Not only did the requirements of supervision influence the staff in the course of their work, but supervisors also decided how recruitment and selection, orientation, professional development, performance appraisals, and separation processes were managed. Supervision touched all aspects of staffing and a staff member's experience at an institution. Ayo, a director, described how important functional supervision was in their role, "Supervision. Because none of

those other things really happen without active supervision. Yeah, I have begun to feel that more and more.”

While staff manuals can be important to empower staff in a role, socialization to an institution through a supervisor gives staff the resources they need to be successful. An appreciation for balancing guidance and empowerment was expressed by Tracey, a coordinator who does not have supervision responsibilities in their role,

I feel like [my supervisor] gives me the support I need in a sense of me being like, me, but I'm also my own go getter and initiative taker. So, if I have a question, [they'll] be like, hey, I don't know. Go ahead and ask whoever else... who has been doing this for many years.

Lou, an assistant director, emphasized how important a good relationship with their supervisor was and that it was necessary to be successful in their role, “I think if you have a good rapport with your supervisor, I think that can influence decisions being made.” Sammy, a coordinator, illustrated how a good relationship and clear expectations with their supervisor made them more effective,

I'm clear on what's expected. And then I think it helps [them] to win. Like, there are moments where [they] need me to pick up in a certain area of improve on something. I find that it's easier for both of us, once [they've] expressed what [they] need from me, what the expectations are.

Kit, a director, described how their own supervisor's approach influenced how Kit needed to supervise their staff,

[Supervision] takes staying in touch [with my staff] sometimes. My boss... [asks] me things that [they] could just as easily ask directly to the person running [the service] or

[the program]. Instead, [they] want to ask me. And, then I have to go ask [my staff] because I don't have all the answers which [requires] me to premeditate what the questions are going to be so that I do have all the answers before [my supervisor] asks... So, the supervision piece, this aggravates me in terms of being kind of caught in the middle between [my supervisor and my staff].

Rene, a director, stated that the supervision you receive depends on the supervisor, "So, depending on the preferences of your direct [supervisor] will pretty much, you know, outline the type of supervision you will receive."

Functional supervision is a routine aspect of a staff's experience regardless of their role. Across institutions and roles, staff at all three sites illustrated supervision's importance as a staffing practice but also the influence a supervisor has on staffing and a practitioner's experience.

Interconnectedness through Supervision

Once people are recruited and selection for their roles, staff discussed how orientation, professional development, and performance appraisals build off one another. A supervisor orienting a new staff member to their role takes longer than the formal process, which may evolve into professional development. Staff are evaluated by their supervisors on their performance which may challenge them to develop even more. Each of these staffing practices, managed by supervisors, work synchronistically in providing resources for staff to thrive in their roles.

Jaycee, a coordinator, emphasized how each of the staffing practices have an effect on one other and a supervisor's responsibility in managing their staff,

I believe they're all important. So, during the hiring/selection process, now it's important for you to see if that person is a good match, then the person you're interview also needs to see if the institution is a good match... then it also help to set expectations, you know, if there's a clear onboarding process and orientation process and the new employee knows who to go to for what. You know, the supervisor has to be selective, you know, hire and then their training... then professional development... there should be ongoing learning from everyone who works here. And then evaluations... no one should know at the end of the year that they were doing a bad job. Now, how you conduct those, there should be training for people who are going to supervise people. Learning the difference between managing people in the process and leading people.

Supervisors setting realistic expectations for incoming staff is critical for their success. However, hiring is just the beginning. Supervisors have to be aware of the individual development needs for the staff they supervise, as Beverly, an associate director, described,

I feel like the hiring, like the quality and the experience of the person that we get in, how they can impact, how they can show up. That's certainly orientation and onboarding. You can begin to see where more professional development might be needed or just wanted, like, people who really want to learn more about a specific thing.

While recruitment and selection is a critical piece for each site, the choice in a hire will inform opportunities for development. That development begins during orientation. Ayo, a director, described how they become aware of how they will have to develop staff during the hiring process and how they prepare for incoming staff,

So, for the position I'm hiring for now, which is a coordinator who will be responsible for a cohort program. When that person is identified, particularly because it looks like we're

gonna get somebody who's not familiar with the program at all, there'll be some onboarding and orientation to, this is how our office works.

From there, orientation becomes tied in to professional development and performance appraisal. Supervision can be considered an opportunity for professional development with consistent communication and feedback. As Trixie, an associate director, discussed, their approach to professional development in their functional supervision responsibilities,

I tie in performance appraisals, or the feedback, during supervision. I think also professional development with supervision as well. And I do ask [for feedback] during every one on one that we have.

A supervisor's approach to functional aspects of orientation, staff development, and performance appraisals shaped the relationship between those staffing practices. How staff were oriented by supervisors, and gaps in knowledge that were not addressed in orientation, influenced how staff would need to be professionally developed and how their performance would be appraised.

Student Affairs Staff Experiences

In my discussions with staff, we talked about how staffing shaped their experiences at their institutions. Two themes were identified from our conversations: staff are fatigued and staff still stay.

Staff are Fatigued

At all levels, across all sites, the staff are tired. Response to the COVID-19 pandemic challenged staff to provide creative, never before done services for students quickly. Jaycee, a coordinator, thinks that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed issues in higher education that were not addressed when staff returned to campus,

[Burnout] has been very prevalent and on the forefront here. Just burnout and our own mental health. You know, especially I think, if we waited, came back after one year, the pandemic, I think we would have been ok. Because we were on a hamster wheel and that opportunity to get off and sort of manage was great, but I think you sort of crack some small things. Something was cracked already and it just widened it. And I think that really put a strain on the mental health of our students and everything, but also our own.

The pivot to return to 'business as usual' with fewer financial resources, limited time, and while many student-facing roles remain unfilled has put immense pressure on the staff who stayed. Pressure is high at one institution because with each new month comes a new focus area from leadership for staff to address. Ola, a director, stated how time-consuming directional changes are for them and their staff: "Every month brings, like, a huge new priority. Like, that takes up so much of our time."

Transition in leadership and low enrollment has created some uncertainty at one institution. A director, Ainsley, described the uncertainty they felt in their role because of all the changes at their institution,

Uncertainty that is probably campus wide right now. In terms of is this [leader] going to stay and what are [they] going to do. That combined with decreased enrollment, you know, are we going to grow as a university? Are we going to fall apart as a university? Expectations for student services do not change despite lack of resources. Everyone is stretched thin in their roles from covering the work of people who left. Sammy, a coordinator, admitted to feeling burnt out and described how the work they do contributes to their burnout,

I think there's a little bit of burnout. There is this little bit of fatigue, you know, when it comes to certain things. Because the question that we get a lot is, we're often and justifiably asked to do a lot for the students.

Another coordinator, Tracey, described that the solution to their overwork was hiring more staff: "Looking at the issue as a whole, even through staffing issues, there needs to be more hands on deck. Everybody's making it work."

There never seems to be enough time to do everything that needs to be done. Moreover, students have needs that are increasingly more complicated and difficult to meet. Casey, an associate director, and their department reached the limits of their capacities to meet student needs,

Burnout was real. I mean, it was because it was never ending. And one thing I will say is that we had the shift that we made to, you know, the empowerment piece was because there was a shift in the student and the level of needs that came. You know, we had more and more students come in with major diagnosis, and they've been seeing clinicians for years, you know, on medications. We had seen that increase and it was wearing us out. Like, we could not do it.

Staff described experiencing deep fatigue. Each site has addressed creating more balance for their staff through flexible schedules and additional benefits, but there is not as much of a critical lens on the level of expectations for providing services to students. During our conversations, staff expressed a strong need to take care of themselves and others. Navigating those needs in a large, bureaucratic institution and state system made it difficult because the work can be endless. Beverly, a director, acknowledged the work was never-ending and encourages their staff to take breaks when they need to,

And, so, I got to encourage them, like, you have to stay aware of your schedule. Like, there may be a crisis that comes up that we need you, but, like put a system chat on your cell phone and please go for a walk... you know, like, be with yourself... I know we've got these work from home days. But still take vacation time and sick time... like, if you see this system, [the department], the university, it's a machine. Do not put yourself, your person in the place where the machine is broken.

Staff Still Stay

Each staff member talked about their unique reasons for staying in their roles. Some discussed retirement benefits and flexible work schedules. A couple of the staff I spoke with expressed that they did not intend to stay in their roles, but most staff spoke about their unique reasons for staying. Some staff described how they enjoyed working with their colleagues who were also committed to the work and the opportunity to continue building their divisions and departments. Ola, a director, spoke about their appreciation for the community at Hidden Gem University,

When I hear people talking positively about [Hidden Gem University], I think we always talk about the people that we work with. There really is kind of a family feel... I think it's always been an opportunity to build, you know.

However, every staff member described the gratification they get from working with education and with students. Despite it all, staff describe the optimism that can be experienced in their roles. As Chandra, an associate director, stated, they are committed to making a difference for the student population,

I have been able to see the students matriculate from freshman to seniors, which is always a great thing because when you're seeing them graduate, you can just remember all of the progress and things they'd have.

In the midst of the grind of student affairs work, positively impacting students is a reason staff continued to do what they do. Jayce, a coordinator, described how they enjoyed seeing students grow over their time at the institution,

I stay because I like what I do. I like the people I work with, not just in my specific department but in other departments within our division, and I get to see the fruits of my labor... I know them when they're first years and then I see them when they graduate and then for them to come back and seek me out. Tell me how much [they] know. Their time here means something to them because I was part of it. Even if it's just one student, then I did what I was supposed to do. I did what I was meant to do.

Building strong relationships with students remains at the forefront of why they do the work. Lou discussed how they benefitted from their experiences as an undergraduate student and felt their work was an opportunity to provide those resources to students,

It helps me stay passionate, working with students. I'm a first generation student. So, it gives me joy to work with students and help student out and just kind of inspire them on their path. Just my way of giving back to all students because that's how I got to this point.

Despite the challenges for staff across all institutions, there is a commitment to the students and mission of their respective institutions. Beverly, an associate director, described how that commitment effected how they made their decision to work at their institution,

I expressed earlier [my] commitment to the population we're working with. And, so, if you're going to apply for this job and take the salary, there's something else in it for you that you already know exists. B5

Student affairs staff are experiencing pressure to provide the same level of programs and services to students, even though they now have fewer staffing resources to accomplish institutional goals. Despite the overall sense of fatigue that staff spoke about in our conversations, the values-driven commitment to student affairs work was clear throughout. Even as institutions continue to find ways to do more with less, practitioners remain purposeful as they work to serve the students.

Conclusion

Staffing is a complex system for any organization. All three institutions I worked with during this case study approached the functions of staffing in different ways. Each had to take into account the organizational context and their relationship with human resources to execute staffing functions as effectively as possible. While each site had a staffing system, all three sites lacked a systematic approach to staffing. At each site, meeting the needs of students and the goals of the institution were top priority. Support for staff was inconsistent, often depending on supervisors developing opportunities for staff to a predictable rhythm to their work.

On each campus, supervision was a key aspect of staffing. Supervision is not only a functional staffing practice but also influences the staffing system itself. An individual supervisor's approach to their supervision responsibilities influences the experience of staff that they manage. Staff experienced a wide range of outcomes from their supervisor's approach to supervision including trusting relationships and opportunities for growth, but also micromanagement and lack of guidance. Supervisors effectively completed the logistical aspects

of their roles; however, their approach to supervision determined their staff's effectiveness and success. While utilizing a framework for staffing practices is beneficial for student affairs staff, it is not effective without a systemic approach that starts with effective supervision.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this case study was to explore staffing practices. In this section, I will discuss the findings, implications, and recommendations. This multi-site case study examined the following question:

- How do student affairs practitioners experience staffing practices at their institution?

To fully ensure that this research question would be answered through the course of the case study, the following questions were asked:

- How do practitioners describe their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners perceive the interconnectedness of their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners describe their experiences with institutional staffing practices across their employment?

This chapter will explore the findings as they relate to staffing practices in student affairs at three institutions located in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast: Metro College, Downtown University, and Hidden Gem University. I conducted a hybrid research study that included in-person site visits at each institution. During the site visit, I observed the campus and met with the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). While making campus visits, I was able to make observations about the environment that proved to be helpful to understanding each institution. Following the site visit, I interviewed staff at each institution individually via a virtual meeting platform. The staff who participated held diverse hierarchical and departmental roles.

As part of the case study, I also conducted a document review. Documents related to staffing practices were collected through working with the VPSA, institutional human resources, or through my own website research. The documents served as important clarifying points for the logistical processes that staff described during their interviews. The documents also served as helpful reference points for resources staff were provided. However, documents rarely provided the cultural context to staffing practices that staff described in our conversations.

In this chapter, I will share a brief summary of the findings and then discuss the findings within the context of the literature. I will follow the summary of findings with a brief review of the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (IMSP), which was used to frame this case study and analyze the data (Creamer & Winston, 2002). The discussion of the findings will start with considerations related to the changing environment of higher education, an emphasis on inter-relational staffing, and the encouragement of synergistic supervision. I will continue the discussion with a proposal to revise the IMSP. Finally, I will also discuss limitations for this case study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

In this multi-site case study, I explored staffing practices in student affairs and the influence those practices had on student affairs staff. To answer my research questions, I spoke with staff at various hierarchical levels and across unit areas. Despite the specific organizational context of each site, the different management responsibilities, and the varied unit area expertise, there were many common staffing practice experiences.

The sites I worked with have both similarities and differences. The three main similarities were being located in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast, serving either a majority or exclusively historically marginalized population, and having a robust student affairs division.

The main differences in each institution were their sizes (large, mid-sized, and small) and whether they were public or private (two public, one private). Of course, each institution had unique cultures and environments that informed the major aspects of their differences. One institution was growing and going through immense organizational change. Another institution is in what they described as survival mode due to low enrollment. The third institution is historically prestigious and experiencing increases in enrollment. Each institution had institution-wide human resources support, but the amount of support varied. Regardless of the range of the circumstances, there were common experiences across staffing practices and similarities in staff experiences.

At each institution, awareness of organizational context, compensation expectations for a role, and the relationship with human resources influenced hiring and selection. Despite the wide range of organizational contexts, it was clear that onboarding to an institution was very different from being oriented to a specific role and that orientations need to be individualized for each staff member when they join the institution. Supervision, the most influential staffing practice according to the findings, is highly dependent on the specific style of a supervisor, and expectations for good supervision are rarely provided by the institution. Professional conferences and divisional or institutional committee work remain significant ways that staff are professionally developed; however, this is challenging during times where budgets to support conferences, in particular, are limited. Professional development through other opportunities, like human resources courses, are self-driven and so may be inconsistent. Regardless of the style of performance appraisal, staff described the process as unfulfilling and difficult to navigate. Moreover, staff described how performance appraisals were most significantly tied to managing underperformance rather than rewarding high performance or setting goals for further

development. When staff separated from roles, their colleagues were unsure when or, even, if that role would eventually be filled. Staff were primarily concerned about how and for how long work that needed to still be done would be redistributed among staff that stayed in their roles. Of staffing practices as a whole, supervision determined much of how the other staffing practices would be managed. During our conversations, staff described how interconnected each staffing practice was with the others and staffing practices shaped one another. Staff communicated that they were intensely fatigued as a result of their experiences; however, many stay for the meaning and purpose they derive from their work in student affairs.

Discussion

In this section, I will begin the discussion with a review of the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (IMSP) and then discuss the findings as they relate to literature in Chapter 2, particularly the neoliberal academy, ideal worker norms, socialization, and synergistic supervision. This section will continue with a discussion of supervision's influence on staffing, and I will end with recommending updates to the IMSP based on my discussion of the findings.

Model of Staffing Practices and Integrated Model of Staffing Practices

Winston and Creamer's (1997) original Student Affairs Staffing Practices model is comprised of five staffing practices: recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, and performance appraisal. The five staffing practices are influenced by the external environment (economic conditions, legislation, social climate) and institutional context (geographic location, institution reputation, culture) that the individual higher education organization navigates (Winston & Creamer, 1997). The relationship between organizational context and the five staffing practices is illustrated in the model, with five staffing practices encircled by external environment and institutional context. The relationship of the staffing

practices is demonstrated, mostly, linearly with some overlap between each practice. The model begins with recruitment and selection which is followed by orientation. Next in line, supervision's influence on the staff experience is represented with a larger portion of the model dedicated to it. Following supervision, the relationship between both staff development and performance appraisal to supervision is illustrated by their equal placing in the model.

A later update to the original model, the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (IMSP), added a sixth staffing practice: separation (Conley, 2001; Creamer & Winston, 2002). Additionally, that model visualizes the six staffing practices as cyclical rather than linear to demonstrate how they are interconnected with one another. Supervision is at the center of the circle to illustrate its influence on all staffing practices. I will discuss the findings and how they support three major aspects of Creamer & Winston (2002) model: the importance of understanding organizational context, the high stakes of recruitment and selection, and the relationship between staffing practices. I will also suggest an update to the model to demonstrate institutional human resources' influence on orientation, to further illustrate the relationships between each staffing practice, and to reflect the environmental influence that supervision has on systematic staffing.

The Changing Environment of Higher Education

Higher education is increasingly influenced by neoliberalism and moving away from public funding and its role as a public good (Graglia et al., 2021) This transactional environment is creating pressure on student affairs staff to do more with less (Graglia et al, 2021). Added pressure from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has made student affairs staff less willing to make sacrifices for their roles as they experience burnout and burn through (Anderson, 2020). These factors are influencing the environments that staff are working in.

Creamer and Winston (2002) stressed that knowledge of organizational context is necessary for supervisors to successfully navigate staffing practices. To best facilitate staffing practices, a supervisor needs to consider economic conditions, political influences, institutional reputation, and laws and regulations. According to Creamer and Winston (2002), the specific institutional factors that have an effect on staffing practices are geographic location, institutional resources, affirmative action, collective bargaining agreements, administrative culture, work ethos, and expectations of student affairs. Each of the institutions I worked with described all of the environmental factors as well as each of the institutional specific factors (except for collective bargaining agreements) that provided the context necessary to understand staffing at their institution. Supervisors were responsible for communicating organizational context during each staffing practice, and a supervisor following through on that responsibility determined the outcome for that staffing practice. The findings of this case study reflect that supervisors explaining environmental factors help contextualize staffing practices for the staff they supervise. As discussed in Creamer and Winston (2002), this organizational context was multifaceted and had complex interactions that shaped staffing at each institution.

For example, a significant, but unsurprising, factor that impacted each institution, at both an environmental and institutional level, was the financial fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the different enrollment levels at each institution, each VPSA described that budgets remained under close scrutiny. Supervisors I spoke with at each site had authority to make decisions that determined how budget constraints were handled. The need for carefully made and thoughtful decisions in a difficult economic environment challenged supervisors to make difficult choices. This resulted in positions (both full-time and graduate staff) remaining unfilled or cut from the budget, limited paid student support, lack of professional development

opportunities, and lack of support for staff whose roles require continuing education credits. Lack of resources for staff is contributing to burnout (Anderson, 2020). However, expectations of staff to provide pre-COVID-19 levels of services to the institution and students did not change. Collectively, staff described the impossible task of meeting those expectations, not from a limited budget alone, but also with the limited time and professional support they had because of the budgetary decisions made (Anderson, 2020; Silver & Jakeman, 2014).

A unique aspect of this case study was the geographic area that bound the case. Each institution was located in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast. Staff at each institution described the competitive nature of recruitment and selection in a large area that has opportunities at dozens of other institutions or within the private sector. However, this also gave staff the option to move roles without uprooting their lives. In fact, one staff member I interviewed in the study was in the midst of transitioning to another institution for more competitive pay and a more predictable rhythm of work. Living in an area with plenty of opportunities within higher education and outside of higher education allows staff to leave their roles when they experience burnout. Staff have more options to use the neoliberal free market to their advantage and push back on the expectation to “work all the time and be emotionless” by prioritizing their well-being and finding a new role (Mistretta & DuBois, 2021, p. 140). Living in a large area with a lot of opportunities was a draw for many staff that I spoke to. Supervisors understood the reasoning for staff who left to take advantage of the competitive job market, but the situation leads to frequent turnover at two institutions in particular.

Budget constraints continue to impact compensation for student affairs staff. While financial resources are considered at the institutional level in Winston and Creamer’s (1997 & 2002) model, compensation and benefits are not explicitly called out in the recruitment and

selection of student affairs staff. Staff at all three institutions discussed compensation in terms of institutional fit. Many staff were willing to accept lower compensation for the opportunity for meaningful work, more focus on their personal life, and other benefits like remote work and tuition support. Conversations about compensation were an important topic for supervisors while they were hiring new staff, but these conversations proved to be a challenge because of the expectation for staff to be motivated by the value-driven student affairs work (Graglia et al., 2021). One supervisor noted the tension they felt when repeatedly discussing compensation during interviews, only for a candidate to try to negotiate outside of the stated range at the offer stage.

[I] have to be very clear, because I think so many incoming candidates have been well trained to negotiate, negotiate, negotiate... I don't have any more money beyond the budget. If [they're] looking for more money than that, this is not the position for [them].

Like discussing overall fit for the role, both compensation and benefits outside of compensation were topics that supervisors discussed checking in on frequently in an interview process

Separation is a staffing practice that was added in the later iteration of the Model of Staffing Practices, the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Conley, 2001; Creamer & Winston, 2002; Tull, 2011). When a staff member leaves, the conversation often starts with why they have made that decision. Because in this study I spoke with staff who were still in their student affairs roles, there is little first-hand perspective on why staff leave. The main concern that staff had across all three institutions related to separation was the repercussions from one of their colleagues leaving. At two institutions, supervisors and staff members felt uncertainty about whether a role would be filled at all. When people left, it was not unusual for those roles to remain unfilled or eventually cut from the budget because of failed searches or budget

constraints. That uncertainty caused stress among supervisors and staff because, even if a role was allowed to be filled, the time it could take a supervisor to fill that role varied depending on candidate pools and human resources processes that could be lengthy.

The main concern for staff when a colleague left was how supervisors would distribute the work that still needed to be completed. Because of the urgency to provide students a pre-COVID-19 pandemic experience, expectations for programs and services remained the same after a staff member left, regardless of how long the position took to fill. Performing this work was to the benefit of the institution at the cost of staff members' well-being, a key aspect of neoliberalism (Graglia et al. 2021). How staff were, or were not, compensated for redistributed work varied from site to site. One supervisor experienced a role they supervised eventually being cut from their budget because their staff demonstrated the same amount of work could be done with fewer staff in the department. In some scenarios, staff who covered work when a colleague separated from a role were occasionally compensated for the time period the role was unfilled.

Extra compensation for additional responsibilities generally happened when staff were covering work for a department outside of their own or for a role that was higher in the hierarchy of their department. One supervisor explained to me that they were uninterested in doing the work of their supervisor who left even though they would be compensated for it. However, they inevitably had to complete aspects of their supervisor's role while it was being filled. Regardless of whether they were being compensated for additional work, staff at all levels described their desire to support their colleagues. This was the case at one institution where staff tended to stay at the same institution but move into new roles. They had institutional knowledge that was often called on by the staff in their former unit. The staff I spoke to stayed in their roles for many

reasons, but the redistributed work from their colleagues leaving significantly contributed to their fatigue in their roles.

Emphasizing Inter-relational Staffing

For staff across the institutions I worked with, recruitment and selection was a critical focus, and often, one of the more in-depth topics we discussed. In particular, they emphasized the importance of the agreement between a candidate and hiring manager that the organization context was a good fit for both parties and of beginning to socialize prospective staff to the institutional environment. Candidates may be motivated to work at an institution, but determining mutual fit for a role takes candid conversations about the organizational context. Supervisors, who at each of my sites were hiring managers for open positions on their staff, were responsible for determining organization fit during recruitment and selection.

Supervisors at each site described how they discussed organizational fit and socialized candidates through recruitment and selection materials, providing examples of divisional work, and during initial interviews (typically via phone or virtual platforms). However, opportunities for supervisors and their staff to determine that fit are becoming more limited with on-campus visits being eliminated from interview processes at two institutions I worked with during this case study. Supervisors and staff at each site described the value of experiencing an institution first-hand and having conversations about fit in-person as a part of socializing candidates to the environment. Candidates for open roles are constantly being socialized in their interactions during the recruitment and selection process and a supervisor's role in hiring is highly influential on socialization (Graglia et al., 2021; Harro, 2000; Mistretta & DuBois, 2021)

Simply executing the function of hiring new staff is not enough. Strategic thought is necessary in staffing, beginning with hiring, to introduce prospective staff to an institution.

Because opportunities for socializing candidates during interviews are becoming limited, supervisors will have to be thoughtful about the opportunities they do have to begin socializing candidates to the roles in which they are interested. Budget constraints that have resulted in fewer on-campus visits limit a candidate's ability to be an active, well-informed participant in the fit decision-making process and, at one institution, contributed to frustration that staff are experiencing with turnover. With concerns around budget not likely to change in the near future, staff affairs supervisors will need to consider new, creative ways to discuss organizational fit.

Staff at each institution reflected Winston and Creamer's (1997) perspective that "new staff orientation begins during the recruitment and selection process and continues throughout the early stages of the job" (p. 278). Supervisors at each of the three institutions discussed how the interview process gives candidates a glimpse into the environment that they might work in. Interviews also give supervisors a glimpse of the skills a candidate has and where they may need to be trained during orientation. However, orientation was where a new staff member was beginning to integrate into the institution.

The socialization of a staff member to their environment begins with recruitment and selection and continues through orientation. Like the recruitment and selection process, a major aspect of orientation is the formal onboarding that a new staff member will undergo when they accept a new role. Staff at each institution described onboarding as the logistical processes of becoming a staff member that included hiring paperwork, background checks, and mandatory institutional training. Orientation was described by staff as the process of learning your new role. Onboarding, which is entirely managed through all three institutions' human resources departments, is also an aspect of socialization for incoming staff that supervisors are not as

attentive to during the orientation process. However, staff reference onboarding frequently when they discussed their first impressions of working at their institutions.

The involvement that a supervisor had formally or informally in the onboarding process varied among the institutions. One hiring manager described how, even though they weren't formally involved in onboarding, they remained aware of it through constant communication with their newly hired staff. The timing of onboarding was often unpredictable, and navigating the requirements caused frustration for supervisors and incoming staff. Supervisors who had an understanding of onboarding requirements like hiring paperwork, background checks, and mandatory institutional training for new staff and determining how to manage them were able to help their incoming staff navigate the process in a streamlined manner. While socialization begins with recruitment and selection, onboarding is the first aspect of socialization that occurs once a candidate has decided to accept a role. Onboarding introduces incoming staff to the staffing functions of the institution, and many staff described onboarding as a difficult introduction to the environment. Ineffective onboarding and orientations continue socializing staff to ideal worker norms in student affairs (Graglia et al., 2021).

The standard orientation guidelines in *The Integrated Model of Staffing Practices* (Winston & Creamer, 1997 & 2002; i.e., educational and operational philosophies, institutional and student affairs history and culture, formal and informal operating procedures, specification of the expectations for professional performance and personal conduct, institutional policies and administrative procedures and the personnel process, the history and relationships among faculty, staff, and students, and introduction to the campus and surrounding community) were important to staff at each institution. However, when discussing orientation, staff members stated explicitly that the need to individualize guidelines to the specific needs of the new hire was important. One

supervisor in particular described how a candidate in a search process they were managing at the time of the interview had no higher education background. Graduate preparation programs are an expected qualification for practitioners and are an early aspect of socialization to the field (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). A staff member, Dallas, “got way more orientation as a grad student...than I did here.” Having not gone through a traditional preparation program, they would not only need orientation to their role but also to higher education as an industry.

Creamer and Winston (2002) described the trade-off hiring managers have to make when bringing new staff into their institutions because “frequently, applicants are eliminated from consideration for a position because they have not performed the duties specified in the job description before” (p. 277). This means that hiring managers are responsible for individualizing orientations to each staff member to make up for any skill or experience gap and ensuring that staff are oriented effectively. Moreover, the time period that a new staff member spends in orientation varied from hiring manager to hiring manager. Winston and Creamer (1997) stated that orientation “continues through the early stages of the job” (p. 278). However, one staff member described how they were still learning about their institution after years of being there, “I wish I knew more of it, because I feel like I could do my job a heck of a lot better.” Many staff noted that it was impossible to cover all orientation topics in the first few weeks of a new hire’s experience. Supervisors should not confuse readiness to execute job responsibilities with being fully oriented to the institution. Orientation is an ongoing and iterative process.

At each of the three institutions I worked with, the idea of staff development was most closely associated with professional conferences. Access to these conferences was limited due to constrained budgets the last few years, although there have been some recent increases. Creamer and Winston (2002) are clear that institutional financial support is necessary for staff

development. However, lack of financial support in varying degrees at each site was understandable because of limited budgets. Professional associations continue to be an important part of socializing staff in student affairs. This proved to be a challenge because staff may not have funding to attend and overreliance on professional conferences to provide staff development has de-emphasized supervisors creating and following development plans for staff. Time, already a limited resource for supervisors, is more often spent focused on ensuring execution of programs and services. Intentional staff development can become less of a priority for supervisors because of the pressure to deliver on institutional goals.

Staff development outside of attending professional conferences is primarily self-driven. Taking advantage of any development opportunities other than professional conferences was typically initiated by staff themselves. Given Creamer and Winston's (2002) perspective that staff development should be part of daily work, there should be a variety of types of development happening, and both new skill development and professional growth should be recognized. For such development to be a part of daily work, supervisors need to check-in with staff on development opportunities. These tenets of development were inconsistent across all sites because very few supervisors had development plans for their staff. Staff recognized the importance of diverse development opportunities and praise for growth, but few described any follow through on staff development. One staff member described how development was one of the first things to be dropped from the priority list because of limited time and budgets. During our conversations, staff were enthusiastic about development in their roles. Staff want to learn and grow; however, they are consumed with the work and professional development is put on the backburner by supervisors.

Winston and Creamer (1997) name the “complex and sensitive institution system” that staff have to interact with when performance is to be evaluated (p. 281). Of the staffing practices, performance appraisal was the one that brought up the most frustration for staff in our conversations. Regardless of the type of appraisal form (two sites used the state system form and one site, being private, used their own form), there was lack of clarity on how supervisors should fill out performance appraisals and what details about performance should be included in the appraisal. The performance appraisal process was difficult for both supervisors and the staff being appraised because supervisors were provided few resources on how to conduct the conversations. Without resources or expectations on managing those aspects of performance appraisals, supervisors were dependent on managing annual evaluations in the context of their supervision approach. This is compounded by a one-size-fits-all approach to the performance appraisal forms provided by institutional human resources. Like staff development, it takes time to have a comprehensive performance conversation, and staff describe having limited time to do so because of the expectations for delivering on student services. The annual performance appraisal is best served by making ongoing appraisal an intentional part of the routine of daily work through supervision. More frequent performance conversations depend on the supervisor’s capacity to have frequent check-ins and focus on development. One staff member described that checking-in on their development and performance was a consistent topic in one-on-ones with their supervision. That experience was meaningful for the staff member and created engagement in their own development. However, that experience was not consistent across the three sites.

While Creamer and Winston (2002) recommend tying appraisals to rewards that benefit staff, at all three sites, that was difficult to achieve. Staff named merit raises as the reward that they would want or expect for performing well in their roles, but none of the three sites had merit

raises tied to performance. Moreover, staff described how they perceived performance appraisals to be used mainly for tracking underperformance. Performance appraisal documents served as a record for human resources should someone need to be removed from their role. This negative association with performance appraisals and lack of rewards tied to them led to staff having incredibly negative opinions on the process.

Encouraging Synergistic Supervision

Winston and Creamer (1997) state that “supervision is a vital staffing practice, second only to selection of new staff in determining a division’s effectiveness. It is the linchpin that holds the staff process together” (p. 279). Based on my conversations with staff across all three institutions, supervision is the most important staffing practice in the model. It is not only the linchpin, but supervision also drives the experiences for staff in relation to each staffing practice. In a later update in the Integrated Model for Staffing Practices, supervision is positioned at the center of the model to reflect the “joint effort between supervisors and staff members, which produces a synergistic effect great than the sum of individual contribution” (Creamer & Winston, 2002, p. 2). Tenets of synergistic supervision include setting expectations for top performance; discussing career aspirations; discussing subpar performance; having frequent, informal performance check-ins; and checking in on satisfaction (Creamer & Winston, 2002). Synergistic supervision is necessary for productive communication between a supervisor and their staff (Tull, 2006).

Across the three institutions I worked with in this case study, none of the divisions provided supervision expectations for staff with supervisory responsibilities or expectations for staff of their supervisors. This is a critical disconnect from Winston and Creamer (1997), who make it clear that “the purpose and process of supervision should be clearly communicated to

each staff member” (p. 279). Not providing expectation on systematic staffing is also a disconnect from the 5P’s model that includes strategic implementation in the model (Pryor et al., 2007).

Each staff member who had supervisory responsibilities described how they used their individual supervision approach to accomplish departmental goals. Effectively, getting the work done was equated to good supervision. Supervisors appreciated the ability to bring their individual style to supervision, but noted that expectations would be helpful, especially for first-time supervisors. By not setting expectations for supervision, for supervisors and their staff, the experience of a staff member is highly dependent on the style of supervision rather than the “goals or objectives and the careful monitoring of activities related to accomplishment of those goals” (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 279). This creates a very inconsistent supervision and staffing experience across institutions, departments, and management level.

Creamer and Winston (2002) describe supervision as an act of care that includes advocating for staff, providing context on institutional leadership, and serving as a sounding board for staff. The staff at the institutions I worked with who were the most engaged in their roles had strong relationships with their supervisors. Their supervisors promoted supervision as care for their staff. That was an inconsistent experience depending on the individual approach of the supervisor at all three institutions. Staff outlined that clear communication and consistency were valuable to them from their leaders. One supervisor described the engagement they promoted with their staff by providing as much transparency into institutional workings and decision making as possible in their roles. It reduced the frustration their staff felt with having additional budget cuts without any change in expectations in student services. Rather than letting a supervisor’s individual approach dictate the staff experience, several supervisors adjusted their

style to meet their staff's needs. This demonstrates a staff-centered perspective that more resembles the synergistic style of supervision that Creamer and Winston, (2002) promote. While supervisors described supervision as ongoing, synergistic supervision was not a common approach across institutions.

Support for the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices

Across each of the three sites, levels of staff, and various departments represented, understanding the organizational context through my conversations with staff was necessary to understand staffing practices. Creamer and Winston (2002) discuss the nature of external influences and institutional culture on the model and outline factors that encompass organizational context. In our conversations, staff frequently brought up external influences, like the lack of financial resources because of the ongoing COVID-10 pandemic, overturning of Affirmative Action, and continued need for social reform. Institutional context proved to be critical for my understanding of staffing. At each institution, staff discussed being located in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast, how their institution was perceived within the city and state it was located in, and the culture of working at their institution. All of this context provided deep insights to the staffing processes. In Creamer and Winston's (2002) model, staffing practices are situated within organizational context. This positioning was supported by the findings.

At every site, staff detailed the recruitment and selection process. It was often the staffing practice that staff cared about the most and, like Creamer and Winston's (2002), marked the beginning of the staffing practices cycle. Staff at each institution described needing to hire, challenges they were experiencing with hiring, how they might have to accept hiring someone

who wasn't qualified or a bad organizational fit, and the consequences should they not be able to fill a position. These findings support that,

Probably the most crucial aspect of the staffing process is recruitment and selection of persons to perform the work that needs to be done. Mistakes made at this stage can have widespread and long-lasting effects. Employing a person who is not suited for work in student affairs or in the particular institutional setting can seldom be overcome and can impede the achievement of high quality student affairs operations (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 40).

Recruitment and selection are very important aspects of student affairs staffs' role, and they care deeply about doing it well. Regardless of how each institution completed the recruitment and selection process, the decisions around hiring did have long-lasting influence on the staff and their experiences.

Both the original model and updated model visually illustrate the relationship between staff development and performance appraisal (Creamer & Winston, 2002 & Winston & Creamer, 1997). That dynamic was supported during the conversations I had with staff at all three sites. Staff who were able to have meaningful conversations about their performance outlined how professional development played a role in that conversation. Staff with supervisors that worked with them to formulate a development plan to keep their performance and growth on track in preparation for an appraisal and after an appraisal were engaged with performance conversations. A tenet of the relationship between staff development and performance appraisal depends on the supervisor leading a development plan for their staff (Creamer & Winston, 2002). While it varied if staff had a supervisor who created a professional development plan, the staff that did have development plans described the relationship it had to conversations about their performance.

Critiques of the Student Affairs Staffing Model

These case study findings support several aspects the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002). The findings also suggest necessary updates to the model to demonstrate the influence institutional human resources has on orientation, to further illustrate the relationships between each staffing practice, and to reflect the significant influence supervision has on each individual staffing practice.

Human Resources and Orientation. Winston and Creamer (1997) stated that “the orientation process actually begins when the new staff member applies for the position” (p. 41). At each institution, job postings were managed by human resources, so the beginning of orientation is initiated with a candidate’s interaction with a human resources process. Human resources units had required content in the job postings, but hiring managers at each site indicated they had control over the description of the role in the posting.

Creamer and Winston (2002) describe orientation as the process of a new staff member being socialized to the institution and their role; however, human resources’ role in socialization for staff is overlooked. During my conversations with staff at each site, they initially spoke about the human resources onboarding process when asked about orientation. Hiring paperwork, background checks, mandatory trainings, and first day onboarding sessions were elements of human resources onboarding that staff discussed. Most of these requirements for human resources onboarding occur prior to a new staff member’s first day. How a practitioner is socialized to the norms of the institution has a lasting effect, and staff were being socialized to the institution long before they began orientation in their new role (Graglia et al., 2021). Many staff I spoke to described how difficult it was navigating human resources onboarding. Some staff with supervisory responsibilities paid close attention to the human resources process

because they knew how difficult it was for their newly hired staff members. That assistance from supervisors did not necessarily make it easier to get onboarding done, but one supervisor described how important the oversight was to keep the process moving along,

I'm confirming that everything [human resources] sent have gotten to where it needs to be even though [incoming staff] probably already checked all kinds of email because I tell [them] to. It's just that bad.

It is doubtful that student affairs staff will have control over any aspect of human resources onboarding, but awareness of the process is necessary. Considering that professional socialization is ongoing for staff at all levels, but particularly important for staff in the first full-time roles, how staff are socialized to an institution through human resources onboarding needs to be taken into consideration with orientation (Graglia, et al., 2021; Tull et al., 2009).

Relationships Between Staffing Practices. Creamer and Winston's (2002) model illustrates the relationship between staff development and performance appraisal in both the original Model of Staffing Practices and the later Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Staff at each of the three institutions described how orientation, including human resources onboarding, also influenced staff development and performance appraisal. During the recruitment and selection process, areas that a candidate would need to be trained in were commonly identified, and staff noted those to be addressed during orientation and through staff development opportunities. Because orientation can take longer than the initial weeks of a new staff member's time at a new institution, staff often discussed how orientation would eventually progress to staff development. In hiring a new staff member, orientation would be focused on learning all aspects of their role and the institution, and staff development would be focused on the way that staff wanted to professionally grow. The progress in both these areas

comes up during performance appraisals. An updated Integrated Model of Staffing Practices will reflect orientation as a part of the staff development and performance appraisal relationship.

The Influence of Supervision. During my conversation with staff at each institution, it became clear that there was a dimension to supervision that was not described either the original model or the updated model (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The model visually represents supervision as the largest staffing practice to indicate that it's "the lynchpin that holds the other components of the mode together" (p. 42). In the model, supervision is described as "a management function intended to promote the achievement of institutional goals and to enhance the personal and professional capabilities and performance of staff" (Winston & Creamer, 1997, p. 42). Moreover, synergistic supervision, a cooperative supervision approach between supervisors and their staff, further encourages staff as active participants in the supervision process (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The model does not take into account the influence that supervision has across each staffing practice (Creamer & Winston, 2002; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The findings from this case study suggest that supervision is more than a management function.

Despite supervision being more than a staffing function, supervisors at each site detailed how much of their performance appraisal was determined on ensuring succession execution of the functional aspect of their and their staff's responsibilities. There was very little focus on supervision as it relates to the staff experience. At each site, supervisors were taking on more and more staff-level responsibilities for carrying out the work of the unit to make up for being understaffed. As a result, supervision responsibilities for many supervisors were reduced to simply executing the functions of supervision. For supervisors, the functions of supervision were filling open roles, getting new staff onboarded and oriented, reminding staff to complete

development activities, completing performance appraisals, and assigning work if a colleague left their role. However, there was a difference between supervision as carrying out these tasks and supervision as a means to achieve institutional goals through influencing staff experience and staff capacity to achieve goals.

Staff described how supervisors made decisions including considering other colleagues' opinions into account during hiring, coworkers helping with orientation, department projects for staffing development, stakeholder input for performance appraisals, and workload management feedback when someone leaves their role. Findings suggest that supervisors influence the experiences of their staff, consciously or unconsciously, because of their influence in decision making and their position of power in relation to their staff. When supervisors took a collaborative approach to staffing functions, they created more engagement in their unit areas. The decisions supervisors made dictated whether the work environment that staff had to navigate during their work was a cooperative one. Staff continued recounting how each of these functional decisions led to their ability to feel like they could be successful in their roles. The Integrated Model of Staffing Practices, the most updated iteration of the model, does not take a supervisor's positional power into enough consideration (Creamer & Winston, 2002).

During our conversations, staff described their supervisor's individual approach and the influence it had on their work in a way similar to how they described how organizational context shapes staffing. One staff member described an ideation session they had with their supervisor to restructure their department,

I was having a conversation with my supervisor. So, my coworker left, and I think when [they] left, there were questions, like, what we need to do in our department... So, I started the conversation, like, even if I stay in [my current role], I would love to switch

[responsibilities]. And, then it led into a conversation, I think it was literally a one on one, where we made our boss reimagine the department and reimagine what the needs were.

A supervisor's positional power to make decisions about staffing, rather than simply carrying out staffing-related functions, contributes to the environment that staff work in.

Supervisors that bring staff into decision-making create a collaborative experience for their team.

The Influence of Supervision on the Staffing Environment

Winston and Creamer (1997) chose the term *staffing practices* because, the term connotes an integrated approach to the selection, orientation, supervision, development, and evaluation of the people employed within a given organization. It communicates the interrelationships that must exist between people and the process they use to facilitate their making contributions to the accomplishment of organizational goals. (p. 3)

The interrelationship not only describes how staff work within systems to achieve the institutional mission, but, through conversations with staff at the three sites in the case study, also came to describe how staffing practices influenced their abilities to accomplish that work. Supervisors are main facilitators of a staff member's initial and ongoing socialization to an institution. Winston and Creamer (1997) also illustrate the inherent conflict and tension that exists for staff to equally serve the institution as well as the students: "Student Affairs is subject to two grand masters: the institution (with its special mission) in which the division functions and the students the division must serve directly to achieve important educational and personal development goals" (p. 6).

Supervision's role as a staffing practice ensures the achievement of those goals through the synergistic relationship supervisors have with staff (Creamer & Winston, 2002). At each

institution, staff described the pressure to meet both of those goals at the cost of their experience as a staff member. The supervisors of the staff I worked with during this case study were responsible for communicating and facilitating the execution of the work that achieves institutional goals, as well as the development of their staff. Every staff member at each of the sites I worked with described the immense fatigue they felt in their roles. Both supervisors and other staff members described the pressure to serve both the institution and student as intense, especially considering the limited time, money, and staff at each institution. Supervisors at each institution were thinking creatively about how to increase staff compensation, provide better work/life harmony, and show appreciation for the work being accomplished, but the pressure to serve the institution meant that services and programs had to be maintained regardless of resources. However, many supervisors I worked with described their supervision responsibilities in terms of ensuring their staff completed their work – accomplishing that function of supervision, but, with limited resources, not articulating the larger role of the supervisor in influencing the environment for staff. The staff's experience, while important to each site, was considered secondary to maintaining programs and services.

Whether they were deciding to leave their roles or not, staff members described how the style of supervision either positively or negatively affected their satisfaction in their role. The staff I spoke with had various reasons for staying in their roles despite the pressure and fatigue, although one staff member did not plan on staying much longer, given their experiences. However, each staff member I spoke with had an unwavering commitment to their students and the work they did. It was a challenge to accomplish what they wanted to, but they derived a sense of purpose and meaning from it. Staff acknowledged they were giving up higher wages, remote work, and more traditional work hours to do student affairs work. Each of them had a reason for

why it was worth it for them. Creamer and Winston (2002) discuss how values drive a lot of the motivation for student affairs work, and staff are motivated to do values driven work. Knowing this, supervisors have a responsibility to reward and appreciate their staff for that commitment. Comprehensively developed staffing practices, as described by Creamer and Winston (2002) are necessary for staff members to accomplish the work they set out to do. However, style of supervision can either promote or inhibit staff members' capacity to effectively work in their roles.

Because of the influence that supervision has on the staff environment and each staffing practice, an update to the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002) is recommended.

Recommended Updates to the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices

Based on the findings from this case study, I suggest the following updates to the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002). The first suggested update to the model is to include human resources onboarding explicitly as a part of the orientation process. As previously discussed, interactions with human resources occur very early in a new staff member's experience. While staff cannot control every aspect of human resources onboarding, awareness of how it shapes a new staff member's socialization can help supervisors and new staff recognize and navigate it more successfully.

The second suggested update to the model would be to demonstrate orientation's relationship with staff development and performance appraisal. Across sites, staff described how it would be impossible to cover everything a new staff member needs to know in a traditional orientation period. Areas that still need to be covered can be positioned as development to ensure ongoing socialization for new staff members.

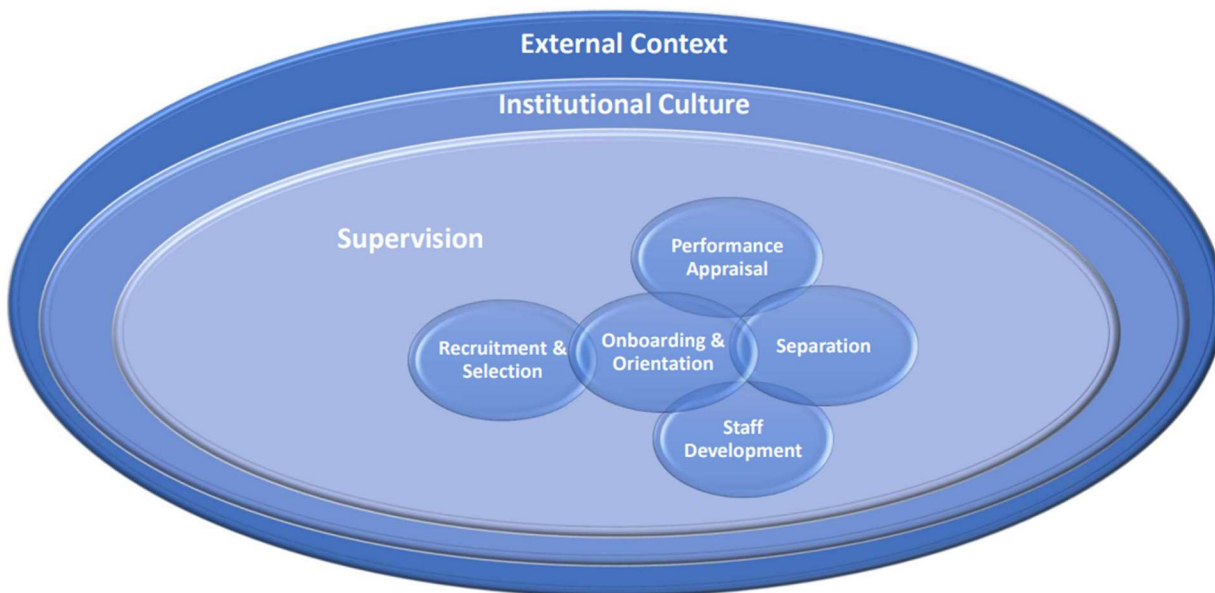
The third and most significant update to the model would be positioning supervision as an aspect of organizational context with environment context and institutional culture.

Supervision influences all aspects of the functions of staffing practices as well as a staff member's environment. That influence directly determines the staff experience. Supervisors are in positions of responsibility and power, and the importance of that authority needs to be reflected in the model.

In summary, the three updates to the model are adding human resources onboarding to orientation, illustrating orientation's relationship to staff development and performance appraisal, and demonstrating supervision's influence on all staffing practices. Because of the importance of the role of supervision, I am referring to the updated model as the *Supervision Model of Staffing Practices*. The following model provides a visual for the recommended updates.

Figure 5

Supervision Model of Staffing Practices



Note. Image of the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices, the recommended modification of the Integrated Model of Staffing Practices. Adapted from: Creamer, D. G., & Winston, R. B., (2002). Improving staffing practices. *Net Results*.

<https://www.bgsu.edu/library/cac/collections/nsaa.html>

Discussion Conclusion

When it comes to ‘how’ each site executed recruitment and selection, orientation, supervision, staff development, performance appraisal, and separation, there were just as many similarities as there were differences in the logistics of their staffing practices. Staffing practices are complex, and every institution is different. Each site had staffing practices in which they were particularly effective and others where they needed improvement. Overall, however, they lacked the systematic approach to staffing practices. Strategic staffing is necessary to have fully realized and effective staffing practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002).

An updated Integrated Model of Staffing Practices, as reflected in the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices, will provide the additional context needed for institutions to develop more comprehensive staffing practices. Circumstances around staffing have drastically changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020. The beginning of data collection for this case was just after the three-year anniversary of the COVID-19 shutdown, but staff spoke about it like it was yesterday. Staff are still experiencing the fallout of shutdown and it came through clearly as we talked about staffing practices. Despite each institution’s best efforts to support staff, they are still fatigued.

Study Boundaries

This case study explored staffing practices in student affairs. I worked with three institutions in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast. I spoke with six participants at each

institution, including the VPSA. My time with each institution was kicked off by a site visit for my interview with the VPSA and was wrapped up with a virtual, clarifying conversation with the VPSA. I used Zoom, a video meeting platform, to meet with staff from each institution for our conversations.

An intentional but limiting boundary for this case study was the unique geographic location. Given that this large, metropolitan city in the Southeast has many higher education institutions at it, staff can, and frequently do, move between institutions for work. This choice was important when thinking about compensation as each staff member dealt with similar cost of living and housing considerations when thinking about their careers. This choice allowed me to work with three very different institutions that had a strong common factor that influenced staffing practices.

This qualitative case study was intentionally designed to provide deep insight into staffing practices and three unique institutions. It is my hope that, given how different each site was, the commonalities between each institution serve as an interesting conversation starter for institutions that are looking to improve staffing practices and see similarities in their own institution.

Implications for Practice

This case study explored the staffing practices at three different student affairs divisions. Higher education continues to experience lack of financial resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has increased student affairs staff workloads (Chessman, 2021). The Supervision Model of Staffing Practices suggests how supervisors, as well as staff without supervisory responsibilities, can think about staffing in an increasingly changing and complex environment. In combination with literature on understanding the complexities of higher

education environments, socialization to ideal worker norms, and guidelines for good staffing practices, the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices provides a starting point for student affairs divisions to provide a comprehensive staff experience for practitioners. In this section, I discuss the use of the model in conjunction with CAS Standards and make two recommendations for student affairs divisions related to staffing practices.

Use for the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices

Creamer and Winston's (2002) model provides an understanding of staffing practices as a system within the specific institutional context and provides broad recommendations for good practice. Most importantly, it emphasizes the need for a *systematic* approach to staffing practices which can only happen coming from the divisional level (Creamer & Winston, 2002). The Supervision Model of Staffing Practices (SMSP) takes into consideration the positional power and influence that supervision has in the environment in which staffing practices occur. It also positions orientation (including onboarding with human resources and position specific orientation) with staff development and performance as iterative processes.

The SMSP can also be used to understand organization context and staffing practices systems; however, given the systems focus in the model, it is best paired with CAS Standards. CAS standards "are identified as essential practices to enact good work within these higher education functional areas" (CAS, 2019, p. 2) and can provide supervisors specific, detailed guidelines on how to supervise their staff within the framework of the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices.

Divisional Leadership's Role in Staffing Practices

Based on the literature and findings from this case study, I recommend that divisional leadership, typically a VPSA, consider a systematic audit of staffing practices at their institution

using the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices framework. Staffing is a complex system that exists in complex organizations (Creamer & Winston, 2002). Findings from this study illustrate the influence supervision has on all phases of the staffing experience. Divisional leadership are the most appropriate stakeholders to drive systematic staffing practices across a division.

A divisional audit should include three general steps:

1. An audit of existing processes in each department measured against the foundational elements of staffing practices outlined in the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices,
2. An identification of gaps in the staffing practices foundational elements,
3. An assessment of those gaps against CAS standards to build up necessary staffing practices and align staffing practices across the division.

This audit should be conducted in cooperation with divisional student affairs staff to provide the opportunity for transparent positive and constructive feedback from staff. Recognizing that this study identified that supervision comes with positional power, careful thought should be considered with how staff are asked for feedback. Someone with significant supervision influence may not get constructive feedback necessary for fear of repercussion. To navigate the challenges with providing feedback to supervisors, I recommend an anonymous survey instrument to collect feedback. Open and honest communication is a foundational aspect of staffing practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002). By allowing for that communication, staff will be able to fully participate in the interrelationship of staffing practices and the work they accomplish (Creamer & Winston, 2002).

This recommendation comes with the understanding gained from this study's findings that time is a valuable and limited resource. Staff across all three sites indicated the trade-offs

they willingly made to do the work they enjoyed. Improving staffing practices through a divisional audit will contribute to continued retention efforts. Especially because budgets will continue to be tight for each of the three institutions I worked with, time spent improving staffing practices is a functional way to reward staff for their contributions. The most significant way to ensure quality delivery of student programming and student services is to provide staff with the support they need to thrive in their roles (Creamer & Winston, 2002).

Providing Resources to Supervisors and CAS Standards

A divisional audit of staffing practices is a significant endeavor which will require a thoughtful plan and plenty of time. It may take time to see progress made and improvement from such an audit, and my second recommendation is intended to meet a need for a more immediate opportunity for improvement. The findings from this case study clearly indicate that supervisors have significant power and influence in staffing practices and therefore in the work experience of their staffs. A way to improve the staffing experience through staffing practice would be to immediately create individual development plans for supervisors. Institutions benefit from staff learning that they have to execute their roles in spite of not being provided the resources (Graglia et al., 2021). Institutions can continue to disregard providing the resources that supervisors need to effectively manage their staff. Development plans can be a first step to uncovering what supervisors need to work in their roles.

An intentional development plan should follow the following good practices recommended by Creamer and Winston (2002):

- Development that considers both skills learned, and growth reflected,
- Development should be incorporated into daily work,
- Variety of development approaches,

- Recognition for development milestones.

In our conversations, staff described a lack of expectations for staffing practices at their institutions and desire for guidelines on good staffing practice. Because the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices provides a systematic view on staffing practices, guidelines on what good supervision practice looks like and how to execute good practice are needed. Staff, especially divisional leadership, expressed their desire to have synergistic staffing practices, but lack of time to create expectations and individualize them for staff proved to be a limiting factor. The CAS General Standards (2019) provide guidelines on leadership, management, supervision, strategic planning, staffing and support, employment practices, and personnel training and development that align with the Supervision Model of Staffing Practices. Supervisors and staff without supervisory responsibilities can reference CAS standards when developing a systematic approach to staffing rather than develop their own as CAS General Standards are written to be applied across institution types (CAS, 2019). The CAS General Standards provide standards for leadership, management, supervision, strategic planning, staffing and support, employment practices, personnel training and development (CAS, 2019). Each of these standards give guidance on aspects of supervision that are helpful for student affairs staff.

For guidelines on specific skills and areas to grow in, CAS General Standards (2019) recommend the following principles (with selected examples):

- Leadership: guiding and advancing their functional area
 - Creating a vision and communicating goals to staff
 - Modeling commitment and effectiveness
 - Influencing those around them
- Management: managing functional area resources and making decisions

- Planning, allocating, and monitoring resources
 - Developing plans for resources
- Supervision: navigating institutional expectations and staffing
 - Incorporating institutional policies and procedures in staffing
 - Consulting with human resources on staffing
 - Ensuring effective staffing practices
- Strategic Planning: developing plans for intentional assessment and program management
 - Facilitating continuous assessment and improvement of department services and programs
 - Providing opportunities for student development
- Staffing and Support: identifying staffing needs and providing resources to achieve staffing needs
 - Staffing the functional areas with qualified individuals
- Employment Practices: reviewing and updating functional aspects of staffing practices
 - Ensuring all staff had written position descriptions
 - Maintaining accurate and updated staffing documents
- Personnel Training and Development: providing and encouraging opportunities for development
 - Providing access to resources for personal and professional development
 - Ensuring staff are trained on institution and role specific requirements

CAS Standards provide a roadmap for practitioners for how they can be affective in their roles. Using the guidelines above, a division and supervision can make a plan for improving

staffing practices. For example, one supervisor I spoke with described how every time they needed to hire a new staff member, they took the opportunity to review and revise the job description. This habit ensured that incoming staff had an accurate first glimpse of what their role would look like.

Supervisors are responsible for staff development plans. Those plans should be intentional, diverse, and growth oriented (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Intentional development around supervision skills would influence individual development as well as shape the experience of staff managed by the supervisor. The development of staff without full-time staff supervision responsibilities should not be overlooked in the big picture; however, immediate focus on staff with supervisory responsibilities would impact a number of staff in the division. Roughly two thirds of participants in this case study supervised full-time staff. One staff member described how their division was becoming top heavy because of entry-level roles being eliminated. There are a lot of staff with supervisory responsibilities in our divisions. One supervisor described how, while they take their staff's opinions on departmental changes or needs into consideration, they knew that the responsibility fell to them as the department leader.

It is impossible to remove the hierarchical nature of student affairs divisions even as we work to empower staff with varying degrees of positional power. Student affairs divisions should acknowledge the influence that supervision and supervisors have on the environment for their staff. In practice, supervisors at each of the three sites I worked with were focused on the execution of their department programs and services, and that was a greater priority than their supervision responsibilities. Institutions should consider assessing student affairs programs and services and the total hours dedicated to executing that work. The amount of time needed to complete the work of a student affairs department should not be more than the total number of

hours that staff can complete in their 40-hour work week. If a department has more programs and services than the staff can handle in their collective work week, institutions should first consider if budgets support expanding staff or if they need to consider a reduction in programs and services. Reallocating resources to hiring more staff or reducing programs and services can help supervisors prioritize their supervision responsibilities. Because the work of a functional area in student affairs is not optional, aspects of supervision become optional when supervisors are focused on assisting staff to do the work.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study exploring staffing practices at three institutions in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast provided robust insights into staffing practices themselves as well as staff experiences. Common themes across staffing practices and staff experiences were identified during conversations with staff at these very different institutions, who held various roles in different divisional departments. However, the limited scope of a case study prevents findings from being applied generally. I have three recommendations for future research to continue exploring staffing practices in student affairs.

The Supervision Model of Staffing Practices

Through a qualitative design, I developed a deep understanding of staffing practices and have proposed an update to the model. Additional quantitative research should be conducted around the applicability of my updated model to different institution types and locations. In particular, research needs to be done on a larger scale to address the geographically bound nature of my findings. As I stated earlier in the boundaries, this case study only considered institutions in a large, metropolitan city in the Southeast. There is a competitive job market in this area. I would be particularly interested in how this model applied to different regions and job markets.

CAS Standards and Staffing Practices

This study took into account how findings applied to CAS standards; however, there is an opportunity for additional research for understanding how CAS standards apply to staffing practices. Because Creamer & Winston's (2002) Model of Staffing Practices was the main model for analysis, data analysis using CAS standards was limited to broadly applying themes to using the CAS standards. Because CAS standards are intended to be a resource for practitioners, research should be conducted at institutions who actively use CAS standards as a part of their staffing practices. CAS standards can be most commonly associated with programmatic improvement. It would be helpful to highlight how they can be used to improve staff experience by studying institutions who use them in that way.

Supervising Mid-level and Senior Level Staff

One of the major findings of this case study was the environmental influence of supervision on each staffing practice. Continued insights are needed on the positional power that supervisors have in their staff's experiences, particularly for mid-level and senior level student affairs staff who also have supervisory responsibilities. One staff member described how they were a middle person in their role and that their supervisor's approach determined how they had to interact with their own staff. The influence of supervision tends to be considered for entry-level staff; however, in this case study, staff across all levels described how their supervisor shaped much of their work. Additional research needs to be conducted on supervision responsibilities for mid-level and senior level roles in student affairs.

Conclusion

When I began thinking about this case study, I knew I wanted to focus on student affairs staff and their experiences. I left my practitioner role in June of 2021 for the private sector after

managing a large recreation center and its student staff through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and return to campus. As I continued my doctoral work, I was stuck on student affairs staff being the facilitators of student experience. I couldn't help but wonder, what or who was the facilitator of the staff experience? The complexity addressed in the Model of Staffing Practices (Winston & Creamer, 1997) and Integrated Model of Staffing Practices (Creamer & Winston, 2002) provided clarity for understanding staffing practices, with the supervisors responsible for them being the facilitators of the staff experience. While the term *staffing practices* refers to six functional aspects of staffing within the organizational context of individual institutions, staffing covers the breadth of the student affairs staff experience that may not be easily categorized.

As the research design came together, I grew unsure if a VPSA would provide access to their division at the risk of uncovering negative issues along with the positive aspects of staffing practices I hoped to uncover. I was unsure if staff that I spoke with would be comfortable being candid in their conversations knowing that their VPSA was a part of the project. I was unsure if anyone would even have time to participate. These concerns quickly fell away as each VPSA and staff member was gracious with their time and perspective. Each staff I spoke with was enthusiastic about sharing their experiences, either to have their institution recognized for providing resources that they appreciated or to improve staffing practices they experienced.

The three institutions I worked with have each experienced an incredible amount of change since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and staff continue to do everything they can for the students. For many staff, the intense pressure to serve both the institution and students challenged them to enforce aspects of work life harmony for themselves, whether provided by the institution or not. One of my favorite indications of staff boundaries were the couple of staff members who had away messages on their emails for after-hours emails they received. It was a

gentle reminder of working hours and when to expect a response. However, each institution still has work to do when it comes to improving staffing practices in service of providing a good experience for their staff. Student affairs staff play a unique role in the student experience. Providing staff the resources they need only benefits the student experience.

In this multiple site case study, I worked with those three institutions to answer the following research questions:

- How do student affairs practitioners experience staffing practices at their institution?

Follow up questions were asked to fully answer the main research question:

- How do practitioners describe their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners perceive the interconnectedness of their institution's staffing practices?
- How do practitioners describe their experiences with institutional staffing practices across their employment?

I found that organizational context and supervision were highly influential on staffing practices and the experiences of student affairs staff. Staff at each institution had different styles of executing tasks related to staffing practices, and the ability to bring individual style to their roles was important. Staff also described how they would benefit from more systematic expectations and guidelines for staffing practices as they navigated change at their institutions.

As higher education institutions and student affairs divisions continue to respond to changing environmental and student needs, staff need to be provided the resources to effectively work in their roles. The staff experience is dictated by how supervisors carry out staffing practices. A system of comprehensive staffing practices to help staff understand their institution makes it more possible for staff to execute programs and services for students. When discussing

staffing practices with Jaycee, they described how “we’re all talking about creating belongingness and inclusion for our students, it has to happen for your staff too.” Student affairs staff enjoy helping students belong and succeed in their education. Now it’s up to our institutions to help supervisors and staff belong and succeed in their roles.

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Appendix A: Site Invitation for Participation Email

Hello [NAME]

My name is Maggie Fitzsimons, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. I am beginning the data collection process for my IRB approved dissertation which explores how student affairs staffing practices. With staffing across higher education continuing to be a challenge, it is critically important to understand the current landscape of staffing practices. I am hoping to learn how student affairs divisions can provide the staffing resources practitioners need to be successful in their role. For this case study, I am looking to partner with participants who:

- Work in a student affairs department in the Atlanta-metro area
- Employ full-time practitioners and graduate student practitioners

I plan to conduct this study as a hybrid model between fully in-person and fully remote research. For each site selected, I intend to:

- Conduct an in-person, 75-minute interview with the senior student affairs officer at the beginning of the data collection process.
- Collect documents that provide insight into staffing practices (e.g., hiring materials, orientation handbooks, performance appraisal documents).
- Engage in a physical artifact analysis with all participants.
- Conduct virtual, individual interviews with a director-level, mid-level, entry-level, graduate-level, and divisional talent manager (if applicable). These interviews will be approximately 75-minutes.
- Conduct an additional in-person or virtual interview with the senior student affairs officer at the conclusion of the data collection process.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please respond to this email expressing your interest. We will schedule a time to speak about the next steps and discuss any questions you may have about my study. I look forward to the prospect of working with you!

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimons
Ph.D. Candidate
College Student Affairs Administration
Mary Frances Early College of Education
University of Georgia

Appendix B: Director-level, Mid-level, Entry-level, Graduate-level, and Divisional Talent Manager Participation Interest Email

Dear [NAME],

My name is Maggie Fitzsimons, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. I am beginning the data collection process for my IRB approved dissertation which explores how student affairs staffing practices. With staffing across higher education continuing to be a challenge, it is critically important to understand the current landscape of staffing practices. I am hoping to learn how student affairs divisions can provide the staffing resources practitioners need to be successful in their role. For this case study, your institution has decided to participate, and I am hoping to partner with mid-level, entry-level, and graduate-level participants as part of the study.

Your participation would include participating in:

- A virtual, 75-minute interview during the data collection process.
- A physical artifact discussion during the participation interview.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please fill out this participation questionnaire [\[INSERT LINK\]](#) Once you fill out the questionnaire, I will contact you about the next steps. I will be selecting participants from those that are interested. I look forward to the prospect of working with you!

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimmons
Ph.D. Candidate
College Student Affairs Administration
Mary Frances Early College of Education
University of Georgia

Appendix C: Director-level, Mid-level, Entry-Level, Graduate-Level, and Divisional Talent Manager Participation Interest Questionnaire

[Open Ended Questions]

- First Name
- Last Name
- Research pseudonym you'd like me to use
- Preferred email address
- Divisional unit area (department) you work in

[Drop-down Option Questions]

- Please chose the best description of your role in student affairs.
 - Director-level
 - Currently working full-time in student affairs with at least three years of experience with supervision responsibilities for at least one full-time staff
 - Ex. Director
 - Mid-level
 - Currently working full-time in student affairs with at least three years of experience with supervision responsibilities for at least one full-time staff
 - Ex. Assistant Director, Associate Director, Manager
 - Entry-level
 - Currently working full-time in student affairs with three or less years of experience
 - Ex. Senior Coordinator, Coordinator, Specialist, Assistant Manager
 - Graduate-level
 - Currently enrolled in a student affairs or higher education master's degree and currently working as a graduate assistant within student affairs
 - Divisional Talent Manager
 - Currently working full-time in student affairs
 - Ex. Assistant Director, Associate Director, Manager

[Yes/No Questions]

- Do you currently supervise full-time staff?
- Do you currently supervise graduate-level staff?

[Open Ended Questions]

- Do you have any questions about your participation?
- Do you have any general questions about the study?

Appendix D: Senior Student Affairs Officer Participation Confirmation Email

Hi [NAME],

Thank you for your interest in participating in this case study examining staffing strategies in student affairs. I am very much looking forward to working with you and your division. This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Georgia. In preparation for your interview, please let me know the best way to schedule a time for us to meet in-person.

I have attached an informed consent form for you to review prior to our interview. Your verbal agreement to the terms outlined in the IRB consent form and participation in the study will be recorded at the beginning of your interview. All names and institutions will be confidential and coded in the findings.

During our time together, we will be discussing student affairs staffing strategies, how they are implemented, and the impact they have. Staffing practices are activities related to the recruitment/selection, orientation, supervision, performance appraisal, and professional development of student affairs staff. The physical artifact you select to discuss should be something of meaning to you that represents a component of staffing practices you encountered during your time at your institution.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions you might have prior to our interview.

I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimmons

Appendix E: Director-level, Mid-level, Entry-level, Graduate-level, and Divisional Talent Manager Participation Confirmation Email

Hi [NAME],

Thank you for your interest in participating in this case study examining staffing strategies in student affairs. I am very much looking forward to working with you. This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Georgia. In preparation for your interview, please do the following:

- Review the informed consent form.
- Fill out the participation Doodle form.
- Select a physical artifact that you feel represents some aspect of your division's staffing practices.

I have attached an informed consent form for you to review prior to our interview. Your verbal agreement to the terms outlined in the IRB consent form and participation in the study will be recorded at the beginning of your interview. All names and institutions will be confidential and coded in the findings.

Please fill out this Doodle form [INSERT LINK] to indicate what dates/times you'd be available for your interview.

During our time together, we will be discussing student affairs staffing strategies, how they are implemented, and the impact they have. Staffing practices are activities related to the recruitment/selection, orientation, supervision, performance appraisal, and professional development of student affairs staff. The physical artifact you select to discuss should be something of meaning to you that represents a component of staffing practices you encountered during your time at your institution.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions you might have prior to our interview.

I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimmons

Appendix F: Interview Confirmation Email to Participants

Hi [NAME],

I am looking forward to our time together on [DATE AND TIME]! Below is the Zoom link [INSERT LINK] that we will use to meet.

As a reminder, please make sure to review the informed consent form attached to this email. Our conversation will be recorded for transcription purposes. Our conversation will be confidential and all names, institutions, and personal identifiers that you share will be anonymized in the findings of my study.

We are scheduled for 75 minutes on [DATE AND TIME]. Our time together will begin by reviewing the informed consent form. We will then have a conversation about the research topics guided by interview questions. We will also be discussing the physical artifact you will bring to the interview. Some topics you can anticipate us talking about are:

- Your experiences around staffing at your institution
- The meaning behind the physical artifact that represents an element of your staffing experiences

For the interview format, I recommend, if you are able, you give yourself five to 10 minutes of transitional time before and after your interview to help prepare for and decompress after our conversation. In our highly virtual work world, back-to-back meetings can be very taxing. Feel free to bring water and a snack as well!

Please let me know if I can answer any other questions you might have in preparation for our conversation. Feel free to email or text me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimmons

Appendix G: Follow-up Email to Interested Participants that were not Selected

Hi [NAME],

Thank you for expressing interest in my research study. I am reaching out to update you on the process. At this time, I have enough initial volunteers. I would like to keep you on a waitlist and reach out should there be an opportunity to participate. Thank you so much for your support in the study and interest in the topic. Please let me know if you have any questions about the study or process. If I can be a resource to you, don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Maggie Fitzsimmons

Appendix H: Informed Consent for Senior Student Affairs Officers**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA****CONSENT FORM****Exploring How Student Affairs Divisions Use Staffing strategies****Researcher's Statement**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Researcher: Maggie Fitzsimmons
Mary Frances Early College of Education, CSAA
maggie.lajza@uga.edu

This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Laura Dean, Mary Frances Early College of Education, College Student Affairs Administration Program

Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to explore how student affairs divisions are using staffing strategies.

Study Procedures and Time Commitment

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your participation will include one 90 minute in-person interview and one 60 minute virtual interview. During this interview, you will be asked to answer questions about your division's staffing practices. You will also be asked to participate in a physical artifact analysis as a part of the first interview. You will also be asked to share relevant documents for analysis as it relates to

the study. Finally, you will be asked to provide contact information for director-level, mid-level, entry-level, graduate-level, and a division talent manager (if applicable) which will be used to invite individuals to participate in the study.

Audio/Video Recordings

In-person interview will be recorded using a recording app with a back-up recording device.

Virtual interviews will be recorded on a virtual meeting platform with a back-up audio recording device. Interviews will be transcribed to text upon completion of the interview. Audio/video recordings will be deleted once the study has been completed.

Benefits and Risks

As a benefit of participating in the research study, participating sites will be provided implications for their divisions based on the findings of the study. Additionally, findings from this research will be used to educate and inform student affairs divisions on staffing practices.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participants are welcome to skip questions they do not feel willing or comfortable to answer. The researcher will not probe further with that question.

Confidentiality

Collected information will be kept confidential. Only researchers will have access to identified information and communication. Personal information will only be kept long enough to ensure data is coded correctly. Pseudonyms for names and institutions will be used in results for anonymity. Personal information will not be shared with anyone not connected to the study. De-identified study data will not be used for other purposes in the future. Personal information collected (names and emails) will be deleted.

Internet Data Collection

Participation in this study includes filling out an online form that asks for your name and email address. Only researchers have access to this information, and it will be deleted at the conclusion of the study. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Withdrawal from the Research Study

If you decide to withdraw from the study or the investigator terminates your participation, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Should you have questions

Maggie Fitzsimmons is the doctoral candidate conducting the study. The supervising professor, Dr. Laura Dean at the University of Georgia, will be the primary investigator for the study. If you have any questions, you are encouraged to contact Maggie Fitzsimmons at maggie.lajza@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

By participating in the interview, you are agreeing for your division to be one of the sites in this research case study. Consent to participate will be confirmed at the time of the interview.

**Appendix I: Informed Consent for Director-level, Mid-level, Entry-level, Graduate-level,
and Divisional Talent Manager**

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM

Exploring How Student Affairs Divisions Use Staffing Strategies

Researcher's Statement

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Researcher: Maggie Fitzsimmons
Mary Frances Early College of Education, CSAA
maggie.lajza@uga.edu

This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Laura Dean, Mary Frances Early College of Education, College Student Affairs Administration Program

Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to explore how student affairs divisions are using staffing strategies.

Study Procedures and Time Commitment

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your participation will include one 90 minute virtual. During this interview, you will be asked to answer questions about your divisions staffing practices. You will also be asked to participate in a physical artifact analysis as a part of the first interview.

Audio/Video Recordings

In-person interview will be recorded using a recording app with a back-up recording device.

Virtual interviews will be recorded on a virtual meeting platform with a back-up audio recording device. Interviews will be transcribed to text upon completion of the interview. Audio/video recordings will be deleted once the study has been completed.

Benefits and Risks

As a benefit of participating in the research study, participating sites will be provided implications for their divisions based on the findings of the study. Additionally, findings from this research will be used to educate and inform student affairs divisions on staffing practices.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participants are welcome to skip questions they do not feel willing or comfortable to answer. The researcher will not probe further with that question.

Confidentiality

Collected information will be kept confidential. Only researchers will have access to identified information and communication. Personal information will only be kept long enough to ensure data is coded correctly. Pseudonyms for names and institutions will be used in results for anonymity. Personal information will not be shared with anyone not connected to the study. De-identified study data will not be used for other purposes in the future. Personal information collected (names and emails) will be deleted.

Internet Data Collection

Participation in this study includes filling out an online form that asks for your name and email address. Only researchers have access to this information, and it will be deleted at the conclusion of the study. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology

used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

Withdrawal from the Research Study

If you decide to withdraw from the study or the investigator terminates your participation, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Should you have questions

Maggie Fitzsimmons is the doctoral candidate conducting the study. The supervising profession, Dr. Laura Dean at the University of Georgia, will be the primary investigator for the study. If you have any questions, you are encouraged to contact Maggie Fitzsimmons at maggie.lajza@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

By participating in the interview, you are agreeing for your division to be one of the sites in this research case study. Consent to participate will be confirmed at the time of the interview.

Appendix J: Senior Student Affairs Officer Interview Protocol

Procedure

1. Thank participant and engage in small talk
2. Obtain verbal permission to record interview and ask permission to begin recording.
 - a. If it is alright with you, at this point, I will begin recording our conversation. At any point, you can ask me to stop the recording if you are concerned with your participation. Do I have your permission to begin recording?
3. Start recording with the following information:
 - a. Date
 - b. Time
 - c. Location
 - d. Participant pseudonym
4. Confirm participant received the informed consent form and consents to participate.
 - a. Did you receive the informed consent form emailed to you? I'd like to review it before we get started, so that you confident with your participation.
 - i. You participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to not participate or stop at any time without penalty.
 - ii. I am recording our conversation and will transcribe it when we finish out interview. Recordings will be deleted once the study is completed.

- iii. All names and institutions will be confidential in this study. Pseudonyms will be utilized to identify people or institutions. Only researchers will have access to this information, and it will be deleted once the study has finished.
 - iv. If you decide to withdraw from the study, your interview up to that point may continue to be utilized unless you request to have it removed from the study.
 - v. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact UGA's IRB office. I can provide contact information to you.
 - vi. Do you have any questions?
 - vii. Do you understand what I have explained and agree to participate?
5. Conduct interview using protocol below.
 6. Keep track of time during interview and give 10-minute warning.
 7. Stop recording.
 8. Thank participant for their time and outline the next steps.

Interview

Thank you again for participating in my study. The purpose of this case study is to explore how student affairs staffing practices. We have reviewed the informed consent and begun recording, so let's begin!

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about student affairs on your campus.

2. What's it like to work at your institution?
3. What does the term "staffing practices" mean to you?
 - a. Possible follow-up: what other words or processes do you associate with staffing?
4. A popular model for staffing in student affairs includes six staffing practices: recruitment/selection (hiring), orientation (on-boarding), supervision, professional development, performance appraisal (evaluations), and separation (leaving a role). Of those practices, you mentioned that [BLANK] were what you thought of when you thought of staffing. What do the practices that you didn't mention mean to you? Let's start with [BLANK].
 - a. Recruitment/Selection
 - b. Orientation
 - c. Supervision
 - i. Supervisor/supervisee
 - d. Professional development
 - e. Performance appraisal
 - f. Separation
5. How do your institution's staffing practices impact each other?
 - a. Possible follow-up: what are the most important parts of your division's staffing?
6. How are decisions around staffing practices typically made?
7. What internal or external factors influence staffing practices in your role?
8. Research in student affairs is increasingly concerned with practitioners experiencing "burnout" in their roles. How does the current climate around employment influence staffing practices at your institution?

9. How have staffing practices influenced your own satisfaction in your role?
10. What parts of staffing practices need to be improved at your institution?
11. What parts of staffing practices work well at your institution?
12. Is there anything else you think is important for me to understand as it relates to the research study?

Document Collection

- Leadoff Question: What documents would be useful for me to understand at your institution?
 - Possible follow-up questions:
 - Why did you choose these documents?
 - How do they represent the staffing practices at your institution?
 - Do they have meaning to you?

Appendix K: Director-level, Mid-level, Entry-level, Graduate-level, and Divisional Talent Manager Interview Protocol

Procedure

9. Thank participant and engage in small talk

10. Obtain verbal permission to record interview and ask permission to begin recording.
 - a. If it is alright with you, at this point, I will begin recording our conversation. At any point, you can ask me to stop the recording if you are concerned with your participation. Do I have your permission to begin recording?

11. Start recording with the following information:
 - a. Date

 - b. Time

 - c. Location

 - d. Participant pseudonym

12. Confirm participant received the informed consent form and consents to participate.
 - a. Did you receive the informed consent form emailed to you? I'd like to review it before we get started, so that you confident with your participation.
 - i. You participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to not participate or stop at any time without penalty.

 - ii. I am recording our conversation and will transcribe it when we finish out interview. Recordings will be deleted once the study is completed.

- iii. All names and institutions will be confidential in this study. Pseudonyms will be utilized to identify people or institutions. Only researchers will have access to this information, and it will be deleted once the study has finished.
- iv. If you decide to withdraw from the study, your interview up to that point may continue to be utilized unless you request to have it removed from the study.
- v. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact UGA's IRB office. I can provide contact information to you.
- vi. Do you have any questions?
- vii. Do you understand what I have explained and agree to participate?

13. Conduct interview using protocol below.

14. Keep track of time during interview and give 10-minute warning.

15. Stop recording.

16. Thank participant for their time and outline the next steps.

Interview

Provide description of study and topic introduction:

Thank you again for participating in my study. The purpose of this case study is to explore how student affairs staffing practices. We have reviewed the informed consent and begun recording, so let's begin!

Physical Artifact Discussion

- Leadoff Question: Can you describe to me the artifact you chose?
 - Possible follow-up questions:
 - Why did you choose this artifact?
 - What meaning does it have to you?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about student affairs on your campus.
2. What's it like to work at your institution?
3. What does the term "staffing practices" mean to you?
 - a. Possible follow-up: what other words or processes do you associate with staffing?
4. A popular model for staffing in student affairs includes six staffing practices: recruitment/selection (hiring), orientation (on-boarding), supervision, professional development, performance appraisal (evaluations), and separation (leaving a role). Of those practices, you mentioned that [BLANK] were what you thought of when you thought of staffing. What do the practices that you didn't mention mean to you? Let's start with [BLANK].
 - a. Recruitment/Selection
 - b. Orientation
 - c. Supervision
 - i. Supervisor/supervisee
 - d. Professional development
 - e. Performance appraisal
 - f. Separation
5. How do your institution's staffing practices impact each other?

- a. Possible follow-up: what are the most important parts of your division's staffing?
6. How are decisions around staffing practices typically made?
7. What internal or external factors influence staffing practices in your role?
8. Research in student affairs is increasingly concerned with practitioners experiencing "burnout" in their roles. How does the current climate around employment influence staffing practices at your institution?
9. How have staffing practices influenced your own satisfaction in your role?
10. What parts of staffing practices need to be improved at your institution?
11. What parts of staffing practices work well at your institution?
12. Is there anything else you think is important for me to understand as it relates to the research study?

Appendix L: Senior Student Affairs Officer Follow-Up Interview

Procedure

17. Thank participant and engage in small talk
18. Obtain verbal permission to record interview and ask permission to begin recording.
 - a. If it is alright with you, at this point, I will begin recording our conversation. At any point, you can ask me to stop the recording if you are concerned with your participation. Do I have your permission to begin recording?
19. Start recording with the following information:
 - a. Date
 - b. Time
 - c. Location
 - d. Participant pseudonym
20. Confirm participant received the informed consent form and consents to participate.
 - a. Did you receive the informed consent form emailed to you? I'd like to review it before we get started, so that you confident with your participation.
 - i. You participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to not participate or stop at any time without penalty.
 - ii. I am recording our conversation and will transcribe it when we finish out interview. Recordings will be deleted once the study is completed.

- iii. All names and institutions will be confidential in this study. Pseudonyms will be utilized to identify people or institutions. Only researchers will have access to this information, and it will be deleted once the study has finished.
- iv. If you decide to withdraw from the study, your interview up to that point may continue to be utilized unless you request to have it removed from the study.
- v. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact UGA's IRB office. I can provide contact information to you.
- vi. Do you have any questions?
- vii. Do you understand what I have explained and agree to participate?

21. Conduct interview using protocol below.

22. Keep track of time during interview and give 10-minute warning.

23. Stop recording.

24. Thank participant for their time and outline the next steps.

Interview

Description of study and topic introduction

Thank you again for participating in my study. Our conversation today will be focused on any clarifying questions that may have come up during my other interviews.

Interview Questions

- Topic 1: Institutional Environment/Culture

- Questions around how the institutional environment/culture and the influence it may have on staffing strategies will be covered
- Topic 2: Divisional Staffing Strategies
 - Questions around divisional staffing strategies will be covered
- Topic 3: Divisional Staffing Practices
 - Questions around divisional staffing practices will be covered

Appendix M: Data Analysis Part 1

Creamer and Winston's Integrated Model of Staffing Practices

	Recruitment/ Selection	Orientation	Supervision	Professional Development	Performance Appraisal	Separation
<i>Purpose</i>						
<i>Principles</i>						
<i>Process</i>						
<i>People</i>						
<i>Performance</i>						

Appendix N: Data Analysis Part 2

CAS General Standards

**Part 5: Access, Equity,
Diversity, and Inclusion**

**Part 6: Leadership,
Management, and
Supervision**

**Part 7: Human
Resources**

Data Analysis Part 1 Themes
