

Chapter 21

Mentoring and Supervision for Women of Color Leaders in North American Higher Education: Together We Go Further

Elena Sandoval-Lucero

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6010-2055>

Front Range Community College, USA

Tamara D. White

Front Range Community College, USA

Judi Diaz Bonacquisti

Regis University, USA

ABSTRACT

Reflecting on their mentoring and supervision experiences as Latina and Black women leaders in higher education, this article proposes that Women of Color employees are more effective when supervisors give them space to draw upon their own rich histories and cultural wealth in their professional lives. Viewed through the lens of Relational Cultural Theory, which grew out of the work of Jean Baker Miller and colleagues providing culturally relevant, affirmative supervision is a growth-fostering experience for both employee and supervisor. The tenants of RCT include authenticity, growth-fostering relationships, mutual empathy, and mutual empowerment as aspects of supervision that are particularly effective for employees with multiple intersected identities working in higher education spaces. The authors make recommendations for supervisor training that would allow supervisors to draw upon the cultural capital of their diverse employees to provide healing from oppression and build resilience through validation of cultural assets and approaches to leadership.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8592-4.ch021

INTRODUCTION

Although research has identified effective supervision and mentoring models in many fields, the literature is sparse when discussing job satisfaction, supervision, and mentoring for Women of Color working in higher education. We three authors in our work together have had powerful supervision and mentoring experiences as Women of Color working in higher education leadership roles when we had other Women of Color as supervisors. We have often discussed this amongst ourselves in order to identify what made our experiences different from past supervisory and mentoring relationships in our higher education careers. We wanted to write about our experiences specifically supervising Women of Color, and having Women of Color as supervisors to examine and share how these experiences influenced our careers, and helped us each grow professionally and personally. To accomplish this, we conducted a reflective case narrative self-inquiry to illuminate the aspects of our mentoring and supervisory relationships that would be beneficial for other Women of Color leaders in North American higher education settings to experience in order to promote their career development.

A common workplace saying is that “People do not leave jobs, they leave supervisors.” There is a body of literature that points to effective supervision and mentoring as an important tool for employee retention and engagement (Aruna, & Anitha, 2015; Carpenter, Webb, Bostock, & Coomber, 2012; Gomez, Travis, Ayers-Lopez, & Schwab, 2010; Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). However, the majority of this literature comes from the fields of social services and management. Much less is written about effective supervision and mentoring of employees in higher education. Often, the higher education literature on supervision focuses on faculty members supervising graduate students in clinical counseling internships. The literature is even sparser in discussing the supervision experiences of Women of Color in higher education.

Further, higher education organizational structures lend themselves to employees assuming supervisory roles with little or no training in effective supervision. Faculty members are individual contributors until they become program leads or department chairs, and suddenly find that they are hiring, onboarding, observing, and evaluating other faculty members. In student affairs, the opportunity to supervise in entry-level positions is inconsistent. In residence life, and in departments that hire graduate assistants, new professionals can have the opportunity to supervise others, although usually in small numbers. Many entry-level student affairs professionals are individual contributors as advisors, recruiters, or coordinators, until they receive promotions to the next level, usually to assistant directors, and they become supervisors. Additionally, moving from supervising one or two students to supervising a team or large department staff can be a big change for an inexperienced supervisor.

Effective Supervision in Student Affairs Administration

The literature in student affairs in higher education includes some information on effective supervision. While there is no one right way to supervise, a key element is keeping people at the center of your focus and understanding that supervision is about on-going relationships (McNair, 2011). An effective supervisor is a person who is self-aware and has done the self-work to clarify their values and beliefs (McGraw, 2011; McNair, 2011). Self-awareness will also help supervisors understand how their experiences shape their perceptions, and may be different from their employees (Roper, 2011). Effective supervisors meet employees where they are, and provide support, coaching, and work assignments that play to their skills and help them build their professional capacity (McGraw, 2011). Supervisors can also take time

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/mentoring-and-supervision-for-women-of-color-leaders-in-north-american-higher-education/278661

Related Content

Internal Communication in EU Project Management in Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Andra Florina Irinca (2016). *Leadership and Personnel Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1431-1468).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/internal-communication-in-eu-project-management-in-bucharest-university-of-economic-studies/146449

High Quality Online Programs: The Role of Leadership and Teamwork to Support Student-Centered Graduate Education

Sharon E. Norris (2021). *Research Anthology on Preparing School Administrators to Lead Quality Education Programs* (pp. 1552-1570).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/high-quality-online-programs/260485

Women's Leadership Aspirations and Career Paths in Higher Education: Influence of Personal Factors

Lilian H. Hill, Celeste A. Wheat, Tanyaradzwa C. Mandishona and Andrea E. Blake (2021). *Research Anthology on Challenges for Women in Leadership Roles* (pp. 799-821).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/womens-leadership-aspirations-and-career-paths-in-higher-education/278685

Engaging Adult Learners Online Through Technology, Andragogy, and Flexible Course Design: From Theory to Practice

Curtis L. Todd, Kokila Ravi, Harry A. Akoh and Vance Gray (2017). *Handbook of Research on Technology-Centric Strategies for Higher Education Administration* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/engaging-adult-learners-online-through-technology-andragogy-and-flexible-course-design/182618

Entrepreneurial Personality: To Be or Not to Be an Entrepreneur

Brizeida R. Hernández-Sánchez, Jose C. Sánchez-García and Alexander Ward (2021). *Encyclopedia of Organizational Knowledge, Administration, and Technology* (pp. 1427-1442).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/entrepreneurial-personality/263627