

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE New Professionals' Perspectives of Supervision in Student Affairs

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OBJECTIVE This study was designed to assess the perceptions of new professionals regarding the leadership practices encountered in their initial experience following graduation from their master's program.

METHODOLOGY Seventeen institutions with master's programs in student personnel administration provided access to their alumni for this study and 447 participated (59% response rate). The typical respondent was female (71%), Caucasian (82%) and members of "Gen X" (78%). Their supervisors were generally female (59%) and Caucasian (81%). More than two-fifths (44%) of the respondents indicated their initial experience was at a research university, 30 percent at a liberal arts college, 18 percent at a regional university, and the remainder at a community college. Nearly two-thirds (61%) respondents were at public institutions, 37 percent at private not for profit institutions and two percent were at private for profit institutions. More than two-fifths (43%) worked in residence life during their initial experience, one-fifth worked in campus activities, leadership, or Greek affairs, 14 percent in academic advising or career services, six percent in admissions or enrollment management, 4 percent in orientation or family programs, and the remainder in academic affairs and support, service-learning, or civic engagement. They completed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer on their direct supervisor.

KEY FINDINGS

Enabling Others to Act was the most frequently observed leadership practice and Inspiring a Shared Vision the least observed. Moreover, the scores on the five practices in this sample of student affairs leaders were consistently lower than those found in the Kouzes Posner normative data base.

New male professionals consistently reported a higher frequency of exemplary leadership practice than their female counterparts. In addition, men and women reported that male leaders engaged more frequently in the five leadership practices than female supervisors/leaders. New professionals who are African American consistently reported a higher frequency of exemplary leadership practices. Additionally, African Americans reported a higher frequency of exemplary leadership practices with Caucasian supervisors than with African American supervisors. Generational status had no discernible difference among respondents.

The author concludes that “supervisors and practitioners should not only focus on planning efforts, but rather improving ... as leaders” (p. 127).