A STUDY OF EXEMPLARY CO-CURRICULAR ADVISING BY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSEITY FACULTY

A dissertation thesis presented
by
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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
June 30, 2015
ABSTRACT

Significant value is placed on meaningful interaction between faculty and students outside the classroom as a quality indicator for higher education institutions, yet there is limited research pertaining to the experiences of faculty members who engage students in co-curricular activities as faculty advisors to student organizations. Moreover, the existing literature on student organization advising is prescriptive and anecdotal in nature. This study explored the complexities of co-curricular advising by investigating how exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations described their roles, their approaches and their experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting. A theoretical framework comprised of student involvement theory and a conceptual framework of student engagement guided this hermeneutic phenomenological study. Literature on the role expectations and realities of college faculty in higher education, the complexities of student organization advising, associated outcomes of student organization involvement and faculty interaction, and resource and relationship dynamics impacting key stakeholders informed the researcher’s inquiry. The participants for this study were nominated by campus activities colleagues on their campus who identified them as “exemplary” faculty advisors to student organizations. Seven faculty advisors participated from various colleges and universities within the northeast region of the United States. This study’s findings demonstrated how the exemplary faculty advisors primarily learned to advise student organizations by trial-and-error and approached co-curricular advising as a blend of teaching and service. The exemplary advisors believed that informal relationships with student leaders were paramount to meaningful student engagement and described multiple role behaviors that were contingent upon their assessment of group contexts. The findings suggest that co-curricular advising is undervalued within faculty culture as a means to meet expectations of institutional service and promote student engagement.
outside of the classroom. This study draws attention to high-quality co-curricular advising by college and university faculty as a high impact educational practice for meaningful student engagement. Recommendations are presented for new directions in research and practice for campus activities professionals, college and university faculty members and higher education institutions in the final chapter.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Life teaches you to make good use of time, while time teaches us the value of life (Unknown). This dissertation research provided an extraordinary opportunity to learn many of life’s lessons, particularly about the value of time and unconditional friendship and support. There are so many people in my life who have given me the priceless gift of time, encouragement and support throughout my educational adventures, and for them I am truly grateful.

First and foremost, I wish to express my appreciation for my wonderful family, especially my wife for the countless ways that she has supported me while I immersed myself in my research. Candace, you made it easy for me to disappear into my studies and were always willing to review my work, even when it was most difficult to do so. I dedicate this work to you and our beautiful daughter, Claire, as you both have been my motivation and inspiration to persevere. Special thanks are also due to my parents for teaching me the importance of education and hard work, and to the rest of my immediate and extended family for always understanding how different life was for me while I tended to my education and work commitments. I am truly lucky to have you all in my life.

Even with the most wonderful support at home, working full-time while completing a degree is undeniably an arduous task. I could not have reached the finish line without my outstanding colleagues at Johnson & Wales University. Colleagues from throughout the university community and many student leaders have been great cheerleaders at every step of the way and always made sure I took the time to acknowledge and celebrate the small wins. Thank you to my Student Involvement & Leadership team and to my SGA student leaders, past and present, who always checked in on my progress and offered encouragement and comic relief along the way. I
wish to also offer special thanks to Dr. Ron Martel for recommending me to take this great step in my professional development.

I was very fortunate to work with a brilliant research committee who contributed significantly to this project and my experience in different ways. Dr. Carolyn Bair, your genuine and thoughtful approach to talk me through some tough decisions throughout my research has truly made this a gratifying endeavor for me. Your encouragement to make this research my own and not to simply follow other models demonstrated to me that my success was important to you. Dr. Leslie Hitch, thank you for your enthusiasm for my research and for challenging me to dig deeply into the faculty experience. Dr. Loren Intolubbe-Chmil, I will forever be grateful for our processing sessions and your sage advice throughout this adventure. You are the quintessential colleague and a wonderful human being who has made a tremendous impact on this research project and my experience.

I wish to also express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to many of my esteemed student affairs colleagues. So many outstanding student affairs professionals took great interest in my dissertation research and some were even able to connect me with outstanding faculty members to be considered for this research. Although the list of supporters is rather lengthy, I do wish to mention and express my gratitude to Meagan Sage, Dr. Hank Parkinson and Dr. Cindy Kane for their infinite enthusiasm about my research and for so freely giving their time and counsel throughout my experience.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to the seven exceptional educators who took time out of their busy schedules to share and explore their experiences. This study would not have been possible or as exciting without their time, active participation
and eagerness to explore the magic behind their approach to educating and advising students. The impact all of these individuals have on their students and learning communities is remarkable and deserves to be shared with others.

ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Exploring a Blend of Teaching and Service: A Study of Exemplary Co-Curricular Advising by College and University Faculty

Involvement in student-run clubs and organizations (herein referred to as student organizations) contributes to success and persistence for undergraduate students that extends beyond graduation; these experiences often involve considerable faculty-student interactions that are co-curricular in nature (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1997; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). The term “co-curriculum” has been attributed to purposeful interaction between faculty members and students outside the classroom, including active faculty advisement of student organizations, that enhances the formal curriculum in higher education (Shulruf, Tumen, & Tolley, 2008). Advising has been commonly accepted as a “universal task” within the student services realm of higher education, pertaining to the helping relationship and dynamics that foster discovery, self-determination and responsibility surrounding critical decisions for students to succeed (Love & Maxam, 2011, p. 419). Faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom also corresponds with high levels of time and energy students invest in their college experience, a concept referred to as student engagement (Kuh, 2001; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

The increased emphasis on co-curricular student engagement as a quality indicator for higher education institutions has challenged colleges and universities to expand their breadth of high impact educational practices to promote active and collaborative learning outside of the classroom for students (Kuh, 2009). Even with this increased emphasis, empirical research on co-curricular advising remains limited. Much may be learned on this topic by exploring various elements of what is considered high-quality co-curricular advising by college faculty.
Problem of Practice

Student organizations serve to meet a variety of academic, social, developmental and personal objectives and interests for students. As such, motivators for students to join and be actively involved in an organization may vary by organization type. For example, Holzweiss, Rahn and Wickline (2007) found that career development, networking and personal development opportunities were distinct motivators to be involved in academic student organizations while relationship-building, and desire for self-expression, belonging and service to others were distinct motivators for student involvement in student organizations that are not academically oriented. The Council for the Advancement in Standards (CAS) proclaims it to be the responsibility of campus activities professionals to provide oversight for student organization involvement and leadership and to encourage or require their student organizations to have faculty advisors (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009). However, not all higher education institutions require student organizations to have faculty advisors, nor are faculty commonly encouraged by administrators to devote their time and resources to advise student organizations as a valued type of institutional service (Boyer, 1990; Neumann & Terosky, 2007). Furthermore, there is little evidence to demonstrate that higher education institutions are intentional to promote that student organizations should have engaged faculty advisors, even when organizations are required to have faculty advisors.

Campus activities professionals often rely on faculty advisors to ensure student organizations comply with key policies and to help manage risks associated with the student organization’s activities (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009); yet, training programs and resources are often limited for faculty advisors (De Sawal, 2007). As a result, many faculty members learn how to advise student organizations through haphazard
means, especially if they do not have prior experience advising students in group settings (Banks & Combs, 1989; De Sewal, 2007). Scant empirical research on student organization advising continues to limit what is known about practical and effective means for college faculty to engage students within the context of student organization advising.

The purpose of this study was to explore factors associated with high quality student organization advising by studying select faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations. The faculty participants for this study were nominated by campus activities professionals who work with them and regard them to be exemplars for other faculty members who serve as student organization advisors. A key focus of this study was to illuminate any antecedents and factors associated with the select faculty advisors’ experiences as well as the essential knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that they demonstrated or applied in their advisory capacity.

Significance of the Study

An exploration of high quality student organization advising by college faculty is important for many reasons. Both student organization involvement and faculty-student interaction outside the classroom provide opportunities to integrate and apply technical skills learned in the classroom with the social skills developed through communication and group dynamics (Bush & Miller, 2011). Additionally, faculty advisors can provide access to a network of peers and professionals while promoting development of leadership and professional skills that are relevant to settings beyond the classroom and that are also coveted by potential employers (Miles, 2011). The “role and skills of a teacher” are central to advising groups (Love & Maxam, 2011, p. 413), therefore an exploration of high quality student organization advising by college faculty may strengthen what is known about the application of effective teaching and other helping skills to a student organization setting.
Despite the rising importance of faculty-student interaction beyond the classroom, consideration should be made that not all faculty members have an orientation toward student development (Astin, 1984), nor do they all have time to commit to additional responsibilities outside of teaching, research and other forms of institutional service (Schuh, 1999). Moreover, not all campus activities professionals possess the prior training and experience to effectively train and develop faculty to be student organization advisors (De Sawal, 2007), or they may have other responsibilities limiting their capability to develop or enhance support resources for student organization advisors. Therefore, research highlighting how exemplary faculty advisors delineate their advising roles and their essential approaches and skills that were related to their interactions with students in a co-curricular setting may highlight transferrable teaching skills and key socio-cultural factors to be considered when addressing this problem of practice.

Lastly, a deep exploration of high quality student organization advising may resolve conflicting attitudes between students and advisors on college campuses about the purpose and impact of the advising relationship (Brown Jordan, 2012). It is the experience of this scholar practitioner that many faculty advisors report a discrepancy of experiences with the student organizations they advise; many campus activities professionals report that student leaders express a wide spectrum of attitudes toward the student-advisor relationship, often describing it as either nonexistent or overbearing. Such conflicting experiences and attitudes may diminish the perceived value of faculty involvement within student organization settings. Taking all of this into account, further research and scholarship on faculty-student interactions within co-curricular contexts, particularly focusing on high quality student organization advising, has great potential to provide practical knowledge to empower campus activities professionals and college faculty to
strengthen the value of the advising relationship and expand the resources available to nurture meaningful faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom.

**Research Questions and Goals**

The central research question for this study was: *How do faculty members who were identified as exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations describe their roles, their approaches and their experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting?* The primary goal of this research was to explore a multitude of factors associated with high-quality student organization advising from the perspectives of select faculty members identified as exemplary student organization advisors by campus activities colleagues on their campus.

On a heuristic level, this study aimed to provide and explore rich examples of faculty advising of undergraduate student organizations to inform practice towards purposeful faculty-student interaction within co-curricular contexts. Additionally, this study sought to understand how other factors impact the ways by which faculty members approached roles inherent to their style and experiences advising student organizations; these factors included their prior experience advising students in group settings, their general attitude about student organization involvement and advising, and various socio-cultural dynamics from within the campus environment that may have impacted key stakeholders.

**Organization of this Document**

The remaining sections of this dissertation contain the theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, findings and discussion of this qualitative study and are titled accordingly. The next section provides an overview of the theoretical framework of this study that is comprised of two components. Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement is the first component
of the study’s theoretical framework, serving as a seminal work for the development of student engagement as a concept that undergirds a significant amount of educational research (Zepke & Leach, 2010). A psychosocial conceptual framework of student engagement serves as the second component of the theoretical framework of this study. A brief synthesis of the theoretical framework and its relevance to studying this problem of practice is provided.
CHAPTER 2 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study incorporated an integrated theoretical framework, utilizing elements of Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement and a conceptual model of student engagement posited by Kahu (2013). Together, they effectively scaffolded the exploration of the extent to which exemplary faculty advisors engaged students in a co-curricular setting and how they may have positively impacted the student organizations and the students involved.

Component One: Student Involvement Theory

Astin (1984) coined the concept of student involvement at a time when significant attention was drawn toward the positive gains of student participation in activities both inside and out of the classroom. A model of inputs-environments-outcomes (I-E-O) was introduced by Astin (1993) to emphasize the dynamic relationships among institutional practices, environmental factors, and desired outcomes for students. Student involvement theory included that same dynamic, particularly the relationship between a student’s physical and psychological investment in their educational experience and the associated educational and developmental gains (Astin, 1999).

A theory of student involvement was developed to explain what past empirical studies did not about “environmental influences on student development” (Astin, 1984, p. 519). Involvement theory offers a focus on student behaviors of mental and physical investment in the college experience, including a direct relationship between the quality of the student involvement programs and the level of learning and development that occurs. While various degrees of involvement exist between students at different times, they also occur within students at different times in their educational career. Student involvement theory posited that program and policy effectiveness is dependent upon the capacity to positively influence student involvement (Astin,
1984, 1999). Table 2.1 presents the theory’s five key postulates.

Table 2.1

*Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1999, p. 519)*

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Involvement is a byproduct of “physical and psychological energy in various objects”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A continuum of involvement occurs within and between individuals at different times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Involvement can be measured both quantitatively or qualitatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student learning and development is directly proportionate to a student’s involvement in that respective activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Educational policy effectiveness is reliant on its capacity to enhance student involvement</td>
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Since its introduction late in the twentieth century, numerous research studies have been conducted on co-curricular student involvement (herein referred to as student involvement); that research informs what is known about the impact of student involvement on positive outcomes such as critical thinking, integration, retention, and student satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Gellin, 2003; Kuh et al., 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Student involvement has been found to have impacts on students that extend well beyond their educational career, most obvious through participation in structured activities that are guided by set rules and regular participation with peers and adult mentors, like faculty advisors (Thanh-Thanh et al., 2010). Involvement with peers and faculty in student organizations
provides distinct opportunities for collaborative learning and the development of leadership and professional skills (Miles, 2011).

**Involvement and Faculty-Student Interaction**

Student involvement has been linked empirically to positive student-faculty interaction and desired learning and development outcomes for students (Astin, 1984, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, & Buckley, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Faculty-student interaction was found to be one of three of the most important forms of involvement that significantly impacted student integration and persistence in higher education, alongside peer interaction and active learning (Astin, 1984, 1999). Current research still supports these findings and suggests that the greater the number of faculty members who value involvement in activities, the greater the student participation in co-curricular activities (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh, 2009). Furthermore, interaction with faculty outside of the classroom supports the development of socially-responsible leaders by engaging students in service activities and conversations within their peer groups about socio-cultural issues (Dugan & Komives, 2010).

A few studies have posited taxonomies of students and student groups in relation to the concept of involvement, focusing largely on peer-interactions and positive developmental gains (Astin, 1993; Clark & Trow, 1966; Dugan, 2013; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000); further research is warranted to focus on faculty interactions with students that foster student involvement and positive developmental gains (Kuh & Hu, 2001). For this study, Student Involvement Theory provided context to explore the levels of involvement of students and faculty in their respective student organization and to understand factors associated with exemplary student organization advising.
Component Two: A Conceptual Framework of Student Engagement

Like Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement, the concept of student engagement emerged to comprehend the experience of college students and promote research to "respond well to students and to create effective learning environments" (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 421). Further learning about student engagement, a widely-debated concept with its own theoretical underpinnings, may expand the roster of high impact educational practices in higher education. The concept of student engagement has been explored as both a process and an outcome, demonstrating the importance of linking theory to practice inside and out of the undergraduate classroom in higher education (Higbee, Arendale, & Lundell, 2005; Kuh, 2009). Operationalized, student engagement refers to the “time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (Kuh, 2009, p. 683).

Within the larger discourse, student engagement is regarded more as a concept than a theory (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). There are various conceptual definitions and constructs of student engagement (Kahu, 2013; Zepke & Leach, 2010). Kuh and Coates are regarded as the leading scholars for student engagement research, involving their development and support of widely used national surveys quantifying student engagement and their influence on empirical studies on how and to what extent student engagement yields positive outcomes in higher education (Bridges et al., 2008; Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Greene, Marti, & McClenny, 2008; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Kinzie et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2007; Nelson Laird, Chen, & Kuh, 2008; Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2009; Pike & Kuh, 2005, 2006; Pike et al., 2007; Pike, Kuh, & McKinley, 2009; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). As such, the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE), the Community College Survey for Student Engage-
ment (CCSSE) and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) have significantly impacted educational research and institutional benchmarking practices in the twenty-first century (Zepke & Leach, 2010). Extensive use of NSSE to serve as an indicator of quality in higher education has drawn significant attention to five key educational practices relevant to student engagement: academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment (Kuh, 2001; NSSE, 2000). These educational practices are supported by principal engagement indicators posited by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and have been tested and re-tested as reliable and valid in various empirical studies (Kuh, 2001, 2002; Pike, 2006a, 2006b).

Wolf-Wendel et al. (2009, p. 423) cautioned scholar practitioners to extend their understanding of the concepts of involvement and engagement to comprehend the “epistemological and methodological assumptions that guide the study and use of the terms.” Existing research on student engagement fails to address the quality of the environmental influence (i.e. the nature of faculty-student relationships within the institution or specific programs and their antecedents) on student engagement (Hurtado, 2007). Student engagement is a dynamic process warranting a conceptual framework that respects the distinct, yet interconnected, relationships between multiple factors (Zepke, 2011). Accordingly, this study employed a conceptual framework that posits student engagement as a complex interaction among numerous factors. The conceptual framework was introduced by Kahu (2013) to explain the dynamics among various factors that influence student engagement; the six elements of the framework are: sociocultural influences; structural influences; psychosocial influences; the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of student engagement; and the proximal and distal consequences of student engagement.
Kahu’s framework represents student engagement as a dynamic psychosocial process subject to influence from personal and institutional elements within sociocultural contexts (See Figure 2.1). The factors of Kahu’s (2013) conceptual framework guided the collection and analysis of data for this qualitative study. For example, qualitative interviews with select faculty advisors explored how sociocultural factors may have influenced student affect, cognition, and involvement behaviors, in addition to faculty advising behaviors. The framework also considers distal consequences of student engagement that were relevant to this study, such as faculty influence on student career success or applicable learning from past advising experiences. Additionally, the framework encouraged an in-depth look at a variety of influencers on faculty advisors and their approach to student organization advising.

Kahu’s (2013) framework recognizes that not only are there institutional practices that influence student engagement and its consequences, but there are sociocultural influences on student-faculty relationships. Within this framework, the dynamics between structural and psychological influences and student engagement are embedded within sociocultural environment that is influenced by institutional politics and culture. A psychosocial view of student engagement recognizes “the lived reality of the individual, while not reducing engagement to just that” (Kahu, 2013, p. 766). Therefore, the framework supported an exploration of high quality student organization advising at a micro-level with faculty advisor influence on individuals and at a macro-level with group-related influences from faculty advisors.
Figure 2.1 - Kahu’s (2013, p. 766) conceptual framework of student engagement

Summary

In summary, the theoretical framework for this exploration of high quality student organization advising by faculty members involves two components that situated faculty-student interactions within what is known about student involvement and student engagement in higher education. Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement was one component that informed the researcher’s inquiry about the role faculty play in involving students in co-curricular activities and the associated influence of exemplary faculty advisors on students’ physical and mental investment of energy in their co-curricular activities. Kahu’s (2013) conceptual framework of student engagement served as the second component, which presents student engagement as a dynamic
psychosocial process that is impacted by personal and institutional elements within sociocultural contexts.

Higher education environments are evaluated by how they nurture student involvement (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991) and student engagement (Kuh, 2009). The theoretical framework that guided this study explored the educational environment from multiple perspectives that may impact practices of faculty members serving as advisors to student organizations and campus activities professionals that are expected to provide training and support for student organization advisors. The following chapter provides a review of the relevant literature to situate this study within the broader context of the problem of practice. The literature review addresses the various roles and expectations for college and university faculty, the complexities of advising students in group settings, associated outcomes of faculty-student interactions in group settings and key resource and relationship dynamics impacting key stakeholders of the advising relationship in higher education.
CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaningful interactions between students and faculty outside of the classroom have a positive impact on students’ perceptions of a supportive and enriching campus environment (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh, Schuh & Whitt, 1991). It is essential for higher education institutions to expand how they shape the educational landscape on their campuses and promote ways in which students engage with faculty members outside of the classroom (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2012; Kuh, 1995). Correspondingly, co-curricular advising by college and university faculty is an area prime for extended research (Droste et al., 2006; Pargett, 2011) and may provide further evidence that advising could be “the most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (Light, 2001, p. 81).

Existing scholarship on advising student organizations can be characterized as prescriptive manuals and texts that are limited to lists of functions, roles and tips for advising (De Sawal, 2007), failing to address the complexities associated with effectively advising student groups within increasingly complicated higher education settings. The purpose of this study was to explore high quality advising by college faculty within the co-curricular contexts of student organizations. Multiple factors associated with the experiences, essential knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors of exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations were explored. Accordingly, this literature review examines the dynamics between roles and expectations for college faculty relative to co-curricular advising, the complexities of advising students in group settings, associated educational gains and outcomes of faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom and dynamics related to resources and relationships impacting the advising relationship in higher education. First, the key roles, expectations and realities of faculty members are explored. Secondly, an overview of the literature on the complexities of advising students are examined, draw-
ing relevant findings and limitations from research on advising undergraduate students and student organizations in higher education. Next, educational and development gains associated with student organization involvement are discussed, along with relevant theories and empirical findings. Lastly, relevant dynamics impacting relationships between key stakeholders and the availability of resources are explored.

**Realities for College Faculty: Balancing Expectations**

Faculty attitudes and behaviors relative to promoting active and collaborative learning have been found to influence environmental factors that foster greater student engagement (Um-bach & Wawrynski, 2005). However, students and faculty often do not see the value of formal and informal interaction outside the classroom (Fusani, 1994; Nadler & Nadler, 2001). Research and scholarship suggest that the harsh realities for college faculty on matters of competing roles in the area of teaching, research and service and ever-changing norms and expectations that may restrict faculty involvement outside of teaching in the classroom and publishing research and other forms of scholarship (Fairweather, 1996; Leslie, 2002). Understanding sociocultural influences on faculty attitudes and behaviors is relevant to the present study of how college and university faculty members experience and approach engaging students within co-curricular contexts.

**Teaching, Research and Service**

Teaching, research and service have historically served as the key dimensions for defining faculty roles and expectations in higher education (Ward, 2003). It has been easy to discern what is meant by teaching and research, for they capture the essence of being a faculty member - creating knowledge and sharing information through various instructional techniques and scholarship (Boyer, 1990; Ward, 2003). Teaching and research activities have served as the predomi-
nant factors for promotion and tenure decisions (O’Meara, 2002; Ward, 2003), and promotion and tenure decisions have served as the ultimate force influencing faculty self-efficacy and role clarity (Fairweather, 2002). Therefore, it’s no surprise that role conflict between teaching, research and service is a reality for college faculty, with service often sacrificed over commitment to teaching and research activities (Lawrence et al., 2012).

**Faculty service.** There is a dearth of literature that addresses the ambiguity of the definition and value of faculty service, an increasingly important role expectation for college faculty (Lawrence et al., 2002). Thus, the role of faculty service has been considered to be loosely-defined and expansive (Boyer, 1990; Neumann & Terosky, 2007; O’Meara, 1997). Expectations of institutional service are rarely stated explicitly for college and university faculty (Lawrence et al., 2012). Social interactions with administrators and colleagues are considered to be most influential when trying to understand expectations of service within a work environment (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Lin et al., 2008). Three general types of faculty service have emerged to understand role expectations of this dimension: disciplinary service, community service, and institutional service (Neumann & Terosky, 2007). Institutional service has been vaguely defined as service activity that “supports the institution’s mission, operations, and cultural life” (Neuman and Terosky, 2007, p. 283). In their study of faculty activities post-tenure review, Neumann and Terosky (2007) categorized student organization advising as a form of institutional service. Consideration of student organization advising as institutional service is only implied within the other literature (Boyer, 1990; Lawrence et al., 2012). Also, there is a lack of qualitative research on institutional culture related to institutional service.

A few studies offer some insight into faculty attitudes and experiences regarding institutional service. Lawrence et al. (2012) studied faculty service as a form of organizational com-
mitment behavior, finding that faculty service was influenced by the level of congruence between the values of the faculty members and those of the institution and the perception that an institution holds high regard for service. Neumann and Neumann (1990) posited that faculty commitment is highly influenced by transparency and certainty of the work environment, suggesting that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for faculty may differ across disciplines when it comes to service and other activities indicative of organizational commitment. Neumann and Terosky (2007) presented a few key realities about institutional service from their empirical study on faculty attitudes and behaviors, they were: a) serving others within the university community provides benefits such as personal and professional development; b) through service, faculty learn about their students and other constituents that enhance their capacity for quality teaching and research; and c) service through committees versus student organization advising is viewed more so as a chore than as learning and development opportunities. Aside from these few empirical studies, much of the literature on institutional service is theoretical or anecdotal in nature (Lawrence et al., 2012). Research on both the content (what services the faculty member provides) and context (what the faculty member experiences and gains from service) perspectives of faculty service may provide further information realities faced by faculty with respect to how institutional service is valued through policy and practice (Neumann & Terosky, 2007).

**Striking a balance.** Faculty members may arguably be the most important resources to foster student learning in higher education (Umbach & Wawrynski, 2005). According to Gaff (1973, p. 609), “the single biggest difference between influential faculty and their colleagues is the extent to which they interact with students outside of the classroom.” Unfortunately there are a multitude of risk factors that deem it challenging for faculty to strike a balance between various expectations and roles (Johnson, 2009). Pressures from growing expectations and responsibil-
ties inside and out of the classroom, coupled with the race for promotion and tenure can be problematic for faculty (Johnson, 2009). Additionally, institutional service through advisement of student organizations has been considered a significant time commitment often without extrinsic rewards (Nadler, 1997; Reaves et al., 2010). Some institutions neglect the possibility that students may have little understanding of what faculty do besides teaching (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Nevertheless, inherent satisfaction from effectiveness within the role of teaching has demonstrated to be a greater motivator for faculty than the rewards associated with published research and scholarship (Leslie, 2002). An exploration of the interplay between the roles of teaching and service within the context of student organization advising is warranted. Extending the literature on the topic of faculty attitudes and behaviors associated with teaching and service within the context of co-curricular advising may provide further insight about role synergy and the power of faculty to enhance student engagement outside of the classroom in extraordinary ways.

**Complexities of Advising: Roles, Functions, and Approaches**

Advising has been regarded as “perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students’ sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape such an experience” (Hunter & White, 2004, p. 20). Advising has largely been considered the responsibility of student service professionals (De Sawal, 2007; Love & Maxam, 2011). Nonetheless, even without perceived recognition and other extrinsic rewards, faculty members have been found to view the opportunity to advise students in co-curricular contexts as rewarding and impactful to student learning and development (Nadler, 1997; Reaves et al., 2010). Various roles, functions and approaches to advising students have been discussed within the literature on advising that is characteristically anecdotal in nature; however, there are a few empirical studies
that explore the distinct roles, costs and benefits of faculty members as advisors to student organizations (Droste et al., 2006; Nadler, 1997; Reaves et al., 2010).

Roles

The roles of advising student organizations have been described by several scholars over time, dating back to the work of Bloland (1967) that posited three distinct role dimensions: maintenance, growth and program content. The maintenance dimension of advising involves an advisor’s active involvement in sustaining the organization. The growth dimension involves influence on the advancement of the group’s principles, accomplishment and student success, while the program content dimension captures the advisor’s influence on learning and achievement of desired educational outcomes. These three role dimensions have been described to be compatible with one another (Bloland, 1967); however, there is a gap in research exploring the interplay and balance of these roles for student organization advisors.

Maintenance roles. Banks and Combs (1989, p. 60) argued that faculty advisors are “one of the few reasonably consistent links from year to year” and potentially throughout the organization’s life cycle. As such, presenting knowledge pertaining to institutional and organizational memory to support group decision-making and perseverance has been a key maintenance role for an advisor (Miles, 2011). Enforcing policy can be considered another maintenance role, with responsibilities that include interpreting the group’s bylaws and institutional policies for the organization and facilitating the development of new policies (Dunkel, Schuh, & Chrystal-Green, 2014). Therefore, it is important for an advisor to be knowledgeable of institutional and organizational policies and procedures (Miles, 2011). Additional maintenance roles include responsibilities to manage and resolve intra-group conflict, serve as a role model and content expert, and prevent public relations mishaps for the organization with various stakeholders (Bloland, 1967;
Dunkel et al., 2014). The literature encourages advisors to be in tune with the purpose of the organization, group dynamics and applicable risk and financial management issues to effectively serve in maintenance roles (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014).

**Growth roles.** Growth role responsibilities require the initiative of the advisor to promote group development and effectiveness (Banks & Combs, 1989; Bloland, 1967); in this capacity the advisor may serve as an educator and coach to foster leadership development and followership for students involved. Over time, growth roles have been expanded to include mentor, educator, leader and follower (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). As leaders, advisors help facilitate the process of establishing a shared vision with the group members. As followers, advisors help empower students to take risks, to serve actively in leadership roles and to fail when appropriate (Banks & Combs, 1989; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Love & Maxam, 2011). As mentors, advisors have characteristically been described as enthusiastic and knowledgeable individuals who proactively invest time and energy to provide emotional and intellectual support (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). The mentoring relationship is not effective if it is forced; therefore, it should be noted that a faculty advisor to a student organization has an opportunity to serve as a mentor to students within the organization if their is mutual openness to this powerful relationship (Love & Maxam, 2011).

**Program content roles.** The advisor’s responsibility for program content aligns closely with the traditional roles of teaching; this involves advisors exerting complimentary and supplementary efforts to meet educational objectives and enhance the co-curriculum of the institution (Bloland, 1967). For example, a program content role as educator may be reflected through the advisor’s efforts to educate organizational members about Robert’s Rules of Order, teamwork or group decision-making (Love & Maxam, 2011). Additionally, faculty advisors may often play
program content roles as trainers and facilitators on program planning, leadership, service and philanthropy and other activities central to the group’s purpose or vision (Dunkel et al., 2014; Love & Maxam, 2011).

Ultimately, advisors are expected to play a multitude of roles; the literature suggests that the various roles must be adapted to respect dynamics within the group and other contextual factors (Banks & Combs, 1989; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Manka, 2009; Miles, 2011). As Banks and Combs (1989, p. 63) contend, “the advisor’s role is not static; it is dynamic, changing and evolving as the student organization changes and evolves.” Related literature cautions advisors to assess the current status and needs of the student organization and its leaders to prescribe certain leadership roles and behaviors (Banks & Combs, 1989, Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Love & Maxam, 2011). As a widely understood contingency leadership theory, Hersey and Blanchard’s (1967) Situational Leadership Theory has been used to highlight the need for advisors to selectively apply various leadership techniques according to the student maturity levels and other factors (i.e. telling, selling, participating and delegating) or to provide guidance on motivating student leaders (Banks & Combs, 1989; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Love and Maxam, 2011), however situational leadership theory has sparsely been applied to empirical studies on co-curricular advising.

Functions

Key functions of a student organization advisor have been prescribed to be: a) prepare student leaders for their role within their organization, b) participate in meetings and events when possible, c) provide helpful information and access to resources, d) interpret institutional policies, e) mentor, and f) provide encouragement and support for student learning and development (De Sawal, 2007; Dunkel, 2004; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; ). Existing
educational research and scholarship offers a limited view of the complexities of advising student organizations and the potential mentoring, coaching, and teaching that is made possible by active involvement as faculty advisors to student organizations. Faculty, campus activities professionals and higher education administrators would benefit from empirical research on how faculty advisors balance the key functions of advising student organizations and why they may prioritize some functions over others.

Advisory functions may differ in accordance with the type of student organization, such as academic versus non-academic or recreational organizations due to student motivations, associated risks and other sociocultural factors (Holzweiss et al., 2007). Students have been found to be motivated by career and professional development opportunities to be involved in academic student organizations; relationship-building and the desire for self-expression have been identified as motivators for students to be involved in recreational or social organizations (Holzweiss et al., 2007). Holzweiss et al. (2007) suggested that students will have different expectations for involvement in various student organizations and advisors can be most effective if they understand these unique motivators and expectations of students involved. As such, a key function of a faculty advisor in an academic-based club may be to facilitate networking and experiential learning opportunities, while a faculty advisor’s primary function in a student governance organization would be to teach about advocacy and the value of debate and teamwork (Dunkel et al., 2014).

Literature suggests that advisors should serve in an advocacy capacity for the issues associated with student organizations, especially those that are identity-based (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008; Patton & Bonner II, 2001; Renn & Ozaki, 2010). Fostering a collaborative and safe learning environment within the context of the student organization can therefore be considered to be
a key function of advising (Ahren, Ryan, & Niskode-Dossett, 2009). Students seek out groups for a sense of place and a yearning to belong (Komives et al., 2005); consequently, many identity-based student organizations have formed on college and university campuses to serve the educational, cultural, social or other needs and interests of students from a psychosocial identity perspective (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation)” (Renn & Ozaki, 2010, p. 14). Examples of identity-based student organizations include a black student alliance, gay-straight student alliance, Indian student association or a catholic student organization. Research suggests that high-quality advisement of identity-based student organizations requires a commitment from advisors that is distinct from academic or recreational student organizations (Jenkins & Walton, 2006; Ozaki & Johnston, 2008; Renn & Ozaki, 2010). For example, knowledge of identity development may be critical for advisors to understand the unique experiences of the students and the potential conflicts that can arise within the organization as a consequence of diversity (Renn & Ozaki, 2010). Since positive advisor contact has been found to be a key indicator for student confidence and identity development within student organizations, it is recommended that advisors of identity-based student organizations strike a balance between key functions of teaching and actively learning with students (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008).

**Advising Approaches**

Understanding advising approaches and their importance in higher education has been of particular interest to scholar practitioners (Barbuto, Story, Fritz, & Schinstock, 2011). Two approaches to advising that are most commonly researched and practiced are prescriptive and developmental advising within contexts of academic advising; both approaches have been found to have their limitations (Banta, Hansen, Black & Jackson, 2002; Barbuto et. al., 2011; De Sawal, 2007; Smith & Allen, 2006). Prescriptive advising is a structured approach that directs student
behavior, which can often limit student responsibility and decision-making (Banta et al., 2002). Developmental advising is based on the assumption that an advisor is an educator and is responsible for fostering student development via the working relationship with students. The developmental advising approach is regularly criticized as a vague approach that doesn’t identify an advising curriculum to develop students in specific areas (Melander, 2005). Research on these two advising approaches does not discuss methods that combine the two approaches nor contingencies to balance between them.

A critical analysis of the shortcomings of both developmental and prescriptive approaches to advising have generated interest in developing new advising models beyond the two dimensions (Fielstein, 1994; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Barbuto et al. (2011) investigated the application of transactional and transformational principles of leadership within the context of advising. Their model of full range advising identified three key behaviors of advisors (laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational) and compared leader-follower relationships with those of advisor-advisee relationships. According to Barbuto et al. (2011), positive advising behaviors include setting clear expectations, providing personal attention, valuing the needs of individuals, encouraging continuous improvement, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. It is possible for advisors to provide little direction, passive management or provide answers without challenging students to think critically to solve problems that are considered to be negative or poor advising behaviors (Barbuto et al., 2011). Strengths-based advising is another approach to advising that is relatively new, offering new possibilities for faculty influence on student organization advising (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). Grounded in research from various fields including positive psychology, education, business, and social work, strengths-based education con-
tends that talents can be developed into strengths to yield maximum learning and success for both advisors and students (Lopez & Louis, 2009).

Application of full-range and strengths-based advising to student leader development and organization advising is promising. Although research on academic advising approaches may not have been derived from research on faculty advising of student organizations, it does offer information and design strategies that may shape studies of advising students in group contexts. New outcomes-based approaches may be easy for both campus activities professionals and faculty to apply collaboratively. Research on student leadership development initiatives and programs on college campuses recommends that educators redesign structures to maximize high-impact learning through peer and advisor interactions and pedagogical strategies (Dugan et al., 2011). Further research on formal and informal approaches used by faculty advisors to engage students in their learning and development outside of the classroom. As Dugan et al. (2011, p. 66) cogently argued, “educators cannot afford to invest in human and financial resources in...leadership programs with questionable impact.”

**Associated Student Engagement Outcomes**

Established objectives for the advising relationship prescribe action to assist students with the development of self-understanding, self-acceptance, clear personal and professional goals and skills relevant to succeeding in complex work and life settings (Love & Maxam, 2011). The impact of student involvement and positive adult influence is pervasive in the literature, including positive outcomes such as critical thinking, knowledge integration, retention and student satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Gellin, 2003; Kuh et al., 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Faculty-student interaction in student
organization settings has also been tied to learning and development of industry-related skills and knowledge (Droste et al., 2006; Lamport, 1993; Nadler, 1997; Reaves et al., 2010).

Faculty advisors can play a significant role in student development from establishing autonomy to achieving interdependence within groups (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Cultural contexts play a major role in students’ perceptions of self efficacy that are applicable to interventions targeting student gains (Dugan et al., 2011); therefore, it can be implied that positive faculty influence on the culture of an organization has indirect influence on student development of self-efficacy. Additionally, faculty advisors may serve as an “adult influence” to support students expanding their self-awareness which is crucial to leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2006).

Scholarship applying student development theory has provided frameworks to understand what we know about key factors of higher education, such as student engagement, retention, leadership and achievement (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Chickering’s Identity Development Theory, as a psychosocial theory, has offered understanding of the various stages of competency development related to identity that can be applied to co-curricular settings (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The theory helps understand how faculty advisors can play an integral role in supporting meaning-making and affirmation for students as they develop competencies through leadership activities within student organizations (Komives et al., 2006). Cognitive-Structural theories like Perry’s Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development and Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development are valued provide insight into moral and ethical development that can influence students’ interactions with others inside and out of the classroom (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Furthermore, student organization advisors help create “safe spaces” and encouragement for students to interact and resolve conflict.
in a mature and productive manner with their peers (Komives et al., 2006, p. 596). Identity development theories offer valuable insight into the possibilities of faculty advisor impact on educational and developmental gains for student leaders and members of student organizations.

**Student Identity Development**

Studies on student identity development have shaped a great deal research and educational practices on college campuses (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For example, Komives, et al. (2006) posited that advisors can play an integral role in supporting students’ interpersonal relationships and developing competence through leadership and involvement activities. At the collegiate level in particular, the “significant adult” status of an effective advisor would have a formative impact on the identity development of the advisees. It is also relevant that advising students is a developmental process that is always changing, and is dependent on the needs of the students, not the advisor or other stakeholders (Pascarella, 2001). Quality undergraduate education is likely to be attributed to higher education institutions that “maximize good practices that enhance students’ academic and social engagement;” therefore, it is the responsibility of campus activities professionals and faculty advisors to ensure quality opportunities for leadership development within student organizations (Pascarella, 2001, p. 22).

**Student Leadership Development**

A focus on undergraduate student leadership development is needed by educators in order to ensure that students can be respectful and influential in complex working environments (Dugan et al., 2011); the advising relationship can play a critical role in achieving this outcome. Leadership development is still a relatively misunderstood concept despite the wealth of research on the topic of student leadership (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). A widely-accepted definition of leadership for college students is provided by Komives, Lucas, and
McMahon (1998, p. 21) as “a relational process of people together attempting to accomplish change or make a difference to benefit the common good.”

**Leadership identity development.** Student Leadership Identity Development Theory has helped to understand the process of how students develop and “situate themselves in the construct of leadership over time” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 403). The theory describes six stages of development: (a) awareness, (b) exploration/engagement, (c) leader identified, (d) leadership differentiated, (e) generativity, and (f) integration/synthesis. Adult influence is critical for success throughout all stages of leadership identity development. For example, adults often recognize potential in students and raise their awareness of their leadership capabilities, later becoming active mentors to students throughout the various stages of their leadership development (Komives et al., 2006). Faculty advisors promote student learning and leadership development by recognizing student potential, providing affirmation and sponsorship, setting expectations for involvement, encouraging through positive reinforcement, and serving as role models and mentors (Komives et al., 2005). Moreover, student leaders often rely on advisors to create and sustain safe spaces for learning and healthy peer interaction (Komives et al., 2005; Komives et al., 2006), which is increasingly important for the growing number of student organizations that are identity-based on college and university campuses.

**Group-Level Influences**

Faculty advisors do not only impact students at the individual level; they have the potential to influence decisions about how students work interdependently to manage short-term and long-term decisions for their student organizations (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). Faculty advisors are in a position to foster the group integration and application of technical skills and knowledge learned in the classroom with the social skills developed through commu-
nication and group dynamics within the student organization (Bush & Miller, 2011; Reaves et al., 2010). Understanding educational and organizational gains from involvement with faculty and peers outside of the classroom has been beneficial to effect change and legitimize the role of co-curricular activities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005); yet, the distinct roles and experiences from the perspective of faculty members who advise student organizations remain underre-searched.

**Resource and Relationship Dynamics**

Similar to faculty, student affairs professionals are expected to serve in various roles within higher education institutions (Dunkel et al., 2014; Reynolds, 2011). One significant role for student affairs professionals, particularly campus activities professionals, is to ensure guidance and support for accountability and success for student organizations and their individual members (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009). The existence of common barriers to synergy and other dynamics between student affairs professionals and their academic colleagues at higher education institutions is prevalent in literature (Ahren, 2008; Frost et al., 2010; Helfgot, 2005; Grace, 2002). For example, faculty schedules usually revolve around class schedules and office hours for students, while student affairs colleagues often structure their schedules around programs and events (Frost et al., 2010). In many instances, faculty and academic administrators have not valued the prominent role of student involvement outside the classroom in synergistic ways (Ahren, 2008). As such, shared values and goals between campus activities professionals and academic affairs are needed to not only bridge any gap between academic and student affairs, but also to maximize educational and developmental gains for students through partnerships (Frost et al., 2010).
Regardless of the dynamics between faculty and campus activities professionals on a given campus, an exploration of the literature indicates that there are limited training programs and materials are often limited for faculty advisors, leaving many faculty to settle into the various roles of advising by trial and error (De Sawal, 2007). Additionally, not all campus activities professionals possess recommended graduate preparatory education to serve in helping capacities that involve training and advising student organizations and their faculty advisors (De Sawal, 2007; Reynolds, 2011).

**Literature Review Conclusion**

Advising has played and will continue to play a critical role in supporting student learning and development for those students involved in student organizations (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). As higher education institutions are challenged to demonstrate high levels of student engagement while meeting the ever-changing needs of current and prospective students, exploring exemplary models of faculty advisement of student organizations is warranted. Student organizations have been identified as valuable resources for students (Astin, 1999). Furthermore, actively engaging students as leaders within student organizations should be considered a high impact learning and pedagogical strategy within higher education (Dugan et al., 2011).

The literature relative to faculty advising of student organizations reveals many challenges. It is difficult for faculty to commit time to and value student engagement within student organization settings due to the challenge of striking a balance between the competing roles of teaching, research, and service (Lawrence et al., 2012; Neumann & Terosky, 2007). Roles and expectations of faculty service are “increasingly prominent in faculty careers but under-appreciated and underresearched” (Neumann & Terosky, 2007, p. 283). Additionally, there are
few empirical studies that explain the compatibility of various roles and functions of advising and that are deemed as priorities by faculty and scholar practitioners (De Sawal, 2007).

Application of student development theory to professional practice has been found as an effective approach to promote student learning and engagement in college life (Astin, 1984; Astin 1999; Komives et al., 2005; Komives et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), yet there is little evidence that student development theory is applied to practice in advisor development and to their interactions as student organization advisors (De Sawal, 2007). Positive student development and learning outcomes have been associated with high levels of faculty-student interaction in co-curricular contexts that warrant further exploration (Kuh, 2009; Terenzini, Pascarela, & Blimling, 1996). Much can still be learned about advising approaches by investigating how advisors move to intentional advising approaches.

Lastly, research suggests that advisors traditionally develop their approaches to advising primarily through trial-and-error; some are fortunate to receive mentoring or development through graduate preparation programs (De Sawal, 2007). Faculty advisors are rarely prepared to adequately support these unique experiences and adapt their style of advising appropriately (De Sawal, 2007), which may be complicated by sociocultural barriers between academic and student affairs professionals on college campuses. While the effects of partnerships between student and academic affairs has been confirmed in literature (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), little research is available to share exemplary partnerships and recognition of the contributions of faculty advisors to co-curricular student engagement.

The next chapter provides an in-depth description of the design of this hermeneutic phenomenological study. The methodology is discussed with particular attention to the collection
and analysis of data that aim to provide an in-depth view of exemplary student organization advising by college and university faculty and maximize the trustworthiness of the study.
CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

The problem of practice addressed by this study was the limited understanding of what constitutes high-quality co-curricular advising of undergraduate student organizations by college and university faculty. This qualitative study was designed to create a dialogue between the researcher as a scholar practitioner and each of the faculty members who were identified as being exemplary student organization advisors by their campus activities professional colleagues. As such, personal interviews and follow-up discussion forums between participants served to reciprocally interpret the essence of exemplary co-curricular advising between the student researcher and the sample of faculty advisors. Essence-finding involves searching for “the core meaning of an individual’s experience that makes it what it is” (Kafle, 2011).

The central research question for this study was: How do faculty members identified as exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations describe their roles, their approaches and their experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting? Empirically, the research question intended to guide an exploration of the essence of a phenomenon, exemplary co-curricular advising by college faculty, not the measured existence of that phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). From a heuristic viewpoint, the research question situated the researcher within the meaning-making process with participants, a process that closely aligns with the tradition of phenomenological research (Kafle, 2011). This chapter provides an in-depth account of the interpretive approach and hermeneutic phenomenological design of this study. A discussion about recruitment and sampling procedures and the data collection process used in this study is provided. Additionally, the role of the researcher is discussed with regard to strategies used to analyze data and to maximize the trustworthiness of this study.
Research Approach

An important role of the researcher is to identify the assumptions that govern their knowledge of, experience with, and attitudes about phenomena to guide how they determine what can be known - their methodology (Butin, 2010). The impact of faculty in co-curricular settings has been investigated primarily by researchers through quantitative means, measuring outcomes of student-faculty interaction (Hurtado, 2007). While quantitative inquiry may reveal relationships relevant to student engagement-related outcomes, qualitative inquiry is more likely to provide information about the how and the why of faculty impact on students in co-curricular settings (Cotten & Wilson, 2006).

Qualitative research is defined by its study of phenomena within their natural environment for the purpose of sense-making or interpreting the meanings attached to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Accordingly, qualitative research designs are ideal when research questions focus on exploring or understanding phenomena (Creswell, 2012). Exemplary advising of student organizations by faculty members is the phenomenon of interest in this study, and advising students is a complex social process (Barbuto, Story, Fritz, & Schinstock, 2011; Melander, 2005). A qualitative research approach most commonly used to explore the lived experiences, or the essence of a phenomenon, is phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Kafle, 2011).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The exploratory focus of this study aligned itself well with the tradition of phenomenology in qualitative research. Phenomenological research has been traced to the work of German philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Dowling, 2007; Kafle, 2011; Kakkori, 2009). Phenomenology is most commonly associated with the study of “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.
Review of the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer and van Manen reveals that there are multiple approaches to finding the meaning of lived experiences within the framework of phenomenological research that have sparked scholarly debate (Dowling, 2007). According to Kakkori (2009), the inability of the researcher to distinguish between the distinct differences between the phenomenological views of Husserl and Gadamer can be problematic considering their epistemological and methodological assumptions differ fundamentally. For example, Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology would require the researcher to separate her or his own judgment and beliefs to purely experience the phenomena through a process called bracketing; Gadamer’s phenomenology suggests that reflective interpretation by the researcher is part and parcel to understanding and describing the essence of phenomena (Laverty, 2003).

Greater interpretive involvement of the researcher in phenomenological studies has become increasingly common due to the work of van Manen, referred to as hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. “van Manen’s phenomenology allows the researcher to use experience common to the researcher and the participant to conduct a structural analysis of what is most common, most familiar and most self-evident to the researcher” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1298). van Manen (1990, p. 111) promoted his hermeneutic (interpretive) approach to phenomenology as “the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive – sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, in the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak.” The hermeneutic phenomenological approach to this study served to create a dialogue between the student researcher as scholar practitioner and each of the participants through personal interviews to explore characteristics of exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations and explore how they interpret their approach and experiences through language.
The Role of the Researcher

Exploring the natural form of the social world through subjective experience undergirds the interpretive research paradigm of qualitative research (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The interaction between researcher and participants in interpretive research exposes valuable meaning and deep understanding of the multitude of variables that influence phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Accordingly, the role of the researcher in this study was to serve as the primary data collection instrument through interaction with participants and what is described by Creswell (2013, p. 187) as “making sense of lessons learned through the data...abstracting out beyond themes and codes to the larger meaning of the data.”

The axiological assumption of qualitative-interpretive research is that the role of the researcher in this study would be to summarize or shape narratives with participants to establish understanding of their experiences and the essence of exemplary co-curricular advising by college and university faculty members (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology was a good fit for this study as it is supported by a methodology that involves reflective interpretation on the parts of the researcher and participants together to explore the experience of exemplary student organization advising (Gadamer, 1976; van Manen, 2007). Understanding experiences and approaches of those identified as exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations helps to understand the subjective nature of co-curricular student engagement. According to van Manen (2007), a person’s reflection of experiences with particular phenomena may require involvement of the researcher to shape dialogue and understanding of lived experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method that does not have stringent analytical stipulations, thereby avoiding “method for method’s sake” (Kafle, 2011, p. 191). Nonetheless, this
study followed guidelines established by van Manen’s hermeneutic approach to phenomenological data collection and analysis.

**Participants**

**Site and Participant Selection**

Hermeneutic phenomenology calls on the researcher to explore comparable experiences (van Manen, 1997), and this study aimed to explore comparable approaches and experiences of college and university faculty members who were identified by a campus activities professional on their campus as an exemplar student organization advisor. A key principle of hermeneutic phenomenological research is to have an “oriented stance toward the questions;” thus it was suitable for the researcher, a campus activities professional, to seek the assistance from other campus activities professionals to identify faculty advisors to student organizations that they considered to be “exemplary” (Kafle, 2011, p. 191). Standards in higher education proclaim it to be the role of campus activities professionals to provide support and developmental resources for student organization advisors (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009), therefore campus activities professionals were in a good position to identify faculty members whom they consider to be exemplary student organization advisors. Rich accounts of the essence of a phenomenon are best achieved with a diverse group of participants who have experienced it; therefore, purposeful sampling procedures for this study focused on faculty participation from more than one site (van Manen, 1997). Participation was open to all higher education institutional types to recruit a diverse sample of select college faculty.

**Sampling.** This study employed two purposeful sampling approaches to identify and select participants for this study. First, intensity sampling identified “intensity-rich cases” of faculty members who provide high-quality co-curricular advising as student organization advisors
(Patton, 2002, p. 243). Campus activities professionals from a diversity of colleges and universities were invited by the researcher to nominate faculty members who are exemplars of high-quality student organization advising. The call for nominations requested that the faculty advisors be nominated by campus activities professionals and that they meet the following criteria: 1) currently serving in an advisory role for a student organization for at least two years, and 2) are likely to talk about their experience and approach to advising student organizations. This approach to criterion sampling required that all participants meet identified criteria to ensure quality of inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

“Sample size depends to a large extent on the testimonies of individuals involved, the richness of the data, and how much data can be required without replication” (Corney, 2008, p. 168). Smaller sample sizes are recommended for phenomenological research designs to best achieve thick, rich descriptions of research phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Therefore, the researcher intended to study a heterogeneous sample of 6 to 8 college or university faculty members who were identified as exemplary student organization advisors, a recommended sample size for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). This sampling strategy is considered “nested sampling,” in which credible comparisons of a few members of the same subgroup (faculty members identified as exemplar student organization advisors); in this study, “one or more members of the subgroup represent a sub-sample of the full sample” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 239). Seven participants were selected out of a pool of fourteen nominated faculty members. The researcher prioritized the selection of a heterogeneous sample based on gender, type of institution, years of advising, and type of student organization advised; no two participants were from the same institution.
**Recruitment and Access**

Participant recruitment began upon approval of the study by Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). A ‘Call for Participants’ (CfP, Appendix A) was shared electronically with the researcher’s professional network as a long-time volunteer and member of the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), a professional organization with a membership base of campus activities professionals and strategic focus on advancing research agendas on the topic of co-curricular student engagement. The CfP included the study’s statement of purpose, criteria for participation, and contact information for the researcher. Participation was limited to the Northeast region for the researcher’s ease of access to participants.

Recruitment happened electronically by three methods. First, targeted recruitment took place by sending a call for participants to campus activities professionals within NACA’s directories for their Northeast region of the United States. Second, an abbreviated version of the CfP was posted on a social media platform for campus activities professionals in the northeast to promote participation. Lastly, the researcher sent personal communications to campus activities colleagues to forward the CfP to peers who may have been interested in nominating an exemplary faculty advisor to a student organization on their campus.

All participants were screened through a brief intake call or email communications with the researcher. Conversation during the intake call was limited to a brief overview of the purpose of the study and a few brief criteria-based questions to assist in the screening process while reserving discussion of informed consent and relevant experiences for the recorded interviews. The intake calls were not recorded; however, written notes were taken to assist with the selection process. Participants were notified that they would be contacted directly by the researcher if they were selected to participate in the study. Upon notification of selection to participate in this
study, participants were provided a copy of the Unsigned Consent Form (Appendix B) for review and were asked to schedule a formal interview at a mutually convenient time to take place via an online video-conferencing platform of their choice or in person.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Hermeneutic phenomenology commonly involves reflections from the researcher throughout the study (Polkinghorne, 1989); in such designs, the researcher serves as a data collection tool with participants through methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and reflection journals. In alignment with hermeneutic phenomenological methodologies, personal interviews, review of documents and other materials provided by the participants, post-interview online discussion threads between participants and the researcher, and a reflective journal kept by the researcher served as collection strategies for experiential data.

The nature of this study was turned to a lived experience of particular interest to the researcher, exemplary student organization advising by college and university faculty members. Several methodological guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenological studies were reflected in the cyclical process of data collection and analysis of this study. They were to: a) explore the essence of a phenomenon as it is lived, not as it is conceptualized; b) use reflection to identify essential themes of the lived experiences and characteristics of participants; c) write and rewrite to describe the essence of the phenomenon; d) foster a sustained orientation towards the phenomenon throughout the study as researcher; and e) consider the nature of parts in relation to the whole context of the phenomenon throughout the exploration (van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31). Reflection of the lived experiences of participants as high-quality advisors to student organizations draws attention to the value of meanings that influence behavior before they may even be known by the participants (van Manen, 2007). The cyclical nature of interpretation with participants is
referred to as the hermeneutic circle, requiring careful attention to latent experiences and meaning that are revealed through the interpretation of language or texts (Laverty, 2003).

**Interviews**

One-on-one interviews took place either face-to-face or online, depending upon the location, availability and preference of the participants. All face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private location that was mutually agreed upon by the participant and doctoral student researcher. All interviews were loosely-structured with a working interview protocol as a conversational guide (See Appendix C for Interview Protocol and Conversational Guide). Loosely-structured interviews are commonly used in phenomenological studies to encourage the participant to drive the discussion based on their lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Interviews were between 60 to 90 minutes in length to allow for depth and detail in the interview and to respect each participant’s time. All interviews were audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription. Two interviews were scheduled with each participant to maximize depth, richness and nuance of collected data. Each follow-up interview began with reflective interpretation from the researcher regarding the original interview as a form of member-checking and impetus for further conversation.

**Document Reviews**

Relevant documents that were referenced by participants in interviews were solicited by the researcher from participants after the conclusion of interviews, when applicable. Examples of documents included advisor position descriptions, advising manuals or handbooks, and citations or nominations of recognition for quality advising previously awarded to the faculty advisor. For example, a few of the participants were able to provide access to nominations and written articles that discussed what was special about how the faculty members interacted with stu-
dent leaders in co-curricular contexts. All documents collected were used to support the responsive interviewing that took place during the second interview with each participant and further reflection through online discussion prompts.

**Researcher’s Journal**

Nuances such as silence and nonverbal cues in interviews can be essential to the interpretive process; therefore, the researcher kept a journal to capture the continuous reflection throughout the data collection process (van Manen, 1997). Self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher was essential to balancing presence with participants while building upon an ongoing exploration of the lived experience. (Hertz, 1997). The researcher’s journal assisted with the preparation for follow-up interviews with participants. Additionally, the researcher’s journal included information about themes that emerged within and between participant interviews that supported continued discussion and analysis about the faculty advisors’ experiences through online discussion threads.

**Online Participant Discussion Threads**

Participant discussion threads served as an additional source of experiential data while also playing a role in the validation process of member-checking. After the initial analysis of data, the researcher created an online discussion forum on a private Google document with prompts for participants to anonymously reply to questions posed by the facilitator and other participants. Participants were provided an email by the researcher when the discussion forum was available, with instructions and a requested timeline to respond and interact anonymously on the discussion forum. Instructions informed the participants that they should ensure they are not logged-in to Google when they select the link to ensure it preserves their anonymity when reviewing and replying to discussion prompts.
In addition to supporting the validation process, the online discussion threads served to solicit further thoughts and reflection from participants on the topic of exemplary co-curricular advising. Discussion prompts included questions related to common themes about faculty-student interaction or environments that support exemplary student organization advising to provide a more in-depth analysis of the lived experiences (see Appendix D for Sample Communications and Discussion Prompts). Participants used pseudonyms provided by the researcher to open their posts and replies within the discussion forum; as a result, data from the forums were easily able to be linked with individually-collected data from previous interviews with the researcher. Such a multi-layered approach to interpretation was included in the design as a way of further capturing the essence of the lived experience (Koch, 1995).

**Data Storage**

The researcher protected all audio recordings with password and encryption upon immediate transfer and storage to the researcher’s personal external hard drive and online Google storage account. All electronic files and transcriptions were saved with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and were labeled and stored as Microsoft Word documents. Written notes taken by the researcher, along with documents and communications collected from participants, have been stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home. The researcher managed access to password-protected and encrypted files with pseudonyms linked with participant names for the purpose of follow-up questions only, in accordance with Northeastern University policy.

Upon completion of the doctoral thesis, the researcher will destroy all electronic communications and files containing participant names. To support future scholarly work, all remaining files will remain password protected and encrypted on the researcher’s personal external hard
drive and destroyed within four years of the completion of the study, in accordance with North-eastern University policy.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study consisted of various cycles of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 1990). Similar to general inductive and other qualitative approaches, the analysis approach employed in this study can be characterized as loosely-structured to explicitly explore the essence of the phenomenon and cyclical in nature as it happened throughout the data collection process (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). Moments of clarity about the essence of phenomena in hermeneutic research are temporary due to the reflection of the researcher with participants to experience the phenomena as they are lived, not experienced (Caputo, 1987). For this study, writings in a reflective journal and follow-up discussions with participants served as cyclical analysis tools to address this challenge and guide the interpretive analysis process.

Within the context of phenomenological research, understanding one’s positionality is a form of orienting oneself to the phenomenon, an initial step for hermeneutic methodology (van Manen, 1990). Since orientation of the researcher is a quality indicator for hermeneutic phenomenological studies (Kafle, 2011), thematic analysis of the researcher’s reflections and initial exploration of the researcher’s positionality were part of the data analysis process. Analysis for this study began with self-reflection and was accompanied by the actions of reading, reflective writing and interpretation to uncover thematic aspects of the phenomenon (Laverty, 2003).

**Positionality**

Critical reflection of a researcher’s views and opinions of a problem of practice can help the researcher acknowledge and detach their personal biases from their research (Machi &
McEvoy, 2009). Even though hermeneutic phenomenological research must pass the quality test of accurately representing the experiences and intentions of participants without bias, a strong orientation of the researcher to the phenomenon of interest and involvement of their reflection and lived experiences is essential (van Manen, 1990, 1997). Advising student organizations and overseeing programs and resources for faculty members who volunteer as student organization advisors has been both challenging and rewarding aspects of this researcher’s experience as a campus activities professional for nearly fourteen years. Consequently, this researcher acknowledged his positionality from experience that high-quality advising of student organizations by faculty members can be a high impact educational practice. However, not all faculty advisors demonstrate the value of their potential impact on student engagement outside the classroom.

One’s own experiences and history can yield significant misinterpretation as they apply their own meaning to the situations of others (Briscoe, 2005). Thus, the researcher’s mindfulness of his or her advising style is valuable as long as it does not prohibit reflection or detract participants from sharing and interpreting their lived experiences with advising and student engagement. Through past advisory positions, the researcher approached the advising responsibility as an educator and partner in the success of the organization. However, as reflected in empirical studies on student organization advising, advising styles of faculty members vary greatly dependent upon past experiences or training they receive (De Sawal, 2007). With limited training and development programs for advising in higher education, variation in general approaches to advising is inevitable. The position of the researcher was that variance of attitudes and training provided to faculty members who advise student organizations has been problematic to enhancing student engagement in higher education settings, thereby warranting research to inform this problem of practice.
**Data Reduction**

After an initial exploration of data, the essential process of data reduction or “describing, classifying, and interpreting” data took place through various cycles of coding (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2013) within a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program - MAXQDA11. Upon conclusion of the first cycle of analysis, hermeneutic reductions from interview transcripts served as the text for an additional cycle of hermeneutic reduction through reflection prompts and follow-up interviews with participants. Due to the intended thickness of the data, multiple coding strategies were utilized to reduce and code data into themes. Once themes were identified through various cycles of coding, analytic memos and the research questions were used to develop descriptions to further assist analysis of data to support as many cycles of reading, reflection, and interpretation as necessary to understand the essence of the phenomena. Hermeneutic cycles aided the researcher in determining the point in time when practical meanings of the lived experience have been attained with confidence (Kvale, 1996). Figure 4.1 provides an illustration of the cyclical process used in this study that constituted of reading, reflective writing and interpretation (Kafle, 2011).

![Hermeneutic Cycle](image)

*Figure 4.1 - Hermeneutic Cycle (Kafle, 2011)*
Trustworthiness of the Study

Careful tending to “the quality of the entire research process and the product is the most crucial aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological research” (Kafle, 2011, p. 195). According to van Manen (1997), quality indicators for hermeneutic phenomenological studies should be: 1) orientation of the researcher and their involvement in the meaning-making of the lived experience, 2) strength of the transcripts and reflective texts describing the essence of the phenomena as shared by participants, 3) richness of the texts used to narrate the meaning-making process with the participants, and 4) depth of the reflective texts to present a deep representation of participant experiences and intentions (Kafle, 2011). Commonly-accepted trustworthiness indicators of qualitative researchers are confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hermeneutic phenomenology does not fit neatly within the framework of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) trustworthiness indicators of qualitative research (Kafle, 2011). Nonetheless, this section will overview key measures taken to reflect quality indicators of hermeneutic phenomenological studies and trustworthiness indicators of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Confirmability

Confirmability of a qualitative study is an assessment of the objectivity of the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994), requiring the researcher to disclose “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). The researcher’s experience and positionality were part of the reflective process in this hermeneutic phenomenological study (Kafle, 2011). Confirmability presumes researcher objectivity, which does not align with van Manen’s quality principle of researcher orientation to the phenomenon. Although the researcher’s lived experiences with the phenomenon
were bracketed through self-reflection in analytic memos and an electronic journal to
acknowledge beliefs and assumptions throughout the entire study, their orientation to the phe-
nomenon of study was evident through a statement of positionality and analysis of reflective
journal texts. Study participants were asked to review preliminary analyses of data for accuracy.
Member checking supports various validation strategies; however, it is a process that helps iden-
tify and curb researcher bias, but not bracket out the researcher’s experiences with the phenome-
na that are valuable to the hermeneutic circles (Creswell, 2013).

Credibility and Dependability

Credibility has been referred to as the most important factor for evaluating qualitative
research, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several measures were taken by the researcher to strengthen
the credibility of this interpretive study. First and foremost, established qualitative methodolo-
gies were employed by the researcher, such as purposive sampling, loosely-structured interviews,
and data analysis methods that have been demonstrated as credible within hermeneutic phenomenological designs. Additionally, triangulation measures involved collecting data through multiple methods to demonstrate strength, richness and depth, such as multiple individual interviews, document reviews, and participant discussion threads. Triangulation is commonly accepted by qualitative researchers as a strategy to provide corroborating evidence through the utilization of multiple methods and resources to collect and analyze data (Creswell, 2013). In addition to bracketing researcher bias, member checking assists the qualitative researcher by soliciting eval-
uation of credibility of the researcher’s collection and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2013;
Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Preliminary data analyses were shared with participants through elec-
tronic communications and reflective journal prompts to explore what information may be misin-
terpreted or missing about the lived experiences of the participants.
The ever-changing nature of phenomena and organizations require the qualitative researcher to employ methods to ensure dependability of the present relevance of collected data and analyses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that creating overlap of clearly described methods promotes dependability of the study and exposes data that can be characterized as static. Additional interviews and participant interaction on discussion threads on analysis from interviews served as overlapping data collection and validation strategies for this study as they took place after initial interviews with participants. The involvement of participant feedback in hermeneutic reflective analysis demonstrated the researcher’s commitment to accurately representing participant intentions with sharing their lived experiences (Kafle, 2011); the role of participant feedback in the analytical structure of the study is the key quality indicator (Landridge, 2007). Therefore, credibility and dependability measures were essentially interdependent within this study as they involved triangulation through participant feedback to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

**Transferability**

The likelihood that the critical reader can infer that the conclusions made by the researcher can be applied to other settings is referred to as transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is important for the researcher to provide significant context for the study design through detailed information about the sites, participants, and methodologies employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Correspondingly, rich descriptions are provided within this dissertation about the sites, participants, and both data collection and analysis procedures to permit the reader to make their own inferences about the transferability and depth of the study to other higher education settings.
Protection of Human Subjects

While multiple strategies were taken to maximize the trustworthiness of this exploration of exemplary student organization advising, numerous steps also served to ensure the protection of all participants in this study. Since the experience and characteristics of exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations were explored, anonymity of participants was essential to avoid any consequences from sharing information that can be perceived as negative by other participations, nonparticipants, or sites. Although this threat was unlikely, pseudonyms were used in all interview transcripts to secure anonymity of the participants and the subjects of the interviews for precautionary measures. Participants were encouraged prior to the start of the interview to use pseudonyms whenever possible to maximize anonymity and prevent bias if the researcher is able to discern the identity of individuals or institutions discussed during the interview, such as student leaders or colleagues. Since hermeneutic phenomenological methodology involves reflection, pseudonyms were used for all reflection prompts in which participant responses and analyzed data may have been shared to strengthen dialogue about the lived experiences of participants while protecting participant anonymity. An online platform that protected anonymity of participants was used (i.e. discussion prompts open to a group of participants).

Although there were minimal risks (social, economic, psychological, or physical) associated with this study, measures were taken to maintain anonymity and the voluntary nature of participation in this study through informed consent. Participants were recruited through nomination by colleagues within the researcher’s professional network. There was no need for additional protection measures since it was highly unlikely that minors or at-risk populations were to participate in the study. Nonetheless, the researcher complied with all guidelines and requirements stated by participant’s institution and Northeastern University policy.
Informed Consent

The Unsigned Consent Form (Appendix B) developed for this study was submitted for approval to the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting participants and scheduling interviews. No data was collected without IRB approval. The confirmation email for all scheduled participant interviews included a copy of the unsigned consent form with a request for their review prior to the interview. The unsigned consent form was read verbatim by the researcher to the participants before asking any interview questions to ensure understanding of the purpose of the study, definition of key terms, potential risks for participation, and both the confidential and voluntary nature of the study as outlined in the form.

As outlined in the unsigned consent form, participants were “free to ask questions at any time, and may refrain from responding to any questions,” especially if they did not feel comfortable answering any particular questions. The form clarified measures taken for confidentiality and assured participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality measures included labeling all interview files with pseudonyms, encrypting the files with password protection, and destroying all recordings once transcribed. Verbal consent was confirmed prior to the start of the interview rather than obtained in writing as an additional confidentiality measure, limiting connection of participant names to interview responses.

Both the Unsigned Consent Form and the Interview Protocol (Appendix C) for this study were submitted to Northeastern University’s IRB Office for prior review and approval. A brief introduction of the researcher and a statement of purpose of the study was included at the beginning of the protocol to avoid any possible misunderstandings about the goals of the study. This study required some extent of responsive interviewing, a model in which questions evolved
throughout the study; however, sample questions were submitted to Northeastern University’s IRB to assure minimal risk of participation and demonstrate that the subject matter was not overly intrusive (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

**Summary**

Given the investigative nature of this study of exemplary co-curricular advising and co-curricular student engagement by select faculty members, a hermeneutic phenomenological research design was appropriate. An advantage of hermeneutic phenomenological research is that it permits the researcher and the participants to make meaning of lived experiences through a cyclical process of reflective interpretation (van Manen, 2007). As such, the researcher was not bound by stringent analytical stipulations. Multiple forms of data collection were used and various measures were taken to maximize the trustworthiness of the study, which involved measures related to the confirmability credibility, dependability and transferability of the study’s findings. Data collection strategies included multiple interviews with each participant, review of documents, an online discussion forum between participants and active journaling on the part of the student researcher throughout the data collection and analysis process. The participants in this study were all nominated by campus activities professional colleagues on their campus who regard them to be exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations. Intensity sampling and nested sampling strategies were used to identify a reasonable sample size of seven participants from different higher education institutions for the purpose of achieving thick and rich descriptions of the lived experiences of exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations in higher education settings.

The following chapter provides further information about the participants in this study and presents the study’s findings. The chapter is organized in the following sections: a) over-
view, b) description of participants, and c) themes and sub themes that emerged from the study.

A summary of the findings is also provided at the conclusion of the chapter to set the stage for the subsequent and concluding chapter that discusses the study’s findings and their implications for research and practice.
CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS

Phenomenological research involves the exploration of individual lived experiences to comprehend realities and common features of particular phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Consequently, this hermeneutic phenomenological study explored how exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations engage students in a co-curricular setting, a phenomenon not experienced by all college faculty members. An exploratory focus was placed on how the exemplary faculty advisors described their roles, approaches and experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting.

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology of this study involved various cycles of data collection and reflective interpretation by the researcher to gain a deep understanding of rich descriptions of language and lived experiences of the exemplary faculty advisors (van Manen, 2007). The use of participant and researcher narratives throughout the various cycles of interpretation provided a mechanism for understanding essence phenomena experienced by the participants. Additionally, the use of narratives involved mutual storytelling and interpretations between the researcher and participants, a common approach to obtain the best interpretation of the lived experiences of phenomena (Nash, 2004). The researcher’s journal served as a helpful way to analyze data in a deep and collective way (van Manen, 1997), while also permitting the ease of the researcher’s narratives to move freely between various parts and the entire data text for a process of thematic analysis to take shape (Heidegger, 1962; Laverty, 2003).

This chapter demonstrates the researcher’s commitment to a hermeneutic process and provides an objective portrayal of the lived experiences of participants and the themes and sub-themes that emerged from various cycles of analysis. First, descriptions of the participants are provided. Pseudonyms were used for all participants and non-participants in this study. To pro-
vide context for the participant’s narratives, the descriptions summarize: a) some qualifying characteristics of the faculty members as “exemplary” advisors to student organizations, b) key aspects of the participant’s story behind becoming an advisor, and c) descriptions of the preparation and support they received relevant to engaging students in a co-curricular setting. Next, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the various cycles of analysis of participant interviews, reviewed documents, online discussion board threads and the researcher’s journal are presented. To resolve the variation between spoken and written language from recorded interviews to transcripts, this chapter presents modified narratives for the purpose of readability and comprehension that were supported by triangulation measures, including member checking and multiple forms of data collection.

**Description of Participants**

At the time of this study, all participants were employed as full-time faculty at different coeducational non-profit institutions in the northeastern region of the United States of America. Additionally, each participant had experience serving as an advisor to a student organization that was different from the others with respect to their established mission. Descriptions of the particular student organizations advised are limited to preserve anonymity of the participants and their institution. The participants came from different backgrounds with varied educational and professional experiences (see Table 5.1 for Participant Demographics). All participants were identified by campus activities colleagues on their campus as exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations who were likely to talk about their experiences and approach to advising (see Appendix A for the Call for Participants). All participants were willing to describe their roles, approaches and experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting to contribute to this study.
Table 5.1

Selected Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th># Years in Higher Ed</th>
<th>Approx. # Years Advising</th>
<th>Student Org Type</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Professional, Social, Cultural</td>
<td>4yr Private, Research</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>4yr Private</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student Media</td>
<td>4yr Public, Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>4yr Public, Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Enterpreneurial</td>
<td>4yr Private with Business Focus</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student Government</td>
<td>4yr Public, Liberal Arts</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Culinary</td>
<td>4yr Private, Experiential</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harold**

Harold is a middle-eastern/European male in his early 60s with nearly 32 years of teaching experience at a small (undergraduate enrollment = under 5,000) research-intensive institution. With an earned doctoral degree and associate professor status, he enjoys the flexibility to instruct a few courses outside of his primary discipline at his institution and to serve in various administrative and advisory capacities. He has more than 14 years of experience advising student organizations at his institution, including but not limited to: a performance-based group (approx. 13 years), a social/recreational group, (approx. 10 years) and a chapter of a national professional organization (approx. 14 years). His nominator described him as a “great role-model” for students, “generous of his time and active within the campus community.” According to Harold,
students and departments regard him as someone who works well with students; he not only has helped establish a few of the student organizations he advises, he also has been sought after to advise additional student groups over the years. His passion for advising and working with students has been recognized by his peers and students by service awards and a few news features showcasing his work with students outside of the classroom. Harold attributed his passion for engaging students in co-curricular contexts to his genuine interest in students and commitment to their development like his own children.

I’m very close to my students. I invite them to my house, take them to lunch and other social settings…I like bringing people together to enjoy themselves; it’s part of being an educator. You’re willing to give something from the resources that you have, which is mostly your time and wisdom…They’re like your own children!

Harold has high expectations for the student organizations he chooses to advise. He stated, “I only want to work with clubs that are not ‘all talk,’ but that have some ambition to do good work.” He continued, “I don’t want to be an advisor to a club that is not interested in being active. Do something well and be dynamic!”

Harold indicated that he had little preparation to serve as an advisor to student organizations. However, Harold did share that he has positive support from campus activities professionals and other resources on campus to advise his student organizations. “Whenever I have questions, the campus activities office provides direction…So, there have been no problems with resources, but I also think it’s partially because of my personality.”
Stephanie

Stephanie is a white female in her 50s, working as a faculty member at a small residential campus of a large (undergraduate enrollment = 15,000+), private university; and she has an earned doctoral degree and associate professor status. She had more than six years of industry experience and 15 years teaching high school before becoming a full-time professor at her institution. She has advised a student organization closely tied to learning outcomes of her academic program for approximately five years; she described her reason for accepting the responsibility to serve as a student organization advisor to be her passion for working with young adults. She explained, “I am very active with a youth organization outside of the university. So, I saw the synergy of the two as working really well together.” According to her nominator, Stephanie was recently selected to win an award for excellence in co-curricular advising due to “her passion that shined through her work with students, challenging and supporting them as a mentor.” Stephanie confirmed what her nominator stated about her passion for being an educator inside and out of the classroom. “Obviously, I like to see development in young people. That's really how it came to be that I would advise the group,” she claimed. She attributed her approach to engaging students in a co-curricular setting as a passion for “student-centered learning.”

[A]n important aspect of student-centered learning…is to create some excitement in what they're doing…I just see it as empowering the students to grow; pushing them a little bit, but letting them discover in that journey…They’re afraid to change because they're comfortable.

Stephanie indicated that she received some training support from campus activities professionals, but no transitional support from a colleague who previously advised the student organization. “The role was not clearly laid out when it was assigned to me,” she commented. “I
was asked to advise, but essentially it was assigned to me.” When stepping into the advisory role, Stephanie was delighted to find out that some training programs were offered for student organization advisors by her colleagues in the campus activities department within her institution. She stated that the first training didn’t necessarily provide the “stuff” that she needed, “but they said to ask questions and were always willing to help.”

**Jane**

Jane is a white female in her 30s working as a faculty member at a mid-sized (undergraduate enrollment = 7,501 - 10,000), four-year public institution. She has earned a doctoral degree and assistant professor status at her institution. With relevant industry and undergraduate involvement experience in media and communications, she naturally was drawn to the role of faculty advisor to a student media organization, which she has advised for approximately two years.

I was interested even before I was interviewing here to someday serve as a student media advisor. Student media was a really big part of my undergraduate experience, a really positive and productive experience for me in terms of career development. This is something that really dovetails in with my personal and professional interests, so it’s a nice escape for me.

Despite her genuine interest to advise a student media group, Jane was actually recruited to serve as an advisor to one by a colleague in campus activities. Her nominator in campus activities described her to be “friendly, persistent and positive,” specifically when it comes to “motivating students to work through difficult moments and to understand that the hard work is worth the effort.” She regarded herself as having a warm and light-hearted presence, which she believes contributes to her ability to positively influence students. She receives a small stipend for the
regular evening hours she spends as an advisor with a written agreement of primary responsibilities.

Jane has experienced student media advising to be a “visible” type of advising. “Most of our teaching is fairly invisible to our colleagues. People don't read my students’ papers…but, this is front and center! Our product is distributed all over campus,” she described. She noted that she was discouraged by faculty colleagues within her department to accept the role of faculty advisor to a student media group. For example, she claimed they stated that “it's not enough of a benefit…in terms of what you get out of it.” She further explained that by saying that, her colleagues were suggesting that there were other ways to meet requirements of institutional service as a tenure-tracked professor that were less difficult than advising the student group.

Jane regarded her undergraduate experience as a student leader within a similar organization as great training experience for her role as advisor. “I really can't express enough how much my decision to do this in the manner that I do has been influenced by the people who advised me as an undergraduate,” she commented. Additionally, she credited her colleagues from campus activities as inspiration for her effectiveness to engage students in the student organization setting. It was apparent that her colleagues in campus activities have been very influential to her. “I love how Ellen runs her office, I love the culture of that office, it's the kind of place people want to be. She and Olivia are both very, very visibly supportive mentors to students.”

In addition to the support she receives from her colleagues in campus activities, Jane felt it was necessary to advocate for her own professional development to be an effective advisor. She successfully advocated for funding from her institution to attend a professional conference during her first year advising to help ease her fears and learn about helpful resources to meet her
role requirements and balance her various personal and professional commitments. She stated that the conference was a highly educational and comforting experience for her.

A real tangible result of me attending that conference was learning about national organizations…with high power attorneys who are basically there to help any student organization or advisor pro-bono.

**Paul**

Paul is a white male in his early 50s and a faculty member at a small (undergraduate enrollment = 5,001 - 7,500), four-year public university. He has an earned doctoral degree with full tenure as a professor with approximately 20 years experience teaching in the social sciences. He has advised a student chapter of a national service-based organization on his campus for 15 years. He began his relationship with the student organization when he attended a few meetings from pure interest and shortly took over for a pair of advisors. As a service-based organization, the student group hosts regular meetings and coordinates a few signature events to raise awareness and funds for various projects to support their cause.

Paul is very passionate about the mission of the student organization he advises; over time he became actively involved as a leader on the board of officers for a local chapter of the organization. Paul was described by his nominator as “genuinely invested in student success, taking the time to meet with them and explain procedures and paperwork.” The stories he told about regular reunions with former students and the various pictures of him with his student group members throughout his office were indicators of his genuine investment in student success and meaningful relationships with students. “I just got an email last week from one of the club members who has been gone for 10 years. He was in graduate school and had a problem
with a professor; he asked how to handle something, so I shot him a reply with some advice,” he shared.

To learn about the role of advising, Paul spent some time shadowing the previous advisors. However, Paul believes that the majority of his preparation for the advising role was the result of his ongoing experience working with the group.

It really was kind of trial by error in lots of ways. I think the main thing that I had to learn to do was not micromanage as much. When I originally came on I had a really good president who just knew her stuff and took care of stuff. Then, the next year I had a president who really wasn't ready for it and I found myself doing a lot of work instead of showing her how to do it. I learned that in order for them to be really better at what they do, I have to let them do it and let them make mistakes, but then be in a position to help them learn from those mistakes instead of just feeling that it's punitive.

Despite learning to advise in a co-curricular setting primarily on his own, Paul indicated that he received significant support to effectively serve in his advising role:

We receive great support from our campus activities function here, and for a number of reasons actually. It’s never enough, but we receive good funding from student government, primarily because we've demonstrated that we're a club that's responsible with money. What happens through campus activities, at least, is that we receive support in terms of them facilitating things when we forget something and not holding up any paperwork if it isn’t submitted properly by students.
Max

Max is an associate professor with tenure at a small (undergraduate enrollment = under 5,000), private business college with approximately 15 years teaching experience in higher education and an earned doctoral degree. He is a white male in his mid-40s. His relationship with a student chapter of a national entrepreneurial organization began during his first year at his institution; he was invited by students to serve as their faculty advisor after making a donation to support the club’s fundraising efforts.

I wrote a check for a small donation. Next thing you know, the president of the group shows up at my office and says, ‘Please be our advisor.’ I said, ‘I barely know where the bathroom is. I have only been here for a month so far.’ But, I’m supportive of the group. It looked like a pretty exciting thing they were doing, so I said, ‘You’re a new club. I believe in entrepreneurship; It’s not my area of scholarship, but I think it’s a great thing.’

Aside from hosting regular meetings, the student organization attends educational conferences and hosts various programs, including a competition for potential entrepreneurial ventures and guest speakers.

Max is a passionate educator, which was evident by how he described student organization leaders and their growth and the nomination he received from his colleague. His nominator described him as someone who establishes “unbelievable relationships” with students, using his professional connections to develop strong coaching and mentoring relationships with students and supporting them in all that they do. Max indicated this passion when sharing his perspective on working with students.
I love being around bright, young people. I love learning from them. It’s not the same in the classroom. They come; time’s up; they go! There are some limits to how much you can engage with students in a classroom setting. Getting out of that classroom setting, it’s just so rewarding to get to know them better… I can’t say enough about how I am looking for these gems, especially at the freshman and sophomore level to feed opportunities to.

Max indicated that his multiple teaching and service commitments within the institution limit his availability to the group; therefore, he hasn’t taken advantage of available resources for student organization advisors.

I’m really busy. I just have never gone to the trainings. I feel really bad. They put a great manual together. I get it. I look at it, but I’ve never gone to any of the sessions. I feel horrible because these are people that I work with a lot… it’s much more about the relationship than it is about the structures and the procedures.

He values support from colleagues in campus activities for their mentorship of student leaders and training of executive boards that support his role. “They know how to make the place go. Let’s face it, the whole logistics side of the house, running events and thinking about how all that works is foreign to faculty.”

Daniel

Daniel is an associate professor at a small (undergraduate enrollment = 2,001 - 5,000), four-year public university. He is a white male in his early 50s with an earned doctoral degree. He made a career change from government work to teach behavioral sciences at his current institution nearly nine years ago. With a personal interest in policy and government, it wasn’t long
before Daniel got involved with Student Government Council (SGC) on his campus as their faculty advisor.

My doctorate is in political science, and I have a policy background. I thought I wouldn't have considered it had the request not have come across through email. I thought this might be something fun to do, something interesting to do. I threw my name in the hat and got the position.

Daniel has co-advised student government council for approximately four years with a full-time staff member who is an administrator for campus activities at his institution. His co-advisor, and nominator to participate in this study, described him to be a link between the students and faculty. His nominator also shared that students “naturally gravitate to Daniel like a teddy bear.” As the faculty advisor to SGC, Daniel has attended weekly business meetings and helped plan and facilitate activities at their retreats. Daniel indicated that there are ample resources available to support him as a faculty advisor, however he primarily relied on his intuition and his co-advisor for approaching his various roles as advisor.

There are resources available, but I never took advantage of them. They have written resources, but I’ve never looked at them. They have meetings for faculty advisors, but I haven’t attended any of these meetings. Not that I felt that I knew it all, but I felt like I had a pretty good grasp on things as it was. My biggest resource was Jack. I learned better just from communicating closely with him, interacting with the students, and just being myself.
Samantha

Samantha is a white female in her mid 30s who works as an associate instructor at a mid-sized (undergraduate enrollment = 5,001 - 10,000), private university with an experiential education focus. She earned a bachelor’s degree and has worked in various roles for ten years in the field of culinary arts before returning to her alma mater to become a full-time instructor. She has been teaching for five years at her respective institution and has served as lead advisor for a culinary club for nearly three of those years. Samantha served as a secondary advisor prior to taking responsibility for a lead advising role when it abruptly became vacant.

The main advisor was done…She had stopped pushing the officers to do anything; if nobody's behind them telling them to do what they need to do, they didn't do it. We ended up in the middle of the term with no main advisor and a student officer who still wanted to keep the club going, but none of the members were really doing anything…We have a core group of officers who do all the organizing. The members just kind of show up.

Samantha was nominated to participate in this study for being a faculty role-model who engages “student leaders in setting the agenda for the club while working within the contexts of her limited availability.” According to her nominator, “she does not force or lead the group into any particular direction and empowers students to help her bring in industry professionals for club events.” She received recognition for excellence in club advising from students and peers at her institution during her tenure. According to her nominator, Samantha strives to clarify her role with the campus activities office and ensure that she's supporting their work and mission.

Samantha shared that she has relied on resources provided by campus activities to clarify and manage her role responsibilities as lead advisor to a club that hosts between six and nine
events per academic year with occasional meetings. Her quick reference to a file with the club’s advisor team role responsibilities outlined and an advisor manual demonstrated the importance of available resources when issues arise.

I only remember going to maybe two trainings as an advisor; one was at the very beginning when we were provided an advisors-like guide with a list of phone numbers and people to talk to, which was great because I still look at it…I’m pretty confident I know what the role is, but I feel like it's different for every club and it's different for every person. I think that as an advisor you define that role. The school has a certain say about how you need to be there for the club when they need you, but that all depends on when and how your club needs you.

Overview of Findings

This qualitative study was guided by one primary research question: How do faculty members identified as exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations describe their roles, their approaches and their experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting? Five central themes emerged from the interpretation of narratives from multiple interviews with participants, the narratives from the researcher’s journal and the online discussion among participants and the researcher; they were:

- The exemplary faculty advisors primarily learned to advise student organizations by trial-and-error rather than through formal training in the advising role

- The exemplary faculty advisors believed informal relationships with student leaders were paramount to meaningful student engagement in a co-curricular setting
The exemplary faculty advisors described multiple role behaviors that were commonly contingent upon their assessment of group contexts

The exemplary faculty advisors experienced co-curricular advising to be one of many forms of institutional service within faculty culture

The exemplary faculty advisors believed co-curricular advising to be a blend of teaching and service

The five central themes are interconnected as is reflected within the presentation of each theme and sub-theme.

**Theme One: The Exemplary Faculty Advisors Primarily Learned to Advise Student Organizations by Trial-and-Error Rather than through Informal Training in the Advising Role**

Participants were asked to share their experiences adjusting to the role of faculty advisor, including any influence from particular resources on campus; their responses support findings from within the literature that faculty primarily learn how to advise student organizations by trial-and-error (De Sawal, 2007). Paul contended, “I don’t know that I necessarily had role models for how to do the advising piece necessarily. It really was kind of trial by error.” Paul’s sentiment about his preparation and adjustment to the role of advisor was similar to those shared by the remaining participants. Nonetheless, two sub-themes emerged that suggest that a) the faculty advisors had access to training and development resources for engaging with students as student organization advisors; and b) positive working relationships and interactions with colleagues in the office of campus activities on their campus were valued greater than the provided programs, trainings and manuals.
Access to Training and Support Resources

Overall, the faculty participants expressed that they valued the support provided by their colleagues in the campus activities office at their institution. Max expressed that “they make the place go and have skills that faculty don’t have.” Stephanie, Jane and Paul also suggested that their colleagues in the campus activities office know the students very well on their campus, often anticipating how they can be of support for matters associated with the student organization’s events or group dynamics. Jane commented, “I love the culture of that office; it’s the kind of place that people want to be. My colleagues in campus activities are both very visible and supportive mentors to students.”

Advisor guidelines and manuals. Additionally, each participant reflected an understanding of their formal roles and responsibilities as advisors to student organizations, which were either stated explicitly or implied within university guidelines and resource manuals for advisors and student organizations that were coordinated by their colleagues in campus activities. Available resources were described by participants to be advisor manuals that outlined policies and procedures and/or orientation and networking programs. Samantha shared that the materials provided by campus activities include important contact information and guidelines that have been helpful to reference when supporting the group with event planning and promotion. Additionally, Jane has formal responsibilities outlined within an agreement she signed with the university; the agreement states a few primary role requirements, such as “to provide or secure” necessary technical training for the student media group and to offer regular feedback to improve student performance and adherence to editorial policies. Even with a document outlining role requirements, Jane stated that her colleagues in campus activities and resources from a professional conference have been more helpful for her to adjust to her role as a faculty advisor than
her department or other faculty resources. She credited her fellow faculty advisors from other institutions at a professional conference and her valued colleagues in campus activities for some strategies she used to motivate members of her student organization.

**Programs for advisors.** Stephanie, Max, Daniel and Samantha stated that campus activities professionals on their campus have offered orientation and training programs specifically for advisors, yet not all advisors took advantage of them. Stephanie attended an advisor orientation program to be sure she was familiar with campus expectations of her working with students in the group setting and to learn about the guidelines and resources available to the student group. “I probably was much more hands-on as a high school advisor…For me, I needed to truly understand how much hands-on, hands-off type responsibilities were involved,” she explained as her reason for attending available advisor trainings. Daniel, Max and Samantha stated that they appreciate having manuals and training programs available to them and to other advisors, however they’re not conducive to their busy schedule. Max stated, “I’m really busy. I just have never gone to the trainings. I feel really bad. They put a great manual together. I look at it, but, I’ve never gone to any of the sessions.” He continued, “I feel horrible because these are led by people that I work with a lot that run them over there in campus activities.” Daniel expressed that his primary resource to understanding his role responsibilities as a faculty advisor was his co-advisor and nominator, a staff member from campus activities:

I felt like I didn't have time to go to the advisor training meetings or to look at written stuff. I don't mean that in an arrogant sense. It's not that I didn't need it; I probably did, but I learned better just from communicating closely with Jack, interacting with the students and just being myself.
Samantha shared that she would find programs geared for advisors to be valuable, yet just not possible for her with her busy class schedule and commitments at home with her family. These findings suggest that the limited offerings for advisors are not as conducive to the on-the-job training that is more of a reality for busy faculty members.

**Indirect support for advisors.** Even if they didn’t take advantage of provided trainings or available advisory support resources, all participants reflected an understanding of their many role responsibilities as advisors from their colleagues in the campus activities office or their interactions with student organization leaders who were trained by those same colleagues to know roles and expectations for advisors. All participants shared that their respective institutions have required training programs for student organization leaders that they find to be influential and supportive from their perspective as faculty advisors, even though they personally do not attend them. “I use the students to ask questions. They're like the sounding board if I have a question about policy or procedures; if I question it, then I'll reach out and just look for validation,” described Stephanie. “I appreciate the work that campus activities does with the students. They work with the student leaders…That’s a huge support,” expressed Max. Considering the nature of the faculty participants’ regular interaction with their student leaders and approach to empowering the student leaders to manage their organizations, it was not a surprise that the faculty participants received valuable information indirectly from student leader trainings. Furthermore, the participants communicated that they relied on campus activities to provide the necessary support for their student leaders to gain access to financial and campus resources for events and programs and understand important campus policies.

**Building Relationships and Accessing Support as Needed**
When describing their experiences advising students in a co-curricular setting, the participants conveyed that the greatest support for them came more so from positive working relationships and interactions with their colleagues in the campus activities office at their institution than through established documents and training programs. Stephanie shared that her campus activities department offers training and development resources to her from their leadership library; she shares that these have been beneficial for her to plan team building and developmental exercises for her student organization leaders. Harold commented that his campus activities office is always a great support about things that he does not know about, such as preparing liability waivers for off-campus excursions and for accessing money for different activities. Jane referenced how influential her two colleagues in campus activities have been for her to accept and sustain her role as a faculty advisor. “I know that I always have those two resources. It was really important that they created this culture where involvement with student leaders seemed like a positive experience from an outsider’s perspective,” she said.

Samantha expressed that situations remind her that she needs assistance from others. “It’s not until tough situations are right on top of me that I realize I lack the knowledge for addressing a particular challenge,” she said. Additionally, Samantha shared how important access and open communication has been with her colleagues in campus activities. She shared that it has been problematic for her when her campus activities colleagues have not been as responsive as she expected to address particular matters for her organization’s events. “Sometimes it takes them a long time to call me back…but when I’m calling, we’re at the ninth hour and that’s a problem,” she asserted.

Participant narratives suggested that a collaborative partnership between campus activities and faculty advisors is most important to promote student engagement and a positive experi-
ence for all involved in the process. Max exclaimed, “We know these students because of what we do together. We interact with them in multiple ways. That’s what’s most important.” Daniel shared that regular communication with his colleague in campus activities has been instrumental for him to be successful in his advisory role. “My biggest resource was Jack! He and I would talk often. We would keep the lines of communication open…We were always on the same page as far as how we would want to approach challenges that would come up and how we were going to plan our retreat.”

Lastly, participants offered some recommendations for how the experiences for faculty advisors could be enhanced on their campus. Jane and Stephanie recommended that campus activities professionals can better support faculty advisors by creating a network of faculty advisors who can contact each other when needed and assist with learning about the realities of their new role within the context of faculty culture. “Even though the nature of my work feels so different than what some other student advisors do, we’re still in the same boat in terms of relationships, faculty development and how our advising work affects our work-life balance and other tenure-related goals,” commented Jane. Paul also shared that faculty advisor networks can be helpful to learn new tricks and help others. “It’s helpful to learn from other people who are doing it to come up with new tricks…But also, I could very easily help new advisors too,” he contended. This particular finding is valuable as it suggests that campus activities professionals can foster a more supportive culture for faculty advisors by creating a peer network to share ideas and solicit advice when needed.

The second theme represents the style of communication that was indicative of participant’s descriptions of their interactions with students outside of the classroom setting. According to the participants, time spent supporting and coaching student organization leaders extended
into the evenings and weekends for programs and meetings; there were more natural settings for informal interactions and casual, yet professional, relationships with students. Although there were times when faculty members referenced the need to have formal conversations with student members or leaders about peer or role accountability, responses in general reflected that their preferred roles and approaches to advising were “informal” in nature.

**Theme Two: The Exemplary Advisors Believed Informal Relationships with Student Leaders were Paramount to Meaningful Student Engagement in a Co-Curricular Setting**

All participants described interactions with student advisees that were characteristically different from the more formal faculty-student interactions common in the classroom setting. For example, Daniel presented his approach to advising as preferably less formal than many of his faculty peers. He described the importance of diverging from the formal barriers between faculty member and student to create an important bond with student leaders.

In addition to some of the formal faculty roles, you…let down your barriers and put aside your ego and all of that nonsense that faculty are so good at maintaining, and just interact with the kids…You really become one of them as part of the whole process…Faculty cannot do that at arms’ length.

Daniel articulated his sentiments on value of informal interactions with student leaders, particularly with his participation in overnight retreats with his student organization.

We have the full council retreat in the fall, then we have an executive board retreat in the winter…just to regroup. Formally, I think it's important for the faculty advisor to be engaged with all of those things. Informally, for me, it's greater access. In other words, access for the council members to have access to me.
The casual nature of interactions and relationships with student leaders served various purposes, according to the participants. Two sub-themes emerged regarding how the faculty advisors described and rationalized their informal relationships with student leaders, they were: a) to build rapport with students, and b) to mentor students to be successful in their leadership roles or as future professionals.

**Building Rapport**

Five of the participants reported that students actually refer to them in a more casual and informal manner during interactions that they believe have yielded positive outcomes. Harold, Jane, Paul, Max and Daniel shared that they are affectionately referred to by their first name or a nickname by their students in the co-curricular setting. Max posited that informalities helped level the playing field in certain settings and instilled confidence in students.

I let my student organization leaders call me by my first name because I work with them closely. I don’t do that in class...They’re going to feel like they’re not part of the team, or that they’re somehow subordinate to me, if they’re not calling me by my first name like everyone else.

Jane acknowledged that her preferred communication style with students was somewhat unique from other faculty in that she actually prefers that students call her by her first name both inside and out of the classroom setting. Harold expressed that even though he has invited students to call him by his first name, they still feel more comfortable calling him by his title of professor or doctor. Jane believed that it is important to have less formal interactions with students outside the classroom.
They’re there to learn, to grow, and they can quit at any time. It’s really nice to have that level out a little bit. I’m a human being who happens to have some experience in this area that I’m really excited about. Let’s not worry about when X, Y or Z is due and what percentage of the grade something is. There’s a lot of that stuff that can complicate the student-teacher relationship that is dissolved in the student organization setting.

Informal relationships with students outside the classroom setting often meant that the faculty advisors were more accessible by personal cell phone or by socializing with students in different settings. To some extent, every participant referenced that casual relationships naturally developed a sense of camaraderie from students getting to know them as faculty members in different settings, indicating these casual relationships were considered to be mutually beneficial. Paul spoke about how quickly barriers dissolve when spending multiple days with student leaders traveling for group-related activities. Jane referred to the advising relationship as a special relationship, “I think it’s a special relationship. The power structure is not the same. There’s almost nothing I can do to penalize a student in a club, well I suppose I can give them negative feedback on an article.” Samantha referenced that although some classroom etiquette may apply when working with her culinary-based club, “it’s after hours and it’s meant to be fun,” so she ensures the climate is less formal by playing music and relaxing her communication style. Stephanie asserted that many of the informal interactions created trust and greater level of comfort for further interactions.

They see me as an everyday person when they’re in the club activities. It does break down the barriers that I think they actually perform better than in the classroom, because there’s a different level of understanding of who I am. I think they actually trust me more because they’ve seen me in a different set of circumstances.
Harold, Max and Daniel referenced that they socialized with student leaders from their organization in informal settings for educational reasons or to build rapport. Daniel stated that students always accept his request to sit with them in the cafeteria. “Having lunch with them when they're struggling with personal issues or going out for coffee with them to talk, that's what it means to engage with students informally.” Harold coordinates activities for students to socialize and dance in public settings on evenings and weekends. Both Harold and Max stated that they regularly invite students into their homes with their families for dinner to celebrate or reconnect. “My wife and I have students over at the house for dinner all the time. Big groups of them because we don’t want to be selective….I don't need to do that. They already are really engaged with me, but I really like doing it…I don't have any specific goal in mind” (Max). Max provided some guidelines from his experience that he believed cultivated meaningful relationships with students in the co-curricular setting.

You have to get to know them personally and build strong rapport. That means talking about who you are, beyond your role as a faculty member. Talk about your youth, education and career path. They like to hear how you grappled with a difficult life and career decisions…It’s a thin line between friend and mentor. You can be friendly, but still maintain a professional relationship.

In addition to building rapport with students, many of the participants expressed that their experience serving as co-curricular advisor has involved mentoring of some students of whom they held with high regard. The existence of some type of mentoring of student leaders was also evident within the statements made by the campus activities professionals who nominated the faculty participants.
Mentoring

Even though all participants expressed that they have special relationships with their student organization leaders, Harold, Jane, Paul, Max and Daniel explicitly referenced “mentoring” with respect to the more casual relationships they have established with many students as a faculty advisor. Max described mentoring students to be a fun part of advising a student organization.

Mentoring is not just about offering advice, it’s about asking them questions in the course of a normal conversation you have. ‘Have you thought a little bit about your internship for next summer? Have you thought about graduate school? Where do you think you might want to concentrate in?’ You just normally and naturally ask questions. You're not really giving advice.

Jane contended that “mentoring is crucial; but, it can't be forced.” She continued, “There has to be a natural progression. I feel like something like a student newspaper allows for students to extend their relationship with the faculty member outside of the classroom.” Jane shared that her mentoring relationships with student leaders differed by their personality and work style. She described a mentoring relationship with her student leader last year as unique from other relationships.

My last year's editor was a take-charge kind of leader. He was not looking for anyone to hold his hand or reassure him. He was very confident, so that has been a very different experience for me. I think I was still able to mentor him in some ways, but it has been a very different experience with this year's editor.

Many of the mentoring relationships described by participants extended beyond their time advising students as leaders within their organization; students would call upon the faculty
members for guidance and advice as alumni as well. Harold, Paul, Max and Daniel all acknowledged that they have built some long-lasting friendships with students who consider them to be their mentors. Harold related his experience mentoring students as an advisor similar to the approach taken to raise his own children. “I think that the rewards are like those that you get from your kids. If you really raise good kids, you see that they’ll appreciate coming to talk to you,” he said. Daniel also referenced an affinity towards the students he works with in a co-curricular setting as “paternal” by nature.

Participant narratives not only promulgated the importance of breaking from the formalities of faculty-student interactions common in the classroom setting than within the organization setting; they also portrayed that exemplary faculty advisors constantly assessed dimensions of task and relationship matters within the organization to determine their role responsibilities and varied approaches to advising. The next theme further illustrates how formal versus informal interactions with students can do a disservice to the students as faculty advisors and mentors.

**Theme Three: The Exemplary Faculty Advisors Described Multiple Role Behaviors that were Commonly Contingent Upon Their Assessment of Group Contexts**

A common thread throughout all participant responses was that each faculty member served in multiple role capacities as an advisor to students in a co-curricular setting; these roles were dependent upon situational variables to accomplish desired outcomes. Essentially, participant narratives reflected spectrums of task and relationship behaviors that were contingent upon dynamics within the student organization. As such, advising roles appeared to be contingent upon the leadership approach taken by the faculty advisor in a given context. For example, Harold shared, “I was more hands-on when the organization was in chaos. I made decisions to appoint responsible leaders within the group and then supported them by attending their meetings.” Paul
described his approach to advising as constant adjustment; “the way I monitor them, the way I give them feedback, the way I just engage with them has to really adjust based on their strengths, their weaknesses and their level of confidence,” he shared. Stephanie stated that her philosophy to nurture student growth and development requires attention to the dynamics of the student leaders within the group.

I think that my philosophy of empowering and nurturing students to help them feel successful about what they do requires attention to the experiences that they already possess. For the few that aren’t involved in other groups that receive more training, that are just coming through the pipeline for this one organization, those students really need nurturing. From my perspective, they need the nurturing to be able to take the next steps as student leaders.

Samantha shared that she’ll take the role of “authoritative chair” at times if students are not being engaged or responsive, “I try not to micromanage, but I also try not to sit back and do nothing either,” she said. Max remarked that his “hands-off” approach to advising at times is out of necessity, due to numerous other commitments, however he described that he found a way that works for him that is primarily centered around coaching and supporting the executive student officers of the organization. He continued, “Really, my work has been to build a great team at the top, and then for them to be able to go out and do great work with their general members. I really focused on the executive board, and particularly on working with the lead officers. That has been a key part of my work.”

Styles of leadership behavior emerged from participant narratives about their roles and approaches to engaging students in a co-curricular setting that were situational in nature. Two
sub-themes emerged from the interpretive process of this study, they were: a) at times, the exemplary faculty advisors coached students in individual and group settings towards desired goals; and b) whenever possible, the exemplary faculty advisors strived to nurture student leadership, empowering students as decision-makers. The two sub-themes reflect leadership behavior because they involve influencing others (i.e. students) to achieve desired behaviors and goals (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

**Coaching Students in Individual and Group Settings Towards Desired Goals**

Participants expressed that there are usually limits to empowering students without some direction on tasks and relationships as coaches. Samantha believed that “there has to be a transition period.” She added, “You can't just empower people right from the start. You can't just give them the go ahead to do whatever they want, but, once they have proven that they're willing and able to, you can then empower them with making the important decisions for the group without some initial coaching.” Paul coached his new officers year after year who were terrified about their first few meetings.

They have 60, 70 students coming to check out the student club, so there’s the pressure of making sure that they keep people interested, keep things moving and get some of the business done. Part of helping them is just giving them basic meeting management and set-up advice, how to set up the agenda. Having an agenda alone helps calm somebody down, because they have that security blanket to go back to when there are certain things that they may forget.

Collectively, participant narratives reflected that participants coached students at individual and group levels through various means.
**Group coaching.** Participants primarily approached their role as coach by asking questions and providing feedback and support at organizational meetings. Stephanie, Jane, Paul, Daniel and Samantha regularly attend organizational meetings, whereas Harold and Max attend meetings upon request or as they deem necessary or valuable. Max asserted, “I was at an e-board meeting about a month ago because we had a big event that we really needed to talk through. So, I went to the executive board meeting to talk them through it.” He continued, “but, generally I don't show up at executive board meetings. I will go occasionally to general board meetings, especially when I'm presenting something or doing some kind of a workshop for them.” Harold expressed that it was his role as advisor to be available when the student group needed him, which is often when he has sensed that the organizations needed to be coached through addressing a particular problem:

If there is a sense that there is a problem; that’s when I start to get engaged and discuss it with the students. For instance, one of my clubs as has a networking dinner that they’ve been planning…the costs were becoming too high for the students to afford. So, I got involved and coached them to find a different location on campus that does not charge for specific resources, significantly reducing the cost of the event.

Stephanie referenced the importance of challenging the group process at critical times, coaching student organizational leaders and members with generating new ideas and possibilities.

I try to ask the questions to get them to think about a wider variety of items. Depending on the personalities of the students and group dynamics, I try to gently nurture the students by putting ideas out there and always allowing them to feel that they are the decision-makers…My approach is to try to help them understand that the first thing that
comes to their mind may not be the best decision, and to ponder many solutions rather than just going with the first thing of which they think.

One-on-one coaching. There were many examples provided about participants coaching students at the individual level. Harold, Jane, Stephanie and Samantha expressed that their students are often over-extended or over-committed to responsibilities outside of the organizations. Therefore, they each felt inclined to serve as coaches to student leaders to manage their decisions. “I’m learning more and more that providing emotional support is a primary role...a lot of it is helping students with stress and time management...This interpersonal management has been a little unexpected,” commented Jane. Stephanie shared that a few students have visited her for some coaching to address issues they perceived as troublesome within their organization. “They wanted some guidance in conflict management or negotiation strategies because they were not comfortable with the situation...They were just looking for some direction.” she remarked. According to Jane, “the ability to craft leading questions (of sorts) that can help students reach the best conclusion on their own is truly a skill, and one that doesn't just come easily based on earning the title “advisor.”

Many coaching styles expressed by participants involved providing open and frank feedback with student leaders. Jane referenced that coaching and feedback are paramount to deep learning in co-curricular settings.

Deep learning and self-regulation for my students comes in the way of accountability, and the adviser pushes this by not being too hands-on, by truly making events or output about the students, warts and all. In a student media climate, my students have to own up to their misquotes and typos. I think that my role is more vital in coming in and saying
'Hey, this happened...It’s embarrassing, but it makes you want to try that much harder next time.’

Daniel shared that taking the time to coach student leaders through difficult situations is worthwhile and educational; he shared a particular example of a time when he coached a student leader through the process of dealing with another student who was being difficult.

I don't think it was as much of an ‘aha-moment’ as it was just recognizing the fact that we were talking about leadership. He recognized that he was in a leadership position and that he did have to take the high road in that particular situation. He got it! It wasn't a light bulb moment, but I think just through coaching and mentoring and through talking about what leadership entails, he was able to take that step back and take the high road.

Max contended that student engagement is about recognizing the students, “writing them a note when they do something great, or even providing a shout-out on social media.” Harold and Jane also believe that doing small things to recognize student efforts is a part of coaching. Jane posts accolades for members on the group’s social media sites to praise students in a more public manner.

All of the participants described that most of their time and energy is invested in advising, coaching or mentoring student leaders, not necessarily the general members of the student organization. This type of interaction is somewhat intentional by design as indicated by the guidelines and trainings they described for their student leaders. The next sub-theme illustrates how important it was for the faculty advisors to empower student leaders as decision-makers and nurture student leadership and responsibility for the group.

**Nurturing Student Leadership and Empowering Student Leaders**
It was not uncommon for the participants to express that it’s the students’ organization, not theirs. According to Max, “being a club advisor means not telling them what to do, but empowering them to take ideas they have and helping them do it.” Daniel shared that his co-advisor primarily sets the tone that it’s “the students’ organization,” a philosophy to which he subscribes. Harold contended that “the advisor should follow the lead of the student leader, not be pushing his or her own agenda.” He described his philosophy as “come to me if you have questions, want consultation or to brainstorm. Otherwise, I’m here to observe you as you take the lead and shape this experience for yourself and your group.” Paul and Samantha expressed that advisors can easily make a “rookie mistake of micro-managing,” not leading, their student leaders as supporters. They both shared how they learned important lessons over time to role model for the student leaders to take the lead on key tasks. “I probably micromanaged them a little more than I should have, especially the first year and the second year, because I didn’t want things to fail because the officers didn’t do what they were supposed to be doing or they didn’t go through the right channels to get the room approved” (Samantha). “I think that it’s so important for the faculty members to empower the student leaders…not to direct them or order them to do certain things. You want to guide them as they make their own decisions” (Max). Paul asserted that he tries very hard to stay out of the decision-making process for the group, which is not always easy to do on service trips when you spend a lot of time together.

If a student organization goes out of state at my institution, they have to have a faculty advisor with them. I try to stay as removed from the decision-making as possible on our trips…I try to let the student leaders know, ‘You just take care of what's going to happen during the trip and just come back to me if you have questions or if you need anything.’
I'm there really as another one of the participants in a lot of respects. I'm there to facilitate if needed and to stay out of the way if I'm not.

The participants’ narratives implied that despite their belief that it was “the students’ organization,” the faculty advisors felt like they were an important part of the group. Accordingly, the faculty advisors contended that many of their behaviors served to lead by example or indirectly influence other students by supporting the student leaders as the decision-makers.

**Leading by example or role modeling.** Paul, Harold and Daniel shared specific examples how they exhibited leadership behaviors to mediate conflict or address accountability matters. Paul expressed that he taught a lesson about conflict resolution by facilitating a discussion with a student complainant in front of a student organization leader.

It was an opportunity for me to show him how you have to respond to somebody who disagrees with something you're doing. Even as unreasonable as they may sound, you still have to be polite and address their concerns. You can't simply dismiss them. Sometimes you're not going to win.

Harold believed that it was imperative for him to support his organization by holding an unethical student leader accountable.

People were intimidated by her and no one else wanted the responsibility to hold her accountable…I couldn’t live with it. It didn’t bother me that she had done some damage to my reputation by her false accusations, but I thought it was horrible that this girl would cause damage to other people within the organization.
Daniel expressed that a greater focus on relationships and leading by example was effective in a few different instances of accountability. One example was related to his actions during and after a mediation meeting he facilitated between two students along with his co-advisor.

Things did cool off between the two of them after our meeting. The president knew that he had to be the bigger person in the situation, he got it, actually. The other young man backed off a bit after we all spoke… I wanted him to know that this wasn't personal, but we wouldn’t tolerate his previous behavior. Every time I saw him I would always say ‘hello’ and try to be engaging with him. He reciprocated, so I think that that helped the situation. It really was effective for the four of us to sit down.

**Leader as member.** It was not uncommon for participants to use the pronoun “we” when describing the activities and dynamics within their organization, reflecting active participation as a leader within the group. For example, when discussing his roles as advisor to his service organization, Paul stated the following:

One thing that actually isn't going particularly well this semester is that we’ve got students who are really busy but just aren’t working as a team. They're doing their own things and not capitalizing on the strengths that they’ve got as a team. So, that's something I'm going to try to work on next semester.

Max described his active participation in building a great team with the student leaders within the organization. “We’ve had a lot of success. They have won five national best chapter awards in the six-plus years that I’ve been with them. I don’t take any credit. It’s just because we’ve attracted great students, and great student leaders to the club.” Samantha suggested that team-
work with the students has been paramount to serving as an informal leader within the organization.

In order for faculty advisors to gain the best performance from their officers, we need to ‘step off the soapbox,’ and meet our officers on their level. Speak to them as a team member, not an underling. Guide by example and teamwork. With that model, the officers of my specific club have been able to ask questions and feel comfortable to make mistakes as they take on their leadership roles. After a brief adjustment period, it seems that the officers are able to lead and organize independently with confidence because they know they are supported by their advisor.

Five of the participants indicated that their preferred role in meetings is to serve as a participant or silent leader with the executive board. They each described some strategy for how they support as a silent leader by empowering the student leaders who run the meetings. For example, Paul makes sure he is available to officers prior to and immediately following the meeting so he doesn’t have to get involved within the meeting. Harold attends meetings for the student organizations he advises by their request, otherwise he participates by reviewing their meeting minutes and requesting to attend “when he senses there is a problem.” Both Jane and Stephanie spoke about how important it is for them to be purposeful about where they sit in meetings to avoid being perceived as an authority. “I just really want to make sure that they're not thinking ‘Oh that's our professor, she must be in charge,’ when I’m sitting in the front of the room. So, I try to be really intentional to deemphasize me in the room,” said Jane. Jane also expressed that her role in meetings is mainly to provide feedback and to “have a little training moment” on technical skills and teamwork when necessary. Stephanie considers herself “a silent partner” with her executive officers at larger group meetings.
At executive board meetings I'm more engaged, but general membership meetings, I really just try to let them run the show and answer questions if they ask me questions. Each year I have them set their goals for the club so there's continuity on the board they know what they've done the previous year, and so I let them drive those visions. If they are struggling with not really understanding what potential and opportunities there are, then I’ll ask the right questions to encourage them to look at things differently.

The next theme provides insight into how the exemplary faculty advisors experienced the value of their work engaging with students as faculty advisors to student organizations. Overall, participants experienced that co-curricular advising is primarily valued as just one form of institutional service within faculty culture.

**Theme Four: The Exemplary Advisors Experienced Co-Curricular Advising to be One of Many Forms of Institutional Service within Faculty Culture**

All participants articulated that their time and effort spent advising students in a co-curricular setting was considered to meet some or all requirements for institutional service within a given year, yet not for teaching or research expectations. Despite Jane and Daniel receiving a stipend to satisfy established role requirements as faculty advisors to their student organization, all participants expressed that co-curricular advising could be valued more within faculty culture with consideration to their time spent with students outside the classroom and as professional development opportunities. Two significant findings emerged as sub-themes regarding the traditional faculty roles of teaching, research and service, they were: a) the faculty advisors intentionally selected co-curricular advising as a preferred form of institutional service, and b) faculty commitment to service may be unevenly distributed to a fault.
Co-curricular Advising as a Preferred Form of Institutional Service

There were various prompts for the faculty advisors to describe any structural or sociocultural influences on their lived experiences to engaging with students in co-curricular contexts (See Appendix C for the Interview Protocol and Conversational Guide). When discussing the institutional culture and faculty culture on their campus, the participants expressed that there are various forms of institutional service that are encouraged on their campus; yet, they chose to advise student organizations as a form of institutional service that can be more time-consuming and involved than other forms of institutional service. According to Jane, “There is much easier service to do for tenure.” She added, “I could just be on a committee, and that would be incredibly less time-intensive with much less responsibility on some level.” When asked to explain why she serves as a faculty advisor if there are easier ways to meet service requirements, Jane responded, “It is nice that this is a piece of service that fits into my interests and my passions.” Daniel shared that one of the reasons he stopped serving his time on a campus committee was to have a more meaningful experience serving his institution as a faculty advisor to a student organization.

Jane and Daniel divulged that they experienced discouragement from some of their faculty peers from serving as a faculty advisor to their respective student organization. Jane’s colleagues discouraged her from taking on the role of an advisor to a student media organization. According to Jane, faculty colleagues within her department stated that “It’s just, it's not enough of a benefit for you in terms of what you're going to get out of it, it's risky as a junior faculty in a lot of different ways. It was like my chair basically told me that I shouldn't do it. And yet, I wanted to do it.” Daniel referenced that his faculty colleagues teased him in a friendly manner
about how much time and energy he spends with students from the Student Government Council as their advisor.

They are not comfortable having more of a personal or an interpersonal relationship with their students. They don't see their students as customers like I do. They are skeptical of the student governance process itself and the contribution that students make to that. Obviously, I think it's important or I wouldn't be a part of that...In a very caring, loving sort of way, they give me a hard time for that. It was hard for them to understand why I would take this on.

**Faculty Commitment to Service May Be Unevenly Distributed to a Fault**

To many of the faculty participants, faculty commitment to service is unevenly distributed on their campus. Max noted that there are faculty members who “do way more service than many others.” He further explained:

It’s not fairly distributed because it’s voluntary. Some faculty just don’t do it. It’s unfortunate that a few faculty members carry a lot more of that burden than others. That’s a sticking point within the faculty; When you go up for promotion, you have to have X amount of service hours to get promoted. You don’t get a lot of extra credit for all the other stuff that you do.

Overall, participants expressed belief that their institution works hard to create opportunities for student engagement. However, as Jane suggested, it’s not obvious “how closely the advising component is tied to this goal, at least at the institutional level.” Despite participants reporting that co-curricular advising is primarily valued as institutional service within faculty culture, all participants described that there were significant intrinsic awards to volunteering their time to
serve as faculty advisors. A comment made by Max on this topic was representative of experiences described by the remaining participants.

I think I’ve advocated for faculty to get more credit for advising, but that’s not the way tenure and promotions work. There aren’t any incentives to do this. We rely on great faculty who just do it, even though in a way there’s a disincentive to it. You’d be better off purely from a promotion standpoint spending your time doing teaching and research, and not doing these other things, but we have faculty that just love to do it. We’re lucky in that sense.

Samantha asserted that even though she is encouraged to be involved with her student organization, faculty within her college are “encouraged to pursue acts of professional development” much more than engaging with students outside the classroom as faculty advisors to student organizations. Jane affirmed that she has had a similar experience on her campus with how her service as a faculty advisor is valued less than other professional development activities. “I can apply for money for training and professional opportunities related to my teaching and my scholarship, but no money is available to me for the purpose of my advising duties, which in my instance are directly related to my professional field.” Paul shared that there is little structure to encourage faculty to highlight their impact on learning and student engagement in the co-curricular setting, “it’s up to faculty to demonstrate that they have combined the co-curricular learning opportunities with what happens in the classroom, but not a requirement.” Harold suggested that “service is not recognized appropriately.” He offered advice for new faculty advisors to know what they’re getting themselves into.
Faculty receive better evaluations when they write grants or papers; it’s those things that apply to faculty raises. Service is not really something that institutions care about as much; They appreciate it, but it is not valued as much… I think if a new faculty advisor knows that the relationships with the student is the reward and that the reward from university is minimal, it’s okay. I would want them to know that so that they don’t become frustrated about why they aren’t recognized by others.

The next theme presents findings associated with the intrinsic rewards experienced by the faculty participants to commit to serving their institution and students as faculty advisors to student organizations. Not only do the participant narratives reflect that advising is primarily valued as institutional service within faculty culture, they also reflected that each participant believes and experiences that co-curricular advising is a blend of teaching and service. For example, Samantha contended that “advising is a lot like teaching, but with more personality.” She continued, “the students I advise feel comfortable with me and I am able to impact their learning on a whole different level because of that personal connection.”

**Theme Five: The Exemplary Faculty Advisors Believed Co-Curricular Advising to be a Blend of Teaching and Service**

When asked to describe their lived experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting, it was natural for the faculty participants to relate their teaching style to how they interact with students outside of the classroom. Two sub-themes emerged when interpreting how participants described their work as faculty advisors to student organizations within the context of roles and expectations within the faculty culture at their institution. First, the faculty participants reflected that they believe that advising is part of their nature to be an educator; they view advising as a dimension of teaching. Second, participants described their experiences as mutually benefi-
cial for the students involved and them as faculty advisors. Accordingly, they easily identified positive learning and development outcomes demonstrated by the students while also articulating some personal benefits for them spending a significant amount of time with students in the co-curricular setting as faculty advisors. Together, these two sub-themes suggest that the seven faculty participants believed advising to be an integration or blend of teaching and service.

**Advising as Teaching**

Without exception, all participants described their approach to advising to be characteristically similar to their teaching style as passionate educators. A noteworthy quality that was evident within all participant nominations for this study, including those not selected to participate, was that the faculty advisors were regarded by their campus activities colleagues as passionate educators. Thus, it was no surprise that all of the participants regarded their approach to engaging students as faculty advisors to be similar to their teaching style. Furthermore, nominators for all of the participants reflected that each respective faculty advisor garnered the same respect and appreciation from students outside of the classroom as they do inside the classroom. According to Max, “showing students you care about them as people” helps motivate students to learn in co-curricular settings.

You want to help them get a job. You want to help them go to grad school…You have to show that you can be very demanding, set high expectations, but be completely fair, approachable….Being a good teacher doesn’t necessarily make you a good advisor. But if you’re going to be a good advisor, you have to be a good teacher.

Samantha commented that it’s not always easy to be intentional to mirror your teaching style with your advising style when there are expectations for formalities between faculty and stu-
dents. “I tend to combine my teaching and advising style a little bit. I try to be the most approachable instructor I can be. I don't want them to be scared to ask me a question if they don't know how to do something; it's the whole point of them being here so that they would,” she said.

Paul described his teaching style within the co-curricular setting to be more “team-based” and casual. “I see my role as teaching them how to think for themselves (and thus solve problems without coming to me for answers every time), which is similar to my classroom approach.”

Paul expressed that his team-based approach within the club “creates a comfort level that allows them to tell me I’m wrong, to make fun of me, and to allow me to do the same in return.” Daniel asserted that he’s “the same person in the classroom” as he is “in an executive board meeting or general council meeting” for the student group he advises.

There are issues which are important to me and for which I'm willing to fight and to really fall on my sword, but most of the stuff in life doesn't fall into that category for me…I think the act of comity is a dying art. We don't see it role-modeled much anymore, whether it's in politics or in personal opinions, we've become kind of close-minded, unwilling to listen to reason in argument really…It’s just a part of who I am and it's worked well with the student government council.

Each participant reflected a passion for fostering student leadership development as educators. Stephanie, Jane and Daniel facilitated student learning and development through training workshops or retreats. For example, Stephanie works with her student organization officers to hold a summer planning meeting. In past meetings she has coordinated a trust-building and teamwork exercise to “develop leadership” potential and help student leaders learn the “art of delegating.” Daniel has helped coordinate overnight retreats with his co-advisor, which he believes has helped “create bonds” for the students to respect each other and work well together.
Harold, Paul, Max and Samantha indicated that they utilize individual or small-group meetings as opportunities to create educational spaces for their student leaders.

**Meetings as educational spaces.** The participants expressed that meetings serve as platforms to develop the potential of their student executive officers. Paul expressed that the sustainability of the club is at risk without deep learning through reflection and feedback in meetings. He continued, “We always have post-event reviews to summarize what worked and what needs to be improved. At times, this requires some one-on-one feedback with officers or club members to let them know when they messed up in a way that can’t happen again.” Paul regarded his meetings to be a way to promote a student’s “self-regulation,” an essential component to “set them up for success and not micro-manage them.” He expressed that he sees steady improvement in confidence from students after providing them feedback on what they did well and could improve upon after each meeting. Similarly, Jane stated that she meets with student leaders before and following scheduled meetings, reserving each group meeting as an educational space for her student leaders. “I try not to ever do anything in the meeting. I try to respect the editor-in-chief’s leadership in that space.” Jane described that her behind-the-scenes approach has been impactful for her current student leaders.

Although Max stated that he doesn’t have time to attend regular meetings for his student group, he suggested that students would avoid making the difficult decisions if an advisor was always present at their meetings. “If I was always there, they would look to me on crucial decisions. Instead, I meet with the president and vice president regularly and I talk through the key things that are on the agenda for the coming weeks. I also talk with them about past decisions,” he remarked. Like Max, Samantha prefers one-on-one or smaller group meetings with officers to discuss strategy and officer accountability. Additionally, she believes that her attendance at
larger group meetings provided a prime opportunity for accountability conversations and learning opportunities. “If I can catch them at the right moment and I can direct them in the right direction, that's a beautiful thing,” she remarked.

**Advising is Mutually Beneficial for Students and the Faculty Advisor**

As articulated within the first theme, the faculty participants in this study demonstrated that they approach their encounters with students in the co-curricular setting to promote learning and development as situational leaders. Whether they described their approach to supporting, coaching or mentoring, the stated intention of the participants was to engage the students in accomplishing developmental or learning outcomes that they deemed important as educators. Various outcomes were described by participants that reflect an advantage for student leaders who have an involved faculty advisor. Additionally, all participants reflected that they experienced great satisfaction and other benefits from actively serving as a faculty advisor to a student organization.

**Benefits for students leaders.** When asked to describe their perceived impact on student learning and development in a co-curricular setting, each participant easily articulated ways in which they have seen significant growth and development for the student leaders within the organization. For example, Samantha saw marked transformation for a few student leaders over her time as advisor; she spoke specifically about her current president that she has worked with over the years. “I've seen her grow personally, professionally with her skill sets over the course of the year. Now, I have her in class again. She's totally different and somebody to be reckoned with,” she said proudly. Stephanie reported significant development for the students in the areas of “being comfortable taking risks, building trust, networking and relationship building and
learning how to take risks and to interact socially.” The observed impacts of the faculty advisors that emerged from this study were indicative of learning and development in two areas: character development and skill development. Table 5.2 represents a sample of narratives revealing these impacts.

### Table 5.2

*Positive Outcomes for Student Leaders Described by Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning/Development Outcomes</th>
<th>Supporting Narratives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>‘We ask student leaders to do stuff that they wouldn’t normally do, but at the same time their maturity level increases exponentially because they are given such responsibility.’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘They got so much more confident over the course of a couple of years and standing up in front of a big group of people.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘They are willing to take the risk of entering dialogue, putting something out there, even though they're not positive whether or not it's exactly what the faculty member might be looking for.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘I see building confidence in my officers as my key job as advisor.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>They get the time management, a laboratory for time management and organization.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Often in developing that trust we have conversations that deal with ethics, because the world is not black and white.’</td>
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<td>‘There’s some personal character development happening, like understanding humility’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘After a brief adjustment period, it seems that the officers are able to lead and organize independently with confidence because they know they are supported by their advisor.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning/Development Outcomes</td>
<td>Supporting Narratives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>‘...team building, communication, working with each other and all the different types of personalities.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Speaking for themselves; not in the sense of communication, but just learning how to talk to other people and make those other people realize that they’re somebody to talk to.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘It’s the brainstorming process, both as a group and as thinking through things on your own and then bringing it to the group for the brainstorming process and engagement’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘In the classroom, it’s the development of analytical skills, and writing skills, and problem-solving skills, but with student government it’s more about developing the problem-solving abilities.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘They’re running ideas by me. They’re giving me feedback, but also with each other...I’m just trying to encourage them to treat this like a professional experience.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Understanding what real people besides instructors and teachers expect of them.’</td>
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**Character development.** Participant narratives about their experiences working with student leaders as faculty advisors described some marked changes in student leaders’ character. “Character refers to positive and cultivated traits that become habits by which the whole person is judged to be exemplary” (De Braine & Verrier, 2007, p. 2). Accordingly, achievements that were described to influence students’ creative effort and perseverance were interpreted as character development indicators in this study. Examples of character elements described by the participants included self-confidence, managing time and stress, and instilling a sense of accountability to others.

**Confidence.** Confidence was a key character element emphasized by nearly all participants within their narratives. Samantha, Paul, Max and Harold asserted that they’ve seen a great
deal of development in the area of self-confidence from their interactions with their student leaders. Paul expressed that building the confidence of his officers is a key part of his job as their faculty advisor. He shared his perspective about a student leader that he believed made a significant transformation in the area of self-confidence after serving as an executive leader for two years.

She came from being this student who was afraid of her shadow, mortified at the prospect of speaking up in front of other people to the person who was running the meetings, running the club and telling people what to do...We ask student leaders to do stuff that they wouldn’t normally do, but at the same time their maturity level increases exponentially because they are given such responsibility.

Similar to Paul, Max referenced that his student leaders became more comfortable speaking publicly in front of a large group after some coaching and practice. “Some of them are just naturals, but others are not so much. Here, they really got to develop that, first with general member meetings and then even at big events,” he remarked. Stephanie expressed belief that empowering student leaders to make decisions has helped increase their self-confidence and willingness to take risks.

The students that have developed as leaders within the club tend to be more confident about who they are. They are willing to take the risk of entering dialog, putting something out there, even though they're not positive whether or not it's exactly what the faculty member might be looking for.

*Managing time and stress.* Stephanie, Samantha, Jane, Paul and Max acknowledged that they had either counseled students through matters associated with time management or had di-
rect conversations with student leaders about accountability for managing their time and stress. Stephanie, Samantha and Jane attributed a great deal of student stress to low self-esteem or over-commitment. Accordingly, the faculty advisors stated that they often spend time coaching students to develop plans to remain involved or commit to specific roles as members or leaders.

Jane expressed that she likes to help student leaders with managing their time and stress, which has been much more common with student leaders whom manage multiple commitments with work, academics and other involvement initiatives.

When you're the editor-in-chief of a paper, you're dealing with so many things and suddenly so many interpersonal issues. It can get overwhelming at times. One of my student leaders this year is working more than we would like her to be. She's taking a full load of classes, she's leading this group, she’s involved in fraternity and sorority life. She has a lot of stuff going on…I feel like I have been able to answer questions for her and reassure her when she's panicked or stressed.

Paul described that experience and feedback play a tremendous role in promoting student development, teamwork and time and stress management. “You see the development…You just see them growing and becoming more mature based more on the experience than your feedback, but it's really an important combination.” Max shared that he has had some accountability conversations with student leaders regarding their time management to ensure that they are committed to their academics as a main priority.

**Accountability to others.** All participants shared experiences of facilitating learning moments with students on the topic of peer accountability. Harold shared an example in which he held a student accountable for violating the student code of conduct for how she was being un-
ethical as a student leader within the organization and mistreating others. “The role of the faculty advisor is make sure that the students understand that responsibility and accountability comes with their leadership position. As a leader, they impact other students by the way they lead,” he remarked. Jane shared that “deep learning and self regulation” for her students has come in the way of accountability.

The advisor pushes this by not being too hands on, by not making events or output too much about the advisor, but letting it truly reflect the students, warts and all. In a student media climate, my students have to own up to their misquotes, their typos in the headlines, etc. As an advisor, I also believe that I can help facilitate deep learning by encouraging them to look at the bigger picture, to see the forest, and not just the trees.

Paul, Max, Daniel and Samantha each expressed that there were a few instances in which they requested meetings with student leaders to provide honest feedback about their lack of accountability to others within the group. Max provided an example of how he coached student leaders to address a peer that was not meeting group expectations that resulted in positive outcomes for all students involved.

We talked for about an hour, about what that conversation would look like. Then they had a conversation with Victor. What they did was adjust his role to something that actually fit his strengths better. They didn’t throw him off the e-board, but they shifted his responsibilities. He was happy with it. They were happy with it. It actually worked out really well. This year he’s back as an e-board member.

Daniel expressed that he views his role as faculty advisor as a way to ensure a sense of accountability for the students to be good stewards of their work, but also to be good citizens. He shared
a few examples of how he has helped students learn about the act of comity, “how to agree to disagree and about what a bureaucratic structure and a bureaucratic process looks like, and…giving up your will to the needs of the group.”

**Skill development.** Participants conveyed passion for experiencing the personal and professional growth of student leaders they work with in a co-curricular setting. Students’ development of various interpersonal and professional skills emerged from participants sharing their experience working with students in a co-curricular setting. According to Daniel, high-quality faculty advisors are “setting an example for students for life beyond college, so hopefully we are modeling for them what appropriate interpersonal skills look like, what time management looks like, and what organization skills look like.”

**Interpersonal skills.** Many of the faculty participants expressed that the heightened levels of self-confidence demonstrated by their student leaders over time were a result of their development of key interpersonal skills in areas such as public speaking, effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution and group decision-making. For example, Max shared that public speaking “helped a lot of them get much more comfortable…that's going to serve them really well. The fact that they got so much more confident over the course of a couple of years and standing up in front of a big group of people is great.” The faculty advisors described their active involvement in or facilitation of activities such as brainstorming, networking, team building and processing within the co-curricular setting that were positively related to students’ skill development as student leaders. Jane, Paul and Daniel believed that their student leaders have learned appropriate ways to communicate with different people from their interactions with student leaders before and after group meetings.
Professional skills. The participants also professed that they value the opportunity to help students develop professional skills through their involvement and leadership in a co-curricular setting. Paul asserted that many of the life skills developed by the student leaders were also “transferrable to their jobs in terms of the coordination skills associated with designing, executing and assessing the success of an event.” Jane referenced that student leaders are exhibiting a sense of professionalism and identity as journalists through her interactions with them. “I suppose on some level I try to encourage them to professionalize themselves in terms of how they correspond with me,” she said. Jane added, “In some ways they almost take on a colleague kind of a role with me by which they’re not writing to me as their professor…They’re running ideas by me, they’re giving me feedback, but also with each other.” Harold demonstrated important professional skills for his student leaders, such as problem solving and garnering financial resources that he believes has been influential for the students.

Once every two months I go to the group’s meetings and share some ideas. I had some ideas to get money from alumni to help them. So, I worked with them to organize a dance competition; I brought a photographer to take pictures to send to an alum who previously donated money for a dance studio. After he saw the picture, he wrote a check for more than $4,000 for the students.

Other areas of professional skill development referenced by the faculty advisors were developing and managing budgets, running effective meetings, delegating and managing others. Stephanie shared an experience when a former student demonstrated how she has applied professional skills that she learned in the co-curricular setting. “It was a wonderful discussion listening to her, who struggled with delegating, explaining to me how she's applying the same types of
strategies that she learned through the club; not through the classroom, but through the club, to be a more effective manager on the job,” she explained.

While the focus of this study was not on the impact of faculty-student interactions in co-curricular settings, participants demonstrated that they enjoyed their experiences watching students mature as professionals and develop skills that they do not experience as often in the classroom setting. These findings support evidence that high levels of involvement with students outside the classroom are what set “influential faculty” apart from their peers (Gaff, 1973, p. 609). Moreover, the manner in which faculty participants in this study described their interactions with students, demonstrated that they too experienced significant benefits from interacting with students in a co-curricular setting.

**Benefits for faculty advisors.** All of the participants indicated that educating and mentoring students in a co-curricular setting has been mutually beneficial. Samantha spoke positively about unique opportunities made available to her through her role as faculty advisor to a student organization that may not otherwise have been available.

There has been a lot of opportunity for me to work with other people that I didn’t know. I got to work to support many high profile and unique events through this role. Things I don't think I would have ever done, so it has been fun to collaborate…The kids were there to support me and I taught them how to do things and they learned.

Max stated that he loved working with young people. “I love being around them and learning from them. There are some limits to how much you can engage with students in a classroom setting. Getting out of that classroom setting, it’s just so rewarding to get to know them better.”

Harold spoke about his affection for his student leaders’ development. “There is no reward for
these activities except, for you feeling like…you are doing something that you like to do for the students ” he stated.

In addition to meaningful relationships developed with student leaders, Max also shared that he learned a lot through his work as an advisor to a student organization as well.

I think I've learned a lot about the field of entrepreneurship! Some of these kids have really gotten out there and learned a ton, so they're the reason I really have gotten to understand what was going on with some startup accelerators in the area; a couple of the student organization members went out and landed internships with them. The students got me interested in that, and then I got to know the folks at a local startup accelerator and then started helping other students get internships there…The students were so passionate about the topic!

Harold, Max, Paul and Samantha referenced how they learned the art of empowering the students as advisors by shifting from a style of micromanagement over their years of advising. Harold articulated that “I have found that micromanaging is a sign of weakness, suggesting that you are afraid of failing. I feel much more comfortable now after struggling a bit with that. Failing is part of life!” Likewise, Paul shared that he “learned about how to better deal with people because there's always something new. There's always somebody with something I've never had to confront before.” These findings further support that faculty-student interaction in the student organization advising setting develops different leadership and management skills that those commonly developed in the classroom setting.
Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings that emerged from this qualitative study on co-curricular advising by college and university faculty. Participant descriptions were included to provide context for narratives presented within the five central themes that emerged from the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to this study. The participants were from various institutions and had different educational and professional backgrounds. The five central themes that emerged from this study were:

- The exemplary faculty advisors primarily learned to advise student organizations by trial-and-error rather than through formal training in the advising role
- The exemplary faculty advisors believed informal relationships with student leaders were paramount to meaningful student engagement in a co-curricular setting
- The exemplary faculty advisors described multiple role behaviors that were commonly contingent upon their assessment of group contexts
- The exemplary faculty advisors experienced co-curricular advising to be one of many forms of institutional service within faculty culture
- The exemplary faculty advisors believed that co-curricular advising to be a blend of teaching and service

The following chapter synthesizes the findings with relevant literature and the theoretical framework of this study. Additionally, a discussion of the implications of the findings, limitations and recommendations for further research are provided.
CHAPTER SIX - DISCUSSION

From the limited scholarship on student organization advising, we can deduce that advising is a complex process that requires advisors to serve in various roles to enhance the mission of the student organization, foster student leadership development and ensure that organizational and institutional policies and procedures are followed (Bloland, 1967; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Love & Maxam, 2011). Nonetheless, there are notable gaps in the literature on student organization advising that warranted this study. The existing literature prescribes various advising roles and role-flexibility with little support from empirical research, therefore it is characteristically anecdotal in nature. Also, the literature on student organization advising speaks universally about student organization advising, leaving out discussion of the experiences of faculty members who advise undergraduate student organizations to provide a more complete discussion on the topic. There is no research on college and university faculty who are considered to be doing exemplary work engaging students in co-curricular contexts, particularly as student organization advisors. The dearth of research on co-curricular advising by college faculty has limited what is known about effective means to foster meaningful faculty-student interaction in co-curricular contexts (Droste et al., 2006).

The purpose of this study was to explore factors associated with high-quality co-curricular advising by studying college and university faculty who were identified as exemplary advisors to student organizations. One central research question guided the interpretive approach of this study: How do faculty members identified as exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations describe their roles, approaches and experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting? A heterogeneous sample of seven exemplary faculty advisors from different colleges and universities in the Northeast region of the United States were selected to partici-
pate (See Table 5.1); each willingly explored their lived experiences with the researcher for the purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study. Five central themes, along with several sub-themes, emerged from the interpretation of various texts from this study. Table 6.1 presents a summary of the study’s findings. These findings were significant as they revealed patterns of similar lived experiences of faculty members from different colleges and universities who engage with students as faculty advisors to student organizations; as such, the findings further our understanding about sociocultural and structural influences on the process of student engagement.

This final chapter provides a discussion and synthesis of the findings with reference to relevant literature and the theoretical framework that guided the methodology of this study. Additionally, this chapter discusses the practical implications of the study and the limitations of its findings. Finally, recommendations are presented for new directions in practice and research related to this problem of practice, along with some concluding remarks.

Table 6.1

Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme One: The exemplary faculty advisors primarily learned to advise student organizations by trial-and-error rather than through formal training in the advising role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited training and development resources were available to faculty advisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Positive working relationships and interaction with campus activities colleagues were valued greater than the provided programs, trainings and manuals</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme Two: The exemplary faculty advisors believed informal relationships with student leaders were paramount to meaningful student engagement in a co-curricular setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Less formal interactions with students helped build rapport</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Less formal interactions with students were indicative of mentoring relationships that were formed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.1

Summary of Findings

Theme Three: The exemplary faculty advisors described multiple role behaviors that were commonly contingent upon their assessment of group contexts
• At times, the exemplary faculty advisors coached students in individual and group settings towards desired goals
• Whenever possible, the exemplary faculty advisors strived to nurture student leadership, empowering students as decision-makers

Theme Four: The exemplary faculty advisors experienced co-curricular advising to be one of many forms of institutional service within faculty culture
• The faculty advisors intentionally selected co-curricular advising as a preferred form of institutional service
• Faculty commitment to service may be unevenly distributed on college and university campuses to a fault

Theme Five: The exemplary faculty advisors believed that co-curricular advising to be a blend of teaching and service
• The exemplary advisors approached advising similarly to their teaching style
• Co-curricular advising is a form of institutional service that has been mutually beneficial for the advisor and students involved

Discussion of Findings

Before providing an in-depth discussion of this study’s findings, it is important to note two significant assumptions that influenced this study. The first assumption was that not all faculty members make good student organization advisors (Astin, 1984; Schuh, 1999); therefore, a key delimitation of the study was that the findings provide a greater understanding of high-quality or “exemplary” co-curricular advising by college faculty, not the general population of faculty members who advise undergraduate student organizations. The second assumption was that meaningful faculty-student interaction within student organizations is a high impact educational practice that strengthens student engagement. Accordingly, a theoretical framework inte-
grating the concepts of student involvement (Astin, 1984) and student engagement (Kahu, 2013) was used to guide this exploration of exemplary co-curricular advising and its antecedents.

The five primary findings from this study emerged from addressing the study’s central research question with support from the integrated theoretical framework used. The interpretation of the findings was supported by various bodies of literature relevant to how faculty advisors would describe their roles, approaches and experiences engaging students in the co-curricular context of a student organization. This section also provides a discussion of the findings with respect to the various bodies of literature that informed the researcher’s inquiry and presentation of findings. Additionally, it provides a discussion of the relevance and implications of the theoretical framework of this study.

**Advising Roles and Approaches**

One of the primary themes from this study was that the exemplary faculty advisors demonstrated multiple role behaviors that were based on their assessment of group contexts. Sometimes conflict resulted from interpersonal relationships between student leaders; while other times challenges arose from varied skill and maturity levels between student leaders that provided different context to which the advisors responded. In addition to skill level and interpersonal dynamics, the participant narratives suggested that the strengths, weaknesses and level of confidence of student leaders at a given time or situation are important considerations for any action or inaction as advisors. Therefore, this study affirmed that advising is a dynamic process that requires advisors to play a multitude of roles and functions to positively influence student organizations and the students involved (Bloland, 1967; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Love & Maxam, 2011).
Most of the role behaviors described by the participants were characteristic of five general advising roles described within the literature on student organization advising; they were: *educator* (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Riordan, 2003), *leader, mentor, supervisor* and *follower* (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). A few of the central themes that emerged from this study relate to role dynamics as they impacted Bloland’s (1967) three primary role categories of advising and how the faculty advisors closely linked their advising approach to their teaching style. The work on the three role functions are ever-present within the literature on student organization advising, perhaps to a fault. For example, Bloland intentionally categorized common advisor roles into three function areas (maintenance, growth and program content) versus offering a comparative or contrasting analysis of functions or styles along continuums (passive vs. active or democratic vs. authoritative). Similarly, the remaining literature and prescriptive resources used by many higher education institutions provide a list of key advising roles that an advisor could play at a given time. The design of this study provided a good example of research that explored the interplay and balance of the three primary role dimensions that are described within the literature on advising (Bloland, 1967; Dunkel et al., 2014).

**Formal versus informal advising roles.** When prompted to describe their roles and approaches to advising, most participants instinctively described the roles that were prescribed within advisor documents or implied through trainings they attended as advisors. Examples of formerly structured role responsibilities included training oversight, approval of procedural forms, supervision of the organization’s financial activity and meeting attendance in some instances. Within the literature, these structured activities are described as supervisory roles for advisors (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014) or as maintenance functions that serve to manage a spectrum of risks for the institution and students involved and support the persistence
of the student organization (Bloland, 1967; Love & Maxam, 2011). Participant narratives implied that these role responsibilities were easily understood and that expectations were garnered directly or indirectly from training programs and established resources for student leaders and advisors.

Upon further inquiry, many of the faculty advisors shared that they engaged students more intently through loosely structured or “informal” roles than those prescribed for them. They viewed themselves within these roles as educators, mentors and leaders. The responsibilities associated with the roles of educator, leader and mentor were indicative of what Bloland (1967) described as growth or program content functions of advising. Many of the advisor behaviors were describe as ways to “improve the operation and effectiveness of the group” or individuals towards goal attainment (Bloland, 1967, p. 2). The participants spoke passionately about their roles as mentors and coaches to student leaders in the co-curricular setting; two faculty advisors actually described their regard for their student leaders as paternal by nature, specifically with investing time and emotional energy to see them make difficult decisions for themselves or their peers to succeed.

Other growth, program content or maintenance role responsibilities that were described to be informal included recognizing and rewarding achievements of student leaders and the group in general. Dunkel and Schuh, (1998) argued that it is a responsibility of an advisor to recognize and reward student and group accomplishments as part of supervisory role responsibilities, along with developing teamwork and providing feedback. However, the faculty advisors in this study associated such behaviors as the difference between “being an advisor on paper” (and doing the bare minimum of advising expectations) and being a good faculty advisor. Therefore, the findings suggest that these growth-oriented or program content-related roles are considered to be in-
formal or optional. The participants discussed their approaches to building teamwork and providing feedback more so within the more loosely structured role contexts of leader or educator. This finding is significant as the faculty advisors believed that it was not as common for faculty advisors to go above and beyond the basic role requirements established or implied in advisor manuals and training programs on their campus. Although the participants didn’t criticize the approach of other faculty advisors, they attributed their own approach to advising as a mixture of hands-on experience and as being innate to who they are as passionate educators who enjoy mentoring and leading students to achieve success.

Advisors as educators: An overarching role. The role of educator has been heralded as an essential role within the literature on advising (Bloland, 1967; Creamer, Winston & Miller, 2001; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014; Love & Maxam, 2011). The positive influence of faculty members on desirable developmental and learning outcomes for students involved in co-curricular programs is pervasive in the literature (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This study found that the exemplary faculty advisors believed co-curricular advising to be a dimension of educating, a blend of teaching and service. The findings imply that participants see themselves as educators first and that not all education interactions or strategies require mentoring or leadership behaviors. The faculty advisors described that efforts to mentor and coach students involved interactions that were less formal than what was common within the classroom environment. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that the role of educator may be an overarching role or the link to all major roles described by the faculty advisors that warrant further exploration.

As passionate educators, the faculty advisors expressed an attitude and belief that informal interactions with students promotes meaningful student engagement. This study reinforced
what is found in the literature, that student organization advisors interact most directly with designated student leaders of the organizations rather than the general students involved (De Sawal, 2007; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel, Schuh, & Chrystal-Green, 2014). Additionally, these findings highlight the importance of advisors challenging and supporting the student leaders of the organizations they advise in one-on-one meetings or in small groups with the student organization’s executive leaders.

Scholarship on co-curricular advising claims that advisors help facilitate a student’s development of new skills, such as program planning, problem solving, effective meeting management and conflict resolution (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014). Since nearly all of the scholarship on group advising is anecdotal in nature, the findings of this study provide empirical support for such claims. Narratives from the advisors in this study suggested that their purposeful interactions with students created educational spaces for them to promote collaborative learning and professional communication through reflection and feedback; these interactions took place in individual and group meetings. The exemplary faculty advisors shared that they provided training moments, challenged the group brainstorming process and led reflections on the hits and misses of past events to facilitate learning in group meetings with student leaders. Additionally, the advisors credited their participation in planned service trips, conference travel and leadership retreats for providing collaborative learning and development opportunities for all involved. Further, the participants indicated that they observed marked improvement from student leaders that could be categorized as character development or skill development as direct or indirect results of their intentional educational practices as faculty advisors (see Chapter 5, Table 5.2). Leadership and mentorship behaviors were linked to the various roles that the faculty advisors described.
Advising as situational leaders. Love and Maxam (2011) contend that the essence of advising is characteristic of leadership behavior because it involves relational influence. Effective leadership requires adaptation to situational variables (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), as was represented by the participant narratives of their perceived influence within different contexts as faculty advisors. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) presented four styles of leadership behavior that fall within spectrums of orientation on task and relationship: delegating (low relationship/low task), supporting (high relationship/low task), coaching (high relationship/high task), and directing (low relationship/high task). Banks and Combs (1989) caution faculty advisors not to accept one leadership style as most effective for advising student organizations; the role of the faculty advisor is dynamic and requires influential action with respect to the maturity of the organization and its leaders. The findings from this study highlight that high relationship leadership behaviors (coaching and supporting) were most common among the high quality faculty advisors when working with student organization leaders.

Coaching. Coaching is goal-oriented behavior that involves guidance and feedback, a high focus on both task and relationship (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). At times, the faculty advisors coached students in individual and group settings towards desired goals. Participant narratives reflected a heavy emphasis on both relationship and task when advising student leaders to successfully resolve complex problems and interpersonal conflicts, exercise key skills for personal and professional success, and to hold themselves or peers accountable to shared goals or responsibilities. The significance of this finding is that the faculty advisors did not tell students what to do, rather they helped them set expectations, role modeled behaviors at times and provided performance feedback to students verbally and in writing to promote learning and achievement of desired goals. Banks and Combs (1989) were the first to use situational leader-
ship theory to understand the dynamic influence that faculty advisors can have within student organizations; a scan of the literature suggests only anecdotal support in its application to advising. Hence, the findings from this study affirm that effective advising involves coaching as a behavior that should be exercised by faculty advisors when engaging students in co-curricular settings, especially since student leaders and campus environments change frequently. Moreover, participant narratives implied that coaching behaviors evolved from hands-on experience and they asserted that micro-management of student leaders created barriers to student learning and leadership development.

Supporting. The participant narratives implied that whenever possible, the faculty advisors preferred to step back and support the students to lead their own organizations and manage their events. As such, a common theme showed that faculty advisors strove to participate with the organizations as supporters and nurture student leadership by empowering students as decision-makers. When concluding a follow-up interview, one of the participants expressed that her primary goal for advising is to help students fulfill aspirations and to support them in any way possible to accomplish whatever agendas they have set for the student organization.

Supportive leadership behavior involves listening to others within a group; it is most effective as a leadership style when the members of the group are competent to accomplish the task yet require some motivation and encouragement (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Examples of supportive leadership behavior in this study included: a) empowering students to make decisions, b) following their lead to ensure that they are learning from mistakes and c) leading by example as a participant within the group. The faculty advisors all referenced purposeful roles when attending meetings for the student organizations, ensuring that they are run by the student leaders and that they are available for support and encouragement. Supportive leadership behaviors allowed
for one-on-one interactions with students to discuss feedback and develop mentoring relationships as passionate educators and advisors to the student organization.

**Advising as mentors.** Mentoring is discussed briefly within the literature on student organization advising, particularly for the opportunities it provides to develop rewarding learning relationships with students (De Sawal, 2007; Dunkel et al., 2014). Mentoring involves special learning relationships that are extended over time and involve influence from mentee’s modeling behavior of individuals they regard as mentors (DeCoster & Brown, 1982). According to Love and Maxam (2011), the mentoring relationship is most powerful when it is mutually understood and nurtured; therefore, it cannot be forced. Five of the study’s participants explicitly described that they have developed mentoring relationships with particular student leaders, suggesting that their developmental approach to advising involves them playing the role of mentor.

As a form of helping behavior, advising provides a distinct opportunity for “mutual discovery and self-determination” between the advisor and the advisee(s) (Love & Maxam, 2011, p. 413). Mentoring has been considered within educational research as the “highest end on a continuum of helping relationships” (Jacobi, 1991, p. 511). The findings from this study further suggest that faculty advisors may develop a “significant interest in the students’ present and future academic careers, serving as mentors and guides” (Droste et al., 2006, p. 64). For example, the participants’ narratives implied that mentoring included getting involved personally with students by discussing their future plans for work and balancing personal and professional commitments as student leaders. Furthermore, the findings from this study suggest that mentor relationships and long-lasting relationships between faculty advisors and student leaders were attributed to the informal interactions that evolved into relationships or friendships that were collegial in
nature. The reunions and casual dinner and lunch meetings hosted with former students were indicative of these relationships.

Participant narratives suggest that there are significant benefits from the mentoring relationship for both students and faculty advisors. For the student leaders, they are provided opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with a faculty member outside of the classroom that may extend beyond their undergraduate years and receive valued feedback about their leadership performance. Additionally, many of the faculty advisors expressed that they are active in recruiting quality students to get involved in their student organization and encouraging students with great leadership potential to run for leadership positions within the organization. As such, it can be implied that the student organization also benefits from the faculty advisors acting as mentors to individual students to get engaged in leadership roles. Lastly, the faculty participants expressed significant satisfaction from mentoring student leaders outside the classroom, suggesting that the intrinsic rewards from mentoring students make it more attractive for faculty members who may feel that co-curricular advising is undervalued within faculty culture.

**The Co-Curricular Advising Experience for College and University Faculty**

There were two important findings related to how exemplary faculty advisors described their experiences engaging students as student organization advisors. First, the faculty advisors experienced co-curricular advising to be just one form of institutional service. While the participants expressed belief that their institution works diligently to promote student engagement, their experiences with how co-curricular advising is valued as institutional service implies that co-curricular advising is undervalued as a high-impact educational practice and worthwhile commitment for faculty members. Second, the faculty advisors learned to advise primarily by trial-and-error rather than through formal training in the advisory role. Their experiences demonstrat-
ed that while they valued having access to resources such as advising manuals or programs developed by campus activities professionals to support them as advisors, experiential learning was more realistic for their busy schedules and had a greater impact on their experience. The significance of these findings are further discussed within this section.

**Co-curricular advising may be undervalued within higher education.** All participants were asked to describe their experiences with people, places or things that challenged or supported them as faculty advisors. According to all of the participants, the majority of support they receive to meet their advising responsibilities was provided by campus activities professionals on their campus. This finding is not surprising as we know from literature and practice that campus activities professionals are primarily responsible for providing support for student organizations and their advisors (De Sawal, 2007). However, some of the participants shared that faculty commitment to institutional service is unbalanced on their campus or that there were easier ways to get credit for service than advising a student organization with similar extrinsic awards. One faculty advisor was discouraged by colleagues to serve as a student organization advisor; another was teased by his fellow faculty buddies about the time and energy he invests in advising his student organization. All of the participants conveyed that it is unfortunate that faculty are not recognized as much within their faculty culture for quality work done with students as student organization advisors; narratives suggest that criteria or attitudes related to promotion and tenure or professional development resources warrant further exploration to determine any relationship to the value of co-curricular advising.

In general, these findings indicated that the intrinsic rewards outweighed the extrinsic awards or obstacles that the participants faced to be actively engaged as faculty advisors to student organizations. Furthermore, the findings are significant as they contribute to a deeper un-
derstanding of some of the structural and sociocultural influences on the time college and university faculty spend interacting with students outside of the classroom and support that co-curricular advising as institutional service and teaching provides personal and professional benefits for faculty (Neumann & Terosky, 2007).

**Learning to advise by trial and error.** All of the faculty advisors indicated that experience within the role of advisor was primarily how they learned to advise. A few of the participants shared that they attended an orientation or training program for faculty advisors, yet they indicated that communications with their colleagues in campus activities were most beneficial when they needed support within their role as advisor. De Sawal (2007) investigated how student organization advisors learned to advise and found that vicarious learning and trial-and-error were dominant ways in which professionals learned to advise. A limitation of her study was that the findings are only representative of the participants of her study who had advising as part of their job responsibilities and not faculty members who volunteer as advisors as was the case in this study. This study further suggests that advising is a complex process that is more commonly learned by direct experience, however it also implies that on-demand support services from fellow faculty advisors and campus activities professionals are valuable resources that should be suited to meet the diverse needs and challenges of faculty advisors.

**Relevance and Implications of the Theoretical Framework to the Study’s Findings**

This study was guided by a theoretical framework comprising of two key components: Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement and a conceptual model that posits student engagement as a complex process with various influences on faculty-student interaction in a co-curricular setting (Kahu, 2013). Together, the two components provided an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of college and university faculty members engaging students in co-
curricular settings as faculty advisors. As such, the findings from this study acknowledged the mental and physical investment of students in their co-curricular experience while also providing an understanding of structural, psychosocial and sociocultural influences that impact faculty-student interactions in a co-curricular setting.

** Applying the lens of student involvement theory.** Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984) explains the relationship between educational and developmental gains for students and their investment of psychological and physical energy into an activity. Accordingly, the theory offered an understanding of the environmental influences on student development with a focus on students’ mental and physical investment in their college experience that was relevant to this study. The relevance of this theoretical concept to this study was evident in many ways.

First and foremost, meaningful interaction between students and faculty members outside of the classroom has been found to be a significant influencer when it comes to promoting and sustaining student involvement (Astin, 1984; 1999). The findings from this study further support that faculty can play a significant role in student involvement by recruiting students to become involved in student organizations and promote their active engagement by encouraging them to assume leadership roles and responsibilities. Five of the participants highlighted that they have found it to be worthwhile to actively recruit students to become involved in their respective student organization and to support students while they invest their time and energy in meaningful ways within the organization. Three of the participants especially noted that their encouragement of students to join and get involved within their student organization has provided unique opportunities for them to run for leadership roles and invest higher levels of energy in their college experience.
Second, Student Involvement Theory promulgates a direct relationship between the quality of student involvement programs and the levels of student learning and development; it also posits that levels of student involvement can change within and between individuals over time (Astin, 1999). Although it was not the intent of this study to confirm this claim, participant narratives suggested that their efforts as faculty advisors to hold student leaders accountable to their responsibilities and work positively with their peers supports this postulate of Student Involvement Theory. For example, all of the participants reported special relationships with students that involved direct and ongoing feedback related to their performance that was attributed to their approach to advising and interaction with student leaders. Furthermore, six of the participants described that students’ level of involvement and responsibility within the student organization were often influenced by factors such as employment, personal matters, interpersonal conflict and self-doubt. These findings were related to their availability and interactions with students in manners that were less-formal than classroom interactions and to the situational leadership roles played by the faculty advisors to support the student leaders and the organizations they advise.

Third, Astin (1999) argued that student involvement can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. An objective of this study was to expand the base of qualitative research on faculty-student interaction and understand distinguishing factors of faculty and student involvement within exemplary advising models. Narratives from all participants provided rich descriptions of the students with whom they work with most directly, confirming that qualitative research can provide an in-depth exploration of the characteristics and experiences of faculty and students, in addition to supporting the theory’s five postulates.

Lastly, the theory of student involvement places an emphasis on the student experience outside of the classroom and has been “linked via research to almost every positive outcome of
college” (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 412). In particular, the findings from this study demonstrated that student involvement in clubs and organizations can provide distinct opportunities for character and skill development. Character development referred to the enhancement of positive traits that became part and parcel to the way the students could be regarded as exemplary (De Braine & Verrier, 2007). Nearly all participant narratives showed students’ character development via improved self-confidence, their ability to better manage time and stress and a deepened sense of accountability to others due to their leadership involvement in their respective student organization. Essentially, the findings support prior claims that faculty advisors help shape environments for students to develop interpersonal and professional skills that are coveted by employers by fostering group interaction and communication between student leaders and their peers (Bush & Miller, 2011; Reaves et al., 2010).

**Applying the lens of a dynamic model of student engagement.** This study sought to extend what was known about the positive learning and developmental gains associated with faculty-student interaction in co-curricular settings that is ubiquitous in literature on student development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Droste et al., 2006); therefore, it was appropriate to apply a dynamic model of student engagement as a lens to explore the influence and interplay of significant factors associated with student engagement. As Kuh (2009, p. 699) argued, it is imperative for scholar practitioners to “remain open to alternative interpretations of what at this moment in time seem to be near-paradigmatic understandings of what matters to student success and enthusiastically welcome evidence that points to other, better ways to define and measure student engagement.” Kahu’s (2013) conceptual model of student engagement extended the focus of this exploratory study beyond the students’ investment of time and energy to focus on a multitude of factors associated with structural, psychosocial and sociocultural influences on fac-
ulty-student interactions in co-curricular settings (see Figure 2.1). Even though the model has the students at its center, it provided great relevance to explore psychological factors of student engagement (i.e. affect, cognition and behavior) and various influences related to how the exemplary faculty advisors described their lived experiences engaging students as faculty advisors to student organizations. Furthermore, the model promoted an understanding of positive educational and developmental outcomes by exploring them as proximal and distal consequences of student engagement. As a result, various claims can be made about the structural influences, psychosocial dynamics, distal consequences and socio-cultural influences on the experiences of the faculty advisors through the interpretation of this study’s findings.

**Structural influences.** There are various structural factors that limit or moderate the psychosocial interaction or relationships between faculty and students, thereby impacting student engagement (Kahu, 2013). Kahu’s dynamic model of student engagement posits that structural influences such as a student’s lifeload or university culture can challenge student engagement efforts (Kahu, 2013). ‘Lifeload’ refers to the collective pressure stemming from students’ personal or professional life (Yorke, 2000). The finding that the exemplary faculty advisors approached advising based on situational variables suggests that they not only encouraged students to interact and resolve conflict with their peers in positive ways (Komives et al., 2006), but they also challenged and supported students to positively address structural influences in times of crisis. Harold, Stephanie, Jane and Samantha each shared instances when they took action to challenge, support or coach a student leader when their academic or work commitments compromised their engagement within the student organization and follow-through of designated responsibilities.
Another example of structural influence that can be identified from this study is the influence of institutional culture on the advisor’s experience engaging students in a co-curricular setting. For example, a few of the faculty participants expressed that the structure of extrinsic motivators to serve as faculty advisors to student organizations could be improved to place higher value on the time spent by faculty engaging students in high impact educational practices. One participant had to exert additional effort for faculty development funds to be approved for her attendance at a professional development conference for media advisors. Another participant expressed that there is pressure for faculty to focus their time outside of teaching on earning degrees and certifications, often de-emphasizing the value of engaging with students outside of the classroom as faculty advisors. A few of the participants referenced that funding from student government provides great opportunities to build relationships with students through conference attendance, retreats and service projects. Overall, the findings provide support claims from Nadler (1997) and Reaves et al. (2010) that co-curricular advising is rewarding and a worthwhile contribution to student learning and success despite the perception of limited recognition, rewards and access to financial resources for professional development within the context of their advising role.

Psychosocial influences. Student, university and relationship variables have emerged from research on student engagement as psychosocial influences (Kahu, 2013). Student variables include motivation, skills, identity and self-efficacy. University variables include teaching approaches, support, workload and staff support. Appropriately for this hermeneutic phenomenological study, Kahu’s model encouraged the researcher to discuss influences such as student motivation and self-efficacy on the advising approach of the faculty advisor. The findings from this study indicated that the exemplary advisors were sensitive to the motivation, skills and self-
efficacy of the students involved and adapted their approaches to educate and mentor students to promote deep learning whenever possible. Additionally, participant narratives reflected that there were times when faculty workload made it difficult to invest as much time as desired to build meaningful relationships with students outside of the classroom. This finding indicated that the relationships developed with student leaders were rewarding and thereby encouraged faculty members to be available outside the classroom to contribute to their development of self-efficacy as student leaders. Research has shown that influence from teachers have been more powerful than other internal or external factors related to student motivation (Zepke, Leach & Butler, 2010). Further understanding of this powerful influence is warranted by exploring the lived experiences of student leaders with their interaction with high-quality faculty advisors.

**Distal consequences.** Kahu (2013) posited that student engagement has academic and social impacts on students that extend far beyond the context of their student organization or their time at the university; these are considered to be distal consequences of student engagement. The mentoring relationships described by a few of the participants suggest that faculty mentors can be a great positive impact on student engagement through sharing stories of their communications with former students who attribute work success to their undergraduate leadership experiences. For example, Stephanie, Daniel and Paul described experiences with former student leaders reaching out to them for career advice or to discuss ways in which they impacted their career success. Another finding from this study with relevance to this framework was related to the distal consequences of student engagement for the faculty advisors, not necessarily the students. For instance, two participants presented specific examples of distal consequences of student engagement for faculty advisors who became more active in national and community organizations as a result of their role as faculty advisors to student organizations. The framework
shows promise to extend student engagement research beyond the student experience and provide a deeper understanding about the benefits of co-curricular advising for college and university faculty.

_Sociocultural influences._ Lastly, Kahu’s (2013) model drew attention to the larger sociocultural influences on student engagement, such as culture, politics, power dynamics and economics within higher education. One sociocultural influence that emerged from this study was related to faculty culture and the power dynamics between faculty member and student. Most of the faculty advisors referenced the distinct importance for faculty advisors to dissolve the traditional formalities between student and professor to build rapport and engage students in deep learning experiences as student leaders. This finding suggests that there may be greater sociocultural barriers for faculty members to feel comfortable developing meaningful relationships with students outside the classroom that has relevance to this problem of practice.

Another noteworthy sociocultural influence was related more so to faculty culture and the traditional roles of teaching, research and service. It has been argued that role conflict and confusion with regards to the traditions of teaching, research and service has been problematic for faculty members within higher education in general (Lawrence et al., 2012; Neumann & Terosky, 2007). The participants’ narratives implied that faculty commitments to teaching and research have greater value than institutional service when it comes to professional development resources and review for promotion and tenure. A caveat of this finding is that it is a broad claim since promotion and tenure procedures vary by institution and change over time. Nonetheless, consideration of sociocultural influences and other variables within conceptual model of student engagement warrant discussion of relevant implications for practice and recommendations for further research on the co-curricular advising experience of college and university faculty.
Implications for Practice

There are various implications for this study that have primary relevance to three constituency groups: campus activities professionals, faculty members and higher education administrators. Student organizations are advised not just by college and university faculty, but by campus activities professionals and other university staff members who receive minimal training on what constitutes effective advising of student groups (De Sawal, 2007). As Astin (1999) and Kuh (2009) contend, student engagement in co-curricular programs is the responsibility of both faculty and student affairs professionals; therefore, the findings from this study provide relevance for both constituency groups to develop collaborative partnerships and shape conditions that foster student engagement on their campus. Moreover, higher education administrators may need to evaluate how they are promoting faculty-student interaction both inside and out of the classroom and to develop strategic initiatives to deepen student engagement on their campuses.

Practical Implications for Campus Activities Professionals

This study aimed to examine the perceived value of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. According to the Council for Advancement in Standards (CAS), campus activities professionals are ultimately responsible for the learning outcomes associated with student organization involvement and student interaction with faculty advisors. A palpable implication of this study is that campus activities professionals should maximize the number of faculty members on their campus who are regarded as approachable and passionate educators and invite them to serve as faculty advisors to student organizations. Greater involvement with faculty within student organization settings provides more opportunities to establish mentor relationships between students and faculty and connect them with other positive adult influences who are committed to fostering student learning and development (Astin, 1999; Kuh, 2009).
Additionally, the findings from this study should encourage campus activities professionals to develop structural and psychosocial influences to achieve two primary objectives: a) challenge and support faculty members to invest their time and energy as student organization advisors and b) encourage and nurture informal interaction between student organization leaders and their faculty advisors. This study provides a glimpse into the lived experiences of seven faculty members who are considered to be exemplary student organization advisors by experienced campus activities professionals, thereby providing valuable insight for new or mid-level professionals who may be benefit from understanding the distinct experiences of faculty members as they balance institutional service with other faculty role commitments. Additionally, the findings from this study provide compelling evidence of the mutual benefits of co-curricular advising for faculty members and students in addition to the perceived value to strengthen recognition and other extrinsic motivators for busy college and university faculty with competing demands for teaching, research and service.

Furthermore, this study supports claims that student organization advisors primarily learn to advise by trial-and-error (De Sawal, 2007). Nevertheless, the findings suggest that faculty advisors placed greater value on the availability and support of colleagues in campus activities than the training documents or advisory support programs that were available to them. As such, the findings should encourage campus activities professionals to rethink how they structure the advising experience and resources for student organizations and faculty advisors on their campus. Expanding resources to include on-demand support (i.e. online training modules, webinars, virtual chats) for faculty advisors and developing programs that establish peer networking and relationship-building for situational support are two recommendations to address this problem of practice.
Finally, this study provides a qualitative framework as a practical assessment strategy for campus activities professionals to explore student engagement on their campuses. As defined by Upcraft and Schuh (1996, p. 18), “Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.” The two main reasons for assessment are accountability and improvement (Schuh, 2003). Campus activities professionals and student affairs practitioners have been relatively unsuccessful in their efforts to understand and explain the impact of programs, activities, and services, particularly due to the lack of empirical research and insight into the skill of assessing student engagement and learning (Green, Jones, & Aloi, 2008). The hermeneutic phenomenological approach used in this study lends itself well as an assessment strategy for campus activities professionals to assess student learning and development in student organization settings by exploring the experiences of faculty advisors on their campus. Data from such a qualitative inquiry may help assign greater value to faculty involvement with students in co-curricular settings within institutional culture and garner greater financial and human resources to nurture and support meaningful relations with faculty members who advise student organizations on their campus.

**Implications for College and University Faculty Members**

Faculty members can play a significant role in shaping environmental factors that foster student engagement (Umbach & Warynski, 2005). In the spirit of empowering faculty to foster student engagement, a few practical implications are noteworthy for college and university faculty. First, the findings from this study provide evidence that learning and student development occurs through the co-curricular advising relationship. Educational cultures must promote “diverse learning spaces and locomotion among them” if they are to achieve holistic development of the student (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 205). The findings from this study should encourage faculty
members to advocate for recognition of their service and for the educational and developmental impact they have had by creating learning spaces as faculty advisors to student organizations.

Secondly, the findings from this study suggest that informal interactions with students promote meaningful student engagement experiences for the students and faculty members. Cox and Orehovec (2007) found that personal interaction between students and faculty on topics of similar interests and goals helped students feel valued and important. The faculty participants in this study expressed that their interaction with students is characteristically different than those faculty members who interact through more formal means, which are more limiting to student engagement, learning and development. These findings imply that deep learning is promoted when faculty advisors actively engage students in determining personal and professional goals and interests.

Thirdly, the participant narratives implied that co-curricular advising provides an opportunity for faculty members to extend their network of colleagues within their institution. All of the participants expressed that they gained relationships with campus activities professionals on their campus by actively serving as student organization advisors. A few of the faculty advisors shared that they received access to financial resources to support professional interests and programs that extended to other areas of professional development. Therefore, co-curricular advising should be better positioned within faculty culture as worthwhile professional development and networking opportunities.

**Implications for Higher Education Institution Administrators**

Two notable implications emerged from this study that are most relevant for higher education administrators. First, the findings from this study suggest that co-curricular advising by faculty members is undervalued in higher education. “Whether or not faculty believe that advis-
ing is important, it is incumbent upon colleges and universities to provide advising for their students and to determine who (faculty, professionals, graduate students, undergraduate students, or a combination of one or more of these) will provide the service” (Kelly, 1995, p. 21). Perhaps there are unintended consequences of institutions placing greater value on teaching and research. Institutions should consider evaluating their criteria for promotion and tenure to ensure that faculty members have an opportunity to provide rich data about their impact within the areas of teaching, research and service as faculty advisors.

This study also suggests that the co-curricular advising relationship is an area prime for active collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. Professional development programs should be offered that challenge and support faculty members and campus activities professionals to develop and achieve common learning outcomes for students both inside and out of the classroom. The Council for the Advancement in Standards (2006) outlines key learning outcomes for students to attain through their interactions with faculty and staff outside the classroom; they are: a) knowledge acquisition; b) cognitive complexity; c) intrapersonal development; d) interpersonal competence; e) humanitarianism and civic engagement; and f) practical competence. Higher education administrators may want to consider structuring relevant training programs and assessment initiatives for learning and development for both student affairs and academic affairs professionals with these learning outcomes in mind.

**Conclusion**

Despite the ever-growing need for colleges and universities to demonstrate institutional effectiveness in areas such as faculty-student interaction and collaborative learning (Kuh, 2009), little is known about the dynamics between faculty advising and student engagement (Droste et al., 2006). Moreover, existing research on student organization advising speaks universally to
advisor preparation, failing to account for the unique experiences of faculty advisors in comparison to campus activities professionals or other university staff members. The significance of this study is that it provided an in-depth exploration of high-quality faculty-student interaction in co-curricular contexts by studying the lived experiences of exemplary college and university faculty advisors.

This study’s findings revealed how and why some faculty members actively challenge and support students to be involved in student organizations and engaged in their personal and professional development as student leaders. Exemplary faculty advisors primarily learned to advise student organizations by trial-and-error rather than through formal training as advisors. Group contexts and the advisors’ nature as passionate educators served as moderating variables for the advisors to apply various advising roles and approaches. The advising roles described by the faculty advisors were representative of four of the main advising roles discussed within the prescriptive literature on student organization advising: mentor, coach, educator and leader (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Dunkel et al., 2014), with the role of educator appearing to serve as a universal or overarching role or approach to support all other roles applied. Personal or informal interaction with students served as one way through which the faculty advisors engaged students actively within the contexts of the student organization and beyond. Findings from this study signify that co-curricular advising may be undervalued as a blend of teaching and institutional service.

The efficacy of Kahu’s (2013) dynamic model of student engagement to guide this study indicates that the framework arguably contributes added value to educational research and best practices. The conceptual model helped synthesize findings that included interaction between various structural, psychosocial and sociocultural factors related to the roles and experiences of
college and university faculty who invest significant time and energy working as faculty advisors to student organizations. Together with the lens of Astin’s (1984) student involvement theory, Kahu’s (2013) conceptual framework supported what we know about the positive impact of student’s investment of time and energy to interact with faculty members and deepen our understanding of how faculty and institutional culture, student motivations and faculty affect may shape both the advising relationship and student experience.

Various implications from this study were analyzed to encourage new direction for policy and practice. Implications for campus activities professionals warrant a shift in practices to maximize the number of exemplary faculty advisors on their campus who are committed to serving as student organization advisors; to strengthen reward and recognition initiatives to support faculty advisors who are balancing conflicting pressures in their obligations of teaching, research and service; and to adapt a qualitative approach similar to this study to guide the assessment of student engagement on their campus within the context of co-curricular advising. College and university faculty members are encouraged to find ways to mentor student leaders through their role as faculty advisors to student organizations, adapt their advising roles and approaches to the needs and maturity of the student organization leaders, and discuss their impact as faculty advisors with relation to expectations of teaching and service. Recommendations for higher education administrators include review of extrinsic reward practices for faculty members to ensure that co-curricular advising is recognized as a blend of teaching and institutional service and to enhance faculty professional development offerings to provide trainings on the complex nature of advising and on the need for deepening student engagement and learning outside of the classroom.
Recommendations for Further Research

The dearth of research on co-curricular advising by college and university faculty suggests that there is much to learn about this problem of practice (Droste et al., 2006). Although this study strengthens our understanding of the complex nature of advising, it had its limitations. Further research is warranted to address several limitations of this study and further explore dynamics and curiosities that emerged from this study.

Phenomenological methodology is more so “a perspective on what constitutes knowledge” than it is “a clear recipe for how to do flawless research” (Dukes, 1984, p. 202). As such, the design of this study required creativity, flexibility and constant self-reflection on the part of the researcher to maximize the trustworthiness of the study. The findings from this study are limited to the seven faculty advisors who participated. Although the faculty participants for this study were a heterogenous group from different colleges and universities, they may not be representative of the lived experiences of faculty members from different institutions and of different ethnic and educational backgrounds. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with a different sample of diverse faculty members from various higher education institutions and of varied ethnicities to further investigate the findings of this study and related factors to advising approaches and experiences. It is also recommended that the sample of participants include faculty members from different types of student organizations that were not represented in this study, such as fraternities and sororities, spiritual or religious groups, and various cultural or identity-based student organizations.

Although much can be gleaned from the special relationships fostered by informal faculty-student interaction in this study, only the perspective of the faculty advisor is provided. To better understand the complexities of exemplary co-curricular advising by college or university
faculty, the lived experiences of the students should be explored as well. According to Kahu (2013), a holistic view and exploration of student engagement helps avoid making an error of assumption that the faculty member is responsible for when a student is engaged, yet not as much when they are disengaged. Further research with participation of student advisees may provide valuable insight on how students helped shape the mentor relationship and what learning and developmental gains they attribute to meaningful interaction with their faculty advisors who were identified as exemplary faculty advisors and thereby support efforts to triangulate data within the study.

The findings from this study suggest that institutions can do more to reward and recognize high-quality co-curricular advising by college and university faculty; however, claims should not be made that promotion and tenure practices do not value co-curricular advising as a blend of teaching and research in higher education. Promotion and tenure processes vary by institution, and the distinct processes for each institution involved in this study were not discussed in depth with participants. Therefore, greater knowledge about the sociocultural and structural influences on faculty-student interactions in co-curricular settings may be attained with more research on what counts for promotion and tenure and how it relates to institutional commitment for faculty with regard to co-curricular advising.

It was not feasible to provide an in-depth analysis of all of the variables within the conceptual model of student engagement that guided this study. Therefore, this study applied the conceptual framework as a conversational and interpretive guide to understanding the roles, approaches and experiences of college and university faculty as they engage students as faculty advisors to student organizations. “The clearer our understanding of student engagement and the influences on it, the better positioned we will be to meet the needs of students, to enhance the
student experience, and to improve the educational outcomes” (Kahu, 2013, p. 769). What is the correlation between being an exemplary faculty member in the classroom and being an exemplary faculty advisor in co-curricular settings? What impact on confidence building and other forms of character development can be attributed to faculty-student interaction and other factors related to the theoretical framework of student engagement? More qualitative research is warranted to fortify what is known about the antecedents to student engagement and high impact educational practices of faculty advisors.

**Final Remarks**

Given the firm hold that the concept of student engagement has as a quality indicator of higher education in the twenty-first century, it is imperative for higher education institutions to expand their knowledge about the breadth of high impact educational practices that exist within their learning communities (Kuh, 2009). The dearth of literature on co-curricular advising by college and university faculty members signifies a mandate to extend our knowledge beyond the general consensus that faculty-student interaction is one of the top influential relationships that contributes to positive learning and educational gains for college students (Astin, 1999). In essence, this study answered a call to action to understand the reasons why and how faculty play various roles as advisors to students outside the classroom (Droste et al., 2006) and how different variables and influences nurture meaningful interaction between faculty and students outside of the classroom within higher education (Kahu, 2013).

The nature and design of this hermeneutic phenomenological study generated patterns of meaning-making of the lived experiences of the exemplary faculty advisors, which included the faculty advisors and the student researcher as a campus activities professional. Heuristically, the
theoretical framework permitted an exploration of notable sociocultural influences on the faculty advisor’s experiences to guide the research to identify multiple intervention points to shape an environment that is conducive to quality co-curricular student engagement by college and university faculty. The findings from this study indicate that the recipe for exemplary co-curricular advising and student engagement by college and university faculty includes three key ingredients that are well-positioned for further exploration in theory and practice: 1) on-demand advisory support and resources designed by campus activities professionals for the busy faculty member, 2) defined student learning and development outcomes to encourage advisors as situational leaders and educators that align with the institution’s educational mission, and 3) an institutional culture that places high value on co-curricular advising as a form of teaching and institutional service that deepens student engagement yields desired learning and developmental outcomes for students. As Grace (2002) cogently argued, “successful partnerships create the essential social, intellectual, and political capital that can then be used to transform our colleges and universities into vibrant learning communities” (p. 10). The findings from this study manifest that there are exemplary models of co-curricular advising and partnerships between campus activities professionals and faculty members to promote meaningful student engagement that warrant further exploration in research and practice.
References


Grace, C. G. (2002). Student affairs collaborations and partnerships. *New Directions for Student Services, (100), 3*.


APPENDIX A - CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Call for Participant Nominations - Campus Activities Professional Version

[Date]

[Participant Name]

[Participant Title & Department]

[Institution]

[via electronic mail]

Re: A Study of Exemplary Co-Curricular Advising by College Faculty

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to request your assistance to nominate a faculty colleague on your campus who you consider to be an exemplary student organization advisor. As you may know, the majority of scholarship on student organization advising is prescriptive in nature, with limited application of research that situates co-curricular advising by faculty as a high impact educational practice in higher education today. Through my dissertation research, I will explore characteristics of exemplary faculty advisors to student organizations and what they identify as factors contributing to their success.

Criterion for faculty participation in this study includes:

• Nominated by a campus activities colleague on their campus as an exemplary faculty advisor to a student organization

• Currently serving in an advisory role for a student organization for at least two years
• Are likely to talk about their experience and approach to advising student organizations for the purpose of this study

This project has been approved by the Institutional Research Board of Northeastern University (INSERT PROJECT NUMBER).

If you would be interested and willing to nominate one or more participants for this study, please contact me by October 31, 2014 so we can schedule a brief call to discuss your nomination(s). My email is Lyons.Sc@husky.neu.edu or you may reach me by telephone during the day at (401) 598-2833. Additionally, any assistance you can provide to share this call for participant nominations to campus activities professionals in your network would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Scott Lyons
Ed.D. candidate, Higher Education Administration
Northeastern University

Call for Participants - Faculty Advisor Version

[Date]

[Participant Name]
[Participant Title & Department]
[Institution]
[via electronic mail]

Re: A Study of Exemplary Student Organization Advising

Dear [INSERT NAME],

You have been identified by [INSERT NAME OF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES PROFESSIONAL] as an ideal participant for a study on exemplary co-curricular advising by college faculty. As you may know, higher education today commands high-impact educational practices that promote collaborative learning and meaningful student interaction with faculty in co-curricular contexts such as student organizations. Through my dissertation research, I hope to explore the essence of exemplary faculty advisement of student organizations by engaging faculty identified by their campus activities colleagues as exemplary student organization advisors.

Based on a sampling strategy I have developed for this study, you have been identified by a colleague at your institution as a student organization advisor that I would like to include in my research. I am writing to ask for your involvement in my study that would require two or more one-on-one interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes and response to a few online discussion prompts with other participants within the next six to eight weeks. Additionally, I may request the sharing of any relevant documents that may lend well to rich understanding of the discussion topics, including any formal communications, training outlines, or procedural documents related to student organization advising. Anonymity of all participants will be respected at all times. All individuals will be identified using pseudonyms, including contributions made by participants on online discussion threads.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Research Board of Northeastern University (INSERT PROJECT NUMBER).

If you would be interested and willing to participate in this study, please contact me by October 31, 2014 so we can schedule a brief call to determine your potential participation in this study. My email is Lyons.Sc@husky.neu.edu or you may reach me by telephone during the day at (401) 598-2833.
Thank you for your consideration. I hope you will find participation in this study valuable.

Respectfully,

Scott Lyons
EdD candidate, Higher Education Administration
Northeastern University
APPENDIX B - UNSIGNED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

[Date]

Dear [Participant]

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation research project. The purpose of this research is to explore exemplary student organization advising by college faculty. This communication provides an overview of your participation in this research process with informed consent, which is described below.

As part of the informed consent process, there are several details I would like to explain:

• There are no foreseen risks for participation in this study for you.

• There is no compensation offered for participation.

• Since you have been nominated by a colleague, I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of your participation. However, pseudonyms will be used for all participants and non-participants to ensure anonymity.

• Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question and may withdraw at any time without any repercussions.

• I will offer you the opportunity to review your interview transcripts and to request that any of your contributions be withheld from analysis within two weeks of the interview.

I am seeking your consent for the following:

• **Interviews:** I plan to conduct a few comprehensive interviews with each participant, which I will record and transcribe. I anticipate that all interviews will last between 60 and 90 minutes in length. The objective of the interviews is to explore your experience advising a student organization and how you interpret experiences and approach to advising to be exemplary. A framework of student engagement will be provided to support our discussion and interpretation of your experiences. I plan for these interviews to take place during fall/early winter 2014.
• **Documentation:** I would like permission to review and analyze any documents relevant to interview discussions, including but not limited to student organization training outlines, memos and other communications, and advising resources. Review of documents are to support the rich interpretation of collected data; participant and nonparticipant identities will be kept anonymous.

• **Online Discussion:** This study involves comparable experiences of participants and continuous reflection of the researcher and participants, therefore I am asking for participants to respond to discussion prompts with other participants within two to four weeks following an interview. A Google Doc will be created for the purpose of discussion between participants that does not require log-in information to maintain anonymity of participants.

Finally, your review of my interpretations of collected data, particularly as it represents your personal experiences with the essence of exemplary student organization advising, is critical to the trustworthiness of my research. Therefore, I will actively seek your review of findings and conclusions and ask for your verification of my interpretations through written reflection prompts. I respect your time and will do my best to limit the time requirement for participation in this study.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research. You may contact me at: Lyons.Sc@husky.neu.edu or 401.598.2833 during daytime hours. You can also contact Dr. Bair, the Principal Investigator at C.Bair@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you,

Scott Lyons

Student Researcher and EdD Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Dr. Carolyn Bair
Principal Investigator
APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/CONVERSATIONAL GUIDE

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: How do exemplary faculty advisors to undergraduate student organizations describe their roles, their approaches and their experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting?

PRIMARY GOALS OF RESEARCH: The primary goal of this research is to explore a multitude of factors associated with exemplary student organization advising from the perspective of faculty members identified as exemplary student organization advisors by a colleague on their campus.

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today and for your willingness to participate in my research. As you already know, this research is for my doctoral dissertation at Northeastern University. You have been identified by a colleague [REFERENCE NAME OF NOMINATOR] as an exemplary faculty advisor to a student organization. For the purpose of this study, exemplary is defined as "serving as a desirable model; representing the best of its kind" (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2014). I am familiar with [NOMINATOR], through my professional network as a campus activities professional.

I would like to talk to you today about your experience as a student organization advisor. This interview should last between 60 and 90 minutes in length. With your permission, I will be recording the session because I do not want to miss any details of our conversation. The design of this research study involves reflective interpretation, therefore transcripts may be quoted in the written dissertation; however, anonymity of all participants, non-participants and institutions involved will be ensured with the use of pseudonyms.

I want to remind you that your participation is voluntary, you do not have to talk about anything you don't want to, and you may end this interview at any time.

Do you have any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview? May I begin recording our conversation?

Let's begin:

Sample Main Questions
1. Can you tell me about the student organization(s) you advise and how you came to serve as their faculty advisor? [How long have you been advising the student organization(s)? What, if anything, happens to confirm or sustain your role as faculty advisor to the organization over time/each year?]

2. I’m interested in what your roles are as advisor to the organization(s) you advise, could you tell me about typical responsibilities or tasks as the advisor to [STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS]?

3. How would you describe the personalities, motivation, and skill sets of the students involved in the student organization(s) you advise?

4. I’d like to discuss some of the resources and influences on your role as faculty advisor to a student organization. How would you describe the resources available to you to advise a student organization [or student organizations] on your campus? In other words, in what ways do people, places, or things support or challenge you as a faculty advisor to a student organization on your campus? [How would you describe the support of faculty within your department to advise student organizations? How would you describe]

5. Please describe the student culture at your institution. How would you describe the level of involvement of students in their education outside of the classroom within student organizations?

6. As you can tell by now, my research interest is exploring student engagement. If you were to think about what student engagement means to you, what would you say it was from your perspective?

7. Can you share some highlights or examples of your interactions with campus activities professionals on your campus who provide direct support for student organization members and leaders? [Follow-up: Can you describe any trainings, meetings, or documents to support you in your role as a faculty advisor?]

8. It would be helpful to explore a bit more about your approach to advising the student organization(s) and student leaders you advise? Can you share some examples or highlights of how you interact with the organization and/or the students involved? [Follow-ups: Can you describe a typical meeting or interaction with the group?

9. Can you tell me what happens when students transition into or from leadership roles within the organization and what role, if any, you play in that process?
10. Can you share some examples or highlights of impacting any significant direct or indirect positive outcomes of your involvement as a student organization advisor for the students involved? How about for the organization as a whole? [Follow-ups: How do you believe your advising relationship has helped student learning and achievement? Can you share any highlights of how your interactions have impacted satisfaction and well-being for the students involved in the organization?]

11. If I were a new faculty member considering advising a student organization, how would you describe your experiences engaging students within the student organization setting and what advice would you provide to meet what you believe are the essential responsibilities and an effective approach to engaging students outside the classroom?

12. Is there anything about your approach or experience with advising student organizations that we didn’t get to discuss? Is there anything else you would like to share that you believe would be helpful to understand about the role and experiences of a faculty engaging students outside the classroom in student organizations?

Checklist:
• Understanding of advisory role(s)
• Understanding of student organization(s)
• Approach to advising student organization(s)
• Perspective on co-curricular student engagement
• Experiences engaging students in a co-curricular setting (examples, narratives, stories)

Thank you for time. I’ll be transcribing this interview within the next few weeks and anticipate confirming my interpretation and promoting further reflection of your experiences with the focus of this study through written reflection prompts. I will follow up with your shortly with further information.
APPENDIX D - SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Hello [Participant],

I'm pleased to share that the participant discussion forum has been created and is live for participant responses/interaction. To ensure that I can stay on target with my research schedule, I am asking that all participants visit the discussion board at least twice over the course of the next two weeks to: 1) submit an initial response to each of the three questions by March 1, and 2) post at least one follow-up response or comment to another participant's response anywhere within the document to any question by March 7.

Important instructions:
- Please visit the following link to access the Google Document/Discussion Forum:[LINK INSERTED]
- You'll want to ensure that you are not logged into Gmail to ensure confidentiality of your response within the Google Document
- Post your response using the appropriate Pseudonym I have provided for you. Your participant Pseudonym is P3.
- All participants are asked to post an initial response to each question.
- I will send a reminder email to revisit the document next week to provide at least one follow-up response to any question or comment on at least one other participant's post.
- The document automatically saves. You need only close out of the browser window when you are done with your responses at any given time.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I hope to have all initial and follow-up responses completed by March 7. Your support in helping me accomplish this timeline is most appreciated.

Respectfully,

Scott Lyons

DISCUSSION PROMPT INSTRUCTIONS:

Dear Participants,

Thank you for your tremendous support of my dissertation research thus far. This document is intended to be an informal and an online version of a “conversation” between the group of us as a final phase of my data collection and analysis. I would greatly appreciate an initial response to each of the three questions posed below, along with at least one follow-up response to any question or response from another participant within the next two weeks as I wrap up my data analy-
sis. I will follow-up within a week to encourage follow-up responses and announce when the document will be closed.

Comments to others posts are encouraged; you may post comments using the “insert comment” option in the menu above. Please begin any response or comment with the pseudonym identifier I provided you in my email (i.e. P1, P2, P3...). Your active participation in the conversation would greatly support the depth and richness of my research. There is no length requirement or restrictions for responses, I just ask that you consider using pseudonyms and avoiding referencing your specific institution or clubs name for confidentiality purposes.

The document is editable by everyone on the link, so please be sure to leave existing text intact for others to review, but please add your comments! IMPORTANT NOTE: Please be sure you are NOT logged in to Gmail to preserve confidentiality! You can tell if you are logged in by viewing if your username is in the top right corner of this browser window. Thank you in advance and please don’t hesitate to call me at any time with questions! - Scott Lyons

• Question 1: To what extent do you believe your institution embraces the idea of student engagement through student organization advising? How do you know this to be true?
• Question 2: From your experience, what dynamics do you believe specifically impact the relationship between a faculty advisor and student organization leaders? Please briefly explain your response.
• Question 3: To what extent do you believe that it is the role of the faculty advisor to promote deep learning and self-regulation by students engaged within the organization you advise? In what specific ways do you believe you have facilitated this type of learning and development.