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STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISING AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL STUDENT LEADERS, STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISORS

A Dissertation in
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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the contributions student organization advisors make towards successful student organizations. The current research on student organization advising mainly consists of guidebooks or articles on specific types of student organization advising. Any current resources that are available are mainly grounded in anecdotal experiences, providing advisors with little guidance supported with empirical evidence.

This study used a multi-case study research design focused on student organization advisors and student leaders from organizations recognized by a large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university. The advisors were chosen from a purposive sample of advisors who attended advisor workshops provided by the student affairs division. Highly structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were used for data collection.

The results of this research confirmed findings from the current student organization advising literature that there are a variety of advisor approaches and roles and the fact that the student-advisor relationship can directly impact individual student development. This study also deepened the understanding of student organization advising. The findings show the various ways advisors impact individual student leaders through developing open-relationships and knowledge, skills and life strategies. The research also exhibited how advisors impact organizations through the various roles they fulfill. Finally, the study demonstrated that the act of advising a student organization impacts the advisor, as well. Advisors were impacted in that they found themselves setting and navigating personal and professional boundaries and determining when and when not to intervene. These results can be used to better inform and prepare advisors to help an organizations’ continued success.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

What is the purpose of higher education? There are many possible answers to this question. Two conceivable responses are to educate and to facilitate personal growth, for which the relationship between faculty and students is critical. Faculty-student interaction is an important element of college that positively contributes to student outcomes such as high retention and high GPA (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1975; Astin, 1977). Co-curricular involvement is one pathway to reach these objectives. Student organizations are critical to co-curricular involvement and have a long history within higher education. The activities students engage in through their involvement with student organizations teach them skills that help them succeed inside and outside of the classroom. Student organizations help to both educate students and provide them opportunities to grow as people. Identity development, for example, is one area in which students report as a high area of growth as a result of involvement in student organizations (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Meseus, 2008; Renn, 2007).

The colonial colleges were established to educate the elite and the pious. However, over time, the students forced change. Colleges shifted focus to intellect and they would continue to evolve to include a focus on the “extracurriculum” in the form of literary societies. The origins of the literary societies are closely linked to the political atmosphere of the time. The important issues of the day were played out in these student organizations. The literary societies provided students the opportunity to continue to refine their intellect outside the formal classroom setting (Rudolph, 1990). These purposes have not changed much when compared to today’s student organizations. While their specific purposes vary a great deal, the overall idea remains the same. Student organizations provide students an environment to become engaged citizens and gain practical experience that complements their classroom work.
Student organizations are rooted in the history of higher education, but have evolved to meet the many interests and needs of contemporary students. The actions of contemporary student organizations not only garner the attention of campus administrators, but they also make national headlines. Students’ rights tend to be a hot topic issue. In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court held that public colleges and universities operating under an accept-all-comers policy for student organization recognition could have anti-bias rules (Jaschik, 2010). This ruling was limited to public institutions but has had rippling effects on other types of institutions as well. This case reaching the Supreme Court is a perfect example of the fact that the attention that student organizations bring to a college or university warrants the need for guidance in the form of an organization faculty or staff advisor. Advisors can assist in assessing potential risk, serve as a liaison between the organization and the university, arrange logistical support, provide historical perspective, and be an advocate for the organization to the university and vice versa (Bloland’s, 1967; Schuh, 1987).

Student organizations depend on faculty or staff advisors in many respects. After conducting extensive benchmarking projects, I have discovered that due to the value that advisors bring to a student organization, an increasing number of higher education institutions require all of their student organizations to have a faculty or staff advisor. For example, the university that recognizes the two organizations examined in this study instituted an advisor requirement in 2004. Those advisors need to be a full-time faculty or staff member. Any organization recognized prior to 2004 was grandfathered in and exempt from this policy. However, if an organization that was recognized before 2004 goes inactive for at least two years and a student would like reactivate that organization, it too must retain an advisor. This policy will eventually be phased out as the institution was planning on requiring all recognized student
organizations to retain an advisor. Philosophically, the institution, like many other institutions of higher education, sees advisors as necessary for a student organization to be successful, to teach students valuable lessons, and to ensure the actions of student organizations reflect the values of the institution.

**Purpose of the Study**

In order to communicate these necessary aspects of successful organizations, student organization advising and academic advising literature stresses the need for adequate advisor training (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008; Schuh, 1992). The purpose of this study was to examine the contributions successful student organization advisors make towards the growth and development of individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole. The ultimate goal would be to use the results to inform advisor training programs. When reviewing what colleges and universities currently offer for advisor training there is a lack of universally accepted professional standards. When individuals are first asked to serve as an advisor, questions they tend to ask: What is expected of an advisor? How much time does advising involve? What am I required to do? The answers to these questions come from either written guidelines that are based in best practices or from professional experience. Experienced advisors are in need of adequate annual training as well. They face their own challenges of remaining knowledgeable on university policy, serving as mentors to students, assisting students in crisis, and providing big picture advice to ensure organizational longevity.

Student affairs professionals could use more than guidelines and experience in order create training materials and programs; in order to further legitimize student organization advising within higher education, they need training rooted in proven theory. Conventional wisdom suggests that providing documented examples and theory strengthens any argument.
The current guidelines and practices would benefit from empirical evidence to strengthen the many nuances that characterize student organization advising.

Both new and experienced advisors request guidance and training. As a student activities professional working with student organizations, I have conducted several benchmarking efforts to compare the training my institution provides student organization advisors to other peer institutions. The results of these informal surveys demonstrated a severe deficiency in programs offered to advisors at most institutions for either novice or experienced advisors. Student activities professionals can benefit from research that would create or build upon current training models.

Understanding the nuances of the role an advisor can play in students’ experiences can build on the already established knowledge that involvement while in college is important for student success. Substantial research has been done on the impact student organizations have on students. Little is known of the impact student organization advisors have on students. Considering how transitional the college student population can be, the students have little time to learn the intricacies of the operation of the organization and the leadership skills necessary to maintain the organization’s success. In most circumstances, advisors can help provide that continuity from year to year. This then presents the question: what makes an organization successful? As social work scholarship suggests, the collaboration between an advisor and student leaders is critical to achieve the group’s goals (Klein, 1953). Bloland’s (1967) work suggests that students and advisors work together on maintenance functions to keep the organization productive, to encourage organizational growth, and set goals for the organization year to year. Using this knowledge of what makes an organization successful, this study
reviewed two successful student organizations to examine if their advisors had a positive impact on the individual student leaders and the organization as a whole.

**Justification of the Study**

This study examined student organization advising and the interaction advisors have with both individual students and organizations. The dynamic and relationships between advising individuals and organizations was a focus of this investigation. The interactions advisors have with student leaders and organizations vary. The training that currently exists tends to only focus on logistical topics that help to manage an organization. Students come to advisors for guidance on financial matters, policy clarification, conflict management, to serve as references, or even advice about personal relationships. In the context of the organization, advisors are asked to attend events and general body meetings, introduce themselves to members so they can put a name to a face, or to interpret current university priorities. However, information is lacking on how the advisors’ roles and responsibilities can differ and coincide between these two contexts. Student organization advisors tend to face challenges related to the individual students and the organization. Those challenges can either be similar or contrasting in nature. This investigation sought to provide concrete information to better understand advisor contributions that could best mitigate those challenges thus preparing advisors and their students to succeed.

My work with student organization advisors through my professional position is the foundation for my interest in this area. On a yearly basis, novice and experienced advisors ask the same questions. This study will also help advisors assist their students regardless of their experience. Literature was drawn from the areas of student organization advising, academic advising, consulting, and organizational effectiveness. The literature on academic advising vastly outweighs the amount of literature on student organization advising. Advisors who are
faculty members may have content knowledge of academic advising but not student organization advising. In addition to the small amount of existing knowledge of student organization advising, much of that knowledge is relatively dated; this study also sought to contribute current, original knowledge to this field of interest.

This was a qualitative study and the aforementioned four areas of research provided the study’s framework. This study focused solely on student organizations recognized at a large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university. This process included attending meetings, attending events, and interviews with both student leaders and the organization advisor. Using a multiple-case study approach, this study reviewed the different practices used in student organization advising. A greater understanding of this topic would better inform student affairs professionals in preparing student organizations advisors to serve in this role.

**Research Questions**

The research questions and sub-questions are as follows:

- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the overall growth and development of the organization?
  - What roles do advisors play for the organization?
- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the growth and development of the individual student leaders?
  - What lessons do student leaders learn from advisors?
  - What are student leaders applying to their personal lives they take from time with their advisor?

These research questions aim to provide richer information to inform advisor training programs.
Hopefully the results will assist student organization advisors in understanding the potential impact they can have on individual student leaders and the importance of their advisor role. In addition, these questions will hopefully further assist advisors in promoting the longevity and success of the organizations which they advise.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to better understand how or what advisors contribute to the growth and development of individuals and organizations, this literature review focused on four main areas of research; academic advising, consulting, student organization advising, and organizational effectiveness. This review was organized based on individual advising and organizational advising. The first section outlined the literature on how to advise individuals followed by advising organizations as a whole. First, advising is defined, and a rationale is offered for the continued importance of having formal services to support students throughout the college experience. The individual advising section first discusses literature on academic advising to demonstrate how advising individual students has been approached in higher education. This literature helped provide direction to the study of advising individual students in a student organization. The consulting literature showed how individuals within an organization can be advised from the perspective of an “outside” independent actor. The organizational advising section highlighted how this type of advising has been done and to demonstrate its importance to the student experience. Finally, the literature on organizational effectiveness provided context as to how advisors can contribute to a student organization’s effectiveness.

Much of the literature about advising in higher education is focused on academic advisors. Many of the nuances of academic advising could transfer to student organization advising. The literature that solely focused on student organization advising was limited and primarily consisted of handbooks and guides for those charged with advising student organizations. The roles and responsibilities of student organization advisors were identified. The many approaches advisors take and the types of advising will also be discussed in this chapter. The few pieces from the literature that do not serve as handbooks focused narrowly on
certain types of student organizations, such as organizations with purposes aimed at advancing students’ interests and needs from a particular ethnic background. Competencies of student organization advising were drawn from these types of articles.

In addition to reviewing the work done surrounding advising, this review included literature on effective organizations and consulting. The literature for effective organizations not only illuminated the necessary elements of an effective group but it also focused on what makes for effective managers, paralleling managers to student leaders. The review of effective organizations drew distinctions between individual behavior and collective behavior. In addition, the definition of consulting was outlined in order to draw connections to what student organization advisors do when advising student organization individual leaders. This review defined the different roles in the consultant dynamic; the consultant and the client. The skills necessary for consulting and the goals of consulting were also discussed.

**What is advising?**

Formal advising relationships in higher education consist, broadly stated, of academic advising and student organization advising. The relationships between students and faculty members are considered instrumental for students to establish a connection with their institution and contribute to student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Ullah & Wilson, 2007). The term “advisor” is defined for both academic advising and student organization advising. Student organization advisors are seen as those teaching in a nontraditional classroom (Schuh, 1987). They are considered as interveners and sometimes interpreted as members of the organization and sometimes not as members. An academic advisor should serve as a focal point of the students’ total learning experience (Crockett, 1978). Advising has “the capacity to become a primary integrating factor that brings students faculty…and curriculum together into a
truly meaningful educational whole” (Greenwood, 1984, p. 52). Crockett (1978) defines an academic advisor as someone who “helps to coordinate a student’s educational process” (p. 30). Academic advising has been part of the makeup of higher education from its inception. It was not necessarily coined as such, but an institution’s president, professors, and tutors sought to guide students through their educational experience (Crockett, 1978).

Initially, advising was considered ensuring students were fulfilling their academic requirements and keeping records of students’ progress toward their degrees (Walsh, 1979). Around the 1870’s, the scope of higher education began to change with the advent of the elective system. With these new curricular options, advisors were needed to guide students in order to succeed in their chosen path of study (Walsh, 1979).

**Rationale for Advising**

Despite the fact academic advising and student organization advising have been documented as crucial and extremely helpful for the college student experience, many students still are not utilizing these institutionally provided resources according to a study done by Knapp and Karabenick (1998). Students reported needing support and retention services. Specifically, marginal students experienced greater success as a result of these services compared to those who did not use them. However, students tended to seek help from informal sources such as friends and family even when the formal services were available. Knapp and Karabenick (1998) conducted a study to determine if seeking help from informal sources extends to academic problems, and they found that “data indicate that informal sources of help were used to a considerably greater degree than their formal counterparts” (p. 225). Specifically, 63% of those who received help found it from of knowledgeable friends, and 57% got help from other students in their classes (Knapp & Karabenick, 1998). Many students did, however, admit that they did
need help and did not seek it, saying they should have tried harder. Those services used tend to be instructors, but the vast majority of the students never used other formal sources.

Alexitch (2002) also found that students who need the most help feel threatened if they ask for help. In a study to determine students’ help-seeking and preferred advising styles, she found that there were two types of students: (1) those who enjoy the process of learning and (2) those who are more outcome-oriented (Alexitch, 2002). Those students who are more outcome-oriented “exhibited higher levels of debilitating anxiety, had more negative attitudes toward their education, and poorer study habits than primarily learning-oriented students” (Alexitch, 2002, p. 17). The students who need the most help are less likely to seek it. The implications of this study were that students needed help early in their college career and that institutions needed to take initiative to provide advising to students who were more reluctant to seek it on their own.

While students weren’t using these services, the institution strongly promoted them. And these services that were provided were the ones students report needing. The students were clearly not taking advantage of what was offered; instead, they were seeking support from friends and other students. The only factor reported by students for struggling was that they should have tried harder, not that they were embarrassed or afraid. Such a finding indicates the need for professionals to find multiple strategies to promote their services (Knapp & Karabenick, 1998).

**Individual Advising**

**Academic advising.**

The many components of academic advising, from roles, responsibilities, approaches, and training, are relevant to student organization advising. The need for academic advisors grew with the complexity of the American institution of higher education. The demands of faculty
members developed in the areas of research and service, spawning new roles and positions such as academic advisors (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). Similarly, as the importance of student involvement grew to the overall college student experience, which includes involvement in student organizations, the need for student organization advising grew. When students receive effective academic advising, students experience positive feelings about the institution (Crockett, 1978). Crockett (1978) found that a good advising program consists of the following:

[H]elping students to clarify their values and goals to better understand themselves; helping students understand the nature and purpose of higher education; providing accurate information about educational options, requirements, policies, and procedures; helping students plan educational programs consistent with their interests and abilities; assisting students in a continual monitoring and evaluation of their educational progress; integrating the many resources of the institution to meet students’ special educational needs and aspirations. (p. 30)

Advisors need to be able to help “define and develop realistic goals, to perceive their needs accurately, and to match these needs with appropriate institutional resources” (Crockett, 1978, p. 30). This all needs to be done while developing a caring and trusting relationship between the student and the advisor (Crockett, 1978). To develop an engaging relationship there are four primary steps. These steps include identifying the assumptions that the student can clearly articulate, assisting students in clarifying assumptions that are unclear, clarifying personal, professional, and educational goals, and guiding the students as they navigate through their specific curriculum (Yarbrough, 2002).

Yarbrough (2002) goes on to state that advisors are frontline mentors to students. Advisors should work with students to clarify personal goals and objectives. Through these
interactions advisors should assist with setting minimum academic standards, catalog the
interactions with students, assess students’ academic strengths and weaknesses, work with
students to explore their desired degree, and assist with setting students’ personal priorities for
success (Yarbrough, 2002).

Crockett also outlined elements of a successful advising program. There needs to be
administrative commitment, well-articulated institutional policy, recognition of good advising,
selection of advisers, in-service training, an advising handbook, information about advisees,
frequency and quality of student contact, reasonable student load, a referral system, advisee
satisfaction, an evaluation program, and an appropriate delivery system (Crocket, 1978). In
addition to what Crockett lays out for a successful program, Yarbrough (2002) asserted that
successful application of the advising program means the student has been paired with the
appropriate advisor with the objective of providing mutually rewarding learning and training in a
particular academic area of shared interest.

When looking to narrow the academic advising definition, Walsh (1979) stated that “an
advisor’s major role, it seems, is to keep records of students’ progress toward their degree and to
make sure that students have fulfilled both college and major requirements” (p. 446). However,
with the increased emphasis on creating more of a community between faculty and staff, there
has been a call for the redefining of academic advising calling for a more developmental
approach (Crockett, 1978; Walsh, 1979; Ender, Winston, & Miller, 1982). Redefining the
developmental advising approach would improve the process for advisors to help students
choose courses and work on career planning. In addition, redefining this approach would help
students to navigate through all the various individualized academic programs now offered in
college curricula. Developmental academic advising is steeped in student development theory,
Methods of academic advising.

While advising in general is grounded in assisting students through their educational experience in college, there are several types of academic advising. The conceptualized notions of prescriptive advising and developmental advising were developed by O’Banion in 1972. It was in 1983 that there were formal terms established by Habley. Habley (1983) constructed the following models: Faculty-Only Model, Supplementary Model, Split Model, Dual Model, and Total Intake Model. Developmental advising “is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision making, and evaluation skills” (Crookston, 1972, p.12). Developmental advising is holistic in nature and concentrates on student growth and development. This model focuses on the needs of the student, and the advisor should set limits to the conversation and interactions for the establishment of the relationship (Gordan, et al., 2008). This type of advising certainly transcends the boundaries between academic and student organization advising because of the focus on student growth and development beyond just academic lives.

The notion of developmental academic advising is well established. Raushi (1993) theorized that “quality advising fosters student development and at the same time enriches the academic community, the adviser, and the society at large” (p. 5). Ender, Winston, and Miller (1982) offer another definition of developmental advising:

Developmental advising both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life; it is a systematic process based on a close student-advisor
relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources. (p. 8)

Developmental advising is by definition a process and an orientation. This advising theory focuses on the whole person, and the advisor meets the student where they are developmentally. Those subscribing to this theory view advising as a continuous process which is based on the advisor-advisee relationship (Raushi, 1993).

Advising is one of the few instances in which students are required to engage in a repetitive, one-to-one relationship with an institutional representative. Institutions of higher education should take advantage of this relationship in order to promote the development of the whole student. The rationale for developmental advising is rooted in this need for higher education to educate the whole student. Advisors should be instrumental in the integration and orchestration of learning experiences. The academic self of the student should be integrated into the personal self (Frost, 1993; Walsh, 1979). Student organizations connected to a student’s academic field of choice date back to the very first student organizations (Thelin, 2011). Having an advisor that is trained in helping students to make the important connections between their academic and student organization lives is beneficial to students’ growth.

There are several justifications for development advising. Changes in the college student population, for instance the increase in non-traditionally aged students, have drawn attention to the need for systematic planning geared at helping students with programs of study, career exploration, and academic or personal success. Finally, retention is also another factor to support developmental advising (Ender et al., 1982). When students have a satisfactory experience with their advisor, it increases the likelihood the student will remain at the institution (Ender et al., 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006).
There are several themes that emerged from the various assertions related to developmental advising. Developmental advising is a process that is concerned with human growth while being goal related and requiring establishment of a caring human relationship. Developmental advisors also serve as adult role models and mentors. This kind of advising is a cornerstone of collaboration between academic and student affairs and it utilizes all campus and community resources (Ender et al., 1982). In an attempt to join theory and practice, Frost (1993) conducted a study of advisors described as developmental to determine their advising attitudes and practices. Several common practices emerged from this study. Developmental advisors use the advising relationship to get students involved in their individual college experience. When advisors engage students in conversations about time management, study skills, planning techniques, shared advising responsibilities, and problem solving they can explore what will make students successful. Developmental advisors show interest in student progress both academically and in their extracurricular activities when they ask about past performance, career plans, and outside interests. Rarely do advisors make decisions for students, encouraging their growth in personal decision-making and taking responsibility for their own future (Frost, 1993).

Much of the literature on academic advising is centered on developmental advising and is, for the most part, supportive of the theory. However, Hemwall and Trachte (1999) make an argument that developmental academic advising should be abandoned as other approaches are more promising. They argued the emphasis student affairs professionals have put on student development has led to too much separation from intellectual learning. Hemwall and Trachte (1999) asserted that the underpinnings of developmental academic advising contribute to the difficult relationships between faculty and professional advisors. They also believe this helps to explain why faculty advisors do not engage in formal academic advising training workshops.
They contended that developmental advising can move focus away from academic learning and puts too much focus on a broad concept of student development (Schaffer & Martinson, 1966). In order to strengthen the validity of my study, this perspective was taken into consideration when interviewing advisors to gauge their view of what their role should be as a student organization advisor.

Again, while much of the literature centers on developmental academic advising, there are other options to recognize. There are several models of academic advising that consider advising to be teaching. These theories connect to student organization advising as scholars have theorized that teaching is a student organization advising approach, which will be addressed in later sections of this literature review. Gordon, Habley, Grites, and associates (2011) describe normative advising theories as more academically centered. Hemwall and Trachte (1999) and Boyer (1990) researched advising as teaching and found that teaching and learning were academic processes. If advising is conducted as teaching, then advising should not be considered in conjunction with the personal growth of the student. Lowenstein (1999) researched prescriptive advising as learning-centered for which advisors should behave more like faculty members. Borgard (1981) and Melander (2005) developed educative models that align with principles of how students learn.

Analogical academic advising theories are considered to be narrative in nature. Christman’s (2003) narrative advising theory is based on narrative theory from the psychology field and proposes that students use past experiences to find solutions to create successful and lasting change. Narrative advising can help students determine what keeps them from reaching goals and what interferes with commitments and it can help students to overcome adversity and obstacles. Often times, student affairs professionals talk about how important it is for students to
learn from previous failures or mistakes. This narrative theory can provide justification to ask student organization advisors if they talk to students in their organizations about how past individual or organizational failures can help them improve how they lead the organization or function as a group.

Yarbrough (2002) proposed an engagement model for academic and student organization advising, however he references academic advising much more than student organization advising. Yarbrough (2002) believes that “the engagement model approach to academic advising allows both students and advisers to develop a heightened personal investment in the success of the individual academic program, the supporting academic unit, and the overall university” (p. 61). Access to faculty and other students is salient in this advising model. The engagement model assumes the advisor serves as a mentor and assists students in identifying goals and objectives. There are five primary assumptions:

(1) The student was admitted to the college/university having met minimum academic standards, (2) the student has been introduced to the university catalog, (3) the student already has a personal sense of his or her academic strengths and weaknesses, (4) the student has already explored what the particular degree has to offer, and (5) the student has identified personal priorities regarding academic versus nonacademic success.

(Yarbrough, 2002, p. 61)

This engagement model relates to student organization advising because it encourages advisors to be a part of the students’ lives and the organization as a whole. As presented later, researchers have found that student organization advisors similarly serve as mentors and assist the organization in goal setting sessions. The consulting section also outlines the need for a consultant, which is equated to an advisor. Consultants are instrumental and engage in the
process of assisting an organization in setting goals to improve and enact change. When reviewing the various methods of academic advising, we find their foundational principles and goals.

**Academic advising principles and goals.**

The principles of academic advising are to ensure student success. These principles include a philosophy that advising is grounded in talent-development, advising is a tag team activity between institutional partners, students are expected to map out a path to success, every advising contact is a precious opportunity for meaningful interaction, the frequency and quality of interactions are of the utmost importance, and one should recognize that advising is a cultural and culture-bound activity (Gordon, et al., 2008). Walsh (1979) outlines several goals of academic advising: growth of self-awareness, growth to determine academic and career goals, and growth in understanding of life beyond college. Both sets of principles and goals are applicable to formulating training programs for student organization advisors. The principles can guide what content is used, and the goals can be used as potential outcomes of the training program.

**Academic advisor perspective.**

There is a limited amount of research on advising from the advisor’s perspective. Dillon and Fisher (2000) sought to get the opinions of the advisors themselves to determine what they felt contributed to and detracted from advising interactions. Faculty advisors do not get sufficient training even though it is usually listed as an integral part of the advising process. Faculty advisors also feel that they do not get the appropriate information when changes are made to course offerings or the curriculum. These problems are sometimes exacerbated because advising may not necessarily be considered for job promotion or tenure. In the consulting
portion of this literature review it is important to incorporate the “client’s” opinion in a consultation process. This could translate to advisor training.

According to faculty members, factors contributing to successful advisor-student interactions include advisor and student preparation, time for advising, and courtesy, kindness, and friendliness between advisors and their students. The advisor’s knowledge is important as well, as it plays an essential role. Knowledge is important in guiding students through requirements and completion of their degree (Dillon & Fisher, 2000). Dillon and Fisher (2000) also stated that knowledge is even more important than courtesy, kindness and friendliness as this will come when advisors are well informed. Faculty also outlined the factors that detract from successful advisor-student interactions. When the student is unprepared or misinformed, advisor-student meetings are not especially productive. The fact that advising is not considered in job promotion or tenure detracts from the advising interactions, as well. An overwhelming majority of advisors said that advising should be considered in job promotion and tenure decisions. Advisors believe that advising should be formally rewarded as it takes time from teaching, research, and other service-related activities (Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Evans, Evans, & Sherman, 2001).

Myers and Dyer (2005) focused on advisors’ self-perceived level of competence in advising. The vast majority of respondents said that advising both undergraduate and graduate students was time well spent. They also agreed that advising contributed to building rapport with students, retaining students and recruiting students. Ultimately, regardless of the reward, the respondents felt advising should be an institutional expectation of all faculty members. In relation to their level of competency, these advisors felt comfortable advising students on career and academic decisions, however they needed assistance in advising student organizations, using
advising technology, and advising on personal matters and legal issues. These perspectives will be used when developing the advisor interview questions to see if the same opinions transfer to student organization advising.

**Consulting.**

Reviewing the literature on consulting helps to formulate a greater understanding of how advisors can work effectively with individual student leaders. The definition of a consultant is used and applied to what a student organization should be and do. This comparison was made because both consultants and advisors are individuals who have an expertise in a particular area and they provide support to individuals at the top of a particular organization or to an entire organization related to that area of expertise.

The consulting literature lies mainly in the business field. This literature was used to make the following comparisons: (1) consultant to the student organization advisor, (2) the top manager of a business to the student leaders at the top level of student organization structures, and (3) the business to the student organization. Consulting is defined as “a person in a position to have some influence over an individual, a group, or an organization, but who has no direct power to make changes or implement programs” (Block, 1981, p. 3). Through consulting one wants to teach clients to be able to solve problems on their own. A client is defined as the recipient of advice. They can be single individuals, a group, a department, or a whole organization (Block, 1981).

The skills necessary to be an effective consultant are technical (need the expertise to answer the question) and interpersonal (some ability to put ideas into words, to listen, to give support, to disagree reasonably, and to basically maintain a relationship). The process of consulting includes five phases: entry and contracting, discovery and dialogue, feedback and the
decision to act, engagement and implementation, and extension, recycle, or termination (Block, 1981). Another perspective on important skills comes from Dallimore and Souza (2002) who wrote about developing a course curriculum for consulting. Communication is significant for consulting as are cognitive, interpersonal, and personal skills. Communication is important as it is how information about organization process and skills are delivered. Consultants should be able to diagnose communication problems and design, implement, and evaluate organizational interventions once problems are identified.

As with academic and student organization advising, there are goals and roles for consultants. Consulting goals consist of establishing a collaborative relationship, solving problems, and ensuring attention is given to be both the technical and business problem and the relationships. The roles of a consultant are to serve as an expert, be a pair-of-hands, and to be collaborative (Block, 1981).

Consultants can encounter resistance at times. A consultant needs to be able to identify when resistance is taking place and view resistance as a natural process. When there is resistance it is a sign that the client is on target. The consultant needs to be supportive of the client and address the resistance directly. And finally the consultant should not take the expression of the resistance personally or as an attack on their competence (Block, 1981). Applying this idea to advising will certainly be relevant as students often push back because when an advisor exerts authority, it could be interpreted as an attempt to take over.

**Consulting approaches.**

Dallimore and Souza (2002) believe that approaching consulting from a research perspective is beneficial because it requires critical thinking and problem solving. They use Nyquist and Wulff’s (2001) consultation model which can train consultants to investigate a
broad range of organizational problems. The model starts with the problem, issue or question then moves into four basic steps: data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and data translation. While this model may not be applicable in its truest sense, a student organization could use the basic premise as a roadmap. If an organization needs to solve a problem, the advisor could advise them to collect all the relevant information in some sort of strategy session, review all the information, determine what all the information means in the context of solving the problem, and finally communicating the outcomes to the entire organization.

Polsgrove and McNeil (1989) described additional approaches to consultation. They asserted some approaches view the role of a consultant along a continuum providing either a temporary service to a client on one end or consultants collaborate with clients to effect change on the other. Other approaches view consultation as a triadic service delivered from the consultant to the client. Despite these differences, Bergan’s (1977) stages of the consultation process overlap them all. These stages are problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and problem evaluation. The stages of the consultation process could be beneficial to incorporate in student organization advisor training to prepare them for when student leaders ask for help with a particular issue or in big picture planning to improve the performance of the organization as a whole.

**Consulting objectives.**

The aforementioned consultation process stages each have specific objectives. The ultimate objectives of problem identification are to identify intervention goals and to select behaviors to change via an intervention. The problem analysis phase has three components. The first phase is to create an acceptable intervention plan. The second phase is to establish cooperative working relationships with consultees to come up with strategies and plan
interventions. The third phase involves identifying and addressing consultee resistance that may develop. Defining and implementing behavior change strategies make up the plan implementation and problem evaluation phases. Training is very important for this final phase in order to ensure that strategies are implemented effectively (Bergan, 1977).

There can be stereotypes that consultants see clients’ perspectives as shortsighted or that clients lack the ability to execute important and needed changes. The following goals are arranged in a particular hierarchical order in order to dispel these stereotypes. Similar to the idea of developmental advising and the importance of forming a relationship between an advisor and advisee, these objectives are to ensure that the consulting process is a partnership between the consultant and the client. Turner’s (1981) eight functional objectives are the following: “providing information to a client, solving a client’s problems, making a diagnosis, which may necessitate redefinition of the problem, making recommendations based on the diagnosis, assisting with implementation of recommended solutions, building a consensus and commitment around corrective action, facilitating client learning, and permanently improving organizational effectiveness” (Turner, 1981, p. 121). When clients ask for information from a consultant, the information needed may not be what the client actually requests. Often times, clients are unaware of their needs; in these cases, consultants should look to determine those underlying client needs. When moving into the second objective of solving the client’s problem, the consultant needs to ask if the problem asked is in the fact the problem that needs to be solved. The consultant needs to explore the context of the problem. When proposing the solution to the problem the consultant should focus on the original concern while also addressing other and related factors. Through this process the problem may be redefined and can focus on issues the client may have difficulty discussing (Turner 1981).
Turner strongly stated that “‘much of management consultants’ value lies in their expertise as diagnosticians” (Turner, 1981, p. 123). Determining the diagnosis involves more than just the consultant; they should involve members of the client organization because they are more likely to buy into the process and accept the problem. When recommending action, a written report or an oral presentation is usually provided outlining the detailed recommendations of the consultant. In regards to implementing changes, it is important to do so without usurping the manager’s job (Turner, 1981). This is also important when student organization advisors are making recommendations to student leaders. Advisors should learn how to make recommendations without diminishing students’ decision making authority. Turner warns that many consultants struggle with recommending what they think the client wants to hear as opposed to what is right. If the organization wants to improve its effectiveness, recommendations need to be made that are realistic for the organization to act on (Turner, 1981).

When building consensus and commitment and facilitating learning, the client should remain involved. To build trust and readiness for potential change, consultants can conduct interviews with members of the organization at all levels. It is important however for the consultant to be clear that they are not looking to assign blame but to encourage constructive ideas. The final objective of organizational effectiveness is present in every step and tends to be management’s most important task. Consultants should be practicing what they truly believe (Turner, 1981). The consulting process would be a valuable model for advisors to assist their students in both addressing problems and to affect positive change.
Organizational Advising

Student Organization Advising.

The literature on student organization advising will be the foundation for this study. One of the preeminent higher education scholars, Astin (1984), categorized advising as a major influence on student involvement in college; one particular involvement area where advisors are crucial is in student organizations. Students have a greater educational experience when involved with student organizations, leading to a higher level of institutional satisfaction (Abrahamowicz, 1988). Students involved with student organizations feel less isolate and experience a supportive social outlet. Organizations provide opportunities to network, build leadership skills, develop practical competence, and identify academic and social needs (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998). When it comes to student success through student organization involvement “the important elements for success are simple: access to the faculty adviser and to other student members” (Yarbrough, 2002, p. 63). Introductory seminar classes or current technology, for example an organization’s web site, increases access to both faculty members and students while sharing information and building relationships (Yarbrough, 2002).

Much of the literature on student organizations comes from handbooks or manuals used to serve as guides to advisors. John Schuh’s (1987) *A Handbook for Student Organization Advisors* was written to benefit faculty and staff serving as organizational advisors and includes chapters on budget and financial management, legal rights and responsibilities, and approaches to advising and problem solving. This work defines an advisor as “an educator—an educator in a nontraditional classroom. The adviser is an “intervener in the group and can be viewed alternately either as a member of the group or not as a member of the group” (Schuh, 1987, p. 47). The act of advising is then “looked upon as an intervention process in a group to affect
behavior of individuals in the group and/or the group itself” (Schuh, 1987, p 47). Here we see connections to the consultation process on identifying, assessing, and solving problems to improve organizational effectiveness. The work found in these guidebooks is also highlighted in resource manuals student affairs offices publish for their organization advisors (*Advisor Manual*, 2005 & *Student Organizations Manual*, 2016).

**Elements of student organization advising.**

The many types of student organizations add complexity in efforts to understand student organization advising. There can be different roles, responsibilities, and knowledge requirements for the many types of organizations. For instance, there are certain competencies recommended for advisors of Hispanic student organizations. Advisors to Hispanic student organizations should know the many ways Hispanic students identify themselves. Hispanic advisors should understand ethnic identity development and acculturation and should strive for cultural empowerment. Hispanic advisors should understand and work with differences. Hispanic advisors also need to be aware of the scarcity of Hispanic faculty and staff within higher education and be aware of their own biases. Hispanic organization advisors should be aware of specific cultural values, they need to foster leadership, and they should assist in involving *la familia*, community members and alumni. In addition, advisors to Hispanic organizations should be prepared to deal with racism and oppression (Delgado-Romero & Hernandez, 2002).

In connection to understanding cultural competencies, cultural organization advisors should be aware of how their affiliation with their organizations can mark, or label, students to their peers. This “marking” could present challenges to both a student organization as a whole and to individual students. When students are joining student organizations, they are looking to
find a way to fit in. In Renn’s (2000) study about how peer culture influences the ways multiracial students made meaning of their identity, students reported looking for space, both physical and psychological, to fit in. Student organizations were classified as a public space along with residence halls, classrooms, and social events. Joining student organizations could either mark students as insiders or outsiders for several reasons. If multiracial students join an organization related to their background or if they branch out and join something completely unrelated to their cultural identity they were labeled accordingly (Renn, 2000). A culturally competent advisor should be aware of these dynamics as students may come to them seeking guidance and advice.

**Student organization advising rewards.**

Considering the majority of student organization advisors are serving as advisors in a volunteer capacity, it would be helpful to both advisors and students to be able to explain the rewards of giving their time to these organizations and individual students to other advisors. However, understanding what motivates a person assumes they are serving based on principled grounds rather than for personal benefits (Wilson, 2000). Those who identify strongly with an organization are most likely to volunteer for that group (Payne, 2007). Understanding why student organization advisors give their time will help to understand how they allocate their time between student leaders and the entire organization. When advisors value the purpose of the organization they may invest their time in the organization as a whole. If advisors value making an impact on individual student lives, for instance getting to know them on a personal level, the advisor may invest their time in one-on-one interaction with student leaders. Finally, when an advisor places more value on the purpose of the organization and want to make an impact on
students’ lives, they may balance the time into both the organizational activities and one-on-one interaction with students.

There are several rewards for serving as an academic advisor, including (a) observing the development of college students during their matriculation; (b) receiving recognition from the institution, organization, or students; (c) serving as a job reference for students; and (d) serving as a mentor for students. The rewards for advisors fall outside the faculty reward system (Cuyjet, 1996). Enjoyment and interaction with students are the primary incentives (Croft, 2004). Meyer and Kroth (2010) conducted a study comparing the motivations of student organization advisors to identify, recruit, and recognize volunteer advisors. This study confirmed that career, social, and values were advisors’ primary motivations.

*Advisor roles and responsibilities.*

*Roles.*

Finding out what motivates someone to advise a student organization can help to determine if they are willing to fulfill the roles expected of an advisor. When reviewing both the literature on academic advising and student organization advising, roles and responsibilities are covered extensively. Walsh (1979) asserted that an advisor should play three distinct roles. Advisors should serve as counselors and should have some sort of background in counseling theory. However, they are not expected to be professionally licensed counselors. Advisors should serve as advocates providing much needed institutional resources to their advisees. And, finally, advisors should take the role of guardian in the sense of protecting the quality and integrity of the institution (Walsh, 1979). Petress (1996) asserted similar roles but varied in relation to claiming that advisors should serve as institutional resources, advocates for students, referral resources, and as friends to their advisee. In describing what advising is, Schuh (1987)
cited Bloland’s (1967) three major roles of advising (maintenance functions, group growth functions, and program content functions) and asserted that functions should be product-oriented because many student organizations are created around accomplishing some sort of task.

Many advisors ask student affairs professionals for guidance as to when they should intervene versus when they should let the students have full control. A particular issue, in which advisors should take an active role, maybe more so than for other issues, is addressing the alcohol culture on college campuses (Patton & Bonner, 2001). Advisors should initiate conversations about alcohol use, and they should include undergraduates in the decision-making process regarding how rules and regulations should be developed and enforced. Open and active dialogue between the advisor and the campus organization is critical (2001).

Another area in which advisors are asked to have a role in is fostering a positive public perception. Here advisors must focus on products (members), processes (recruitment, involvement, community service), and outcomes (goals, missions, student development). When focusing on the product, advisors need to be aware of personality traits and characteristics of individuals and characteristics of the group as a whole. Through the many processes advisors are asking to encourage students to advance a more democratic stance. Finally, when focusing on outcomes the advisor assists the organization in collaborating with groups outside their usual sphere (Patton & Bonner, 2001).

Advisors are also often asked to encourage students to take on leadership roles. In this sense they are expected to do more than fill out paperwork or attend an occasional meeting. Advisors should understand their guidance and mentoring can have serious implications. An advisor’s encouragement to run for office or to become a committee chair can have an impact on
students’ experiences and persistence in certain types of organizations, such as Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender student organizations (Renn, 2007).

Advisors can be seen as a key element to a student organization. Advisors play the role of mentor, supervisor, teacher, leader, and follower. As well as a final checkpoint on organizational activities, a link to the institution and alumni, assist in the attainment of organizational goals, and an expert in the field related to the purpose of the organization (Droste, Hill, Ruder, Snyder, & Wendel, 2006; Dunkel & Schuh’s, 1998; Evans, Evans, & Sherman, 2001). Advisors can provide valuable resources such as professional contacts, a knowledge base, learning processes, professional activities, and personal lives. Advisors have also been described as part friend, parent or boss in addition to mentor; however, an advisor needs to determine what role they want to assume and in what context (Evans, et al., 2001).

When analyzing the role of student organization advisors, Banks and Combs (1989) found that the roles shifted depending on the class standing of the students. When members are new and are unsure of organizational goals or unable to complete tasks, the advisor tells members what needs to be done and how to do it. As members mature and become willing but yet still unable to do things, the advisor needs to convince members on how things are done. Eventually when members are both willing and able to accomplish organizational tasks, the advisor can take a step back and allow the students to take on what needs to be done (Banks & Combs, 1989).

These ideas appear to be an application of Hersey and Blanchard’s (1977) situational leadership theory. Situational leadership is used when assessing the maturity level of a follower and to model behavior appropriately. Leaders ascribing to this theory would assign tasks based on the assessment of a follower’s abilities and where they are developmentally. The theory is
explained in quadrants with low maturity followers needed the highest level of guidance and tasks assignment; whereas those who have achieved high levels of maturity are given greater independence. Once situational leaders understand what their followers are capable of, they can facilitate follower growth (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). This style will be applied to the recommendations outlined in chapter 5.

Similarly, when looking at the organization as a whole, Banks and Combs (1989) determined that advisors were taking on different roles depending on the maturity of the organization. When an organization is first being established, the advisor may have to take on the teaching approach and tell groups of students why and how they will benefit from membership. As the organization matures, the leadership may become overwhelmed or feel that their voice in decision-making may be diminished. At this point, the advisor may need to find a way to bridge a gap between the leadership and the growing membership. As the organization matures, student leaders may become complacent as they have made it through initial challenges and have lost their momentum. This is when an advisor can encourage the leadership to find new goals in order to remain successful and once this happens, the advisor can take a back seat role allowing the students to take the reins of the organization (Banks & Combs, 1989).

**Responsibilities.**

The general responsibilities of any advisor discussed in Bloland’s (1967) monograph include the following: teaching or coaching, consultation on programs, providing continuity, counseling individual students, interpretations of policy, minimal supervision and representing the institution, and addressing emergencies. Here we see similarities between the responsibilities of advisors and consultants. Additional possible responsibilities that would depend upon the organization and the individual advisor are: supervising financial matters, attending the
organization’s social activities, attending organization meetings, ensuring members are meeting certain scholastic eligibility, assisting in tracking organizational records, and ensuring the organization is meeting institutional requirements (Bloland, 1967; Droste et al., 2006).

While there are certain roles and responsibilities advisors are asked to play, there are also different techniques advisors can employ. When advising students on an individual level, most of the teaching and effectiveness happens in private consultation. The individual work is most important however it will happen in both settings (Bloland, 1967). Ways to work with individuals are: weekly conferences, counseling (facilitating personal and intellectual development for students), referrals, coaching or tutoring (teaching how to perform in the various arenas students find themselves when managing a student organization), and being available to the students (Bloland, 1967).

In addition to individual advising, Bloland (1967) outlined several different group advising techniques. Advisors would work with groups in executive board meetings, weekend retreats, overarching planning sessions, leadership development, and when bringing special guests or resourceful people from the campus whom the advisors felt would benefit the organization as a whole. The aforementioned techniques may certainly be useful tools, however Bloland does not test them in any sort of empirical study in this work. According to Frost (1991), advising techniques can be broken down based on minority students, underprepared students, students with disabilities, student athletes, and international students. Overall general techniques for advisors are encouraging involvement, being resourceful, building relationships, encouraging the development of academic and personal skills, displaying a positive attitude, and serving as an advocate (Frost, 1991).
Student organization advisor approaches.

The many aforementioned roles and responsibilities comprise the day-to-day elements of advising student organizations and leaders. Understanding an advisor’s approach may determine how deep of a connection the advisor has with the students and the organization. Schuh (1987) stated that depending on the group, the advisor should approach advising from some sort of ascribed leadership model citing the following: Fiedler’s Leadership Contingency Model (1967), Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid Leadership Styles (1978), and Hersey and Blanchard’s Tri-Dimensional Leader Effectiveness Model (1972). Once the advisor determines what style fits the advisor and the group and the context in which they both exist, they can then be considered effective in their role. Factors to consider are the organization’s goals, expectations, the motivations of the members, the organization’s purpose and history, and the experience level and familiarity of the members (Schuh, 1987). All of these things can vary from organization to organization.

Two approaches outlined in Bloland’s (1967) *Student Group Advising in Higher Education* are active and permissive strategies to advising. The permissive approach is described as being seen and not heard; the advisor remains in the background and is only used as a resource. This approach is also characterized as having little educational value; however, those who adapt this approach do so because of a lack of time for the organization or out of sheer apathy (Bloland, 1967).

The active advisor is described has taking much more of an engaging role. Bloland (1967) cites social work theory suggesting collaborating with an advisor is necessary to achieve the group’s goals (Klein, 1953). The active approach involves serving maintenance functions, assists the group in its growth and development, and works with students on program content.
(Bloland, 1967). This isn’t to say that the advisor is making decisions, but they are in fact a part of the process to ensure student success.

There are four different ways student organization advisors approach the act of advising that were found in Danielle De Sawal graduate work in 2007. They see themselves approaching advising as developmental, administrative, programmatic, or other. Developmental advisors guide students and the organization in their leadership roles and establish a sense of friendliness for students that encourage them to explore life and career goals, solve problems, and make educational decisions. Administrative advisors serve as authoritarian figures that exist to maintain the existence of the organization and to keep it out of difficulty. Programmatic advisors assist the students in the planning and delivery of events that will contribute to the students’ own intellectual development while enriching campus life. The “other” approach consists of those advisors that combine elements of the other three or simply base how they respond to a situation case by case (De Sawal, 2007).

**Student development theory.**

The various advising approaches are aligned and connected to several student development theories; more specifically, cognitive structural theory. Student development theories are grounded in how students develop, grow and change (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2016). Knowledge of the various theories assist higher education administrators design programs, develop policies, and identify and address students’ needs (2016).

While there are many categories of student development theory, the cognitive-structural theories are best to inform this study. Student involvement, such as with an organization, has been reported having significant impact on college students’ cognitive development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006). These cognitive-structural theories focus on the many stages of
development students experience in college related to their intellectual and ethical development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2016). William Perry’s (1968) theory asserted that there exists a continuum of development consisting of nine positions in which students can experience various levels of development and students do not necessarily remain in one position for any specific amount of time. Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1976) theory claimed that moral reasoning develops from a six-stage sequence. His theory exists in a more structured form in which students move from one stage to the next. Student organization advisors can apply these theories to better understand where their students are developmentally.

**Student organization advising skills and training.**

While the literature on academic advising speaks about the importance of training and evaluation programs (Frost, 1991; Myers & Dyer, 2005; Petress, 1996; Stull, 1997; Walsh, 1979), the existing work on training for student organization advisors is lacking. While this study does not include an outline for a formal training program, it partially aimed at providing richer information trainers can incorporate into their student organization advisor education efforts. Advisors learn to advise either through knowledge acquisition or through relationships. The five methods of knowledge acquisition are through trial and error, exposure to advising, observing advisors as an undergraduate student, vicarious learning, or a training or graduate program (De Sawal, 2007). The student-advisor relationship can also teach one how to advise. The majority of the time advising is spent with individual members as opposed to the entire group, specifically the executive officers (De Sawal, 2007).

Walsh (1979) believed that skills with which advisors should be equipped include the ability to enhance students’ decision making skills and a foundation in helping skills such as listening, reflecting, and interviewing. Petress (1996) stated that “advisors need training and
guidance to do a competent job” (p. 91). Myers and Dyer’s study (2005) found that many advisors felt ill-equipped and had little to no preparation to advise student organizations. Much of their knowledge was experiential.

Several senior student affairs officers came together at a National Association for Campus Activities conference to publish an article on what it meant to be a strong student government advisor (Boatman, 1988). While the article focused on student government, these skills are certainly applicable to other types of student organizations. Skills of strong advisors include student relationship building, the ability to be an informed resource person, institutional credibility, and being a positive role model (Boatman, 1988; Droste et al., 2006).

An advisor should be able to empower their students based on a strong relationship and to balance that with a level of fairness. Advisors should be honest and open with their students when interacting with them. Serving as a resource can take many forms; some are noted earlier in this review. Additional areas could include sharing institutional culture, history, policies and politics, and knowledge about similar organizations at other institutions. Having institutional credibility takes the form of having access to high level administrators and having adequate time to devote to advising the organization. In addition to being a mentor, serving as a positive role model is demonstrating a positive approach to their work, acting ethically, and demonstrating commitment. Positive role models should also have commitment to tolerance and diversity and they should operate with a thick skin, similar to the consulting process, as many challenges will come an advisor’s way such as defiance, manipulation, disappointment, and anger (Boatman, 1988; Droste, et al., 2006, Turner, 1981). This is similar to consulting in that Turner (1981) stated that a client may be somewhat adversarial and defensive when they are presented with issues facing their organization. Putting this in the context of a student organization, members
can get stuck in a “that is the way we have always done things” mentality and routine and could become upset if an advisor suggests making changes in order to be successful.

**Effective Organizations**

The section of the literature review outlines what constitutes effective organizations. Universities want their students to be successful in their endeavors as students, both in their academic and personal lives. Understanding that organizations should be effective in order to be successful may not be difficult to understand, however understanding the tools necessary to be effective may not be so apparent to young college students.

Wanger, Hollenbeck, & Russell (1992) define organizational effectiveness as “the ultimate aim of organization design and is a measure of an organization’s success in achieving its goals and objectives” (p. 54). In analyzing the effectiveness of an organization Hofstede’s research on the differences in national cultures can be applied when reviewing the differences between individualism and collectivism. “A cross-cultural dimension that refers to two opposing points of view on the norms and values of a national culture-whether they should place greater emphasis on satisfying personal interests or on looking after group needs” (Wanger, et al., 1992, p. 23).

Individualism is described as people looking after personal interests and in doing so benefiting the whole. Pursuing these interests is critical to personal and society well-being. Collectivism on the other hand is when group welfare is more important than personal interests. Belonging to a group secures their own well-being and the broader society. Collectivism also ignores personal needs for the sake of their groups even at the expense of personal hardships (Wagner, et al., 1992). This distinction is important to this study as it outlines concerns when
analyzing what might be most important for student leaders or the organization as a whole. Advisors can take these ideas when providing guidance to determine what is of highest priority.

The term “manager” for organizational behavior can be comparable to a student leader or an advisor for a student organization. Management is “a process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling organizational behaviors in order to accomplish a mission through a division of labor” (Wagner, et al., 1992, p. 49). Management is a process of ongoing flow of activities. Managerial activities affect the behaviors of the members and organization and for an organization to accomplish the mission, organization on the part of the manager is necessary (Wagner, et al., 1992).

Like advisors, managers are asked or expected to assist in planning for the future, they set goals and objectives for performance, and they identify what is needed to accomplish them. “In organizing mangers develop a structure of interrelated tasks and allocate people and resources within this structure” (Wagner, et al., 1992, p. 51). Organizing begins as managers divide tasks and design tasks that will lead to reaching goals and objectives. Also like advisors there comes a time when management needs to start delegating tasks to certain people. “Directing encourages member effort and guides it toward the attainment of organizational goals and objectives” (Wagner, et al., 1992, p. 52). When directing an organization, communicating goals and objectives to members is pivotal (Wagner, et al., 1992).

Another concept in the organizational management literature is controlling. “Controlling means evaluating the performance of an organization and its units to see whether the firm is progressing in the desired direction” (Wagner et al., 1992, p. 52). When controlling an organization, management is comparing the actual performance to goals and if the organization did not reach the goals, the organization goes back to the planning stage and set new goals and
objectives. Skills necessary of a manager are conceptual, human, and technical. Conceptual is big picture thinking, goals and objectives. Human skills include building trust and understanding others (desires, interests, viewpoints). Technical skills are tools, procedures, and knowledge to do the job of the organization. If one were to ask most student affairs professionals about working with student organizations, they would agree that controlling is not an approach that student organization advisors should aspire to. Advisors tend to focus more on the conceptual, human, and technical skills. From my experience working in student affairs, I have found that advisors should not be “controlling” the agenda or direction of the organization; that should be left to the students.

Much of the literature on organizational effectiveness focuses on how well an organization stores and shares their knowledge. Knowledge management is described as “the process of collecting and identifying useful information (i.e. knowledge acquisition), transferring tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge (i.e. knowledge creation or transfer), storing knowledge in the repository (i.e. organizational memory), disseminating it through the whole organization (i.e. knowledge sharing), enabling employees to easily retrieve it (i.e. knowledge retrieval) and exploiting and usefully applying knowledge (i.e. knowledge leverage)” (Yang & Wang, 2004, p. 595).

To assist in developing knowledge sharing social integrations, Yang and Wang (2004) assert that first, networks need to play a crucial role in the following: accelerating knowledge sharing, assembling divergent resources, and in enhancing the effectiveness of storing individual and organizational knowledge. Secondly, technology can be used to share and store knowledge and third, the top managers should remove all obstacles by developing a culture to promote knowledge management (Yang & Wang, 2004).
How well an organization manages processes such as knowledge management speaks to its organizational culture. “Organizational culture is defined as a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organization” (Schein, 1985). Organizations that cultivate a group culture that values teamwork, cohesion, and employee involvement are more effective than those who do not. In addition to a group culture, a balanced culture is important to organizational effectiveness. Group culture entails flexibility and internal focus and managers support values through empowerment, mentoring, and support of teamwork. A balanced culture incorporates group culture, developmental culture, rational, hierarchical culture (Gregory, Harris, Armenakis, & Shook, 2009). Advisors can have an indirect impact on the organizational culture in that they are the link from year to year. They can share the knowledge of how students have conducted the organization in the past to best prepare the current students to decide how they may either continue what has been done, change the way things are done, or do a combination of the two options (Bloland, 1967; Schuh, 1987).

Summary

This study investigated the contributions successful advisors made to the growth and development of individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole. Advising has been a part of the make-up of higher education since the 1870’s with the introduction of the elective system (Walsh, 1979). The first section of the literature review outlined the literature that sheds light on how to advise individuals followed with how one might advise entire organizations. The literature covering academic advising and consulting both address one-on-one advising. This review outlined several types of academic advising including developmental, normative, narrative, and prescriptive (Boyer, 1990; Christman, 2003; Ender, et al., 1982, Frost, 1993; Hemwell & Trachte, 1999; Lowenstein, 1999; Walsh, 1979). In addition to the different
types of advising, there are several models: educative and engagement (Borgard, 1981; Melander, 2005; Yarbrough, 2002). When taking all of these types and models of advising into consideration, it is important to focus on the relationship between the advisor and advisee, in addition to balancing how the advisor serves as a reliable resource while investing in the whole lives of their students. Understanding this is important when determining how advisors can incorporate this information when advising individual student leaders in student organizations. When interviewing advisors, questions focused on how the advisors developed these relationships with their individual student leaders.

Reviewing the literature on consulting also informed this work as to how advisors can best advise those at the top levels of the organization, such as the individual student executive board members. Like academic advising, consulting is built on the relationship between the consultant and the client (Block, 1981; Turner, 1981). Also, drawing from the many skills and the various approaches, consultants need to be able to take the concerns of a client seriously and read between the lines to determine potential problems that the organization members do not recognize (Bergan, 1977; Block, 1981; Dallimore & Souza, 2002; Turner, 1981). Often times, students only engage with their student organization advisor when something is wrong. If this is indeed the case, the skills mentioned here are certainly useful to assist students realize underlying issues they may not see on their own. Whether or not advisors are aware of this helpful tool will be determined through this study.

There are many roles and responsibilities expected of student organization advisors. These roles included counselor, guardian, mentor, supervisor, teacher, leader follower, maintenance functions, group growth functions, and program content functions (Bloland, 1967; Droste, et al., 2006; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Evans, et al., 2001). The responsibilities of advisors
can vary depending on the organization but they primarily focus on more logistical tasks of the organization (Bloland, 1976; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998). The various approaches that advisors can employ when working with student organizations are permissive, active, developmental, administrative, programmatic, or a combination of multiple approaches (Bloland, 1976; De Sawal, 2007). The roles, responsibilities, approaches, combined with the necessary skills to advise a student organization were all taken into consideration when interviewing student organization advisors for this study to ascertain how they all come into play when either advising their whole organization.

Finally, organizational effectiveness provides a context for the goals and objectives for any organization. Overall, any organization is looking to be successful from year-to-year; advisors should play a role in that success. This may seem obvious, however, the tools necessary to be successful may not be, especially to young college students. The organizational effectiveness literature focuses a great deal on the importance of sharing and storing knowledge well, an issue which an advisor can play a key role (Yang & Wang, 2004). An advisor is the common thread for an organization from year-to-year; they hold institutional knowledge that can be shared with leaders. The multiple approaches and understanding of organizational culture will also be valuable in assessing the effectiveness of the organizations that will be the subjects of this study (Connolly et al., 1980; & Gregory et al., 2009).

In all four sections of this review, the importance of training to an advisor and an organization was consistently addressed. Thus, this literature review aimed to set the foundation of this study. The goal was not to necessarily come up with a “one size fits all” idea of what an advisor should be but rather information to help guide advisors in the many different scenarios
they may, and probably will, find themselves when advising student leaders and student organizations.
Chapter 3: Methods

Theoretical Approach

A lack of scholarship currently exists regarding student organization advising. Research that examines the roles undertaken and challenges of advising such organization has the potential to enhance the work of student affairs professional in serving student organizations and their members. Colleges and universities ask advisors to perform many duties including attending events and meetings; serving as mentors, resources, and references; and ensuring student organization leaders are familiar with current university policies and procedures. However, outdated handbooks and personal experience or anecdote are often the primary resources available to educate advisors as how to perform these duties. This study sought to contribute to the overall understanding of student organizational advising by examining two case studies.

The object of this study was to examine how successful student organization advisors advise individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole. As a student affairs practitioner, my role in that field has influenced how I approached this study. My interest in this topic stems directly from my belief in the significance of the student organization experience. Much of my passion for and support of student organizations also comes from the time I have spent with students as an organization advisor. Many of my most valued memories in the student affairs field are ones that involve meaningful interactions with student leaders or organizations. As a new advisor, I struggled with not having formal training on how to advise a student organization and what to expect as an advisor. This lack of training prompted my desire to study student organization advising. However, while personal interest and experience served as motivating factors to conduct this study, I sought to acknowledge and to minimize my own
biases. At the same time, I acknowledge that I approached the study with an existing belief in the power of student organizations to enhance the student experience.

The following four context areas outlined in the literature review helped to structure and guide the study: organizational effectiveness, consulting, student organization advising, and academic advising. The literature on consulting showed that advising individuals and organizations is different (Block, 1981). Developmental, narrative and engagement academic advising were combined with consulting approaches to understand how student organization advisors guide student organization leaders. Developmental advising is holistic in nature and concentrates on student growth and development (Gordan, et al., 2008). Narrative advising occurs when students use past experiences to find solutions to create successful and lasting change, it can help students determine what keeps them from reaching goals and what interferes with commitments, and it can help students to overcome adversity and obstacles (Christman, 2003). The engagement model of advising assumes the advisor serves as a mentor and assists students in identifying goals and objectives (Yarbrough, 2002). Elements of organizational effectiveness as well as roles, responsibilities and approaches to student organization advising were examined to understand how advisors work with entire organizations.

Case Study

Student organization advisors are asked to interact with individual student leaders in addition to taking an active role with the entire organization. This explanatory, multiple-case study explored ways in which an advisor can contribute to the overall vitality of the group and to the individual growth of student leaders. Creswell defines case study as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple
sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Furthermore, multiple-case studies are defined by several fundamental criteria: “Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication) (Yin, 2003, p. 47). The goal in this study was to examine two successful student organizations and the impact of their respective advisors on individual students and at the organizational level. Descriptions are found in the chapter 4 narratives describing how the two cases selected were defined as successful in terms of fulfilling their missions and serving students. Table 1 provides characteristics of each of the two organizations.

To aid in the selection of identifying advisors active with their organization, I targeted advisors who attended an advisor workshop sponsored by the institution’s student activities office. Approval from the student activities director was obtained to consult that list of advisors in the process of identifying suitable student organizations for the study. Other considerations also influenced potential organizations identified for the study. I eliminated certain types of organizations based on lessons gained from professional practice regarding preparation for advisors for these organizations and levels of support from national bodies. Examples included social fraternities and sororities, national academic honoraries, and religious and spiritual organizations. Fraternities and sororities were eliminated as they have strong support from their national organizations and their advisory boards go through required intense and in-depth training. National academic honoraries also receive strong support from their national organizations and religious and spiritual organizations have advisors assigned to them through their specific religious entities. Religious and spiritual organization advisors also bring specific
agendas because of their strong connections to religious organizations. The two types of organizations ultimately chosen were a philanthropic organization and a special interest organization. These were chosen because of a high degree of internal control and limited influence from national bodies, such as with fraternities and sororities, so that each organization’s agenda would likely be driven largely by the student membership.

The proposed research questions were informed by review of the literature and by my previous professional experiences working with advisors and student organizations. At the core of the study are the relationships between individual students and the advisor and with the organization generally. The interview questions, as seen in Appendix B, look to unpack the nuances of the relationships. Common threads were drawn from coding the interviews, with observations of organizational activities and documents providing important supporting data.

**Research Questions**

- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the overall growth and development of the organization?
  - What roles do advisors play for the organization?
- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the growth and development of the individual student leaders?
  - What lessons do student leaders learn from advisors?
  - What are student leaders applying to their personal lives they take from time with their advisor?

These questions were used to inform this study’s interview questions (as seen in Appendix B).

It was important to research these questions to help contribute to a needed knowledge base for colleges and universities to be able to better prepare and educate advisors and student
organization members to assist in the continued success of student organizations. Student organizations have been very important to college students’ experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2006). A great deal of learning occurs as a result of involvement in student organizations. The findings of this study contribute to our knowledge related to successful advising of student organizations.

Important gaps exist in the current literature on student organization advising. Manuals and guidebooks often in use at institutions are not grounded in research studies and are outdated. In addition, the current literature focuses on how to advise organizations based on the type of organization, for instance advising historically black fraternities, student governments, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender student organizations (Boatman, 1988, Patton & Bonner, 2001 & Renn, 2007). The findings of the current literature are difficult to use as a basis to educate advisors broadly on how to work with organizations and individual student leaders. They do not necessarily apply to all types of organizations. Studies like this one contribute to better education and training applicable to an array of student organizational types.

Data Collection

Data collection included interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data collection involved interviews of a purposive sample of student organization advisors from a large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university who have attended the developmental, advisor workshops. These individuals are characterized as active and engaged advisors as they are taking the initiative to engage in training to be quality advisors. Data were collected via highly structured, in-person interviews for several reasons. Table 2 outlined details regarding when, were, and how many people were included in the interviews. In-person interviews were conducted to reveal social cues such as voice and body language that
provided extra information. I was able to record the interview with permission, which allowed me to revisit the interview multiple times and to ensure the conclusions taken from the interview were accurate (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

I used focused interviews combining exploration and structure (Krathwohl, 2009). Interviews started with broad questions and were then more specific later in the interview. Predetermined questions were used in addition to any questions that were prompted from the interviewees’ responses. There were several considerations that influenced the predetermined questions used in the interviews. My professional experience and the literature on student organization advising were important resources in developing questions. While previous professional experiences proved helpful in developing questions, literature on advising and student development proved important in shaping the questions. In particular, previous literature proved important in crafting questions related to different types of advising and how advisors perceived the advising.

Topics the interviews covered included the advisor’s background and how the individual came to be a student organization advisor. Questions also addressed what prior information or knowledge had prepared them to advise, the advisors’ relationships to the students in the organizations with which they are affiliated, and the advisors’ understanding of the nature and activity of the organization. See Appendix B for a list of interview questions for advisors.

Confidentiality was protected with the use of pseudonyms for interviewees and for individuals referred to by interviewees in their answers. The narratives will outline the pseudonyms for each organization advisor. Any additional student names used in interview quotations are also pseudonyms. All of the pseudonyms were tracked in a memo. All memos
and data documents were stored on a password protected computer and password protected file saving online platform. I am the only person with access to the memos and data.

Interview data were transcribed using natural transcription in order to capture what the interviewees were saying as closely as possible. Natural transcription is where “utterances are transcribed in as much detail as possible” (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p. 3). Such detail assists in efforts to avoid misrepresentation regarding information shared by the interviewee (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005).

Once I completed interview transcriptions, finished coding, and began developing themes from the data, some additional questions arose to ask the advisors. I member checked by emailing the advisors to seek clarifying information based on these additional questions. I received answers from one of the two advisors. The answers helped to broaden my understanding of what she shared in the interview.

It is important to note possible disadvantages to using interviews. People can have different speech patterns, which may result in difficulty transcribing completely the information provided. For example, an interviewee may speak too quickly or too softly to be understood accurately, thus resulting in the loss of data. To partially address this concern, notes were taken during the interviews to supplement the interview recording. Notes were also taken when there a follow-up question related to an interviewee’s answer, and those questions were asked after everyone had the opportunity to answer the specific question as opposed to speaking over any interviewee to remain true to natural transcription (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005).

With Institutional Review Board approval, the study moved forward following the interview protocol, which included recording the time, date, and location of the interview, the interviewer, interviewee, the list of questions, and space within the list to take notes (see
Appendix A). To recruit potential interviewees, permission was requested to review the attendance records of advisor workshops through the relevant student affairs office. The length of the interviews was roughly 30-60 minutes and, with the permission of the interviewee, the interviews were recorded with an audio recording device. Each recorded interview was then transcribed and coded at a later time with the NVivo software. Incentives such as $50 gift certificates to area restaurants or stores were provided to recruit and thank study participants.

Document analysis was used to evaluate student organization advisor manuals. While much of the learning about being an organization advisor comes from experience, such manuals are commonly used for outlining advisor expectations, resources, and tips on being a student organization advisor. Advisor manuals were helpful in determining what advisors are potentially taught by their respective student affairs contacts and then informed the advisor interviews. These manuals provided institutional context, including the rules and policies under which advisors operate. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show how the content from the manuals connect to the codes and themes that emerged from the interviews. These documents helped to provide supplemental data to help enrich and focus the topics addressed in the interviews to help strengthen the overall usefulness and credibility of the study (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). Two advisor manuals were used for document analysis. One of the manuals used is published by ACPA: College Student Educators International and was posted on the Association of College Unions International’s professional development online forum for student organization advisors. The other manual is published by the Office of Student Activities at a four-year, selective, large, institution with higher research activity.

Several observation experiences were incorporated into the study to help provide critical information about what is important to the community or group of interest that comprised the
student organizations and to understand the various perspectives of those in the community or
group (Creswell, 2013). Once the participants were identified, each advisor and student
executive board president was contacted to discuss what organizational activities were available
to attend. The interactions advisors had with student leaders and general board members were
examined through these experiences.

There are four ways to conduct observations: complete participant, participant as
observer, nonparticipant/observer as participant and complete observer (Creswell, 2013). This
study’s observations were conducted as nonparticipant/observer, which is defined as “an outsider
of the group under study, watching and taking field notes from a distance. He or she can record
data without direct involvement with activity or people” (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). This method
was used to reduce interference by the study author with the interactions between the advisors
and student organization members.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis for this study consisted of both memoing and coding in order to search for
patterns. Krathwohl (2009) stated that “memos are used to integrate thoughts, to record hunches,
facilitate the gradual development of an explanation or theory, and suggest future directions” (p.
277). Two kinds of memos were used: (1) post-interview and observation memos and (2)
memos from field notes. Memos were written about each interview and observation experience
after its conclusion and were used as the means to take notes on the documents analyzed. Field
notes were taken during interviews and while making observations, which were used to construct
memos. The memos reflected any impression that came from an observed situation, the impact
the research had on me personally, and the implications for both of these on the research.
Memoing was used because it is a valuable method to track progress, record thoughts and conclusions, and to ensure information is not lost (Krathwohl, 2009).

Coding was done using NVivo software. The coding method for this study’s interviews was drawn from Yin’s pattern matching (Yin, 2003). The order was based on when the interviews are conducted. The first interviews that were conducted were the first coded. After a few interviews were initially coded, those codes began to be grouped into larger codes, or themes, as patterns began to emerge through focused coding. Pattern matching compares empirically based patterns with predicted patterns (Yin, 2003). The pattern matching logic used here was “nonequivalent dependent variables (Yin, 2003, p. 116,).” The independent variable was the advisor as this study focused on successful student organizations with advisors. This pattern logic requires certain propositions outlined in advance (2003); for this study the major propositions were (1) that the advisor does have an impact on the growth and development of individual student leaders and (2) the advisor does have an impact on the growth and development of the overall organization. These propositions represent the dependent variables.

When reviewing interviews, observations, and documents, I searched for patterns, or meaning, by aggregating frequency to develop codes. Patterns that formed included the ways advisors impacted individual students, the organization, and unexpectedly, the advisors. The one, unpredicted proposition that emerged was how advising student organizations impacts the individual advisors.

Using the initial propositions, I used pre-determined codes, or anticipated codes as I referred to them, to make meaning of the data, in addition to establishing newly created codes as I continued my analysis. These anticipated codes came from the literature. The themes that were developed from the codes came from code frequency and the deep meaning behind the
stories shared in the interviews. Figures 4 and 5 outline the anticipated initial codes and the next level of coding as the patterns began to emerge. Figures 6 and 7 outline the same for the created initial codes and next level of coding.

**Research Bias**

It is important to note that as the researcher I, too, am a student organization advisor. This position had potential to cause several dilemmas because of the perceived “insiderness” of this study. On a broad level, there are issues concerning the conceptual definition of insiderness and its relationship to outsiderness. Related to this are questions concerning whether insiderness can provide a unique perspective that can never be penetrated by an outside participant observer and whether insiderness actually diminishes a broader, unbiased understanding that an outsider could bring to the student (Merton, 1972; Surra and Ridley, 1991). As Labaree (2002) noted:

> On an introspective level, there are questions of motivation and the motivations of others and the careful consideration of ethical issues. Finally, at the center of those questions lies the general issue of whether the outcomes and interpretive conclusions would differ significantly if the study were to be conducted by an insider participant observer rather than an outsider (p. 99).

As an insider, I come with personal bias which could be seen as detrimental to this study. There are several disadvantages to being an insider. I have created advisor manuals, and I coordinate advisor training programs in multiple formats. As I have experience in these areas, one might argue that I have a particular agenda in what questions I asked and my ultimate goals for this study. Ultimately, the goals with this study are to better assist advisors and their students, thus improving the students’ out-of-class experiences.
The insider’s perspective is crucial for several reasons; the lack of understanding of an outsider and “informants” may not trust an outsider (Labaree, 2002). There are also advantages to being an insider for this study (2002). As an insider, I was able to gain access to interviewees (advisors and students), supporting documents, and observation opportunities easily. My position in the student activities field also provided the added advantage of a unique understanding that might not otherwise be feasible for an outsider. In addition, as an insider, there was the value of having a deeper understanding of what the interviewees were sharing when coding and discovering larger themes.

**Trustworthiness**

Several tasks were employed in this study to address trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was addressed through triangulation of another source to increase “the probability that credible findings will be produced” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). For example, advisors were asked what they believe student organization advisor roles and responsibilities are when interacting with both individuals and the organization as a whole. These questions were based on the roles and responsibilities outlined in published guidebooks and handbooks. Their responses were then compared to observations made while attending student organization meetings and events. These were then verified with the interview participants in a summary to determine my accuracy through member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability was accounted for through the use of several strategies. As outlined previously, triangulation was used and multiple layers of coding. Research steps were also tracked with an audit trail (Krathwohl, 2009). This way other researchers can understand how I
developed my analysis, determine if my coding terms are grounded in the data, and determine the validity of my conclusions (Krathwohl, 2009).

Finally, using triangulation and creating an audit trail, I was able to address confirmability. I also engaged in reflexivity via my memoing processes and a journal. Through memos and a journal, I recorded feelings, questions, notes, emerging themes, and thoughts on decision making. Interview quotations were also used a great deal to support my analysis and conclusions.

**Limitations**

This case study research project focused on student organizations that had active advisors. Additionally, the outcomes are singular in relation to the particular organizations studied, only undergraduates were subjects of the study, and are not necessarily universal for other organizations or other institutional contexts. In terms of comparison, the study also did not include organizations with no advisors. Understanding how individual student leaders grow and develop through their involvement in student organizations without the guidance of an advisor could provide another valuable source of data regarding the potential benefits and drawbacks of such an approach.

Another study limitation related to who was interviewed and the amount of time spent with those subjects. The study’s sample was small as there were only two organizations involved and general body members of the organizations were not interviewed. There were several questions that could be posed to general body members, which could provide additional viewpoints. Example of questions include (1) are you aware your organization has an advisor; (2) what is your understanding of the advisor’s role; and (3) what kinds of interactions have you experienced with your advisor?
Finally, the data from this study consisted of interviews with each advisor and each executive board, observations of general body meetings and executive board meetings for both organizations, and only one event from one of the organizations. Additionally, observations of events might have yielded additional insights, just as inclusion of other organizations could have yielded additional insights. Lessons learned from these two cases, however, contribute in meaningful ways to our overall understanding of advising student organizations.
Figure 1: Document Analysis-Impact on Individuals

Impact on Individual Student Leaders

- Developing Open Relationships
  - Be an Advocate
  - Learning through failure
  - Informal Interactions
  - Interpersonal and Communication Skills

- Effective knowledge, skills, and life strategies
  - Ethical Development
    - Liability and Risk Reduction
  - Critical Thinking and Analytical Skill Development
  - Advising Do's
Figure 2: Document Analysis - Impact on Organizations
Figure 3: Document Analysis-Impact on Advisors

Impact on Advisors

- Personal and Professional Boundaries
- Program Planning
- Advising Do's
- Liability and Risk Reduction

When and When not to Intervene
Figure 4: All Anticipated Codes

- Types of advising leaders-Narrative
- Types of advising leaders-Developmental
- Techniques-Retreats
- Techniques-Leadership development
- Roles-Supervisor
- Roles-Serve as an expert
- Roles-Program content functions
- Roles-Maintenance functions
- Roles-Leader
- Roles-Initiate conversations about difficult topics
- Roles-Group growth functions
- Roles-Fostering positive public perception
- Roles-Final checkpoint
- Roles-Encourage students to take leadership roles
- Role-Can shift based on student age and maturity of the group
- Roles-Assist to attain goals
- Rewards of advising-student development
- Rewards of advising-Recognition from institution...
- Responsibilities-Represent institution
- Responsibilities-Policy interpreters
- Responsibilities-Financial supervision
- Responsibilities-Consultation on programs
- Responsibilities-Attend meetings
- Quality advising leads to positive feelings about the institution
- Organizational culture-individualism
- Organizational culture-collectivism
- Motivation to advise-Values
- Motivation to advise-Career
- Consultant-Relationship between consultant and consulted
- Consultant-Interpersonal skills
- Consultant-communication
- Approaches-Programmaticality
- Approaches-Other
- Approaches-Administrative
- Advisors develop caring and trusted relationships
Figure 5: Larger Anticipated Codes

Anticipated Larger Themes Color Legend:
Column 1: Advisor Interviews
Column 2: Executive Board Interviews
Column 3: Executive Board Meeting Observations
Column 4: Executive Board Observations
Column 5: General Body Meeting Observations

- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the overall success and vitality of the organization?
- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the growth and development of the individual student leaders?

### Types of Advising Leaders

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### Types of Advising Organizations

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<td>Competencies</td>
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<td>Members based on org affiliation (found none)</td>
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### Motivations to advise

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<td>Career Social Values</td>
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### Rewards of advising

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<td>Recognition from institution, organization or students</td>
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<td>Serving as mentor</td>
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<td>Asked to be a reference</td>
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<td>Observing student development</td>
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<td>Serving as mentor</td>
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### Roles

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<td>Assist to attain goals</td>
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<td>Be collaborative</td>
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<td>Can develop on students, age and maturity of the org</td>
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<td>Expert in the organization's field</td>
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Quality advising leads to positive feelings about the institution

Advisors develop caring and trusted relationships

### Consultant

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### Organisational culture

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Figure 7: Larger Created Codes

Contributions to System Operations

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<td>General Board meetings</td>
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Developing Personal Connections

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<td>Creating bonds</td>
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<td>Nurturing</td>
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Teaching individual members/officers

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<td>Learning through failure</td>
<td>Students asking advisors' opinion</td>
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<td>Advisor making a suggestion</td>
<td>Providing advice and guidance</td>
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Advising Approach (a way of dealing with something) - Something opposite of passive

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Advising Style (a manner of doing something)

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- How does the student organization/advisor contribute to the overall success and vitality of the organization?
- How does the student organization/advisor contribute to the growth and development of the individual student leaders?
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Advisor going above and beyond</th>
<th>Adviser serving as a positive and active influence</th>
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Table 1: Organization Facts

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year Founded</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Executive Board</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Advisors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Philanthropic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Founded</td>
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<table>
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<td>Number of General Membership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Executive Board</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Advisors</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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### Table 2: Familia and Business College Council Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familia</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<th>Time</th>
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<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>8/12/15</td>
<td>4:00pm (37:52 mins)</td>
<td>Pam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Leader (Executive Board) Interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/19/15</td>
<td>5:30pm (54:01)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8/31/15</td>
<td>7:00pm (2 hours)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Body Meeting Observations</td>
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<td>8/30/15</td>
<td>7:00pm (1 hour)</td>
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<td>Lecture hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event Observations</td>
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<table>
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<th>Who</th>
<th>Where</th>
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Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis

In order to develop an understanding of the two cases of this study, this chapter will begin with a short narrative describing each case. These narratives detail the characteristics of the organizations and their memberships, their structures, and their activities. They also provide background information about each organization’s advisor. Following the overview narratives the chapter presents analysis of the cases. The case analysis is divided into three sections which are then broken down further into specific themes.

The three sections discuss the impact (1) advisors have on individual student growth and development; (2) advisors have on organizational growth and development; and (3) advising students and organizations has on the advisor. Key themes that surfaced in the area of individual student growth and development dealt with the importance of relationships and imparting effective knowledge, skills, and life strategies to students. In the area of organizational growth, the various roles advisors play proved integral to their work with the organizations. The third overarching theme generally overlapped in terms of advisors working with individuals and the organization. This theme dealt with advisors putting personal and professional boundaries in place and determining when to intervene with the students or the organization.

Business College Council

In order to establish a context for the data, narratives that relate the stories of each organization are first presented. This first narrative identifies and provides background on an organization that I refer to as Business College Council (BCC). BCC was founded in 1990 at a large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university and has maintained its active status with the university since its creation. The mission of the BCC is to provide a link between the students and their academic college. The actual mission is omitted
from the narrative to ensure the organization’s anonymity. The students on the executive board provided more in-depth information regarding the organization’s mission during an interview with them.

The university where this organization exists categorizes organizations into different categories. BCC is categorized as a “Student Council.” Student Councils are “groups that serve as student governments/councils in various college, schools, departments and residence areas” (Intent to Organize form). The BCC student membership consists of 150 general body members and 5 executive board members. While the university does not require this particular organization to have an advisor, they have had one historically. (Only organizations recognized since 2004 at the university are required to have and maintain an advisor.) An interesting element to this organization is that while its core mission is about supporting the student population of the business college, a notable emphasis of the organization involves fundraising for a very large non-profit foundation, which I refer to as the Wind Foundation for Kids. (This foundation is described in the narrative below for the second case organization, Familia.) As such, the organization operates with an additional internal organizing committee specifically dedicated to fundraising efforts for this non-profit foundation.

BCC is a very active organization. Its members host a variety of events throughout the academic year that support the college, both philanthropic and social in nature. Members also engage in multiple service-related activities as well. The executive board meets once a week with the advisor, and a general organizational meeting occurs once a month. BCC also supports travel for its members to conferences for professional development and continued education related to students’ academic fields.
BCC engages with a variety of constituents. The group’s primary population consists of undergraduate students, but members work regularly with several organizations that represent the interests of graduate students in the college. The group also works with the alumni council for the college, with its members invited to BCC’s meetings whenever the council meets on campus. BCC communicates with the faculty of the college on a regular basis with the assistance of the advisor.

When asked to describe BCC’s mission in their own words, executive board members discussed a focus on improving the overall experience for individuals—students, faculty, staff, and alumni—associated with the business college. One student leader spoke about what the organization does:

Yeah, I think a common misconception is that the [BCC] is a governing body, but we’re not. So that’s just one thing that we try to make people know that we don’t act as a governing body, like Bob said, we kind of work as the middleman and we like to establish relationships between the student and the faculty, the staff and the alumni.

(Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Another student on the executive board spoke about the environment the organization hopes to create for its members:

Besides that, I think of the BCC almost as a thing like you can consider like a home away from home. Like, these are the people that you’re with, kind of, every day and we go out and we do things together, we do events together all the time, it’s just like something to make you not miss the family atmosphere because that’s what we, kind of, create.

(Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)
The advisor expressed similar sentiments as students regarding the organization’s mission and purpose:

The team or the building between faculty, staff, students, the camaraderie in the college. The doing togetherness, getting, faculty and staff as interested in the student body and helping them to obtain that or helping them to do that and then of course guiding them and kind of putting a little thumb on them of what they can do and what they can’t do and so, it just kind of keeping the spirit of we’re all one big family…keeping them all inter-tangled together and working together. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

The advisor, who will be identified as Susan, is a female, in her 60s, working in the administrative offices of the business college. She began working for the university in 1995 and has only ever been at the university’s flagship campus. She has a high school degree and attained a few college credits. She is married with children and grandchildren. She has been the advisor since January 2013. Historically, BCC has had faculty members as the advisor; Susan is the first staff member to be asked and approved by the college to serve as the advisor. While the organization does not operate under complete college control, it is subject to some degree of college oversight, suggesting approval by the college for this advising arrangement. Additionally, and considering that advising this organization is not part of Susan’s formal job description, someone within the college ostensibly had to provide explicit or tacit approval for her to take on this advising role. The students of the organization initially asked Susan to serve as interim advisor after the previous advisor, a faculty member, stepped down. The executive board shared that the students at the time found Susan’s service so valuable that they asked her to remain as the permanent advisor. To date, Susan has only advised the BCC.
BCC was chosen as one of two cases for this multi-case study because of its overall recognition as a vibrant and dynamic organization and because of the presence of an advisor actively engaged with the organization. BCC is well known among the student population as a strong organization, one that also enjoys faculty and alumni support. The academic college supports the group through funds, space, supplies, and staff time. Further indications of the organization’s health and vitality include collaborations with other student groups, active involvement in the university’s undergraduate student government, fulfillment of various student organization university obligations, hosting a variety of events, a strong and well-functioning internal governance structure, and regular engagement with the group’s advisor. Additionally, as communicated in interviews and indicated in observations, the organization engages in effective internal communication, regularly reviews the group’s guiding constitution, holds efficient meetings, conducts an officer transition process, and maintains a solid planning and implementation process to accomplish annual milestones. Student leaders described the organization as providing members a home away from home and fostering an environment for students to find their place personally and professionally.

BCC was also chosen for this study because it actively engages with the university’s student activities office. The organization regularly satisfies the requirements the university places on all student organizations, and it maintains compliance with applicable university policies. On average, 100 to 150 organizations at the university lose their recognition on an annual basis because of failure to meet university-imposed obligations. The literature on organizational effectiveness states that a measure of success is for an organization to achieve its goals and objectives (Wanger, Hollenbeck, & Russell, 1992). For a student organization to achieve its goals of functioning and receiving university benefits the members must maintain
BCC’s status as a recognized student organization, which they have successfully done. Besides adhering to minimum institutional requirements, BCC students voluntarily attend developmental programming offered by the university geared towards student organizations, and the advisor regularly attends parallel developmental programming for advisors. Finally, the student leaders submit applications for the annual student organization awards on a regular basis. Susan was selected as “Advisor of the Year” at the conclusion of her very first year as the advisor. In sum, based on a number of criteria, BCC exists and has existed as an active and successful student organization.

**Familia**

This second narrative provides an overview of the organization I refer to as Familia. Familia was founded in 2008 at the same large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university as BCC featured in this study. Familia has maintained its active status with the university since its founding. The mission of Familia is to create fundraising opportunities and awareness among the university community to support another organization, known here as Working to Inspire New Directions for Kids (WIND for Kids) and its overall foundation, the Wind Foundation for Kids. The arrangement is like a tree diagram. There are multiple student organizations at a bottom level (e.g., Familia) that sponsor programs and fundraisers to support the organization at the next, higher level (i.e. WIND for Kids). Then the organization at that second level, WIND for Kids, donates its funds to the foundation at the top level of the tree (i.e., Wind Foundation for Kids). The actual mission is omitted from the narrative to ensure the organization’s anonymity.

As mentioned, the university where this organization is recognized categorizes student organizations. Familia is categorized as “Philanthropic.” Philanthropic groups are defined as
“groups that seek to raise funds and/or support for a particular charity or cause” (Intent to Organization form). The student membership consists of 400 general body members and 12 executive board members. This organization is required, per institutional rules, to have an advisor because it gained institutional recognition after 2004.

Familia functions as an active organization. While this organization’s members could potentially engage in limited activity considering the group’s core purpose surrounds one, annual campus-wide event, the members host a variety of events throughout the academic year. The majority of these events serve as fundraisers, but additional events include social gatherings, travel for fundraising purposes, and participation in other campus-wide activities. The organization has traditionally been one of the groups raising the most money for WIND for Kids. Within the program’s structure, there exists a tiered system of top fundraising organizations and with those tiers come certain benefits. Familia has been selected for one of the top tiers several times. The organization holds weekly executive board meetings and monthly general body meetings.

Familia also targets and engages certain student populations. Familia is intended as a place first-year students can feel comfortable getting connected to and learning about the WIND Foundation for Kids. But, the organization is open to students more broadly. According to the advisor, the membership is well balanced in terms of gender and is diverse in terms of racial composition, belief systems, and academic programs.

When I asked the students on the executive board and the advisor what they believed the organization’s mission to be, the comments below typified the types of responses:

- I would say the mission is to create a second family for students who are here at [the institution]. Not only that, but a second family that they can go to for
anything. While also raising money for [Familia]…. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

- [Familia] means family in [Spanish], so we really focus on. . .I mean, the reason that it was founded was because there were so many special interest organizations that were focusing primarily on fund raising and that’s great obviously because that is what [WIND for Kids] is for, it raises money, but it’s also because of the [Wind Foundation for Kids] families and I think, volunteers sometimes get left out in that mix that’s why [Familia] was founded. They wanted to make a family out of [institution] volunteers that were volunteering their time for [WIND for Kids] and wanted to make a community out of it. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

When asked, the advisor said this about the organization mission:

To raise money for the [Wind Foundation for Kids], to connect with their families. They’re connected to three [Wind Foundation for Kids] families and to help create a sense of family connection. [Familia] means family for the students in the organization, and that is that shapes how they’re structured. They have an overall exec team, they have [Familia] Family Facilitators or [sub-committees]; and those in the general meetings, the execs kind of lead some portion of the meeting and then they do these break off’s where they go off to these other rooms and the sub-committee members kind of, meet with their smaller clusters of 10, 15, 20 students. (Pam, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The advisor, who will be identified as Pam, is a female, in her 50s, working as a member of the upper-level administration of a unit within student affairs at the university in which Familia resides. She has a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree. She is married and has a
step-child. She worked at another campus of the university from 1998 to 2005 and then joined the flagship campus in 2006. She has served as Familia’s advisor since 2010. Pam connected with Familia as a way to become further involved with the WIND for Kids. Her husband served as the WIND for Kids advisor at the time and had mentioned her name to student leaders in Familia who were seeking an advisor at that time. Pam met with the students and was, by her description, interviewed for the role. She has served as the advisor since. Pam also fulfills the advisor role for another student organization as one of her job responsibilities for the university. Thus, she possesses experience and professional knowledge related to advising a student organization, though it should be noted the two organizations she advises are distinct in nature.

Familia was chosen as one of the two cases for study because of the consistent level of organizational activity, success in meeting the organization’s goals, and the engagement of student leaders and members with the advisor. Similar to the BCC, Familia is well known among the student population and among the other student organizations with similar missions. Familia holds programs on a regular basis, fulfills university requirements annually, has a strong internal structure, collaborates with other organizations, diversifies its fundraising initiatives, and engages multiple types of constituencies. Internally, the organization has multiple layers of leadership positions allowing students to gradually advance within the organization, the members communicate well, the group has a strong officer transition process, and it actively engages the advisor on a regular basis. This organization also regularly evaluates potential activities on the basis of whether projects align with the organizational mission and purpose. Much of the impetus for founding the organization centered on notions of family; and creating a family atmosphere for its members is something the group strives for and does well. As with BCC, Familia reflects characteristics of success discussed in organizational literature, such as meeting
organizational goals, good communication structures, and sound leadership and planning (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980; Wanger, Hollenbeck, & Russell, 1992).

Familia was also chosen for this study because it actively engages with the university’s student activities office. Familia maintains compliance with university policies and regularly satisfies the requirements the university places on all recognized student organizations. All student organizations must maintain recognized status to receive university benefits, which Familia has done annually. In addition to adhering to institutional requirements, Familia students voluntarily attend the developmental programming designed for student organizations. The advisor regularly attends similar developmental programming for advisors. Finally, the student leaders of Familia also submit applications for the annual student organization awards on a regular basis. As with BCC, based on multiple factors, Familia operates as an active and engaged student organization.

Impacts of Advising on Individuals, the Organizations, and the Advisor

This study seeks to explore the impact of student organization advisors on organizational functioning as well as on the potential growth and development of individual student leaders in the organization. As discussed earlier, colleges and universities differ on whether student organizations must have an advisor. The data in this chapter provide insight regarding the ways advisors for these two student groups impact the organizations and the student leaders, as well as how advisors determine and navigate their involvement. As noted, three particular strands arose in considering contributions of the organizational advisors, namely the (1) impact advisors have on individual student growth and development; (2) impact advisors have organizational growth and development; and (3) the impact on advisors.
Impact on Individual Student Growth and Development

This first section will focus on the impact of the advisors on the growth and development of individual student leaders. The two dominant themes that emerged in this area centered on the formation of open relationships between individual student leaders and the advisors and the knowledge, skills, and strategies advisors used to facilitate individual student growth and development.

Building open student relationships.

While each student organization possesses its own unique characteristics, as exemplified by these two particular organizations, commonalities also existed in the types of roles advisors played in supporting their respective organizations, such as in relation to general body and executive board meeting attendance, annual or one-time events, and leadership retreats. Data from both of these cases revealed that the advisors played a meaningful role in in the growth and development of student leaders.

The student leaders for both groups reported that the respective advisors had an important impact on their personal and academic/professional development. The data indicated the advisors were able to impact individual student leaders through forming open relationships, which I define as those where there is a free exchange of ideas without fear of judgement or reprimand. These relationships are often formed through informal interactions, with the advisor-student relationship grounded in rapport and trust. One student said, “I can just call her, ‘Pam, I’m concerned’. She’ll be like ‘Relax,’ and I’ll be like, ‘Okay.’ So, I appreciate my relationship with her more than anything (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)”.

To unpack this idea of open relationships further, there are also several types of relationships that developed between the advisors and students, ones that impacted individual
student growth and development. These organization advisors came through as advocates, motherly figures and friends, and, at times, these types of relationships blended with one another.

Both organizations’ student leaders equated their relationships with their advisors to those of a mother and a friend, indicating that these advisors served roles that went well beyond simply the functioning of the organization. That is, students consistently reported that the advisors played important roles in their individual growth and development, with advisors serving as nurturing and caring figures who took an interest in students’ lives beyond the organizational context. Comments from executive board interviews of both organizations relayed the importance of the individuals’ relationships that student leaders had with the advisors. One student from BCC shared:

I do see the mothering aspect that Susan has...I agree with what everybody says as far as that she’s there, she’s nurturing, she’s there to help instill growth and so on...she definitely has that steady vision for where she expects the Council to go... (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

In addition to nurturing, another student leader from BCC shared how Susan invests time in students’ personal lives.

She is almost like a motherly figure, like I said, I met her almost right away when I came here because I got a job, and you just...she’ll just pick up small talk with you, it doesn’t have to be about anything special and it’s not even as much as how’s your semester going, how’s your classes, you know... (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Echoing similar sentiments about the maternal nature of the relationship of student leaders with their advisor, a student leader from Familia made a general comment of how Pam looks out for her
student leaders’ well-being. “She’s like the mom, she’s just taking care of everybody, making sure everybody’s happy. . .” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The advisors also reported that they view their relationships with student leaders as much more than transactional and beyond focusing on the organization. Susan shared a comment about how she sees her student leaders as her own children. She spoke fondly about a time a past president of BCC who had graduated stopped by her office for a surprise visit. He had arrived with his girlfriend and the three of them had a nice conversation, catching up on what he was doing at the time. She described the exchange by saying:

Wow. . .watching them grow, watching them mature and being young adults and then going into adulthood and just kind of, letting go and watching your kids fly, I mean to me they’re all like my own. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Susan showed a high level caring and nurturing when she shared that she uses her personal time (both over her lunch hour and after her work day) to assemble care package materials for the members who will represent the organization at the fundraising events they particulate in annually. The close, open relationships developed primarily with the student leaders. However, the caring and nurturing also extended to the general members as well. In what seemed as a response to the time and effort that Susan spends on members, multiple students on the executive board shared that Susan is not someone who you meet in college and once you graduate the relationship is over. Several shared how she makes a concentrated effort to remain connected to her students post-graduation. Alumni of the organization come back to visit her and she remains connected to many of them through social media.

One of Susan’s student leaders also shared how much Susan cares for them and how that directly impacts their relationships with her.
[S]he’ll talk to you and she’ll get personal with you and I really feel like if there was anything I needed, I’ll just go into her office and talk to her about anything, about “BCC”, about classes, about my life in general and she’s just always there. She’s extremely personable and it just. . .you can really tell that she cares, she genuinely cares about you, and as I said earlier with Andrew, when he came back, it’s not just like oh, you’re here in college and you have a relationship with Susan, it’s clearly they have a relationship that exists beyond graduation and that she is actually someone who is a valuable person and will become a valuable person in your life beyond graduation. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Pam also gives of her personal time to work to develop her relationships with the student leaders. When I attended a money counting event from a major fundraising weekend for Familia, I observed Pam engage in a balance of focusing on task completion related to the event but also socializing and interacting with students. She began discussing the outcomes of the weekend in one room with the executive board members. Pam and the student discussed the weekend’s event but also engaged in conversations about what was going on in the students’ personal lives. That is, discussion with the students focused on more than only issues and events related to the organization. Eventually, Pam announced that she was going to go back to the living room of the apartment where the main money counting was occurring, as that was the main purpose of the event. The students protested and really wanted her to stay and spend time with them. It was clear the students valued the informal time Pam spends with them, and they felt comfortable sharing their personal lives and issues with her. Pam appeared very surprised by how strongly the students wanted her to stay and spend time with them.
The student leaders shared several examples related to how their relationships with their advisors developed through the informal interactions such as that at the money county event. As mentioned previously, Susan works in the business college’s administrative office. She makes herself available while at work and provides meaningful feedback on a regular basis and the students reported that they feel like she makes her presence known to executive and general body members. One student shared the following to describe Susan’s commitment to individuals in the organization and demonstrated the importance of these informal interactions:

[A]s soon as she became our advisor in [BCC], she made herself a presence there and I enjoy just coming in and talking to her, just in and out and just getting that little bit of feedback, and then this year, coming in as an exec board member, obviously I get to see her all the time. So yeah, she has a presence in the beginning; just an acquaintance and face but she’s become somebody I definitely plan to keep in contact with [after graduation]. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Along similar lines, the student leaders from Familia spoke about the fact that their advisor Pam jokes with them, that she is present for them, and that she genuinely supports them. This level of connectedness came through in observing a fundraising event. The event served as a time for members to convene in a formal organizational context; it also provided ample opportunity for individual students and the advisor to engage in an informal manner. The event took place at the apartment of an executive board member. The students in charge of the fundraiser were in a student’s bedroom where there was a provocative poster of a woman holding a soccer ball. Pam made a comment about the value of the poster in a sarcastic tone that was likely meant to make the student think about how the meaning behind the photo was demeaning to women. Considering the nature of the comment, hearing Pam challenge the
student on whether or not it was something he should display indicated a few things in terms of her relationship with the student leaders. She felt comfortable engaging in a conversation that would cause the student some level of discomfort but also that the students are willing to consider such challenging comments and potentially learn from such interactions.

A question that came out of this interaction is whether it is appropriate for advisors to be in students’ apartments or bedrooms. This question is further discussed later in the section about setting personal and professional boundaries.

There were several other examples of informal exchanges I observed from this event that served to indicate the level of comfort between Pam and the student leaders. These included a silly conversation with the students about the lyrics to a song that was being played as they were counting money. I also observed that all of the students referred to Pam by both her first and last name as a term of endearment. Through these conversations and interactions, it was evident that the students felt very comfortable with Pam, that they could share various thoughts and views without fear of judgment, and could just feel at “home” with her. And quite literally, students invite her into their homes on a regular basis.

Opportunities for advisors to engage in informal interactions also included executive board meetings. At the start of these meetings, Familia conducts a quick ice breaker exercise where students share a “high” and a “low” from their past week. It is a common exercise for student organization meetings. Pam participated in sharing a “high” and a “low” and the students clearly enjoyed her involvement in the activity. In fact, her participation helped to spark a side conversation, which helped to set an engaged tone for the meeting. As with other events observed and comments from students, such instances of advisor engagement and interaction played an important role in establishing meaningful relationships with student leaders.
Along with the importance of informal interpersonal interactions, the advisors also forged relationships with student leaders when they help them to navigate difficult situations and provided constructive feedback, as opposed to offering comments that simply reaffirmed or left unchallenged students’ preconceived beliefs or ideas. The advisors provided a space for student leaders to evaluate a situation and learn from it, which connects to the idea of developmental advising. Developmental advising, among other things, focuses on evaluation skills (Crookston, 1972). One student leader described Pam’s willingness to offer meaningful feedback:

I think that’s a really great way to learn how I should respond to other people when they make a comment. That I should actually say what I think in a really kind way rather than just being, ‘that sounds great’. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Tied to ideas associated with developmental advising, learning through failure is a concept that student affairs professionals often view as valuable for college students in their growth and development. I asked both advisors how they felt about this idea, and Pam and Susan shared that they witness instances of failure often and are comfortable with it happening as long as the potential outcome is not going to unduly damage the students or the organization. For BCC, both the students and the advisor saw failure as having a meaningful place in the student organization context. One student shared the following:

Yeah I would say that internally and this is nothing against any of us or against people in our org, we had some struggles this year with projects or things we were working on, just issues and we didn’t really have that last year, so there was really not as much of a need to talk to her I think last year about things that were going on, she was always there and stuff, there was more natural obviously when you have issues you’re going to go to the advisor but I think that when things are really positive I need to make an effort to talk to her about
them too, and that’s something that I really didn’t do in the past, but I find myself doing it more. I think that it is fair to say that, you know, when you have issues and things go wrong it can make you stronger it’s definitely built the relationship that at least I have with her. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

To complement the above statement, Susan spoke about how learning through failure is something the students will face in life, reinforcing the idea that the experiences in student organizations are like a learning laboratory.

Where they have to fail to learn, I mean, if they have an idea and it doesn’t work, you try it and if it doesn’t work it’s failed and or you try it again or, I mean it’s kind of a, it’s the only way you learned, you fall down and pick yourself back up again, so that’s life. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Allowing students to learn through failure affords the advisor the opportunity to then provide big picture perspective as a way to process the difficult situation the students just experienced and to continue to build on the student-advisor relationship. As expressed through interviews, Pam demonstrates an ability to help calm student leaders when they are upset and to put problems or issues into a perspective that does not make them seem so overwhelming or potentially disastrous. This specific role came up multiple times in the student leader and advisor interviews. Several student leaders shared stories about how they have gone to Pam when they were very concerned because they thought they had done something that would impact the organization negatively. Each shared story illuminated Pam’s process. She first listens and then talks through the situation collaboratively with the student leader, in a way the students described as helpful and non-threatening. Pam engaged in a process similar to what current literature discussed in terms of advisors playing a consultant role in providing leadership development and
the strengthening of interpersonal skills (Dallimore & Souza, 2002). A story that she shared helps to illustrate her approach:

Two individual Executive Chair people are coming to mind right now, the very first one and the latest one that I’m working with. Tim was his name. . .but he was having some issues with one of the exec chair, kind of, people, and we just, kind of, talked through what that would look like, what that conversation would look like with somebody else that he needed to talk to about something. So, I kind of, just spent some time, kind, of listening to him and talking to him about how he could. . .yes, how he could handle that conversation with that person who was or was not doing something that he wanted to see happen. Actually, the same thing, sort of, was going on, was happening about a month ago right, it was kind of before [a festival] with the most current executive chair person who you will, I think you’ll meet her. . .I was talking with, with the “executive director” about, she was getting frustrated, I guess, with some of the exec team members, and I spent some time listening to her for, a lot of time listening to her over the phone one night in particular over the summer and just kind of talking with her, trying to just listen to her and remind her a little bit about a lot of the exec chair people are just kind of new to their positions, maybe they don’t know the things that you expect of them.

She was, she was wanting to kind of hear my thoughts about, “Am I being unreasonable?” or, “Do you think I’m being fair in this email that I’m going to send them,” and things like that. (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

As demonstrated in this section, these advisors employ multiple strategies to develop these open student-advisor relationships in which students can exchange ideas freely without fear of judgement or reprimand. These relationships have proven to be very impactful for the
individual students involved in these two organizations. In addition, there were outcomes of these relationships that were also proven impactful. The students seemed to also derive certain benefits as a direct result of these open relationships.

**Effective knowledge, skills, and life strategies.**

Along with impacting students through the development of strong inter-personal relationships that focused on more than organizational issues, a second sub-theme, one building on the formation of strong advisor-individual relationships, addressed the impact that advisors have on individual student leaders in areas referred to here as effective knowledge, skills, and life strategies. Some of these skills relate to the ongoing work of the student organization while others center more on individual benefits derived by students from the relationship with the advisor, including in their roles as student leaders. Examples in the data include effective interpersonal and communication skills, critical thinking and analytical skills, and ethical development. Broadly, these knowledge, skills, and life strategies reflect student leaders navigating the types of complex challenges and environments discussed in the student literature (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) such as learning to comprehend, interpret, and extrapolate and enhancing one’s ability to apply abstractions or principles. Capitalizing on the strong relationship developed, the advisors in this study helped push students to hone their leadership abilities, providing support to students but also challenging them at important moments. Importantly, these advisors, as noted previously, also shared that student leaders often can learn much from their organization’s failures and not just successes.

One skill that the advisors helped to foster in student leaders related to not overreacting to situations (i.e., putting issues into a manageable perspective) and demonstrating patience in particular instances. It was discussed earlier how Pam, from Familia, has the ability to listen to
students and employs a process to assist her student leaders when they struggle. The student leaders even acknowledged that the things that cause them concern often turn out not to not be as serious as initially thought. This realization—one connected to active efforts by Pam to assist students in processing potential issues or problems—of the importance of putting problems or issues into a manageable perspective helped them to grow as leaders and positioned them to handle future, similar situations. One student shared how Pam assists students in this area:

   Like, she’s always thinking of that big picture, when we’re all thinking about this little tiny thing and we’re constantly freaking out and, at least for me, she keeps me so grounded. I know that I can always go to her, she’s like my other mum, I can just call her, “Pam, I’m concerned.” She’ll be like; “Relax,” and I’ll be like, “Okay.” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Both Pam and Susan also influenced their individual student leaders when they pushed the students to develop their critical thinking and analytical skills and their ethical development. The critical thinking gains students experience in college have a rich history in the research (Pasquerella & Terenzini, 2005). Much of this research centers on Piaget’s work on structures of the mind and stages of cognitive-structural development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2016). While several student development theories exist on what the various stages of development may be (e.g., Perry’s theory on intellectual and ethical development (1968) or Kholberg’s theory on moral development (1958)), these theoretical perspectives all indicate a meaningful role for individuals on campus to impact the growth that occurs between the stages. Previous literature suggests student organization advisors can serve as catalysts to spark individual change and development and to enhance development from one stage to the next.
I feel like it’s developmentally, like, I don’t know, there are a lot of times we’ll have really out there ideas and she’s always bringing it back down to earth, but she’s always asking, you know, “How is this going to benefit next year?” And there are a lot of times where we’re not thinking of next year at all and she’s always thinking about that, which is…she’s thinking about everything and we’re focusing on one thing and she’ll just throw things out there, and we’ll be, “Oh yeah, we hadn’t thought about that.” So, she’s looking to develop the future and see Familia continue, which is, I feel, an important quality that you want to have in an advisor. For them to be looking for you and looking out for your success after we’re all “has beens.” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The Executive Director of Familia also spoke about the one-on-one attention Pam devotes to her student leaders and pushes them to in terms of their critical thinking skills.

So, Pam could not come to our first exec meeting we were all selected and I had to meet with her anyways because I just got selected and I was super overwhelmed, I had no idea what I was doing. So, I met with her and basically went over every single thing that I told them and I was like, “What do you think, do you think this is good?” Like, I was being Pam and she was like, “Yeah, I think this is good, are you sure?” And she would ask me questions like why is this your goal? (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Importantly, the fostering by advisors of students learning to analyze situations and to listen to the views of others did not mean that students always had to agree with positions offered by advisors. For example, one student leader from BCC said that Susan once offered a suggestion
related to financial business with which the student disagreed. She appreciated Susan’s feedback but felt it was a bit conservative compared to what the organization wanted to do.

I agree with what everybody says as far as that she’s there, she’s nurturing, she’s there to help instill growth and so on, but I think, the disagreements that I’ve had this year in what she’s offered and what had to say with inputs is that she’s more on the conservative side of where I. . .of goals that we have and I think to me, that might be an age difference thing or that might be just the culture of the college, but I think that’s the only difference in. . .maybe that’s specific to my role of being treasurer, but she definitely has that steady vision for where she expects the Council to go and. . .like I said before. . .she has expectations but not requirements, and I think they lean conservative to me. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Hence, the student was able to recognize Susan’s overall positive role played and to consider divergent views from her own but was also felt empowered to offer a differing stance on particular issues. That is, rather than feeling obligated to reflexively adopt views offered by Susan, the student could engage in a more reflective process of differing with the advisor’s views on particular issues while also recognizing that Susan sought to advance the organization in a positive manner.

Along with engaging students in ways that furthered students’ overall analytical and critical thinking skills, the advisors also pushed students to consider the ethical implications of their actions, including in the context of seeking to hold students accountable for decisions. In one telling exchange, members of Pam’s organization engaged in a discussion about whether to follow a specific fundraising rule for their umbrella organization which they served. Pam stepped in to push the students to weigh the implications of violating standards. She pushed for the students to
consider whether the actions under consideration aligned with the organization’s mission.

Additionally, she asked the students to consider the reputational impact on the organization for potential violation of the standard in question, helping the students to consider their fiduciary responsibilities to uphold the group’s reputation and standing at the university.

Pam also holds people accountable, giving students constructive feedback and not just affirming students no matter what statements or views they offer. One student related the following about Pam’s approach:

Pam’s such a nice person, everything she says...it’s not like...you know those people though, whenever you have a suggestion, and they’re “That’s great, that sounds...”. I don’t like that. She’s really nice in the sense that she’s not just giving “That’s great” kind of advice, but she actually has a constructive comment about things, and I really appreciate how she interacts with us in that way. I think that’s a really great way to learn how I should respond to other people when they make a comment. That I should actually say what I think in a really kind way rather than just being, “That sounds great.” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Along with providing constructive feedback as an element of ethical development, Pam has helped students gain a deeper understanding of selflessness. One of the Familia students described Pam as incredibly selfless, and she serves as a good example for him and how he should act.

She’s also so incredibly selfless, like it doesn’t matter what it is. Formal, she hates formal as itself, she showed up half an hour early and she was eating, and she could see that I was flustered because I got there late and couldn’t finish the prep by myself, so she dropped her food and she finished helping me set up, and then throughout the event, if anything
happened, she would come to me, ask me what she thought I would do and then gave me advice on it. Towards the end, she also stayed an extra 45 minutes to help clean. She’s just always so actively there and she doesn’t view herself as in some kind of position where she doesn’t need to do that, she’s just actually supervising us and making sure we’re on track. She just gives everything that she can, so that helps me a lot in my position because I have to remember that I have to give what I can to the org and I have to make the events what they can be for the members, not for me. Like, I don’t have to take pride in the event; I want the members to take pride in the event. So, that’s it’s built it a lot for me, I need to remember to stop being selfish and start being more selfless. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

This student experienced a moment where he understood why it is important we do things for others and not just ourselves through his advisor’s actions.

The advisors also assisted in their students’ ethical development and decision making holding them accountable for what could be interpreted as bad behavior. Susan seeks to hold the BCC students accountable when necessary. In the past the organization has struggled organizing the group to attend its annual conference. At one point, Susan decided that she needed to help further this process and discuss with the students how they had fallen short in terms of carrying out an important task associated with the group:

Well yeah, I mean it’s, it was hard and it was hard for them I mean, it was hard for them the whole, fall, spring semester it was like guys, especially fall I mean we had there was some conflict with the [national conference] and they would complain and one person was complaining about this and another person was complaining about that and I was like okay, come on guys we need to do this and then I had to call special meeting and say look now,
this is what we are going, we’re not going to California for a free vacation because the college is paying for it so, we had to have a special meeting about that and it was like and then there was the chatter and it’s like, if you can’t follow the rules you’re going to have to so, there was a little bit of issues and they blamed that on Kyle, which was the former president, because he didn’t have the leadership that Andrew had and I said look it’s so, it was a constant reminder of look, this is where we are yeah. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

As with Pam, this episode demonstrated how Susan, rather than merely seeking to affirm students’ views and actions, also was willing to push them in terms of fulfilling their organization’s mission and making ethically sound choices.

The relationships these advisors maintain with their student leaders serve as a foundation for the ways the advisors impact the individual student leaders. Open relationships, with advisors can impact student leaders’ future endeavors including in terms of graduate school and job preparation (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There are several ways in which the advisors of both organizations in this study influenced students’ graduate school search processes positively. A student from BCC shared her experience with great enthusiasm.

Telling her about grad school and like, stuff, she’s the most supportive person I had behind me wanting me to get in and stuff, and the day I told her, her reaction was just priceless. Like, it just makes you feel good about yourself, she makes you feel like you’re doing something with your life and she’s proud of you. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

And another student leader from BCC shared his experience about asking Susan for a letter of recommendation.
Right, if you need a recommendation, I was a little hesitant to ask her because she’s not a faculty member for recommendation for something I applied for, but she instantly was like, “Yes, absolutely and if there are important things you think I should include, send them to me and I’d be happy to.” and I just...I thought that was cool. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

An example that I observed of helping a student to focus on graduate study opportunities occurred when I attended the program that Familia held to count money they had raised. A conversation took place between Pam and one of the members of the executive board. He was in charge of this particular type of fundraising for the organization and was explaining to Pam that he was going to have to miss the next organizational general body meeting where the executive board would reveal to the entire organization the total amount of funds raised for the weekend. This particular milestone is clearly very important to this student’s leadership position. It was a form of celebration of the hard work he and his committee had put in and for the entire organization. Pam showed true empathy demonstrating she had an appreciation for the student being upset that he had to make a difficult decision. She did assure him, however, that attending his interview for his graduate program interview was critically important to his future and that the other officers in the organization could cover his responsibilities.

Many student leaders struggle with the idea of graduating and moving on from the university. Student leaders from both organizations talked about how their advisors assisted them with that struggle. A student leader from BCC mentioned that Susan has helped make the idea of graduating and leaving the university very exciting. Often times, students develop such a strong connection to their institution that it makes it very hard to leave to begin the next stage of their lives. This student made it clear this was not the case for her.
I guess for me, I mean I’m a little different, a lot of students I feel like are afraid to go into the future after graduation and I can honestly say she’s made me more excited to graduate. I know it’s like a huge transition but. . .I don’t know I am ready to go and graduate and get out of here. I know it’s hard because I know a lot of students who say, “I never want to leave,” I feel honestly after this year having this leadership position and if you’re always in like marketing departments, the marketing, department, she’s just got me excited to go forward and kind of I just want to feel from talking with her like I’ve gotten what I’m going to get out of [the university], I’ve grown so much especially even this year from more and I honestly say that she just helped me know that I learned what I’m going to learn and I should be more excited to go on and not be afraid to go on and learn more, so it’s exciting, I’m excited. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The impact these two student organization advisors had on the student leaders emerged through the development of open relationships and the knowledge, skills, and life strategies students learned from their advisors. The following section focuses on the second dominate theme of this study which is the impact the advisors had on the overall organizational growth and development. This section outlines the various roles student organization advisors fulfill.

**Impact on Organizational Growth and Development**

As the advisors in this study impacted the growth and development of the individual students, they also influenced the growth and development of the organization as a whole. The data revealed that advisors played several important roles for their respective organizations.

**Advisor roles.**

Unsurprisingly, a straightforward theme that emerged from the data involved advisors fulling various supportive roles for the groups. As such, the data reflected discussion in previous
literature regarding the ways in which advisors assist organizations (*Advisor Manual*, 2005; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; *Student Organizations Handbook*, 2016). In terms of advisor roles in relation to the organization, the emphasis is on playing a supportive role but permitting students to determine overall direction and carry out needed activities. During my time working in the student activities profession, I have found that people working with college student organizations would agree with the importance of students carrying out the substantive work of student organizations and providing leadership. However, as confirmed in the two cases for this study, students acknowledged that they rely heavily on their advisor to fulfill certain roles. These roles included serving as informational resources, connections to the university and surrounding environment, and encouragers and sources of wisdom. In addition, the advisors provided assistance in knowledge management, they were present at organizational activities, served as sounding boards for ideas, and helped to safeguard the organization for future students.

The student leaders from BCC described Susan serving as a resource and connection to the larger university. She uses her connections to the college to help with logistics for events and as a source for suggestions. The student leaders report that Susan serves as an important connection to the college, providing perspective on what faculty and staff might think about their activities. She leverages her knowledge of the college to help students gain support for events, including funding. Students offered that Susan’s advice can at times prove crucial in making an event successful. One student leader shared the following:

So, she has a great understanding of how the college works and operates and what it’s done in the past and part of what we do, we plan a lot of activities and events with the college, so it’s not just BCC events, it’s also our college events, and so, she helps us plan and organize how things have occurred in the past and how funding would work because sometimes we
use BCC funds, other times we use college funds, depending on the type of event, and she’s a great asset giving opinions on what staff and faculty in the college might think of certain events rather than just students. . .a different way of thinking from. . .we’re students and she’s also from the staff and we work with her a lot to try to bridge the gap of the students, staff and faculty. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The BCC student leaders spoke several times about a conference that they attend annually for networking, professional development, and to present undergraduate research. One student leader shared specifically how valuable Susan is when it comes to organizing the trip to this conference.

[G]uess the best example is when we had the national conference, we sent eight seniors to the national conference and she was always there if I had a question about logistics, she was always there if I had a question about how to communicate something to people who would potentially go on the trip and she was just a really good voice of reason, like I said, and showing us that we can take on more than we think or we can accomplish things on our own, with her help, but we accomplish things that we set our minds to. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The student leaders from BCC also shared an example of how Susan used her knowledge of the university to help them find a location for a new social event they wanted to implement. When asked about Susan’s involvement in event planning, a student shared how she provided resources for an event the students wanted to try.

[O]ne of the things we tried to do this year was something for Halloween, something seasonal, and I was trying to work with different orchards around the area to maybe do a
tour through a corn maize or go to a pumpkin patch or something, and she gave me three
different places to call. She’s like, “Oh, I’ve been here and I’ve been here and I think they
have something,” and so, she definitely suggests things as far as activities go. (Business
College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Pam shared a story about a connection she had with a former Executive Director of Familia
that illustrated how Pam served as a link to the community and the university. The student leader
struggled throughout her experience with other members of her executive committee. The
organization was not meeting their expectations for their fundraising totals, and she was feeling
tremendous guilt over the issue. Pam had such an impact on her, that the student gave Pam the 1
millionth dollar the organization raised and a personal note on WIND for Kids weekend. The story
is expressed below in Pam’s words.

. . .“Look what’s your purpose here? ” You know? “Think about the things that you’ve
done that are good and you’ve still made accomplishments and. . .” I don’t know, just try to
put into perspective for her a little bit. It was, kind of, at some point bound to happen, and I
don’t remember exactly what I said to her but she thanked me later on in a letter for. .
.yeah, yeah, yeah I have it right in here. . .for, kind of, just reminding her what the focus is
and that was that “Familia” is family, and that’s your primary focus. [WIND for Kids] has
plenty of money, [WIND for Kids] will survive without, you know. . .without X amount of
dollars that maybe you guys raised last year...you all raised last year, [WIND for Kids] is
okay. Your primary focus is family and that’s probably as it should be,” you know, so,
anyway. . .I also have. . .I also have the millionth dollar, they gave me the millionth dollar. .
. ‘I can’t tell you how much better our talk before winter break made me feel. That was a
very rough week for me and talking to you completely made all the difference. You
brought me back down to earth to help me realize why we do this whole [WIND for Kids] thing, and remember it’s not just about the money, and even though our talks are a little longer than most, you know what, I would not have it any other way.’ Anyway, I don’t know what that meant, because I don’t think I talk too much actually, but . . . so yeah, I keep these things in my little. . . (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

The student leaders from Familia also shared several examples of how Pam is a very good resource to their group. Pam has helped the group with financial issues and is a good source of knowledge. Pam used her resources within student affairs to assist the organization in solving a last minute problem. If Pam had not used her connections to the university, Familia’s event may not have been able to occur. The Familia student leaders also spoke to how she has been working with this group longer than anyone and she has knowledge and wisdom to share.

She’s been doing this for longer than any of us have, so she’s just that person that we know that we can rely on to ask her if we’re on the right track or if she’s going to lead us on the right path if we’re straying. . . . (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Providing something tangible is not the only important thing the student leaders in these cases relied on advisors for; having someone serve as a source of wisdom and encourager was also important to them. Susan demonstrates this quality in a variety of ways; specifically, the students said that she will help out in any way she can and when describing her advising approach they specifically used the word “supportive”. These examples are shared here:

[You always know that she’s there and will contribute if you need her or if something is out of line she’ll definitely make it clear, “Okay now maybe we should try this,” but, I would say that her stepping in to the advisor role is definitely a big deal for us... (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)
One of the Familia student leaders used the same terminology when describing Pam.

Yeah, she’s there for support, at the same time, I think, that if we’re not doing what we should be doing, she’ll make you aware of it and say, “Hey, maybe…” not in a negative way, but you know, “You need to send this email out because we need to get information out to the council. . .whatever.” She’s always thinking of stuff like that, but I would say that she’s mainly just there for her. . .as a supportive figure. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Many of the BCC student leaders shared how valuable Susan’s knowledge and wisdom are and how these attributes contribute to their success. Susan demonstrated a strong knowledge of business college policies. The student leaders spoke about her knowledge of policy and procedure and are in large part why they wanted her as their advisor in the first place.

This idea of being an encourager came up in several ways for Pam. The Familia student leaders spoke about how she takes care of everyone and she allows the students to take the lead with a supportive nudge. Examples include bringing the students food to events and the willingness to take on jobs that no one else wants to do, which will also be discussed later related to how the advisors may get too involved at times. When it comes to how she allows the students to take the lead, the students said this about meeting attendance:

[S]he doesn’t want to be the one telling any of us what to do. Like, she really does let us run everything and you always know that she’s there to. . .if you need her for something. Obviously, we always invite her to everything, she always comes to our meetings, our exec meetings, but she really lets us run everything. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)
Pam’s encouragement for the organization as a whole contributes to the connection and relationship building. When asked about her advising approach, Pam said:

Yeah, I think primarily I would fall into the developmental. I think, again, I think cheerleader is probably the word that I think I do the most. It’s just supporting them, encouraging them, being a presence for them, being a sounding board for the Executive Chairperson, primarily. (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Pam also wants to ensure her student leaders understand her motivations behind the comments she shares. She does this to empower her students and remain a source of knowledge and not to direct the agenda.

And, I think as much as we don’t need it, also kind of. . .I don’t know, she always prefaces everything with, “Well, I mean, this is just my opinion, you guys don’t want to do this. . .I mean, it’s just totally an idea, totally came from left field,” and she just keeps going, keeps going. We’re like, “Pam, we’re so excited with what you’re going to say, just say it,” but it’s just nice that, like “female student” was saying, she really does let us do what we want to do and she doesn’t want in any way her opinion to inflict that. . . . (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Student leaders also rely on their advisors to participate in knowledge management. Until now, however, it has been in the context of transition reports (Bloland,1967). Officer transition reports assist organizations when preparing new officers. BCC is now including this in the internal processes as a result of Susan encouraging the organization to find ways to make things easier on the new officers. The student leaders shared the following example:

For a position going forward to. . .one of the things I have to do, which we mentioned last week was the [newsletter] in the back thing, and she’s really interested in making it easier
because the program we use is very difficult to use and stuff, so she actually was really
insistent upon. . .she sent it to the higher ups upstairs. . .marketing thing, to make an easier
way for us. They actually switched it all over into Microsoft Publisher now, it’s way
easier. So, she’s really good about knowing what makes next year even easier position for
people coming next year and we’re actually all writing reports on things we’ve done this
year to kind of put them together and applying them for next year’s exec board. They’ll be
coming to our next week’s exec board meeting actually, for the first time ever. (Familia,
personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Another part of knowledge management involves sharing information about organization
history (Yang & Wang, 2004). The student leaders spoke about Susan helping when she
conveyed how faculty and staff within their college have perceived the organization’s events in
the past.

[A]nd she’s a great asset giving opinions on what staff and faculty in the college might
think of certain events rather than just students. . .a different way of thinking from. . .we’re
students and she’s also from the staff and we work with her a lot to try to bridge the gap of
the students, staff and faculty. (Business College Council, personal communication, April
20, 2015)

The student executive board members also commented on how well Pam takes notes. I
observed this as well. When I attended both executive board meetings, I noticed that Pam took
copious notes on her agenda. Taking notes during organizational meetings is something very
helpful when developing historical information for an organization. Pam is able to refer back to
her meeting notes in order to help both the current board but also future boards. The student
shared the following: “She writes everything down, like, literally everything she writes down. Her
notes for our exec meetings are like when you make the outline, hers would just be covered in pen. It’s really good. . .” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

The student leaders from Familia spoke about advice they have shared from year to year, specifically in the context of Pam’s importance to the organization. They shared that if there is anything you need help with to go to Pam because she has been with them for so long. One student said this:

I always say that Pam is the best person to ask for anything, and I know that our past presidents have always told the next person, “If you ever need anything, she’s the person to go to” because she’s been with us since day one and she knows so much more about everything we’ve been through than any of us could. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The student leaders from Familia also shared several ways they rely on Pam for knowledge management help. Pam helps them to stay on track from year-to-year so they remain true to their mission and the students recognize that she has been around longer than any of them.

She’s been doing this for longer than any of us have, so she’s just that person that we know that we can rely on to ask her if we’re on the right track or if she’s going to lead us on the right path if we’re straying, so yes. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Pam and Susan portray a commitment to developing an understanding of the nature and history of the organization. Having a deep understanding of the organization can help the advisor provide continuity from year to year. There is very rich information from all the data sources that map back to this idea for both of these organizations. One particular example for BCC is when the executive board discussed creating an absentee ballot for their upcoming officer elections. One of the general body members was the person who brought the idea to the
executive board. They spent a good deal amount of time discussing whether they should and how they would pursue this question. The advisor was able to set context for them in describing how previous elections were conducted, how they might be able to amend their constitution allowing for an absentee ballot, and offered to help with its implementation. It was encouraging to witness the depth of Susan’s knowledge of the organization and how it clearly helped the students make a decision that would truly benefit the organization as a whole.

Susan also provides a bigger picture perspective for the organization’s recruitment efforts. Student organizations will often recruit heavily for a few weeks at the beginning of an academic year, even those that have a strong membership numbers and involvement wise. However, Susan makes it a point to explain the importance of continuing to recruit throughout the academic year. One of her students said this:

Yeah, I definitely agree. I would say that sometimes when you’re planning different events and stuff for your organization, you kind of, get tunnel vision on just your active members and you don’t always think about recruiting constantly, not just at the beginning of the year but throughout the entire year, and Susan not being a student, definitely opened our eyes to be the seeing eye lens of just everyone that could be involved in the organization, not just currently involved and was always reminding us of different opportunities to get more people involved. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The students of Familia appreciate Pam’s big picture advice on a variety of issues. Pam is heavily involved in the organization’s executive board selection. The student leaders shared with me that they appreciate her unbiased voice in the process.

Pam is involved in that entire process. So, after. . .once it’s time for exec chair application to go out, she’ll look at the application; she’s not too concerned about that because there’s
always an interview. So, she’ll be on that selection board and any interview, she’s there; and then, she’s in the deciding process, so anytime that the selection committee meets, she’ll go to that, give her two cents, normally towards the end, after everybody has said everything. . .so, we definitely have an extensive process based on what I have compared to other organizations and she’s involved in every single part of it. She doesn’t have to be, but we definitely. . .that’s like one thing I really appreciate her for because she doesn’t always know everyone because we’ll get a lot of general org members that she probably hasn’t met before, she won’t know their involvement, which is kind of nice, she’ll be unbiased. She’ll be like, “Well, do you think this person is going to be good at this?” and we’ll be like, “Oh, they come to this and this and this,” and she’ll go like, “But does that mean they’ll be good at it?” So, she’s definitely really, really involved in preparing for that. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Both organizations’ members discussed that they also rely on their advisors to be present at meetings and events. Both advisors attend general body meetings, executive board meetings, and they attend a few social events throughout the academic year. A student leader from BCC spoke to how valuable it is to have Susan at their weekly, executive board meetings.

Yeah, I think the unique thing is that she sits in on our weekly exec meetings and that really helps. If she didn’t sit in on those, obviously it’d be one hour less a week that we’re with her, but even if she doesn’t say anything at all, she’s there and will contribute when she needs to be, but just knowing that she’s there when we have a question or whatever, I mean, most of the time it’s us that carry the conversation, which is nice because we don’t feel like we’re pressured to have to say something a certain way, you know what I mean?
She’s not. . .she never oversteps her bounds, but she’s always right there. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Pam, from Familia, actually gives her time over the summer for a meeting. The executive board meets for the first time together during the weekend of a summer event in the town where the institution is located. “[B]ut I think I really got to interact with her over [a festival] this weekend. We had our first exec board meeting, so, that’s when we really got to talk to her about everything” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

Pam also tends to feel guilty for not being available to her students. The Executive Director shared this comment:

She’ll also. . .she totally doesn’t need to do this, but if she’s going to be gone for three days from [town], she will write me a novel of an email explaining where she’s going, what’s she’s doing, why she has to leave, and she’s so sorry and if she can do anything while she’s gone, she will have this time to be available, she will have this email, this phone number, and I’m like, ‘We’re going to be great, it’s okay,’ But. . .and she would always randomly check in on me over the summer. Like, she’d call. . .like before she had met any of these guys, and she’d be like, “You know, how’s this going, how’s this person? How’s your summer?” (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The student leaders report how committed Pam really is to this organization and to the students’ success. The student leaders even acknowledge that Pam should not feel so guilty about having limited availability for a short period of time.

Both organizations recognize that the advisor serves as a sounding board. Both advisors recognize this as part of their role as well. Danielle De Sawal (2007) wrote a dissertation on the various student organization advisor approaches. The results of this study showed four types of
approaches including include programmatic, administrative, developmental or a combination of these three approaches. When asked if she aligned herself with one of the four approaches, Susan’s response was “other” or the combination of the three. She described it this way:

That’s what I’m thinking I mean it kind of hits all of them, because it’s working with the students in the administrative field to keep them, it’s like when we had, hey guys, you guy take the part facing outside you can’t do it in here, so it’s those kinds of things. Its following rules, you can’t, if you want to reserve a room you can’t do, you can’t have movie night with popcorn sleeping bags, kind of stuff, so it’s kind of guiding them with that kind of stuff, but then it’s also working with them on it’s like last year we had a couple of incidents where there was some hard feelings among the student exec board and so, it’s being kind of the sounding board and having them think things through and before you say something to them, so it’s kind of like even mothering them, I mean I don’t know I mean, I guess and then guiding them with okay, the national conference and this is a resume builder and did you apply for [a scholarship]. So it’s kind of, it’s helping them with that and then it’s our open house and then it’s helping them with, hey guys, we need mentors, we need people for shadowing and so, it’s all of that kind of built into one because I don’t know I guess I would fit under the other is the way I see myself as the other so, as the combination of all of them and then some I don’t know, it’s kind of like being their mom. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

The Familia student leaders also made comments about Pam being a sounding board. I just think she’s like a good source of knowledge and wisdom and information. . .she’s like someone you can just go to if you need to bounce ideas off someone. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)
In addition, Pam shared that she serves as a sounding board when she needs to help reframe what the students are thinking. Student organizations try new things every year. There are times though that Pam feels she needs to ask whether what they want to do is the most appropriate thing. She encourages them to think about when it is most appropriate to try new things. Is it this year or the next year?

So, sometimes my conversations are, kind of, about trying to help them, I don’t know, with the exec chairs in particular just, kind of, remember what the focus is on what you’re doing and remember you’ve got…you all are doing a lot of good things and is this, this new initiative really, really critical for this year or is this the year that you lay your ground work for next year’s group to actually do that? So, trying to help them have those kinds of conversations about, “You don’t need to do it all now,” “Can we have conversations about that this year?” “What’s most critical for you as a leader of this organization for, to accomplish this year.” (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Both Pam and Susan also assess and manage risk on behalf of the organization at times. When I attended the money counting event and Pam was spending time with the executive board members, the student in charge of coordinating the weekend was updating Pam on the weekend’s outcomes. Pam conveyed concern when she asked for more details regarding how many students had gone on out-of-town trips to fundraise.

Another form of risk management the advisors performed was understanding the organizations’ financial operations. It was mentioned earlier that Susan has suggested to the student leaders that they need to pursue more fundraising efforts for the overall organization’s budget. The college has traditionally supported the organization financially, but the college was under budget constraints as a result of state budget constraints. Susan tries to best prepare the
organization so that it can avoid situations where it does not have the funds to cover their activities.

While Pam understands both Familia’s financial policies and those policies affecting all recognized student organizations, she still remains relatively removed from the financial business of the organization. She leaves it up to the student leaders to manage the money. This is an example of how Pam and Susan differ. They interpret their role differently in the area of finances and their respective backgrounds influence these interpretations. Pam is a student affairs professional and is taught to empower students to lead the way. Susan works in a college administrative department where they are more inclined to exert more control of things like financial transactions. Pam has stepped in when absolutely necessary and has access to the organization’s budget documentation; however, she still remains removed from it for the most part so the student leaders can take ownership. One student leader said:

She doesn’t have. . .okay, so we have our Google group where everything happens and she’s on that. She understands maybe five percent, she calls me and is like, “So, I got an email, how do I open it? ” and I’ll be like, “Pam.” She has access to everything we have access to and if she was that curious she could see how much we raised exactly from this one trip for [fundraising event] and things like that; but. . .and anytime she asks me what’s our total right now, I have no objection to that. . .I’ll tell her but she has access to it, but she’s definitely…. . .think that’s how Pam is because she’s so, “Are your members having fun? Is this happening? ” like she’s not really worried about that and since she’s in every exec meeting, she hears that this is how much that’s in our ASA, and she’ll write it down in her little notes, but yeah, she’s definitely. . .not like she’s not involved, but she’s not
involved, if that makes sense. She’s just...it’s not like her biggest concern, which is kind
of nice. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

The advisors in these two cases also have a strong knowledge of event planning. Sponsoring events is a cornerstone of the life of a student organization. This certainly can mean very different things based on the nature of the organization. For example, for Familia, the money counting events are very specific to an organization like Familia. When Pam first became the group’s advisor, she began attending these events in order to fully understand the nature of the organization and to be supportive of the organization. Now that she has a good understanding of the various events Familia sponsors, she actually feels comfortable challenging the students on some of the events they consider. At one point the group considered registering to walk in the homecoming parade, and Pam was not sure if it was something worth the time, effort, and money it entails. The students conveyed the following:

I remember from this year, we were talking about the homecoming parade and how we were going to be involved in it; she was like, “Well, is that really necessary? How is that going to benefit Familia? What is Familia going to get from the homecoming parade?” And she just, kind of, asked questions to verify that what you’re doing is right and necessary and like, we were still hooked on the homecoming parade, but she wanted to see what we thought about it, how that would benefit us. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Susan is also highly involved in planning and implementing events for BCC as previously outlined. She suggested and even hosted part of the social event the group sponsored at the recreational park, she helped organize the group’s barbeque that was for the college, and is

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involved with putting the finances together for the conference the organization members attend on an annual basis.

Assisting an organization to set expectations and goals is another documented role advisors play. As was outlined in the literature review, advisors need to help students define and develop goals and perceive their needs accurately (Crockett, 1978). Crockett (1978) said this in the context of academic advising, however we see here it is significant for student organization advising as well. Susan pushed the group to pursue more fundraising opportunities in an effort to assist BCC attain its goals. When asking her about what her expectations are of the BCC student leaders, she responded saying that she hopes that they simply fulfill their responsibilities and do what they are supposed to do. Overall, she hopes they respect each other and work well together.

I want them to I mean, I guess I want them to do what they’re supposed to do, president is just a president and he is the one in charge. Vice president, should take over when the president is not available or whatever, I just want them to do what they’re supposed to do basically, try and hold them to that if they can, it’s like okay, if they can’t then we have to have a sit down. . .I think respect for each other, to work together as a group and success all the way around. . . . (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Pam has expectations of the Familia students; however she mentioned that she has never communicated them to the students. Schuh (1987) states that expectations are important in understanding one’s advising style. Then in extension, understanding your advisor style is tied to being an effective advisor. Having an advisor communicate their expectations of the students will be addressed in the discussion chapter. When asked Pam about her expectations of her students, she shared the statement below:
Do I have any, that’s what I’m struggling with, do I have any expectations of them other than to. . .I want them to communicate with each other. I’ve seen that that certainly helps them. I want to be connected to. . .I want to know, kind of, what they’re. . .I want. . .do I have expectations of them? Sorry, I don’t know, I’ve never really communicated this to them, but I want them. . .if they really want to create a sense of a family and belonging in the organization, and they really want to, you know, care for their families, then those things come to mind for me as important. (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

She also mentioned she hopes they keep her updated through the organization listserv, direct emails, text messaging, etc. She expects to be involved in the executive board selection, and for the entire organization to be open to any student who wishes to be involved with Familia.

As different roles surfaced from the data, they formed this common theme and demonstrated the impact the student organization advisors had on these two specific organizations. In addition to the impact on individual student leaders and overall organizations, this study also highlighted various ways in which the act of advising impacted the advisors themselves.

**Impact on Student Organization Advisors**

The previous two sections focused on two of the three dominant strains resulting from the data. These areas dealt with the impact of the advisor on individual students and the organization. The third dominant area of this study focuses on the impact student organization advising has on the advisor. Namely, this part considers the ways in which advisors must navigate various personal and professional boundaries and decide when to intervene with the individual students and the organization as a whole.
Reviewing the engagement model of academic advising and the active student organization advising approach provides some context for how the advisors in this study established their boundaries. The engagement model involves advisors actively assisting students in identifying goals and objectives (Yarbrough, 2002). Additionally, the active approach consists of serving maintenance functions, assisting the group in its growth and development, and working with students on program content (Bloland, 1967). In both of these cases, the organization advisors demonstrated a willingness to become actively involved in a variety of ways with the organization, more than that of other organizations in which students reported they were members. Examples included inviting students to their homes for events, using professional capital to assist the group, engaging in discussions about alcohol at events, helping keep organizational activities on track and safeguarding the organization, and interceding when students are potentially at risk.

Before outlining the types of boundaries that were extrapolated from the data and when the advisors chose to intervene, considering what the advisors and student leaders shared about boundaries provides some insight and context. First, when asked what it means to be an effective advisor, Pam shared the following:

Generally, I think effective advisors let the students do what they want to do. It’s their organization, I’m not the president; I’m not their supervisors. Help them see the pros and cons of things and try to figure out what their potential repercussions maybe of their decisions, right? (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

The student leaders also shared how Pam does not over step boundaries but still contributes. The student leaders said that they felt comfortable sharing with Pam whatever is on their minds. When comparing Familia to other organizations they are in, the students shared that they do not feel the same level of comfort with other advisors. They can say what they think and
look for feedback from Pam. Student leaders from BCC also said something similar in that they like that she is there and recognize she does not overstep. A student said this:

Yeah, I think the unique thing is that she sits in on our weekly exec meetings and that really helps. If she didn’t sit in on those, obviously it’d be one hour less a week that we’re with her, but even if she doesn’t say anything at all, she’s there and will contribute when she needs to be, but just knowing that she’s there when we have a question or whatever, I mean, most of the time it’s us that carry the conversation, which is nice because we don’t feel like we’re pressured to have to say something a certain way, you know what I mean? She’s not...she never oversteps her bounds, but she’s always right there. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

When engaging in these various ways the advisors were actively involved, the advisors had to ask themselves at various points what constituted acceptable boundaries in carrying out their advisor functions. These ideas of boundaries and intervention turned out to be relatively complex with many components at play. It is noteworthy that there was a difference in style when comparing what the two advisors found to be acceptable and not acceptable. In addition, another piece to setting boundaries and determining when to intervene was deciding when an advisor may have gotten too involved when agreeing to engage in an activity that could be thought as beyond the scope of their role.

Student affairs professionals who oversee student organization operations on college campuses usually do not want student organization advisors to be doing the work for the students. However, there are times when it can be appropriate for an advisor to step in and actively participate and even at times to exercise authority. Establishing these boundaries can be difficult determinations to make (Reynolds, 2008).
These two case studies showed that student organization advising can involve determining and adhering to certain self-imposed boundaries. In the study, the advisors had to decide of when to act or not to act and when to draw professional and personal lines, including time commitments, in terms of involvement with the organization and, to some extent, with individual students. This part of the chapter discusses how the advisors in this study sought to establish appropriate boundaries.

**Personal and professional boundaries.**

The process of putting personal and professional boundaries in place involved doing so with both student leaders and general body members. One instance when the advisors were willing to allow for some flexibility on a personal level was when they would invite student leaders and general body members into their homes. Susan shared a time when the BCC executive board wanted to plan a social event somewhere local but off campus. Susan suggested a local recreational park and in order to make the event more appealing, Susan also offered to host the meal at her home. Susan conveyed that she believes inviting students to her home can break down barriers and puts students at ease around her, opening the opportunity to a closer relationship. For the student leaders in the BCC, one student said this:

[S]he’ll talk to you and she’ll get personal with you and I really feel like if there was anything I needed, I’ll just go into her office and talk to her about anything, about [BCC], about classes, about my life in general and she’s just always there. She’s extremely personable and it just. . .you can really tell that she cares, she genuinely cares about you, and as I said earlier with [Andrew], when he came back, it’s not just like oh, you’re here in college and you have a relationship with Susan, it’s clear they have a relationship that exists beyond graduation and that she is actually someone who is a valuable person and
will become a valuable person in your life beyond graduation. (Business College Council, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Personal boundaries with students was one of the areas the two advisors differed in style. Contrary to how Susan approached boundaries with organization members, Pam did not find it imperative that the general members know her on a personal level. When asked what her interactions are like with the organization as a whole, Pam said the following:

Those would primarily be just going to those meetings and I don’t, I wouldn’t say that I interact a whole lot with them, I go into the stands on [WIND for Kids] weekend and I stand there so some general members might see me there. . .Besides looking a little older. . .looking a lot older that they do. . .they probably. . .I don’t know if they do. I try not to worry about that too much but, yeah, they probably should know who I am. I know the exec team they, when they think of it, they introduce me somehow during the semester, the first semester usually, they’ll say who I am, but I’m okay with the general org not really knowing who I am. (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

While Pam may not engage personally with general members, Pam does allow executive board members in Familia to call her at all hours when they are upset over issues such as operational problems or issues with particular peer student leaders. While the students may appreciate this, it could be interpreted as going beyond an acceptable personal boundary for many advisors as self-care and time apart from students has been found to be important to maintain quality work-life balance (Cusker, Gregory, Guthrie, and Woods, 2005).

Susan shared the need to set boundaries as well and put it in the context of students sharing parts of their personal lives. She has felt the need to ask the students to be more discerning with what they share at times and said the following:
Well, it kind of brings a really strange situation, it brings up the topic that was like oh, I didn’t want to hear that, kind of setting up boundaries I don’t, I guess I should when “E-Board member” yeah, she lived with Kyle girlfriend so, those two were roommates along with couple of other girls and [organization member] was having issues with Kyle being over at their apartment so she would commit and she would vent, so and got him sleeping over him doing I’m thinking wait a minute so, it’s like I can’t help with that and I really shouldn’t hear this because I don’t need to hear that he is sitting around in his boxer shorts, but this is what she wanted to relay me and I’m thinking oh, my God, so at one point I think I finally said, I can only help in my BCC role, I can be a sounding board, but please limit what you tell me because, then it gives me a whole different perspective, so I kind of have to back off a little bit so that kind of yeah, so I mean yeah, providing a boundary line yeah, I have to figure that out. . . . (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Through member checking, a follow-up question was asked regarding what the advisors felt was acceptable involvement in students’ lives. Susan’s response was:

A student's personal life is their own and I prefer to not be a sounding board in their personal relationships. If I can assist them within the realm of work ethic I do but try to keep their personal business their own unless of course they need someone to talk to. I have had that on occasion but rare. (Susan, personal communication, December 21, 2016)

Similar to the above example about Pam allowing her students to call her at any time, communication methods provided another way the advisors set a professional boundary with the individual student leaders. Susan has intentionally set a boundary for her students related to text messaging and social media. She expresses that while the students have offered to include her on
the organization’s social media platforms, she feels that is a space for students only. Susan said this:

[A]s far as text messaging and things like that they don’t really send me anything that’s not I mean they do have a Facebook page or something that they and I don’t get on and I don’t and maybe it’s not even Facebook, it’s something that they get on and they just do stupid stuff when I’m thinking oh, I don’t want any part of that yeah, I don’t want that, I don’t. They said would you want to see it no, it’s okay, I don’t want to see it, it’s their student life stuff I don’t need to see that. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

It was mentioned in the advisor roles section, that using professional capital is a way the advisors serve as an organizational resource. Using professional capital and contacts was another professional boundary both advisors were willing to cross. Susan does this quite often. One particular example is that she will share important things that are on within BCC’s college that the student leaders should know since she works in the administrative offices. Susan is also willing to use her professional contacts to assist with BCC’s programs. The group was discussing an event where it hoped to barbeque their own food and Susan let them know that the college’s graduate student organization had a similar event and that she could connect the BCC student leadership to the graduate student leadership. A third example is that Susan used to work for the current university president when he was the college’s dean. She has been willing to invite him to some of the organization’s events with a direct email to either him or his current administrative assistant.

Pam was also comfortable to set boundaries in which she used her personal capital when stepping in to help the organization’s logistics chair, who is charge of the finances when a last minute emergency came up. The organization was holding an annual social event where security
was needed, and the purchase order that was required was never obtained. The student described the situation in detail:

[A]ctually this week we had an issue with the police for our formal where the guy…when she called me, she was like; “I need you to go to the University police.” I was like, “What!” Well anyway, when you have so many students, you have to have an auxiliary officer there, so we just had to have an auxiliary officer at the formal, at the door. So. . . .Yeah, but anyway, so the way we’ve always paid them in the past and the way that the guy. . .”male staff member” from the reservation office that we were going to pay is that they bill us and then we have to pay in 30 days, but Pam had gotten a call from her friend at the student office. . .the [financial] office that we were supposed to pay them using a purchase order. This was literally the day before formal. . . and we ended up getting it all sorted out, it was a pain but we thought that it was really great that she had a connection in the [financial office] and that they had called her and let her know what was going on and completely helped alleviate the confusion with that. . . but that was really helpful and I was really happy that she let me know. Otherwise I don’t know what would have happened, so. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Not all of the data that related to boundaries were exclusively personal or professional. Pam and Susan noted the pull of both professional and personal responsibilities. Both advisors spoke about needing to be comfortable with not attending every meeting and every event of their respective organizations. While they are both very committed to the students and the groups, they recognized a need to separate themselves at times from organizational events. But, as this study reinforced that no hardline rules exist regarding when to be involved and when to hold back, individual advisors are left to make such determinations. When asked about how she challenges
her student leaders, Pam’s response brought this issue to light because she shared concerns that perhaps she was not doing enough for Familia, stating:

I wonder if I challenge them ever. Do they challenge me? Yes, and it’s not. . . it’s more of like an indirect challenge, and it’s more about. . . I feel often times that I should be doing more, does that make any sense? Like I should be going. . . I should be going to more of their fundraising things. I should be going to more of their family oriented, the Wind Foundation for Kids family events. I feel like over the past several years I’ve, kind of, slacked off a little bit in my involvement with them, I was real gung ho at the beginning. For the first few years I was. . . I felt more connected to the exec teams, I felt like I knew more of their names and things like that and, so, I, I learn their names, I do, eventually, it just takes me a while; but they challenge me in kind of, it’s more like a selfish, or self-interest perspective sort of challenge of like kind of, am I doing enough for them as their advisor at this point? Am I still the right person they need where there’s a time for them to work with somebody else? (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Finally, perhaps the most striking action Susan took related to an individual student that crossed both personal and professional boundaries was when she discovered that a student was living out of his truck. She invited him to live at her home with her and her husband. She discovered the student was a veteran and had yet to receive his funding from the Veteran’s Association. He ended up staying at her home for three months. She reported developing a relationship with the student like that of a son. He concentrated on school, and she exposed him to new life experiences. Tragically, however, when the student left for his home in North Carolina for the Thanksgiving holiday, he was killed in a traffic accident.
To this day, Susan maintains a strong relationship with the student’s mother. This particular instance has serious implications for the boundaries individuals working in higher education should set related to their relationships with students. Susan even mentioned that thinking back on this now, she realized that she should not have done this, but when it came down to it, a student was living in his truck. This was another example and one where the advisor recognized that she may have gotten too involved with the situation. From this and the previous examples, the personal and professional boundaries come up in a variety of situations.

As advisors were setting both personal and professional boundaries with their students and organizations overall, there were also situations during which they were making decisions whether or not to intervene. This sub-theme is then further divided by intervention with organizational activities and policy or procedure and reputational issues.

**When to intervene and not to intervene.**

As stated earlier, through my experience as a student affairs professional working with student organizations the question of when to intervene is asked frequently. The evidence from this study illustrated a variety of situations in which intervention was appropriate but also possibly inappropriate.

**Intervention with organizational activities.**

The first sub-theme related to when to intervene is related to involvement in organizational activities. One boundary Pam found appropriate involved discussing the presence of alcohol at organizational activities and sharing her concerns with their potentially risky decision making. There was one instance that I observed during one of the executive board meetings for Familia where the conversation touched on the presence of alcohol a couple of times. Overall, the discussion was about social and bonding events. The student leaders went
over both “dry” and “wet” events. Part of the discussion involved whether or not to plan “wet”
events when both executive members and general body members were invited. Several of the
board members mentioned that they were doubtful students in lower level leadership positions
wanted to spend time with the entire executive board. The student leaders were saying some
pretty rude comments about the other “lower level” student leaders. The executive board
members did not think the other student leaders wanted to hang out with the executives, so they
reasoned that alcohol would have to be present in order to get the captains to the social. The
executives even started discussing details such as having jello shots there and that certain
captains were assigned the responsibility to clean up after their “family” members who might get
sick at a social. With literature on consulting outlines that consultants are often used to identify
problems an organization may not recognize (Bergan, 1977), this is an instance where consulting
techniques of intervention can serve useful.

At this point, Pam decided to intervene and highlight her concerns and displeasure. She
made it clear to them that it is very important to plan to socialize with the general membership
and to form relationships with them as they are the future of the organization. She pointed out
that those members would be the future executive board members. She said that she did not like
the conversation and hearing about the fact the students felt there was a need to have alcohol in
order to get everyone together and that they expected and prepared for students to get sick at
these types of events. The student leaders reacted by saying they understood what she was
saying and decided to move on to a new topic. Even though Pam chose to intervene here, the
topic of alcohol is an area Pam struggled in determining whether or not to intervene. She tries to
remain uninvolved but still feels a certain obligation to get involved.
Sometimes I am challenged when I’m sitting in those meeting and they’re talking about things that are a little... the “dry”... the “wet” socials, in the context of my work and residence life are hard for me to kind of listen to. I kind of sit there and try not to pay attention but I feel like I need to pay attention and then I struggle with not knowing what to do with that because I know they do it. (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

As Pam felt issues related to alcohol was an acceptable boundary to cross, she also got involved when the executive director needed some reassurance in how she was managing the organization; this links back to the role the advisors play as encouragers. In this episode, the executive director at the time was feeling pressure from the rest of the group regarding the amount of money they were raising. Considering the core purpose of this organization, this represented an important concern for members. Pam shared how she chose to intervene by putting time into reassuring and encouraging the student leader seeking to reframe the situation:

Last December, the last December, the last years’ exec chair was really struggling to, she was getting some feedback from other people on her team about we’re not making as much money, we are not going to make as money as we did the year before, and this was the first time in my time with them that they had kind of had a dip and they knew they were going to have a dip, and so I kind, I didn’t really tell her anything new that they needed to do as an organization, but she says that it was a good thing for me to have had a conversation with her at that winter time December, because she was all, it was December, she was exhausted from the semester and she was getting some pressure from some of the executive people... and I tried to just tell her, ‘Look what’s your purpose here?’ You know? ‘Think about the things that you’ve done that are good and you’ve
still made accomplishments and... I don’t know, just try to put into perspective for her a little bit. It was, kind of, at some point bound to happen, and I don’t remember exactly what I said to her but she thanked me later on in a letter for... yeah, yeah, yeah I have it right in here... for, kind of, just reminding her what the focus is and that was that Familia is family, and that’s your primary focus. [WIND for Kids] has plenty of money, [WIND for Kids] will survive without, you know... (Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Keeping organizational activities on track is an additional area where both advisors felt it was appropriate to intervene. For example, Susan spoke very firmly in her desire to keep gossip during official organizational meetings at a minimum because it would distract the students from the pre-determined agenda. She said that when she hears people trying to “stir the pot” she will step in to ensure these conversations happen at more appropriate times. When asked what kind of advice Susan has given to help the organization be more successful she said this:

I mean it was chatter, I had to advise I mean, come on guys we can’t have the chatter, we got to stop that... it’s like stirring a pot that don’t need to be stirred, we don’t want mixed messages getting out there so, it’s kind of advising of, be careful how you handle that, stop the, let’s stop the gossip, let’s stop the comments if someone has a question that they don’t, you aren’t comfortable answering or you’ve already answered it and they’re still badgering send them to me and I’ve never had any of them come other than the exec board so, it’s kind of a, we don’t want, we don’t want to stir up stuff that doesn’t need stirring. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

While there are appropriate levels of intervention, again, we see examples within the time spent in organizational events boundary where the advisor potentially may have crossed the line of
too much involvement from the perspective of many working with student organizations. The student leaders from Familia shared several examples of how Pam, according to them, goes above and beyond without them asking. However, when thinking about boundaries, these are potential examples of an advisor taking on too much responsibility. In one instance, discussed earlier, Pam showed up early to the organization’s end-of-year formal dance and was one of the last people to leave after the event. From one perspective, such devotion could potentially help to instill a level of selflessness in students. But, it also raises questions regarding how much is too much in terms of advisor involvement and why were the students not filling these responsibilities. One student shared:

She’s also so incredibly selfless, like it doesn’t matter what it is. Formal, she hates formal as itself, she showed up half an hour early and she was eating, and she could see that I was flustered because I got there late and couldn’t finish the prep by myself, so she dropped her food and she finished helping me set up, and then throughout the event, if anything happened, she would come to me, ask me what she thought I would do and then gave me advice on it. Towards the end, she also stayed an extra 45 minutes to help clean. She’s just always so actively there and she doesn’t view herself as in some kind of position where she doesn’t need to do that, she’s just actually supervising us and making sure we’re on track. She just gives everything that she can, so that helps me a lot in my position because I have to remember that I have to give what I can to the org and I have to make the events what they can be for the members, not for me. Like, I don’t have to take pride in the event; I want the members to take pride in the event. So, that’s it’s built it a lot for me, I need to remember to stop being selfish and start being more selfless. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)
This boundary of intervening in organizational activities was difficult for both advisors. It was also something that fluctuated from year to year as to the amount of time they have been willing to contribute. The advisors’ involvement was more than just about guidance and teaching; at some points it did rise to the use of an authoritative voice. The second piece to when to intervene is when there were policy or procedural violations and the organizations’ reputations were an issue.

**Applicable policies or procedures and reputational issues.**

In this section will outline the information that emerged from this study’s data related to applicable policies or procedures and reputational issues. When it comes to policies and procedures, I am referring to when organizations have either violated them or discussed intentionally violating them. Instances of this kind of intervention demonstrated the advisors seeking to steer conversations in ways that the advisors felt more appropriate and away from things such as intentionally violating policies. There were times when the advisors did intervene and others when they chose to remain silent. During one of the Familia executive board meetings I observed, the students get held up in conversations around getting caught violating a WIND for Kids policy. Similarly, the group engaged in a separate conversation about how organizations go out to raise funds during the special fundraising weekends and report each other when they break the rules. The student leaders were making harsh comments like “back stabbers” and “let’s play hard ball.” They discussed how they could intimidate the students from other organizations and strategize how they would either find a way around the policies or intentionally violate the policies.

Pam decided to intervene in these situations. At one point she interjected, asking whether what they were discussing was in line with Familia’s mission. This is something Pam does often and came up in her interview, the executive board interview, and the meetings and events I
observed. Pam would interject but then give a caveat that she was not telling them what to do. She said that they should think about their reputation. She posed questions to them asking if they wanted to be known as the organization that makes “shady” decisions or the organization that always gets other organizations in trouble. Pam’s intervention style is illustrated here because we see she made it clear she was not dictating to the group what to do, the students still have the authority, while at the same time she is seeking with a suggestive intervention that the students are not making good decisions. The student leaders acknowledged that Pam made valuable points and they decided to move on from this conversation. This area of intervention connects back to the role advisors play in the ethical development students experience in college. Pam served as a catalyst here to push her students to think more deeply and critically about the decisions they were making.

University room reservation policy violations came up for both organizations. The policy’s level of severity seemed to determine whether or not the advisor got involved. While I was at one of the executive board meetings, Pam got involved when several other students from another organization kept peeking their heads into the room. Eventually, one of those students asked if Familia had the room reserved and the executive director said that they did have it reserved so the student left. As soon as he closed the door, the executive director said that they in fact did not have the room reserved and that part of the reason they do not have a room reserved is because they do not like the woman they have to work with to reserve space. Pam spoke up right away about how inappropriate that was and went as far as to go apologize to the student who asked. In effect, Pam moved from an encourager or supportive role to one of an independent agent role in this situation. Conversely, in a separate conversation, the Familia student leaders discussed how they
plan to move furniture around in meetings and take over unused rooms, which are also clear policy violations, and Pam then kept quiet.

Another example of organizational intervention related to policy violations was when the executive director of Familia was leading a conversation about a change in the WIND for Kids policies, the organization for which Familia raises money. The policy was regarding the organization’s upcoming fundraising weekend travel to raise money. The Executive Director was very concerned about how it was going to impact Familia in comparison to similar organizations. They were also discussing how organizations would set each other up to get caught violating policy and would report each other. The students were calling their peers “back-stabbers” and said how they, as an organization, should try and intimidate other people in other organizations. In this instance, Pam chose not to intervene but I observed her exhibiting non-verbal forms of communication indicating that she was clearly uncomfortable with the conversation and wanted to say something but allowed the students to continue without her input. At least in terms of the group conversation, she opted to refrain from interjecting her thoughts.

Susan also demonstrated some inconsistency when intervening in situations related to room reservation policy. BCC planned to hold a “pie-in-face” activity during their general board meeting. As the student leaders brought out the pies, Susan stepped in very quickly to ensure they did not damage the floors and had them move the activity outside. However, at both general body meetings I attended, they gave out free food at the beginning of the meeting, which violates the policy of having food in classroom space. Despite these different circumstances, these examples do show advisors determining they need to exercise a certain level of authority by taking action with the student leaders. Overall, when considering how both advisors intervened or did not
intervene with policy violations, the level of violation severity seemed to factor into the advisors’ decision.

Maintaining a positive reputation was directly linked with policy and procedure issues in this boundary. As discussed in the advisors roles section, Pam finds it very important to ensure Familia has a strong and favorable reputation among the other similar organizations and wants to safeguard that reputation. Pam seems to align with the idea of collectivism in which the good of the organization usurps the wants of the individual (Wanger et al., 1992). Viewing her role in safeguarding the organization’s reputation served as an important trigger for when she would interject herself into discussions or decision-making. Pam specifically shared how concerned she is with Familia’s reputation.

I think it’s important for me, it’s important that Familia has a good reputation, and I . . . .sometimes I don’t know what the reputation of Familia is. I know that sometimes WIND for Kids orgs get reputations for being certain ways, and I try to get a sense of what the organization’s reputation is but it is hard sometimes to know what that is when you’re part of it, you know? Sometimes I worry that Familia has a reputation as being kind of, one of the more party oriented organizations, and that worries me a little bit but they, I know that in the, in the exec team meetings they talk about that and they talk about having more “dry” socials than “wet” socials. Although I know they do have “wet” socials and they want their [sub-committees] to have “wet” and “dry” socials and all that stuff. So, yes I worry…

(Pam, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

The Familia student leaders also spoke to the fact that Pam plays a big role in safeguarding the mission of the organization. When asked about how Pam helped Familia flourish, the students shared that without her, they would have lost track of the organization’s purpose multiple times.
As with the issue involving adhering to relevant rules and standards, Pam engages in a process where she encourages students to consider the meaning of the group’s mission and how that should guide the organization. One student shared this:

I think that without her input, without her being there, we might have lost track of what Familia really means. Like, what we’re really here to do, like [a female interviewee] kept saying, she’s always there to tell us, well is that what you’re supposed to be doing? Is that why Familia was founded, that kind of stuff, and so we definitely do stray from that. . . .

(Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Involvement in ensuring the longevity of the organization is also another way the advisors chose to intervene to ensure a good reputation. A student shared a time when Pam helped remind the students of the real purpose of Familia beyond raising money when the executive board was getting worried about their fundraising totals. They shared this about how Pam was able to help put things into perspective for the students:

Yeah, like a specific example of that was when we talked about the first [fundraising trip], she just sat us down and she said, “Listen, you’ve got to forget about the dollar value itself. Any penny counts, you have to remember who you are and how you push.” It gets really important that. . .we always say that some of the best experiences you have in Familia are the ones that you have on canning trips. You meet your closest friends during those [fundraising trips]. So, she just says, “You know, if you get the amount of money that you’ve raised by the end of the day, it’ll come with the amount of number that you have going out in these trips, rather more focus on people to go and to like you as a person,” because the most important part is to like everyone else. . .and it’s such a social aspect and
she likes us to remember that old time and she pushes it so much that it helps define us and keep us on track with who we are. (Familia, personal communication, October 19, 2015)

Susan has also made her voice heard related to the reputation piece of this boundary through her involvement with ensuring BCC’s longevity. This instance is a bit different compared to Familia. When asked how involved she is in the financial matters of the organization, she shared that the group manages most of it and for any money the college provides for them, the college financial staff assists the organization. Instead, Susan has given them larger scale in advice. She shared that she has spoken up and said this:

They need to pursue fund raising that’s going to be a big part of this year. They need to pursue some fund raising because, budget crunches and stuff like that and the college of course provides the food for all our meetings and I basically said you guys are going to have to try to figure out a way of helping, support some of your funding so that way the college isn’t doing, so there [are] some things that we’re working on as far as getting, advising issues going. (Susan, personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Advisors are faced with making the decision to intervene or not to intervene in a variety of contexts both with individuals and the overall organization. In general terms based on the collective data, advisors remained on the outskirts of the activity when things were progressing. The vast majority of the examples of when advisors were involved filter down to when the organization was struggling, when they needed some assistance accomplishing something, or when they came across they needed another perspective. When meetings were progressing, the advisors took notes and listened. When tasks were completed, the advisors gave them praise. When students were able to help one another, the advisors remained silent.
Summary

This multiple case study found that student organization advisors impact individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole. The study also shed light how advising impacts the advisors by deciding what was acceptable and unacceptable to do for student leaders and student organizations. The first section includes two narratives describing each of the two student organizations, or cases. The following section then outlines the impact on individual student leaders. Student organization advisors use several tools to develop open student-advisor relationships through inter-personal connections grounded in rapport and trust. These open relationships then fed into certain outcomes that are impactful for individual student leaders. These outcomes include effective knowledge, skills and life strategies.

The next section outlined how student organization advisors impact student organizations as a whole. These results align very closely with the already established literature. The advisors impacted the organizations through the many roles they play which include encourager and keeper of wisdom, a participant in knowledge management, a sounding board and risk manager. The final section then discussed the difficulty advisors experience in establishing boundaries and when to intervene. There are things advisors are willing to do and what they are unwilling to do which do not always fall solely on either side of the spectrum. A third element to this theme was when advisors cross the line into do too much for the organization. The next chapter will focus conclusions and recommendations for student organization advisors and student affairs professionals whose responsibility it is to train advisors.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine successful student organization advisors and how they contribute to the growth and development of individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole. Using a multi-case study design, data were collected using multiple methods. I conducted highly structured interviews with two advisors and the organizations’ executive boards. I also observed meetings and events of both organizations. This final chapter reviews and discusses the findings of this study. Implications and further research are also discussed; specifically, for those working with college and university student organizations.

Discussion

The research questions and sub-questions are as follows:

- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the overall growth and development of the organization?
  - What roles do advisors play for the organization?
- How does the student organization advisor contribute to the growth and development of the individual student leaders?
  - What lessons do student leaders learn from advisors?
  - What are student leaders applying to their personal lives they take from time with their advisor?

The three primary thematic areas that emerged from this research were the impact of advisors on individual student leader growth and development; the impact of advisors on organizational growth and development; and the impact on advisors. The sub-themes grouped under the “individual student leader” theme were how advisors work to build open student-advisor relationships and effective knowledge, skills and life strategies students learn as outcomes of
student-advisor relationships. The sub-theme connected to the “organizational” theme was advisor roles. Two sub-themes emerged related to the “impact on advisors,” which were: putting in place personal and professional boundaries and deciding when to intervene.

**Impact on Individual Student Growth and Development.**

After analyzing the data, several trends emerged. First, advisors used a variety of approaches when building relationships with students. Both sets of student leaders described that the relationship with their advisor was similar to a mother-child relationship or a friendship. These relationships were not only important while they are involved with the organization, but also after they are no longer active members. Students still maintain their relationship with the advisors after graduation.

This idea that advisors serve in a surrogate mother role is not necessarily new. Evans, Winston, and Miller (2001) mention very briefly that advisors should serve as part friend, part parent, part boss and part mentor. After examining the data from this study, it is evident that this motherly role was very important. Both advisors are women and mothers themselves, which may have contributed to the development of relationships that at least some students viewed in a maternal way. This finding from the study raises interesting ideas and questions for both student affairs professionals and advisors to consider. In reflecting on the history of higher education in this country, *in loco parentis* disappeared over time as college students were eventually expected to learn to navigate life as a student and young adult on their own (Barr, Desler, & Associates, 2000). As *in loco parentis* faded, the idea of a bystander campus evolved in which universities felt they could no longer control students’ behavior (Bickel & Lake, 1997). In more recent years, the manner in which universities and the legal system interpret the university-student relationship has drifted back towards institutions taking more responsibility for student behavior.
and their development. This study potentially indicates one way that institutions are taking on such roles. At the same time, the advisors sought to create appropriate boundaries regarding when to intervene with the organization or how involved to become in students’ personal lives.

The advisors in this study clearly play more than a nominal role in the organizations and in the lives of student leaders. Multiple executive board students report the importance of their interactions with the advisors as important for their overall development beyond achieving tasks for the organization. The current study indicates that organization advisors potentially play an important role in student development, one that goes beyond providing technical or logistical assistance to organizations. Student development research highlights the importance of the co-curricular in terms of student growth and development (Astin, 1993; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2016; & Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005). Additionally, academic advising research on developmental advising emphasizes student growth and development. Developmental advising is holistic in nature and focuses on, among other things, students’ environmental and interpersonal interactions, and problem-solving, decision making, and evaluation skills (Crookston, 1972). This study helps to sharpen our understanding of the potential ways in which organization advisors facilitate various developmental benefits of student participation in organizations. The advisors in this study demonstrated their roles as institutional leverage points in contributing to multiple facets of student development, including in areas related to values, attitudes, morality, career choice, and development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 2016; & Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005). Consistent with previous literature (Reynolds, 2008) the advisors also carried out their roles through the use of helping skills such as crisis and conflict resolution and group dynamics and skills. These helping skills contribute in establishing the trust needed for the students to take and then apply the advice given by the advisors. Closely related to issues of
personal growth, students in the study indicated that the advisors fostered a dynamic in which students enhanced their ability to hold themselves and others accountable in particular situations. 

Along with demonstrating benefits that students and organizations derived from the actions of advisors, the experiences of these two advisors exhibited that realization of such benefits were often connected to the development of meaningful relationships with students. The advisors in the study shared their personal time to support student organizational efforts, and they also made themselves available for both formal and informal interactions. The building of strong relationships with students provided a basis for the advisors to play a positive role in the students’ development as well as with the organization. The students reported that they valued the advisors for caring about students as individuals. Thus, this study indicates that, even in the context of organizational advising, the establishment of meaningful individual relationships with students proved key in the success of these advisors. Similarly, we see this in the academic advising literature where it is thought that every advising experience and interaction should be of high quality and deeply meaningful (Gordan et al., 2008). Additional studies could further explore the extent to which such personal ties are helpful in advisors playing roles that enhance individual growth in addition to the achievement of organizational goals.

**Impact on Organizational Growth and Development.**

Reflecting on how these two advisors impacted the organizational growth and development, many of the roles they play with their organizations align with previous literature on advisor roles (e.g., Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Schuh, 1987; Advisor Manual, 2005; Student Organizations Handbook, 2016). Some roles were similar to the previous research; however, other roles are presented in a new light and provide a deeper understanding. The roles that emerged from these two cases were serving as informational resources and connections to the
larger university; encourager and source of wisdom; attending organizational activities; sounding board; and safeguarding the organization.

One particular advisor role for which this study provides greater understanding is serving as an institutional resources and a link to the larger university. Currently, the institutional resource role is understood as passive in that advisors are asked to simply provide information to students (Dunkel & Schuh’s, 1998; Walsh, 1979). From these two cases, the advisors exercised a more proactive role. The advisors in this study specifically served as a connection to the larger university by using professional colleagues as connections to achieve students’ goals, implementing event tasks, and assisting with trouble shooting last minute problems. The advisors in this study were willing to commit a considerable amount of time and capital for the success of their respective advisee organizations.

Safeguarding the organization is something both Pam and Susan appeared to take very seriously. They were both very active in ensuring the longevity of their organizations. Knowledge management represents a concept out of organizational effectiveness body of literature, which is an integral part of safeguarding an organization (Yang & Wan, 2004). The student organization advising literature outlines a similar concept stating advisors should serve as a knowledge base for their organization (Evans, et al., 2001). Assisting with knowledge management is a role that is not seen widely in current student organization advising literature; however, it emerged as a dominate sub-theme in this study.

The advisors contributed to safeguarding the organization in a style reminiscent of narrative advising. Narrative advising, as outlined previously, occurs when an advisor assists students using past experiences to inform lasting change (Christman, 2003). Pam and Susan participated in organizational activities much like a manager. From the literature on
organizational effectiveness, managers should assist in future planning (Wagner et al., 1993). Like a manager, Pam and Susan participated in executive board member selection, taking copious notes at meetings, providing new ways to train new officers, ensuring officers always remember the core organizational mission, and truly understanding the nature and history of their organizations. When Pam and Susan actively engaged in these various ways, they provided historical context to assist in ensuring the organization’s success. Effective organizations are those that achieve their goals and expectations (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980; Wanger, Hollenbeck, & Russell, 1992). These two organizations were successful in part as a result of the roles their advisors played.

Interestingly, when examining how advisors impact the overall organization, there is evidence it still involves working with individuals. The role of mentor is seen throughout the current literature (Droste, Hill, Ruder, Snyder, & Wendel, 2006; Dunkel & Schuh’s, 1998; Evans, Evans, & Sherman, 2001). This role manifested in this study in particular ways, such as becoming a source of wisdom and encourager. This source of wisdom and encourager is discussed in numerous contexts throughout the data from both the students and the advisors. The student leaders perceived the advisors to be very encouraging and to have a great deal of wisdom to share. The advisors spoke about how important encouragement was to their advising approach and style. In this study, student organization advising constituted a relationship more than transactional or logistical in nature. The same may well hold true in other student organization settings.

Much of what was found to be important advisor roles may be perceived as relatively straightforward. However, considering how prevalent these roles are in the data, it is important that it be highlighted as a significant element of advising. The fact that Pam specifically noted
that while she has expectations for her student leaders, she does not share those expectations with them illustrates the need to train advisors on the roles they will fulfill for their organizations. Sharing expectations has been found to be important in both academic and student organization advising (Crocket, 1978; Schuh, 1987). This demonstrates the need to train organization advisors on what roles they will be expected to play within the organizational context.

This study suggests that being an engaged and active advisor can eventually lead to a more valuable college experience for students. When students observe their advisors taking these active roles, they can then emulate how they approach roles in their own lives. For instance, the consulting literature speaks to how the role of a consultant is to enact change. Similarly, advisors can be change agents for an organization. The advisors were presented with opportunities to make an impact and they took advantage of that opportunity. Thus, a student can take that and use that example as a student or as a graduate. As students and organizations were impacted by the work of their advisors, the act of advising also impacted the individual advisors.

Impact on Student Organization Advisors.

A third major idea that emerged through this study was how the advisors were influenced by advising a student organization. This theme was unexpected and presents a new challenge for advisors to navigate that is very complex. Setting boundaries and what they believe they should or should not get involved with arose in the interviews, observations and events for both organizations in this case study. Much of the data that encompassed this theme was first coded under the sub-themes of the impact advisors have on individual student leaders and the overall organizations. However, as I continued to re-evaluate the themes and sub-themes the idea of when and when not to intervene emerged as significant enough that it deserved its own overall
theme. The information within this theme cut across much of the day-to-day activity of the advisor roles. It was exciting to see this unique area emerge as it could have an important impact for those working in the student activities field and is worthy of additional scholarly exploration.

While the issue of boundaries for organization advisors is novel for the student organization literature, it is not a new topic to student activities professionals. I often have conversations about this topic with advisors through my professional position. The concern usually surrounds not wanting the students to perceive the advisors as taking control of the organization. However, based on this study, there were situations that presented themselves when the advisor felt the need to use her authority and intervene. There is some mention in the current literature stating that one of an advisor’s roles is “supervisor” (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998). However, Susan stated that she did not perceive herself as the students’ supervisor. Based on how complicated this theme provided in the current study, it suggests that providing opportunities for advisors to exchange ideas and share views on how they set and manage boundaries could be beneficial in other situations.

If advisors had a space to discuss the complexity of setting boundaries and intervention together, they could address the types of boundary issues that resulted from this data, as well as other ones that advisors may encounter. The first sub-theme was putting in place personal and professional boundaries. Sub-categories to this theme included how the advisors approached relationship building, communication, sharing professional contacts, the need to separate from organizational activities, and inviting students into their homes. A common thread of these sub-categories is how advisors balance their time with the students and the organization. When researching work-life balance in the student affairs field, Cusker, Gregory, Guthrie, and Woods (2005) found four keys to balance: (1) self-knowledge; (2) intentionality; (3) commitment to
self-care; and (4) reflection. This framework could be valuable to share with student organization advisors to ease the decision making process related to the kinds of boundary situations encountered in this study.

A striking example of personal boundaries was when Susan invited a student to live in her home after discovering he was living in his truck. Susan did offer in retrospect that it was not a good idea, but this was a notable risk to take. As a university employee, I would have encouraged her to connect the student with appropriate university and community resources. To allow a student to live in her home is not something I would advise a student organization advisor, or any university community member to offer. While Susan was role modeling morality in protecting her student, she was not necessarily role modeling responsible decision making. Engaging in reflection helped her realize she did not make a good decision; this is a good case to better understand how advisors may go too far with their intervention and the need to help them reflect upon boundary issues before they arise.

As mentioned in the earlier section about the importance of informal interactions, Pam found it acceptable to attend events in students’ apartments and to enter into students’ bedrooms. Despite the fact a student may feel comfortable inviting an advisor into their personal spaces, it may be crossing a line related to liability in accepting such an invitation. The advisor, again, took on considerable risk spending time in these spaces. Students may own things that if the advisor saw, the advisor may be required or feel obligated to report in some way. This is another good example of when the advisor may have gone too far with what they were willing to do for their organization.

The second sub-theme that emerged from this portion of the study was determining when to intervene with individual students and the organization as a whole. This sub-theme involved
the advisors’ involvement in organizational activities and policy or procedure and reputational
issues. Examples of intervention with organizational activities involved conversations about
alcohol at events, assisting to keep organizational activities on track, and event execution. The
interventions here were applicable to the more transactional and logistical tasks of an
organization. Connections to the current literature can be found here when reviewing Pam’s
decision to intervene in the conversations about alcohol. Literature on social fraternities and
sororities asserts that advisors should get involved with alcohol issues. Advisors should be
active in the dialogue and decision making involving alcohol (Patton & Bonner, 2001). Getting
involved with organizational day-to-day activities to remain on track is also seen in the literature
related to maintenance functions (Bloland, 1967).

While these two elements are linked to current findings, there is also the element of what
may be over-involvement in the area of event execution. This strengthens current understanding
of how an advisor can help keep an organization be successful. As outlined earlier, Pam helped
Familia set up, implement, and wrap up the group’s end-of-year formal dance. The amount of
work she contributed to this event was questionable in terms of perhaps taking on tasks that
students should have arguably performed. The students shared their appreciation for how Pam
goes “above and beyond” for them, which is admirable. On the other hand, perhaps the advisor
assumed too much responsibility and deprived her students of a learning opportunity. This
scenario also raised issues related to the earlier discussion of in loco parentis and drawing lines
regarding appropriate levels of oversight of students.

The second portion to this sub-theme in addition to organizational activities was policy
and procedure or reputational issues. Policy violations, reputational issues, and maintaining the
organizations’ missions were discussed at length. The advisors clearly made determinations of
when to step in depending on the type of violation had occurred. The various types of violations that were discussed in the data included, internal WIND for Kids policies and university policies and procedures. When Familia debated whether or not to violate the WIND for Kids policies, Pam intervened as it was a conversation about what was the right thing as opposed to a violation that would put the organization in jeopardy with the institution. This provided an opportunity for the students to engage in self-reflection.

The other policies that were at play included policies and procedures outlining the use of university space. However, the advisor intervened when the violation meets a certain level of severity even when violations of those policies could put the organizations in jeopardy with the institution. A determining intervention factor appeared to be when the organization’s actions impacted someone or something else. For instance, when Familia took an open room that another organization reserved, Pam felt obligated to apologize to those students; and when BCC brought food to meetings for their attendees she allowed it, but when the students wanted to do a pie-in-the-face activity she intervened so as not to cause additional issues for the cleaning staff. There are many “gray” areas working with student organizations. There are policies and procedures outlining what organizations can and cannot do, efforts to be student centered tend to circumvent strict adherence to policy. Further studies could provide more insight into how advisors approach the need to uphold policies and procedures or when not to intervene.

In addition to policies and procedures, intervention was also associated with reputational issues. Both Pam and Susan conveyed a great deal of comfort intervening and they worried the organizations’ reputation or organization mission may be at stack. Taking action to protect an organization’s reputation is also linked to the current student organization literature. Patton and Bonner (1967) posited that an organization advisor should engage in conversation when public
perception was concerned. There are also links to academic advising literature as Walsh (1979) stated advisors should serve as guardians for students to protect their interests. There were multiple examples of Pam having developmental conversations with student leaders challenging them to think about if their actions connected back to the organization’s mission. The students went to the lengths of sharing they valued those conversations. These exchanges illustrate how while these can be difficult conversations, they are warranted.

When reflecting on these thoughts about intervention, one might ask the question of what are the determining factors advisors should take into account when deciding to intervene or not to intervene in a particular situation. This study hopefully contributes to reflection regarding that questions. The outcomes of this study delineated the conditions under these advisors chose to intervene or to hold back. This information is potentially informative in ongoing efforts related to advisor training and also provides a topic worthy of additional research. In this study, the issue of when to intervene was not always clear for advisors, suggesting the value of providing advisors the space to engage in reflective conversation with other practitioners centered on defining appropriate boundaries in organization advisor and working with students.

While the two student organizations in this study are considered successful according to the university and the literature standards, there are areas of improvement related to how the advisors fulfill their roles and balance their commitment. Overall, however, this case study demonstrated on multiple levels that advising a student organization can be complex. It also showed how advisors fulfill certain roles and develop open relationships that directly impact the growth and development of individual student leaders and student organizations as a whole.


**Researcher Conflicts**

My role as research also presented potential conflicts that I needed to be aware of and to navigate in the research process. As an observer, I naturally impacted the environment. There were instances where the advisor or students spoke to me during meetings, and I was asked to participate in the money counting event I observed for Familia. I should have positioned myself in the room more strategically in order to further minimize my physical impact. I attempted to remain as separated as possible by briefly responding verbally or responding with non-verbal communication.

My professional position may have posed a greater and more significant challenge throughout the data collection process compared to my presence impacting the environment. I have mentioned several times that my professional role involves working with student organizations and with that comes with certain pre-conceived notions related to the importance of student organizations in a college students’ experience. Student organizations have been part of the fabric of American higher education almost since its inception with debate societies and single sex fraternities (Geiger, 2000). I believe the experiences students are exposed to through student organization work are some of the most impactful, and advisors add great value to those experiences. I acknowledge my position to provide transparency for the reader.

My position on the value of student organization advisors did influence how I viewed certain situations throughout this study. While there were specific times I was asked to get involved and declined, there were times in the meetings I observed that I felt I needed to step in because I was witnessing policy violations. This was conflicting because part of my professional responsibilities includes advising my institution’s organizational conduct committee. This committee is charged with holding recognized student organizations accountable to university
policies and procedures. The issue I was grappling with was the blatant violation of university policy and the unethical behavior being exhibited by the officers. During my time as a student affairs professional working with student organizations, I have developed a lens centered on policies and procedures. So when I witnessed an organization intentionally violating policies it was very challenging not to intervene as a representative of the university. I had to weigh the potential outcomes of my actions. I had to weigh how my study would be impacted if I filed a report against the organizations versus how my position in my professional role would be impacted should I not file a report. Ultimately, I maintained my observer role, did not report either one of the organizations, and used the observed conversations in the recommendations below.

My position also influenced how I structured my questions. My education and practical experience in the student activities field provided a context of what I assumed was important in related to the study’s topic. I determined questions based on the concerns I have heard from student leaders and advisors. I was naturally situated in the research and plan on applying what was learned here to my job responsibilities. I was an instrument of that data collection and analysis.

**Validity**

Validity was addressed in this study through the use of data triangulation. Evidence of each theme was found in the interviews and observations of both organizations. This included both the event and meeting observations. Member checking was used following up with the advisors with questions related to the themes that emerged to confirm the findings and to answer some additional inquiries that emerged as a result of the data analysis.
Recommendations

The findings of this study point to at least five recommendations. These are (1) advising approaches should be based in situational leadership, (2) the various roles advisors play should be made publically available; (3) advisors should be encouraged to step in when it is necessary and to assure them that it is acceptable to do so; (4) students and advisors should discuss early and often the expectations of both parties; and (5) the importance of in-depth and meaningful advisor training.

Recommendation 1: Situational leadership.

As outlined in the literature review, there are numerous types of approaches individuals can take to advising college students. To go further, Schuh (1987) stated that student organization advisors should ascribe to a particular leadership style. Based on the different themes that emerged from this study, the first recommendation is that advisors can use situational leadership when advising their student leaders and the organization as a whole. The situational leadership theory has undergone several revisions since its original iteration in 1996 until the most recent version in 2007 (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; Blanchard, 2007). Situational leadership refers to when a leader can adjust his or her leadership to the developmental level of those being led.

Ascribing to situational leadership would serve student organization advisors well considering the various situations in which advisors find themselves. This study illustrates the nuance and complexity that often arises in advising a student organization. Advisors are asking to fill a variety of roles and tend to take on roles independently. Pam’s experience with the Executive Director at the time of these interviews was an example of her shifting leadership style. A story was shared about when the student leader was new to her role and she was finding
herself calling Pam on a regular basis looking for affirmation that she was fulfilling her leadership role well. Pam was putting a lot of time into encouraging the student and boosting the person’s confidence. As a contrast, from the observations I saw the exchange about how the executive board felt they needed events with alcohol in order to develop connections with other organizational members. At this point, the Executive Director had been in her role for six months with more experience and confidence in her abilities. In this situation, Pam was not so encouraging and instead challenged the students’ thinking. She wanted them to thinking critically about whether this was the right approach to relationship building. Beyond this example, all of the advisor roles present varying situations in which the advisors will need to make a determination how they will address those situations.

**Recommendation 2: Advisor roles.**

Understanding the nature of the many roles advisors fulfill is important information for advisors and those units supporting them. Along with assisting advisors in serving students and organizations effectively, this type of information can also help advisors make informed choices. For instance, advisors benefit from awareness regarding how potential situations could raise liability concerns for the advisor, other individuals, and the institution. As illustrated in the data for this study, liability concerns can arise in multiple circumstances, including determinations of what types of organizational events to attend as an advisor, what kind of advice an advisors may deem it appropriate to share, and the level of intervention in a given situation.

Information and resources should be made available to advisors in as many formats as possible regarding the various types of roles they assume. Often student advisor manuals are published online and provided in hard copy form and are discussed at advisor training workshops. Other distribution options should also be considered, including weekly email
listservs as a, for example, “role” of the week (which can even coincide with the time of year),
roles can be listed on an institution’s website, workshops that cover particular advisor roles, or
peer sharing opportunities such as roundtable discussions.

When reflecting on the advisor roles that emerged in this study and their everyday
application, advisors can be a resource when students are otherwise unable to achieve an
objective without additional assistance. For instance, the BCC executive board members would
probably have been unable to convince the university president to attend their events without
Susan’s help. Pam also served as a resource for Familia when they neglected to obtain a
purchase order that was required for their event. If Pam had not reached out to her colleagues to
obtain the purchase order, the event may not have happened.

When acting in the role of the advisor, there is likely no simple or standard answer
regarding when to focus on the individual student versus the organization as a whole. In this
study, for example, at times the two considerations blended together. Responses in this study
indicated a benefit to focusing on an individual student leader when he or she begins a term in
office. In general, as indicated in this study, the advisors possessed insight and wisdom to share
to aid individual students’ in their development that went well beyond the confines of the
organization’s direct mission. In other instances, such as if the organization has a large event
approaching, a focus on the organization achieving its transactional goals may dominate in terms
of the advisor’s time and attention and duties to the organization.

Recommendation 3: Step in.

Many student organization advisors worry that when they assert their opinion they
are overstepping appropriate bounds for involvement in organizational decisions. The data in
this study highlighted certain instances when it was appropriate for the advisor to “step in” and
other times when it was more appropriate to remain on the perimeter or organizational activity and decision-making. This study raises the possibility that similar questions and concerns exist in other student organization contexts. The results of this suggests a benefit in university officials providing time and space to allow advisors to work through and wrestle with these types of questions collectively. Issues that rose from this data included student homelessness, struggles with future life decisions, learning how to make ethical decisions, how to interact with both peers and those in authority, and the importance of understanding one’s background and history. If chances for organization advisors to contemplate such matters together are not provided, this study suggests a potential value in institutional providing such opportunities.

The results of this study are potentially beneficial to other advisors and those supporting advisors in terms of deciding when it is appropriate to “step in” and in taking into account that students may appreciate advisors taking more active roles at certain moments to help the students and the organization thrive.

**Recommendation 4: Set expectations.**

The fourth recommendation is that student leaders and advisors should take time at the beginning of the executive board’s term to outline expectations regarding the advisor-organizational relationship. Taking into consideration the importance of relationships, the roles advisors may play, and the need to set boundaries, an expectation exercise can be very useful. This should be a 360 degree exercise where the student leaders share their expectations of each other, the students should share expectations of the advisor, and the advisor should share her or his expectations of the students. While there are numerous roles advisors can potentially fulfill, no advisor is going to be willing or able to carry out all conceivable roles. Establishing shared expectations can benefit both the advisor and the organization’s members in establishing a sound
and productive relationship. The advisor can then share what roles that she or he is willing to fulfill with the student leaders as well as expected boundaries. These expectations will most likely fluctuate over the course of an academic year; and if so, if the student-advisor relationship is well established, a productive and candid conversation can address changing expectations and circumstances.

**Recommendation 5: Advisor training.**

A final recommendation derived from this study relates to providing advisors with training that go beyond limited topics. These trainings could be richer and more about student development as opposed to solely about the transactional pieces of student organization work. Various advisor training sessions can consist of new advisor workshops, annual policy refresher workshops, and developmental topic workshops. Recommended content that can be included is the personal development college students’ experience as a result of student-advisor relationships along with relevant student development theory. Student organization advisors could be exposed to the cognitive-structural student development theory, of which advisors who are faculty members may not otherwise be exposed. Additional content that could be included are policy review and importance of avoiding violations, outlining the contributions advisor make that students value, providing examples of when it is appropriate to be actively involved and when to allow the students freedom, examples of what it means to be too involved, and information about the services that the university provides to advisors.

Another suggestion is for colleges and universities to require their student organization advisors to attend trainings on an annual basis. Policies change every year and advisors should be informed of those changes to better serve their student organizations. Based on the evidence from this study, understanding policy is incredibly important to safeguard the reputation and
status of the organization. Updated policies can be reviewed while giving advisors a regular opportunity to engage in conversations with one another about various issues faced. Annual trainings could also include conversations about risk and liability to better prepare advisors in making decisions related to their involvement in organizational activities. From these conversations materials could be developed outlining what actions could trigger what risk factors. For instance, if a student organization sponsored a “date auction” on a yearly basis, a risk matrix could link that event to reputational risk. “Date auctions” can cause controversy at times; understanding how an organization could be perceived after holding a “date auction” would be helpful before sponsoring one.

This recommendation could potentially provide the most practical application out the recommendations provided. As a practitioner with deep experience working with student organizations and their advisor, I felt strongly regarding the value of training for advisors before pursuing this study. This study only strengthened my belief in the importance of such training opportunities. Data indicated that the advisors in this study had a significant impact on students and the organizations advised, a state of affairs likely present in other organizational and institutional contexts. Thus, advisors benefit from a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which they can contribute to student development and organizational vitality. Such information can, for instance, be disseminated to student affairs professionals through national associations and the professional development opportunities those associations provide their members. Those student affairs professionals can then relay this important information to the advisors and student organizations at their respective institutions.
Implications for Future Research

This research study attempted to increase the understanding of the impact student organization advisors have on both the student leaders and the organizations as a whole. A lack of research in this area leaves student affairs professionals with primarily anecdotal evidence in order to prepare and train student organization advisors. The qualitative case study methodology used in this study offers an examination of the experiences of two successful recognized student organizations at a large, public, four-year, primarily residential, high research activity university.

While this study represents a new direction in the body of research on student organization advising, further research is necessary. This study alone is not enough to apply its findings to other similar organizations, other types of organizations, or organizations at other institutions. To apply and to expand upon the lessons gained from this research it would be helpful to replicate the study with organizations not as strong as those represented here. It would also be helpful to expand the data collection to include surveys of student leaders, general body members, and advisors.

First, research focused on how an advisor’s identity impacts the way they advise would be valuable to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of student-advisor relationships and the impact of those relationships. As outlined earlier, the students in both organizations in this study referred to their advisors as “motherly figures.” Perceiving the advisor as a mother carries certain implications related to how and to what level the student leaders and the advisor interact with one another. This leads to questions with gender dimensions such as if an organization’s advisor is male would members view them as a “fatherly figure” and would that carry different implications? The same goes for potential implications depending on the advisor’s race,
ethnicity, nationality, county of origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, parental status, etc.

The second area of future research suggested by this study would be to conduct a longitudinal study with organizations with and without an advisor. One could reasonably assume that an organization can be successful without an advisor, however it would be interesting to examine the differences in how both the individual student leaders and the organization as a whole grow over a certain period of time. Not every institution of higher education requires its student organizations to have an advisor. There is a pattern, however, of institutions moving in the direction of requiring advisors for student organizations. The outcomes of such a study could provide insight related to this trend.

A final area of future research would be additional examination of how advisors set boundaries with the organization and members. The majority of the instances where this issue arose in this study centered on tasks or roles the advisor was willing to fulfill. It would helpful to ask targeted questions in an interview after observing the advisors at meetings or events about why they did or did not intervene in particular situations. The results of this study touched relatively little on the non-intervention side of this theme. The liability that people assume when they agree to serve as advisors would be an interesting element to future research on intervention as well. There are several different areas of risk that present themselves when advising organizations including personal risk or liability. Setting boundaries was not an anticipated thematic area, but it proved an issue prevalent throughout the study. Questions future research could examine include: (1) what is considered doing too much; (2) when does “burn-out” come into play; and (3) when do advisors start to enable bad student habits because they are doing too
much? Research into these questions could yield valuable information for student organization advisors.

Conclusion

Serving as a student organization is a task hundreds of students ask faculty and staff to do or are required to do as part of their official job responsibilities. Unfortunately, there are little to no standards across the country related to student organization advising. One of the goals with this study was to better understand the value to groups and individuals of student organization advising by exploring questions related to the “how” and “why” student organization advising and the relationship between advisors and students and with the organization overall. This study is part of a small but growing body of research that could support the development of standards to support advisors. Establishing a foundation of how advisors impact individual students and organizations can help to better prepare advisors and assist student affairs professionals support the advisors at their institutions.

This study along with the already established literature highlights the complexities and nuances of student organization advising (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998 & Schuh, 1987). Continued training and study of this dynamic role can only enhance the environments and opportunities that colleges and universities provide to their students. This study provides support to the notion that every organization should retain an advisor and that successful advisors should be more than just a name on a form. Their impact is far too vital to the success and vitality of student leaders and the organization overall.
References


Perry, W.G., Jr. (1978). Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A


Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol:

Time of interview:
Date of interview:
Location of interview:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Questions:
Appendix B

Advisor Interview Questions

How did you become aware of the opportunity to serve as an advisor?
Why did you become an advisor?
What is the mission of the organization?
What is the membership like?
How would you describe your approach to advising?
How would you describe your advising style?
Why do you ascribe to this approach and style?
Does your approach or style change when advising individual students versus the organization as a whole? If so, how and why?
In what contexts are you interacting with individual student leaders?
In what contexts are you interacting with the organization as a whole?
What would you say you advise individual students about?
What would you say you advise the organization about?
How much time do you devote to the organization?
What types of activities are you involved with? Meetings? Events?
How would you describe your relationship with the student leaders?
How much time do you devote to the individual student leaders?
What types of expectations do you have of the individual students?
What types of expectations do you have of the organization as a whole?
How do you challenge the student leaders?
How do you go about supporting the students?
What is your opinion on learning through failure?
When do you feel it’s appropriate for an advisor to step in?
How would you describe an effective advisor?
Appendix C

Student Leader Interview Questions

What is the mission of the organization?
What types of programs does the organization sponsor?
What is the membership like? Numbers? Engagement?
How much did you know about your advisor when you took your leadership role?
What do you hope to get from your advisor?
When did you first meet your advisor?
What do you expect from your advisor?
How would you describe the approach of your advisor?
How would you describe your advisor’s style?
How much time does your advisor devote to the organization?
What types of activities is your advisor involved with? Meetings? Events?
What role does she play at these meetings and events?
What events has your advisor suggested your organization pursue?
How has your advisor been involved regarding goal or vision setting?
How has your advisor been involved in the area of organizational finances?
In what ways has your advisor advised you as leaders regarding preparing the organization for new leadership?
In what ways has your organization flourished due to your advisor?
How would you describe your relationship with the advisor?
How much time does your advisor devote to the student leaders?
How does your advisor challenge the student leaders?
How does your advisor go about supporting the students?
In what ways have you grown as a result of your interactions with your advisor?
How would you describe an effective advisor?
How does that apply to your advisor?
Knowing what you know now about your relationship with your advisor, would you have approached the relationship differently?
If you could describe your advisor in one word, what would it be?
EDUCATION

**Doctor of Education**, Higher Education  
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
May 2017

**Master of Education**, College Student Affairs  
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
May 2005

**Bachelor of Arts**, History  
Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH  
May 2003

STUDENT AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE

**The Pennsylvania State University – University Park**

Assistant Director, Student Organizations  
2015-Present

Student Engagement Programs

Program Director, Student Organizations  
2008-2015

Union and Student Activities

Program Advisor  
2007-2008

Center for Student Activities and Programming (CSAP) & Center for Student Engagement (CSE)

**The Pennsylvania State University – Altoona College**

Assistant Director, Office of Student Life  
2005-2007

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Staff Development in Student Affairs: Developing Retaining and Motivating Our Team (October 2004)  
*Presented with Dr. Phillip Burlingame, Ph.D., Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs at PCPA Conference*

Student Employees: The Representatives of the Student Union (November 2004)  
*Presented at ACUI Conference*

I Can Do It Myself...Will Get You into Sticky Situations & How to Delegate Effectively (August 2006)  
*Presented at Penn State Summer Leadership Conference*

Effective Student Organization Transitioning (December 2007)  
*Currently present every semester as part of the Student Organization Success workshops*

Advising Students: Every Experience is Unique (November 2009)  
*Presented at ACUI Region 4 Conference*

Advising the Advisors (November 2010 & March 2011)  
*Presented at ACUI Region 4 Conference & ACPA Annual National Conference*

Officer Transitioning: It Starts on Day 1! (Every semester)  
*Student Organization Conduct Committee Presented at ACUI Region 7 Conference*

AWARDS AND HONORS

American College Personnel Association Outstanding Graduate Student Award (2005 Graduate Student Award)

Pi Lambda Theta (Graduate Student Honor Society)