

2017

## Mindfulness as a Pedagogy of Supervision: Reclaiming Learning in Supervised Practices in Student Affairs

Henrique G. Alvim

Walsh University, halvim@walsh.edu

Allison Barnhart

Walsh University, abarnhart@walsh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/jraphe>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Alvim, Henrique G. and Barnhart, Allison (2017) "Mindfulness as a Pedagogy of Supervision: Reclaiming Learning in Supervised Practices in Student Affairs," *Journal of Research, Assessment, and Practice in Higher Education*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/jraphe/vol2/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education and Health Sciences at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Research, Assessment, and Practice in Higher Education* by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact [frice1@udayton.edu](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu).

---

# **MINDFULNESS AS A PEDAGOGY OF SUPERVISION: RECLAIMING LEARNING IN SUPERVISED PRACTICES IN STUDENT AFFAIRS**

**Henrique G. Alvim, Walsh University  
Allison Barnhart, Walsh University**

## **ABSTRACT**

*As graduate students prepare to enter the student affairs profession, supervision serves as a critical component of their overall self-development. However, for a number of reasons (e.g., the fast-paced nature of higher education, time constraints, etc.), supervision in the context of internships often centers solely on productivity and task-oriented activities. While worthy and necessary, these can neglect a central component of supervised practices: learning. This article seeks to reorient aspiring and seasoned student affairs professionals (supervisees and supervisors) toward certain pedagogy of supervision that makes room for mindfulness, which can bolster the quality of these learning experiences.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Master's level student affairs professional preparation programs afford students the opportunity to learn both in the classroom and through practical experiences, such as assistantships, practicums, and internships. These kinds of supervised practices allow students to learn alongside other more seasoned professionals, accounting for one of the most meaningful ways in which aspiring student affairs professionals develop their personal and professional skills, competencies, and dispositions. In fact, Kuk and Cuyjet (2009) suggest that the internship experience can be one of the most beneficial interactive opportunities for students to bridge professional preparation and practice that are crucial to professional socialization. Internships are – or should be – a key component of professional preparation programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2015). Winston and Creamer (as cited in Stock-Ward & Javorek, 2003) also tell us that supervision ought to be a “helping process designed to support [supervisees] as they work to promote organizational goals, and to enhance personal and professional development” (p. 77). At the same time, while internships in student affairs are prominent experiences, there is still only a scant literature that deals more directly with an actual pedagogy – i.e., the teaching and learning involved in such practices – that informs what supervision of these aspiring professionals entail.

What we know, however, is that optimal learning experiences occur when they are paired with high-quality supervision, which is central in determining the educational value students derive from such supervised practices (Janosik, Cooper, Saunders, & Hirt, 2015). What is also noteworthy is that internships often take place in an increasingly ambiguous context of fast-paced and complex institutions of higher education that, in present days, seem to place a premium on productivity (Janosik et al., 2003; Janosik et al., 2015) over learning. Seen in such a light, supervision often becomes a way by which many supervisors aim exclusively at getting tasks accomplished, often to the detriment of a holistic and developmental view of learning (Ignelzi, 2011). In other words, gains on the part of institutions may not always amount to benefits on the part of students preparing to launch into their careers in higher education. Cognizant of this tension between productivity and learning – one that perhaps does not need to necessarily be resolved, but held in proper balance – this article aims at enlarging a needed conversation on supervision toward helping those engaged in supervised practices (supervisors and supervisees) to consider ways in which learning can be foregrounded in these experiences.

Internships afford supervisors and supervisees not only the opportunity to accomplish important tasks but, most importantly, to consider the meaning of what is accomplished. With that, students can extend their learning into other present and future professional experiences by abstracting and, therefore, applying gained knowledge and skills on site and beyond. To that end, we emphasize mindfulness as a critical element of supervision that, as we argue, can contribute to the personal and professional development of aspiring student affairs educators.

Langer (2014) suggests that mindfulness is:

an active state of mind characterized by novel distinction-drawing that results in being (1) situated in the present; (2) sensitive to context and perspective; and (3) guided (but not governed) by rules and routines. The phenomenological experience of mindfulness is the felt experience of engagement. (p. 11)

By engaging in supervision in such a manner, aspiring and seasoned professionals can also live out a central commitment of our student affairs profession: *learning*. This, however, calls for a certain professional disposition toward the development of graduate interns – indeed, a pedagogy – that places learning in the forefront of these supervised practices. For our purposes, we define this pedagogy as a way in which more experienced student affairs educators, by enacting on their commitment to and capacity for teaching and learning, provide a quality experience by way of supervision that hinges on keeping in proper balance the importance of tasks as a means toward a greater learning outcome and, consequently, the development of aspiring professionals. Furthermore, we claim that this is best done when supervision of graduate interns emphasizes the practice of mindfulness. Central to our inquiry are the following questions: What value does mindfulness add to the self-development journey of supervisees and their supervisors? Moreover,

how can a pedagogy of supervision that accounts for mindfulness contribute to learning and thus to the preparation of graduate students for student affairs work?

In providing possible answers to these questions, we seek to reorient our profession toward a certain quality of supervision that makes room for more “thinking” about the “doing.” We concur with Janosik et al. (2015) who affirm that in internships the focus is on learning knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be abstracted to other professional contexts. It is precisely in that vein that the completion of tasks becomes a means to a greater end: students’ learning (Janosik et al., 2015). Therefore, by anchoring supervision on a certain “way of learning” – i.e., an intentional pedagogy of teaching and learning by way of supervised practices – graduate students can, as the Student Personnel Point of View suggests, better “acquire an understanding of [themselves], [their] abilities, interests, motivations, and limitations” (American Council on Education [ACE], 1949, p. 5).

Two important considerations are worth mentioning from the onset of this discussion. Firstly, while this may disappoint some readers, the claims and arguments herein presented do not hinge on empiricism. Thus, instead of looking at “what is” (e.g., through data), we offer a modest normative view, looking at “what could be” in what pertains to the personal and professional development of graduate students partaking in internships in student affairs. Secondly, we enter this conversation with several assumptions in mind: (a) that supervision can lead to learning and development of those who partake in the experience (i.e., supervisor and supervisee); (b) that, for one reason or another (e.g., lack of experience, limited knowledge of what supervision that aims at human development entails, or other factors, such as time constraints, etc.), not all supervisors are able – even though we surmise many would be willing – to promote learning by way of mindfulness; (c) that supervisors and supervisees often do not share the same expectations and goals in what pertains to supervised practices - as Janosik et al. (2015) suggest, this is something that needs to be negotiated in the context of a supervisory relationship; and, finally, (d) that bypassing learning in favor of efficiency (or of a mere “product”) can be detrimental to the preparation of aspiring student affairs professionals and, consequently, to the profession.

### **COMMITMENT TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

We are told by the authors of the Student Personnel Point of View that “the major responsibility for a student’s growth in personal and social wisdom rests with the student himself [or herself]” (ACE, 1949, p. 4). This, they add, also takes into consideration the many factors (e.g., personal, interpersonal, and institutional) that his or her development hinges on (ACE, 1949). At the core of such growth is learning – the strongest thread of our work in student affairs. As educators, our responsibility to fostering learning and personal development, guided by a holistic philosophy of learning, is taken seriously (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1996). Yet, while learning is the reason for higher education, “we simply have not paid a great deal of attention to our role as learning facilitators” (Keeling, 2006). Grasping a foundational competence in student learning and development implies that professionals possess a critical

understanding of learning and development theories as well as the ability to put these theories into use in order to construct learning outcomes (ACPA-College Student Educators International & NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2015). These are important reminders for our professional practice with college students. At the same time, because these are foundational commitments of our profession, we claim that these guiding principles can also be applied to our professional work preparing future student affairs professionals as they partake in internships. After all, we should seek to model what we profess.

That said, even though learning remains at the center of our mission as a profession, in response to various and often conflicting demands of society, political and institutional leaders, and the numerous constituents that higher education serves (e.g., students, families, communities, and others), even the most well-intended educators and administrators find themselves pressured to succumb to practices that, ironically, tend to neglect the process that human development hinges on. While this may often be an unintended consequence, we believe it is our responsibility and professional commitment to create experiences for future generations of student affairs educators that would set in motion opportunities for meaningful personal and professional development through the learning that supervised practices are designed and intended for.

At the same time, we are cognizant of the realities of student affairs work, which is hectic, unrelenting, often varied and fragmented: amidst phone calls and e-mails, both urgent and trivial, everything demands the attention of professionals, and frequent interruptions contribute to disjointed conversations (Winston & Hirt, 2003). To spend time on mindfulness with student-supervisees can seem like a dispensable luxury. In fact, neglecting supervision in order to merely get things done appears to be a more attractive alternative (Winston & Hirt, 2003). Yet, as Winston and Hirt (2003) remind us, the price incurred for taking a convenient route in what pertains to supervision can be stiff. While their advice is directed to those who supervise new professionals, we believe their admonition is equally noteworthy for those who supervise graduate students in internships:

staff supervision should be one of the highest priorities, if not the highest priority for those assigned that responsibility. Careful, close attention to supervision can produce manyfold returns on the investment. Few other activities have the potential of producing such rich rewards for the individuals involved and the organization. (Winston & Hirt, 2003, p. 44-45)

Even though interns' experience in a certain office, department, or division, might be time-bound, when graduate students are seen as an integral part of the staff, the responsibility for their supervision cannot be taken lightly. If, as Winston and Hirt (2003) suggest, supervision is so critical, with the added promise of great returns, quality supervision of graduate students should also be a priority for supervisors (both site and faculty supervisors) involved in these academic

experiences. In these particular instances, supervisors should see themselves as facilitators of learning. In fact, we further argue that contributing to the formation of aspiring student affairs educators is a gift to the institutions where students intern as well as other institutions where they will eventually start and progress in their careers in higher education. Investing in their learning and overall development also strengthens our student affairs profession and, by extension, allows these aspiring professionals to more meaningfully contribute to the experiences of college students and other stakeholders they will be working with.

If our arguments are thus far convincing, an important question still remains: What possibly contributes to mindfulness being a neglected feature of supervised practices in student affairs? Perhaps one could be justified in arguing that a response to the various demands placed on higher education professionals (supervisors in particular) is what adds to the temptation to center supervision on ensuring the accomplishment of important tasks that, in the name of efficiency, can bring about tangible products. In turn, said “products” would speak to the quality of supervised practices. Yet we are not convinced of this logic. Productivity is not always synonymous to human development. After all, tasks can be completed without one’s perception of the reasons that informed what one might call a “good product” or outcome. Rather, those involved in supervised practices must think, reflect, and “mind” what has been accomplished in order to realize the quality in what they supposedly produce. Ignelzi (2011) shares this concern, stating that

there also appears to be a widespread assumption that supervision, when it occurs, should be almost exclusively aimed at the particulars of getting current work tasks successfully accomplished. These assumptions run counter to the holistic and developmental view of learning that serves as the philosophical and operative basis of our profession. (p. 418)

What’s more, the way in which higher education has become increasingly commodified seems to complicate this matter. Colleges and universities seem increasingly concerned with productivity and the output of good “products.” While there are good reasons for that, which we cannot fully explore in the context of this discussion, this notion can, at times, run counter to the “process” that learning entails. For our purposes, what is important to note is that when product (or the full pursuit of productivity alone) takes precedence over process, the consequences in what pertains to the experience of graduate students in internships can be notable. For instance, when financial and human resources are scarce (a reality for many institutions of higher education in present days), having an extra “body” to get projects off the ground sounds like an attractive proposition to many busy student affairs professionals and administrators in supervisory roles. More people in the office supposedly equates to greater efficiency in operations. The logic is understandable. At the same time, we should tread carefully, especially when learning is at stake. For this reason, it behooves supervisors to keep the temptation to merely “put interns to work” in

check. When time needed for learning becomes a rare commodity in the experience of graduate students and busy supervisors (one might ask: “Who has time to stop to think and reflect on what we’re doing?”), the enticing alternative to replace learning with more tangible outcomes can become a detrimental reality in the experience of aspiring professionals partaking in internships.

One might consider a successful supervised practice that which fulfils the immediate needs and goals of offices, departments, and/or institutions where internships take place. This is indeed one of the outcomes of supervised practices. Arguably, the opportunity to learn something new is always present in everything students do at their internship sites. In fact, we admit that “products” do have their place in these academic experiences. To be sure, tasks and activities are essential in facilitating outcomes (e.g., products). That said, when mindfully reflected upon, these tangible outcomes can lead to greater learning on the part of aspiring professionals. In view of that, we argue that “thinking” leads to better “doing.” Likewise, when paired with mindfulness, “doing” can lead to deeper “thinking.” This, however, requires a certain disposition to learning as an *a priori* commitment on the part of both supervisors and supervisees. In other words, the commitment to minding every learning opportunity and teachable moments derived from tasks and activities that rightly result in good “products.” This, we submit, requires a healthy balance between product and process; one that, we fear, seems to be easily neglected in the contemporary academy.

### QUALITY LEARNING AND SUPERVISED PRACTICE

Supervised practices in student affairs largely speak to what experiential learning is about: “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (Kolb, 2014, Chapter 2, para. 2). More fundamentally, Kolb (2014) reminds us that learning is as “a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience” (Chapter 2, Learning is Best Conceived as a Process section, para. 2), adding that “when viewed from the perspective of experiential learning, the tendency to define learning in terms of outcomes can become a definition of nonlearning, in the process sense that the failure to modify ideas and habits as a result of experience is maladaptive” (Kolb, 2014, Chapter 2, Learning is Best Conceived as a Process section, para. 3). Supervised practices that center on learning share these characteristics that are inherent of experiential learning. It follows that meaningful internship experiences require students to be, first and foremost, present (body and mind) and open to the process of learning: about themselves, their skills and dispositions, strengths and areas for continuous growth; about the world of higher education; about college students, etc. “Products” derived from such experiences are, at best, incidental to what is central to supervised practices: learning.

Supervision that accounts for opportunities for deep learning on the part of graduate students seems to also challenge the notion that these practices ought to aim at accomplishing tasks that arguably fulfils, primarily, the needs of the internship site. While we cautiously agree that the needs of the site supersede the needs of student-interns (Janosik et al., 2015), we are reminded that

those who agree to take on the responsibility for supervising aspiring professionals “should be expected to provide an organized, focused, and professionally based practical experience for students they supervise” (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009, p. 94). At the same time, exercises in mindfulness (e.g., through reflection) can shine a practical light on experiences. In fact, Kolb (2014) supports the notion that every one of the four stages in his cycle of experiential learning (including Reflective Observation, RO, which follows Concrete Experience, CE) accounts for learning.

While graduate internships are justifiably one of the most practical experiences in the context of a master’s level student affairs professional preparation program, we submit that any practice that neglects or bypasses deep thinking about experiences (e.g., through mindful reflection) can shortchange students in what pertains to their “becoming” reflective educators; not only doers but also thinkers in the profession. Since one of the professional commitments of educators is to foment critical thinking in college students, we claim that supervised practices should be carefully designed as to make room for reflection that increases aspiring student affairs educators’ ability to be critical thinkers themselves.

Toward that end, we find Ellen Langer’s (1997) ideas about mindfulness particularly instructive for our purposes. She claims that mindfulness allows for characteristics that are powerful learning tools, including “the continuous creation of new categories, openness to new information, and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective” (Langer, 1997, p. 4). Langer (1997) further explains that when individuals are mindful they “(1) view a situation from several perspectives, (2) see information presented in the situation as novel, (3) attend to the context in which [they] perceive the information and eventually, (4) create new categories through which this information may be understood” (p. 111).

Mindfulness – and, by extension, mindful learning – implies a certain mindset. Yeganeh and Kolb (2009) suggest that “in order to be more aware of learning processes, learners must find unique ways to engage in routines of momentary awareness” (p. 18). In essence, practicing mindfulness helps the learner to overcome automaticity (Kolb, 2014). It is a choice learners make to be present with that which leads to learning – i.e., according to Kolb (2014), “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Chapter 2, Summary section, para. 1). Such a choice allows learners to expand perspectives as a result of their awareness of viewpoints other than their own (Langer, 1997). When the information learners receive is involving – that is, perceived as interesting to them – students begin to draw distinctions, to notice novelty in what is being learned, and, consequently, to see different sides of what is learned. This, in turn, contributes to increased interest on their part, enhancing students’ capacity for mindful learning (Langer, 1997). When students’ attitudes toward what is learned is changed – that is, when they see the relevance of what they are learning in relation to their own selves – they can draw greater meaning from a learning experience by connecting what they learn with what they care about (Langer, 1997). Finally, by creating new categories, students take what has been learned and store this information in their knowledge base to pull from for future experiences (Langer, 1997).



Conversely, mindlessness – i.e., the opposite of mindfulness, which allows for doubt and thus for choice (Langer, 2014) – is like operating on “automatic pilot,” which disregards new signals from a given experience and thus prevents learners from gaining full awareness of discriminatory details of distinctions they draw from what they learn (Langer, 1997). It follows that “mindlessness typically comes about by default not by design” (Langer, 2014, p. 11). In fact, mindfulness takes intentionality. It cannot be left to chance. In what pertains to internships in student affairs, supervision that aims at bolstering students’ mindfulness requires a commitment to seizing every opportunity (both planned and unplanned) to capitalize on the teachable moments that experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, allow for. This requires a relentless commitment to learning on the part of supervisors and supervisees. As previously noted, the intense pace and many “distractions” that are now part of the daily work of higher education professionals can in effect foster automatic behaviors that, while often inadvertently, can stifle learning and thus compromise the development of those partaking in supervised practices.

The implications of mindlessness can be manifold for students preparing to enter the student affairs profession. For instance, mindlessness contributes to inattention. This, in turn, prevents aspiring professionals from developing a capacity to derive the kind of learning from present concrete experiences that could positively influence future experiences by way of the conscious choices they make. Moreover, mindlessness may also lead to mediocre present and, most critically, future outcomes in their work in higher education. What’s more, by the virtue of one’s inability to articulate a reason (or reasons) for their successes and failures, students preparing to enter the profession may not develop an ability to abstract present learning to future experiences in their careers. This cannot be good news for college students and other stakeholders they will eventually work with nor for the mission of institutions which they are called to uphold (ACPA, 2006).

What is also noteworthy is that mindlessness thwarts the possibility of experiences living on in other future experiences. In that case, the “experiential continuum,” articulated by John Dewey (1938/1963) in his seminal book, *Experience and Education*, runs the risk of being interrupted. Dewey presses this point further, asserting that experiences cannot be mindless or unintentional; they cannot be left to “planless improvisation” (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 28). In articulating his theory of experience, the educational theorist emphasizes the need for quality learning that, in return, provides for continuity of an experience. His claim is that “every experience is a moving force” (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 38), which either contributes or hinders the subsequent experiences of learners.

Our student affairs profession is committed to transformative education (Keeling, 2004). Thus, one cannot go through such an experience detached, as a mere spectator. There is a kind of emotional commitment required for experiences that lead to learning. Kolb (2014) makes it clear: “emotion creates attention, and if we are not paying attention to an experience, it will not be sensed, formed and transformed. Rich experiences, such as those which change and surprise or use all the senses, are more memorable” (Chapter 3, Reflective Observation and Remembering section, para.

1). With that, we surmise that a well designed and implemented internship experience – one that attempts to forecast and foreground opportunities for learning by way of doing - holds such a promise and, with it, the potential to be truly transformational in the preparation of aspiring student affairs professionals.

### **MODEST STRATEGIES FOR RECAPTURING MINDFULNESS**

Throughout this conceptual article we have sought to make a case for mindfulness to be accentuated in supervised practices in student affairs and thus to be used as a pedagogy in the professional preparation of aspiring professionals. Perhaps more clarity is in order. By “accentuating” we do not mean the replacement of “practice” with “thinking” or, for that matter, of “product” with “process” alone. All have merit. All can be designed to add value and contribute to a meaningful learning experience. In fact, to be clear, we support the notion that internships ought to be an inherently practical experience. At the same time, we propose the accentuation and indeed a reorientation to reflective practices that lead to greater learning – an essential feature of the work of student affairs educators – which is often at risk of being lost in supervised practices in light of the reasons already touched on earlier in this discussion. That said, we affirm that supervised practices that inspire and make room for self-reflection – “a critical aspect of meaning-making” (Ardoin, 2014, p. 129) – should be a protected feature of internships. This, we claim, would contribute to deeper learning on the part of students partaking in these academic experiences: learning about themselves, about institutions as organizations/systems, about higher education at large, about college students, etc. We claim that mindfulness that aims at better understanding the “doing” can even pave the way toward transformative learning, which “reinforces the root meaning of liberal education itself – freeing oneself from the constraints of a lack of knowledge and an excess of simplicity” (Keeling, 2004, p. 9). In fact, we think mindfulness as a pedagogy of supervision facilitates this kind of learning by taking the “doing” experienced in one’s internship and transforming it most meaningfully by way of “thinking.”

At the same time, we are cognizant of the fact that when priorities compete for the attention (i.e., mindfulness) of busy professionals, oftentimes opportunities for reflection about practice may be postponed – or, worse yet, even forfeited – to make room for pressing tasks. Thus, greater care on the part of both supervisors and supervisees must be taken to maintain their commitment to “minding” (i.e., paying attention to, exploring one’s perception of, reflecting upon) the concrete experience of students in internships. At the same time, given the power differential inherent in the role of supervisors, we do think seasoned professionals should be the ones ensuring that time is properly devoted to reflection. Here, we concur with Cooper and Saunders (2003) who suggest that “supervisors of students in internship (...) should view their role as educators of future practitioners” (p. 176). Considering that supervised practices are in essence learning experiences, we posit that, when prioritized, the practice of mindfulness serves as a meaningful pedagogy of supervision that can bring out the meaning behind practical experiences. This is what makes the “thinking” about the “doing” worth being accentuated in internships.

At the same time, embracing this pedagogy points to other difficulties, which we do not presume being able to overcome with simplistic solutions or prescriptions. It is possible that some supervisors (especially new supervisors) may be under-equipped to sustain the practices of mindfulness to the depth we propose here. Others, while certainly capable, might be unable to maintain a consistent commitment to supervision that largely hinges on mindfulness, especially in light of the pressures, volume of work, and deadlines that are by now too common for professionals in the field. Conversations that lead to deep learning take time, which seems to be a rare commodity in higher education these days. What's more, even in the case of supervisors who may be willing and apt to use mindfulness as part of their pedagogy of supervision, often what needs to be overcome is the reluctance of students themselves who, in many cases, might themselves be after a "product" alone. We also surmise that among many supervisors and supervisees' main apprehensions would be that time spent on thinking or self-reflection is time away from the possibility of developing the more "practical" skills that internships are designed for. At the same time, at the dawn of this discussion, we hope to have made a convincing argument that among the many aims of supervised practices, one stands at the top of the list: *learning*.

While such possible impediments and concerns may have merit, we like to think that when it comes to solidifying practical skills by way of internships (e.g., enhancing one's professional competencies, as suggested by ACPA and NASPA, 2015), in many instances there may be nothing as practical as mindfulness itself to bring about learning that bolsters aspiring professionals' ability to become competent and thoughtful student affairs educators. After all, as we also suggested earlier, mindlessness cannot be a good formula for personal and professional growth and, for that matter, student affairs work. For this reason, we argue that reflection could be seen as an inherently practical skill.

Something of value would be lost if graduate students mistakenly thought (or, worse yet, were told) that learning could be accomplished solely by way of "doing." While experiences in the context of internships include tasks and activities that are central and essential to these supervised practices, they are, at best, conduits for learning, not the sole reason behind internships. We think mindfulness by way of thinking and reflection is that which leads to meaning-making of what one "does" in a given internship. In fact, we posit that learning by way of mindfulness can lead to greater knowledge acquisition which, in turn, helps to shape students' professional practice in complementary ways. Magolda and Baxter Magolda (2011) make this point even clearer: "knowledge and action are synergistic. Knowledge informs action, and the results of action in turn refine knowledge.... Reflection on how existing knowledge interacts with and is further informed by action helps educators refine their expertise" (p. 9).

While there are many educational strategies (e.g., counseling techniques, including Socratic dialogue/questioning, formative and summative evaluations of interns and internships, etc.) that we believe are complementary to this pedagogy of supervision we propose, in light of the limited space we have, two practical exercises that can facilitate mindfulness: journaling and the use of a learning contract in internships. We posit that these educational exercises can enhance

the learning that goes into supervised practices in student affairs and, consequently, bolster both knowledge and skill acquisition of aspiring professionals. Furthermore, these can be thought of and designed as “thinking spaces” for students in internship, engaging the reflective faculties of supervisees as they plan and participate in practical experience in the field. Yet these cannot be left to chance either. Supervised practices in student affairs require students to “plan to think deeply about what is observed and experienced” (Janosik et al., 2015, p. 27). We think that journaling and the learning contract are good starting points for the “thinking about the doing” that graduate students ought to engage in during internships.

Journaling offers an in depth opportunity for reflection. By writing down their thoughts, students can verbalize and thus make meaning of what they are learning on site. By asking “What have I learned?” student-supervisees can become increasingly attuned (i.e., mindful) of the learning outcomes that result from concrete, practical experiences. In providing answers to this or similar questions, supervisees can explore their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to what they experience, do, and learn on site. This, we argue, can serve to reinforce the concept of mindfulness proposed by Langer (1997) – e.g., considering multiple perspectives, looking at the experience as novel, etc. And while we surmise that faculty supervisors might be more prone to incorporating this kind of exercise as a course assignment, reflective journaling can be done with or without guidance from a supervisor. Accordingly, reflective journals can be structured (e.g., as a response to a set of questions) or semi-structured (e.g., with expectations that supervisees discuss learning outcomes, yet left open to students to choose freely what experiences they would like to process in writing). These can be brief exercises (short entries) that, for instance, helps to bring to mind the learning behind specific experiences, situations, etc., that students partake in during their internships.

Another way to facilitate learning through supervised practices is by way of a well-thought-out learning contract (for more information on learning contracts see Janosik et al., 2003; Janosik et al., 2015). In this written document, goals are agreed upon between supervisee and his or her supervisors (both site and faculty supervisors). The learning contract (not a legally binding contract, but, rather, a “roadmap” or a plan for learning) results from a collaboration between supervisors and supervisees who establish feasible goals that serve both students and their respective sites. It sets the tone and outlines expectations and learning opportunities on the part of supervisees that, if followed through, could add meaning and guide students toward learning as a result of practical experiences. Cooper and Saunders (2003) affirm that “[internships] should offer students an understanding of the world of work, an opportunity to develop their professional skills, an environment in which to link theory with practice, and a chance to enhance future employment prospects,” adding that “the focus of any internship is fundamentally on what the intern learns” (p. 189). In that vein, learning contracts (as a goal-setting tool) provide something tangible for supervisors to pull out during supervision and revisit with supervisees (Cooper and Saunders, 2003) toward identifying opportunities for learning. When learning outcomes are thought-out and articulated before or at the beginning of internship experiences, throughout one’s internship this

written document can serve as a reminder of the purposes of these individualized supervised practices.

The contract can spark reflection at various points in the internship experience toward assessing gains in or possible roadblocks for learning, thus helping supervisors and supervisees to adjust the experience accordingly. These and other questions could be posed to and explored with supervisees toward gaining awareness of what is being learned through their internships:

What are your successes in making progress with the learning contract? In what areas are you seeing positive skill development? In what areas is your skill development stalled or particularly problematic? How might we work together to make sure that you are developing the skills most important to you? (Cooper and Saunders, 2003, p. 191)

Whether through journaling, a learning contract, or any other purposeful activity that inspires thought and mindfulness in student-interns, what is important is that supervisees and supervisors find ways to remember and revisit regularly their agreed upon plans for internships. Naturally, there needs to be room for flexibility and adaptation to other priorities that may emerge in the course of an internship. For good or ill, this is a known reality of the work of higher education professionals. Yet a commitment to “minding” new learning opportunities – even when flexibility is in order and changes are needed – ought to remain a priority for those committed to these learning experiences.

The pedagogy we propose here points to the fact that mindfulness often runs counter to the demanding nature of student affairs work in the contemporary academy. It asks us to think more when we already have so much to think about. It demands more time when we have so little of it, yet so much to accomplish. While adopting this pedagogy might sound impossible (or perhaps impractical), our claim boils down to this: from time to time, supervisors and supervisees should put down their to-do lists and make room for the very essence of our work in student affairs, namely, education and learning.

## REFERENCES

- ACPA-College Student Educators International & NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. (2015). *Professional competency areas for student affairs educators*. Retrieved from [https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/ACPA\\_NASPA\\_Professional\\_Compencies\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/ACPA_NASPA_Professional_Compencies_FINAL.pdf)
- ACPA-College Student Educators International. (2006). *Statement of ethical principles & standards*. Retrieved from [http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/Ethical\\_Principles\\_Standards.pdf](http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/Ethical_Principles_Standards.pdf)

- American College Personnel Association. (1996). *The student learning imperative: Implications for student affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/ACPA's%20Student%20Learning%20Imperative.pdf>
- American Council on Education. (1949). *The student personnel point of view*. Retrieved from [https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Student\\_Personnel\\_Point\\_of\\_View\\_1949.pdf](https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Student_Personnel_Point_of_View_1949.pdf)
- Ardoin, S. (2014). *The strategic guide to shaping your student affairs career*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2015). *CAS professional standards for higher education* (9th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Cooper, D. L., & Saunders, S. A. (2003). Supervising student affairs internships: A special case. In S. M. Janosik, D. G. Creamer, J. B. Hirt, R. B. Winston, S. A. Saunders, & D. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Supervising new professionals in student affairs* (pp. 175-205). New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1963). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. (Original work published 1938).
- Hirt, J. B., & Winston, R. B., Jr. (2003). Professional development: Its integration with supervision processes. In S. M. Janosik, D. G. Creamer, J. B. Hirt, R. B. Winston, Jr., S. A. Saunders, & D. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Supervising new professionals in student affairs; A guide for practitioners* (pp. 85-121). New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Ignelzi, M. G. (2011). What forms would supervision take to model inclusive, learning-oriented practice? In P. M. Magolda, & M. Baxter Magolda (Eds.), *Contested issues in student affairs* (pp. 416-432). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Janosik, S. M., Cooper, D. L., Saunders, S. A., & Hirt, J. B. (2015). *Learning through supervised practice in student affairs* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Janosik, S. M., Creamer, D. G., Hirt, J. B., Saunders, S. A., & Cooper, D. L. (2003). *Supervising new professionals in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.
- Keeling, R. P. (Ed.). (2004). *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Retrieved from [https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Learning\\_Reconsidered\\_Report.pdf](https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Learning_Reconsidered_Report.pdf)
- Keeling, R. P. (Ed.). (2006). *Learning reconsidered 2: A practical guide to implementing a campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Retrieved from <http://nirsa.net/nirsa/wp-content/uploads/LearningReconsidered2.pdf>
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education LTD. Retrieved from OhioLINK Safari eBooks.

- Kuk, L., & Cuyjet, M. J. (2009). Graduate preparation programs: The first step in socialization. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration: A guide for new professionals and their supervisors* (pp. 89-108). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Langer, E. J. (1997). *The power of mindful learning*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Langer, E. J. (2014). Mindfulness forward and back. In A. Ie, C. T. Ngnoumen, & E. J. Langer (Eds), *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of mindfulness* (pp. 7-20). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Stock-Ward, S. R., & Javorek, M. E. (2003). Applying theory to practice: Supervision in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 40(3), 77-92.
- Yeganeh, B., & Kolb, D. (2009). Mindfulness and experiential learning. *OD Practitioner*, 41(3), 13-18.