**Allowing the Principles of the AFA Core Competency Model
to Inform Strategies of Supervision**
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It is without question the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors' (AFA) recently developed Core Competencies are important when considering the skills and knowledge fraternity and/or sorority advisors should continue to hone and build upon as they improve their practice (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2018). Moreover, whether you are a campus-based or headquarters professional, these competencies play an equally important role when considering skills needed in supervision within fraternity/sorority programs. When supervisors are considering their supervision philosophy, a synergistic approach paired with the principles of the AFA Core Competency Model could help those they supervise understand how to develop their own guiding philosophies as professionals in fraternity/sorority programs. After all, supervisors have a responsibility to lay a strong supervisory foundation for newer employees or those with less experience.

Supervision is widely understood as a combination of focus on the individual and on achievement of the institutional goals and priorities (Davis & Cooper, 2017). This idea builds upon an existing approach to supervision — synergistic supervision. Winston & Creamer (1997) argue synergistic supervision is the best conceptualization of supervision in complex organizations and operations such as higher education. Given the vast and broad array of stakeholders critical in fraternity/sorority advising programs, one could make the case that fraternity/sorority advising programs are also complex organizations and require synergistic approaches in supervising and developing staff in order to create capacity for moving the needle on critical issues facing fraternities and sororities.

Synergy is a good representation of the guiding principles undergirding the AFA Core Competency Model. The principles set out to guide how we are to approach our work and supervision is inherently part of the work we do to develop a profession working to support members of the various sororities and fraternities. Much like the AFA Core Competency model, our supervision should follow these principles:

Aspirational
Synergistic supervision allows room for staff to be aspirational in their work. Defining core competencies typically sets a base-level expectation of knowledge and is rigid in its delivery of those competencies. Synergistic supervision does not assume one would simply stay at the lower end of the competency curve. Instead, it assumes those we supervise will develop capacities to lead and supervise their own teams.

Elevating the Profession

The philosophy of elevating the profession is not about a singular professional's experience or reputation. It is about growing the knowledge and competencies across the field, thus elevating the profile of the entire profession. However, an individual's experience indeed contributes to the entire profession. Synergistic supervision allows supervisors to take individual approaches to elevating the profession. It allows a supervisor to meet staff members where they are and to develop these individuals into better professionals through a philosophy of challenge and support. These individual relationships through the synergistic philosophy of supervision, if implemented broadly, will have an extensive impact by elevating the professional profile of members of the association.

Developmental

Being developmental has long been a philosophy of student affairs. Developmental approaches to the work give room for imperfect fraternity/sorority staff. This philosophy takes into account every staff member comes with various levels of competencies across a variety of topics. Synergistic supervision supports the idea that our development as professionals is not a destination, but it is rather an evolving process. Whether a staff member you have oversight of has been working in the field for 1 year or 15 years, synergistic supervision continues to hold both goals of the professional and priorities of the institution in high regards. Therefore, it continues to motivate us to think about our ongoing development in the ever-changing work of advising fraternities and sororities.

Individualized

With professional development being a process, rather than a destination, understand supervision should take into account the process for each individual staff member. Synergistic supervision gives room for individualized developmental plans for staff. Our work in supporting fraternities and sororities requires an array of competencies, from knowledge about public health, diversity and inclusion, vision setting, assessment, etc. Therefore, this supervision philosophy allows supervisors to strategically hire, train, and develop staff contributing to the overall vision of the institution/organization. Therefore, supervisors should think individually in the development of their teams in order to harness the strengths of individuals to contribute to the collective.

Expandable

This philosophy recognizes that competencies are dynamic not static. Some of the challenges facing fraternities and sororities today are not those faced a generation ago. In that same vein, staff members and students of new generations bring different context and experiences requiring competencies to be expanded or changed. Therefore, it requires a supervision philosophy that also gives room for this changing context, as we adapt to generational racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences into the broader experiences of fraternity/sorority life. Synergistic supervision has as an underpinning of working across differences. These differences require an ever-changing set of competencies.

Universal

Competencies in this work must continue to be universal to all constituents who work to support the fraternity/sorority experience. These constituents include, but are not limited to, campus staff, headquarter staff, and alumni volunteers. Supervision is an inherent part of each of these constituents, and the synergistic philosophy is also universal in its application across these various constituents. In fact, staff development across various industries comes with very similar philosophy, though competencies' content may be different. Therefore, a synergistic model could easily be applied across various stakeholders working with fraternities and sororities.

Strategies for Synergistic Supervision

Developing a philosophy on supervision is a necessary step to supervision. Given the attrition of fraternity/sorority advising professionals is high (Koepsell & Stillman, 2016), we know intentional development of new professionals within the functional area of fraternity/sorority advising programs is critical to the ongoing success of the fraternity/sorority movement. However, we know supervision can be difficult. Davis & Cooper (2017) encourage us to embrace this, sometimes difficult, relationship with three key strategies:

- Socializing staff into organization
- Diagnosing immediate and long-term needs
- Providing ongoing one-on-one, face-to-face meeting times

It is important to socialize staff into the organization and field. One way a supervisor can socialize those they supervise is by introducing and discussing the AFA Core Competencies. A supervisor can use staff meetings, retreats, and other meetings to engage staff in reflection on

their competencies. Supervisors are responsible for working with staff to forecast immediate and long-term needs of the organization. This forecasting is an iterative process that gives room for the changing context of fraternities and sororities. It allows competencies to be expandable. We continue to give room to expandable understanding and competencies through constant assessment. Of the many formal ways we do assessment, informal ways of assessing through one-on-one meetings gives us ongoing analysis of the needs of both the organization and the professionals. Supervisors can advocate with and for staff to take on opportunities enhancing competencies that are both interests of staff and addresses the needs of the fraternity/sorority advising organization.

Intentional incorporation of the principles of the AFA Core Competency Model into synergistic supervising strategies when hiring, training, and developing staff can be a transformative experience for organizations and staff. Supervision should be strategic in order to set clear vision, develop competent staff, and to ultimately impact students. These strategic actions between supervisors and supervisees have potential that goes far beyond the supervisor-supervisee relationship. These actions structure environments that allow fraternity/sorority teams to have an incredible impact on students.

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