

Foundations in Understanding NACURH: Training Regional-Level Advisors in a
Professional Learning Community

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved October 2024 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee

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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2024

ABSTRACT

Compared to advising on college campuses, advising students in a national nonprofit organization presents distinct and understudied challenges that require targeted approaches. This action research qualitative study was conducted to address the need for regional-level advisors volunteering in the National Association of College and University Residence Halls, Inc. (NACURH) to receive training specific to their role and to the needs of advising in a nonprofit organization led entirely by college student leaders. Advisors often receive training for campus student organization advisor roles but receive limited training to advise a group of students in this organization. This study used the theoretical frameworks of professional learning communities (PLCs) and adult learning theory to develop a four-part training series attended by regional-level advisors. The findings of this study suggest that implementing a professional learning community and presenting applicable training sessions positively impacted advisor development and engagement in their roles.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the advisors and students of NACURH, Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my parents, Melinda and Jim who have always encouraged me to follow my dreams, and to keep what really matters in perspective. Thank you for your love and support throughout all my educational journeys and for always attempting to learn and understand the acronyms. Love you!

To my sisters, Nicki and Robin who led the way as first-generation college students before me, making the journey a little bit easier along the way. Love you!

To my friends, who let me externally process on the phone, asked me regularly how writing was going, encouraged me to shake it off and play pickleball, or let me stay in their guest rooms while writing this dissertation, thank you. Your friendships are some of the most rewarding things in my life, and I'm grateful to have you in it.

To the various Flagstaff, AZ coffee shops and wine bars that let me sit for hours and do homework or write. Thank you Forêt, Oeno and Firecreek, I don't think I would have finished without your cozy writing environments.

To my colleagues (past and present) in Campus Living at Northern Arizona University who gave me flexibility in scheduling on-call, sat in coffee shops while I wrote, encouraged me to take the time off to write, or supported me as supervisors and mentors. To the Coordinators who I supervise (and GA), thank you for cheering me on and being flexible, I am grateful to have such an awesome team of "Stoop Kidz".

To my “Group Therapy” community of practice for getting me through the hardest semesters and keeping me motivated to finish the program on time and with you. To Jaclyn in particular, thank you for being my first doctoral friend forged through discussion board posts in our first semester. Your support, humor and TS scheming made it all worth it.

To my committee members Delton and Jen, who provided perspective, a little challenge, and a lot of support through this process. Delton hired me for my first professional role out of graduate school advising student leaders. Thank you for seeing my potential and encouraging me to develop as an advisor and young professional. Jen was my first co-advisor in all my NACURH roles. Advising has always been more enjoyable when advising with you. Thank you for nudging me to pursue my doctorate, and for being there at the beginning for how this study happened. I can’t wait to co-author whatever article or book we decide to work on in the future.

To my chair, Danah, chair extraordinaire. “And the years passed like scenes of a show. The professor said to write what you know”. When I reflect on this process, I am incredibly grateful for your patience, understanding of my procrastination and giving me the right nudges along the way, all while making time to talk about TS. I’m grateful that you were a part of this transformative experience.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Standing at the podium in front of an arena filled with two thousand college students from around North America, a student prepares to close out the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH) Annual Conference. Leaning into the microphone, she says, “Hey, NACURH?” knowing that the crowd across from her will respond with “Hey, what?” in unison. As the crowd settles into their stadium chairs, the graduate student, whose role is Chairperson and CEO of the organization, begins her closing remarks about the conference that transpired over the weekend and her journey from undergraduate student to this culminating moment—wrapping up her term as the Chairperson of the “largest student-run organization in the world.”

The crowd looking back at her varies; most are students attending the conference because of their roles on their college campuses, but some are advisors, professionals from each college and university in attendance who have helped the students travel to the conference safely and, in most cases, help the group accomplish campus organizational goals as part of their full-time jobs.

During the years the Chairperson was involved in the organization, they would have experienced multiple advisors. For a student to make it to a role such as this, some might think they must have had highly skilled, supportive, and engaging advisors at the campus, regional, and national levels. While students may have had many advisors, very few advisors receive the training necessary to support them and provide consistent

feedback about how to improve or adapt. The need for improved advisor training is relevant for all advisors due to the many students attending college and universities each year; each is encouraged to get involved and develop leadership skills for their future careers (Campus Labs, 2015).

The experience of this Chairperson is repeated over and over again by student leaders involved in NACURH. As one of the NACURH Advisors, I am responsible for co-advising the organization's C-suite student executives, working to onboard, train, and develop the regional-level advisors who work with the student leaders who will eventually hold the “C-suite” roles. With fourteen regional-level advisors coming from different campus experiences and levels of training, the organization faces a distinct challenge in preparing advisors to serve in regional-level advisor roles. Bridging what a professional has experienced in their full-time job with the operations of the student-led non-profit organization requires advisors to be adequately onboarded and trained to meet students' needs while understanding how a nonprofit organization is structured and functions.

Currently, regional-level advisors receive some training each year. For many years, advisors were primarily trained to be financial account signatories and work with regional conference teams. Informal conversations and chats supplemented these topics, with advisors sharing what worked for them. More formalized training has been developed over the last five years, with training topics being structured around current and outgoing advisors sharing their experiences in the role and working with a group of student advisees at different college campuses. Previous attempts to level-set the

experiences of regional advisors through training have yet to include topics around the nature of the organization as a nonprofit or what skills are needed in this type of advising role that is different from what skills worked advising on campus.

To address the training needs of regional-level advisors, an Action Research (AR) study was implemented to explore what happens when a training program is developed for new and continuing regional-level advisors using Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Adult Learning Theory, also known as andragogy, to train advisors on NACURH's nonprofit structure, budget and finances, and advising in a virtual environment.

Larger Context

Higher Education and Student Affairs

Extracurricular organizations are a part of the collegiate environment, dating back to the earliest colleges and universities, with students forming 'eating clubs' and interest-based social groups (Thelin, 2011). Bloland (1967) wrote about the growth of clubs and organizations and how, in the 20th century, most institutions had moved to a system requiring that a club or organization have an advisor to be recognized by the college or university, mainly faculty and staff members (p.3). In most instances, advising was uncompensated in addition to their assigned roles. Bloland does not indicate what skills advisors would need but does identify their role as having three functions - maintenance, group growth, and program context (Bloland, 1967).

Contemporaries to Bloland also focused on advisors' roles rather than skills, noting that "many of the advisors in this study had little or no professional preparation to

advise students or student organizations. Although faculty and administrators generally perceived their knowledge as adequate to advise, most of that knowledge is experiential” (Myers & Dyer, 2005, p.44). In student affairs preparatory programs, the inclusion of advising focuses on group development, group dynamics, and group motivation (Schuh et al., 2016). Unlike supervision or student conduct, student organization advising is not an area of focus in training programs for graduate students looking to work in Student Affairs.

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and College Student Educators International (ACPA), the two professional organizations that serve student affairs as a profession, list Advising and Supporting as one of their ten competencies. This competency broadly establishes knowledge, skills, and dispositions for advising students in various settings, including interpersonal skills, professional development, group dynamics, partnering with others, and conflict and crises (ACPA/NASPA Competencies, 2015). Including advising as an area critical for the Student Affairs profession indicates that advising students is a core aspect of student affairs, even if preparation and training programs are limited. The Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) is another organization serving student affairs professionals. ACUHOI has core competencies for professionals working in campus housing, which include “student advising” as part of the “Residence Education” core curriculum area (ACUHO-I, 2022).

Despite the need for advisors, the lack of training programs or dedicated coursework associated with advising and the limited formal research being conducted

highlight a gap in student affairs about advising, how to improve as an advisor, and what skills to learn to succeed. On some college and university campuses, dedicated training for club advisors is an integral part of student life departments, with dedicated training for advisors and opportunities to develop skills and campus-based advising knowledge. These examples are rare, not a standard for higher education institutions, and underscore the need for institutions of higher education, student affairs as a profession, and organizations such as NACURH that utilize advisors to focus on developing training and transition solutions that will prepare advisors to support students' needs adequately.

History and Structure of NACURH

NACURH began in 1954, bringing together two independent residence hall student organizations, the Association of College and University Residence Halls (ACURH) and the Inter-Mountain Residence Hall Association (IMRHA) with similar missions, to bring campus-based residence hall governments together to share ideas on how to improve the on-campus living environments on their respective campuses. The campus-based residence hall government organizations, usually called Residence Hall Associations (RHA), were experiencing changes to their campus environments, with new buildings being built and campus cultures shifting to accommodate the increase in enrollment (Averill, 1999). ACURH and IMRHA merged and adopted the name NACURH in 1961 after schools from neighboring states indicated their interest in involvement. A decade later, NACURH was registered as a nonprofit organization, setting up the foundation and structure that is still present today. In the seventy years since, NACURH has aimed to keep with the initial goal of connecting residence hall

student leaders by sponsoring annual and regional conferences, creating resources for campus leaders, and offering leadership opportunities for students and professionals in the organization. The National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) was created in the 1970s as a complementary organization, focusing on recognition and service and woven into the organization's structure through positions and services. NACURH is uniquely situated as an entirely student-led organization, with its c-suite leaders, board of directors, and stakeholders all being students attending an institution of higher education and, in most cases, living in on-campus provided housing.

The C-suite of NACURH is the Executive Committee, which includes the Chairperson (CEO), an Associate for Operations (NAO), an Associate for NRHH (NAN), and an Associate for Engagement (NAE). These students hold their roles for one-year terms and are elected by the organization's board of directors. NACURH's structure grew from the initial merging of two organizations situated in the western and midwestern areas of the United States, which set up the pathway for NACURH to be organized geographically. As the organization included more and more colleges and universities, new regions were established. This region-based model grew to include regional leadership teams, called Regional Boards of Directors (RBD), that were formed.

NACURH currently has eight regions spanning North America that are organized geographically. Each region elects a Regional Director, Regional Finance Officer, and Associate Director for the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) (NACURH Bylaws. pp.3). These three positions comprise the NACURH Board of Directors, have the power to determine NACURH policies, and are responsible for making decisions on

behalf of the organization at the corporate and regional levels. Each regional board also includes additional student positions called Coordinating Officers (CO) that are specially designed for the priorities of that region.

At the campus level, NACURH gives stakeholders voting power to students called National/NACURH Communication Coordinators (NCCs), who vote on matters affecting NACURH's bylaws. These student roles are the direct tie from NACURH to each campus.

When NACURH adopted the unified name, it also established the need for the organization to have advisors supporting it and its student leaders. This started with creating a National Advisor role and two years later expanded to include advisors for each region (Coleman & Dunkel, 2014). At the NACURH level, the organization has two NACURH Advisors who work directly with the NACURH Executive Committee, advising on corporate matters and supporting the regional advisors. Additionally, three consultant positions exist to support the organization's broader programmatic initiatives.

Regionally, boards have either one regional-level advisor or a regional advisor and regional NRHH advisor. Both roles directly advise the regional board of directors, while regional NRHH advisors also focus on advising positions tied to NRHH.

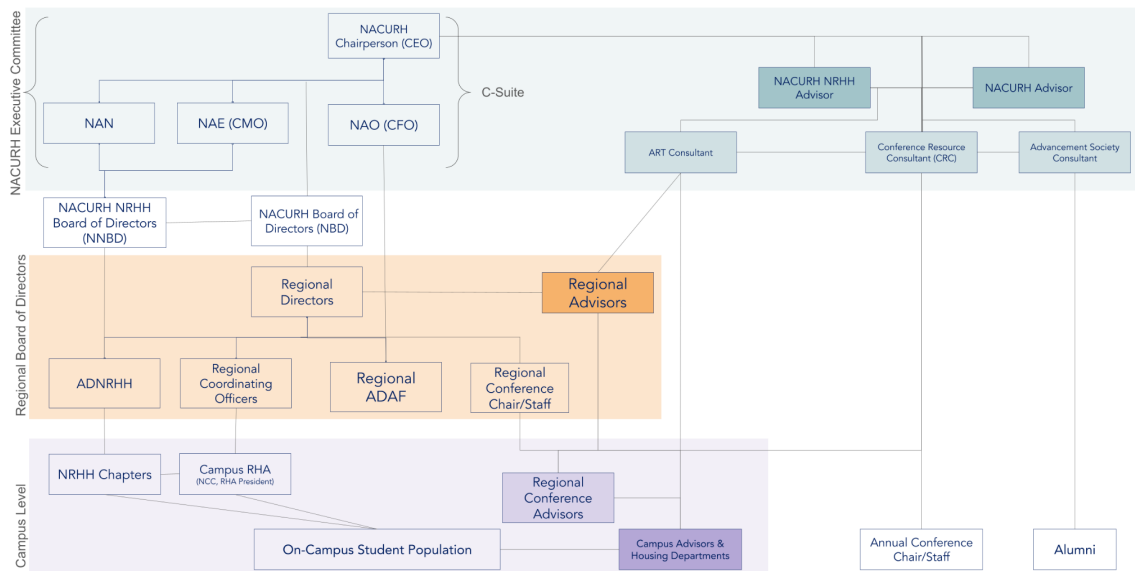


Fig. 1 NACURH Organizational Chart

Advisor Retention & Training Program

The Advisor Retention & Training (ART) is one example of a formal training program designed to train advisors. ART was created by Ed Grandpré in 1996 using a curriculum based on a national study of RHA advisors conducted by Dunkel and Porter, which was initially known as Advisor Resource Training. The program aimed to provide training topics for residence life advisors attending student leadership conferences (Shapiro, 2012). In 1999, the program expanded to be available to all NACURH member school advisors. Eventually, ART was developed to add a “Master ART” level, encouraging more experienced advisors to present content to newer advisors. Since 2012, ART has been recognized by NACURH as a service for advisors involved in the organization. The curriculum continues to change but focuses on the campus-level advising experience as its primary focus.

Situational Context

The National Association of College and University Residence Halls, Incorporated (NACURH) is a student-run non-profit organization operating primarily in North America. NACURH's mission is to “empower, motivate, and equip residence hall leaders by providing them with skills and resources to excel and positively impact their campus communities” (NACURH, 2022, p. 5). NACURH is divided into eight distinct geographic regions, each with college-aged student leaders serving in volunteer positions tasked with hosting regional conferences and conducting business for the member schools in the region.

To support being a student-led organization, NACURH has various unpaid professional positions that support and guide its leaders through their roles and provide continuity to the organization from year to year. Regionally, the advisor positions are filled by professional staff from colleges and universities from defined geographic regions of the organization. Similar to volunteer leadership roles in professional organizations in student affairs, such as the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHOI) or the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), leadership roles are aimed at professional development and giving back to the organization and professional community (NASPA, 2022). The main difference between these professional organizations' structures and NACURH is that the professional student affairs organizations have central offices staffed by full-time employees in an office setting and offer many volunteer professional development positions.

Regional-level advisors advise a group of seven to nine student positions in predominantly virtual spaces. Each advisor holds the role for two to three years while also holding a full-time professional job. Advisors have often experienced challenges and large variances in their experiences because of the student-run and volunteer-reliant structure of NACURH. Historically, this group has received limited onboarding or training and is left to rely on past experiences and guesswork to navigate a complex organization that operates outside the boundaries of the college and university structure in which they work.

Several steps have previously been taken to improve advisor training and engagement, including creating a separate training schedule for advisors preparing to enter the role two months before the start of their terms. Topics have included panel discussions hosted by former advisors to share their experiences and expertise. Previously, regional-level advisors have been surveyed on their needs, organizational culture, and ways to increase engagement and innovation.

Regional-level advisors often have served as campus Residence Hall Association (RHA) and National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) advisors, taking students to NACURH-sponsored conferences and utilizing NACURH's resources before pursuing a regional advising role. Bachman (1989) describes these organizations as necessary for influencing the residence hall environment. RHA and NRHH have many structures but are ultimately funded and governed by the affiliated institution.

The nonprofit nature of NACURH and its structure, which is not mirrored at the campus level, ties directly to the need for regional-level advisors to receive targeted

training. Advisor readiness situated only in the context of advising college students in a university environment must include the nuance of the nonprofit structure. These organizations face compliance and engagement hurdles while aligning their decision-making with a mission (Ensor, 2023). The results for NACURH are a mismatch between student affairs professionals with some training in student organization advising but limited nonprofit knowledge or advisors with experience in NACURH as students but little to no formal advising or nonprofit training.

Previous Cycles of Research

This dissertation uses action research, characterized by systematic inquiry, to improve the quality or effectiveness of something (Mertler, 2020). Action research situates a practitioner-researcher to take action in their setting, often through implementing innovations to address an identified need (Mertler, 2020). A key attribute of action research is incorporating reflective practices to consider what did and did not work in each successive research cycle and make changes to future cycles. Action research is commonly used in educational settings, aligning it appropriately with the setting of NACURH's regional-level advisors. During the Spring 2022 and Fall 2022, two preliminary cycles of research were conducted to understand the landscape of regional-level advisor experiences better and work towards developing an intervention for this dissertation study to improve their experiences as regional-level advisors and, ultimately, support the students they advise.

Action Research: Cycle Zero Research

During the first preliminary research cycle (termed “cycle zero” in action research), a reconnaissance study was conducted to understand the problem of practice better. In cycle zero, two outgoing regional-level advisors were interviewed to learn about 1) the skills they think were most important as advisors working with students in virtual and in-person NACURH spaces and 2) how the regional-level advisors view their advising skills at the end of their experience.

Findings from the interviews highlighted advisors need more knowledge about the skills required to advise effectively and that observing other advisors was the primary way they learned how to advise. This cycle also pointed to training as an area that regional-level advisors were concerned about and wanted more of when looking back at their time in the role. The interviews reinforced what Jamison (2003) noted as an imperative to train volunteers at the start of their roles, periodically during their time, and to ensure that training is tied directly to the organization's mission.

Action Research: Cycle One Overview

Continuing with the action research study conducted in cycle zero, the next cycle (cycle one) shifted focus to new and continuing regional-level advisor training experiences. Four advisors were interviewed to understand their advising backgrounds better and how they perceived advisor training offered by NACURH, followed by a survey that synthesized the coded themes from interviews focusing on advisor support and training topics. Findings from this research cycle are needed to implement an

intervention, so the advisors should have experienced a style and type of training. Still, through the survey and interviews, the advisors narrowed in on topics they identified as necessary to succeed in the role, namely understanding regional and NACURH finances and the structural and political landscape of the organization.

Cycle Zero and Cycle One utilized the tenets of adult learning theory to frame and define the topics and questions, explicitly involving advisors in identifying and designing training they would participate in and benefit from (Knowles, 1984). The absence of an intervention in Cycle One left some questions about the future success of innovations that utilize training sessions as the primary delivery method for content, which the innovation in this study will need to address.

Innovation

To build regional-level advisors' skills pertinent to advising in a nonprofit organization, a training series focusing on the nonprofit elements of the organization and culture as it relates to being a virtual organization was implemented for all incoming and continuing regional-level advisors. Advisors participated in other training and developments, such as regional advisor chats, panel discussions hosted by past or outgoing advisors, and training that crossed over with the student positions. The training covered four primary topics: an introduction to professional learning communities, NACURH's virtual culture, financial impact and NACURH budgeting, and NACURH's corporate structure.

The introductory session on Professional Learning Communities (PLC) introduced the five components of PLCs and engaged advisors in connecting each tenant to existing behaviors and actions and identifying ways the group could enhance the community. These components include shared beliefs, values, and vision; shared and supportive leadership; collective learning and its application; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice. The training aimed to introduce the concept and help advisors identify what steps the group would take to become a PLC.

The second training juxtaposed NACURH's virtual nature with common advising skills. Advisors navigated through activities to identify differences between campus-level organizational cultures and NACURH's. This training aimed to push back at common assumptions made by advisors working with students who have held multiple positions in the organization concerning their roles and responsibilities as advisors in this context.

In the third training, advisors were introduced to financial impact and budgeting training, which provided advisors with introductory knowledge about how nonprofit finances operate, how NACURH's finances operate, and their role in NACURH's finances. While additional finance training exists for the student roles, this training highlighted critical areas advisors should focus on and how to navigate advising conversations related to financial decisions.

The final training topic focused on building competence around organizational structures in nonprofits and how these structures differ from NACURH's structure. This session aimed to build on the advisors' experience and knowledge of the student organization and situate it within a nonprofit context.

Problem of Practice and Research Questions

This research study addresses the problem of practice of how does formalizing a professional learning community (PLC) among the NACURH regional-level advisors impacts their preparation and engagement while advising student leaders in NACURH through implementing a training series that focuses on the components of a PLC, NACURH's corporate structure, finances, and advising in a virtual environment. The following research questions guide this research study:

RQ 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?

RQ 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?

RQ3: How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this study. This action research study focused on training professionals in student affairs who volunteer their time as organization advisors to a nonprofit organization that undergraduate and graduate students run and what happens when training is implemented to support advisor development in areas of the organization being a nonprofit. While substantial research has been done on professional training and onboarding across the field of education, and extensive research has been done on nonprofit board development, very few published studies or articles related to advising and advisor training exist.

This chapter will first review relevant literature surrounding advising, advisor training, and related literature on training adults and persons working in student affairs. Then, a review of nonprofit organizational structures and how these organizations train volunteers. Lastly, adult learning theory and professional learning communities (PLC), which are used as the framework for this study, will be shared.

Student Organization Advising

How do student organization advisors learn to advise? What training is available to advisors that address the skills necessary to work with different types of organizations? Understanding the state of training and skill development for advisors, especially those connected to residence life-based organizations in student affairs, is essential for understanding the types of experiences that regional-level advisors in NACURH have.

Broadly, students engaging in student clubs and organizations on college and university campuses experience the same challenge of working with advisors who may or may not have received training and guidance. As of 2022, there were over 3,900 colleges and universities in the United States of America (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). No national data exists for how many clubs and organizations exist; however, Arizona State University has over 1,000 unique clubs and organizations registered, indicating that many staff and faculty would be advising at any given time (Arizona State University, 2024).

Advisor Skills and Training for Student Clubs and Organizations

As covered in Chapter One, student organization advisors evolved from students organizing activities and events, needing a faculty sponsor to faculty and staff volunteering to advise, being asked to report by students, or having organization advising explicitly tied to their role (Bloland, 1967). While some advisors receive basic training in helping skills through student affairs master's programs, most advisors learn to advise by doing or observing other advisors.

Considering the skills necessary for advisors, very little research indicates the types of skills needed to be a successful or quality advisor. Bloland (1967) identified three functions of an advisor but did not indicate the necessary skills to achieve the three functions. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a more scholarly focus on advising, for instance, describing advisor duties as “attending meetings and events, working with the officer team, explaining university policies, serving as a resource, signing documents as the university representative, initiating ideas for discussion,

overseeing the finances and budget cost centers including following the state and university legalities associated with fundraising, instilling teamwork...” (Whittington & Cano, 2007). Broadly, advising a student organization is noted as a valuable task to be performed by faculty and staff for the betterment of students. Still, there is no discussion about how to complete the task.

Some colleges and universities have created advisor training programs to supplement the limited professional training in academic spaces. For example, Arizona State University (ASU) has a Student Organization Advisor Handbook on its website. The handbook is over twenty pages long and covers topics from starting a new organization to instructions on having food at events and reminders about risk management. The handbook lists advisor expectations and indicates additional online training resources through the ASU club management system (Arizona State University, 2019).

Residence Life-Based Student Organizations

Residence Life-based student organizations like the Residence Hall Association (RHA) or the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) have specific advising needs. Bachman (1989) described the rise of organizations like RHA as necessary for staff and students to influence the residence hall environment to create a climate for personal and academic development (p. 25). The rise of these organizations as an essential part of the student housing experience necessitated more staff to advise organizations. Bachman (1989) indicated that “training programs, retreats, and workshops, both for student leaders and their advisors, are now also part of most college and university residence life

programs” (p.8). This expansion of student organizations within student housing should indicate that club and organization advisors in residence life are more thoroughly trained and prepared to support student needs. No research suggests this is true, however, as more formalized training programs within professional organizations such as the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHOI) would likely exist and be a primary topic for up-and-coming residence hall staff and leaders if advisor development were a core focus. Advising is mentioned as a topic in the “residence education” competency area developed by ACUHOI as a “more general competency designed to address those areas of residential education including promoting personal growth, community building, student advising, broad-based programming strategies not specifically addressed in the other residence education competency areas” (ACUHOI, 2022). This competency area covers numerous areas often folded into professional roles in residence life, each of which could likely be a unique competency area.

Since 2020, ACUHO-I, along with eight other associations, worked to create a student affairs certification program to promote and advance student affairs professionals across higher education. The program includes specialty certifications in various areas, including campus activities, housing and residential life, and fraternity and sorority life. The certifications were each developed by subject matter experts and require participants to complete curriculum and ongoing training in addition to passing an exam. Advising is embedded in some specialty certifications tied explicitly to a broad learning domain of student learning, development, and success (Student Affairs Educator Certification,

2023). One example is the College Unions certification, which identifies “advise student organization to maximize student development, leadership, inclusion, management, and safety” as an essential knowledge and task (Higher Education Consortium for Student Affairs Certification, 2023). Describing advising as knowledge and task misses the knowledge and tasks associated with advising, reinforcing an assumption that advising is a skill that all professionals innately have and do not need to develop.

Outside of these professional student affairs organizations, one instance of an advisor training program exists for consumption by advisors at multiple campuses, the Advisor Retention & Training (ART) program owned by NACURH, Inc.

Advisor Retention & Training (ART)

The development of ART and its evolution over the last thirty years highlights a central challenge associated with training advisors. ART was developed by volunteers advising students in NACURH who observed the lack of training they received to support students as advisors.

The initial curriculum included five core workshops that an advisor would complete along with completing a variety of tasks and experiences related to advising. Shapiro (2012) highlights the original curriculum, which required advisors to attend five core workshops: *Advisors as an Information Resource*, *Student and Group Development Theories and Models*, *Retention and Recruitment of Members*, *Working with an Executive Board*, and *Meetings and Activities*. In addition to core workshops, three elective topics had to be completed. These included *motivating students*, *legal issues*, *conferring*, *advising an NRHH chapter*, *diversity in organizations*, *working with a national*

communication coordinator, and *bid writing*. The experiential requirements included advisors attending conferences affiliated with NACURH at the regional and national levels, completing a year(s) of organization advising on campus, or attending a board meeting at a NACURH-affiliated conference.

Dunkel and Porter's (1996) study of 300 RHA advisors and 300 RHA students set the foundation for the development of ART. Identifying what students and advisors prioritize related to advisor tasks created a springboard for negotiating what students and advisors perceived as an advisor's role. The challenge with this study being used as the basis for the development of the ART curriculum is that the topics were so narrowly focused on the differences in priorities between advisor and student as it related to RHAs and NRHHs in the late 1990s that it quickly became outdated due to it not being built upon a foundation of common skills all advisors should possess in working with students in clubs and organizations.

When NACURH formally recognized ART as a service in 2011, steps were taken to address the outdated content and materials. In 2013, the ART curriculum was updated using a new data set collected from RHA advisors and RHA students. It streamlined the storage and collection of materials owned by NACURH and ensured materials were accessible digitally to those eligible to present. In 2018, the ART Standards Committee, a committee of advisors and those familiar with ART developed a three-year strategic plan in which they intended to assess the needs of the curriculum and track advisors in the program. In June 2021, NACURH approved adding ART to the organization's structure, updated the purpose and structure of ART, and renamed the program Advisor Retention

and Training. These updates included adding a volunteer professional to help coordinate ART at each year's Annual NACURH Conference. In 2021, this role was elevated to a NACURH Consultant, providing greater access to resources and support as the program aimed to expand its reach beyond RHA and NRHH advisors.

The goal of ART still aims to address the same things De Sewal (2007) noted: Advisors usually rely on the observable experiences they had as undergraduate students working with their organization's advisor as the sole basis for how they currently advise an organization rather than building on training and skill development obtained as a professional (p. 21).

The next evolution of the ART curriculum is now under development. As ART aims to address advisor training needs more broadly, it will aim to address the needs of student club and organization advisors in residence life and those advising other types of groups.

Training Regional-Level Advisors in NACURH

Fourteen individuals serve as regional-level advisors in NACURH. Understanding the types of training and opportunities advisors may have had professionally before becoming a regional advisor helps identify what skills a regional-level advisor may need to be more successful, especially when their roles require them to advise students at multiple institutions, in virtual spaces and operating in an organization outside of the boundaries of their college or university. Unlike campus clubs and organizations, a region's advisor must support students in understanding non-profit governance and risk management and how campus policies and procedures are connected to the organization.

Before 2020, training for regional-level advisors was limited, consisting of conference training, regional finance training, and talking to one another about advising experiences when time allowed.

Beginning in March 2020, the first training and onboarding curriculum for regional-level advisors was introduced. Onboarding entailed sending a welcome letter, sharing contact information, creating virtual spaces for advisors to get to know each other, and creating a mentor program between new and continuing advisors. Training consisted of virtual chats that covered specific training topics, videos with reflection questions, an advisor panel, and opportunities to shadow and observe student spaces. This training and onboarding were reinforced by making resources more centralized and utilizing multiple advisors to develop the content and delivery. When crafted, the schedule was intended to prepare advisors for their terms, having both virtual and in-person experiences. Still, after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, scheduled connections and virtual opportunities became the primary way that advisors communicated and engaged with one another.

In February 2021, a survey was administered by the NACURH NRHH Advisor to all the regional-level advisors to better understand their experiences before starting the regional advisor role and what gaps they self-identified in their advising experiences in NACURH. Six outcomes resulted from this survey, including the need to define a clear direction for regional-level advisors moving forward, defining clear regional-level advisor competencies, developing an advisor team, creating a clear flow for communication, understanding regional differences and student experiences, and working

towards creative solutions to foster a positive culture. The training and onboarding offered in spring 2021 included consideration around the six themes and a focus on defining what steps should be taken for training versus how the group functions (Advisor Conversation, 2021).

The training of advisors at NACURH poses an essential question about what knowledge and skills these advisors may need, specific to NACURH being a nonprofit organization rather than a college campus.

Nonprofit Organizations

In the United States, nonprofit organizations are characterized by their aim to serve either the public at large or their members. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) establishes what constitutes a nonprofit and which organizations can benefit from the financial tax breaks afforded to most nonprofit organizations. The existence and purpose of nonprofit organizations is to be a “first line of defense or provide flexible means through which individuals concerned about a social or economic problem can begin to respond” (Pynes, 2011). Organizations fall into various categories, ranging from advocacy-focused to humanitarian organizations and groups focused on the arts or education. Each nonprofit is tied to being governed by its bylaws, the document that establishes the structure and operational policies for it to operate (Pynes, 2011). Broadly, the work done by nonprofits is to accomplish its defined mission. Ahmed (2022) showcases the importance of viewing a nonprofit through the lens of how it is legally structured. Legally, a nonprofit’s board of directors is at the top of the organization's hierarchy and is ultimately responsible for accomplishing the organization's mission

(p.101). Ahmed shares that even if an organization relies on a structure that includes a CEO or other staff, “the board can never be relieved of its legal and fiduciary responsibilities” (p.102). Grant and Crutchfield (2007) describe the need for nonprofits to figure out how to manage the external boundaries of the organization rather than how the organization functions internally (35). The push and pull of nonprofit governance partly reflect their reliance on volunteers to accomplish the organization's mission.

While there are common structures used in nonprofit organizations, most determine their structure based on who their stakeholders are and whether they have a CEO or only a board of directors. Nonprofits with a CEO utilize their Board of Directors and employees (paid or volunteer) to make decisions on behalf of the organization and use volunteer support to meet the expectations of stakeholders (Authenticity Consulting, 2008). The distinction between nonprofits' use of volunteers versus for-profit organizations' use of employees is at the foundation of the benefits of nonprofit organizations' existence and the challenges in ensuring those engaged in the organization are prepared to take on their responsibilities.

Non-Profit Organization Orientation, Onboarding and Training

Nonprofit literature is full of books, articles, and research aiming to identify the best ways to train executives, boards, and volunteers and to plan for change. Adams (2010) recognizes the need to develop talent management strategies, encouraging nonprofits to create and implement talent management programs. These programs aim to develop the people in leadership roles by connecting the organization's mission to the people in the organization and creating ways to measure strengths and growth. Inglis

(1994) focused research on identifying nonprofit board member needs using social exchange theory to understand the relationship between the social relationships in a nonprofit setting (p. 175).

Ahmed (2022) reinforces the importance of training new board members and ensuring all board members are provided with the necessary materials. One item that Ahmed mentions is a board policy manual, which includes a “mission statement, a brief description of programs, current budget, recent financial statement, list of funding sources, organizational chart, list of board members’ names and addresses, bylaws and long-range plan” (p.113).

Explicitly considering the role of training volunteers, Deslandes and Rogers (2008) discuss, “volunteer training is crucial to volunteers and organizations because it allows their volunteer workforce to serve their target populations effectively. Not only are trained volunteers more productive, but volunteers who are given opportunities for training are more likely to remain because doing so enhances volunteers' organizational experiences”.

Volunteerism in Nonprofit Organizations

According to Inglis and Cleave (2006), nonprofit volunteers fall into two categories: direct service and governance. Direct service volunteers focus on implementing programs and services, while governance volunteers have legal and fiduciary roles in the organization (84). Both foci indicate a level of involvement that requires time and commitment to the organization. Inglis & Cleave (2006) describe the need to train and develop volunteers as a “primary foci to function efficiently” (p. 83).

Others like Nihart (2012) highlight the need for long-term volunteers in leadership positions to sustain nonprofit organizations. “Nonprofit organizations relying on volunteer leaders may struggle to accomplish their mission and goals without their ability to train and retain these volunteers” (p. 33). Numerous organizations have successfully leveraged volunteers to accomplish primary organizational goals. AmeriCorps, one of the premier volunteer organizations in the United States, engages volunteers in education, disaster relief, healthcare, and other fields (AmeriCorps, 2024).

AmeriCorps focuses its volunteer training activities on “developing a connection to national service and volunteerism, learning and demonstrating best practices for volunteer program development, and practicing effective team-building and communication while acquiring and demonstrating leadership skills” (AmeriCorps, 2007). In an AmeriCorps blog post the importance of volunteer leadership was described as “a vast untapped resource for nonprofits not only to expand capacity for service and volunteering...If properly supported, cultivate consciousness, capabilities, and commitment in volunteers...” (AmeriCorps, 2007). AmeriCorps has successfully engaged volunteers, considering they can mobilize thousands annually. This may be due to their emphasis on comprehensive training, which includes three phases: “big picture (vision), foundation building, and implementation” (AmeriCorps, 2007). Volunteering in leadership roles requiring training and specific skills is essential to nonprofit board positions.

Ahmed (2022) summarizes that nonprofit organizations with a large volunteer workforce are responsible for implementing policies and practices that minimize liability

and ensure volunteers are well-situated to complete the requested tasks. Suggested policies include volunteer safety, confidentiality rules, firing of volunteers, communication expectations, and how potential volunteers will be screened before involvement (p. 150). Volunteer motivation is also an important consideration. Swartz (2020) suggests a lifecycle for volunteer management that includes recruiting, engaging, recognizing, and retaining. This lifecycle points to a nonprofit needing to carefully consider how to address each part of the life cycle to move the organization forward.

Little (1999) presented twelve basic needs to motivate and retain volunteers in a nonprofit organization. Of the twelve needs, adequate training, access to resources, and instructions to complete any tasks are repeatedly repeated in the literature surrounding volunteerism in nonprofits. Pynes (2011) reinforces the importance of considering motivation for nonprofit volunteers, mainly rethinking how nonprofits can change the types of assignments volunteers are given, how long volunteer terms are, and what amount of time is needed to volunteer effectively (p. 147).

The considerations around nonprofit organization volunteers indicate the need for deliberate and careful planning when creating volunteer positions and ensuring that volunteers are adequately trained to fulfill the roles outlined.

The nature of student organization advisor training as outlined in this chapter and a broader understanding of how nonprofit organizations are structured lends itself to wanting a group of advisors volunteering in a nonprofit to receive the training and support that allows them to succeed. To consider how their training might be developed

and implemented effectively, considering some theoretical lenses on adult learners and creating professional learning communities will situate the remainder of this study.

Theoretical Lenses

My problem of practice is that regional-level advisors in NACURH need foundational knowledge and skills related to advising in a nonprofit setting and are coming into advisor roles with very different backgrounds in advising. Looking broadly at the problem, I will use adult learning theory to consider how training and learning may best occur for a group that is not only volunteering but also needs to acquire new knowledge to fulfill their roles.

Lastly, in developing my innovation, I will infuse professional learning communities (PLC) into the training structure to ensure that the group of advisors is situated to support one another and perpetuate positive cultural norms.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory, developed by American educator Malcolm Knowles, was created in 1968 and was first known as andragogy. In the 1980s, Knowles refined the theory to define five assumptions about adult learners. The assumptions include self-concept, adult learning experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn. These assumptions, in addition to later work by Knowles to acknowledge that not all adult learners may understand in the same way due to systems of oppression and culture, still provide a starting point for considering adult approaches to learning and motivation to learn (Clapper, 2010).

Self-concept applies to an adult's ability or desire to be independent and to learn in self-directed ways. The adult learning experience is tied explicitly to adult learners reconciling their experiences as learners earlier in life and applying life experiences to future learning. Adult learners' readiness to learn is primarily about the applicability of learning to the roles held in life, such as a job or becoming a parent. Orientation to learning is about adult learners leaning towards learning concepts that impact or improve everyday life versus subject-based learning. Motivation to learn in adults is about intrinsic motivation, particularly when gaining a reward such as promotion (New England Institute of Technology, 2021).

In the decades since Knowles published the first adult learning theory work, the theory has morphed into more of a continuum with pedagogy by a teacher at one end of the spectrum and student-directed learning or andragogy on the other end, allowing for the focus on adults specifically to be less of the emphasis (Merriam, 2017).

Andragogy is of particular importance when considering the regional-level advisors since, as a group, they are volunteering their time to fulfill a role where they have some experience. Andragogy repositions the role of the educator or me as the researcher as a helper and facilitator of learning rather than directing the entirety of the learning plan (*Adult Learning Theory - JAHSE: PRE*, n.d.). This distinction influences how content is delivered and shapes the need for this research to focus on helping advisors develop competence and build upon prior knowledge, even if the expertise range is different (Orsini et al., 2015) shed light on learners gaining a sense of competence by providing timely feedback, allowing learners to address progressively complex situations,

and encouraging vicarious learning in a safe environment. Kenner & Weinerman (2011) add that choosing modalities such as activity-based learning may be more helpful for adult learners than lecture-style presented content when considering how adult learning theory intersects with nonprofit board training. Trapp (2021) researched the experiences of new board member training in a subset of nonprofit organizations, indicating the need to create training for board members that meets the needs of volunteers while leveraging best practices in training adult learners (p. 26).

In a study of teacher education in Greece, adult learning theory was used to develop foundational assumptions in crafting the training (Gravani, 2012). Adult learning theory led the researcher to establish space for participants to choose how involved they wanted to be and trust participants to take what they needed from the training. Gravani indicates that “training adults is not about teaching them specific things... it is about making them view things more openly” (p. 425). For advisor training in NACURH, this same concept can be incorporated into how advisor training is developed. While advisors must learn about corporate governance, finance, and culture, they need to view these topics more broadly in relation to their current understanding of advising. Fraser & Stupak (2002) applied andragogy to support professionals in learning how to engage in strategic planning in an organization through creating opportunities for collaboration while learning and opportunities for reflection.

NACURH is comprised of adult learners, and in the case of the regional-level advisors, they are also professionals who likely need to engage in formal schooling while holding the role. One reason student affairs professionals pursue the regional advisor role

is the professional development opportunity tied to the experience of advising students in a different context than a campus organization. Developing trainings that support advisor development through an adult learning theory lens will ensure that the topics are relevant, that the modes the information is presented are tangible for advisors, and that gimmicks that might be used with other types of learners are avoided.

Knowles's research on andragogy indicates that adult learners will draw upon their lived experiences and situate themselves as ready learners. Another framework that focuses on collaborative learning and support—Professional Learning Communities (PLC)—is necessary for this study and the advisors involved in NACURH to support these principles.

Professional Learning Communities

Common in K-12 education, Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are a way of organizing a group of people to improve the educational environment and student success. Eaker & Sells (2015) describe three ideas central to a PLC: an intense focus on learning, using collaborative teaming to organize a group, and focusing on results (p.14-17). In essence, PLCs are reliant on eliminating isolation and ensuring learners learn. Hilliard (2012) characterizes PLCs in their use in K-12 to focus staff development efforts. The key attributes of these PLCs are that they concentrate on specific issues to improve the overall organization and students (p.71). Other definitions of PLCs identify the people engaging in a PLC as “sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented growth-promoting way” (Stoll et al., 2006).

Hord and Sommers (2007) define the five components of a PLC. The first component is shared beliefs, values, and vision. The second is a shared and supportive leadership. Third is collective learning and its application. The fourth is supportive conditions, and the fifth is having a shared personal practice (p. 9).

The importance of having a shared vision is tied to managing individual autonomy, with educators' need to focus on achieving an objective and sharing a framework to meet their common goals (Stoll et al., 2006). Hord and Sommers (2007) add that a PLC “constructs a shared vision of the improvements they will work towards” as an essential aspect of building a shared vision and ensuring there is buy-in (p. 8). King and Newmann (2001) and many others focus on the need for collective responsibility in a PLC, especially when a group will work over time, allowing the group's commitment to put some level of pressure on each member to hold to the vision of the PLC. Shared leadership involves the leader(s) being bought in and the members willing to share power and authority (Hord & Sommers, 2007, p.10). One way this shows up is shifting cultures that are sometimes competitive into a focus on collegiality (p.11).

Collective learning or engaging in reflective professional inquiry is tied to a PLC, which creates time to consider what challenges exist and possible solutions and analyze how to address these challenges (Hord, 2004). As defined in PLC literature, collaboration concerns a group feeling interdependent through engaging in activities beyond “superficial exchanges,” as Stoll et al. (2006) described. Hord and Sommers (2007) focus on transforming learning and reflection as regular parts of the entire group function to develop new practices. Other scholars on PLCs describe learning as more than just

acquiring knowledge; it is also about working together to discuss, create, and deliberate on the information and topics (Louis, 1994). The fourth component of PLCs is developing supportive conditions. Supportive conditions include things like physical and structural factors such as time or changes to schedules, relational and human factors like managing “collegial attitudes and relationships” and “creating a caring environment” (Hord & Sommers, 2007, p. 15.). The last component is a shared personal practice. This component creates norms whereby a group is comfortable at the individual level, with others observing their work and providing feedback as skills are learned. This step is described in PLC literature as being one of the more challenging aspects of a PLC.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the impact of PLCs on learning teams. Little (2001) reported on research that substantiated studies around PLCs supporting school reform goals. Literature about PLCs points to their success being tied to the active support of leaders at all levels (Mulford & Silins, 2003).

Hord and Sommers (2007) advise that identifying who is involved in the PLC is vital in establishing a PLC and ensuring that participants can self-identify how their role pertains to each other in accomplishing their mission (p.17). Establishing PLCs is also closely linked to change management theories. Strategies for leaders establishing a PLC are expanded on in the work of Hall and Hord (2006), which includes the need to articulate a shared vision, develop a plan, invest in professional development, check on the progress, provide assistance, and keep the context for change in mind.

Using PLCs as the framework for innovation in training regional-level advisors will require infusing the groundwork of PLC development into the communication

surrounding the training sessions and how the training sessions are presented. The group of advisors already has some key attributes that make up a PLC, like having aspects of a shared vision tied to the organization. Shifting the group towards being a PLC will support advisors in learning how their roles in NACURH may differ from their previous advising experiences. The training topics in this innovation could be informative on their own. Still, they may not support regional-level advisors leaving sessions with a commitment to applying what they have learned to how they advise or how they support the students leading the organization. PLCs can provide the boundaries for the group to know how to participate individually and collectively to support the organization.

Hord and Sommers (2007) suggest that leaders looking to implement PLCs consider what might happen to a group if nothing changes (p. 71). NACURH has been in a constant state of change from the COVID-19 pandemic to the present day in many ways, but the trajectory of advisors has remained the same in the same ways as the rest of the organization. Considering what would happen if the regional-level advisors didn't engage in training is an important question to keep thinking about in the context of this study and as the organization continues to transform.

Summary

All the literature on student organization advising and nonprofit governance and three theoretical approaches point to the need to improve regional-level advisor training, especially related to nonprofit governance, finance, and culture topics. The theoretical frameworks display the importance of supporting the needs of professional volunteer

advisors by developing training that meets the needs of adult learners and incorporating a model like PLC to create a structure for reflective development.

In considering the gaps in the literature, there needs to be more literature on student organization advising or the application of PLCs with professionals engaging in work outside of the classroom. Additionally, there appears to be a gap in the literature on nonprofit structures that stray from the norm, leaving many questions about how the regional-level advisors fit into the larger picture of nonprofit structures.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This research study addressed the problem of practice of how formalizing a professional learning community (PLC) among the regional-level advisor team might impact regional-level advisors' preparation and engagement while advising student leaders in NACURH, specifically by better understanding NACURH's nonprofit structure, finances, and virtual culture using the tenants of adult learning theory.

To investigate the impact of this training innovation, I used a qualitative research design involving interviews, a focus group, and participant observations grounded in action research. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?

RQ 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?

RQ3: How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?

This chapter describes the research design, setting, and participants of the study and how data was collected and analyzed. It also outlines the timeline for the research and a detailed outline of innovation training sessions.

Methodology

This dissertation utilizes action research as the method of inquiry. Action research is traced back to Kurt Lewin, who was credited with the term and basis for conducting research in a setting local to the researcher (Hendricks, 2013 in Mertler, 2020). Action research begins with identifying a problem or topic, observing current practices, collecting and analyzing information and data, and then taking action to address the issue (Mills, 2011). Action research is often described as a spiral, with each cycle leading to new information and opportunities to improve the setting where the problem was

identified (Bachman, 2001 in Mertler, 2020). Since a practitioner-researcher conducts action research in the field, these steps can be repeated numerous times with no clear end as long as there is still something to research (Mertler & Charles, 2011). Action research is ideal in the NACURH setting, where advisors are part of a community of professionals similar to those in communities where ongoing development and maximizing positive student impact are priorities (Johnson, 2008 in Mertler, 2020).

This dissertation focuses on practical action research to address a specific problem in the educational community of NACURH (Fraenkel et al., 2012 in Mertler, 2020). This cycle of research was formed using the stages described here and the previous AR cycles outlined in Chapter 1 to implement an innovation with the regional-level advisors in NACURH.

I conducted a qualitative action research study comprising three separate approaches: observations, focus groups, and interviews. I gathered observations through field notes, which I collected while observing participants in the four training sessions. Secondly, I held one focus group with regional-level advisors after they attended the training sessions. Finally, I conducted interviews with seven regional-level advisors individually. Two additional regional-level advisors signed up for an interview or to participate in the focus group but could not attend at the last minute. In addition to these active data collection approaches, I reviewed and analyzed past training and onboarding documents for context and comparison.

A qualitative approach like this can be helpful when people are the core of a phenomenon and when access to the setting allows enough sampling to develop an in-depth exploration of the problem or phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Setting and Participants

Setting

This study took place over the summer and early fall of 2024 among the regional-level advisors in the nonprofit organization of the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH). NACURH's year cycle begins after the annual conference in late May and goes until the following year's conference. Once advisors are selected, the new advisors join the continuing advisors at transition and training sessions held virtually in the two months leading up to the Annual Conference. This training and transition vary from year to year and, in 2024, was limited by a change in conference host site, and regions continuing to fill vacant regional-level advisor positions well into May.

The setting for the F.U.N training was in synchronous online spaces. The training series incorporated best practices from Adult Learning Theory, such as adults being driven by a motivation to learn and discover things relevant to their current roles. It utilized the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) framework to engage advisors in training sessions to encourage community building as they better understand the organization and its structures.

Participants

The participants in this study were NACURH's Regional-Level Advisors. NACURH's student leaders are supported by a group of 14 regional-level advisors who

volunteer for these multi-year roles, maintaining professional roles at a college campus at the same time. Regional-level advisors are hosted at schools in the geographic regions defined by NACURH and must have campus support to hold the role. Regional-level advisors often work full-time as live-in hall directors, area coordinators, or assistant directors in their campus housing departments.

At the time of the study the regional-level advisor group had 11 members, and three vacancies. The group of advisors is diverse in their geographical locations given the requirements of their roles to be hosted in the region they are serving. This group currently is made up of three female advisors and eight male advisors, notable change from previous advisors' groups where male advisors were often in the minority.

Role of the Researcher

My involvement in NACURH as both a previous student leader, a campus level advisor, former regional-level advisor and current NACURH Advisor has shaped my experiences in being interested in this topic and identifying this problem of practice as important to both NACURH and in student affairs. As a student leader I had campus advisors who pushed me to make change, to develop leadership skills and sometimes missed the mark in providing the type of support I needed or wanted. In NACURH as a student leader in two different roles, I worked with two different regional-level advisors each with different styles, who shaped my initial impressions about what these roles should or should not do in an organization like NACURH where student led has sometimes been more of a mandate than a mission. For the nearly five years I served in the regional-level advisor role for the Intermountain Affiliate, I was challenged to learn

how to advise students virtually, to advise students who had bad experiences with previous advisors, to understand how NACURH and regions really work and to try and improve the organization by supporting the students who were choosing to be involved. By the time I became one of the NACURH Advisors in 2022 I had already experienced nearly a decade in other NACURH volunteer roles. In identifying how to improve something like NACURH, an organization I've had ties to for over 15 years, the regional-level advisor group stood out as being a group that would be appropriate for my current positionality and in maximizing the impact on advising as a craft in student affairs.

Keeping in line with action research, my role within this study was as a participant-observer. I was primarily responsible for developing content in the four training sessions, facilitating the training, and observing. My position as one of the two current NACURH-level Advisors situates me above the regional-level advisors in the organization's hierarchy. This may have impacted my role as a participant-observer in delivering content to the regional-level advisors and collecting interview and focus group information. My close relationship with the organization, roles, and topic could have tested my objectivity, which Mertler identifies as a pitfall for researchers engaging in action research as a participant-observer to be careful of (2020). It was essential to allow the findings from interviews and focus groups to speak for themselves and remain mindful of the importance of objectivity at each step of the research process. This was particularly important in considering how flexible I could be as a researcher in rescheduling interviews to fit the schedules of regional-level advisors better and having a

deeper awareness of the personalities and experiences of some advisors that fell outside the scope of the interview, focus group, and observations.

A benefit of this research happening in 2024 was that I have been in my role for two years, and when the training, interviews, and focus group were executed, I had started my third year of a four-year term. Since this study focuses on training regional-level advisors and their experiences, I have an objective distance from having been a regional-level advisor, which may not have been the case if this study had occurred earlier in my advisor term. Additionally, the end of my regional advisor term was still very much impacted by COVID-19, with the organization's operations happening only in virtual spaces, which shifted the year I started as a NACURH Advisor.

An additional way I ensured that I was maintaining objectivity as a researcher throughout the research process was by implementing additional procedures to rely on pseudonyms and alternate naming conventions before coding, as I endeavored to remove reminders about the individuals and their experiences from my analysis processes later. I also worked with the NACURH NRHH Advisor to identify places during the duration of the study where he would communicate with the advisor group about advisor-related chats and information that was not tied to the survey to help advisors also have clarity about what content was related to the study versus their day-to-day advisor activities.

Innovation

The Foundations of Understanding NACURH (F.U.N) training series consisted of four 60-minute virtual training sessions on Zoom. Each session included content about the training topic, collaborative activity, and opportunity for reflection.

To build regional-level advisors' skills pertinent to advising in a nonprofit organization, a training series focusing on professional learning communities (PLC), virtual advising, finances and budgeting, and nonprofit governance and structure were implemented for all incoming and continuing regional-level advisors. Advisors could participate in other training provided, such as regular regional advisor chats and training that crossed over with the student positions. The training covered four primary topics: professional learning communities (PLC), navigating NACURH's virtual culture, financial impact and budgeting, and nonprofit governance and structure.

The learning outcomes for the F.U.N training series were:

- Advisors will learn the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC).
- Advisors will build rapport as a team and identify what and how students will learn.
- Advisors will identify how to engage with each other as a PLC.
- Through the content and session structure, advisors will engage with the five components of professional learning communities (PLC).
- Advisors will be able to differentiate between campus organization structures and NACURH as a nonprofit organization.
- Advisors will be able to describe the structural tenants of a nonprofit organization.
- Advisors will be able to summarize how NACURH's finances work and what sources of revenue support the organization.

- Advisors will be able to investigate examples of organization budgets and what considerations should exist when working with regional finance officers.
- Advisors will be able to outline a plan for supporting students virtually
- Advisors will be able to examine how the organization operates and how to navigate spaces in an advisor role

Session One provided a framework for the regional-level advisors' shift to understanding and utilizing the PLC framework to understand how the advisor group functions. This session was initially going to be embedded into each topical session, but in its final iteration, it was shifted to being the initial training session presented to ensure advisors would understand the components of a professional learning community and develop clarity around how the regional-level advisor group would engage moving forward using the framework. This session also created an opportunity to set up each subsequent topic in the F.U.N series by engaging in activities during the session that would come up in future sessions.

Table 1

F.U.N Session One Outline

Session One An Introduction to the Professional Learning Community		
Learning Outcome 1	Learning Outcome 2	Learning Outcome 3
Advisors will learn what the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are.	Advisors will build rapport as a team and identify what students will learn and how.	Advisors will identify how to engage with each other as a PLC.

Outline of Session

Session Detail

1. Provide an overview of learning outcomes for all F.U.N session
2. Set up the advisor PLC:
 1. Introduce five components
 1. Shared beliefs, values, and vision
 2. Shared and supportive leadership
 3. Collective learning
 4. Supportive conditions
 5. Shared personal practice
3. Discuss the PLC Continuous Improvement Cycle
4. Activity to identify
 1. What do we want students to learn?
 2. What do we want campus-level advisors to learn?
 3. How will we know if they learned?
5. Brainstorm tools this PLC uses to engage
6. Wrap-up

Slide deck

- Outcomes for each FUN session
- PLC components
- Continuous Improvement Cycle
- Activity questions

Activity: The following questions will be visible on a Jamboard for advisors in attendance to generate ideas for. Each question was given 3 minutes.

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. What do we want campus-level advisors to learn?
3. How will we know if they learned?

After advisors created sticky notes for each question, as a group, they put stars or exclamation points on the ideas that resonated most.

Then, for the last ten minutes, the advisors discussed how to group the ideas into themes that could be revisited and discussed how, as a group, they could apply one component of a PLC to engage with students or advisors.

The second training session focused on virtual advising tied to the nature of NACURH as an organization while drawing on differences between campus-level organizational cultures and those presently in NACURH. This training pushed back on

common assumptions made by advisors working with students who have held multiple positions in the organization concerning their roles and responsibilities as advisors. Advisors worked as a group to identify how communication looks different in regional advisor roles and how that may tie into accountability, meeting with students, and addressing concerns. This session asked advisors to work together to create some group norms around how they can support students virtually while engaging in content relevant to their teams.

Table 2

F.U.N Session Two Outline

Session Two NACURH's Virtual Culture		
Learning Outcome 1	Learning Outcome 2	Learning Outcome 3
Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.	Advisors will be able to outline a plan for supporting students virtually	Advisors will be able to examine how the organization operates and how to navigate spaces in an advisor role
Outline of Session		
Session Detail		
Activity: advising in a virtual landscape - Advisors will be placed in pairs and given a list of tasks a group needs to complete. The pair will determine how supporting the student leaders may look different virtually than in person. - Advisors will share practices that work and where there are challenges.		

Slide deck on NACURH's virtual culture

- Virtual meetings
 - Types
 - Platforms
 - Norms
- Virtual 1:1s
- Accessibility and campus support
- Regional v NACURH spaces
- Advisor roles in virtual spaces

Case Study Discussion

Advisors will be assigned one case study in small groups to discuss and then share how they would navigate the situation with the group.

- A student in a CO role frequently misses meetings and sometimes finds it complicated to schedule a 1:1 meeting. Other team members start to mention the challenges of working with this CO.
- Another region's board member perpetuated a conflict between two board members. Several rumors have been shared, and one of the NACURH Executives has gotten involved.

PLC Commitment & next steps

- Revisit five components
 - Share timeline for interviews and focus groups
 - Brainstorm topics and commitment to the group heading into the conference and the summer.
-

The third session, Financial Impact and Budgeting, provided advisors with introductory knowledge about how NACURH's finances operate and how their roles participate in the financial trajectory of the organization. While additional finance training exists for the student roles, this training highlighted critical areas advisors should focus on and how to navigate advising conversations related to financial decisions. This session covered zero-based budgeting, how investment accounts work, what regional auditing consists of, and how to navigate the organization's budgets. Unlike the previous two sessions, this session is tied more directly to content and skills around financial literacy in nonprofits, specifically NACURH.

Table 3*F.U.N Session Three Outline*

Session Three Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting		
Learning Outcome 1	Learning Outcome 2	Learning Outcome 3
Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.	Advisors will be able to summarize how NACURH's finances work and what sources of revenue support the organization.	Advisors will be able to investigate examples of organization budgets and what considerations should exist when working with regional finance officers.
Outline of Session		
Session Detail		
Check-in about group norms, a brief review of session one and two content		
• Slidedeck on nonprofit finance • How nonprofits are funded, funding sources, and opportunities • Overview of NACURH's financial structure • Affiliation • Scholarships • Investments • Budgeting basics for organizations • Terms and definitions • Revenue sources		
Regional Budget example		
• How to use		
Conference Budget example		
• How to use		
Activity		
• In groups, they will be given a regional or conference budget and asked to address a series of concerns. ○ Ex. a deficit, reducing conference costs		

Advising students on nonprofit finance

- Advising an ADAF
- Budget
- Reconciliation
- Monthly reports
- Regional budget planning

Discussion: Supporting regional/entity teams in making financially solid decisions

- Identifying challenges
- Hands-on advising and finances
- Tie back to session one theme around differences in advising in NACURH

Session Four trained advisors on NACURH's nonprofit structure. This session strived to bridge advisors' understanding of campus RHA and NRHH structures with how NACURH's structure is directly linked to the foundations of its nonprofit mission. Advisors worked to use governance documents to identify how they would navigate various advising situations tied to NACURH's nonprofit status. Foundational content about common nonprofit structures helped situate advisors in the organization and allowed for a conversation about how they may need to advise differently.

Table 4

F.U.N Session Four Outline

Session Four NACURH's Nonprofit Structure		
Learning Outcome 1	Learning Outcome 2	Learning Outcome 3
Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.	Advisors will be able to differentiate between campus organization structures and NACURH as a nonprofit organization.	Advisors will be able to describe the structural tenants of a nonprofit organization.

Outline of Session

Session Detail

Set up the advisor PLC:

Introduce five components

- Shared beliefs, values, and vision
- Shared and supportive leadership
- Collective learning
- Supportive conditions
- Shared personal practice

Activity to identify how the group will create spaces for “personal practice” in making some norms.

Slidedeck about nonprofits

- Structure of various nonprofits
- IRS, 501(c)3
- NACURH’s structure + nonprofit
- Comparison to campus organizations

Discussion: nonprofit structure impact on advising

- In on-campus advising, what structures are in place to guide your advice?
- What challenges exist advising in a nonprofit instead of on a college campus?
- How might your engagement as an advisor or style change when working in a NACURH environment?

Activity: Using NACURH’s Bylaws

In groups, the advisors will be given a short scenario and asked to use the bylaws to influence how they might advise their students following the organization’s governance.

Scenario 1 - removing an officer

Scenario 2 - a regional affiliate seeking to change its structure

Scenario 3 - determining eligibility for a role

After the training sessions were completed, a series of interviews were conducted with regional-level advisors related to the training session content. These interviews allowed individual regional-level advisors to share their experiences with the F.U.N training and with their engagement with other advisors.

Once the interviews were completed, a focus group was conducted with advisors to discuss their collaborative experiences with the training sessions and how they will use the information in their advising practices.

Since each training session was recorded, the interviews and focus groups were open to all 11 current regional-level advisors if they watched at least three of the recordings prior to the interview or focus group.

Table 5

Timeline and Procedures of the Study

Time Frame	Procedures
End of April 2024	● Finalize training sessions ● IRB approval
May 1-11, 2024	● Advertise training sessions via email to regional-level advisors.
May 17, 2024	● Training session 1
June 7, 2024	● Training session 2
June 28, 2024	● Training session 3
July 19, 2024	● Training session 4
August 1-22, 2024	● Recruit interview participants
August 28-September 9, 2024	● Conduct interviews ● Advertise for focus group

September 10, 2024

- Conduct focus group

September 11-October 1, 2024

- Data analysis
 - Coding
 - Thematic analysis
-

Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with regional-level advisors who participated in the training sessions to garner a deeper reflection about the content and application to their advising practice. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined a one-on-one interview as “a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions and records answers from only one participant” (p. 219). Coupling one-on-one interviews with the focus group allowed for the nuance of one advisor's experience to be shared and engaged outside of a group conversation. The benefit of interviewing advisors was that each advisor is hosted at a different college or university and has a diverse advising background, making it harder to engage in questions in the focus group setting. In addition to recording the interviews, I kept notes during the interviews to capture themes and follow-up questions that arose as the conversation progressed.

Each interview was scheduled for forty-five minutes and held on Zoom. It was recorded with the participant's consent. The interview consisted of the following questions:

1. Can you tell me about your advising history and how you became a regional-level advisor?

2. What F.U.N training session(s) did you participate in in real time? Which did you watch the recording of?
3. How do the components of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) manifest in how regional-level advisors collaborate or communicate?
[shared values and vision, a collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and learning of the group and individual]
4. What would an ideal Professional Learning Community (PLC) feel like among regional-level advisors?
5. Thinking about what you knew about nonprofits and advising before the F.U.N training, what concepts were newer to you?
6. How would you describe NACURH's nonprofit environment to someone first learning about NACURH?
 - a. What would you share about the corporate structure?
 - b. What would you share about the finances?
 - c. What would you share about the virtual environment?
7. How might you use the content from the F.U.N training sessions in your advising practice with a regional board or SEC?
8. What aspects of the F.U.N sessions did you find most useful? Least useful?
9. Thinking about you as an advisor, what do you need more training on?

The nine questions were also aligned with each research question to ensure that the answers given to questions would cover each question broadly. The research question alignment for the interview question set is provided in Table 6.

Table 6

Interview question and research question alignment

RQ 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?

3. How do the components of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) manifest in how regional-level advisors collaborate or communicate? *[shared values and vision, a collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and learning of the group and individual]*
 4. What would an ideal Professional Learning Community (PLC) feel like among regional-level advisors?
-

RQ 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?

5. Thinking about what you knew about nonprofits and advising before the F.U.N training, what concepts were newer to you?
 6. How would you describe NACURH's nonprofit environment to someone first learning about NACURH?
 1. What would you share about the corporate structure?
 2. What would you share about the finances?
 3. What would you share about the virtual environment?
-

RQ3: How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?

7. How might you use the content from the F.U.N training sessions in your advising practice with a regional board or SEC?
 8. What aspects of the F.U.N sessions did you find most useful? Least useful?
 9. Thinking about you as an advisor, what do you need more training on?
-

Focus Group

The Focus group was conducted after the training sessions, and interviews concluded in early September 2024. The focus group followed a non-directive interviewing style, encouraging participants to share various views on the advisor training

and their experiences (Brinkman and Kvale, 2015). The focus group was scheduled for one hour on Zoom and recorded with participant consent. The goal was to have at least three regional-level advisors in the focus group, but seven of the eleven invited participated.

As the focus group moderator, I aimed to create “a permissive atmosphere for the expression of personal and conflicting viewpoints” (p.175). The focus group questions consisted of the following, with follow-up questions added that may build on the discussion points shared by participants as we went along.

1. Thinking about the first months you were in the regional advisor role; how did you build rapport relationships with and engage with other regional advisors?
2. How have you seen regional-level advisors support each other?
3. Looking at the rest of the year (from now on - NACURH), what might you do the same or differently when engaging with other regional advisors?
4. Thinking about NACURH’s corporate structure, finances, and virtual environment, brainstorm/discuss ways this group could enhance the experience of the students we advise.
5. One thing this group identified as something they wanted campus-level advisors to learn is ways to connect themselves and campus-level leaders to the region and NACURH—how might this group do that?

Like the interview questions, each focus group question was aligned to a research question. While in the interview questions, each of the three research questions had

alignment with at least one interview question, the focus group alignment mainly focused on research questions one and two.

Table 7

Focus Group question and research question alignment

RQ 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?

1. Thinking about the first months you were in the regional advisor role, how did you build rapport and relationships with and engage with other regional advisors?
 2. How have you seen regional-level advisors support each other?
 3. Looking at the rest of the year (from now on - NACURH), what might you do the same or differently when engaging with other regional advisors?
-

RQ 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?

4. Thinking about NACURH's corporate structure, finances, and virtual environment, brainstorm/discuss ways this group could enhance the experience of the students we advise.
 5. One thing this group identified as something they wanted campus-level advisors to learn is ways to connect themselves and campus-level leaders to the region and NACURH—how might this group do that?
-

Data Analysis

As an action researcher, I analyzed the data from this study using qualitative methodologies, focusing on a thorough and cyclical review of all collected data, including interviews, a focus group, and engagement in training sessions. With the participant group having a lot of overlap between those who were interviewed and those who participated in the focus group, it was necessary to design an analysis procedure that would fully interrogate the data. A thematic analysis approach was taken to analyze the data, a method of analysis that looks for patterns and meaning across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Details about my thematic analysis process are presented in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure that the contents of the interviews and focus groups are trustworthy, the researcher must strive to have a high level of reflexive objectivity or a keen self-awareness and reflection on my own biases related to the research topic. Brinkman and

Kvale (2015) encourage researchers to “let the object speak, being adequate to the object investigated...” meaning that the participants and their experiences conveyed through their engagement in interviews and focus groups can speak for themselves through a blend of direct quotes to support the themes and codes developed as a researcher (p. 279). An important consideration for this study will be its applicability outside of the regional-level advisor group. It will be essential to balance the generalizations that may apply to the regional-level advisor group when considering training for other groups of advisors.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed criteria for assessing qualitative research trustworthiness. These include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The inclusion of interviews as well as focus groups creates multiple opportunities for the regional-level advisor group to share their experiences and increase the credibility of the qualitative methods. Transferability can be accomplished through purposeful sampling. In the case of the regional-level advisors, it will be essential to consider what impacts may exist if more or fewer regional advisors choose to participate. Triangulation is one way to have dependable and confirmable qualitative data. This will be practiced through reflexivity and a code-recode strategy to analyze the interview and focus group data.

This chapter provides an overview of this study’s intervention, methodology, and planned analysis. This study will use the action research tradition to investigate how regional-level advisors navigate advising in a nonprofit organization advising environment by creating an intervention of three virtual training sessions focused on nonprofit governance in NACURH, nonprofit finances, and NACURH’s virtual culture.

These sessions will utilize Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Adult Learning Theory and provide a foundation to study how the regional-level advisors responded to the content and setup of the sessions to understand how to train regional-level advisors best and ensure they are better prepared to advise in an environment different than their campus advising experiences.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

New students with varying knowledge and skills begin their roles in NACURH each year. This frequent organizational change requires regional-level advisors to reassess how they will successfully advise in NACURH's complex student-led nonprofit organization structure. In previous chapters, I outlined the need for NACURH's regional-level advisors to receive additional training to support them in these volunteer roles. This research study addresses the problem of practice of how formalizing a professional learning community (PLC) among the NACURH regional-level advisor team might impact their engagement through implementing a training series that focuses on the components of a PLC, NACURH's corporate structure, finances, and advising in a virtual environment. This research study utilized interviews, a focus group, and observations as the data collected for analysis. This chapter shares the findings from the F.U.N Training intervention. The research questions guiding this study are:

- RQ 1:** In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?
- RQ 2:** How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?
- RQ3:** How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?

The findings from this study are presented by first describing the process of analyzing the data collected. This includes coverage of what coding methods took place, how each coding cycle built upon the previous one through coding tools like code charting and landscaping, and how codes transformed into themes. Using the finalized themes, each research question will be answered individually, presenting quotes and data from the analysis process.

Data Analysis Procedures

After completing all data collection procedures for this study, I prepared to analyze the data systematically (Saldaña, 2021). I downloaded the recorded videos, transcripts, observation notes, and memos from the seven interviews, four training sessions, and focus groups to prepare for the qualitative data analysis. I reviewed all the recordings and corrected the transcriptions from Zoom to ensure the accuracy of each video recording transcript. I then uploaded the transcripts, notes, and videos into HyperRESEARCH qualitative analysis software to begin analyzing the data.

I initially coded the interviews, focus group, and observational notes from the four training sessions. Inductive and eclectic initial coding allowed me to enter the analysis with an open mind, with no preconceived codes influencing the analysis (Saldaña, 2021). This approach was critical due to my proximity to the subject matter and the individuals who participated in the study as persons I volunteer with in NACURH outside of this study. The initial coding yielded over 30 distinct codes. The coding was done through eclectic coding, allowing multiple sub-types of codes to be intermixed into a code book, including descriptive, in vivo, and narrative codes. Saldaña (2021) indicates that this

approach works well as a “first draft of coding with multiple methods, followed by a revised draft of coding with more purposeful and select methods” (p. 228). Codes in this initial phase yielded a few codes that were utilized numerous times across multiple forms of data, while other codes ended up being used sparingly. Before completing this initial coding, I reviewed the materials at the start of the coding process and added more to the broader code book formed throughout the analysis process.

After completing this coding round, I began a second round of coding, this time rewatching the videos from the interviews, focus groups, and training to hear and see the information shared in a different format. This second coding refined some original codes that seemed redundant, unclear, or too general. An example of this was the code “time” was changed to “wanting more time” to describe why the code was created in the first place, with several participants talking about the lack of time to engage in their advisor roles to the extent they would like to.

The last layer of coding I engaged in was code charting for the interview participants and code landscaping of the coded data overall. This coding round provided ways of checking if the code book and coding cycles highlighted any emerging theme-related categories. Code charting is a way of taking coding data and summarizing and comparing the patterns in codes between data sets (Harding, 2019). An example of code charting for the interview participants in this study is in Table 8.

Table 8*Code Charting Example*

Participant	Summary	Codes
James	James focused heavily on the relationships between advisors and the need for time and energy among the group to build relationships. James is newer to the role and talked about the training content being new to him and helping him better understand NACURH. James redirected the answer to one of his questions about the students he works with rather than his needs or wants as an advisor.	COLLABORATION FINANCES ARE SCARY HEARING OTHER EXPERIENCES STUDENT FOCUS TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE TRAINING GAPS
Sam	Sam focused on the value of the PLC concepts at the NACURH level and how they could be used professionally and with campus-level advisors in his time on campus. Sam has a positive relationship with his co-advisor, which is evident in how he speaks about the components of PLCs. Sam described being more experienced but feeling like they missed out on some training and experiences earlier in the role that they wished they had gotten sooner.	CO-ADVISOR COLLABORATION FINANCES IMPACT QUALITY TIME TOGETHER STUDENT FOCUS TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE TRAINING GAPS UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURE

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

For James and Sam, the code charting showed that “collaboration” was a code that appeared numerous times in their interviews. In reviewing the code book for this study, it could be easy to assume that this code is prevalent across all interviews when a review of the code charting shows that it was used a lot for a few advisors and then

sparingly with others. When developing themes from coding, this information helped to narrow in on themes versus codes used frequently, but that only appeared in a couple of data sources.

Code landscaping took a broader look at all the data by inputting it into a word cloud generator to show words or phrases that appear throughout the data based on frequency. Saldaña (2021) describes code landscaping to see the “most salient words and thus potential codes, categories, themes and concepts” (p.286). HyperRESEARCH has built-in code landscaping, allowing for a visual to be created and eliminating filler words. Figure 2 shows one example of code landscaping done with the data from this study.

Figure 2

Code Landscaping

able_{back} board_{budget} campus conference corporate
could different_{each engage environment even experience}
feel first_{fun got} group_{having} into
Learning level little need_{new}
nonprofit now organization people
Professional question questions
region regional_{regions right role} say
something structure student
students_{support} Thinking through
training_{very} virtual work

The code landscape of the collected data shown in Figure 2 shows the fifty most used words throughout the transcripts of interviews and the focus group. While the

frequency of words is not the most critical consideration in analyzing data, coupled with the code book and code chart, some concepts are worth considering further. One example of a word in the code landscape is “student.” It is not surprising that student appears in the top fifty words used by advisors; however, when looked at with the code charting and code book where “student focus” was a frequently used code, a theme around how advisors situate themselves concerning the students they advise is part of the story emerging from the data.

Initial categories were developed to organize the codes into groupings. This process was done in a tactile manner, printing out all the codes and arranging them on a large table in order to view the data in a new way, off the screen. This approach was good for moving around the codes into a variety of groupings, some larger and some small until each group was distinct and comprehensive of the codes therein. The resulting groupings were given category names of *team*, *future*, *students*, *self*, and *understanding*. The additional analysis yielded the transformation of these categories into five themes describing the core of what the data in these categories mean. These themes are prioritizing the student experience, ongoing desire for development, intentional and frequent time together, building self-confidence as an advisor, and advancement through advisor engagement. The following table shows each theme with examples of associated codes.

Table 9

Themes with exemplar codes

Research Question 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?		Exemplar Codes
Theme	Intentional & Frequent Time Together	• Wanting more time together • Having fun and connecting
Theme	Advancement Through Advisor Engagement	• Competencies and formal training • Using PLC to reach our goals
Theme	Prioritizing the Student Experience	• Student focus • Redirect onto students
Research Question 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?		Exemplar Codes
Theme	Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor	• Application to professional roles • Imposter syndrome
Theme	Ongoing Desire for Development	• Looking ahead to the future • Understanding the structure

Table 9 (continued).

Research Question 3: How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?		Exemplar Codes
Theme	Ongoing Desire for Development	• Looking ahead to the future • Understanding our structure
Theme	Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor	• Application to professional roles • Showing up

The following section outlines a brief discussion of these themes with supporting quotes from the data. Following this, I explore each theme more deeply as it aligns with research questions.

Advancement Through Advisor Engagement

Advisor participants were forward-thinking and identified future opportunities for individuals and the group to improve NACURH. For newer advisors like James, the focus on improving the organization starts with his reflections on the experiences of other advisors. James described, “Being able to hear about other advisor experiences outside of just conferences, to ask intentional questions and then hear their insight and perspective was super helpful.” The sentiment about sharing experiences showed up with more experienced regional-level advisors like Peter, who described the ideal advisor community as “a space where we have the authority to ask questions and engage in discussions pertaining to the organization's future.” Advisors shared experiences of their time in the organization as students and professionals, and a few advisors went further in

identifying how advisors could work together to sustain the organization due to the nonprofit experience that many advisors have. Jack described the urgent need for advisors to “identify the cyclical or common topics that we know we need to talk about each year and instigate these conversations so we can be more prepared for the student cycles happening.” The idea of using the professional learning community as the launching pad for the future was emphasized by advisors like Betty, who shared ideas about “having a few advisors from different regions get together, leaning on the strengths and knowledge they have of the organization and work to build out things that can help each other be more successful.”

The other aspect of this theme was the desire for more reflexive opportunities to engage as a group of advisors. Advisors like Leo mentioned previous experiences: “I got some good feedback when other advisors attended my conferences. I appreciate their insights and think it is a good way to learn.” On the other hand, James described the hope for having their co-advisor or others “create spaces for advisors to see each other in action, not necessarily to give or receive feedback, but to share what was amazing in an interaction and get ideas for how to navigate similar conversations in the future.” For advisors who do not work with co-advisors, honing in on advisor skills could be challenging. James and Leo both provide great ideas for pathways in the future where advisors can be in spaces together, see their peers in action, and support each other more fully.

Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor

Regional-level advisor confidence or a lack of confidence emerged in nearly every interview and focus group setting. For some advisors like Peter, advisor confidence is tied to being able to identify the organizational practices that are being reused and recycled from year to year and being okay with communicating this to a student team:

We have a unique challenge of ensuring our region's values and vision align with those of NACURH. Sometimes, our students are not aligned, and conflict can occur. So, as advisors, we can advocate for understanding the difference between regional values and NACURH, but we have to know and feel good about them first.

Building confidence can be challenging for regional-level advisors. James described being in spaces, like previous training, and experiencing imposter syndrome. “I know the training and resources are out there, but understanding all the logistical pieces that go into a regional conference would help me feel more confident. Currently, I sit in regional advisor chats, feeling like I just can’t contribute to the conversation or discussion because I do not know.” Sam mused in his interview about confidence being tied simultaneously to confidence in the organization being student-led while being open to “supporting them as a professional and helping them set the vision for the organization.” The balance of NACURH being student-led and the desire for advisors to feel successful showed up for Drew, one of the advisors who has been in the role for several years. Drew said, “Seeing your students thriving and empowered to lead the corporation is rewarding. It reminds me that I cannot be rigid in my beliefs or advising.” Another experienced regional-level advisor, Jack, described the difference between campus advising and

regional advising as critical for building advisor confidence. He expressed the importance of “asking questions, reflecting on experiences, and showing up in spaces with other advisors” so he does not miss out and can adjust his advising from the needs on his campus advising role, to his advising of students in NACURH.

Intentional and Frequent Time Together

Of all the themes identified in the data, regional-level advisors' desire and need for time together was reiterated repeatedly. This was specifically focused on when talking about co-advising with another professional and where the group has seen time together be beneficial. For advisors who co-advise, it is evident that these relationships are profoundly meaningful to them. Sam described his relationship with his co-advisor in this way:

We only see each other in person about three weeks a year, but we have a solid, established relationship because of how often we talk virtually. I know that it is a personal relationship now. When I have a rough day, we talk through those things.

Other advisors, like Betty, who also co-advises, added that she knows she always has “another person who can step in and provide another perspective” but that she knows not every team has that, so it is vital to provide perspectives to advisors from regions that do not have a co-advisor model. Peter described relationship building as a new advisor from the perspective of having a co-advisor, knowing that he could say, “Hey, help. I need support through this,” and that the co-advisor would help. For James, his co-advisor also helped provide contextual knowledge and described them as their go-to, saying,

“They are usually the first person that I go to get answers to things I haven’t experienced yet or that I have questions about.”

The advisor group emphasized the desire and need to spend time with the broader regional-level advisor group, whether or not an advisor has a co-advisor. James, Sam, and Jack discussed the need for advisors to have fun while connecting. James indicated that if he had his preference, “I would love to see them weekly, but I also know that that is not for everyone, but it would help build community to see the group together more often.” Sam described the difference between summers 2023 and 2024 in building relationships with other advisors based on the conference schedule. “I think when we did have time together, it was nice just to get to know each other, so spending time doing that intentionally might be helpful, or even like buddies so we get to know each other.”

Leo described the present challenges in getting to know each other due to the focus on the students. “It is not that it is not wanted, but it is easier when we come together in person at semis or pre-conference since there is a lot of information sharing and learning from each other.” Leo was not the only advisor who talked about the power of in-person connections. Stephen spoke about looking forward to “being at the semi-annual business meeting this year, for the entire time, and building those connections with other advisors.” Betty and Peter echoed Stephen’s sentiments about their experiences at the 2024 Semi-Annual Business Meeting, where their “relationships with other advisors were affirmed.” In their interviews and during the focus group, multiple advisors talked about knowing that the in-person connections are meaningful and, at the same time, the importance of taking the time set aside virtually to connect since it can

happen more frequently. Many advisors described wishing all of them could show up for the virtually scheduled chats that occur. Sam lamented:

If there is a more consistent time when we all show up and work together toward things, like when we collaborate on quarterly meetings, that would be an excellent time to explore and get to know other people differently.

Leo added, “It would be wonderful if we could consistently dedicate more time to these positions.” It is a good reminder that these roles are volunteer, and this group has to balance professional careers and personal lives in addition to taking on the regional-level advisor role. A desire to spend time together, and frequently enough where relationships are formed and developed, may not always align with the time an advisor is willing to put into the role.

Ongoing Desire for Development

Given what is known about adult learners, advisor learning, and development is not a surprising theme to arise from the data analyzed. Adult learners are motivated intrinsically to learn about topics that will help them succeed and interest them (Clapper, 2010). For regional-level advisors like James, having topics embedded into the F.U.N Training series allowed him to “see what happens behind the scenes at the NACURH level with managing a nonprofit organization,” something James has an interest in beyond just his NACURH involvement. Previous research cycles containing sessions about the finances of NACURH have often been the most desired and appreciated. Drew said, “It is important for me to understand how we get the money and fund things and to learn why so we can provide an alternative.” Jack adds that in his experience, “it is good

to keep learning the nuances about how we manage funds, and what types of funds we have and how that might differ from what a campus organization might have available to them.” Even advisors with extensive finance or nonprofit experience, like Betty, identified any budgeting or corporate structure session as the most valuable training and development she can get as an advisor. Peter identified that ongoing training, especially those that employ visuals, “really help me to grasp content and recall the information later when working with students.”

Looking at future development, advisors quickly identified training needs that they see as valuable in their roles that could be added to F.U.N or other training series in the future. Drew focused on working with conference hosts and learning more about contracts and insurance to support better campuses that are hosting. Jack identified focusing on investing more development time in ensuring student regional boards can effectively transition from year to year. At the same time, Stephen noted that he would like to understand things like the NACURH and NRHH’s strategic plans better as a professional and an advisor. Leo’s ideas for future training centered on pursuing corporate or conference partnerships to support the financial future of NACURH, something Sam and James also spoke about. For Betty, advisor development extends beyond just the regional-level advisor group to ensure that campus and future regional-level advisors are being developed. She noted, “ART is great, but are there creative ideas on how to engage campus advisors in our spaces, whether in-person or virtually.”

Surprisingly, many regional advisors came into the role, having previously worked with large nonprofit organizations or having formal education around nonprofits.

These advisors noted the importance of understanding the differences between their campus structures and NACURH. Betty said, “It is a good reminder to see how and why our structure is special, and it may make it harder to describe to people, so how do we take the time to do that at each level?” Nearly every advisor reiterated the value of training. Drew described training for advisors around “topics that will help us stabilize or navigate NACURH differently. We need a good foundation; if we did not receive a good transition, we especially need that.” Advisors shared sentiments of wanting more training that anticipates their needs and is appropriate for their regional-level advisors' roles.

Prioritizing the Student Experience

The final theme is the most surprising theme to emerge from the data, but the theme that should have been most expected given the design of the advisor roles in NACURH. Advisor roles are designed to support students; without students, advisors are not needed in NACURH. Advisors were asked questions in the interview and focus group that almost always centered their experiences as advisors as the focal point of this study. Yet, when answering questions or engaging in training sessions, most advisors veered towards tying their answers back to the students they advise or the organization searching for applicability for the group they advise. Peter talked about the value of corporate structure training and said, “It would be interesting for the entire Regional Board of Directors (RBD), especially the Coordinating Officers (COs), to have a better understanding of the corporate structure and how it functions.” Peter focused on making the content presented to him available to the student board positions he advises, especially the roles not on the board of directors.

Additionally, Drew talked about how students learning about the intricacies of operating in a virtual environment could “be professional development and help them when they go to interview for jobs since many interviews are done virtually now.” Leo consistently shifted the conversation back to the students when answering questions. This redirecting to the students appears as a way advisors prioritize the student-led organization in their minds. An example of this is in a question Leo asks:

As regional advisors, we could help our students with perspective checking. How are our students feeling and acting on their attitudes about legislation or business, and how can we help? We could take more responsibility for that aspect as advisors to forecast further ahead and share our perspectives sooner.

In many cases, advisors wondered about the feasibility of helping their student teams develop a professional learning community or something similar, given the components they see themselves engaging in. Sam wondered if using the PLC structure could help their region's campus-level advisors or even the team he works with on-campus engage around a common goal of supporting students like the regional advisors do.

Time and again, advisors referenced ways their students could benefit from training or gain more understanding as they did. Sometimes, the advisors were the teachers or facilitators for this training. Still, they mostly talked about the students getting this content from other places, like the NACURH Executives, or during transition and

training provided in the spring. Chapter 5 will further discuss this theme and its implications.

Research Question Findings

The five themes that emerged from the data help answer the three research questions posed at the outset of this study. The following section will answer each question and explain how it ties to each theme. The following table shows how themes appear concerning the three research questions.

Table 10

Research question and theme alignment

Research Questions	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
RQ 1: In what ways does the implementation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors impact their engagement with each other?	Intentional & Frequent Time Together	Advancement Through Advisor Engagement	Prioritizing the Student Experience
RQ 2: How do regional-level advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions?	Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor	Ongoing Desire for Development	n/a
RQ3: How do regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?	Ongoing Desire for Development	Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor	n/a

Research Question #1 Findings

Research Question #1 specifically examined implementing the Professional Learning Community (PLC) with the regional-level advisor group. Three themes highlight the PLC's impact on their engagement, intentional and frequent time together, advancement through advisor engagement, and prioritizing the student experience.

Intentional & Frequent Time Together

Regional-level advisors describe a desire to interact with one another more frequently, even with the impacts on their professional jobs and varying time zones that make finding a standard meeting time a challenge. Implementing a Professional Learning Community (PLC) has impacted the advisor group by giving them a common language about their time together and why it is essential to their success. Eaker & Sells (2015) describe how PLCs intensely focus on learning, using collaborative teaming to organize a group and focus on results (p.14-17). Shifting the group of volunteer advisors from viewing their roles as simply a professional development opportunity or something they do for fun towards a group of people focused on learning and results required training the group on the foundational components of a PLC. Following the first F.U.N Training session on the principles and value of a PLC, the regional-level advisors began using the language of PLCs in group spaces to talk about how to interact and advise. Jack discussed the value of the regional-level advisor group working together as a professional learning community, “I think there’s a huge benefit from the way that we manage our group overall and stay on the same page; if we did not have those connections, it would be difficult for us to be consistent in how we are advising each region and how we focus on achieving the goals we set.” The shared language was prominent in discussing shared

values and vision among advisors. Multiple advisors talked about how they must collaborate not just on obvious things that overlap in their roles, like supporting students when each other is unavailable, but also keeping the organization moving forward. Peter shares, "Advisors know that we are not building the wheel here; it is recycling more than anything. We are finding things other regions have been doing or did years ago and bringing them back."

While a shared language of the components of PLCs allowed advisors to connect their experiences to the concepts more easily, it also uncovered areas where advisors might need to be more open to engaging with each other. The advisors often brushed over the components around reflective professional inquiry and learning of the group and individual instead of focusing on the other three components. This may indicate that advisors need to deepen their relationships and practices around observing each other as advisors, giving feedback or advice, and seeking ways to adapt. Advisors repeatedly indicated that it was only at in-person experiences such as the Semi-Annual Business Meeting or Annual Conference that they felt their advisor relationships were solidified, so further work may need to be done to help the group refocus on the group's desire to learn together and achieve results of supporting students in NACURH through virtual connections.

The regional-level advisors noted that as a PLC, they need to engage differently moving forward and offered various ideas about how to do so. Drew, one of the advisors who has been in the role for several years, talked about when he transitioned into the role, "we would spend a good 45 minutes after a chat on Zoom just chatting with each other

because we wanted to make that connection, and we knew it was a high possibility that we would not see each other in-person during our terms due to the pandemic.” Drew’s sentiments highlight how the regional-level advisors have previously relied on virtual interactions and that connection is possible in this format, even if it has different challenges.

King and Newmann (2001) emphasize the role of collective responsibility in a PLC on the group's ability to move forward. The sentiments shared by several advisors about showing up and being present in advisors' spaces are part of the collective responsibility they may need to foster further, a level of peer pressure that might increase the group's buy-in in the long term. Advisor time together, which is intentional and frequent, does not show the impact of the group being a PLC; their work together to support each other's engagement and development does. Further, if the current conditions for the PLC do not support the group, Hord & Sommers (2007) indicate that the PLC may need to evaluate their schedules to ensure the environment is set up for the group to focus on its purpose.

Advancement Through Advisor Engagement

Advisors started to describe the advisor group as people who are capable of setting goals as a group and working towards them. This shift in their engagement highlights an understanding of PLC components like shared values and vision and how the advisor group wants to support students through their development. Advisors like James explained how they could help “any team as long as I know our advisor values and vision are aligned,” or Leo described the structural things like charters that “are very

similar, but how each region operates can be different so learning what those differences are is important.” One advisor, Sam, talked specifically about how the regional-level advisor group is not in competition with each other and how that culture “allows us actually to learn and grow as a team.”

Thematically, the advisor group pushing each other to advise to the best of their abilities, to show up for each other, and to leverage their experiences to enhance the organization as a whole are in line with the purpose of a PLC. Hilliard (2012) describes two traits of a PLC: a group that can eliminate isolation and ensure learners learn. In NACURH, eliminating isolation among advisors would require the eleven to fourteen advisors to engage with each other and buy into those spaces. The data suggests that advisors are striving to eliminate isolation through wanting to spend time together and that their ideas in advancing NACURH are often focused on things that will improve the student experience.

Remembering that the regional-level advisors are in their roles voluntarily, for no pay, is a good reminder about what is expected of them and what they can expect of each other. Swartz (2020) suggests that volunteers may need to emphasize engagement and retention to see them achieve the organization's desired outcomes. Pynes (2011) also adds that consideration should be given to how much time is needed for a volunteer to volunteer effectively. Given both considerations about volunteers, regional-level advisors seeking to develop need time to focus on development and consider how this development fits into the other time requirements of the role. Looking at the advisor sentiments related to showing up, advisors think about not just the time that should be put

into the role but also understanding that peers may have other priorities that prevent them from being as engaged.

Prioritize the Student Experience

“Ensuring learners learn,” as Hilliard (2012) put it, highlights the importance of the group a professional learning community serves. For the regional-level advisors, the students who make up NACURH Leadership are the learners. Their learning is not in the traditional academic way but in learning and fulfilling their roles within the organization. The advisor group described ways to support each other's students when advisors are away or how they can take content from the F.U.N training and share it with their students so they can better understand the structure of NACURH or how the finances work. During the first F.U.N session, the advisors engaged in an activity where they brainstormed what they hoped students would learn while involved in NACURH. The group was aligned in identifying a mix of soft skills like the ability to manage conflict and critical thinking and tangible skills like how to implement a strategic plan or support an organization as a volunteer member. Co-creating ideas about how to help students learn is tied to the success of a PLC. It is undoubtedly part of the foundation of the engagement of regional-level advisor groups and an area that could be built upon in the future.

In Chapter 2, a review of recent regional-level advisor and student training was presented, showing that in the years since COVID-19, the time and energy spent on transition, onboarding, or training has decreased for all roles. With NACURH students receiving less formal training, the advisor experience has also changed. Perhaps

inadvertently, the regional-level advisor PLC needs to narrow its focus and better account for the development of student teams. Advisors can lean further into helping students in NACURH define where student-led ends since most training and development is currently situated in student roles at the corporate and regional levels.

The impact that implementing a PLC has had on the regional-level advisor group is tied to their connection to each other and willingness to spend time developing authentic relationships while keeping students at the forefront of their advising. When advisors talk about connection, they do not directly tie it to training or student needs but grapple with how to spend enough time together to be successful while considering the impact of their roles being voluntary.

Research Question #2 Findings

The second research question is *how do advisors describe their understanding of advising in NACURH's nonprofit environment after attending F.U.N training sessions*. This question is thematically aligned with building confidence as a regional-level advisor and an ongoing desire for development.

Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor

The group of advisors participating in this study ranged from new advisors who started in May 2024 to advisors who began their roles in 2020. Some advisors had participated in previous training iterations, while others had only attended the F.U.N training offered this summer. Advisors described their ability to navigate NACURH as a corporation and nonprofit more easily after attending or watching the F.U.N training. Most advisors indicated that the “Understanding of NACURH’s Corporate Structure” and

the “Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting” sessions were the most useful and changed how they view the organization. Peter described his reflections on the corporate structure training as follows:

Looking at the different organizational charts of the nonprofits, we see that our organizational chart makes absolutely no sense. Comparing it to anything else is messy. Anyone looking from the outside would never understand how we function. It made it very clear to me that you have to have or develop an internal knowledge of NACURH and the regions to understand how the structure works, and that is going to be the case every year when we bring on new students.

Advisors' ability to understand NACURH as it is and how that may differ from other nonprofit or corporate structures is a practical way of seeing if advisors understand the organization differently than before the training sessions. Even advisors with nonprofit experience described connecting to the content in ways they might not have by just being in their roles. The F.U.N training sessions were built using Adult Learning Theory as the foundation for each session's development. One tenet in developing the sessions was ensuring each session could build upon prior knowledge (Orsini et al., 2015). This was done by using previous information gained through advisor chats and a knowledge of what training and developments had occurred in the last two years to ensure the content would be different than previous content.

Before implementing F.U.N sessions around NACURH's structure, assumptions about how advisors operate were made. Past training sessions presented to members of NACURH Leadership may have discussed NACURH's positioning as a nonprofit

organization and described some of the financial implications of that classification. Still, they rarely, if ever, took time to describe how decision-making is situated in a nonprofit or how NACURH has taken from other industries, making the clarity of its structure harder to explain. In the F.U.N trainings, a different approach was taken to blend delivering content in a session, focusing on creating opportunities for learners to collaborate with learning (Fraser & Stupak, 2002). This was especially effective in the Advising in a Virtual Culture session, which asked advisors to spend time in small groups developing ideas around standard ways of meeting with student leaders, focusing on what ideally should happen and then in the larger group negotiating what makes sense in reality.

Building confidence can also help advisors pursue other opportunities professionally. Several advisors indicated having past experiences with other nonprofit organizations, but usually as event volunteers who do not need to understand the organization's finances or how and why it is structured. Bandura (1977), in discussing the development of self-efficacy, tied having positive experiences with a topic to the ability to develop confidence. The data on a subject like NACURH finances showed how advisor appreciation for presentations that discuss NACURH finances was received, particularly having time in training to apply concepts from the session to their entity budget. Still, the regional-level advisors continued to describe financial topics as scary, even with more positive experiences with finances being provided. This apprehension about finances is likely to separate from the advisor's experiences in NACURH. It may also be present in their professional roles, where most have had some experience with

basic budgets, such as monitoring spending. Still, they may have yet to have experiences building a budget or navigating budgets with multiple revenue streams. Considering that more complex financial systems are separate from the core competencies for entry and mid-level professionals working in student housing, NACURH might be the only place these skills could be developed (ACUHOI, 2022).

Ongoing Desire for Development

In considering the ongoing development of advisors, a strong emphasis continues to be placed on a desire to understand finances better. While this session was the other that was most frequently listed as being one of the most useful F.U.N training sessions, the group described wanting more finance education and understanding around investments, conferences, fiscal year budgets, decision-making, and how to feel more comfortable “doing the finances” when vacancies arise.

Merriam (2017), in talking about adult learners, emphasizes that the facilitator or helper would want to focus on creating space for the development of the learning plan overall and that it should have input and support from the adult learner. Much of the training for regional-level advisors follows this pattern, and more could be done by having advisors identify how involved they think they need to be in training. Gravani (2012) focuses on learners having the opportunity to view topics more openly, not necessarily learning solely to understand new knowledge. To create more openness on topics like finances, additional training that takes smaller portions of a budget or only part of a topic could be beneficial in creating space for transparency.

After attending the F.U.N training sessions, regional-level advisors described their roles in NACURH's structure more clearly, especially considering where the boundaries may be with the organization being student-led. However, further training cycles may be needed to better understand if greater understanding changes how advisors interact or engage with the organization. With ongoing development as a theme, it will be essential to tease out what training may help advisors grow.

Research Questions #3 Findings

Research question #3 asked *how regional-level advisors perceive and experience the F.U.N sessions as a training curriculum for advising in NACURH?* This final research question aimed to look at the future of advisor training and identify topics that should be offered annually and topics that should be developed in the future. The two themes aligned with this question are an ongoing desire for development and building confidence as a regional-level advisor.

Ongoing Desire for Development

Advisors outlined topics on various issues that would add to the F.U.N sessions and could be adjusted in the future. Most advisors found NACURH's Virtual Culture session good information but not as crucial to their current experiences as the other sessions. The perceptions around this session were that it could be helpful for advisors who have not advised in NACURH before and may be less comfortable with virtual meetings to attend sessions like this. Conversely, advisors described the necessity for the finance and corporate structure sessions to exist in as many places as possible, including providing a modified version to the student boards at the first available opportunity.

Kaplan (2019) indicates that systematic learning and a desire to support students can be powerful motivators to help a PLC continue to learn. Motivated by topics that resonate with advisors and show up in their day-to-day advising while ensuring that each training has students at the foundation is essential in thinking about future training.

The corporate structure and finance sessions could be the foundation for future training. Advisors acknowledged that training should continue to be virtual and that finding ways to engage during sessions is essential; however, when it is new content, different from anything an advisor might receive on campus, having slides and recordings supports the current group of advisors' needs. This aligns with ensuring that any training geared towards advisors is geared towards the intrinsic motivations of advisors, an essential aspect of Adult Learning Theory (New England Institute of Technology, 2021).

No sub-themes arose around training topics that should be prioritized in future training curricula, but advisors mentioned ideas around conference support, sponsorship, and partnership development as options. More importantly, in addition to content sessions, advisors indicated that for the PLC to continue developing, the group may need to spend more time talking about their PLC. James shared the following:

Seeing a specific group of regional advisors in one training session and another specific group or seeing some familiar faces in both helped me learn who people were, familiarize myself with them, and build those relationships.

Advisors used their onboarding and training experiences as a frame of reference when sharing opinions about how training should look in the future. Among advisors who participated in the focus group, there was an emphasis on making the experience better

for the next group and their desire to help support that goal. Jack described the challenges with the NACURH timeline and the advisor group needing to “get people started and trained and engaged” as a priority for advisors with their students and advisors with other advisors.

Many PLCs embed training curricula into how the PLC functions, developing feedback loops related to topics and content while utilizing the group's knowledge, skills, and abilities to move it toward its primary goal. One area could be ensuring that the reflexive components of the PLC are woven into the next iteration of the curriculum to ensure that ongoing development is about more than knowledge acquisition and instead creating space for advisors to put the learning into action with their student leaders.

Building Confidence as a Regional-Level Advisor

The F.U.N sessions focused on three tangible skill-based topics and one framework topic. However, looking at how regional-level advisors build confidence, it is evident that future training curricula need to address regional-level advisors transitioning into roles distinct from campus advising roles and embedding ways to discuss and talk about imposter syndrome or a lack of confidence while learning. Advisors spoke about finding their voice and how important that is with peers. Peter shares, “I think, in a weird way, we serve in this ex officio member capacity for our boards. We have a voice, but even then, we temper our voice a lot because we don't want to overshadow the student viewpoint.” For advisors to find where to use their voice as context givers and as peers to other advisors, they may need a training curriculum that focuses on different ways of building confidence in relationship building or soft skill development.

As a stand-alone training, F.U.N only covers a few topics that a regional-level advisor may need to take on the role. Two participants, James and Peter, shared that they wish regional ACUHO-i conferences had more of an advising emphasis or felt like a space where advisors at the campus level could engage in conversations about advising to improve their advising skills and knowledge earlier in their journeys. The gap that exists between professional organizations existence and a lack of opportunities to attend or engage around the topic of advising is an exciting consideration about where these adult learners think they should learn and the impact that having opportunities may have on confidence and considering that the Student Affairs Educator Certification describes advising as a knowledge and task rather than a topic like supervision with layers of complexity that someone would need to learn about, practice and continue to develop in (Student Affairs Educator Certification, 2023).

In some instances, the idea of confidence may be tied to the fact that the F.U.N training topics are more topically complex than previous iterations of training focused on advisors working with students since all the F.U.N training focused on deepening the advisor groups understanding of how they work together as a group or on topics that could be developed as whole curricula on their own. For example, training the regional-level advisors on NACURH's corporate structure required training on nonprofit structures in general. For some, regional-level advisors presented new concepts or concepts they were only aware of as event volunteers in other nonprofit organizations. Balatti et al. (2006) consider learner confidence part of what is developed when learners participate in ongoing structured learning opportunities. Things like how an advisor

views their value in space or if they feel like their voice in spaces with other advisors or students is valued are all considerations in building advisor confidence. Most importantly, Hollenbeck & Hall (2004) and many other researchers have studied how self-confidence can change over time by engaging in activities or tasks that allow a task's perceived capability to outweigh the task's requirements. For advisors who shared how finances are 'scary' over time and by learning how to meet the task requirements, their confidence will be built.

Interconnectedness of Findings

Reviewing the themes that appeared across the three research questions, it is essential to consider the makeup of the participants to the patterns that arose across the data. Two participants, Stephen and James, are the newest advisors to join the regional-level advisor team and were eager to attend the F.U.N training. They both attended three of the four training sessions. Considering limited onboarding experiences, these two participants were some of the most vocal about the desire for more connection, training, and seeing the advisor group come together as frequently as possible. While other advisors shared similar sentiments about connection, these two focused on the PLC being tied to their success in making it through their first year in the role.

Advisors like Betty, Jack, and Peter shared many similar ideas, especially about the organization's broader needs and the role that advisors can play in helping achieve those needs. Their perspectives aligned with the training curriculum, but it is also of note that these three shared fewer student-focused statements in their interviews than other advisors did.

In discussing research question one, the co-advisor's role came up and also seemed particularly interesting when tied back to the desire for deeper relationship building. During code charting, the advisors who have co-advisors talked about connection, relationship building, interacting, and learning from each other far more frequently than the advisors who do not co-advise or have been without a co-advisor for over six months. Considering the themes about building confidence and intentional and frequent time together, it is interesting where these advisors' experiences may align with the group, especially when considering how much they spoke about the role their co-advisor plays in navigating challenges, learning parts of the role or staying connected to the organization. The advisors who do not have a co-advisor did not readily talk about observing other advisors or getting feedback from other advisors like those who co-advise did. When developing a PLC among advisors, this gap between co-advisors and solo advisors should be considered in how the group continues to form and how feedback and reflective loops are built upon.

Research questions two and three had the same themes, focusing on advisors' confidence-building and a desire for ongoing development. Both research questions focused more closely on the role that the F.U.N training had on the advisor experience and their reflections on how they understand NACURH after attending. Sam and Leo stood out thematically as advisors who emphasized the applicability of the content from the F.U.N sessions in their advising practice and often extended it to include how they could share what they've learned with campus-level advisors. Considering ongoing development, Sam was one of the advisors who consistently highlighted their reflections

on training topics, training timing, and what they could use in the future to be successful outside of formal training to be most successful in the role.

Considering the overall participant group, Drew was one of the only advisors to have received a whole training experience when onboarded several years ago. Drew was an outlier regarding both years of experience and shared perspective. In the interview setting, I expected Drew to have had more concrete ideas or points of comparison about the training experiences. Still, he was an advisor who tended to situate his training experience towards the student experience rather than what has been helpful in his advising practice.

Summary

I addressed the three research questions in this study about implementing a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among regional-level advisors and implementing the F.U.N training sessions as a training curriculum for advisors using interviews, a focus group, and training materials and observations.

Advisors latched onto the PLC component language in talking about how they interact as a group and what they want to do in the future to support students better. This included finding ways of spending more time together virtually, building relationships, and pursuing projects where they can engage in smaller groups while deepening their relationships. Advisors emphasized the value of having other advisors observe their advising practice and exploring ways to do this more broadly in the future for advisors who are outside co-advisor structures.

Implementing the four F.U.N training sessions helped advisors, whether new to the role or more seasoned, better understand NACURH's corporate structure, finances, and virtual environment. However, the structure and finance training were identified as valuable for everyone in NACURH, not just advisors. With the two sessions in mind, advisors recognized that other complex training topics could be beneficial to add to the curriculum in the future and that additional training should be developed to enhance the relationship building between advisors transitioning into the role.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss this study's assertions, share limitations and lessons learned, and identify future opportunities for the F.U.N training program. Additionally, I will discuss future research opportunities connected to advisors in NACURH and student affairs for professionals who advise student organizations.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

For NACURH, Inc. to work towards accomplishing its mission, having committed and skilled volunteer advisors is necessary. For far too long, NACURH has relied on on-campus student organization advisors to volunteer to serve in regional-level advisor roles with limited training in advising in a nonprofit organization instead of a college or university. While the organization has attempted to provide training for regional-level advisors in recent years, more work is needed. The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to explore how formalizing a professional learning community (PLC) among the NACURH regional-level advisor team might impact their engagement through implementing the Foundations in Understanding NACURH (F.U.N) training series on the components of a PLC, NACURH's corporate structure, finances, and advising in a virtual environment. These trainings used professional learning communities and adult learning theory as the theoretical underpinnings for this study and influenced content and delivery.

This study utilized qualitative methods, holding interviews and a focus group of regional-level advisors. The thematic analysis of the data provided a guide for analyzing the interviews, focus group, and observational data. Thematic analysis is iterative in practice, aligning well with the analysis process that included multiple rounds of coding, code landscaping, and code charting, as well as the development of themes based on the patterns that emerged through analysis of the data collected.

This chapter will discuss the alignment of data analysis to the theoretical perspectives of previous research that guided this study, share lessons learned, discuss the study's limitations, and discuss implications for practice and future research.

Discussion of Results and Theoretical Perspectives

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Introducing the components of professional learning communities (PLC) was one of the primary shifts introduced to NACURH's regional-level advisors. A PLC is built on five components: shared beliefs, values, and vision; shared and supportive leadership; collective learning and application; supportive conditions; and shared personal practices. As a theory, PLCs give structure and guided focus to a group focused on helping learners learn (Hilliard, 2012). The theory served as both the framework for developing F.U.N trainings and a tool for advisors to engage beyond the sessions. This allowed PLC concepts to influence how advisors interacted with the content and with one another.

Results of this study highlight that the regional-level advisors' shared beliefs, values, and vision are most salient in their focus on supporting students, particularly in their region. Senge (2000) describes the importance of having shared beliefs, values, and vision as “the ability to align disparate aspirations among people” (p. 72). In an organization like NACURH, each advisor has their own goals they want to achieve and the goals that the students want to achieve. Advisors described belief in NACURH as an organization and their focus on students, especially when describing how they hope to operate. Advisors like Sam described the advisor group as being on the same level, absent any competition.

In contrast, an advisor like Leo linked the group's ability to maintain a shared vision to both the advisors' professional training and to the charters of the regions, saying, “Our charters are all very similar, so on the surface, our values and vision are nearly identical, so even when we operate differently, we still know it is stemming from the same common goal.” Regional-level advisors described their roles in relation to their common purpose of supporting the students in NACURH and ensuring the organization continues showcases how the advisor group has bought into and was primed to engage as a PLC. Thematically, all five themes from this study can be connected back to this component and the role it plays foundationally for advisors. In the future, advisors could take additional steps by interrogating how the group spends time in their roles and ensuring that it aligns with this common purpose.

The second component of the PLC focuses on shared and supportive leadership. Sam’s sentiments around the advisor environment being without competition are part of what makes a PLC successful. Sam describes his relationship with other advisors compared to professionals he works with on campus as, “we are learning and working together as a team; it is a type of growth I have not been able to get in professional environments that are more competitive.” Hord & Sommers (2007) describe this environment where professionals have a culture of collegiality that starts “with the soul” of staff and where the leaders that have oversight over them are initiating and holding the group accountable to shared decision making and working collaboratively to learn and meet collective goals (p.32). This component relies on me and the NACURH NRHH Advisor to engage with the regional-level advisors through active listening, embedding

reflection into one-on-one and group settings, managing conflict, and taking time to observe emerging trends (p.118-125). As the creator of the F.U.N training series built around PLCs, I hope it is evident to the regional-level advisors that my co-advisor and I are committed to our common goals. The NACURH NRHH Advisor prioritized attending the F.U.N training and has been supportive of implementing the PLC model into the culture of the advisor group. It may be necessary for both of us to take more time to check on how we create space for advisors individually and in group spaces to ensure the PLC model is being maintained and deepened. None of the five themes from the findings of this study explicitly connect to supportive leadership. It may be that it is not absent from the data, but because, as one of the advisors, I was also leading the spaces and did not explicitly ask about support from the NACURH level; rather, it may be just under the surface of the themes presented, since setting aside time for the group to train or connect is currently coordinated solely by the NACURH level advisors. Thus, it will be essential to check in with advisors about areas where we, as leadership, can be differently supportive to ensure the group stays on the same page moving forward.

The four F.U.N training sessions were inspired by the need in PLCs for collective learning and its application, the third component. This component is focused on creating opportunities for building shared knowledge bases, often done through training that allows space for dialogue and discussions. Hord & Sommers (2007) describe the role of everyone in the PLC coming to training as participants and working democratically. This component emphasizes continuously learning together and applying what has been learned to the work (p.33). James described his conversation with his co-advisor

following the training on NACURH's corporate structure, brainstorming ideas about how they could apply the content to their team meetings. On the other hand, Peter described the validation that other advisors gave him as they talked about their fears or epiphanies about their regional budgets, saying, "Some of the finance pieces are huge, it is helpful that other advisors also are figuring this area out and that we can talk about what is confusing." As the regional-level advisor PLC continues to develop, the goal will be for the PLC to find collective ways for the group to "enhance the community's vision" (p.34).

Supportive conditions are the fourth component, described by Hord & Sommers (2007) as the logistics of how the group comes together and the relationships developed across the participants (p.14). Drew, James, and Leo discussed the impacts of the physical and structural supportive measures in discussing the challenges of keeping to scheduled chats that span six time zones. One of the factors Louis & Kruse (1995) focus on is the physical proximity of persons to one another, which is something not even regional-level advisors regularly have since, most of the time, advisors are located at different campuses. With the theme of intentional and frequent time together being interwoven into the data of this study, it indicates that this supportive condition will need to be focused on continuously since, structurally, there are limitations to the group's closeness. One way to continue to foster this can be by regularly evaluating the time set aside for advisors and ensuring that when time is provided to the group in person, it meets advisor needs. The other aspect of supportive conditions is related to trust building among individuals.

Regional-level advisors indicated that spending time together, especially getting to know each other personally, is rewarding. If the logistical supportive conditions are met, then the group often leaves interactions grateful for the time together. Hord & Sommers (2007) note that relationship building is the responsibility of the members as well as leadership to ensure that the group's development and ability to build and maintain trust are tended to (p.15).

The last component of a PLC is shared personal practices, which includes members of the PLC visiting each other's spaces to observe and share observations and creating space to give feedback to one another. Advisor development and confidence building thematically highlight the importance of embedding more of these practices into how regional-level advisors operate. While advisors like Leo provided examples where they have appreciated having advisors observe them in action, sharing, "I have gotten some good feedback from other advisors attending my conferences," these interactions often lack formality or the feedback loop where additional development can exist or start. Often prioritizing the student experience can conflict with advisor development, having advisors inadvertently shift their focus from learning from other advisors to focusing on the students in the space. Further reflection and planning for balancing these needs will be necessary moving forward.

In considering the five components of PLCs, the themes from this study highlight that shared beliefs, values, and vision, as well as collective learning and application, are solidly embedded within the PLC of regional-level advisors. Advisors described and engaged with these elements around training topics, particularly when reflecting on times

they worked together to develop supportive conditions. The components of shared and supportive leadership, supportive conditions, and shared personal practices should continue to be focused on as the PLC develops, identifying how to work around the geographical challenges of the group coming together and creating straightforward ways for advisors to be observed and given feedback to improve their practice.

The experiences of NACURH's regional-level advisors in this study align with the literature around successful PLCs, especially in citing the benefits of such communities. Hord et al. (2009) indicate that other successful PLCs have been observed reducing isolation among members, seeing group commitment to make change, and seeing signs where the PLC takes greater responsibility for the total development of student success (p.9). Even in a setting outside of K-12, where more research has been done on the value of PLCs, the findings of this study suggest that the level of students a PLC is connected to does not negate the value of the PLC.

In addition to professional learning communities, adult learning theory was used to develop the F.U.N training sessions. This theory will be discussed next concerning this study's findings.

Adult Learning Theory

Knowles' (1984) model of androgyny, which became adult learning theory, identified five assumptions surrounding adult learners' development. These assumptions include self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation, and motivation to learn. Each training course in the F.U.N training series considered each of these assumptions.

Self-concept focuses on an adult learner being self-directed in their learning versus depending on others. A desire for ongoing development and advisors' taking time to identify future training needs align with this adult learning assumption. Three of the four training topics came directly from past advisor feedback about what learning advisors wanted or needed to be successful. This self-concept is like being self-directed, indicating that the advisor is responsible for their learning and decisions. Regional-level advisor roles are voluntary, and advisors spend time learning technical and group concepts with little training or prerequisites. Cox (2015) argues that self-concept is an attribute rather than a given for adults since self-direction may differ depending on the setting (p.29). Considering how advisors perceived the training curriculum and their understanding after attending the F.U.N training series, an advisor's self-concept shows up in three of this study's themes: advancement through advisor engagement, building confidence as a regional-level advisor, and an ongoing desire for development. Future training content should consider these themes and ensure advisor input is taken when identifying topics and desires from training.

The "learner experience" is the second assumption defined by Adult Learning Theory and is the assumption at the core of each regional-level advisor's experience. Advisors "accumulating reservoirs of experience" connects with ideas like advisor development and a professional leaning toward the regional-level advisor role as professional development (Woodard, 2007, p.45). Since the roles are voluntary and offer no financial benefit, the role of the advisor may be to add more to their reservoir of experience instead of gaining other things like money or prestige. Woodard (2007)

suggests that mentor programs can be meaningful ways of engaging persons with a lot of experience since they may find sharing their experiences with others to be developmental (p.47).

Readiness to learn is often referred to as ensuring training and topics are at the “right” time for a learner (Tonseth, 2015). Regional-level advisors indicated in interviews and focus group settings a desire to have training like the F.U.N training on NACURH’s Corporate Structure earlier in their advising experiences, indicating that advisors have been in the “right” time for learning before the training was offered. Additionally, the advisor groups’ desire for ongoing development as a theme in this study strongly indicates that advisors want topics specific to their roles that will help them develop in areas where they want to grow. This assumption is closely tied to the fourth assumption around adults’ orientation to learning with advisors, considering how changes in the organization and surrounding environments change what learning is needed. This was evident in advisors considering when they may want or need additional training on topics like conference hosting and support versus budget development, depending on what needs are directly facing them. Ferreira & Maclean (2018) describe the need to utilize real-world situations to maintain a learner’s orientation towards relevant and meaningful topics (p.17). Problem-centered activities, like those used throughout the F.U.N training, align with this assumption. In each session, there was at least one activity specific to a situation that could be happening in a region or has thematically occurred in years past. Research questions two and three focused directly on the training sessions. Based on the themes from this study and the applicability of this theory to the group of advisors, their

understanding of topics through problem-centered activities and their influence on the topics themselves indicate that the training had the desired outcome.

The last assumption of adult learning theory is a motivation to learn. This assumption is tied to learners being explicitly motivated by internal rewards. This is one of the key differences between adult and non-adult learners (Knowles et al., 2014). These internal rewards are most evident in having a sense of free will to choose content and to see the value in a topic easily to be engaged (Ferreira & Maclean, 2018, p.14). Regional-level advisor feedback about the topics for the F.U.N training indicated that the Introduction to PLC, NACURH's Corporate Structure, and the Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting sessions were sessions that regional-level advisors found internal value in and cited as being valuable for their advising practice. Advisors describing how they would return what they learned to their students or campus-level advisors are vital indicators that their motivation to learn was strong for three trainings. The fourth training around NACURH's Virtual Structure highlighted a difference in motivation for advisors as the session was the least attended. When asked about the usefulness of sessions, advisors stated this session as being the least useful. This comparison in sessions supports the idea that adult learners must be interested in the topics to learn and find value in developmental opportunities.

Considering the five assumptions of adult learners to the F.U.N training series, numerous indicators suggest that advisors increased their understanding of concepts related to NACURH after attending sessions, were able to identify future sessions they would like to see presented, and aside from the session on virtual culture, the

considerations taken regarding advisors as adult learners had a positive impact on advisor engagement. Thematically, ongoing development is something advisors are interested in, and as future training is developed, keeping the assumptions about adult learners in mind will help ensure advisor development is pertinent to their experiences.

Adult learning theory, mainly focusing on Knowles's (1984) andragogy assumptions, has been utilized broadly in education, serving as one of the base theories that make up the growing area of research around adult learners. This study readily utilized the six assumptions in crafting the F.U.N training and considered how assumptions could be used in delivering the content virtually. Attendance at sessions and recorded viewership indicate that the six assumptions still hold to NACURH's regional-level advisors, especially considering the motivation to learn. Likely, another adult learning theory, like transformational learning (Mezirow, 1990), could have been worth exploring to add additional complexity for training regional-level advisors and delivering content to participants who are not children.

Lessons Learned

An important aspect of action research is the researcher taking time to reflect on the process of research conducted, thinking back through the steps taken along the way. Mertler (2020) describes these steps as a cycle: identifying a problem, developing a plan of action, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting the results, then adjusting the theory, and beginning again. Mertler describes these in stages, with reflection as part of the process to plan for what is next. Reflecting on the action research study I conducted, I learned various lessons personally and to this study.

Personal Lessons Learned

As a result of this study, I have learned several lessons that can be applied to the future. The three most important lessons are (a) seeing the throughline from theory to research, (b) overcoming qualitative research challenges, and (c) the importance of multiple cycles of research in improving or addressing a problem of practice.

In coursework related to connecting a problem of practice to research questions, backed by theory and then to intervention, I often struggled to connect all the pieces, even in creating an outline. Having conducted a study from start to finish, I can see more clearly now where I had opportunities in the initial development of the F.U.N sessions and even research questions to use PLC and Adult Learning Theory in more nuanced ways to potentially ensure that all the topics I selected in the F.U.N series would meet the outcomes desired. As I coded the interviews and focus group data, I saw gaps where an adjustment in my questions gave me more clarity about each component of the developing PLC. Additionally, while my research questions worked for this study, questions two and three had some significant similarities that could have been refined further and allowed for a question about support or another topic to be considered instead.

The second lesson I learned is navigating challenges in conducting research, especially qualitative research and knowing from the outset of this study that the total number of potential participants would be eleven required that I talk about the study in as many settings as I could where regional-level advisors were present in the months leading up to the F.U.N training. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and in chapter 4, the timing

of the training ended up mainly over the summer due to various factors. Those factors were partially due to my timelines adjusting due to other priorities happening in NACURH but were also influenced by lower advisor engagement in the spring. I took a risk and waited until summer to host the sessions to get a lot of participation from regional-level advisors as the new NACURH year started. Every session had attendees, but no session had every regional-level advisor present.

In most cases, if an advisor did not attend at least one session in real-time, they did not take the time to watch the recordings or participate in the interviews or the focus group. Knowing that I still need the perspectives of three advisors with their unique perspectives is something that I will continue to consider as I apply what was learned from this study. Additionally, scheduling interviews and the focus group created some challenges in managing advisors' professional schedules at very different parts of their summer or staff training timelines. I conducted most interviews and the focus group three to five weeks later than I originally planned, which changed my data analysis and writing timeline. Ultimately, the lesson learned is that qualitative data collection is time-consuming, and building more lead time helps leave room for participant needs.

The last personal lesson learned is related to action research as a concept. In attempting to have a valuable cycle 0 and 1 (as preliminary information-gathering cycles of research) earlier in this program, I learned about outgoing regional-level advisor experiences related to training via interviews. I surveyed advisors about training needs in the future. With the level of turnover at the advisor level, these research cycles helped provide me with some threads to pull at as the F.U.N trainings were developed but were

not clear enough to ensure that a topic like NACURH's Virtual Culture was potentially replaced with another topic. I think there were markers in those previous cycles that advisor perceptions around the virtual environment did not match my perceptions of the gaps for regional-level advisors in virtual spaces. I think there were instances where I could have taken more time to reflect on the end of those previous cycles to inform what ultimately became of this study to potentially provide a fourth training that would have been more valuable for the regional-level advisors.

Lessons Learned About Implementation of This Study

The lessons learned from the implementation of this study include (a) the impact of developing formal training sessions, (b) the importance of a framework like professional learning communities for a group like the regional-level advisors, and (c) gaps in advisor support and opportunities for the future.

Previous iterations of regional-level advisor training have sometimes been more informal. These trainings were often topical but may have taken a more subject matter approach than a skill-based approach that is more appropriate for adult learners. The development of the four F.U.N trainings was rewarding and allowed me to utilize skills and areas of expertise I use less frequently in NACURH. While I have created trainings previously, the topics were very different from those previously presented and yielded positive results from advisors who attended. I have wanted to provide more comprehensive training on NACURH's nonprofit structure since starting my NACURH Advisor term. Seeing training well received helps motivate me to see the potential for future training presented similarly. Presenting the F.U.N training with slides and some

formality highlighted that advisors are open to and want training with visual aids and things to engage with during the session. As I consider future training or other aspects of engaging with the regional-level advisors, I want to challenge myself to think about balancing regional-level advisors as volunteers with providing content that has a real impact and can be more formal if needed.

Another lesson learned in this study was the use of a framework like professional learning communities, which impacts the professional development of advisors and the professionalization of their roles in NACURH. Applying theories or frameworks to this group has yet to be something that has readily occurred previously in NACURH. The advisors who potentially completed or participated in Advisor Retention & Training (ART) may have engaged in some theory depending on which sessions they attended, but they may have been limited to group development theories or an overview of multiple student development theories. Professional learning communities (PLC) are frequently used in k-12 education but not as frequently in higher education, where the presence of communities of practice (CoP) is commonly used for shared enterprises in organizations and education (Wenger, 1998). Implementing a PLC into the regional-level advisor group instead of a CoP was primarily about a PLC already focused on student success, something a regional advisor role inherently does, given the structure of NACURH. A community of practice was also an appropriate framework for this study. Still, by choosing PLC, the focus was on the group solving problems while using “collective inquiry of best practices to develop new skills,” as Hord & Sommers (2007) described.

Additionally, Knowles's (1984) adult learning theory was used primarily as a foundational framework for building F.U.N sessions but was not shared as part of the training content. It could have been valuable to spend more time weaving into sessions why decisions were made about the content selected and how that connects back to theory. Adding a theory related to adult learners could have enhanced how the theory was embedded in the F.U.N sessions, adding more nuance to what and how regional-level advisor training was delivered.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this action research study. Limitations included 1) my role as researcher-participant and NACURH Advisor, 2) participation by the regional-level advisor group, and 3) training timing and their impact.

As one of the current NACURH Advisors, developer of the F.U.N Training series, and primary researcher of this study, I was tied to the topics of this study in ways that may have challenged my objectivity (Mertler, 2020). Structurally, I occupy a position of power in the organization above the regional-level advisors who participated in the study. While I employed mechanisms along the way to lessen this impact, it is nearly impossible to remove my lens in NACURH from the research. The benefits of being in this role and doing research related to the regional-level advisors is that I am situated to both deeply understand the role having been in the role for five years before and during the pandemic and have been a student impacted by this role in the past. This unique path taken from student leader to advisor of students and now in a role to influence how advisors are trained and engage with their roles is something that has been an asset to this study. I was

able to cut through the layers of acronyms and organizational habits to develop an innovation that would be applicable to the advisor group. In analyzing the data, I was situated to see connections between the student experience and advisor role in ways that may not have been easy to do if I was a researcher learning about NACURH and how it operates for the first time.

Conversely, this closeness to the topic likely had some drawbacks. Something absent from all the data collected was any mention about the NACURH level advisors or other NACURH professionals. One of the PLC components is a supportive leadership. While I as one of those leaders can claim that the other NACURH Advisor and I are supportive, the absence of data to back this up indicates that there is a need to identify how we are doing in supporting them and if the F.U.N trainings and other tools are meeting the needs of the regional-level advisor group. If a different researcher had conducted the same interviews, it might have yielded data related to supportive leadership or other notes about the NACURH professionals that could have yielded other findings and results.

Second, the regional-level advisor group should have fourteen advisors when fully staffed. The group has not had fourteen advisors since the start of the pandemic, and for the last ten months has had eleven advisors. This shift in group size may have impacted how advisors engaged in the training and interview. Only eight of the eleven advisors participated in the interviews or the focus group. While this number is significant regarding the current total number of advisors, at least one region was not represented in the study. This could have provided insight into whether these themes hold

in all regions across NACURH. Additionally, some regions that typically would have co-advisors currently do not have co-advisors, meaning that this study's findings connected to co-advising were missing some perspectives.

Additionally, the current make-up of the regional-level advisor group is predominantly male identifying advisors, which also played out in this study with only one female identifying advisor participating in the study. The regional-level advisor group in its current iteration does not reflect the gender breakdown of the group even five years ago. This shift may be inconsequential but could likely did shape how participants engaged and there could be gaps in the perspectives that were shared. Care should be taken in future cycles to consider if gender plays out differently. It should be noted that both other female identifying regional-level advisors initially indicated that they wanted to participate in this study and due to personal circumstances were unable to participate in the interview or focus group.

The third limitation of this study is tied to timing. Historically, advisor training has occurred concurrently with the student leader training in April each year. The student and advisor training did not happen this year due to organizational personnel changes and significant changes to NACURH's Annual Conference host site. The training was instead held in May, June, and July, at times voted on by the regional-level advisors, but training had mixed attendance due to summer schedules and vacations, leading to a very different group being present at each training, and some advisors only being able to engage in the sessions by watching the recordings. With formalizing a professional learning community

as a primary goal of this study, it is challenging not to have a space where every advisor is present and can coalesce around building a PLC culture together.

Implications

Implications for Practice

By implementing the Foundations in Understanding NACURH (F.U.N) training series, I have learned that regional-level advisors are interested and want opportunities to engage in training topics tailored to their needs and roles as regional-level advisors. To advance the student-led mission of NACURH, advisors need regular and systematic training on topics beyond “how to advise” to successfully navigate the dynamics of volunteering in a nonprofit organization that has strong ties to college and university involvement. The topics that advisors found the most valuable and have yielded positive results in advisor engagement are the F.U.N sessions on NACURH’s Corporate Structure and the Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting. These sessions trained on content not presented elsewhere but pertinent to regional-level advisors and provided opportunities to problem-solve in the sessions themselves. Evidence of these two sessions' impact is readily visible in the qualitative results of this study. All advisors indicated high satisfaction with the usefulness of these sessions and the need for advisors and students alike. The Introduction to Professional Learning Community (PLC) session was valuable to participants as a new framework for advisors, and surprisingly, advisors discussed other places they would want to implement PLCs in their NACURH and professional roles after learning about the structure and value of PLCs for meeting student learning goals.

As one of the NACURH Advisors, I need to work collaboratively with other leaders in NACURH to prioritize how future training builds on the success of the F.U.N sessions when onboarding new advisors in the coming year or developing training for the group. Based on the evidence from this study related to the implementation of the PLC, the time set aside for advisors needs to balance training needs and spaces for regular engagement and relationship building to maximize the group's ability to thrive as a PLC. Considering the limitations presented, future training needs to be timed to consider advisor availability and ensure new advisors have multiple opportunities to connect with other advisors and the organization at the corporate level.

In considering training topics necessary to include in future F.U.N series, greater care should be taken regarding topics that may seem at face value to content advisors already know. The NACURH's Virtual Culture session aimed to create space for advisors to level-set as a PLC related to supporting students virtually, but it was the session that advisors indicated to be the least useful. The session may be more appropriate for a group of regional-level advisors who are brand new to virtual advising or delivered differently to leverage what advisors may not know or expect about virtual advising. This likely indicates that more scaffolding in the training curriculum is needed for regional-level advisors, creating levels or options for advisors with different types of experiences in addition to topics that can promote the group's growth as a PLC.

This study focused on regional-level advisors, but in some instances, the advisor group brought up or wondered about the campus-level advisors in their regional spheres who may also have needs. ART is the primary training curriculum designed for campus-

level advisors. Still, this study showed that regional-level advisors, especially new advisors, could have found the F.U.N training topics valuable before being selected for their roles. This indicates that bridge content could be developed for campus-level advisors who aspire to be involved regionally or at the NACURH level. Developing something like this could address existing recruitment and retention concerns and help people wonder if this volunteer role is right for them.

An additional implication that needs further consideration is NACURH's structure as a nonprofit that only sometimes fits the nonprofit mold and how to engage with regional-level advisors as partners in teaching, navigating, and improving the organization from roles that are not decision-makers. Philosophically, this would require advisors and students to come together to consider different ways of operating that would help persons up and down the organization better understand NACURH's mission and how that mission may need to be engaged with if advisors took a more active role in the governance structure upkeep of the organization.

The final implications are situated outside the realm of NACURH and tied to how we train and develop professionals in student affairs. While this study focused on advising as the core area the group was engaged in, PLCs and adult learning theory are concepts that may have additional practical use in how other professionals are trained in volunteer roles in nonprofit organizations or in student affairs roles where less direct content training is provided. While my interest is specifically in advising, the applicability of PLCs and how to train adults is necessary in multiple fields.

Outside of NACURH, this study could be helpful for other nonprofit organizations tied to colleges and universities, like fraternities and sororities. These organizations also rely on volunteers and a connection to individual campuses but are typically run by persons who are not students at the institution. This study could highlight considerations these organizations could make when engaging with professional volunteers or chapter advisors. These organizations may benefit from exploring a PLC model for their chapter headquarters teams or chapter advisors nationwide to ensure decision-making has students in mind.

For organizations that support student affairs professionals, this study reinforces the need to differentiate student organization advising from academic advising or general helping skills. Based on the engagement in the F.U.N sessions, there are topics professionals in student affairs want to learn and develop in the areas they are passionate about. The current general advising training or knowledge does not meet the needs of today's advisors. It relies heavily on other organizations like NACURH to train advisors while they are advising instead of scaffolding learning and development along their professional journey.

Lastly, the F.U.N training series in its current format is likely too specific to NACURH to be applicable broadly. Still, the topics therein have broad applicability to any nonprofit organization aiming to train volunteers about how the organization works. This is especially true for persons who take on board positions in a nonprofit organization but can also be true for persons who volunteer regularly with an organization but may need to learn how the organization functions.

Implications for Future Research

Future research is needed based on what was learned from the implementation of this study. Melrose (2001) identifies that the rigor of action research can be enhanced by repeating previously tested actions (p.164). The two most helpful training sessions should be presented again and studied to see if any additional considerations are needed. This research would allow for comparing two groups in terms of their understanding of NACURH's structure based on the two trainings.

While the sample size cannot get much larger in NACURH, over time, the group of advisors will turn over, offering new opportunities to see how the F.U.N trainings are received at either a more traditional training time or with current advisors potentially shifting their practice, influencing how advisors may engage with the content.

This study also suggests that other topics are needed in the F.U.N series, such as training on supporting conference hosting, differences in regional structures and practices, short-term and long-term investment strategies, engaging campus-level advisors, sponsorship and partnership development, and additional training on nonprofit priorities and governance. Each of these topics could be developed and studied in F.U.N training.

Future iterations of F.U.N. may want to explore mixed-methods methodologies to enhance the findings, especially if future studies are focused further on the impact of topics in the F.U.N. curriculum rather than the existence of a curriculum that had strong evidence of benefit in this study.

Future research with the ART Consultant should also consider training gaps between campus-level training curriculums like ART or those presented on individual campuses and the F.U.N training offered to regional-level advisors. This research should consider whether a new ART track would be most appropriate or whether another mechanism to present this training would be most valuable for aspiring regional-level advisors.

Formalizing the PLC for regional-level advisors was the first step in giving them a framework to identify how to engage with each other. The introductory phase gave common language to the group and emphasized the components of a PLC that make relationship building and reflection typical for a group of volunteer professionals. Future research could focus on the PLC over time or how other enhancements are received. One enhancement is the implementation of a mentorship program for regional-level advisors. Mentor programs came up regularly in the literature for adult learning theory, PLC, and nonprofit training, but for the timeline of this study, it would have been impossible. Research on implementing a mentor program would support the work already done in establishing the PLC and be a tangible study to perform during other times of the year.

The most crucial facet of future research is ensuring any research cycle moving forward includes the perspective of the students impacted by the training and engagement of advisors. This would be true of any future study that is connected to a PLC, but for NACURH as a student-led nonprofit, having student qualitative data about their experiences with their regional-level advisors or a comparison of data from students and advisors could help to elevate the experiences of both students and advisors in the future.

Conclusion

NACURH's mission is to "create environments that empower, motivate, and equip residence hall leaders by providing them with skills and resources to excel and positively impact their campus communities" (NACURH, 2021). This action research study has showcased how implementing a professional learning community (PLC) framework into NACURH's regional-level advisor group can give a common language to volunteers caught between campus professional roles and nonprofit volunteer experiences. Implementing the F.U.N training series introduced a different way of training regional-level advisors, using adult learning theory to focus on problem-solving and ensure topics intrinsically motivate advisors.

NACURH's ability to train and develop regional-level advisors to help its students achieve its mission will be imperative as it charts its future course and navigates the numerous challenges presented by operating in the twenty-first century.

The use of PLC in a non-K12 context should be researched further in contexts like NACURH, where students are the focal point, but learning together could be valuable. Nonprofits loosely tied to higher education could benefit from examining whether they could do more to support student success by supporting volunteers throughout the organization, even if the volunteers are still students themselves.

Designing this study revealed the need for more research related to organization advising. Broadly, any research about student clubs or organization advising will add to an area that has seen very few studies in the last 25 years. For student affairs, further research is needed to understand the state of advising on college campuses and what has

changed since COVID-19. Specifically in student housing departments, additional research could address the changing needs of persons who advise hall councils, residence hall associations, and National Residence Hall Honorary chapters, expanding what might be needed if an advisor chooses to pursue advising in NACURH.

Future studies are needed on a wide range of subtopics related to advising students, meaning that leaders across multiple fields must also be excited and energetic about developing advisors. I hope that someday, training and developing student organization advisors will be viewed as a necessary set of skills that are imperative for any organization's success.

More than anything, the development of advisors is about the Chairperson who says “Hey, NACURH!” to an arena of their peers, or the first-time conference delegate standing in the crowd. The students who lead and spend their collegiate years volunteering in a large student-led nonprofit are the at the heart what being an advisor is about. Their experiences and the roles they pursue should not be despite the advisors they have along the way, but because they have great advisors uplifting them to be their best. Its these students, who will likely be the future campus, regional and NACURH level advisors and will hopefully be just a little bit better than the group of advisors before them.

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APPENDIX A

F.U.N TRAINING: INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Professional Learning Communities

NACURH Training 2024
May 17, 2024



Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Professional Learning Communities

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

NACURH's Corporate Structure

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Professional Learning Communities

- Advisors will learn what the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are.
- Advisors will build rapport as a team and identify what students will learn and how.
- Advisors will identify how to engage with each other as a PLC.

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Virtual Culture

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to outline a plan for supporting students virtually.
- Advisors will be able to examine how the organization operates and how to navigate spaces in an advisor role.

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to summarize how NACURH's finances work and what sources of revenue support the organization.
- Advisors will be able to investigate examples of organization budgets and what considerations should exist when working with regional finance officers.

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Nonprofit Structure

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to differentiate between campus organization structures and NACURH as a nonprofit organization.
- Advisors will be able to describe the structural tenants of a nonprofit organization.

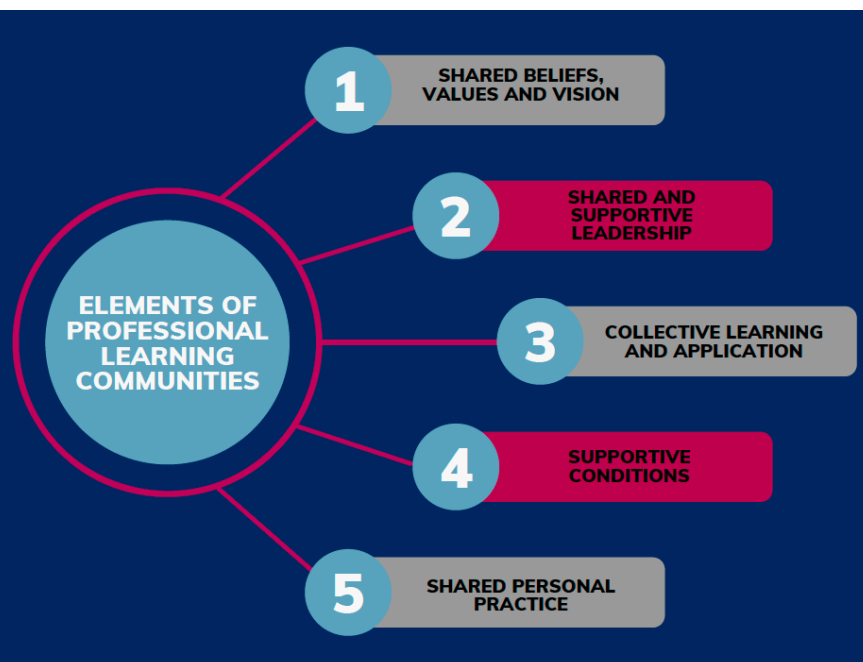
Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Professional Learning Communities
Today

NACURH's Virtual Culture
Friday, June 7, 2024

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting
Week of June 10, 2024

NACURH's Corporate Structure
Week of June 17 or 24, 2024



PLCs: Continuous Improvement Cycle



Professional Learning Communities

What do we want students to learn?

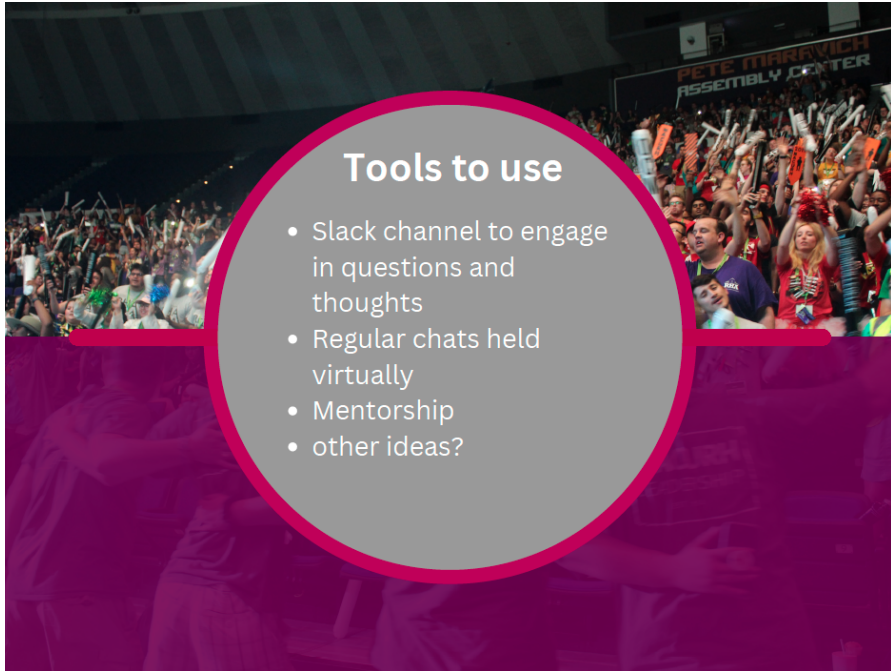


How will we know if they learned it?



What do we want campus level advisors to learn?





Tools to use

- Slack channel to engage in questions and thoughts
- Regular chats held virtually
- Mentorship
- other ideas?

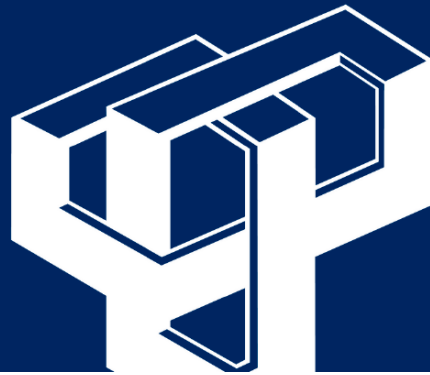
APPENDIX B

F.U.N TRAINING: NACURH'S VIRTUAL CULTURE

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Virtual Culture

NACURH Training 2024
June 7, 2024



Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Virtual Culture

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to outline a plan for supporting students virtually.
- Advisors will be able to examine how the organization operates and how to navigate spaces in an advisor role.

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Assumptions

- The organization can effectively operate virtually in its entirety
- Persons involved in regional roles are aware and expect to engage in predominantly virtual spaces
- All roles are filled by volunteers*
- Most interactions will be over the phone, via text, a messaging app, Zoom, etc.
- Time in person may only include one fall conference, one spring conference and the NACURH Annual Conference
 - Average of 9-21 days, depending on the team member
- Virtual communication has limitations
- Virtual advising is different than in-person advising

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Virtual Team Best Practices - from the literature

- Operate with clear, simple, and written processes
- Establish and maintain communication protocols
 - communication charters, expectations on how work will get done and what tools will be use
- Meet together at least once each week; ideally using video and voice
 - create rituals and things the team can expect
- Show that you care about the people involved
- Show that you care about the projects
- Consider tone when writing to others
- Name when leadership has changed and what that means

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Virtual Meetings on Zoom - Types

Entity

- Regional Board of Directors | SAACURH Executive Committee | Office Staff
- Regional Business Chat
- Regional Representative Chat
- Regional Committee/Taskforce

NACURH

- NACURH Board of Directors | NACURH NRHH Board of Directors
- NACURH Joint Boards
- NACURH Leadership
- Positional Chat
- NRHH Quarterly Meeting
- Committee/Task Force
- Advisor Meeting | Chat | Conversation

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Virtual Meetings on Zoom - Norms

- Use of an agenda that is sent out in advance
- Zoom protocol used that is unique to org ("x", "%", etc.)
- Varied expectations or norms around camera usage
- Management of time zones

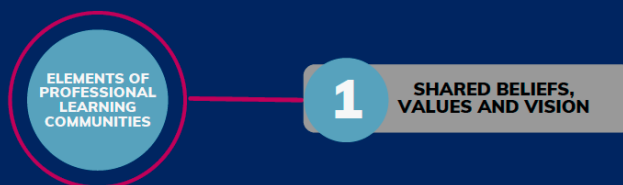
What are other norms?

NACURH's Virtual Culture

Group Commitment Conversation

Virtual Meetings - 1:1s

- How frequently as advisors will we commit to meet with student team members during the upcoming year?
- What are the three most important things that should come from these 1:1s?
- How will this group support and hold each other accountable to regular meetings with student advisees?



NACURH's Virtual Culture

Case Study #1

A Coordinating Officer on the team you work with frequently misses group RBD/SEC/Office meetings and you have had a hard time scheduling a 1:1 with them that is consistent. Another board member mentions that they think the CO isn't "doing their job" and says that they are finding it job to do their role successful because of them.

Case Study #2

A fellow regional/entity advisor asks you about a conflict happening between two of your team members because it came up in a 1:1 with someone on their board. You knew the two team members hadn't worked well together so far, but hoped it was improving. Before you can chat with your co-advisor and set up times with the two students you hear from a NACURH executive that there are rumors going on about the two board members being in a fight and trying to get other entities involved.

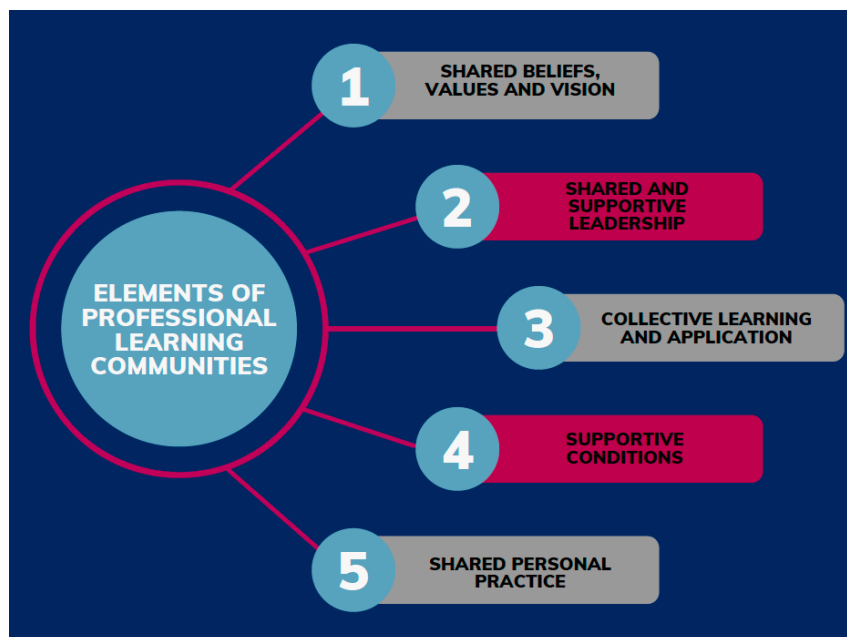
NACURH's Virtual Culture

Case Study Questions

- How might you navigate this if the situation were happening on your campus?
- Beyond not being in the same location, what challenges might you encounter with addressing this situation?
- What are the next five steps you (or you and others) might take?
- Rewinding to before this situation ever arose, what steps might have prevented this situation from occurring in the first place?

3

COLLECTIVE LEARNING
AND APPLICATION



Professional **Learning** Communities

How to connect and engage with others

Leadership Development

Resource and Knowledge stewardship

Emotional Intelligence

Advocacy (self/others)

Organization decision-making skills

Conflict Management (virtual/in person)

**What do we want
students to learn?**

Professional **Learning** Communities

How and why of NACURH's structure

The benefits of regional and NACURH involvement

Advocacy of student orgs at campus level

Impact of advising on student experiences and
retention

Connection with other advisors/professionals

**What do we want
campus level
advisors to learn?**

APPENDIX C

F.U.N TRAINING: FINANCIAL IMPACT AND NACURH BUDGETING

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

NACURH Training 2024
June 28, 2024



Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to summarize how NACURH's finances work and what sources of revenue support the organization.
- Advisors will be able to investigate examples of organization budgets and what considerations should exist when working with regional finance officers.

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

How do NACURH's finances work?



Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Non-Profit	For-Profit
Tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) (income taxes)	Not tax exempt under IRS
No official owner, operations by an ED or Chair that answers to BOD	Earn profits for stockholders, provide goods/services
Public Good/Charitable purpose	Owned by an owner or shareholders
Governed by a Board of Directors; may pay staff, but heavy reliance on volunteers	Pay all staff members
Donations, Fundraising, Membership dues, Grants	Gains, Profits, sales and other business activities
organize finances based on a system of fund accounting*	Use traditional accounting and financial models
Must make enough money to cover annual expenses	
Care and attention to maintaining positive image in their community	

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting Fund Accounting

emphasis on accountability over profitability

- tracking funding sources
- tracking evidence of how funds fulfill mission
- should have
 - statement of financial position
 - surplus/deficit
 - Assets (donations/contributions)
 - Net Assets (investments, property, equipment)

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting

NACURH Revenue Sources

- Affiliation [membership dues]
- Conference Add-on fees [dues bonus]
- Profits from merchandise sold [assets]
- Contributions to Advancement Society or direct to scholarships [assets]
- Interest/Dividends from Investment accounts [assets]

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting

Net Assets

- Unrestricted net assets
 - gifts, event revenue (add-on fees), earned income (merch)
- Permanently Restricted net assets
 - endowments
 - interest used on specific initiatives
- Temporarily Restricted new assets
 - grants, major gifts (Marilyn Michael), corporate sponsorship

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting

Budgets

NACURH, Inc. Corporate Budget
FY 2020: US Dollars
April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

Actual FY 2019 - Month End FY 2020

REVENUE		FY 2019 Actual (as of 12/24/18)	FY 2020 Budgeted	Changes Approved	FY 2020 Expected	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2020 Difference	Percent Realized	
Conference Fees		\$46,200.00	\$39,292.00	\$46,800.00	\$0.00	\$46,800.00	\$71,791.34	-24,267.34	153.40%
Donations		\$0.00	\$66.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$126.34	-\$126.34	12634.00%
	OCM Contribution to ACUHC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
	Advancement Society	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
	General	\$0.00	\$66.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$126.34	-\$126.34	12634.00%
Interest Income		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,256.38	-\$3,256.38	\$325638.00%	
	General	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,256.38	-\$3,256.38	\$325638.00%	
Membership Dues		\$25,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
	OCM Contribution	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
	General	\$25,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Sale of Assets		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
	General	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%

Chart of Accounts - things we have to

Chart of Accounts - things we have "bolded"

Nonprofits

Consistency

Accountability

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Budgets

NACURH, Inc. Corporate Budget
FY 2020: US Dollars
April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

REVENUE	FY 2019 Expected	FY 2019 Actual (as of 12/24/19)	FY 2020 Budgeted	Changes Approved	FY 2020 Expected	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2020 Difference	Percent Realized
Conference Fees	\$46,200.00	\$39,292.61	\$46,800.00	\$0.00	\$46,800.00	\$71,791.34	\$24,991.34	153.40%
Donations	\$0.00	\$66.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$126.34	-\$126.34	12634.00%
OCM Contribution to ACUHO-I	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Advancement Society	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
General	\$0.00	\$66.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$126.34	-\$126.34	12634.00%
Interest Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,256.38	-\$3,256.38	325638.00%
General	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,256.38	-\$3,256.38	325638.00%
Membership Dues	\$25,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
OCM Contribution	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
General	\$25,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Sale of Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
General	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%

FY Budgeted

- when the budget passed

FY Expected

- the reality when known

Changes

approved

- board approved changes

Actual

- tracked amounts

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Budgets

- Open your (or a) entity FY25 budget (or FY24 if need be

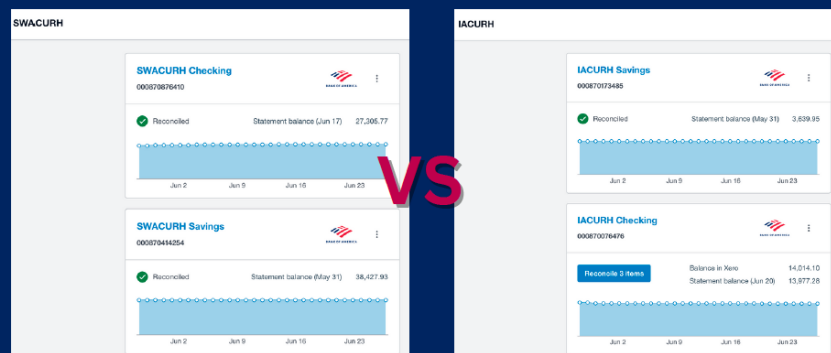
Your RBD/SEC has a great summer retreat and has an idea to mail every student who achieves academically in the fall a postcard of achievement. You open the budget to see what might be feasible, or if you should suggest they explore alternatives.

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting Accountability

Advising an ADAF or proxy

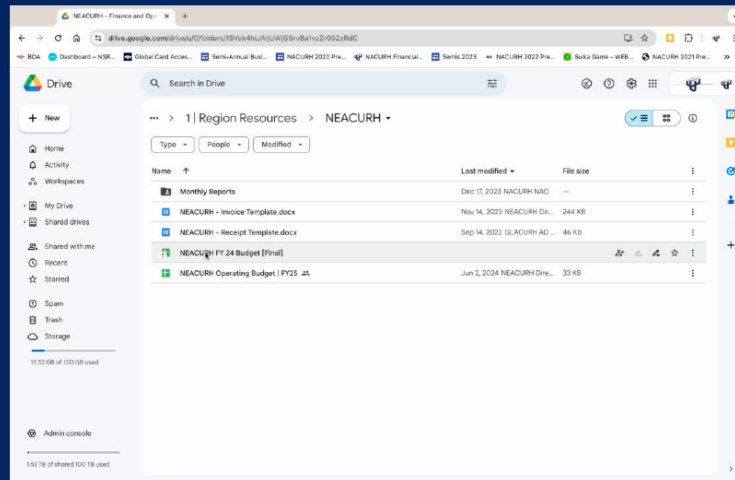
- An up to date budget
- Purchases or charges reconciled
- Monthly Reports submitted
- Collaboration around purchases

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting Xero



Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Monthly Reports



Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Expectations

- Familiarize yourself with your entity budget
- If you don't know what something is, ask
- identify a time at least once a month to check that all tasks are complete
- Be detailed and meticulous
- Try working meetings or email follow up, formal accountability when necessary

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting

*Creating steps for supporting each other
with regional finances*

- What do you feel most confident in?
- What do you need the most support in?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- What could you train someone else on?
- What is one finance related commitment you can make to this group?

Financial Impact **and** NACURH Budgeting

Conference Budgets

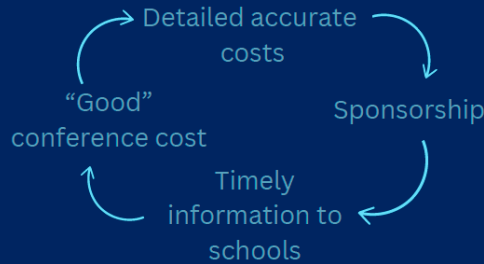
- Jen K doing additional training
- Add-on fees finance our activities
 - conference deficits diminish add-on fees and hurt the host school, the entity and member schools
- Work with your ADAF and conference teams to prioritize being detailed oriented.

Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Conference Budgets

IACURH RBC 2024				
OVERALL BUDGET BREAKDOWN				
Category	60	80	95	
TRA CONFERENCES	\$ 2,988.00	\$ 2,988.00	\$ 2,988.00	
TRA 2024	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Registration	\$ 494.50	\$ 494.50	\$ 494.50	
Travel & Lodging	\$ 12,867.75	\$ 12,867.75	\$ 12,867.75	
Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Security	\$ 402.00	\$ 402.00	\$ 402.00	
Transportation	\$ 1,813.00	\$ 1,813.00	\$ 1,813.00	
Travel & Security	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Educational Sessions	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Workshop Materials and Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Conference Dinner	\$ 125.00	\$ 125.00	\$ 125.00	
Other Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Mail Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Printing	\$ 1,872.00	\$ 1,872.00	\$ 1,872.00	
Communications	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Marketing	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	
Technology	\$ 415.00	\$ 415.00	\$ 415.00	
Insurance	\$ 251.00	\$ 251.00	\$ 251.00	
Physical Address Fee	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	
Other Fee	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00	
TOTAL	\$ 25,319.25	\$ 25,319.25	\$ 25,319.25	
ADDITIONAL FEES				
Conference Room Fee	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	
Early Fee	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
TOTAL COST WITH BANK FEES & CREDITORS	\$ 25,569.25	\$ 25,569.25	\$ 25,569.25	
SPONSORSHIP				
Sponsorship	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
TOTAL COST WITH SPONSORSHIP	\$ 25,569.25	\$ 25,569.25	\$ 25,569.25	
TOTAL COST WITH HOUSING OPTIONS				
Delegate	\$ 616.25	\$ 616.25	\$ 616.25	
Advisor Single	\$ 716.25	\$ 716.25	\$ 716.25	
Advisor Double	\$ 522.50	\$ 522.50	\$ 522.50	
Delegate Price in Other Currencies	AS OF 10/29/2023	Exchange Rate (CAN/USD)	1.36	
Delegate	\$ 79,305.10	\$ 111,459.93	\$ 111,459.93	
Advisor Single	\$ 979,305.10	\$ 1,341,459.93	\$ 1,341,459.93	
Advisor Double	\$ 711,085.10	\$ 966,959.93	\$ 966,959.93	

- CRC will provide template
- set up to have the “overall budget” show you accurate totals of the items in each sub tab
- Gives you numbers related to delegate costs based on total attendees



Financial Impact and NACURH Budgeting

Conference Budgets

DINING & BANQUET						
Item	Description	Cost Per Item	Number of Items	Cost		
				60	80	95
Example: Dining Center Meal	Example: Saturday Lunch	\$ 10.00		\$ 600.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 950.00
Example: Dining Center Meal	Example: RBD/Special Guest Lunch	\$ 10.00	15	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00
Example: Banquet	Example: Decorations	\$ 500.00	1	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
USU Catering	Sat Lunch	\$ 16.14		\$ 968.40	\$ 1,291.20	\$ 1,533.30
USU Catering	Sat Dinner	\$ 16.64		\$ 998.40	\$ 1,331.20	\$ 1,580.80
USU Catering	Sun Lunch	\$ 13.14		\$ 788.40	\$ 1,051.20	\$ 1,248.30
Riverwoods conference center	Closing banquet	\$ 19.95		\$ 1,197.00	\$ 1,596.00	\$ 1,895.25
USU Catering	RBD Sun lunch	\$ 13.14	10	\$ 131.40	\$ 131.40	\$ 131.40
USU Catering	RBD Sat lunch	\$ 16.14	10	\$ 161.40	\$ 161.40	\$ 161.40
USU Catering	Special Guests Sat Lunch	\$ 16.14	2	\$ 32.28	\$ 32.28	\$ 32.28
USU Catering	Conference Team Sat Lunch	\$ 16.14	3	\$ 48.42	\$ 48.42	\$ 48.42
USU Catering	RBD Sat Dinner	\$ 16.64	10	\$ 166.40	\$ 166.40	\$ 166.40
USU Catering	Special Guests Sat Dinner	\$ 16.64	2	\$ 33.28	\$ 33.28	\$ 33.28
USU Catering	Conference Team Sat Dinner	\$ 16.64	3	\$ 49.92	\$ 49.92	\$ 49.92
USU Catering	Conference Team Sun Lunch	\$ 13.14	3	\$ 39.42	\$ 39.42	\$ 39.42
Riverwoods Conference Center	RBD Closing banquet	\$ 19.95	10	\$ 199.50	\$ 199.50	\$ 199.50
Riverwoods Conference Center	Special Guests Closing banquet	\$ 19.95	2	\$ 39.90	\$ 39.90	\$ 39.90
Riverwoods Conference Center	Conference Team Closing banquet	\$ 19.95	10	\$ 199.50	\$ 199.50	\$ 199.50
USU Catering	Special Guests Sun Lunch	\$ 13.14	2	\$ 26.28	\$ 26.28	\$ 26.28
TOTAL DINING & BANQUET COST				\$ 5,079.90	\$ 6,397.30	\$ 7,385.35

APPENDIX D

F.U.N TRAINING: NACURH'S CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Corporate Structure

NACURH Training 2024
July 19, 2024



Foundations of Understanding NACURH (FUN)

NACURH's Nonprofit Structure

- Advisors will engage in the five components of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through the content and session structure.
- Advisors will be able to differentiate between campus organization structures and NACURH as a nonprofit organization.
- Advisors will be able to describe the structural tenants of a nonprofit organization.

Campus Organizations

Registered with College/University

- if Club - funding from a central source or fundraised
- if Organization - funding in whole or part from a department or entity on campus

Oversight from employee

- Assigned or volunteer advisor

Policies adhered to

- College/University policies related to money, conduct, Title IX, state, higher education rules

Student engagement

- large menu of opportunities for students
- ability to “fall forward”

Nonprofit Organizations

Mission-driven

- tied to articles of incorporation

Oversight from?

- Board of Directors
- Organization the nonprofit may serve

Policies adhered to

- IRS, state of incorporation, those established by the organization

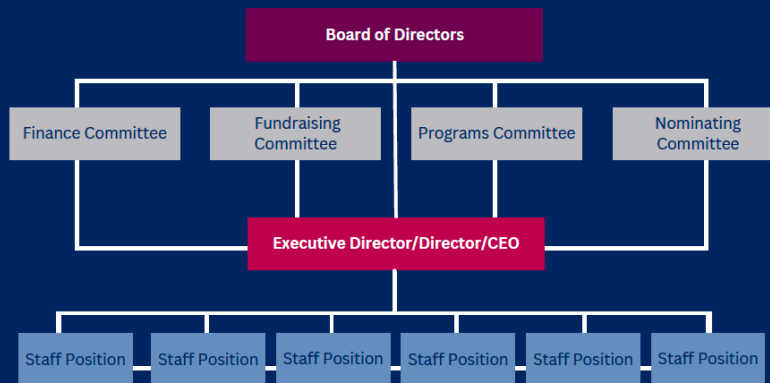
Engagement

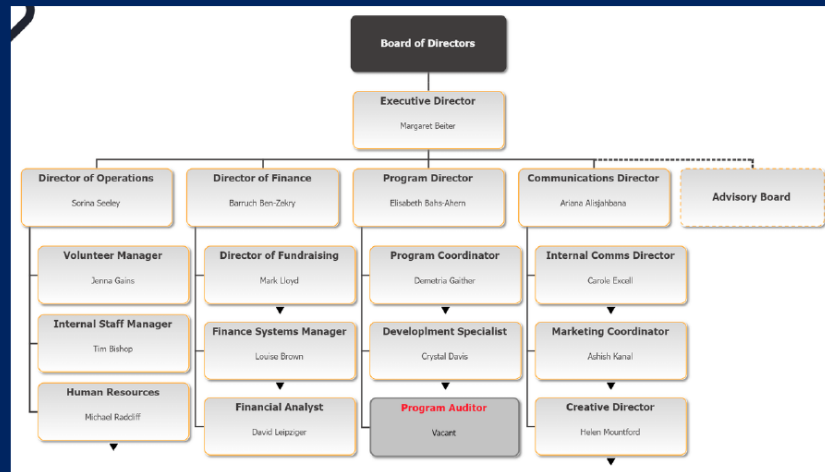
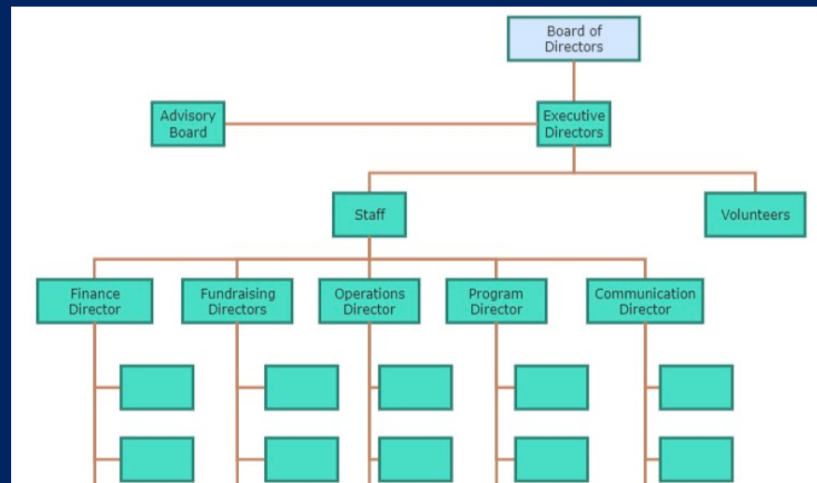
- Specific to mission
- volunteer centric
- special interest

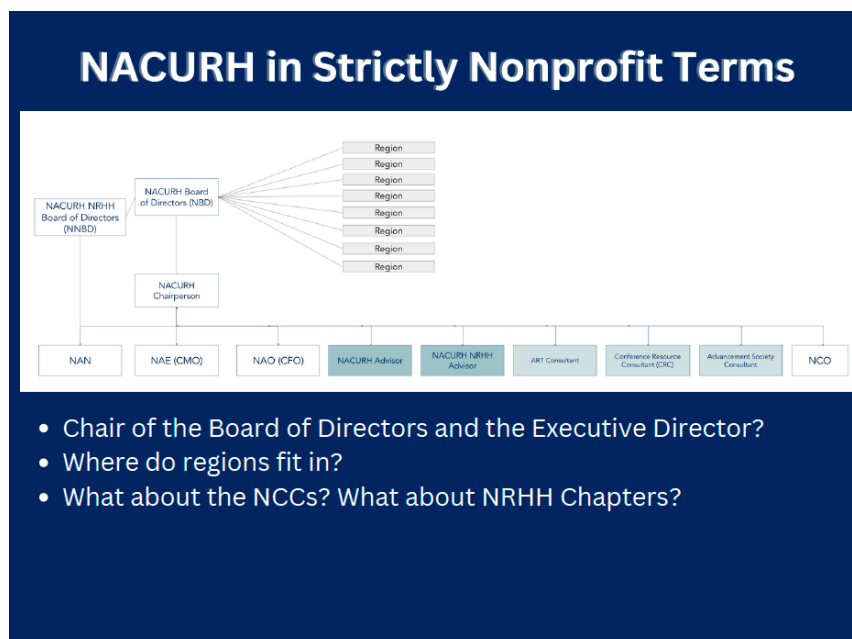
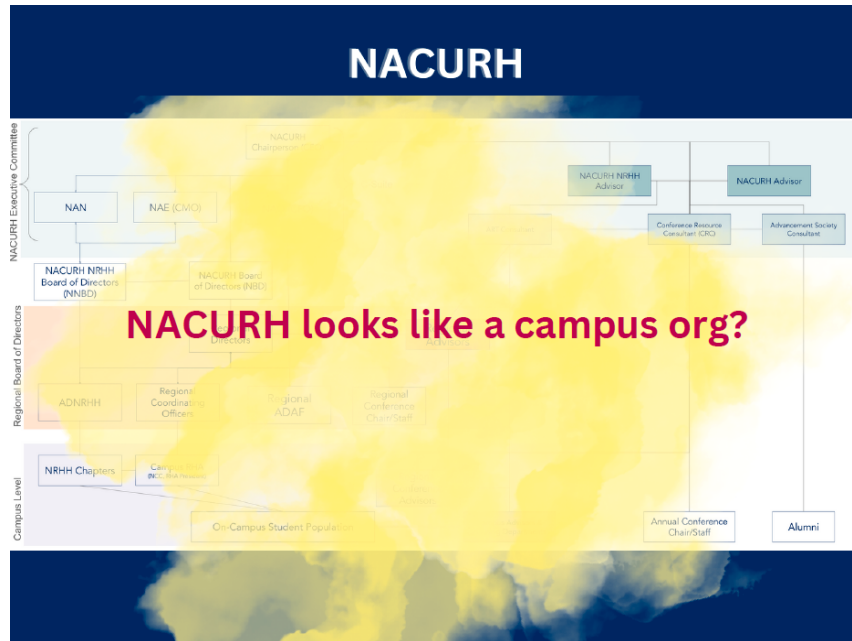
A Nonprofit Structure Needs

- Governance
 - Boards - responsible for high-level decision-making, ensure nonprofit is strategically ready to fundraise and execute mission
- Administration
 - Oversight of budgeting and strategy. Monitor finances
- Programs
 - the work. marketing, fundraising, hr, volunteers, events, etc.

Nonprofit Organization Structures







NACURH's Bylaws

Using NACURH's Nonprofit Structure

- Group 1 - the board of directors member(s) you advise want to remove someone, what are some bylaw considerations?
- Group 2 - a region is seeking to change its structure
- Group 3 - someone wants to be on the board of directors next year and is trying to figure out if they are eligible

Governing Documents | NACURH
[Click here to visit the page.](#)

The Role of Regional Advisors

Reflect on...

- When an issue arises, what structures, policies and resources do you rely on? Are those in alignment with the organization?
- Who in the organization is situated to make decisions? Do they know the power and agency they have?
 - If they do not, how do we advise them to reach this?
- For regional boards, how do we support the programs, events, initiatives while centering the mission of NACURH?
- What gaps exist with the students you work with currently?

The Role of Unlearning

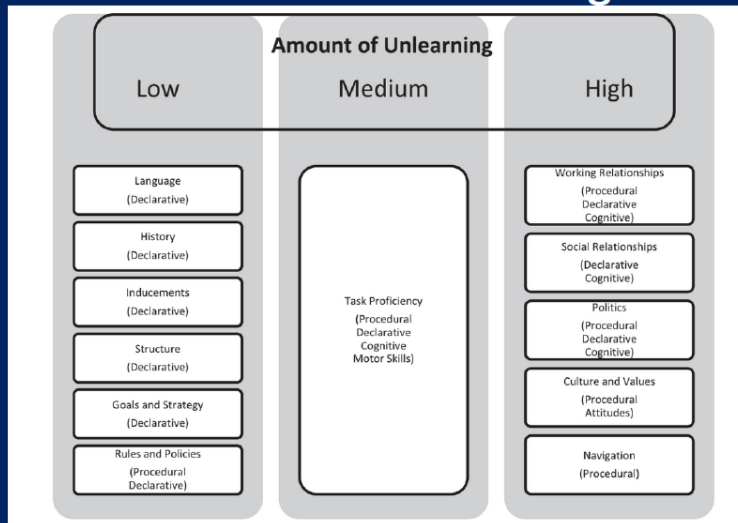


Fig. 2. Amount of unlearning applied to onboarding dimensions and knowledge types (dimensions and types from Klein & Heuser, 2008, p. 317).

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (F.U.N) Interview Protocol

My name is Jamie Lloyd, and I am interested in exploring how implementing foundational training on topics related to NACURH's nonprofit structure might enhance the experience of regional-level advisors.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you want to be kept from being recorded. You can also change your mind after the interview starts; just let me know. In your responses, please do not mention your name or the names of other individuals.

May I record this interview?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your advising history and how you became a regional-level advisor?
2. What F.U.N training session(s) did you participate in in real time? Which did you watch the recording of?
3. How do the components of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) manifest in how regional-level advisors collaborate or communicate? *[shared values and vision, a collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and learning of the group and individual]*
4. What would an ideal Professional Learning Community (PLC) feel like among regional-level advisors?
5. Thinking about what you knew about nonprofits and advising before the F.U.N training, what concepts were newer to you?
6. How would you describe NACURH's nonprofit environment to someone first learning about NACURH?
 - a. What would you share about the corporate structure?
 - b. What would you share about the finances?
 - c. What would you share about the virtual environment?
7. How might you use the content from the F.U.N training sessions in your advising practice with a regional board or SEC?
8. What aspects of the F.U.N sessions did you find most useful? Least useful?
9. Thinking about you as an advisor, what do you need more training on?

Interview Debrief

Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Foundations of Understanding NACURH (F.U.N) Focus Group Protocol

My name is Jamie Lloyd, and I am interested in exploring how implementing foundational training on topics related to NACURH's nonprofit structure might enhance the experience of regional-level advisors.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this focus group. Each individual present will be asked if they consent to having this focus group recorded. If any individual does not want it recorded it will not be recorded. If during the focus group anyone changes their mind about the recording, the recording will be stopped.

May I record this focus group?

This focus group has five questions for consideration. Unlike a regional advisor chat where we might use a "x" in protocol this space is different in that after I state the question everyone can unmute and mute as they see fit. If you are not talking please ensure you are muted. While not everyone needs to respond to each question, it is important with an interview to share the variety of viewpoints that exist among this group on the topic.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview

1. Thinking about the first months you were in the regional advisor role, how did you build rapport, relationships with and engage with other regional advisors?
2. How have you seen regional level advisors support each other?
3. Looking at the rest of the year (from now - NACURH) what might you do the same or differently when engaging with other regional advisors?
4. Thinking about NACURH's corporate structure, finances and virtual environment, brainstorm/discuss ways in which this group could enhance the experience of the students we advise?
5. One thing this group identified they wanted campus level advisors to learn is ways to connect themselves and campus-level leaders to the region and NACURH - how might THIS group do that?

Debrief

Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX G

RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT LETTER

Dear Colleague:

My name is Jamie Lloyd, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Henriksen, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting an action research study on regional-level advisor experiences tied to nonprofit organization structure, finances, and culture. The purpose of this study is to better understand the current situation in respects to Regional Level Advisors involved in the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH).

We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in attending four (4) virtual training sessions, each scheduled for 60 minutes related to NACURH's nonprofit organizational structure, finances, and culture. For advisors who attend these sessions, they will be invited to participate in a focus group and individual interview.

The focus group is designed to give a small group of advisors the opportunity to share their experiences as advisors as it pertains to NACURH, and how learning about nonprofit structures influences advisor perceptions and actions related to advising. We anticipate this focus group will take 60 minutes total. The focus groups will be held on Zoom. I would like to record the audio and video of the focus group. The focus group will not be recorded without each person's permission. The recording will be deleted from the original recording device upon transfer to the password protected computer and then deleted from the computer/cloud technologies once transcribed. Due to the nature of the focus group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while participating in the activity.

The interview will seek to inquire about your knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about advising student leaders who sit on regional board of directors in NACURH. We anticipate this interview to take 60 minutes total. I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Audio recordings will be deleted from the original recording device upon transfer to the password protected computer and then deleted from computer/cloud technologies once transcribed.

Please let me know if you do not want the focus group or interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the focus group or interview starts, just let me know.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences advising and how engaging in a Professional Learning Community of advisors supports your advising. Additionally, the content from the training sessions and conversations had in the focus group and interview will create opportunities to reflect on how advising in NACURH can be enhanced. Focus group and interview responses will also inform future iterations of the study and what may improve the experience of regional-level advisors in the future. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of students involved in NACURH in the future. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses to interviews will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. The interview recording will be labeled with a study ID rather than your name, transferred to a password-protected computer, and deleted from the original recording device. De-identified data collected as a part of current study will be shared with others for future research purposes or other uses.

If you consent to participating, please sign the below page and return to Jamie Lloyd at the listed address.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Dr. Danah Henriksen at danah.henriksen@asu.edu or Jamie Lloyd at jmlloyd6@asu.edu or (720) 935-8156.

Thank you,

Jamie Lloyd, Doctoral Candidate
Dr. Danah Henriksen, Professor

Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study and will let me audio record your responses by verbally indicating your consent.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Danah Henriksen, or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

Consent

By signing below, you agree to participate in the study and be videotaped. Please scan and return to jmlloyd6@asu.edu.

Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

JAMBOARD ACTIVITY THEMES

What do we want students in NACURH Leadership to Learn?	What do we want campus-level advisors to learn?	How will we know if they (students and advisors have learned)?
ability to connect with others and have a conversation virtually or in person	benefits of involvement on a regional level	advisors - increased engagement and return of interest in conference hosting and running for regional positions
communication	coaching	connecting the competencies to learning outcomes
how to make connections in a virtual org	confident with levels of experience in advising regardless of duration	engagement levels within nacurh opportunities
advocacy	conflict resolution	implement forms of assessment via focus groups, forms and visually seeing them grow through shared spaces
advocacy	connect with professionals	increase in regional involvement
advocacy for self and others	critical thinking	increased excitement
balancing other commitments and NACURH	different practical methods to support region/nacurh	increased involvement in NACURH and retention
collaboration	how do they connect themselves and their campus organization to region and nacurh	increased positive conflict management
compassion	how they can have a significant impact on student retention within their organizations	less gossip and harmful behavior occurring
critical thinking skills	how to advise in a "hands-on" way without micromanagement or overcorrecting	more full boards at the campus level
conflict management (virtual/in-person)	how to advise the next generation of students	more full boards at the regional level
conflict management (virtual/in-person)	how to get institutions involved and connected with region and nacurh	more schools affiliated
consider long-term impacts of decisions	how to have conversations with campus leadership about students hosting conferences	NSPA

how organizations make decisions	how to show patience and kindness as an educator - being a developer in challenging moments	observed reflection on the emphasis of decisions on the long-term success of associations and entities
decision-making	how to transition from a campus mindset to a regional mindset in getting involved in NACURH	regular/consistent conversations
decision-making	intersection of NACURH as a corporation and how that informs the operation	retention of nacurh-related information
decision-making	nacurh sponsored resources	student - peer accountability will be prevalent
developing long-term vision and direction for the org	strong verbal and written communication	student experiences with advisors will reflect their comfortability with working with different advisors
emotional intelligence	understanding various competencies of effective advising and how to rate skill levels and develop these	students - increased discussion on individual practices and consideration for streamlined options
engaging with difference		
delegating		
how to be good stewards with resources and knowledge		
How to effectively and positively manage discourse in an org		
how to empower others		
how to navigate politics and policies		
how to work towards a common goal		
kindness		
Leadership Development		
leadership development		
methods of creating and implementing organizational change		

organization		
problem-solving		
self-awareness		
strategic planning		
structures		
team development		
teambuilding		
teamwork		
time management		
transferrable skills to post NACURH		
willingness to learn		

APPENDIX I

CODE CHARTING

Participant	Summary	Codes
A - James	James focused heavily on the relationships between advisors and the need for time and energy among the group to build relationships. James is newer to the role and talked about the training content being new to him and helping him better understand NACURH. James redirected the answer to one of his questions about the students he works with rather than his needs or wants as an advisor.	COLLABORATION x 2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE - IMPACT X4 FINANCE SESSION X 2 FINANCE IMPACT X 3 PLC VALUE X 3 STUDENT FOCUS X 2 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X8 TRAINING GAPS X 3
B - Sam	Sam focused on how valuable the PLC concepts are both at the nacurh level and that they could also be used in his time on campus professionally and with campus-level advisors. Sam seems to have a very positive relationship with his co-advisor, and that is evident in how he speaks about the components of PLCs. Sam described being more experienced but also feeling like they missed out on some training and experiences earlier in their role.	CO-ADVISOR X 2 COLLABORATION X 3 CORPORATE STRUCTURE IMPACT X7 FINANCES IMPACT X 3 PLC VALUE X 5 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 8 TRAINING GAPS X 2
C - Betty	Betty connected the PLCs to the regional level advisor group being able to do more together to get things done and lean into the shared goals the group may share. Betty's background includes nonprofits and was able to describe how NACURHs structure can be challenging to describe and relate to the students but that understanding the goofy structure is vital for the group.	COLLABORATION X3 CORPORATE STRUCTURE IMPACT X8 FINANCES X 3 NONPROFIT BACKGROUND X 2 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 5 TRAINING GAPS X 3
D - Leo	Leo talked about the challenges of being a volunteer in this role and that this is the limitation for communicating with other advisors	COLLABORATION X 2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE IMPACT X 4 FINANCES IMPACT X 3

	more regularly. Leo seemed to not be able to decide if he should focus on how this relates to the student experience or if he should focus on his advisor experiences. Most answers started either with how students are, or tied it back to the students.	WANTING MORE TIME X 2 TRAINING VALUE X 10
E - Jack	Jack focused heavily on the corporate structure of training and how the organization works. Jack stressed the importance of training and that the structures in place or (lacking) contribute to the success or challenges of the organization at the advisor and student level. Jack also keenly discusses how the organization needs to adapt to meet the needs of today	COLLABORATION X2 COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY X 2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE X 8 LEARNING OF GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL X 2 SHARED VALUES AND VISION X 2 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 12 TRAINING GAPS X 2 VIRTUAL ADVISING IMPACT X 2
F - Peter	Peter focused on the connection between people and how he used to be in a co-advisor situation that afforded him a lot of community. Still, without that there is a different emphasis on building relationships. Peter also discussed how advisors play a vital role in the organization not repeating its mistakes. Peter was one of the only advisors to highlight the positionality of advisors about others.	COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY X 2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE X 5 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 5 TRAINING GAPS X 2
G - Drew	Drew focused on the differences in training now versus when Drew started in the role and the need for training both in content and also in relationship building. Drew highlighted that finances are always an area that needs development and that the corporate structure components are needed at the advisor and student level	COLLABORATION X 2 CORPORATE STRUCTURE X 8 FINANCE X 3 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 14 VIRTUAL IMPACT X 3
FOCUS	The group who attended the focus	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS X

GROUP	group focused greatly on how they have built relationships previously and what that could look like in the future. Advisors who had experienced co-advising talked about the value of these relationships. Advisors also talked about the connections that get made at housing conferences and how in person experiences in NACURH are what often solidified relationships.	15 CO ADVISOR RELATIONSHIP X 3 CORPORATE STRUCTURE X 2 FINANCES X 2 IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES X 2 LEARNING OF THE GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL X 2 TRAINING CURRICULUM VALUE X 2 TRAINING GAPS X 2
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APPENDIX J

ASU IRB EXEMPTION



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Danah Henriksen
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
-
Danah.Henriksen@asu.edu

Dear [Danah Henriksen](#):

On 5/15/2024 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Regional-Level Advisors in NACURH: Bridging Nonprofit Knowledge With Student Organization Advising
Investigator:	Danah Henriksen
IRB ID:	STUDY00019947
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent_NACURH_5.11.24.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Focus Group protocol_5.11.24.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Interview protocol_5.11.24 .pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Social Behavioral Protocol_J.Lloyd_5.16.24.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Other_TrainingSessionOutline_5.14.24.pdf, Category: Other; • recruitment_consent_email_05.11.2024_v2.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • RECRUITMENT_method_SCRIPT_Focus Group_05.11.2024.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • RECRUITMENT_methods_SCRIPT_interviews_05.11.2024.pdf,

	Category: Recruitment Materials; • Supporting_documents_focusgroup_consent.pdf, Category: Other; • Supporting_documents_interviewconsent.pdf, Category: Other;
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The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 5/14/2024.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

It is the research team's responsibility to notify the IRB of 'reportable new information.' (an RNI) During a research study, any adverse events, unanticipated problems involving risk, and non-compliance **must** be reported to the IRB as an RNI. Please see the following link for details: <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/reportable-events>. This does not include risks previously identified and listed in the IRB protocol and consent. Any serious events **must** be reported within **24 hours**. Non-serious adverse events **must** be reported within 5 business days.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Jamie Lloyd