

Tangible Tips for Identity Conscious Supervision



Tip 1: Commit to Self-Awareness.

- Explore your own identities and experiences.
- Take time to read books & articles or listen to podcasts about the identities you're learning about.
- Join resource groups across campus to learn more about diverse identities and conversations.

Tip 2: Have Consistent 1:1 Meetings.

- Meet either weekly, bi-weekly, or quarterly. Run through professional case studies in these meetings or in large staff meetings.
- Consistent 1:1s are essential for both work tasks and relationship building.

Tip 3: Initiate, Invite & Instill with Reflection Activities in 1:1s.

- **Initiate** conversations about identity and culture with your student employees.
- **Invite** student employees to fully engage in ongoing conversations about identity and culture.
- **Instill** the values of respectful dialogue and humility by prioritizing and modeling these conversations.
- You can initiate, invite and instill with reflection activities in 1:1s (see Tip 4).
- Free-write definitions of "supervision" with your supervisee. Share and discuss. Ask your student employee, "what has your student past experience been with supervisors?"

Tip 4: Use the Career Skills & GROW[®] Questions.

- Through guided reflection, you can help your student employees connect their work activities to Career Skills, academics and community work.
- Student employees are getting excellent developmental experiences with their jobs, but they have trouble articulating how these experiences align with the skills employers are seeking. With your experience, you can help!
- Reach out to the Office of Student Employment for reflection questions. These questions include Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion as a Career Skill and gives options for questions on identity.

Tip 5: Name the Power Dynamics & Neutralize It.

- The optimal power dynamic with a supervisor and supervisee is one where communication is frequent and open.
- Early on in the relationship and as situations arise, name the inherent power dynamic that exists.
- Let your student employee start with their agenda in 1:1s.
- Meet with your student employee in their favorite spot on campus.

Tip 6: Revisit Your Relationship with Giving & Receiving Feedback.

- When giving feedback:
 - Be clear about the position expectations and encourage a growth mindset during the on-boarding process.
 - Be consistent with timely feedback in 1:1s and with the yearly performance evaluation process.
 - Identify behaviors without judgment, craft your feedback intentionally and stick to observations. For example, "I notice you've stopped sharing in staff meetings, can you help me understand why that is?"
 - Build trust. Be aware it's natural for the person receiving feedback to go to marginalized identities first. Ensure your feedback is coming from a place of care and development and double check it for bias.

- When receiving feedback:
 - Ask your student employees to evaluate you via 360 tool or anonymous Qualtrics Form.
 - Listen and take feedback seriously. Reflect on the feedback you receive with someone you trust.
 - Be aware of the silencing effect. Giving feedback can be hard and brave. Student employees may not want to give feedback if it is disregarded or mishandled.
 - Use the Privileged Identity Exploration Model (PIE). PIE describes 8 defensive reactions often displayed in difficult conversations when one is being encouraged to reflect on their social, political, and economic position in society.

Tip 7: Try the LARA Model with Conflicts.

- Listen with an intent to understand.
 - Listen for underlying principles, cultural values, emotions, and issues behind what is being said. Listen for commonalities. Listen for inherent needs and interests, not just what is said.
 - Pay attention to body language and tone of voice which may provide additional meaning.
- Affirm the principles or issues in what was said, or the feelings or emotions that were expressed (“I can tell you care about this a lot.”).
 - Affirming is not agreeing, it’s acknowledging or recognizing what is shared. This can be done by simply repeating or rephrasing what was said.
- Respond to the issues that were raised and the underlying needs behind them.
 - Ask questions about what was said and allow for clarification.
- Add information to the conversation.
 - After seeking to understand, add information that is important to know about the situation. Ask, “what needs to happen to move forward?”

Tip 8: When Making Decisions, Ask Yourself:

- Have we defined the problem accurately?
- How would we define the problem from our supervisee’s perspective?
- How is power and privilege manifesting in our decision-making process?
- How could our decision cause harm? Would this harm conflict with our values?
- How might our decision affect other supervisees, colleagues, or fellow supervisors?
- Who might be disproportionately affected by our decision?

Tip 9: Engage in Critical Authentic Leadership.

- Engage with identity and its intersections as a primary lens in making meaning of supervisory practices.
- Commit to self-awareness (see Tip 1).
- Be transparent. Communicate openly and be real about your own identities and experiences.
 - Center the voices and experiences of people of color.
- Balance social power on a team. Assess multiple viewpoints within a larger power structure to conduct decision making.
 - Adopt both/and ways of thinking.
- Prioritize values related to social justice and inclusion in your work as a supervisor. We have individual agency. What can YOU do to help?

Resources

Brown, R., Desai, S., & Elliott, C. (2020). Identity-Conscious Supervision in Student Affairs: Building Relationships and Transforming Systems.
 Barker, T., & Landrum, C. (2012). Office of Student Conflict Resolution, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
 Iowa GROW®
[Cultural Humility in Psychotherapy Supervision](#)