



# COUNSELOR EDUCATION UPDATE

Official Newsletter of the Counselor Education Program at WCSU

## This Spring...

DEAR STUDENTS,

It's been over a year now since we have been living in a pandemic. While it is easy to get caught up thinking about the negative aspects of the losses and adversity we have had to face as a result of COVID, it's worth giving pause to consider and be thankful for the small gifts we have received during the past 14 months. Reflecting on gratitude can not only reduce stress but has positive benefits in the realms of career, social-emotional, personality, and health. As we all become vaccinated and look forward to opening up the campus this fall, I wanted to share some of the things I am grateful for about our program this year.

- Despite having to quickly move online last March, our students and faculty quickly adapted to create an engaging and welcoming virtual learning environment. I am grateful we were able to maintain the high-quality instruction and the personal connections we had when we meet face to face. It is what makes our program great!
- Our students in practicum and internship all found sites and supervisors who were willing to partner with us to navigate the new virtual counseling world.
- Our CSI chapter pulled together three wonderful events this year and started to build the framework so that the group can remain an active and vital part of our program.
- We had an amazing team who worked together from three different states to support our students and the program. Thank you to Hannah, Courtney, and Jennifer for helping us not miss a beat!
- Our faculty continued to shine professionally, resulting in a soon-to-be-published book, several scholarly articles and book chapters, a new CT School Counseling Framework, a series of conference presentations, and two small grants.
- We look forward to word on the renewal of Dr. Lomas' HRSA grant which allowed our students to earn a stipend for participating in fieldwork and helped expand our program and inter-professional collaboration.

It's easy to write off 2020-21 as a year not worth revisiting. I challenge you all to reflect on the opportunities and the small things, both personal and professional, this past year had that would not have been possible under normal circumstances. You might be surprised at how much you have to be grateful for.

Cheers,  
Nicole DeRonck, Ph.D., Ed.D., CRC  
School Counseling Coordinator  
CACREP Coordinator

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# 1 mask, 2 clean hands and 6 feet apart

I protect you. You protect me.



## Class Spotlight Stories

CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

### Class of 2022:

Congratulations to third-year School Counseling student, Courtney Fragomeli, for being a co-author of a book chapter!

Courtney completed a research project with faculty members, Dr. DeRonck and Dr. Stewart (Ed.D Program) examining the responses of educational leaders in Connecticut to the murder of George Floyd. The chapter highlights the role of educational leaders in creating culturally inclusive, appropriate, and timely communication. Her work will be included in a book series entitled *Preparing Antiracist Educators: Efforts, Resources, and Initiatives* edited by Dr. Luciana de Oliveira, Dr. Tomika Ferguson, and Dr. Kaprea Johnson.

### Class of 2023:

Huge congratulations to Mental Health Counseling Student, Shabiroon Vereen, for being awarded an NBCC Foundation Fellowship! This comes with funding, extra training and other professional opportunities. We are so excited for you Shabi!



## CHI SIGMA IOTA

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT  
CHRISTINE WALKER

The board for Chi Sigma Iota has been working hard to get the organization up and running again. We initiated a new group of members and hosted an inspiring panel of school counselors. We're grateful to everyone who has come out to one of our events and supported our efforts to make this a society something we can all be proud of.

We are currently looking to fill board positions for next year, so if you have any interest in getting involved in a more direct way, please reach out to Dr. Mariotti. This is a great opportunity to develop your leadership skills, network, and make new friends. It will also look impressive on your resume! Learn more about Chi Sigma Iota [here](#) or contact Christine Walker (walker072@wcsu.edu).

## Program Highlights

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment of school counselors is projected to grow 8% from 2019 – 2029; and employment of substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors is projected to grow 25% from 2019 – 2029.

With that in mind, Dr. DeRonck and our administrative support team hosted a recruitment event on February 25 called, *Beyond Your Bachelors: Careers Options in Counseling*. The goal of the event was to educate WCSU undergraduates about the diversity of career options in the field of counseling and introduce the Counselor Education Program as an option after graduation. The event featured three Counselor Education alumni: School Counselor, Krystal Payne; Integrated Behavioral Health Counselor, Constantino Rago; and Play Therapist, Liliana Yelin. Mr. Lubus, President of the Alumni Association was on hand to deliver the opening remarks. The panelists highlighted the similarities and differences between the three counseling specialties and offered tips for students interested in pursuing counseling as a career. Our event was sponsored by the Alumni Office and Career Services, which offered resources and a Visa gift card as a raffle prize for students who attended. Gabrielle Johnson was the lucky winner.

TalkCampus has arrived at Western Connecticut State University! TalkCampus is an anonymous peer support network that WCSU students can access for mental health support wherever they are and whenever they need it. This app is a safe place where you can access mental health resources and connect with college students worldwide who face many of the same struggles as you do.

Download TalkCampus for free in the app store with your WCSU email to start connecting with supportive peers today. TalkCampus offers bilingual support in over 20 languages, and links directly to Student Services offered at WCSU, so students know what resources are available and how to access them.

With TalkCampus, you can share struggles with anxiety, depression, stress, bipolar, self-harm, anorexia, or suicidal feelings. However, TalkCampus is not monitored by professional counselors; therefore, if you or someone you know is in imminent danger, please call 911 for immediate help.

For more information, visit <https://www.talkcampus.io/>.



## Summer 2021 Electives

- EPY 670 - Play Therapy Theory & Practice
- EPY 674 - Play Therapy Theory Supervision
- EPY 625 - School-Based Family Counseling
- EPY 620 - Marriage & Family Counseling
- PSY 592 - Substance Use Counseling: Assessment & Counseling
- EPY 619 - Crisis Counseling in Community & Schools
- EPY 621 - Drug & Alcohol Counseling
- ED 598 - Career Readiness Planning

Please sign up for summer classes as soon as possible. Set a meeting with your academic advisor if you have questions!

## Faculty & Staff

### PROGRAM CONTACTS

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## Construction Update



The long wait is over, this Fall we move into our new space in White Hall on Midtown Campus. The suite will be modern, with child, adolescent, adult, and family therapy rooms. It will have a large central hall with chairs for waiting, a reception area, and storage areas for materials.

# A Time for Reflection



DEAR STUDENTS,

My name is Gabriella and I entered the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Master's Program in the summer of 2018. I am now days away from graduating in May 2021. From the start when I had my group and individual interview, I felt comfortable and excited for entering the program. Listening to the faculty and current students at that time describe why the program was meaningful to them and meeting with them one on one, encouraged me to also be motivated to be entering this field. The professors in the program were always very present, helpful, engaging, knowledgeable and challenged us past our comfort zones to enhance our skills and make us even better counselors in the making.

I am proud of my accomplishments within the program being the program's student representative for the Connecticut Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (CACES) and being a member of Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) Counseling Honor Society for the past two years. I have been an intern this past year for the Community Health Center in Danbury and have been doing my internship 100% virtual due to the pandemic. I appreciate this unique opportunity to work alongside doctors, nurses, psychologists, licensed professional counselors, and clinical social workers in developing holistic treatment plans for our patients. I am grateful for the experience of co-leading groups like relapse prevention, coping with anxiety and depression, and pain management.

I believe my work within this distinctive internship has shown me a different collaborative experience in helping those in need concerning their substance use and mental health concerns, which has become a new passion and interest of mine. I am now entering into a PH.D. Program in Counseling Psychology at New Mexico State University. I will continue my work working in integrative care when I start their Graduate Psychology Education Program: Integrated Behavioral Health and OUD/SUD Training on the U.S. – Mexico Border. I will also have the opportunity to have a minor in Spanish Counseling and continue my work and passion correlating mental health with mindfulness/expressive arts interventions.

I honor my experience within Western Connecticut State University's Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and feel as though this program has set me up for success to launch into the field. I am grateful for my cohort as we leaned on each other during a global pandemic and showed our resiliency and grit to continue with the program as it looked very different compared to when we started. Congratulations to the class of 2021, to all that we've been through, to all that we've accomplished, and to all that is yet to come!

*Congratulations Class of 2021!*

## Upcoming Events and Workshops



STAY CONNECTED!

Take advantage of event happenings within the CT Counseling Communities.

The Western CT Counseling Association hosts several virtual workshops. To register and see the calendar of events click [here](#).

CT SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION'S Annual Conference is virtual on May 27-28, 2021. Register [here](#).

CT COUNSELING ASSOCIATION Calendar can be found [here](#).

CONNECTICUT SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

### SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

**Curtis R Darragh IV**  
Westside Middle School Academy, Danbury

Congratulations to adjunct professor, Curtis Darragh, for winning CT School Counselor of the Year!