



COUNSELOR EDUCATION UPDATE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM AT WCSU



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FALLING INTO A NEW RHYTHM

Fall is a season of change. The leaves change colors, the days become shorter, and the weather becomes crisp. There is a sense that a shift is about to happen.

This fall the WCSU Counselor Education Program is also experiencing a shift. We have finally completed our transition from an on-ground program to a fully on-line venue. We have submitted our change report to CACREP this September to make our change official. Our incoming cohort is robust and the first to be fully digital by design, not by pandemic!

Fall can also remind us there is value in change. Included in the changes this year is the inclusion of our newly developed clinical skills labs. Our second-year students had the opportunity to participate in the inaugural lab on September 17. Students practiced basic interviewing skills and practiced opening a group through a series of role plays and activities. Students received both peer and faculty feedback to help foster individual growth. You can read more about the clinical labs inside this edition of the WCSU Counselor Education Newsletter.

Fall is also the time to refocus, recommit, or recharge after the frenetic pace of summer. Whatever challenges change may bring this semester, I hope you will honor the change in your life and be inspired to act.

Welcome back and enjoy the fall!

Nicole G. DeRonck, Ph.D., Ed.D, CRC, BC-TMH
School Counseling & Clinical Mental Health Program Coordinator
CACREP Unit Coordinator
Associate Professor of Counseling

SATURDAY CLINICAL SKILLS LABS INITIATED

Dr. Nicole DeRonck, Counselor Education Program Director

The field of counseling requires counselors to develop strong interpersonal and communication skills to help build therapeutic alliances with clients. This is accomplished through the use of skills like active listening, and non-verbal communication in addition to specialized counseling techniques. Students in the WCSU Counselor Education Program learn their craft through a scaffolded approach. Students first learn the theoretical and ethical background, then move on to learning basic skills where they practice with peers, and finally move on to a series of supervised experiences with actual clients in schools and community agencies. All along the way, students work directly with faculty and community supervisors who provide feedback and mentoring to advance skill development.

This summer the Counselor Education program officially moved from being an on-ground to an online program. Concerned about the physical distance and associated opportunities for students and faculty to interface in a digital program, the counselor education faculty wanted to assure students continued to master the skills to be effective counselors. As a result, Saturday Clinical Labs were born. Students enrolled in our four skills classes (EPY 602, 603, 604/605, & 606) are participating in a clinical lab three times per semester to hone their group and individual counseling skills. Students attend a full-day session on campus where they practice with actors and each other to simulate individual and group counseling sessions. Each student is assessed during the day and receives feedback from peers, faculty, and actors on strengths and areas to improve. The labs also provide faculty with data on where students are struggling so they can then circle back in class to readdress the lagging skills.

Stimulations make me feel like I'm an actual counselor in that moment because the actors and classmates are super helpful with the roleplay and feedback, and the professors know their stuff and give their insight. I get excited to spend Saturdays there because I get so much out of it. I feel like I leave knowing so much more than when I arrived.

Students have been largely positive about the experience. In a follow-up survey conducted after the first session in September, almost ninety percent of respondents indicated they found the lab helpful to their professional growth. One student commented, ***"The actors were fantastic because they gave us real-life scenarios. I also felt that having one peer with you was reassuring."*** Students also enjoyed meeting their cohort and faculty in person noting a ***"collaborative spirit between the professors, between peers, and between professors and peers."*** Students indicated the energy and opportunity for camaraderie contributed to high levels of engagement during the day.

So far, the addition of the Saturday clinical labs has been a success. They have provided students an opportunity to meet in person in an otherwise digital program, and have given faculty another way to make sure students are well-trained to enter the counseling field. ***"I think having the experience of the simulation classes will make us all more cognizant of our actions during practicum and internship."***

The WCSU Counselor Education program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counselor Education and Related Programs (CACREP) and offers specializations in School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. **Our application deadline is January 10. [Click here to apply.](#)**



Students practice individual counseling skills with an actor, and participate in a group counseling activity.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HRSA GRANT UPDATE

Dr. Lorrie-Anne Monte, Program Director

Each year, the Counseling Education program offers a professional development series of speakers. The presentations are via Zoom, which allows us to also invite the School of Nursing-Psych APRN, School of Social Work, and the Psychology department, including Addiction Studies students, giving any student interested in mental health issues a chance to enhance their learning opportunities.

Fall 2022 speakers include:

- September 20th, Rosie Breindel of the **Child Health and Development Institute** presented on Comprehensive School Mental Health.
- Dana Begin from the **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)** presented on Evidence-Based Practices in CT on Sept 26th.
- **Western CT Coalition** offered three hours of training on Motivational Interviewing and SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) over four class dates for SC and CMHC students Sept 28-Oct 11th.
- Membrillo Consulting (aka **Together CBT**) presented twice on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, November 9th & 15th.

Spring 2023 plans include

- TBA: We are confirming dates a speaker will discuss EMDR and trauma resiliency.
- TBA: John Crocker, Founder & Director MASMHC, Director of School Mental Health and Behavioral Services, Methuen Public Schools, MA, on trauma-informed counseling in the schools.



Activities of the 2021-2025 HRSA grant are underway and change is in the air. Dr. Lomas has completed the turnover to Dr. Monte as the Grant's Program Director and the annual report was submitted to HRSA August 1st, and the financial report at the end of October.

Speakers for the Fall Professional Development series have begun their presentations and we are confirming availability with speakers for the Spring 2023 series.

Development of a simulation program with counseling focus continues. Actors ("Simulated Patients" or SP) have been recruited from social work, nursing, psychology and theatre arts departments to portray patient/clients. Using SPs allows counseling students to practice skills in a safe environment. We will primarily use SPs during on-campus Saturday clinical labs, Sept 17, Oct 15, and Nov 19; spring dates Feb 25, Mar 25 and Apr 22.

Finally, the vast majority of grant funds are distributed as stipends to third-year counseling students while they are in their Fall and Spring semester practicums.



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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Joseph Wessex interviewed by Jessica Soni, SC '24

Joseph Wessex is a Dual-Diagnosis Therapist at Danbury Hospital for Nuvance Health. He works with adults that struggle with addiction and mental health diagnoses. He graduated from WCSU's Clinical Mental Health Master's Program in July 2022, and was hired for his current position September 2022.

Joseph has a passion for psychology and therapy. He was interested in many grad programs that WCSU offered, such as Social Work but instead he chose a M.S. in Clinical Mental Health. In the end it worked out for him because he is very happy working in a clinical setting.

Joseph shared that the Clinical Mental Health program itself prepared him for his current occupation. He believes the program gave him all the skills: a relevant academic teaching that helped him develop a therapeutic style and gave him a great base. He also found his professors to be extremely helpful when he was a student. He appreciates all his professors but especially Dr. Mariotti for teaching Joseph everything he had to offer. As well as Dr. Monte, for always being enthusiastic in class which made Joseph enjoy learning.

Joseph's job is a continuation of his Internship. He was the first intern the company hired after an internship! He advises students to make a good impression and work hard at their internship site(s). He strongly recommends a group chat for student cohorts. Aside from communicating about courses, it is also helpful for networking purposes.

The best part of Joseph's job is also the most challenging as his goal is to build a more modern curriculum. Another challenge is maintaining a professional relationship with a patient or client. Prior to a client getting their diagnosis a therapist needs to build a rapport with their client. It is challenging to keep the relationship professional and keep the emotions (positive or negative) out of the therapeutic process after the diagnosis is given.

Overall, Joseph's advice to current students is to get your own therapy. He believes that, **"you cannot be all you could be unless you experience it from the patient's perspective."** He does not believe you need to have clinical mental health problems to see a therapist. Going through a therapist could help you overcome challenges like social anxiety, public speaking, trauma, overthinking, etc. Therapy could help a person be mindful of their countertransference, notice their triggers, and acknowledge their feelings. **"Find something to work on because it helps you grow as a person as well as understand the process of being a therapist from a client or patient's perspective."**



PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING GROUPS

CT Counseling Association - CCACounseling.com - See website for information and events calendar
Annual conference October 2022; professional networking; training opportunities.

CT School Counselor Association - CSCA.wildapricot.org - See website for details and nomination forms
Networking opportunities such as: 1st Year counselors roundtable, middle school and high school roundtables, etc.
Awards Nominations open in December 2022 for:

School Counselor of the Year

School Counselor Intern of the Year

SC Intern Supervisor of the Year

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: SCHOOL COUNSELING

Sara Terry interviewed by Lili Dickey, SC '24

Sara Terry is a School Counselor at Helen Keller Middle School in Easton, CT and a 2019 graduate from the WCSU Dual Counseling Program. Sara knew she wanted to be a counselor but started out wanting to be a psychologist. During her undergraduate degree, she had to complete an internship, in which she was in an educational setting. It was there that she discovered her love for being in a school setting. The daily impact and access to students sealed the deal for her journey to become a School Counselor. Sara said that the WCSU program prepared her for being a school counselor by emphasizing the ASCA standards and domains. She implements the ASCA standards into her day-to-day work, and it helps her be sure that all domains are hit. Sara also greatly appreciated the supervision for and during field placements.



Sara talked about the increase in mental health needs in schools. This is a challenge school counselors are facing today because of the limited mental health counseling that is given during the school day. She also mentioned the need for school counselors, but on the other hand, how difficult it was getting into the field. Sara's advice for current and prospective students is to get your feet wet! She suggested reaching out to schools and shadowing for a day, at all different grade levels. Immerse yourself in the nitty gritty of being a school counselor to fully understand the day-to-day challenges, expectations, and rewards.

As a middle school counselor, Sara enjoys giving lessons to her students on a variety of different topics. Her favorite being a lesson on rules! She shares it with the 6th graders, in which they create an island and decide the three rules for their personal island. It works as a metaphor for the rules of the school, for example: what happens if someone breaks a rule on your island? The school has consequences for breaking their rules as well. Sara loves this great ice breaker to start the year!

CHI SIGMA IOTA

Dr. Davide Mariotti, Faculty Advisor



IMPORTANT DATES

CSI is an international honor society that values academic and professional excellence in counseling. We promote a strong professional identity through members (professional counselors, counselor educators, and students) who contribute to the realization of a healthy society by fostering wellness and human dignity.

Membership is by invitation to qualified students who have completed at least 9 credit hours in an approved counseling program and have a GPA of 3.5 or more. Invitations for new and renewed membership will be emailed to eligible students near the end of the fall semester.

Any questions may be sent to Erika Daniels, chapter president, at daniels086@wcsu.edu

Dec 19-Jan 14: Winter Intersession elective EPY 626, *Sexuality Counseling with Children & Families*.
Registration open now.

Spring 2023 Elective: EPY 661 *Telemental Health*.

Please see page 6 for CORRECT Spring Schedule of Courses. **NOTE: Open/Close may have incorrect information..**

Feb 25th, Mar 25th, and Apr 22nd: Spring 2023 Saturday clinical labs will run from 10 am-4 pm.

Jan/Feb 2023 (Date TBA): Chi Sigma Iota initiation ceremony for new members, re-dedication for renewing members.

WCSU FACULTY COLLABORATE ON OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Dr. Adam Brewer (Education), Dr. Mirari Elcoro (Framingham St. University), and Aura Lippincott (Haas Library) are delighted to share that **Behavioral Pedagogies and Online Learning** is published as an open educational resource. Special recognition and thanks to our wonderful WCSU members: Dr. Stephanie Kuhn (Education), Dr. Nicole DeRonck (Educational Psychology), Dr. Lorrie-Anne Monte (Educational Psychology), and Elisabeth Werling Morel (AccessAbility Services)!

Behavioral Pedagogies and Online Learning is a collaborative effort that started with a teaching conference to provide support for teachers in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dedicated colleagues presented evidence-based practices in teaching and their experiences. The positive feedback encouraged us to compile this book and gather more contributors. Many of the chapters elaborate on the adaptation of behavior-analytic approaches to online instruction, including topics such as building equity for diverse student learners, universal design for learning, and creativity. Given the generality and relevance of the topics, we have compiled what we consider is a revitalization of behavioral instruction toward online education.

Visit, add to cart, and check out for a free download: <https://hedgehogpublishers.com/product/behavioral-pedagogies-and-online-learning/>

WINTER INTERSESSION/SPRING 2023 SCHEDULE OF COURSES*

NOTE: Three credit classes (other than supervision) are required to run 2.5 hours or more with a 10 minute break. Graduate online courses may build in an asynch space for independent theory and skill practice.

| CMH | Course | Special Instructions | School | Course | Special Instructions |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|---|--|
| 1st Year | EPY 602 Interviewing/ Lifespan, M 7:00 EPY 600-71 Assessment T 4:30 | EPY 602 Register for either section EPY 602 Saturday Lab Dates 2/25, 3/25, 4/22 | 1st Year | EPY 602 Interviewing/ Lifespan, R 4:30 ED 572 Career Ed & Dev Asynch EPY 600-72 Assessment W 4:30 | EPY 602 & ED 572 Register for either section EPY 602 Saturday Lab Dates 2/25, 3/25, 4/22 |
| 2nd Year | EPY 606-72 Adv Group M 4:30 Mariotti EPY 630 Intro Psychopathology W 7:00 | EPY 606 Saturday Lab Dates 2/25, 3/25, 4/22 | 2nd Year | EPY 606-71 Adv Group M 4:30 Monte EPY 610 Practicum T 4:30 | EPY 606 Saturday Lab Dates 2/25, 3/25, 4/22 EPY 610 Pick any section. ALL sections are meeting at 4:30, NOT 7:00 as listed in Open/Close. |
| 3rd Year | ED 572 Career Ed & Dev Asynch EPY 615 Internship T 7:00 | ED 572 & EPY 615 Register for either section | 3rd Year | EPY 613 Internship T 5:00 OR T 7:00 | EPY 613 Register for either section |
| Electives | EPY 626 Sex Counseling w/Children & Families Asynch EPY 661 Telemental Health R 7:00 | EPY 626 INTERSESSION EPY 661 SPRING | Electives | EPY 626 Sex Counseling w/Children & Families Asynch | EPY 626 INTERSESSION |

***Please use this schedule to plan/register for classes. OPEN/CLOSE may have incorrect info.**