



COUNSELOR EDUCATION UPDATE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM AT WCSU



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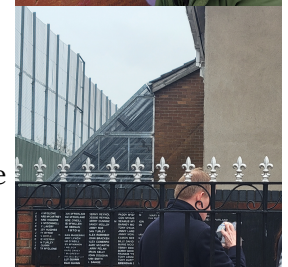
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REFLECTION ON THE PROFESSION

As a reflective practitioner and qualitative researcher, I am inclined to observe, listen to stories, and make meaning from my experiences and the experiences of others to better understand the human condition. This characteristic often spills over from my professional life into my personal life and tends to provide a framework for my experience. This spring break was one of those times as I was privileged to visit Northern Ireland as part of a family vacation. The whole trip I could not help but draw an association between what I was experiencing and my counseling identity.

I observed that Ireland is a very wet, cold place, no matter what time of year you visit. I had been previously in the summer and it was just as wet but slightly warmer then. Conversely, it is such a verdant and beautiful place and is so because of the weather. The rain washes away the dust and dirt and nourishes vegetation. The tidy, brightly painted cottages stand out against the gray and cloudy skies. The weather made me think about the process of counseling. In my analogy, counselors are the rain that helps our clients work through the traumas they have endured to hopefully come out on the other side more whole and beautiful. ***I reflected on the idea that sometimes we have to go through stormy periods to grow, change and appreciate what we have.***

In Belfast, I observed Peace Walls (there are over 97) and cages on homes that were put up to protect neighbors from each other during the Troubles which ended with the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998. I listened to the stories shared by a local who told me about his lived experience of losing family members, being jailed, and sustaining a personal injury all because of ages-old national disagreement on identity, or what it means to be Irish. The gentleman told me that even today, five gates that secure one neighborhood from another in Belfast are still opened in the morning and locked again in the early evening.
(continued, page 2)



ND leaves message at Peace Wall and cage over house behind Clonards Martyrs Memorial Garden.

REFLECTION ON THE PROFESSION

Dr. Nicole DeRonck, *continued from page 1*

He noted there is still one gate that the city has never opened- citing that the closeness of proximity between Protestant and Catholic homes still brings fear of violence. Peace is in its infancy in Northern Ireland, a mere 25 years in existence. To me, this conversation was the most profound experience of my trip and I am still processing it.

As humans, we build psychological walls in addition to physical ones, to keep out pain and emotional trauma and to provide a sense of security. It will be generations before the psychological wounds of the Troubles heal if they ever do. **I was reminded of the helpfulness of tools like CBT and EMDR counselors use to open the proverbial gates for healing.** I could not help but think of the generations of people living in Belfast who continue to live with the trauma of the Troubles. Stigmas about and access to counseling continue to be a problem in a country where mental health concerns are 25% higher than in the rest of Great Britain according to national data.

Understanding that the Troubles were about identity and not solely religion or politics, I reflected on the allegiances we hold to organizations like ACA, ASCA, and CACREP which focus on professional counselor identity. If you stay abreast of issues in the field, you will find divisiveness exists between sub-fields of counseling and between other related helping professions like psychologists, and social workers through their professional organizations. Rather than focus on how we can work together to advocate for social justice or to improve access to mental health care, too often walls are built to define who is better qualified to do the job or who provides better services. This paradigm is observable in lobbying practices, and legislation at the government level, as well as with hiring practices at hospitals, agencies, and schools. Professional identity is helpful in defining roles to assure clients are well served, but taken to the extreme, can impede access to services in a mental health system that is already overtaxed.

At the Titanic Experience (the ship was built in Belfast), I observed the physical representation of the idiom about making futile efforts in the face of a catastrophe, an actual deck chair from the Titanic. The Titanic sank because of a series of missteps and people operating in silos. I felt compelled to stand there for quite some time as it brought up many difficult personal and professional situations I experienced in my life where I felt helpless, and ineffectiveness had an impact on the outcome. It typified the work in the early stages of the therapeutic alliance, where clients have not yet bought into the counseling process, but know what they are doing on their own is not working. It inspired me to think about what I can do to be a better counselor. **For me, it's allowing myself the grace to ask for help when I need it, to take for self-care, and to encourage my clients to do the same.** What can you do to make real change?

Reflection has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Working these steps by contemplating our work day, experiences, and the working alliances we have with our students and clients, helps us recognize our limits, find our successes, and separate personal and work concerns. Most importantly, reflective practice helps avoid burnout by allowing us the opportunity to try new approaches based on what we have learned about ourselves. I encourage you all to give it a try!

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



CHI SIGMA IOTA HONOR SOCIETY INITIATION CEREMONY

Dr. Davide Mariotti, Faculty Advisor & Erika Daniels, President, CMHC '23

Chi Sigma Iota is an international honor society that values academic and professional excellence in counseling. It promotes a strong professional identity through members (professionals, educators, and students) who contribute to the realization of a healthy society by fostering wellness and human dignity.

WCSU is proud to have a local CSI chapter, Zeta Omega Eta, which is growing each year. Membership is by invitation to qualified students who have completed at least 9 credit hours in an approved counseling program and have a 3.5 or greater GPA. We are pleased to welcome 32 new members to our Zeta Omega Eta chapter this spring.

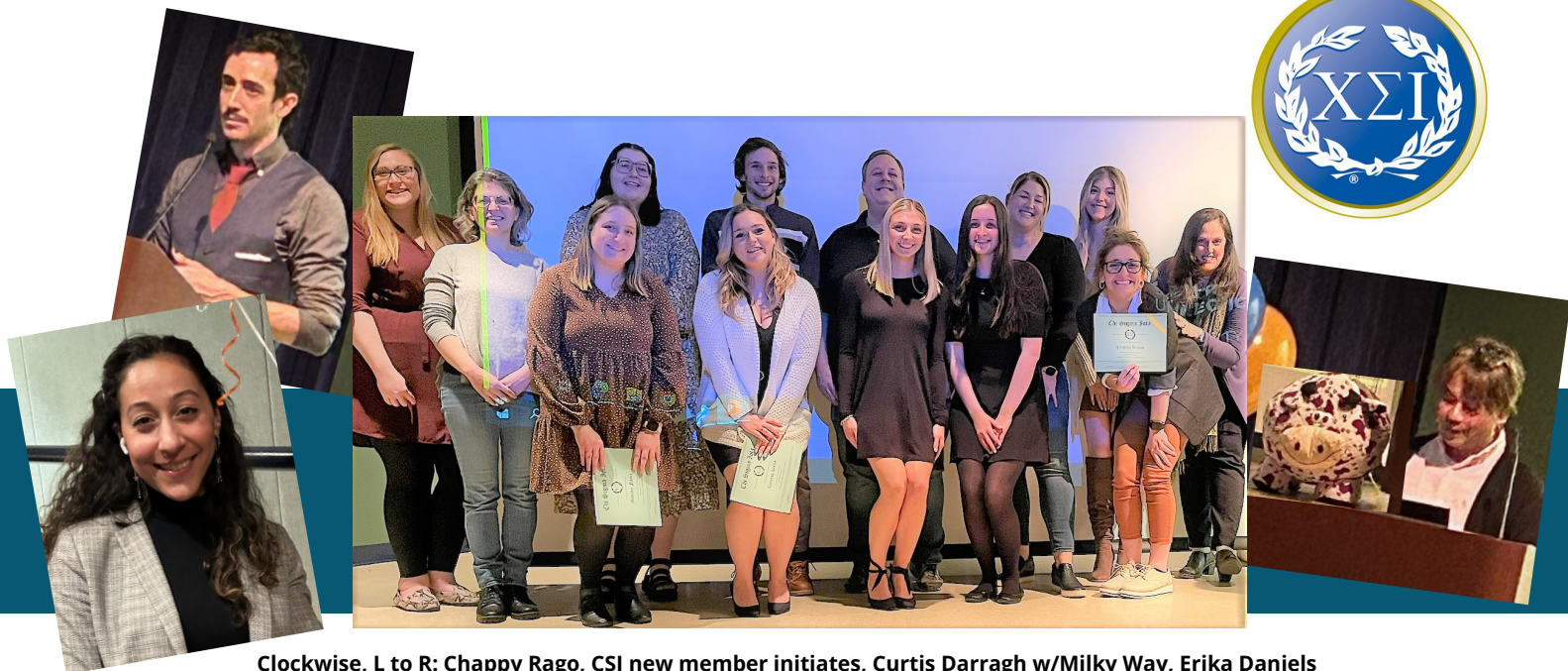
We initiated new members at a celebratory event on Monday, March 27, 2023 in the Student Center Theatre with family or loved ones in attendance; others were able to connect virtually. All new members participated in the oath of membership and each was recognized with a CSI International *Certificate of Membership* and a CSI lapel pin.

Invited guest speakers included WCSU 2020 alum "**Chappy**" **Rago, LPC** who offered advice to new clinicians starting their careers, particularly in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Chappy reminded students that they cannot fix clients; questioning yourself is normal; counseling is collaborative; and that self-care is important. He encouraged students to keep in touch with their cohort as they can offer friendship and professional support after graduation.

On the School Counseling side, our guest speaker was **Curtis Darragh**, School Counselor at Westside Middle School Academy and WCSU Adjunct Professor in our Counseling Education department. Curtis reminded students how important it is to connect with others, and shared some examples of why he continues to serve as a school counselor and why he loves the job. He brought along his purple cow, Milky Way, which was a gift from a student who remembered Curtis's lesson, that "**it is more important to stand out, than to fit in.**"

Other CSI events this semester at WCSU included a happy hour social at **Michael's Tap Room** in February; bowling at **Strikers of Brookfield** in March, and on-going **Weekly Wednesday Wellness** online sessions which support self-care and healthy stress management, led by Counseling Ed students. An April social will be announced soon.

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



Clockwise, L to R: Chappy Rago, CSI new member initiates, Curtis Darragh w/Milky Way, Erika Daniels

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.

Spring 2023 speakers included:

- February 8th our own Counseling Education department professor Diana Naddeo presented on **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** to SC and CMH, with other groups invited to join.
- On March 28th, John Crocker M.Ed, Founder & Director MASMHC, Director of School Mental Health & Behavioral Services, Methuen (MA) Public School District, will speak on **Trauma Informed Counseling in the Schools** to SC (with other groups invited).
- April 4th, Diana Naddeo PhD will teach SC and CMH 2nd years how to perform a **screening for trauma**. (Other groups invited to join.)
- On April 12th, Hope Payson, LCSW, LADC, and EMDR Consultant will present **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and Trauma Resiliency** to CMH (SC and others invited).

These programs are supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$814,749 with 0% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov) or contact Grant Program Director, Dr. Lorrie-Anne Monte, montel@wcsu.edu or University Assistant, Christina Davis, davisc@wcsu.edu.



Activities of the 2021-2025 HRSA grant are underway for year two of the four-year grant. Dr. Monte was confirmed as the Grant's Program Director, and the interim report due to HRSA March 2023 was submitted.

The Fall Professional Development speaker series successfully completed and Spring speakers are underway. Bringing in speakers who use counseling skills in their daily work brings theoretical classroom exercises to life and allow students to interact with professionals.

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; spring dates are Feb 25, Mar 25 and Apr 22.

The vast majority of HRSA funding goes to third-year students who receive stipends during their fall and spring semester internships. As these students look forward to graduation, we will be sending HRSA-required surveys to them asking about their internship experience, their sites, populations served, etc. The annual report, which includes (blinded) information from 3rd year students and their internship sites, is due to HRSA each August 1st.

SPOTLIGHT ON: CLINICAL SITE SUPERVISOR

Robert Meyer, LCSW interviewed by Jessica Soni, SC '24

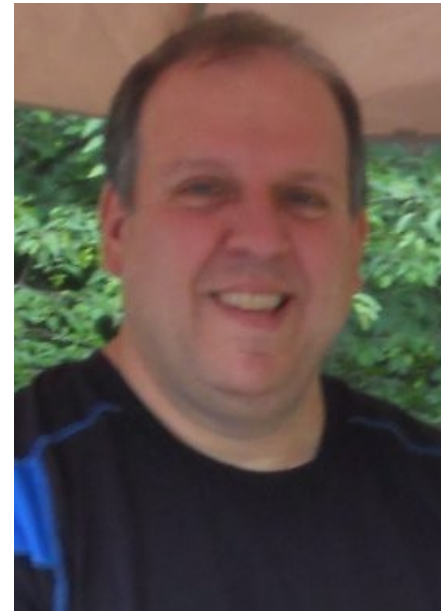
Center for Child & Adolescent Treatment Services

Robert Meyer is an LCSW and a supervisor at the Center for Child and Adolescent Treatment Services (CCATS). In this interview Rob shared the growth of his education and career as well as the growth of CCATS. Robert Meyer is a Western Connecticut State University alumnus. He has his Bachelors in Child and Adolescent Psychology and Masters in Social Work.

Rob's career journey began at Danbury Hospital in the Psych Unit, then he went to CCATS and has been there about 35 years. Prior to the center being called "Center for Child and Adolescent Treatment Services," it was called "Intensive Hospitalization Outpatient Program (IHOP)." Rob explained that the name changed because the clientele and the type of work the center had changed.

CCATS helps adolescents and their families with managing:

- Depression, anger, and anxiety
- Family and school issues
- Secondary substance use issues
- Self-injurious behaviors and thoughts of suicide
- Social/friendship issues
- Gender Issues
- Medication evaluation/management while attending CCATS



In 2020 Rob moved up to the position of supervisor at CCATS. Rob shared that when he had started at CCATS they only took Social Work students. A few years later a counseling student from West Conn went to Dr. Herrick of Psychiatry dept. and was interested in completing her internship at CCATS. Dr. Harrick approved, and ever since WCSU and CCATS have been working together. For the past 5–6 years CCATS has hosted at least 15 students from West Conn's counseling education program. ***Along with the (WCSU) program being adaptable to recent findings in clinical mental health services, it is also resilient.***

When COVID caused a worldwide shut down in early 2020, CCATS also had to close. Services for clients were put on hold, but the need for counseling had become more imperative. CCATS went virtual via Zoom. Rob explained that the temporary change of the program worked out well because so many of their clients were young individuals interested in technology. In November 2022 the program returned to being in person, however telehealth remains a backup option for CCATS client to receive their services.

The Center for Child and Adolescent Treatment offers many benefits. Many individuals including Rob are well networked; any student that interns at CCATS or even shadows there for a day could learn of job or learning opportunities available to them. Rob mentioned that CCATS hired their first internship student not too long ago. Rob's advice to current students is that if they are interested in clinical counseling, they should sit in on group sessions at CCATS and shadow. ***"Gain perspective, if you're curious try it! See if you like it. It's a rich experience."***

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: SCHOOL COUNSELING

Maria Sanchez, SC December '23 interviewed by Lili Dickey, SC '24



Maria Sanchez is a School Counselor at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, CT and will graduate from the WCSU Counseling Program in December 2023. Maria transitioned from being a paraeducator to being the junior class school counselor, while still enrolled in the WCSU program!

She has been able to continue the relationships she has fostered with students, while also providing a safe space for the ones she is continuing to meet. She has been applying her classroom knowledge to her practice by participating on different committees with various stakeholders. This allows her to advocate for her students on a larger scale than before. In her new role as school counselor, she has been able to express her thoughts and ideas to better the school environment for her students.

Maria discussed how having real world experience helps her in the WCSU classroom. When she is learning about the different types of support a counselor may provide, she has already done those in real time. Maria is comfortable and confident with her fellow JFK counselors and can ask for their ideas and feedback when a situation is unfamiliar. This collaboration is a topic that is discussed at length in the master's program. She shares the experiences she is having day-to-day with her classmates at WCSU, and that there will be good and bad days. Her overall message is to just keep going! Maria has loved making the transition to her new role as a school counselor. She can support more students in a different capacity than before when she was a paraeducator.



Her advice to upcoming graduates and future school counselors is to not be shy; speak up and collaborate with others! Making connections with other faculty members is crucial. Especially teachers, since you will often advocate to them on behalf of your students. Maria shared that the WCSU program has given you all the knowledge needed to make a difference in students lives. **"You are well-equipped to do your job and do it well."** Lastly, but most importantly, practice self-care!

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING GROUPS

CT Counseling Association - CCACounseling.com - See website for information, events calendar & registration.
May 1 - deadline for scholarships (must be member to apply); on-going professional networking; training opportunities.

CT School Counselor Association - CSCA.wildapricot.org - See website for details, event calendar & registration.
May 24 Annual Conference at Sacred Heart University; on-going professional networking opportunities such as: 1st Year counselors roundtable, ES, MS or HS roundtables, etc.

SUMMER 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.

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

SUMMER 1

EPY 601	Fundamentals of Statistics	M/W 4:30-8:20	SYNCH
EPY 601	Fundamentals of Statistics	T/R 4:30-8:20	SYNCH
ED 586	Counseling Diverse Populations	M 4:30-6:30	HYBRID
ED 586	Counseling Diverse Populations	W 4:30-6:30	HYBRID
EPY 502	Career Readiness Planning		ASYNCH
EPY 609	Counseling People with Physical Disabilities		ASYNCH
EPY 620	Marriage & Family Counseling	M/W 4:30-7:00	HYBRID SYNCH

SUMMER 2

EPY 601	Fundamentals of Statistics	M/W 4:30-8:20	SYNCH
EPY 601	Fundamentals of Statistics	T/R 4:30-8:20	SYNCH
EPY 621	Drug & Alcohol Counseling		ASYNCH
EPY 619	Crisis Counseling in the Schools	T/R 4:30-8:20	SYNCH (May change to HYBRID)
EPY 509	Exceptional Learners		ASYNCH

SUMMERS 1-3

EPY 611	CMH Practicum	M 3:00-4:30	SYNCH
EPY 611	CMH Practicum	M 4:30-6:00	SYNCH
EPY 611	CMH Practicum	M 6:30-8:30	SYNCH
EPY 611	CMH Practicum	W 4:30-6:00	SYNCH
EPY 612	SC Internship	T 5:00-7:00	SYNCH
EPY 615	CMH Internship	W 4:30-6:00	SYNCH

FALL 2023 SCHEDULE OF COURSES

	CMH	SCHOOL
Year 1	EPY 618 Intro to CMH T 4:30 Naddeo ED 586 Counseling Theories T 4:30 Mariotti OR W 7:00 Mariotti	ED 585 Intro to SC T 7:00 DeRonck ED 586 Counseling Theories T 4:30 Mariotti OR W 7:00 Mariotti
Year 2	EPY 603 Group* (CMH) R 4:30 Mariotti EPY 605 Individual Counseling CMH W 4:30 Mariotti	EPY 603 Group* (SCHOOL) R 4:30 Monte EPY 604 Individual Counseling SC W 4:30 Monte
Year 3	EPY 614 Internship T 7:00 Naddeo/Canada EPY 608 Case Management W 7:00 Naddeo	EPY 607 Pupil Personnel Services W 7:00 DeRonck EPY 612 Internship T 5:00 OR T 7:00 Darragh

ELECTIVE: **EPY 598 Veteran Experience**, M 5:00 Young. See next page. Contact Dr. Young for online options.

UNDERSTANDING THE VETERAN EXPERIENCE

FALL 2023 ELECTIVE SW398/EPY598

Designed for students interested in learning about the veteran experience and those preparing to work in health care, social work, counseling, and other support roles who may encounter veterans in their practice settings.



Mondays
5:30- 8pm
Hybrid-Synch

