

# FITNESS FOR THE PROFESSION OF COUNSELING

A Policy Statement from the Faculty and Staff of the Department of Counseling and Human Services, Panuska College of Professional Studies University of Scranton.

## **PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Entry into the profession of counseling is more than initiating a new career path or beginning a new job. It is similar to starting a lifelong journey. As in many other fields of endeavor, there is an intensive and rigorous training program to complete, which has academic and clinical requirements attached. However, because counseling is both a profession that deals with human living and a way of living in its own right, there are professional and personal challenges that students will encounter.

Meeting these challenges and learning to grow from them is an integral part of succeeding in the counseling profession. As counselor educators, the faculty and staff of the Department of Counseling and Human Services are committed to facilitating the professional development and personal growth of students, and to the education, supervision and mentoring of students in all aspects of their professional counseling journey.

7KH HGXFDWLRQ RI SURIHVVLRQDO FRXQVHORUVHGHPHQGV HYDOXDWLR patterns. In many ways the deepest challenge students will encounter is the combined task of self-assessment, self-correction and self-direction in collaboration with others and across many areas of life: academic, clinical, professional and personal. It is our hope and expectation that each student who joins the Department will succeed in these tasks.

To that end, we list below a number of the attributes, characteristics or behaviors that we believe are important for success in both counselor training and for the practicing professional counselor.

Students in each graduate program will be evaluated on a continuing basis with reference to these professional and personal attributes as well as to their academic performance and growing clinical skill. The list below is not exhaustive but is meant to provide a firm basis for discussion between students and faculty. Descriptions are given to help students in evaluating their own strengths and growing edges in each domain.

**An important note: The faculty hope that providing these characteristics will help students understand what is expected of them and will stimulate self-assessment for continued growth. Ongoing professional and personal growth is an important practice, whether one is a counselor-in-training or a counseling professional. It is in this sense, then, that the faculty and staff of the Department commit themselves to fostering the development of our students as well as of one another. It is our hope to become a learning community of fellow professionals – faculty, staff and students.**

**For all of us, it is to be hoped that growth will build upon our uniqueness as individuals while moving us toward professional excellence. With this in mind, the following attributes are provided to aid in our ongoing development.**

## Professional/Personal Attributes: Counseling

<b>Professional/Personal Attributes</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Commitment to Wellness</b>	Wellness is a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-

\$ Q X Q G H U V W D Q G L Q J R R Q H V I  
counseling profession. The ability to critically assess  
R Q H V R Z Q Y D O X H V D W W L W X G I  
relate to the standards of excellence and ethics, and the  
best practices, of the counseling profession.

The ability to exhibit appropriate professional attitudes and conduct; ability to represent the profession ethically and effectively. Willingness to assume roles of service and advocacy.

Ability to demonstrate **theory-into-practice**, that is, to translate learned values and content knowledge into professional/personal attitudes and action.

Developing participation in the varied roles of the

<p><b>8. Interpersonal Skills</b></p>	<p>Demonstrated ability to interact effectively with clients, families, colleagues, other helping professionals, and the community and to deal effectively with multiple diversities in a pluralistic society.</p> <p>Effectiveness in establishing positive interpersonal relationships on an individual and group basis; openness to constructive criticism; tolerance and openness toward differences; ability to develop appropriate support systems.</p> <p>The ability to identify sources of and seek out appropriate feedback from faculty and peers, and to utilize and provide feedback for improving personal and professional L Q W H U D F W L R O E W S H U Y L V</p> <p>Ability to be appropriately assertive and self-advocating.</p>
<p><b>9. Problem-solving</b></p>	<p>In both professional performance and personal development, the ability to recognize and define problems, analyze data from varied sources, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes. The ability to seek out resources for help, support, and insight.</p>
<p><b>10. Stress Management</b></p>	<p>The ability to identify sources of stress that (potentially) affect personal and professional functioning, and to develop effective coping behaviors. Existence of appropriate boundaries between personal stressors and professional performance. Obtaining appropriate supports, resources and help when needed.</p>

## STUDENT RETENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Acceptance into a counseling SURJUDP GRHV QRW DVVXUH JUDGXDWLRQ IURP LW 6XF degree in the Department of Counseling and Human Services is based upon the continuous evaluation of students to insure (a) effective demonstration of academic competence, (b HDFK VWXGHQW¶V FRPPLWPHQW WR V profession, and (c) his or her continued growth in personal or emotional characteristics and qualities related to successful performance in a helping profession (see above). The evaluation process serves two primary functions:

1. To provide students with direct feedback relative to their progress that will enable them to enhance their strengths and identify and remediate growing edges and weaknesses in their academic, professional and personal development.
2. To provide faculty with information about student progress which facilitates decisions in the best interest



The following procedures are in place for students needing further progress:

**Process 1:**

Students receive feedback in an advising meeting with their mentor. In consultation with the mentor, the student will  
ZULWH D SODQ WKDW DGGUHVHV 3JURZLQJ HGJHV´ LQ WKDW VWXGHQW  
WKH VWXGHQW¶V SHUIRUPDQFH LPSURYHV WR D VDWLVIDFWRU\ OHYHO

**Process 2:**

Students may be unwilling and/or unable to follow through with **Process 1**; there is either lack of sufficient progress in, or resistance to, **Process 1**. In this case the Department will recommend to the PCPS Dean that the student be placed on probation and a more formal remediation plan be developed between the mentor and student, and ratified  
E\ WKH´HSDUWPHQW¶V 3UHWHQWLRQ FRPPLWVHH´ to, QLV FRPPLWVHH L  
Department Chair, and (3) one other full-time faculty member appointed by the Chair on an *ad hoc* basis.

A remediation plan may include but not be limited to the following: (1) Identification of the problem areas, (2) Expected behavioral and/or attitudinal changes, (3) Potential methods for achieving and demonstrating change, and (4) Time line for completion.

Each student involved in this process has the option of bringing an advocate (neither a family member nor a lawyer) to meetings with the Retention Committee.

A copy of the plan will be given to the student, and one will be retained by the mentor, retention committee, and the PCPS Dean. Satisfactory completion of the plan and consistent demonstration of appropriate conduct should be assessed by the committee on an agreed timeline, and will result in a decision to recommend removal from probation to the PCPS Dean.

**Process 3:**

If processes 1 & 2 fail, the entire faculty may (1) recommend voluntary termination/resignation to the student and/or (2) recommend dismissal to the PCPS Dean. If dismissal from the program is recommended, the Department will forward that recommendation to the PCPS Dean for disposition.

In rare cases the faculty may become aware of issues or behavior that ~~raises~~ <sup>arises</sup> about a student's ability to either (a) successfully complete the program, or (b) move forward as a practicing professional counselor. When such information becomes available, the faculty have a duty to review the information fully and carefully, to notify the student of concerns and the outcome of the review, and to select a course of action that is commensurate with accepted ethical and legal procedures as well as the "best practices" of the profession.

In these instances the faculty, in consultation with the PCPS Dean, may find it necessary to forego the step-by-step procedures listed above and move directly to recommend probation and remediation or dismissal from the program.

The retention standards and policies of the University of Scranton and the Department of Counseling and Human Services are free of any limitation, specification, or discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability, except as provided by law. Applications for admission from members of groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the counseling profession are encouraged and welcomed.