Best Practices Guide for Connecting With CSI Professional Members and Engaging Counselors in CSI Chapters

Chi Sigma Iota International Professional Member Committee

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Best Practices for Connecting with CSI Professional Members

Introduction

You are reading this guide because you would like to know how to keep your professional members and alumni engaged in your Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) chapter. Once members have graduated from their master's programs, many chapters are struggling to find ways to keep members involved in CSI and chapter activities. The purpose of this guide is to serve as a resource as you strive to find ways to keep your professional and alumni members involved.

The examples and suggestions provided in this guide are not to be seen as all-encompassing. Please remember that each chapter and region has its own culture and uniqueness that they bring to their campus. However, this guide is meant to serve as a starting point to help you get the ball rolling. As you have additional ideas, please contact the Professional Member Committee so that we can add them to future guides. We wish you the best of luck as you work to boost your chapter engagement!

Rationale

Chapters that reach out to alumni and professional members enrich their activities!

Fun Facts to share:
- Approximately half of CSI's active members are professional counselors.
- If alumni are invited to remain active, they may regard CSI as more than just a “student organization” and derive benefits from continuing to be involved.
- Collaboration between professional members and current students can benefit both groups.
- Alumni can provide networking, career, practicum and internship support, and mentoring opportunities.

What do professional members say?
- “I would like to be updated on the chapter activities and to be invited to the events they hold.”
- “I am not currently active in my chapter. I have no communication, involvement, or knowledge of their activities. It might be helpful if they had a committee to keep professional members informed.”

The CSI Professional Member Committee’s Mission

The Professional Member Committee was created to identify and address the needs of professional members in a proactive manner. The Committee has developed the Professional Counselor’s Corner at csi-net.org to provide a source of information and networking for professional members, including those who are life members.
Guide for Connecting with Professional Members

This guide discusses best practices and activities that may be useful for engaging professional members and alumni.

Where to Begin

• One option is to establish a chapter Professional Member Committee.
  ◦ CSI committees can be led by Co-Chairs.
  ◦ Ideally, one Co-Chair will be a professional counselor member who maintains active membership in CSI.
  ◦ Another Co-Chair can be a student who is an active CSI member, attends Executive Committee meetings, and communicates and plans activities focused on keeping professional counselors involved in the chapter and CSI.

• Surveying professional members can help you to assess their needs and inform students about the possibilities and benefits of continued membership in CSI. The Professional Member Committee has a ready-made survey. Please contact Dr. Barbara Mahaffey (mahaffey@ohio.edu) for a copy of this survey.

• CSI chapters can create their own small survey for free and send it by email:
  ◦ SurveyMonkey.com and Zoomerang.com allow up to 100 responses for free.
  ◦ Google Forms (drive.google.com) surveys allow unlimited responses if you create the surveys.

TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Sigma Delta Chapter, The University of San Diego

• A professional member can serve as a liaison to work with chapter alumni.
• Counselors can be surveyed about mentoring, workshops, and involvement.
• Alumni can receive monthly updates and a newsletter to inform them about events.

Ways to Engage Professional Counselors/Alumni

• Chapter leaders can encourage alumni involvement in CSI Chapters in several ways:
  ◦ Networking and Mentoring Programs
  ◦ Workshops and Retreats
  ◦ Social Networking Websites
  ◦ Publications
  ◦ Presentations and Conference Events
  ◦ Awards

Networking and Mentoring Programs

• Networking meetings can be structured around specific goals (e.g., meet and greet):
Best Practices for Connecting with CSI Professional Members

- Connecting students and recent graduates with licensed clinical supervisors.
- Linking clinicians and students who need access to research subjects from the opposite setting.
- Allowing job-seeking members to meet potential employers.

- A professional mentor can support a student as she or he enters the counseling profession.
  - The committee can provide a mentoring application and match alumni with second-year master’s students.
  - Ideally, students should be paired with a professional in the same track (e.g. school counseling, clinical mental health counseling).

Workshops and Retreats

- Professional members need Continuing Education (CE) hours to earn and maintain licensure.
  - Chapters can offer workshops for alumni who remain active members of CSI. For more information about how a CSI chapter can partner with their counselor education program to offer NBCC-approved CE hours, please visit: [http://www.csi-net.org/?NBCC_ACEP](http://www.csi-net.org/?NBCC_ACEP)
  - If few alumni are close to campus, they may prefer a day-long event (2-3 sessions and lunch).
  - Chapters may wish to partner with a regional counseling organization for financial support.

- Frequently requested topics include:
  - Ethical and Legal Issues
  - Supervision Theories and Practices
  - Starting a Private Practice
  - Using the DSM-5
  - Suicidal Ideation and Interventions
  - Self-injurious Behavior
  - Grief Counseling
  - Multicultural Counseling
  - Using Creativity and Humor in Counseling
  - Substance Abuse
  - Technology and Social Media
  - Self-Care/Preventing Burnout
  - Experiential workshops such as a retreat or an event that focuses on wellness, art therapy, meditation, or yoga.

A common comment from professional counselors is, “I need something that will help me as a person – and which therefore helps me as a professional.”

TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Sigma Upsilon Psi Chapter, South University-West Palm Beach

- “Our campus had licensed counselors as far away as Orlando, FL come to Royal
Palm Beach, Florida to be a part of the workshop on *How to Clinically Treat the Twin Population*. A speaker named Jacqueline Hatch was willing to come down to Florida from Greensboro, NC to do her kickoff workshop for her new agency called the Twin Resource Center. There were at 15-20 in attendance, most of whom were counselors in the field mixed with our graduate students. Chapters are encouraged to invite speakers who are active members of CSI.

**Social Networking**

- Social networking websites can facilitate contact with alumni.
  - Many professional members already have accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, ResearchGate or other sites.
  - Joining a social networking group is easy.
  - Members use these sites regularly, so they are likely to see updates from the chapter.
  - **Please note that all chapter social media must be submitted to CSI Headquarters for approval.**

- A chapter group on Facebook can:
  - Encourage networking among chapter members, who can message each other via the site.
  - Provide chapter news and photos to professional members.
  - Advertise chapter events and allow members to RSVP.
  - Introduce current chapter leaders to alumni.
  - Be linked to the CSI Facebook page!

- LinkedIn is a social networking site designed for professionals:
  - Members’ profiles include a resume.
  - The “Jobs” tab allows chapters to post detailed information about employment opportunities.
  - Job postings expire after 14 days, but can be re-posted. Links can be also be shared, but not files or photos.

- Visit [csi-net.org/?Chapters](http://csi-net.org/?Chapters) to design or report a site:
  - Go to the section on “Chapter Internet Presence and Social Networking.”
  - Review the appropriate rubric (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn) and use the online form to submit it.
  - If you have questions, contact Dr. Stephen Kennedy at [stephen.kennedy@csi-net.org](mailto:stephen.kennedy@csi-net.org)

**Publications**

- The chapter newsletter can include articles by professional members.
- Chapters can award alumni with research and recognize them as part of their induction ceremonies.
- Students and alumni can submit entries for the *Counselors’ Bookshelf* on the CSI website.
• Recent graduates can publish a “job-hunting guide” for students.
  ◦ Professional members can discuss hiring policies and questions that employers often ask.
  ◦ Alumni can offer insights on the current job market.

**TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Beta Alpha Chapter, Northern Arizona University**

• Professional members can contribute to an annual *Counseling and Wellness* journal.
• In addition to submitting articles, alumni are also invited to serve on the editorial board.
• The department and chapter listservs were used to recruit professional members.

**Presentations and Conference Events**

• Professional members can present with CSI chapter students at conferences.
  ◦ New students will be able to be mentored by an experienced presenter.
• Alumni and student members can organize meetings, events, and disseminate CSI brochures to recruit professional counselors during state and local counseling conferences.
• Alumni can be invited to participate in workshops, classes, and panels.
  ◦ Presentations can focus on counselor niches, specialty areas, and job-related issues.

**TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Chi Chi Chapter, Columbus State University**

• A listserv was used to contact counselors.
• Alumni presented on the LPCA licensure process and the practicum/internship experience.
• During workshops, the chapter included networking times for students and alumni.

**TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Upsilon Rho Iota Chapter, The University of Rochester**

• Data were collected at a breakfast for alumni.
• Alumni led workshops that addressed exams for licensure and finding employment as a school counselor or clinical mental health counselor.
• Upsilon Rho Iota collaborated with the SUNY-Brockport chapter to encourage attendance.

**Awards and Contests**

**Awards**

• Chapters can give an “Outstanding Practitioner Award” each year.
  ◦ This award recognizes “an outstanding counselor whose time is spent primarily in direct clinical counseling services.”
  ◦ Accomplishments from the last two years should be considered.
  ◦ Visit [csi-net.org/Awards](https://csi-net.org/Awards) to learn more.
  ◦ After submitting a Chapter Logo Request Form...
(www.csi-net.org/?Chapter_Logos) and receiving approval, customized plaques with your chapter logo can be ordered from the CSI Store (www.csi-net.org/?Offsite_CSI_Store).

• Chapters can also offer “Outstanding Practitioner Supervisor Awards.”
  ◦ The award recognizes “an outstanding counselor whose primary professional commitment is the direct supervision of persons involved in clinical counseling services.”
  ◦ Nominees should spend at least 10% of their time directly supervising other counselors.

TIPS from a CSI Chapter: Nu Chapter, The State University of New York-Brockport
• Professional members chair the committee that selects recipients of the Joseph R. Kandor Award of Excellence.
• A master’s student who demonstrates exceptional potential receives the Kandor scholarship.
• Alumni help students and provide support for this meaningful award.

Contests
• Invite alumni to judge student entries for a contest related to Leadership and/or Wellness.
• Split up the alumni list and give an award or prize to the current student who is able to garner the greatest alumni attendance at workshops or events.
• Invite professional members to propose and co-present a CSI-sponsored poster session at the ACA Conference & Expo (the primary presenter must be a student).

Member Benefits
• The Professional Member Committee has created a brochure that highlights member benefits! Contact the committee chairperson or CSI Headquarters for copies.
• The brochure can also be downloaded from the CSI website.
• Active professional members continue to receive the same benefits as students.
• Some states will count CE hours for participation in CSI webinars.
• Members can learn how they can contribute to the counseling profession.
• Members can vote in CSI International Elections through their chapters
• CSI publications (the Journal of Counselor Leadership & Advocacy, the CSI Exemplar, the Counselors’ Bookshelf)
• Members are eligible for awards, grants, fellowships & internships, and leadership positions.
• Members have access to members-only csi-net.org pages.

For More Information
• If you have questions about developing resources for professional members or
would like copies of the brochure that highlights CSI’s benefits for professional members, contact Dr. Barbara A. Mahaffey, CSI Professional Member Committee Chair, at mahaffey@ohio.edu or pmc@csi-net.org