Leadership Qualities, Roles, and Expectations

Through my observations of my role models, I have learned an invaluable repertoire of knowledge about the field of professional counseling. Various qualities that I have highlighted throughout my observations of role models that have inspired me include the following: openness, authenticity, ability to accurately use empathy and communication, ongoing self-monitoring and awareness, discipline, passion and commitment to the profession and field, responsibility and accountability, advocacy, innovation, inquisitiveness, resiliency and the ability to inspire others, as well as demonstrating ability to effectively work with others and delegate tasks in order to successfully attain goals. Through the role models that I have met working in the field, as well as the faculty at my academic institution I learned a great deal about the importance of these qualities when working with clients of diverse populations and the pivotal nature of striving towards the missions of Chi Sigma Iota, CACREP and both AMHCA and ACA's ethical codes. Through my training at St. John’s University we were taught the vital nature of following CACREP standards, as well as ethical codes in order to promote use of best practices, enhancing the profession through evidence-based practices and to contributing oneself towards the advancement of the field through research, striving towards both leadership and professionalism, as well as protecting not only clients served, and the public, emphasizing accountability and ensuring that standards are consistent to that of needs of individuals in today’s contemporary pluralistic society.

These qualities are necessary, as clients receiving services come from various cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, individual philosophies, ages across the lifespan, spiritual/religious beliefs/practices, vocational/career history housing/homelessness history, sexual orientations and identities, and medical statuses. In order to best understand our client’s worldview, it is vital for professional counselors to maintain qualities of openness, authenticity, accurate empathy and communication to best meet client’s needs as counselors are not to assume based on clients’ personal experiences, subjective interpretations of how they perceive themselves. Through working with people of various backgrounds, including those with mental illness,
substance abuse and comorbid chronic medical conditions such as those often associated with social stigmatization including HIV, Viral hepatitis, etc. I have learned a great deal by using inquisitive skills to guide clients’ expression of confirmation of their current state, historical contributions to this, motivations and functions for behaviors they engage in, as well as what inspires them to either seek change and identifying obstacles and potential inhibitions for goals attainment. I find that the conglomerate of these skills allows professional counselors to surpass the engrained stigmatization and recognize them as a human, with emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual. With consideration of this, responsibility, accountability, and advocacy are rudimentary to evoke systemic change.

In addition to this, ongoing self-monitoring allow counselors to increase one’s cognizance of potential biases, countertransference, and the ability to seek supervision/feedback. Additionally, I have found it imperative to integrate feedback from supervision in order to provide clients with the proper care and services rather than perceive it as criticism. By utilizing supervision, as well as working on research I have learned a great deal about myself, as well as the qualities of discipline, expansion of my passion, commitment towards enhancing the profession, as well as the importance of innovation and upholding inquisitiveness to a high standard guided by proper and appropriate use of assessments, testing and data analysis. Too often, many students are deterred by the concepts of research and assessments, minimizing it upon belief that they are exclusively practitioners, failing to acknowledge the full value of research and assessments, as it guides the profession towards advancement is promoted through ethical standards, yielding continued development and expansion of theories and treatment modalities that are evidenced-based and models identifying variables contributing to mental and holistic well-being.

Through mentorship, I became involved not only in practice, but also through various associations that I joined memberships including CSI, ACA, AMHCA, NAMI-NYS, and NYSCDA. I believe that the didactic experiences at my academic institution, CACREP standard, the mentors I have had all being highly passionate faculty have heavily impacted my growth of becoming a leader. Within my chapter, I previously held position of Secretary, as well as currently hold position as Professional Development and Advocacy Chair, in which I had successfully organized and coordinated a Narcan training with Long Island Council for Drug Dependency (LICADD), a local agency serving individuals with substance-use related issues, as well as an upcoming mindfulness training in order to give students within my school's counselor education program additional knowledge and skills.

In my own experiences I believe that through the proper didactic methods through CACREP’s standards, as well as having opportunities to truly know faculty and to facilitate open communication, expressing one’s goals, expectations, ability to seek assistance when needed, sustaining a sense of humility allow for the cultivation of leadership if one is able to integrate feedback provided by faculty to grow. In regard to
the expectations of counselors becoming mentors, I find it necessary to understand the role of professional identity and wellness/strength-based models and incorporating this framework into practice and research and advocacy work. I see myself already working towards this goal and will not stop. I plan on continuing furthering my education through a doctoral program following obtaining licensure, as well as obtaining additional certifications in various theoretical approaches prior. I hope to conduct further research focused on preventative harm-reduction for STIs and bloodborne pathogens transmission and also do further research on mindfulness and resiliency for individuals with severe-persistent-mental-illness.

In addition to CACREP standards, adherence to ethical codes, understanding professional counselor identity assisting students to become leaders as professional counselors, the integration of a structured self-care plan prior to entering the field would benefit many students on their journey towards becoming professional counselors, as this can increase self-awareness, and ultimately facilitate leadership development and create active leaders. Increasing understanding of oneself and one’s motivations allows counselor trainees the ability the most effective leaders. Doing this can provide opportunities for expansions of self-awareness, awareness-of-others and impact teamwork/leadership potential.