

2019-2020 CSI & CACREP Leadership Essay Contest

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Wellness for our Well-being



While in the counseling program at Western Kentucky University, I have had the pleasure of watching our professors set an example of how a servant leader promotes wellness. Their active roles in our department and our CSI chapter, Omega Kappa Upsilon, has been nothing less of great leadership. When I seek out leaders, I seek out those who are willing to practice what they are teaching. Client's approach counseling the same way that we approach searching for jobs and programs. They are looking for servant leaders or counselors who have resourceful tools that will benefit them for their well-being. As a servant leader, it is important for me to set an example of how nurturing or neglecting wellness

impacts the clients and community we serve. I have learned first-hand from watching other counselors and counselor-educators commit to their wellness and how it has inspired counselors-in training such as myself to commit to our own. Nurturing in our own wellness promote wellness for our clients. It is a contradiction to ask clients to attend to their wellness when leaders such as myself can't commit to ours. The neglect of wellness from a servant leader's position shows in the work that we do with our clients.

Creating group wellness activities for clients to take part in is a great way to promote wellness to clients. Yoga has been a practice that I began participating in once I started my graduate studies in the counseling program and is a common resource that many clients especially college students are currently using. Yoga influences different aspects of the human experience; the mind, body and soul, which also is similar to the Wellness Wheel that CSI use to promote wellness to our leaders. As I began looking into research and gaining first-hand experience while working in the therapeutic environment, I have found yoga to be a common tool that helps with comorbid symptoms such as depression and/or anxiety. Many would consider yoga and mindfulness-based therapy to be a similar tool both relaxing the human body's total experience.

Being a servant leader in my community has developed immensely over the last year. I

have found that educating about mental health is just as important as educating about physical health. Educating on holistic well-being has been a route that I have utilized to promote to my clients. My professor and I have created groups that foster to the well-being of the community. One which is called Identity, Literature and Yoga for young girls in middle school which has allowed them to explore the history of their identity while also learning about stressors and common concerns they may be experiencing. The yoga or mindfulness piece is a coping strategy to assist clients in parasympathetic regulation. "Still I Rise" inspired by Mya Angelou, is another group for girls of color, that I have created working at a middle school to assist students in exploring and becoming familiar with their self-esteem and identity. The group is intended to nurture student's creativity and magic to foster support in who they are and in the person they plan to be. The experience and outcome I have seen working with these groups on their holistic well-being has motivated me as a servant leader to continue to create groups that cultivate mental, physical and spiritual wellness.

Upon entering in the counseling program and being a graduate assistant, I have learned the importance of being a servant leader. The mentorship and encouragement that the professors have displayed inspired me to run for president of the Omega Kappa Upsilon chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. As chapter president, I have the honor of working with our chapter committees on leadership skills, wellness and professional advocacy. The decision to run for president led me to apply and receive acceptance in the Kentucky Counseling Association (KCA) Mentoring Leadership Academy. This leadership opportunity is a program that provides emerging leaders in KCA to grow in the counseling profession and in our leadership ability. Through these roles I have cherished the significance of preparation, responsibility and the well-being of the self and others I serve and lead.

The role of CSI and the CACREP-accredited program has been vital in my overall experience as a counselor in training. CACREP ensures that counseling programs participate in self-assessments, that indicates those who are running the program have "articulated a clear direction or mission for the program" and have the capability to reflect on how they will accomplish their goals (CACREP, 2019). CACREP provides a list of guidelines for programs to provide future servant leaders such as myself with wellness resources to use with our clients. It has also informed me of the value of establishing goals and objectives when working with clients to assist them in their wellness. According to Myers and Sweeney (2004), wellness is approached from a holistic perspective that benefits the mind, body, and spirit. Students and leaders within our department and organization are taught the magnitude of wellness and the impact it has when all aspects of our lives lack nurturance. Our professors in our department are so dedicated to providing us with the tools to nurture ours and our client's wellness that they have incorporated assignments that support progress toward a healthy well-being. Our program has taught me the fortitude of the impact that wellness has on the counselor-client relationship.

From the selfless and caring actions of my professors and mentors I have gained knowledge on the benefits of a well-balanced life and how being a servant leader serves the well-being of the people I serve. After I graduate, I will continue to incorporate wellness in therapeutic sessions and in the community I live in. My leadership skills will continue to develop beyond graduation to assist in evolving client's and community wellness. Without the CACREP-accredited program and CSI, I would not have the adequate resources to facilitate and educate on a healthy well-being for myself, clients and members of CSI's Omega Kappa Upsilon chapter.

References

- Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs. (2019). *Why should I choose an accredited program?*. Retrieved from <https://www.cacrep.org/value-of-accreditation/why-should-i-choose-an-accredited-program/>
- Myers, J. E., & Sweeney, T. J. (2004). The Indivisible Self: An Evidence Based Model of Wellness. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 60(3), 234-245.