The Cycle of Mentoring

For years, I have heard how important it is for counselors to seek positive relationships with other professionals. My experience as a counselor-in-training has shown me that there is a great expectation for counselors to become mentors and to foster these relationships. I have had the privilege of having three wonderful people invest in me through such a long-term, mentoring role. From each of these relationships I have learned more about myself, my abilities, and service to my profession. Through these extraordinary mentors, I have seen what mentoring in counseling did for me and I can see how continuing this tradition now and once I am a counselor will continue to help the field of counseling produce the best counselors possible.

In my experience over the past four years, I have had a variety of mentors. A beloved part-time psychologist in the community helped me by giving me books, asking about my progress through the program, and listening when I needed to talk. A school counselor in the community has allowed me to shadow him, answered questions for projects, and sat down with me to discuss the benefits of studying school counseling and following the path to licensure. Finally, my advisor for my counseling program at the University of West Georgia assisted me in changing my focus from Clinical Mental Health Counseling to Professional School Counseling, taught me about opportunities through Chi Sigma Iota and is working to help me find funding to study abroad. Each of these mentors has brought me very different experiences, and each of these has helped me to grow as a professional and as a person. Because of these individuals, I learned that I was more geared towards working in the school setting, but could still meet my goal of obtaining licensure. Without their support, encouragement, and even expertise I would not know what mentoring looks like within counseling.

These poignant experiences have shown me that there is an expectation for counselors to become mentors to others in the field. Upon entry into professional counseling in the school system it is my plan to continue this tradition and meet the expectation of becoming a mentor to others. To do this I will need to continue learning about what it
means to be a leader in my field and in my community. I have served the past four years in leadership roles in the local chapter of the Kiwanis club, a civic organization that strives to serve the children of the world. Additionally, I am currently the President of the Gamma Zeta Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. These positions taught me leadership and ownership of the responsibilities I hold. Through these roles, I have learned the value of getting to know the ins and outs of my organizations and how to take care of the trust that has been placed in me.

The counseling field is no different than the leadership roles I have held. According to the Principles and Practices of Leadership Excellence, service to others is the primary reason for leadership (Chi Sigma Iota, 2018). Leadership, like mentors, has the responsibility of providing services to others. The primary reason for the counseling field is to assist those who are caught in their problems and to help them cope or better function as they work through those problems. Mentoring others in the counseling field allows those coming up in the field to be more well-rounded and better prepared counselors. They, in turn, will be equipped to mentor to the generation of counselors following them. This leads into the secondary Principle which speaks to continuing the commitment to furthering the mission of their organization (Chi Sigma Iota, 2018).

The Missions and Visions of both CACREP and CSI strive to produce high quality counselors (CACREP, 2018; Chi Sigma Iota, 2018). Emerging counselors, like me, are taught multicultural competencies, ethics, and self-care. Through these important learning objectives counselors are prepared to work with every type of client. Supporting other counselors in this learning is another way for mentoring to play an important role in the development of leaders within counseling. Through mentoring, supervisory, and even consultation relationships counselors have the resources to ensure they provide sound and quality services to their clients. Beyond that, counselors have individuals who understand the field, to bounce ideas off, and talk to when cases are difficult to deal with. These resources help to ensure we can continue to preserve the human capital resources of counseling (Chi Sigma Iota, 2018).

After observing people as they poured their wisdom and energy into me, I realize that I have an important legacy to uphold. Even now through my role as President of my university’s chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, I can help to provide mentorship that allows newer students to learn what is ahead. I can also provide resources and advice that help them to study and prepare for exams that will increase the likelihood students become licensed, as well as provide information about obtaining practicum or internship sites, and information on what the application and job interview process entails. The legacy of mentorship in the field of counseling is one that unconsciously, I have been upholding for the past two years.

When I graduate, and get started in the field, I plan to continue to be a mentor. I will work to help students through providing supervision while they go through their practicum and internship. I will also join a group or even create one so that counselors
in my area can easily consult or support each other. These may seem like small contributions, but like any form of mentoring, they will make a long-lasting and eventually large contribution to the field. Without the mentorship provided through my CACREP accredited program and the Gamma Zeta chapter of Chi Sigma Iota I may not have successfully made it this far in my program. As I complete my program, it is my turn to give back.

References