I believe that mentorship is essential to prepare novice counselors for the “real world” of counseling. Through mentoring, students, clients and other aspiring creatives are able to learn from someone in their particular field of study who has already maintained a certain level of success and professionalism. A mentor acts as a friend who is able to provide guidance and real-life experience by allowing someone to, in effect, “shadow” them. However, when a mentor is truly great, he will be able to help his mentee discover his strengths, weaknesses and figure out where he would like to begin his career. Counselors in training who are mentored are more likely to become leaders and learn how to deal with potential professional and ethical challenges that can occur. Through mentorship, developing counselors can seek advice from mentors before becoming expert counselors.

Admirable Qualities

A quality that has always stood out to me when observing role models in professional counseling is determination. I have noticed that those who embody the upmost professionalism, understanding for others and hard work are the ones who have never given up because they are humble and realize what it takes to succeed. These are the people who had a vision of where they wanted to be in the counseling profession. Furthermore, I believe it is important for mentors to encourage novice counselors to not let setbacks deter them from continually working hard to achieve goals. It is the duty of the mentor to be encouraging of the mentee by being aware of his goals and strengths in order to remind him of his capabilities should he ever feel incompetent.

Another important aspect of becoming a leader through mentoring is setting goals. Mentors can help mentees set clear and realistic goals given they have expertise in the field. For example, I recall being a novice counselor beginning my master’s in counseling five years ago. I expressed to my mentor in the counseling profession my desire to become involved in leadership and advocacy work. My mentor introduced me to Chi Sigma Iota International Honor Society as a platform to begin my leadership and
advocacy work and assisted me in creating clear measurable goals. Creating measurable goals through mentorship help me to track my progress and look back at what I’ve accomplished. Every year since, I have held an executive board position in both my master’s level and doctoral chapter and sought to implement leadership, advocacy and mentoring programs within the chapters.

Mentorship Expectations

Counselors who want to become mentors are expected to exhibit outstanding leadership qualities. When first starting a career, although you may have the correct background in this arena, life experience comes from actually working in the field for years. Counselors who have been working with clients have heard and dealt with a wide range of different situations and people. This will make the counselors very well-rounded over all because they can use past experiences to deal with things that might occur in the present when dealing with novice counselors who may be experiencing obstacles. As a mentor to novice counselors, I understand that I am expected to take on a lot of responsibility of guiding my mentees who may be struggling to reach a professional goal. Therefore, in my role as a mentor I must be very patient with these novice counselors because they can often be very precocious. In most cases, mentees will “shadow” their mentors when they go to work which can involve hands-on experiences and the ability to try out what having that specific job may be like. This requires a lot of effort on both parts because the mentor must be willing to explain everything he is doing to the mentee and the mentee must not lose interest. I am a firm believer that both parties must be committed to begin a mentorship program because if there is not equal contribution from both, one may begin to carry the weight of the other and will not learn as much.

Conclusion

Although the main purpose of mentorship in counseling is to allow novice counselors to gain experience and have someone they can turn to for help, the mentor can also benefit. Often times, I have learned from my mentees in the same way I have learned from my clients. When mentoring, my mentees and I are able gain a different perspective and draw ideas from the fact that one action may be viewed in several different ways. I believe that I have the ability to meet all of these expectations because I have been working hard with diligence, creativity and empathy, both personally and professionally. Since I now have experience as a counselor and have been operating in leadership positions as a school counseling and mental health counselor, I now believe it is appropriate to give back to my community and share what I have learned. It is important to create the next generation of professionals, so mentorship is the perfect way to pass down knowledge.

References
