CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides an a) summary of the study reviewing the results by the Research b) Questions, c) Conclusions, d) Discussion, and e) Implications and f) Recommendations for future research.

Summary

This study was designed and conducted to examine the relationship between research on effective counselor characteristics (ECC) and actual admission requirements of master's level CACREP counseling programs and then to use the information collected to develop a framework for a standard set of admission requirements for assessing prospective students for these programs. Literature on effective counselor characteristics (ECCs), as well as other topics such as college admission requirements and college entrance exams, were reviewed, and current admission practices and requirements of 129 master's level CACREP counseling programs across the country were assessed. After summarizing the literature and the data from the 129 CACREP counseling programs' admission packets, this study focused on obtaining and reviewing more detailed program admission requirements and procedures (i.e., the "whys," "wheres," "whens," and "hows" as well as the "what abouts") by administering a survey to the program chair, CACREP liaison, or program's admission coordinator from a sample of 20 of the 129 CACREP programs across the country.

This study addressed three research questions. Major results are summarized below.

1. What does the research indicate are the characteristics of effective counselors?

Characteristics of counselors have been considered important ever since much of the research, analyzing studies comparing a wide range of psychotherapies, reached the conclusion that there are no differences between therapies (Bergin & Garfield, 1994; Bergin & Lambert, 1994; Bergin & Suinn, 1975; Beutler, 1979; Goldstein & Stein, 1976; Kellner, 1975; Luborsky, Singer, & Luborsky, 1975; Meltzoff & Kornreich, 1970; Rachman & Wilson, 1980). Much of the research stated that personal-emotional characteristics of counselors are "crucial," and "most important over all."

Characteristics of effective counselors cited most often in the literature included categories such as insightful, good problem solving and coping skills, empathic and compassionate, and developed inter- and intrapersonal skills. Of those cited most, 17 were personal-emotional characteristics, 11 of which were "common factors"; thirteen characteristics of emotional intelligence and 12 characteristics of developed emotional skills. Individual characteristics mentioned most often in the literature included interactions/relationships with clients/others (38), warm (34), respectful (33), and accepting (30).

Interpersonal, social and affective factors (i.e., "common factors" or personal-emotional characteristics) common across therapies are accounting for a substantial amount of improvement found in counseling clients and continue to be major stimulators of client improvement (Bergin & Garfield, 1994; Frank, 1976). Client-Centered therapy describes these common therapeutic factors as "necessary and sufficient conditions" for client change: accurate empathy, positive regard, non-possessive warmth, and congruence or genuineness (Bergin & Garfield, 1994).

Bergin and Garfield (1994) attempted to organize and clarify the broad term of 'common factors' by grouping common factors in three categories: support, learning, and action. The

common factors of the therapist, typical across therapies, that are associated with positive outcomes include: Support Factors such as an ability to develop positive relationships, reassuring, can provide structure, can form therapeutic alliances, actively participates, expertness, trusting, warm, respectful, empathetic, accepting, and genuine; Learning Factors such as the ability to provide advice, feedback, insight, and rationale, and affectively experience; and Action Factors such as the ability to encourage and model (Bergin & Garfield, 1994).

Other "enduring subjective therapist traits include personality and coping patterns, emotional well-being, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and cultural attitudes" (Beutler, Crago, & Arizmendi, 1986 cited in Bergin & Garfield, 1994, p. 235). Personal-emotional indicators of effective counselors are open-mindedness (Harvey & Weary, 1985), flexibility, locus of perceived control (Deysach, Rooss, & Hiers, 1977), and emotional well-being (i.e., positive self-concept) (Lambert & Bergin, 1983; Wiggins & Giles, 1984; Beutler et al, 1986; Bergin & Garfield, 1994).

Bergin & Garfield (1994) identified three counselor characteristics as discriminating more helpful from less helpful counselors: 1) the counselor's adjustment, skill and interest in helping clients (Luborsky, McLellan, Woody, O'Brien, & Auerbach, 1985); 2) the purity of the treatment each offered; and 3) the quality of the counselor-client relationship.

2. What are current admission requirements of master's level CACREP counseling programs in the United States?

The data analysis of 129 CACREP programs' admission requirements produced an almost identical conclusion to those listed in the literature. The most common requirements in the literature were undergraduate GPA, academic transcripts, GRE or MAT scores, graduate and/or program applications, and sometimes letters of recommendation, all of which were categorized by this researcher as cognitive-behavioral requirements. The most common

admission requirements cited by the 129 programs analyzed also fell under the cognitive-behavioral admission requirements category. These included graduate school and program application (N=129 or 100%), undergraduate/graduate GPA (N=128 or 99%), academic transcripts (N=128 or 99%), letters of recommendation (N=115 or 89%), personal statement of goals (academic/career) (N=107 or 83%), and GRE/MAT scores (N=103 or 80%) with the next common requirement being individual/group interviews (N=74 or 57%) (Table 1, p. 75).

Of the personal-emotional admission requirements extracted, individual/group interviews (N=74 or 57%) and autobiographical statements (N=49 or 38%) were cited most often in the Personally Focused Admission Requirements (PFAR) category. Analysis revealed only 5% (N=7) of the 129 programs used psychological/personality assessments (Table 2, p. 76). The gaps found from the data analysis consisted of a lack of focus on personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors. Of the 18 programs in the valid sample (9 AFAR and 9 PFAR), all required Academically Focused Admission Requirements (AFAR). Only four of the AFAR programs used letters of recommendation, while all of the PFAR programs used letters of recommendation as well as one or more admission criteria focused more on personal-emotional characteristics.

Furthermore, although the 18 respondents surveyed (9 AFAR and 9 PFAR) were in agreement with the ECCs cited in the literature and combined by this researcher (Table 6, p. 65), they didn't necessarily screen for these characteristics. For example, from the AFAR group all nine cited empathic/compassionate/understanding, developed interpersonal skills, insightful, good problem-solving skills/developed coping mechanisms, and trusting as important, but only six admitted screening for empathy, five for developed interpersonal skills, three for insightful, three for good problem-solving skills, and three for trusting (Appendix E, p. 150). Different from

he AFAR group, the PFAR group (N=9) cited characteristics such as trusting (8), independent/self-managing (7), intuitive (7), and persistent/determined/assertive (6) as important, yet of these said to be of most importance, only four were screened for trusting, three for independent, two for intuitive, and two for persistent (Appendix F, p. 158). Interestingly, all nine in the AFAR group were in agreement with what they considered important ECCs whereas the nine in the PFAR group varied on their opinions of which were most important. Although all nine from the AFAR group were in agreement with what they believed were important ECCs, they varied on the ECCs they screened for as well as screened at a lesser frequency than what they had stated were important. In the PFAR group, the nine program representatives varied on their opinion of which ECCs were important, leading them to screen even less of those than compared to the AFAR group.

Finally, in addition to agreeing with this researcher's ECCs list (Question 8 in Appendix B, p. 128), some of those interviewed added additional characteristics they felt were important. Some of the AFAR group's suggestions (see Table 7, p. 66) were conflict management and resolution skills, curiosity, enthusiasm, engaging, and holistic energy and presence, while the PFAR group had suggestions (see Table 8, p. 66) such as professionally oriented, non-judgmental attitude, ability to address affect of self and others, and developed personhood.

The third research question is two-fold. Part A of research question three asks how admission requirements of CACREP counseling programs do or do not reflect characteristics of effective counselors and what's missing. Part B asks what a framework for a standard set of admission requirements would consist of if balanced between cognitive-behavioral characteristics (CBC) and personal-emotional characteristics (PEC) of effective counselors.

3. A) To what extent do admission requirements and procedures of CACREP counseling programs reflect and assess characteristics of effective counselors? What's missing?

It is evident from this study that most CACREP counseling programs' admission requirements and procedures do not reflect and assess characteristics of effective counselors, specifically personal-emotional characteristics. The traditional focus has been on cognitive-behavioral requirements such as graduate applications, undergraduate GPA and test scores (as stated above in question #2). Gaps found from the data analysis consisted of a lack of focus on personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors as seen in Table 2 (p. 76).

For example, six each of the nine AFAR and nine PFAR respondents reported believing that most counseling programs do not adequately screen overall as well as assess characteristics deemed necessary to be an effective counselor at the time of admissions, particularly personal-emotional characteristics. Of the remaining AFAR respondents, one didn't know; one said, "probably" adequately screen; and only one believed programs adequately screen for and assess students for ECCs during admissions. Of the remaining PFAR respondents, one said the few he knew did screen adequately; another said, he believed that maybe 70% of the time programs adequately screen; and one reported believing that most *try* to screen thoroughly.

Reasons given by AFAR respondents for inadequate admission screenings of ECCs were "don't have time," "believed best screening is within the program and is built into program remediation," and "fear of litigation, liability issues, ambiguity of personal elements, and unable to quantify/justify personal characteristics." In contrast, reasons given by PFAR respondents for inadequate admission screenings of ECCs by counseling program representatives in general were "50% hold no interviews," "don't take the time, aren't as committed to professionalism and don't have administrative support," and "no existing admission procedures, period." The only item

both groups agreed upon was that of time in admissions screenings. The AFAR group took a more passive stance saying others 'don't *have* time' to thoroughly screen, while the PFAR group had a stronger more active stance of 'many don't *take* the time' to thoroughly screen, thus implying that there *is* time to do a better job of screening if one makes the time and makes admission screenings a priority.

After gathering information via interviews and admission packets of these CACREP counseling programs by this researcher, it was evident that a framework for a standard set of admission requirements was needed.

3. B) What would a framework of a standard set of admission requirements consist of if they were balanced between cognitive-behavioral characteristics and personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors?

Based on the literature, the data analysis and the interviews, this researcher developed a framework for a standard set of admission requirements believed balanced between cognitive-behavioral and personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors. Some requirements would be the traditional graduate school/program application, undergraduate GPA, GRE/MAT scores and academic transcripts, but would also include a signed informed consent, a personal or group interview, psychological/personality assessment/instrument, a personal portfolio and FBI fingerprinting and background check (see Table 9, p. 84).

This researcher has introduced some less utilized admission requirements to be included, such as informed consent, psychological/personality assessments, and FBI fingerprinting and background check, as ways to eliminate emotionally unstable and criminal individuals that may cause harm to clients, disrupt the learning within a program, and dominate faculty time with remediation and/or litigation issues. First, this researcher introduced the idea of informed consent

as part of the admission process because it would allow prospective students to make an informed decision of whether they personally and emotionally have what is needed and whether they are willing to do what is needed to be an effective and ethical counselor. Informed consent would allow faculty and their programs to specify what they expect of incoming students personally, emotionally, and academically; what would occur while working through the counseling program; and what would be expected if the student were identified as having problems such as going to counseling, re-taking a class, or taking an extra internship. By specifying up front what is expected and the student acknowledging these expectations by their signature, it is likely that less litigation would occur and less remediation would be needed.

To assist in specifying what is needed to be an effective counselor, the ECCs listed in this study could be utilized as part of a framework for a standard set of admission requirements. These characteristics are good indicators, based on the literature and the faculty interviewed, of what makes an effective counselor and an emotionally well-balanced individual. One way to assess ECCs is to interview and give psychological/personality assessments to prospective students. Many characteristics such as warmth, empathy, and comfort level with others could be identified via an individual and/or group interview, while other more deeply rooted characteristics such as self-esteem, obsessiveness, paranoia, etc. could be identified by a psychological/personality assessment. And lastly an FBI finger printing and background check would at least inform the faculty of whether a prospective student had made poor choices, was aggressive such as in an assault on another, and whether the individual had any illegal drug charges. This researcher asserts litigation would not be much of an issue if informed consent was utilized and it specified that these methods would be used as part of the admission requirements and screening.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The counseling profession has historically searched for better methods for identifying prospective students. An examination of the literature and the current admission requirements of counseling programs indicated that the characteristics of what makes effective counselors are not characteristics traditionally required or assessed in prospective counseling students by counselor educators.

Conclusion 2: A review of the literature indicated that there was also no comprehensive review of admission procedures and requirements of CACREP programs except for this dissertation research.

Conclusion 3: An examination of the literature and the current admission requirements of counseling programs demonstrated no relationship between CACREP standards and admission procedures.

Conclusion 4: Mistakes in admissions are costly to: a) prospective students, b) programs, c) universities, and d) the profession.

Conclusion 5: Many admission requirements are limited because they do not include personal-emotional characteristics of prospective students such as the ability to make good decisions, manage their feelings, motivate themselves, maintain hope, exhibit empathy and compassion, interact with others and manage relationships.

Conclusion 6: Counseling programs to date have not found a successful means of identifying and screening out students with serious personal limitations prior to entry into graduate study.

Conclusion 7: CACREP standards reflect only program operations and standards, but not standards for prospective students such as personal-emotional characteristics.

Conclusion 8: CACREP does not specify a standard method of screening prospective counseling students even though they do specify all other requirements of a counseling program to have and maintain. It is unusual that CACREP doesn't require or specify these requirements, considering CACREP is a standardization of counseling programs.

Conclusion 9: Programs might be helped in their screening of students if there was a framework of standard admission requirements to follow or at least professional encouragement/guidelines recommending inclusion of personal-emotional characteristics.

Conclusion 10: The standard characteristics of effective counselors specified in the literature and the CACREP program standards are not related. Thus supporting the fact that there is no framework for a standard set of admission requirements among CACREP programs.

Conclusion 11: These (needed abilities and characteristics to learn how and/or be an effective counselor) abilities and qualities often cannot be developed within the brief time limit programs have to educate students, if at all.

Conclusion 12: Society expects the counseling profession to pre and post monitor and regulate the professional behavior of its members. This is society's safety net. It depends on professional self-monitoring and gate-keeping and if that's not done, society will lose respect and faith in therapists and the profession of counseling.

Conclusion 13: Faculty recognize the importance of, yet current lack of, and need for a framework of a standard set of admission requirements in which to screen prospective counseling students.

Conclusion 14: Faculty want better methods to screen prospective students as evidenced by the many suggestions, discussions and types of screenings that presently exist.

Conclusion 15: Although most in academia use quantitative measures (i.e., GPA, GRE, etc.), faculty and administrators acknowledge that these measures are inadequate when screening for personal-emotional characteristics of prospective counseling students.

Conclusion 16: From the lack of information in the literature about ways to assess personal-emotional characteristics to concerns in the literature expressed about this lack, there are apparently serious deficits in admission requirements and there does not appear to be a workable model for the faculty that must carry out this task of screening prospective students.

Conclusion 17: Results from survey question #12 would indicate that the more a program focused on PEC during admissions, the more likely its faculty were satisfied with the quality of their students and the fewer the problems and remediations encountered.

Discussion

The literature and all program representatives interviewed agreed that personal-emotional characteristics (PECs) are important and necessary to be a good counselor. Also, more studies referenced PECs than CBCs when discussing what's needed to be a good counselor. However, more commonly used measures as stated in the literature, demonstrated by the interviewed program representatives, and shown in the admission packets of the 129 CACREP programs analyzed, were such things as GRE scores, GPA, and letters of reference. All of these are inadequate, as was reported in the literature and agreed to and supported by the interviewed program representatives.

Reasons given by the AFAR group for inadequate admission screenings of ECCs and PECs as stated in the above summary such as "don't have time," "best screening is within program," and "fear of litigation and liability issue" were in contrast to the PFAR groups reasons

of 50% don't do interviews, many don't take the time and/or aren't as committed to

professionalism and no existing admission procedures period. Interestingly, the 9 AFAR

programs as a whole totaled 13.25 more full-time faculty than the nine PFAR groups (average of

AFAR = 9, PFAR = 8), and averaged 107 full-time students in their programs at any one time

versus the PFARs 178. This would lead one to believe that the AFAR program representatives

have more time and resources to screen more thoroughly. Also of note is the average overall

experience of the AFAR representatives, eight years, versus PFAR's seven years, their average

experience as a counselor educator (AFAR = 23yrs, PFAR = 19yrs), and their average years with

their program (AFAR = 18yrs, PFAR = 15yrs). Among the 18 interviewed program

representatives, the trend appeared to be that those with more experience and a preference

towards research were associated more with programs that relied on academically focused

admission screenings.

Many respondents stated and much of the literature supported the notion that there is a

fear of litigation and of the issue of liability if a potential student was not admitted to a program

based on lacking some emotional characteristic(s) or based on ambiguous personal elements that

they believe are almost impossible to quantify. This researcher proposes that these issues are still

of concern, maybe more so, if a student is admitted and later has to be counseled out of a

program due to lacking some key emotional characteristic(s) or because the person is

emotionally unstable. The student may, and in this researcher's opinion is more likely to, sue

using a claim of discrimination or that s/he wasn't informed prior to admission of specific

requirements or characteristics necessary to be a counselor (i.e., informed consent). The student

may claim that s/he would have made a different academic choice if s/he had known more about

what was expected and necessary prior to being admitted. This way s/he wouldn't have spent lots

of money and time on something s/he cannot or will not be allowed to finish. This researcher believes admitting first and 'weeding out' later would be more of a problem with a higher chance of litigation or liability issues.

This researcher also believes other reasons for inadequate admission screenings may be lack of support by the college administration, lack of funding, and/or no existing model of admission procedures for program faculty to utilize or emulate. For example, some colleges place more focus and funding and/or administrative support on the sciences, engineering and research. These universities would not see counseling as important and therefore would not fund or support adequately. There is much variation among universities as to what is valued or important.

As mentioned earlier, program representatives with more years of experience and associated with research-oriented universities tended to do less rigorous admission screenings. Some reasons for this might be that the faculty was burned out or stagnant, had limited time due to research pressures, promotion and tenure obligations, and other university responsibilities. These faculty might need to retire because they don't have the energy or spirit to invest in upholding standards or to invest in the students. It could be that these long-term faculty members might know what works and what doesn't when it comes to admitting prospective counseling students. Perhaps they've tried some of the procedures this researcher is proposing and they didn't work. Maybe over many years, these faculty members saw that the prospective counseling students they admitted demonstrated little differences between those rigorously screened and those that weren't. And with a research focus, maybe these faculty and their programs didn't place PECs as a top priority. However, this researcher doesn't believe this is the case based on this research, the literature she reviewed and the interviews she completed.

During the interviews completed for this research, program representatives who were using more extensive/rigorous admission requirements (the PFAR group who tended to be teaching universities) changed their requirements more frequently, thus had used them for fewer years. Perhaps they couldn't find what worked or found what they had tried didn't make much difference between the students they admitted. Conversely, these faculty members might be more current with counseling and academic concerns and therefore are changing with each piece of new knowledge they acquire.

If results were more focused on PECs during the admissions' process it would seem, and is supported by the PFAR group's interviews and some of the literature, that there might be less litigation, fewer problems encountered and fewer remediations to belabor, less time spent counseling students with problems, better qualified and higher caliber students, and more satisfied faculty. Implications of more rigorous admission screenings focusing on PECs would be higher professionalism, upholding professional standards, and better gate-keeping rather than being the proverbial ambulance below a curving cliff with no guardrail.

Why is it that the AFAR representatives said they screened for more of the PECs they found important compared to the PFAR representatives, yet later in the interview admitted to being less satisfied with the students they had and that they needed to do a better job of screening prospective counseling students for their programs? The PFAR group seemed more satisfied with their students based on more thorough screenings, yet can be seen here as screening less of the PECs they stated were important compared to the AFAR representatives. In speculating, the AFAR representatives either inadequately screened prospective students overall and/or they screened for the characteristics they stated were most important but not as well as they thought they did, leading similarly, to the effect of not screening for these at all. The mechanisms the

AFAR representatives, as a group, typically used for screening their prospective students were undergraduate GPA, academic transcripts, GRE or MAT score, graduate and program applications, and occasionally letters of recommendation – none of which would appear to assist much in identifying personal-emotional characteristics or ECCs. On the other hand, perhaps the PFAR representatives were more truthful in admitting what important PECs they did and did not screen for and how adequately they did or could do these screenings based on the fact that they used more methods in their screenings. For instance, the PFAR representatives, as a group, screened prospective students more extensively by using mechanisms such as individual/group interviews, autobiographical statements, personal statements of goals, letters of recommendation, psychological/personality assessments, and role playing/mock therapy sessions, in addition to all of the mechanisms used by the AFAR representatives in their screenings.

In line with their belief that they don't have time to thoroughly screen prior to admission, the AFAR group stated they believed that the best screening was within the program and built into program remediation. It appears they believed they had more time to evaluate counseling students once they were admitted and would rather do remediation within the program than prior to admission. This is a reactive rather than a proactive stance – "we will wait until a student exhibits emotional instability or unethical behavior before addressing the issue." This researcher believes this to be a less than favorable approach for 3 reasons: 1) remediation within a program can be time-consuming, more so than doing a thorough admission screening; 2) remediation within a program can set the program up for litigation and liability issues – the very thing this group feared; and 3) someone, the student or their client, may be harmed before action is taken. This leads us back to the idea of gate-keeping, which implies pre- rather than post-admission screenings, prevention rather than remediation, and proactive rather than reactive evaluations of

prospective counseling students. One method that would help faculty and their programs to be more proactive would be to have a framework for a standard set of admission requirements.

Implications and Recommendations

The facts and results of this study lend themselves to several implications and recommendations. Presented first are the implications of this study.

Implications:

1) The need for gate-keeping during the admission process rather than after admission to ensure less harm to clients and society at large, less litigation, less in-program remediation, and to encourage better career choices. For example, six each of the nine AFAR and nine PFAR respondents reported believing that most counseling programs do not adequately screen overall as well as assess characteristics deemed necessary to be an effective counselor at the time of admissions, particularly personal-emotional characteristics. Hence more gate-keeping later.

2) The critical need for and importance of having an Informed Consent as part of the admission packet so again, similar to gate-keeping, to ensure less litigation, less in-program remediation, and to encourage better career choices made by students.

3) More professionalism. The counseling profession will be more ethical, stronger clinically, and better able to monitor and police itself if there is more consistency in admission requirements and more pre-admission gate-keeping.

4) Consistent and more rigorous admission requirements and evaluations would foster a higher caliber of student admitted and eventually graduated from counseling programs (i.e., better students in a program, less remediation, less harm to clients).

5) By knowing what effective counselor characteristics, specifically personal-emotional characteristics, are needed and most important, programs may be able to develop methods of fostering these characteristics within a program for those that may appear to have potential, but are lacking at the time of applying to the program.

6) What if the focus was more on PECs than IQ, GPA and GRE/MAT scores? Would the students admitted be better/more effective as counseling students and eventually professional counselors? A study using a PECs focused approach or one using a combined focus of PECs and CBCs with the emphasis on PECs, might give us the answer.

Additional research in this area could help to establish admission requirements and procedures that would identify personal-emotional characteristics needed to be an effective counselor.

Accompanying the implications above are the recommendations from this study.

Recommendations:

1) It is recommended that this study be replicated with non-CACREP counseling programs and private universities.

2) Replicate this study using prospective doctoral level students as the focus.

3) Other criteria such as non-CACREP counseling programs, psychology programs, and programs at private universities need to be evaluated.

4) Development of an instrument with which to screen prospective students, specifically geared toward PECs and ECCs, and then piloting of this instrument to measure its effectiveness.

5) Development of a standardized interview process/assessment/protocol and an explanation of how an interview would be conducted to evaluate PECs and ECCs.

6) Conduct research on how faculty could measure PECs and ECCs of prospective counseling students.

7) Conduct further research concerning the AFAR and PFAR's suggested additional effective counselor characteristics and ask participants to give examples of these characteristics and how they personally handled such situations/assessed for them.

8) Conduct additional research on faculty with multiple years experience versus few years experience to further explore why faculty with more years experience tended to do less admission screenings. Need to examine burnout, years experience and wisdom, time available at a particular university to do more during admissions, research pressures, promotion and tenure expectations and more.

9) Post-study of outcome (i.e., more gate-keeping = better performance)

10) Evaluation of long-term performance (i.e., a longitudinal study on the students who were admitted, graduated and became effective and ethical therapists).

11) Conduct another study similar to this one, but look at the differences between long-term faculty versus shorter-term faculty and the use of interview and admission requirements and processes more geared toward PECs.

12) Another recommendation, in an effort to possibly foster personal-emotional characteristics, is to make changes in the curriculum of the program, such as having a more interpersonal and self-awareness focus and developing one's personal-emotional abilities. For instance, prospective counselors may be required to participate in counseling for a semester or two as part of their program, or be required to acquire

additional relevant work experience and/or be a minimum age before being accepted into a master's counseling program.

13) As an admission requirement, include letters of recommendation specifically referencing personal character and effective counselor characteristics as a way to tease out personal-emotional characteristics of prospective students.

14) Develop and use a comprehensive rating/assessment sheet that includes PFAR characteristics as a way to asses personal-emotional characteristics.

15) In interviews and/or on applications, ask prospective students to give examples of suggested characteristics (i.e., conflict management, enthusiasm, professional orientation, nonjudgmental attitude, ability to address affect of self and others) and how they personally possess them and use them in their lives.

16) Conduct a follow-up study to the interview process used in this study.

This study establishes a foundation for the assessment and evaluation of prospective counseling students during admissions processes. Combining information from various faculties and the literature provided a more complete picture of what is effective, what is not, what is missing and what is needed. There is a critical need, as defined by this study, for a framework of a standard set of admission requirements. The development of such a framework transcends what theory and methods a program may utilize. Rather, such a framework would establish the process for effectively admitting prospective counseling students.

Making more precise admission decisions (the first step to entering the profession) about who to admit to counseling programs can help avoid or reduce legal problems, reduce the amount of time faculty spend discussing and counseling out problem students, safeguard and

uphold the integrity of the counseling profession, and can help individuals make better career choices.

As was first presented in Chapter One, Olkin and Gaughen (1991) warn mental health professionals:

This area requires some constructive and structured attention; we cannot leave identification of problems in intrapersonal functioning to ex post facto definitions… we are too reactive in our approach to dealing with problem students and we must take more proactive steps. (p. 287)

Stadler, Willing, Eberhage and Ward (1988) warn:

Impaired mental health care professionals do present a threat to the maintenance of professional standards and quality care. This threat may not be as great, however, as the reluctance of professionals to take responsibility for the maintenance of professional standards (p. 259). They must understand that there is an interrelationship between educational purpose, professional integrity, and student selection.

This study did not intend to cast criticism toward any particular faculty or program. This study clearly indicates admission requirements for CACREP counseling programs may be inadequate and there is a need to develop a framework for a standard set of admission requirements.