

Discussion Thread: Best Practices through Advocacy and Leadership

As counselor educators, it is our responsibility (and a CACREP competency) to advance the knowledge base of the profession. Important aspects of this directly involves client care as well as the training of those who will be providing client care. As noted in Chapter 15 of your **Read** item, best practices for the counseling profession “involve the integration of research and practice with an ultimate goal of accountability to clients and the general public. Through intervention and programmatic research, professional counselors and counselor educators demonstrate an integration of advocacy and leadership as they identify effective and ineffective—or even harmful—interventions and dialogue with scholars to advance the knowledge base of the profession”.

To facilitate this, CACREP requires that those faculty designated as core faculty not only have the educational (doctoral degree in CES) and professional (licensure, certification) credentials needed to teach in a counselor educator program; they must demonstrate that they are scholars, leaders, and advocates to the profession. While educational and professional credentials are easy to document, often faculty at institutions that focus on teaching or clinical skills versus research skills can neglect the ongoing engagement in scholarship, leadership, and advocacy activities. However, it is important to note that scholarship, leadership, and advocacy activities actively influence our ability to be effective educators and supervisors to our students. As such, if you are in a teaching institution, we need to find a middle ground between “publish or perish” and “teaching only” perspectives. Otherwise, we not only will grow stagnant professionally; we also will not be able to provide our students with the knowledge and skills needed in order for them to develop competencies that reflect the current best practices of the field.

Because these activities require proactive planning, it is easy to neglect this essential aspect of our roles as counselor educators. Therefore, it is important that you develop strategies to ensure that you are fulfilling this important responsibility to the profession. **For this discussion, you should first reflect on the similarities and differences between best practices in counseling and best practices in research. Based on this exploration, identify three strategies for increasing your knowledge of research regarding best practices.**

You will provide a synopsis of three well-thought-out strategies. Then interact with your group members to get and give feedback on these strategies. You do not need to specifically answer the reflection question. Rather, you will be drawing on it as you consider strategies that would reflect important aspects of best practices.

Initial Post

Best practices in the counseling field include utilizing evidence-based modalities to help our clients, to be trained appropriately in the use of various modalities used, to have evidence that a

modality is effective with the specific concerns of a client, and to track that progress is being made throughout the counseling relationship. Chang & Barrio, 2022 share, “The Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling (AARC) endorses a mission that “advanced the counseling profession by promoting best practices in assessment, research, and evaluation in counseling” (www.aarc-counseling.org)” (pg. 254). Chang & Barrio, 2022 also brought to our attention that “Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) leaders highlighted research as one of six professional advocacy areas, noting “professional counseling should promote rigorous research in the areas of client outcomes, counselor preparation, counselor employment, and public awareness; seek out research grants and contracts; and promote the use of research by clients, professionals, and legislators” (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011, p. 368). Likewise, the 20/20 delegation identified “expanding and promoting the research base of professional counseling” as one of “seven strategic areas that needed critical attention by the counseling profession” ((Kaplan & Gladding, 2011, p. 369)” (pg. 252). We can see that good research is essential to effective and evidence-based counseling practices.

Our textbook also stated that it is “unknown” as to why many who are practicing counselors do not prioritize reading and staying abreast of the latest research data. It seems apparent to me that it is, most assuredly, because research data is often written in what comes across to non-scholars as an attempt on the part of research scholars to demonstrate their perceived superiority through the use of verbosity, utilization of words that have to be looked up in an attempt to understand, and particularly when it come to quantitative research the playing with numbers that is so convoluted that it often seems not to be worth the effort to attempt to decipher. I hope we as leaders and advocates for our profession, who may also do research, take these thoughts to heart

as we present our data. It does little good for scholars to write for other scholars when the rubber meets the road at the counselor and counselee level and needs to be written in such a manner as to be readily digested. This is why counselors are turning to publications such as *Counseling Today* and workshops as mentioned in our textbook (pg. 255). Counselors are looking for good information that makes sense on a quick read between clients coming and going. Three strategies I am using to increase my knowledge of research regarding best practices are: (1) seeking a PhD CES, (2) trying to read more research to become more familiar with the lingo, and (3) to specifically be looking at articles that reflect my counseling practice and areas of interest.

Chang, C. Y. & Barrio Minton, C. A. (2022). *Professional counseling excellence through leadership and advocacy* (Paperback) (2nd. ed.). Routledge. ISBN: 9780367494568.

First Response

Posted by: Jacob MaGlamery—February 9, 2025, 1:00 pm

To remain effective as counselor educators, we must integrate best practices in both counseling and research to ensure that our teaching and supervision reflect the most current and evidence-based approaches. While best practices in counseling emphasize client-centered interventions, ethical responsibility, and ongoing assessment, best practices in research focus on rigorous methodology, continuous inquiry, and dissemination of findings to advance the profession. Given the need to balance teaching, scholarship, and advocacy, it is crucial to develop intentional strategies for increasing research knowledge related to best practices.

1. Engage in Collaborative Research and Practitioner-Based Studies

Partnering with colleagues, doctoral students, and clinical practitioners can help integrate real-world counseling experiences with research. Conducting outcome-based studies, program

evaluations, or qualitative research on client care and counselor training can ensure scholarship remains applicable to both education and clinical practice. Collaborative research also helps to reduce the burden of conducting research alone, making it more feasible for faculty in teaching-intensive institutions.

2. Establish a Routine for Reviewing and Applying Emerging Research

To prevent stagnation, it is essential to have a structured approach to staying informed. This could involve setting aside dedicated time each semester for reviewing top counseling journals (e.g., *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*), joining professional organizations that offer research updates (e.g., ACA, ACES), and attending research-focused conferences. Additionally, integrating new research findings into course content and supervision discussions ensures that knowledge remains relevant and actively applied.

3. Incorporate Research into Leadership and Advocacy Efforts

Effective advocacy is grounded in empirical evidence. By using research to inform leadership and advocacy efforts, counselor educators can contribute to policy discussions, training program development, and ethical considerations in the profession. This could involve writing position papers, engaging in research-informed policy advocacy, or mentoring students in research projects related to systemic change. By embedding research within advocacy initiatives, faculty can maintain a strong connection between scholarship and real-world impact.

By implementing these strategies, counselor educators can actively contribute to the knowledge base of the profession while maintaining a balance between teaching, research, and leadership. This approach ensures that we remain engaged scholars, effective supervisors, and informed advocates, ultimately benefiting both our students and the counseling field as a whole.

Response

Jacob

It sure seems to be a wise choice of word to say we need to “balance teaching, scholarship, and advocacy” and that this will require that we are “intentional”. I like the idea of engaging practitioners through collaboration in research rather than it being conducted from the researchers’ theoretical assumptions or based on a random data set. Having the involvement of the counselor who is looking face to face with a client helps to bring trustworthiness to research

data and as you put it helps ensure it will be beneficial for educational and practitioners alike (balance). Avoiding stagnation through a systematic plan of intentionality to be looking at up to date research is another excellent idea that would be wise to implement into all counselors' routines of practice. Your final section that points counselor educators towards being well versed in research to be well equipped to speak into areas of policy and give quality mentoring is another excellent suggestion we should each contemplate ways we can best implement these into our work.

Second Response

Posted by: Breanna Strickland, February 2, 2025, 4:51 pm

In order to increase my knowledge of research regarding best practices, three strategies that I can put in place to grow are establish mentorship collaborations with scholars, continuously engage in professional development and training, and utilize and engage in scholarly databases that provide current studies and information that focuses on best practices in CES programs. I agree that it is important to have a balance between growing as scholars and implementing best practices as a counselor educator, and I truly believe that these strategies will help me develop and grow in both roles. Although I highlighted three strategies, I know there are more that will assist in creating a balance between both roles.

Response

Breanna

Being purposeful to find opportunities to collaborate with scholars who are actively doing research work will indeed open opportunities to grow and learn about research methods generally and to be better equipped to read and to better understand research work. Having a routine of engaging with professional development, training, and reading journals will also open the door for developing a better understanding and an intimate relationship with scholarly work. It is essential that we as scholars, researchers, teachers, and practitioners are getting these from credible scholarly sources. I think you said it perfectly when you mentioned the need for balance. I do not suspect scholarly researchers will begin to write their findings in more simplistic methods anytime soon, so it is our responsibility to learn how to digest it and make the conversion from the scholarly articles to applying it with our clients who we are in this profession to be helping.

Thanks

Jeremy Gillentine

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