

# Counselor Faculty Best Practices

September 2018

A working document to supplement to  
The 2018 CFA Counselor Faculty Handbook

## Counselor Health and Well Being

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### Building a Healthy Work Environment

We spend a great part of our day at our workplace and understand that a healthy work environment contributes greatly to our well-being as Counselor Faculty. A “toxic” environment can make us sick. Take steps to focus on relationship building and creating solidarity and mutual support for the entire unit. When one of us moves forward, this paves the way for all of us to move forward together. Below are some ideas of what Counselor Representatives are already doing:

- Offer positive feedback for accomplishments.
- Celebrate each other's successes both on our campus and our other CSU campuses.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles. Have occasional lunches together, take walks, meditate as a group, and observe birthdays.
- Help each other with clinical coverage when necessary and encourage our colleagues to take rest when they are not feeling well.
- Encourage Counselor Faculty to have a healthy work/life balance.
- Create an altar in our workplace where each colleague (including our support staff) contributes an item -- we reflect on our hopes/wishes for the semester and have a cleansing ritual to gather positive energy to sustain ourselves.
- Annual (or more frequent) retreats. Try to make these actual retreats and not just long business meetings.
- Strategize during work retreats about how we may create a better workplace
- Strategize about how you can best support each other in doing the impossible.
- Encourage each other to work no more than an average of 40 hours per week and to not take on an excessive client load.
- Take lunches and breaks!

### Counselor Safety

- Remove all sharp objects/potential weapons.

- Position your desk between the client and the door.
- Don't counsel students without other staff nearby in the center.
- Centers should have working emergency buttons in Counselor offices.
- For centers with emergency buttons, perform a drill once a semester.

For more great suggestions about Counselor safety, please see the following:  
 OSHA Guidelines for Preventing Violence for Health Care and Social Service Workers  
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3148.pdf>

Cal/OSHA Guidelines for Security and Safety of Health Care and Community Service Workers  
[http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/dosh\\_publications/hcworker.html](http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/dosh_publications/hcworker.html)

## **CFA Participation**

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Below are some ideas of what Counselor Representatives are already doing:

- Have a CFA Counselor Representative(s) on your campus.
- Make time to participate in monthly CFA counselor calls! (do this together!)
- Join your campus CFA Executive Board or attend Eboard meetings to keep all faculty apprised of Counselor Faculty Issues
- Attend statewide CFA meetings (e.g., Kick Off or Assemblies). With prior approval, CFA may pay for your travel expenses.
- Join in and participate in CFA actions on campus, at the Chancellor's Office, at the Capitol or where-ever else they may happen.

### **Participate in Shared Governance**

- Join your Academic Senate as a Counselor Representative or at large position
- Participate in campus safety committees
- Participate in campus search committees
- Participate in other campus-wide committees.

### **Create your own orientations for newly hired Counselor Faculty**

At some campuses, Counselor Faculty who have been employed for many years take newly hired Counselor Faculty under their wings and let them know real insider information. This is sometimes done off campus. Talk to counselors at LB or their Counselor Rep to learn how useful this can be for your colleagues. New Counselor Faculty are often not included in other orientations and Counselor Faculty are the ones who know best the ins and outs of our work. Be sure they get a Counselor Handbook and read it.

# Evaluations

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Having a good peer evaluation policy and procedure in place is in the best interests of Counselor Faculty because it provides us with documentation of the valuable work we do. A solid record of regular evaluations documenting our achievements and successes is invaluable in making a case for promotion and retention. If it ever becomes necessary to file a grievance, this documentation may also be helpful in supporting a case.

- Each center should have an evaluation policy that describes evaluation criteria and processes for Counselor Faculty who are tenured, probationary or on temporary appointments. (need link to the sample temporary faculty document)
- Faculty should be notified within the first 14 days of the term in which they will be evaluated with evaluation criteria.
- Peer-review is required for almost all evaluations of Counselor Faculty
- Evaluation criteria need to be approved by the Counselor Faculty.
- Faculty have the right to review all documents related to their evaluation and to provide a response if appropriate.
- Faculty should be evaluated based on the Personnel Action File and their Working Personnel Action File (sometimes referred to as Dossier or File). The Working Personnel Action File should include a self-reflection (could be called personal statement, philosophy, self-evaluation, etc.) as well as documentation on continuing education, student evaluations, thank you letters, license, job description, groups and workshops.
- The Personnel Action File is your permanent file. The Working Personnel Action File is the file put together for the purpose of the evaluation.
- Faculty should be given time to compile their Working Personnel Action File or to participate in the peer-review process.
- Faculty should be given the opportunity to correct any deficiencies.

Your CFA Chapter can help you file a grievance if there is no evaluation policy, or if you have not received this policy by your second week of work on campus.

# Creating Policies for support of Professional Development

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Demonstrate using campus and CSU policies that Counselor Faculty employment is directly contingent on being licensed in the State of California. One can also make the argument that Continuing Educational Hours are required for licensure, and that counselors pursue educational hours related to the performance of their jobs. Thus, it makes sense that paid time is allowed to pursue these job-related requirements. At one CSU, the counselor met with administrators to discuss this and brought with them the following documents:

- Job Description
- Classification and Qualification Standards for the California State University System
- Counselor's Handbook
- Counseling Faculty SSP-AR. Criteria for Retention, Tenure and Promotion.
- Executive Order 1053
- Temporary Counseling Faculty Evaluation Guidelines for your department
- University wide Evaluation Policy & Procedures for Temporary Faculty
- Any independent consulting reports (IACS or others) indicating the need to provide continuing education
- Requirements of your licensure board
- Copy of Collective Bargaining Agreement (Article 25: Professional development)

CBA Article 25.1, e states:

25.1 Professional development opportunities shall include:

e. short-term absence with pay for approved conferences, workshops, and other professional meetings

Use this information above to show that the contract states that we are able to do CE work on company time- not on our free time.

Due to bringing this matter to the attention of her superiors, Counselor Faculty (Martha Cuan, ST) was able to get her administrators to develop a policy that matched the CBA. Thus the faculty get paid time off for CE's and have an allotment of professional development money they use in two year cycles. Don't wait for them to figure this out- make them do it.

SDSU Counselor Faculty went through the process of becoming an approved CE provider. This has enabled our colleagues with expertise in relevant topics to do CE training in house, and to invite outside speakers to our center to provide CE trainings at least once per semester. We are also able to invite community therapists and counselors from other local universities to attend these trainings for a small fee.

## CFA Representation

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- CFA representatives can advise you on potential grievances and other employment matters.
- You have the right to a [Union Representative](#) at a meeting with an administrator that could lead to disciplinary actions or reprimands.  
<https://www.calfac.org/headline/faculty-rights-tip-i-need-union-rep-1>
- If suffering from an excessive workload or other grievable issue, you may contact your [Campus Faculty Rights](#) Representative to discuss a potential grievance.  
<https://www.calfac.org/faculty-rights-chapter-representatives>
- Periodically review your Personnel Action File.

# Nuts and Bolts- Counseling Center Operations

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## Crisis/assessment response to faculty / Direct Intervention

If possible, have a counselor covering crisis assessment every hour. If a faculty member walks a student over to be seen, that situation falls under the criteria of “crisis,” and that student is seen and assessed by Counselor Faculty scheduled as crisis coverage that hour. That student is never denied an assessment based on not meeting traditional crisis criteria (e.g., harm to self or other, death of someone close to the student, experience of trauma). That student should be seen and assessed by a Counselor Faculty member. This way, instructional faculty can go back to their work with more peace of mind, knowing that that students’ situation is now ours to sort out. The down side of this practice is less time to provide on-going treatment for students. It is a trade-off of time needed for on-going treatment lessened to prioritizing student and campus safety. There is evidence that this practice intervention has saved student lives.

**ProtoCall Services, Inc.**, provides specialty telephonic behavioral health services and is used both during surge periods and after hours to provide emergency counseling services to students. It can be a lengthy process to get this up and running on your campus as you have to sell it to your administrators and then it has to clear hurdles in your contracting office and with your IT staff. At Chico State, this took three years after we got our initial approval. Pricing varies according to usage and call volume.

## Consultation

Counseling Centers generally provide consultation to faculty about students and/or situations they may be concerned about. A faculty member who is frightened or intimidated by a student should not hesitate to call and get advice on how to handle a sticky student matter. We know that it is the case that when faculty call other offices charged with student conduct, concerns are sometimes not taken seriously. Counselor Faculty know that a student who threatens or stalks a faculty member is potentially dangerous, and that this behavior in a classroom makes everyone feel unsafe. On many campuses, the person on crisis coverage, each hour of the day, takes calls from faculty to help them navigate a sticky or worrisome situation with students.

Some of these situations are now being handled by BIT (Behavioral Intervention) or campus CARE teams, which often include Counseling Center Personnel as part of this team. Keep an eye on a new term coined by Counselor Faculty in the past year “**Confidentiality Creep**.” Let’s keep taking and strategizing about how to address and avoid this.

When Counseling Services were not so understaffed, Counselor Faculty found opportunities to get to know faculty, staff and administrators across campus. Some meet with entire departments to discuss how to best handle difficult student situations and encourage employees to consult about students of concern sooner than later, before situations reach crisis levels. Tenure-track counselors have had greater opportunities to participate in the life of the campus as part of tenure valued activities. Counselors on temporary appointments may not have time or may be discouraged from these kind of outreach activities. If you are a counselor

with a temporary appointment, it is important to make yourself known to others on campus by engaging in this outreach. On many campuses I have heard from teaching faculty that they don't know who works at their Counseling Center. For job security reasons, we need to raise our profiles.

## **Bilingual Services**

If you are bilingual, you will be expected (and others not) to do all of the outreach to underserved bilingual students and parents. Counselors receive request from multiple departments, such as housing and orientations. This creates more work for you and exploits your specialized skill. At CFA we call this cultural taxation. It is beginning to be a real problem. Know it is okay to say no, especially if this is out of the scope of your training and comfort. Talk with your campus CFA Faculty Rights Chair about how to address this. We need to be watching out for each other on this one and be sure that bilingual faculty are fairly compensated for this difficult work. If this is out of the scope of your competence we need to quote the ethics codes that sets limits on this for liability reasons or creates more job security. When campus employees know a counselor by name, they often feel more comfortable reaching out to the Counseling Center for consultation. Faculty and staff assisted by Counselor Faculty can directly speak to the importance of the work that counselors do for the entire campus community.

## **Hiring**

A faculty hiring or search committee is traditionally made up of tenured Counselor Faculty and campus faculty and staff directly impacted by the students with mental health concerns (e.g., Student Health Services, University Housing, Academic Advising, EOP, UPD). In addition, a student may be asked to sit on this committee. Care is taken that the make-up of this committee represents demographics of our campus, not just in terms of race or ethnicity- but in lived experience and challenges to access (e.g. first generation college students). In the absence of tenured faculty, temporary faculty should consult with counseling friendly units on their campus for assistance in selecting a committee that understands and represents the needs of the students on their campus. Broad based advertising of faculty positions should take place (i.e. national searches, searches targeting graduates of programs with a high concentration of students of color). Careful consideration should be made to ensure that Counselor Faculty hiring reflects the diverse identities of the student population.

**Emergency Hires:** This procedure is used when a vacancy occurs, usually during the semester, where a position may need to be backfilled (e.g. family or medical leave). There must be an identified candidate, someone willing and able to take the position, in order to perform an emergency hire. This person employed on an emergency hire contract does not get benefits until after six months of employment. Careful consideration should also be made to ensure that this hire reflects the diverse identities of the student population.

**Careful Consideration:** Give careful consideration to all part-time and full-time temporary faculty with no multi-year appointments who were employed in the academic year prior to the year in which they are being considered. If new work becomes available, the temporary part-time faculty have the right to this work, if they have performed in a satisfactory manner.

## Examples of Sabbatical Leave proposals

Sabbatical Leaves provide Counselor Faculty the ability to do the kind of research, program creation and development, and professional training that are not possible to accomplish in the ordinary course of our demanding day to day responsibilities. Analogous to the work our teaching faculty colleagues conduct while on sabbatical, Counselor Faculty sabbatical projects infuse our centers with creative, innovative product that enhances the effectiveness of our centers. Being willing to advocate for our own Sabbatical Leaves and supporting our colleagues' applications for theirs is important for the health of our centers and for our professional development as Counselor Faculty.

One Counselor Faculty worked on a book for his sabbatical and his end product was a semester long group/workshop for students centered on motivation and achieving academic excellence. Another (Director of our Wellness Center) visited and reviewed University Wellness Centers throughout the country and used this information to improve our peer education student wellness program. Another Counselor Faculty member was interested in Positive Psychology. She used her sabbatical to get training and then presented workshops on implementing Positive Psychology into clinical work. She did presentations for students and faculty groups throughout the university on this topic. Other sabbatical projects have included writing training manuals and creating materials for a campus-wide LGBT+ Ally program and research and training in Mindfulness Meditation that resulted in an ongoing group program.

In addition, do not be afraid to ask for sabbatical funding! At CSUN, we always submit a proposal with a funding request; so far, it has been granted by the VP.

## Counseling Center “Smart Systems” (scheduling and note documentation programs)

### Point and Click

- Great drop down menus
- Excellent mini mental health exam
- Forces diagnosis- helps one think in terms of rule outs- primary problem and presentation
- Expensive \$40,000 at mid-size institution
- Many providers can view it – even students, problematic with name attached to diagnosis
- Platform unstable, goes down often, security makes you sign in all the time
- Run by large corporation- a "product" that is a big business, medical model
- No screen privacy, security makes you re-sign in quite often
- IM feature and confidential messaging (i.e., texting client) is a great feature, but one you must be careful with (i.e. student texts come in at 2 AM!)

### Titanium

- Well thought out privacy screens (names are hidden)
- \$2,000 per year versus \$40,000 per year Point and Click
- Can contribute to important national research efforts on College Mental Health (Center for the Study of Collegiate Mental Health)



- Great support, by owner and his business partner- they do all support and are always available
- Product developed by former Counseling Center Director- conscientious dedicated small business owner who knows what we do
- Stable platform- almost never has issues

## Counseling Center Funding

Centers that have a combination for funding sources (General Fund and Student Fee) keep their services more robust without putting more pressure on student fee increases for funding. This is both a more sustainable and equitable model. Examples include San Jose State and Northridge.

## Developing an APA internship

An APA internship draws the best and brightest doctoral level students from all around the country to work in your center. It is a very competitive process to land an APA internship. The process of doing this is time consuming but well worth it. It involves a financial commitment from your campus which speaks volumes of the value of our work and the need for first rate Counseling Services. Check with training directors or leaders at LB or SJ for how this is done and the cost versus benefit.

The following summary was written by Richard Francisco at SJ about the APA internships:

*Internships are required to become a licensed psychologist and provide invaluable experience. APA Accredited internships provide high-quality training in clinical practice and specialties. APA Accreditation is a process that assures the university community and the general public that a counseling center has clearly defined and appropriate objectives and maintains the best standards of psychological practices. Although it is a very time-consuming and competitive process for a university counseling center to become an APA Accredited intern training site, it is well worth the effort. It also involves a financial commitment from your campus, but again the value of an institution of higher learning having an APA Accredited Internship Training Site cannot be overstated.*

*APA Accreditation is both a status and a process. As a status, APA Accreditation provides public notification that a university counseling center meets standards of quality set forth by the main mental health accrediting agency. As a process, APA Accreditation reflects the fact that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the counseling is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of education and training.*

*For students or trainees, the completion of an APA Internship provides assurance that the university counseling center is engaged in continuous review and improvement of its quality, that it meets nationally endorsed standards in the profession, and that it is accountable for achieving what it sets out to do. Although graduating from an accredited internship training site does not guarantee jobs or licensure for individuals, it may facilitate such achievement. It reflects the quality by which a training program conducts its business. It speaks to a sense of public trust, as well as to professional quality and therefore these sites attract a diverse pool of applicants from all over the world.*

*As Counselor Faculty (psychologists and other mental health workers), and APA Accreditation provides a forum in which educators and practitioners of psychology can exchange ideas on future needs of the profession and ways in which to best address these needs in professional education and training.*

## **IACS accreditation**

All centers should be accredited by IACS. This process is extremely helpful to Counselor Faculty interested in working in a Counseling Center due to ethical standards set to protect student client and Counselor Faculty best interest. If there is push back at your campus, find out why and consult with those of us who value our accreditation. Campuses accredited include: CH, LB, SJ, SF (who else?)

## **Groups versus Individual Therapy**

Although the group modality can be an appropriate and useful one, the decision to offer groups rather than individual treatment should be based on clinical appropriateness for the individual student rather than on lack of availability of individual services. One major issue to consider is the appropriateness of group modality for disfranchised, stigmatized communities of color. Many Centers are using groups for “Counseling Readiness” or “stress management.” A more cynical view is that these groups are offered to eliminate the perception that many students cannot get the services they need and this makes us feel better about these students waiting for services. Does anyone have any empirical data on how this is going and how this impacts students? We also know that many issues will not be adequately addressed through stress reduction techniques and that some groups of students would be very uncomfortable if offered this group format. We need to hear from you all how this practice is working for your students.