

# From Burnout to Belonging

Tackling Cultural Taxation in Higher Ed Counseling  
Proposal #25880355

PLEASE LEAVE FRONT AND BACK ROWS CLEAR UNTIL SESSION BEGINS.  
SILENCE ALL PHONES AND DEVICES.

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## FOSTERING INCLUSION AT NCORE

It is the expectation of the conference that all participants at NCORE enjoy a welcoming and inclusive environment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

NCORE is committed to fostering an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas. In pursuit of that ideal, NCORE is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment for all participants in NCORE sponsored events, regardless of (in alphabetical order) Age, Bilingualism or multilingualism, body size, color, disabilities, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, marital status, national origin, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, race, religion or religious belief, sexual orientation, sovereign identity or veteran status.

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## Fostering a Community of Practice for Accessibility

NCORE acknowledges that ableism is structural, cultural, and attitudinal. Consequently, fostering an accessible environment requires changes to our organizational practices, intentional communication that facilitates unlearning/learning, and collective accountability for ensuring we disrupt the role we each play in enabling and perpetuating ableism.

NCORE is committed to promoting and maintaining conference spaces where all presenters and attendees are part of a community of practice that actively advances equity, access, and justice. This includes being mindful of where we place our belongings (e.g., in aisles) so we do not create access barriers and ensuring we each use a microphone to disrupt the dynamics and practices that limit access. Disability justice is a process of collective liberation, and NCORE calls all conference attendees into action and accountability in that process.

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## Introduction



The CFA Counselors Committee is a statewide body of counselor faculty within the California Faculty Association (CFA), representing the voices, experiences, and needs of mental health professionals across the CSU system. We are licensed psychologists, social workers, and counselors who provide essential mental health services to students—and we are also faculty.

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## Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that NCORE 2025 takes place on Lenapehoking, the ancestral homelands of the Lenape people, whose presence and stewardship of this land continue despite their forced displacement through settler colonialism.

We honor and give thanks to the Lenape—the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, the Munsee Delaware Nation, and the Eelūnaapēewii Lahkēewiit (Delaware Nation at Moraviantown)—who remain connected to this land. Without their care and resilience, this space in which we gather would not exist.

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# pause

Breathe in—the weight of the world is not yours to hold alone.  
Breathe out—release the burdens you've been carrying too long.  
Breathe in—feel the strength rooted deep in your chest.  
Breathe out—soften the stories that whisper you are less.

*"The world asks of us / only the strength we have / and we give it. / Then it asks more, / and we give it."*  
By Rosemary Wahtola Trommer

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## Today's Workshop

### AGENDA

- Introduction & Centering
- Retention Barriers & Data
- Interactive Workshopping
- Call to Action

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## Objectives

- **Identify** systemic retention barriers impacting BIPOC counselors, including cultural taxation and inequitable leadership practices
- **Interpret** key insights from the CSU Counseling Center Climate Survey to highlight morale and workload trends
- **Explore** actionable retention strategies tailored to participants' institutions and communities campus-based strategies that foster professional growth, shared governance, and inclusion

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## CSU Climate Survey Data

Data-Driven Insights.

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## The CSU

- The California State University has 23 (soon to be 22 due to two campuses merging) throughout California
- The California Faculty Association is the State union that represents over 29,000 faculty in the CSU system
- The Counselors Committee is part of CFA that advocates for better working conditions for over 300 Counselor Faculty

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### Demographics Related to the CSU

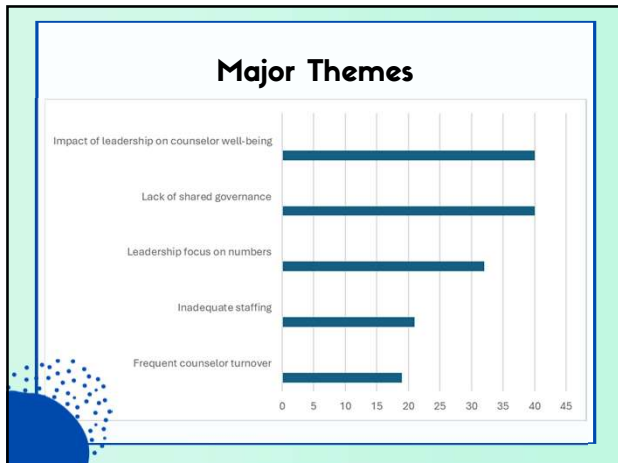
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/LatinX	225,946	48.9%
White	92,741	20.1%
Asian	71,425	15.5%
Two or More Races	21,527	4.7%
Black or African American	19,100	4.1%
International Student	13,718	3.0%
Unknown Race and Ethnicity	14,965	3.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1,306	0.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	884	0.2%

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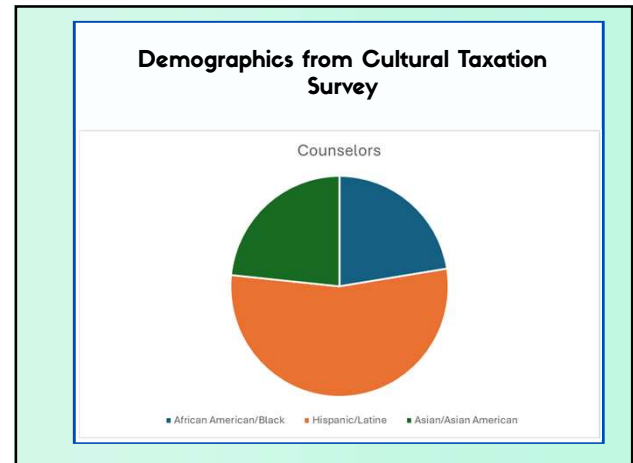
## How did we get here?

In the 2023–2024 AY, after hearing anecdotal information from counselor representatives regarding unsavory working conditions and low morale, the CFA Counselors Committee decided to launch a Climate Survey.

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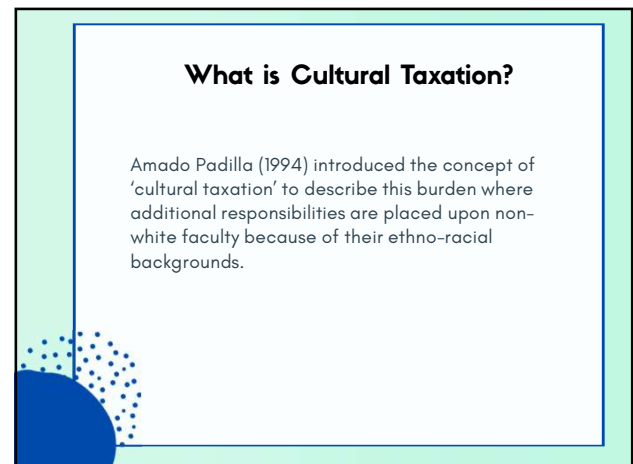
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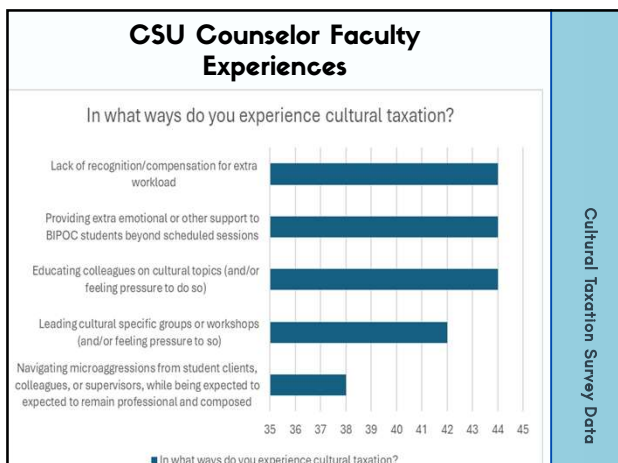
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### From Surviving to Thriving: Leadership That Builds BIPOC Counselor Morale

**Surviving Practices**

- Toxic Positivity/Forced Cheer
- Emotional Labor
- Forced Lunches-Listening and Learning Sessions
- Fear of Retaliation
- Micromanagement and Surveillance

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<p><b>Tokenization:</b> Only inviting BIPOC staff to the table when "diversity" is on the agenda.</p> <p><b>Dismissal of Racial Stress &amp; Identity-Related Concerns:</b> Responding to feedback with "we treat everyone the same here."</p> <p><b>Unequal Workload or Emotional Labor:</b> Expecting BIPOC counselors to do DEI work without compensation or support</p>	<p><b>Non-Responsive or Defensive Leadership:</b> Ignoring feedback or framing concerns as "complaining."</p> <p><b>Invisibility in Decision-Making:</b> BIPOC staff are left out of key decisions that affect their work.</p> <p><b>Retaliation or Gaslighting:</b> Counselors who speak up experience isolation, punishment, or invalidation.</p>
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## Reflections

**Surviving:** What additional surviving practices have you experienced or that come to mind?

**Thriving:** Supportive bosses or supervisors do what?

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## From Surviving to Thriving Leadership That Builds BIPOC Counselor Morale

### Thriving Practices

- Work/Life Boundaries
- Advocacy and Allyship: Leaders advocate for equity in pay, workload, and career growth.
- Empowerment Over Micromanagement: Leaders delegate with trust, encourage autonomy, allow flexibility, and support decision-making.
- Culturally Responsive Supervision: Leaders understand and affirm cultural identity and experiences of BIPOC staff.
- Transparent Communication: Leaders share decisions early, explain context, and allow for open feedback.
- Democratic Decision Making/Shared Governance

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**Restorative Leadership:** Leaders address harm or microaggressions with accountability and repair.

**Recognition and Celebration:** BIPOC counselors are acknowledged for their labor and contributions, not just in "heritage months."

**Mentorship and Pathways to Leadership:** Leaders intentionally mentor and elevate BIPOC counselors into leadership roles.

**Examples:** Summer Friday's, ending day early, self-care time, Wellness Committee, autonomy and control

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## Career Development & Equity

Career Pathways and Professional Growth

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## Misconceptions of Career Development and Equity

If you love your job, you'll never work a day in your life.  
- Confucius

The only way to do great work is to love what you do.  
-Steve Jobs

Work hard, be kind, and amazing things will happen.  
-Conan O'Brien

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Strong employees leave jobs for new opportunities due to limited upward mobility and low wages at their current place of employment

**Career Pathways and Professional Growth**

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Per the AUCOCD survey, low salary (34%) and work conditions (52%) were the top two reasons for leaving in 2021-2022

In 2021-2022, a new significant reason emerged that revealed clinicians are completely leaving the counseling center field (20%).

Results from the 2022-23 Mental Health Professionals of Color Trends Survey revealed that less than 20% reported being satisfied with opportunities for advancement at their current employment.

This is particularly concerning as it implies that departures that involve staff exiting the profession of collegiate mental health can create subsequent recruitment problems, leading to smaller pools of candidates applying for counseling center positions.

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## What can university leadership do?

Identify career pathways and share with workers the skills and knowledge needed to advance one's career.

Provide the appropriate training for individuals to develop the skills to advance their careers.

Reclassify positions to prevent a less bottom-heavy organization.

Provide career counselors/coaches.

For counseling faculty, this could be resolved by adding tenure-track positions (SDSU as an example).

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## What can university leadership do?

Professional development \$\$\$ and workdays for PD

Bilingual pay bump

Cluster hiring that includes counselors

Assess quality not just quantity

Provide constructive, helpful feedback

Prevent and respond to discrimination and microaggressions (e.g., private meetings, debriefing, referrals, mental health days, etc.)

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## Case Study

Campus Case Studies of Success

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- Leadership that understands cultural taxation, is proactive: shows through action that they are paying attention
- Inquiring about cultural taxation and then listening to the response
- Adjustments to work schedule: Taking care of work, allowing for flexibility
- Financial compensation, but lower pay and happiness is better than higher pay and stress
- Pursue your interests but know when to set limits
- Pick your battles for your sanity
- Having someone in the office who is a close friend is sustaining

**CFA specific:** Assigned time for exceptional service, Sabbatical leaves

**Strategies  
Stories  
Success**

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Mental Health Continuum

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## Breakout Facilitator & Action Plan Coach

Interactive Workshoping

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## Retention Strategy Brainstorming Activity

What is one meaningful, systemic change that could improve retention of BIPOC counselors in a university setting?

What are the steps to making that change possible?

What Departments on campus would need to be involved?

What is one small yet impactful personal action you can take today to contribute to a more supportive and inclusive environment?

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## Activity

**EDUCATION/AWARENESS**

- How do you define cultural taxation?
- How could you bring the topic of cultural taxation up at your work place?

**SYSTEMIC**

- How can your work-place be proactive in addressing cultural taxation?
- How can you approach supervisors/directors about cultural taxation and what is one ask you have from your supervisor to address cultural taxation?

**COLLEAGUE SUPPORT**

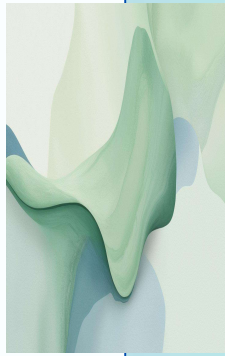
- Name 2 people you could connect with and how you can support each other?

**INDIVIDUAL**

- Identify ways you currently care for yourself, 1-3 aspects you may want to add.

*"Caring for myself is not an act of indulgence, it is self preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."*  
-Audre Lorde

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## Closing

Vision for Belonging + Call to Action

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## Addressing Cultural Taxation

**EDUCATION/AWARENESS**

- Bring awareness and education of cultural taxation in your centers/organizations
- Encourage staff and leadership trainings on cultural humility to encourage allyship

**SYSTEMIC**

- Include wellness and health days
- Create leadership opportunities for BIPOC counselors
- Make sure DEI work is compensated
- Adjust workload to prevent burnout

**COLLEAGUE SUPPORT**

- Create spaces for BIPOC to connect for mutual support

**INDIVIDUAL**

- Set boundaries
- Engage with community based healing practices
- Rest as resistance and resilience

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## Helpful Resources

**Defining Cultural Taxation**  
Ethnic Minority Scholars, Research, and Mentoring: Current and Future Issues by Amado M. Padilla (1994)

**Systemic Acknowledgement**  
Exceptional Assigned Time  
<https://www.calfac.org/faculty-rights-tip-what-is-assigned-time-for-exceptional-levels-of-service-to-students/>

**Books**

- Transforming the Pain*: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization by Karen W. Saakvitne and Laurie A. Pearlman
- Trauma Stewardship*: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others by Connie Burk and Laura van Demoot Lipsky
- Rest is Resistance*: Free Yourself from Grind Culture and Reclaim Your Life by Tricia Hersey
- Decolonizing Therapy*: Oppression, Historical Trauma & Politicizing Your Practice by Jennifer Mullan

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# THANK YOU



1110 K Street, Sacramento, CA  
916-833-4740  
CounselorsCommittee@calfac.org  
www.calfac.org



"Pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you."  
-MAYA ANGELOU