



WESTERN CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY
COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Counseling Connections

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The Student Focus Newsletter

To write an extensive intro here would take away from the entire purpose of this newsletter.

So I'll do my best not to say much.

Simply said, it is that time of the semester—the time when we dread winter but cannot wait for winter break, the time when panic hits the Facebook pages and we wonder whether it's even fair to call this past week a fall "break."

Let's give ourselves some credit.

Let's recognize the incredible

talent that all 60something of us have—the drive, the passion, and the dedication we have to this program, this profession, and, well, this life.



Fall colors in Colorado
Sam Evanoff

Please take a few minutes to read this newsletter, even if it's the first and last you will ever read. Enjoy the reflections and beautiful photographs that display the wide range of that very talent, drive, passion, and dedication that help make this program the best. (Let's be real; we all know it is the best.)

Also, seriously check out the scholarships because everything described above explains why you should apply.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter.

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Reflection on Break by the Lake 2014

I am a first year counseling student new to the Asheville area. I have made a handful of new friends in the counseling program but was extremely nervous walking up to the registration at Break By the Lake. I have never been to a professional conference before, so this was another first for me. Looking back, I am very happy I pushed myself to go to the conference. I knew that I was not going to know many people, so I was stepping out of my comfort zone.

I am in the clinical track of the program and although the conference was geared toward school counseling, I found the entire

day to be informational. The day was not what I expected it was going to be.

The Break By The Lake conference was full of professional individuals but was a relaxing setting. The conference started with an artistic session that got all of the individuals involved with a variety of poems. I thought it was going to be setup like a class lecture. Boy was I wrong!

It was very interesting to see many different viewpoints throughout the sessions of the day. Lunch gave everyone some time to get to know more about people that came from various areas of Western Carolina.

By the end of the day there was a large variety of door prizes, which I was lucky enough to win one! I have to say that for my first conference I was pleasantly surprised by the entire day.

I learned a lot of different information as well as get to know some second year counseling students. I am happy to say my first conference was held by Western Carolina University and I will not forget my experience that day. I am looking forward to my next opportunity to attend another conference.

Lauren Myers

CMHC Practicum Reflection

In the minutes before sitting with my first client I remember talking to my supervisor about how excited yet nervous I was. Unexpectedly, she insisted that we do a power pose together and during that moment my nerves were calmed. I reflected on the support I have from my cohort, my professors, my family, and the incredible experience and confidence that this program has given me thus far. "I can do this," I told myself. And I was right. I only hope that the client found the interaction as enriching as I did.

MAHEC is an inspiring place to be a practicum student. I came to MAHEC hoping to help my clients find meaning and growth in their lives and make the positive changes that they desire. I was not expecting however, to leave every Tuesday amazed by the things that my clients teach me about resilience, myself, and the power of hope. Another highlight of practicum is that my services are

free which allows me to work with clients who cannot afford their copay or have no insurance in the first place. It is incredibly rewarding to offer services to people who might not receive them otherwise. I also find the professionals at MAHEC to be inviting and eager to share their knowledge, which I greatly appreciate as a counselor-in-training. At first, I was intimidated by the idea of working closely with doctors, but I was pleasantly surprised by the dynamic between all of the practitioners and their efforts to give patients the best care possible by treating psychological and physical health equally. I appreciate working in an integrated care facility because I am able to work with clients that might not otherwise receive services due to financial reasons, the inability to take time off for yet another appointment, the stigma associated with counseling, or various other reasons.

I have learned that being present and listening to a client is, at times, all that they may need even though

I feel pressure to give them more. I have learned how to write professional notes, how to integrate all of those "helping skills" into an intake, and how to consult with doctors about medication, but perhaps most importantly, I have learned that I will continue learning and growing for the rest of my years as a counselor. My mentor told me that practicum is when you figure out whether you have made the right choice or a huge mistake. I am sure that I have made the right choice. I still experience the same nervous feelings before sitting with all of my clients, but I now connect those feelings to the empowering opportunity that we have as mental health professionals to give people the space to feel heard and validated for maybe the first time in their life.

Sara Hunter

Practicum student at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC)

SC Practicum Reflection

When I started what is termed as "the hardest semester in the program," I was both excited and a bit terrified for my practicum at a school in Buncombe County. Now more than halfway through the semester I can tell you three things. The first is that it is a powerful experience. Sitting down with real clients dealing with real life problems is a little different than role-plays with fellow grad students. My basic

helping skills have been the single most useful thing in my toolbox. Secondly I realize my classes could only prepare me so much for this practicum. It is the experience itself—along with group and individual supervision—that will bring my skills to the next level. Lastly, for anyone getting ready to begin their practicum, this experience will leave you wanting more. Going to my site once a week

feels like a tease at times. I am learning so much each time I am there. I am forming relationships, building my skills, and becoming part of the community. I wish I could be there more. Luckily next semester is designed to do just that! Internship here I come!

Katrina Roth

Practicum student at North Windy Ridge Intermediate

How to Practice Self-Care

Self-care, self-care, self-care: it's an oft-repeated mantra by professors and peers in the counseling field, but what does it mean, exactly? Is binge-watching season four of *Walking Dead* on Netflix considered self-care (definitely happening), or is it a more regimented prescription – one that includes daily exercise or healthy routines? Is it neither?

It turns out that what matters most in our self-care, what aids the most in the process of “recovery” from work or stress, is an activity that engages the four modes of recovery – mastery, control, detachment, and relaxation. As it turns out, my *Walking Dead* marathon won’t help me recover from stress very well, because I am not participating, so much as just letting it happen. This doesn’t mean that I shouldn’t watch *Walking Dead*, but it does mean that afterwards, I should engage – join a *Walking Dead* fan club or make a zombie costume for Halloween. Here’s why.

According to a 2014 study published in the *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, researchers from San Francisco State University (SFSU) found that creative hobbies, hobbies that produced an end-product or satisfied a goal, left hundreds of workers feeling more in-control, better able to problem-solve, as well as more relaxed when compared to workers who maintained passive hobbies.

Creating something (music, a chair, a fancy meal, or in my case … a podcast) or achieving a goal (climb that mountain, run three miles) is actually vital to feeling restored. It’s an integral part of a good self-care plan.

Let’s revisit the *Walking Dead* costume. Making that costume engages mastery and control – the physical component is measureable and gratifying. In the process of planning the design, searching for materials, or making the costume, you begin to feel a sense of detachment from unrelated problems. You’re engaged, and in the end, you have something to show for the effort, which leaves you feeling more relaxed than someone who spent the same amount of time not producing something fun.

We regularly engage in long-term commitments and projects as part of school or life – a two-year degree, a five-year car payment, a retirement fund, but for self-care purposes, we need to make short-term, achievable projects. It could be climbing to the top of a mountain, cooking a new meal, or learning a new dance. If you don’t know if your hobbies or interests fit the creative/productive bill, here’s a simple exercise to find out.

Make a two-columned list: productive and passive. Write down all the things you normally do or are interested in. As you review the list, ask yourself, “Can I master this? Can I control the outcome? Is there an end product or goal that I can achieve in the short-term?”

Chances are that you either have an interest that fits the bill, or you can mold one into something more productive, and ultimately, more restful and satisfying.

Shawn Hudson

Note: As part of my self-care plan, I made it a point not to stress about writing this article in APA style. If you are interested in the four modes of recovery or in reading the SFSU study, I’ve added the sources below.

Eschleman, K. J., Madsen, J., Alarcon, G., & Barelka, A. (2014). Benefiting from creative activity: The positive relationships between creative activity, recovery experiences, and performance-related outcomes. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 87(3), 579-598.

Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2007). The recovery experience questionnaire: Development and validation of a measure for assessing recuperation and unwinding from work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12 (3), 204-221.

“Creating something or achieving a goal is actually vital to feeling restored. It’s an integral part of a good self-care plan.”

Self-Care in Practice: Highlights from Students



Above: A painting by **Carla Carballo**

Right:
Sarah Wells's
hand woven
baskets and
fresh vegeta-
bles from her
garden



Above: **Natasha Cramer** doing yoga



Above: **Laura Lindsey** in the giant puppet show
“The Painted Bird”



Left:
“Moments of
Happiness”
A charcoal
sketch by
**Shannon
Valentine**



Above: **Sara Hunter** with students rock climb-
ing on a NOLS course

Scholarships & Conferences

National Board for Certified Counselors Foundation

The NBCC Foundation provides scholarships to counseling students in order to increase the number of skilled counselors in underserved or never served communities. Scholarships are available to students who commit to serving military personnel and families, rural communities, and minority populations.

For more information about the scholarships available in the above categories, visit the [NBCC Foundation's website](#).

WCU College of Education and Allied Professions

Several scholarships and awards are available to counseling students, including the Mary Deck/Break by the Lake scholarship, the Daniel Saddler scholarship, the Carole Hearn Curtis scholarship, and the Mary and Charles Wayte scholarship.

Check out [this website](#) for more information. Make sure to check out the Morrill Family Fund for research funding as well!

Upcoming Conference Opportunity

Want to present at a state conference and expand your professional résumé? Consider presenting (a formal session or a graduate student poster) at the 2015 North Carolina Counseling Association Conference in Greensboro.

Head to the [NCCA website](#) to learn more, or go [here](#) to fill out an application to present.

Be sure to check out possible volunteer opportunities to waive your entrance fee!