

# **PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR PORTFOLIO**

A Requirement for School Counseling Masters Degree Students

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A professional counselor portfolio is a collection of experience-based materials and reflective information that demonstrates various dimensions of the counselor's work, philosophy, abilities, and attitudes. The goal is to demonstrate how diverse activities and insights have contributed to the professional counselor's development.

- The development of the professional counselor portfolio begins as the graduate student enters a counseling program, and continues through his/her program of study.
- A session will be held with all graduate students during their first semester of coursework to review the process of portfolio preparation.
- A portfolio is as much a process as a product. Reflective learning requires opportunities to summarize, analyze, and synthesize one's learning in a meaningful and an integrated context.

## **II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The portfolio will be developed in an ongoing manner throughout the graduate counseling program, and is used periodically as a tool for reflection, evaluation, and feedback. The overall purpose is to collect and combine examples of experience and mastery with reflection on their meaning or significance. The process of developing a professional counselor portfolio has several purposes:

- A. Portfolio development is designed to facilitate a thoughtful and intentional entrance into graduate studies. As students begin preparation in a professional career, it is important that they actively engage in each step of their learning. Reviewing one's strengths and "growing edges" setting goals for needed learning, pursuing a learning strategy, and regular evaluation of progress are all important steps in engaging with the learning process at the graduate level. Developing a portfolio is a vehicle for this engagement.
- B. The process of portfolio development also provides opportunities for regular faculty evaluation and feedback for each student in a manner which includes dialogue between the faculty member and the counseling student. Ongoing preparation for a profession is best accomplished with the guidance of professionals who can serve in the roles of consultant, teacher, mentor, and supervisor. The portfolio development process provides for dialogue and feedback throughout the course of study that enables the student to shape and modify his/her learning with attention to personal needs and professional requirements.
- C. Successful completion of the assessment components of the portfolio process serves as benchmarks in the course of graduate study.
- D. The portfolio provides Program Directors, university administration and accrediting bodies with student information regarding program quality and learning processes.
- E. The portfolio assists with the professional counselor's job search process. A completed portfolio demonstrates proficiency and mastery and can be used as an employment tool.

### **III. PORTFOLIO STRUCTURE**

Physically, a portfolio should be a well-organized, attractive presentation of professional materials. It will be organized in a three-ring binder with tabs, table of contents, and individual sections corresponding to the five areas of school counselor focus. Construction and appearance are left to the individual.

A guiding principle in deciding on entries is to ask “What will contribute to the description of my knowledge, skills, and character by adding this entry?” A second guideline is to think about the primary message you want to convey via your portfolio and to ask “Have I selected the entries which most accurately and completely demonstrate my competence?” Be sure to include experiences and learning that occur outside the formal academic program, such as participation in volunteer activities.

Each entry should be accompanied by a reflective statement, which might consist of a paragraph. Reflective statements explain why each entry is included and why it represents you as a counseling professional. In writing reflective statements, ask “What did I do? What does it mean? How did I come to be this way? How might I do things differently? What have I learned? How does this contribute to my emerging identity as a professional school counselor?” The entry is then made meaningful and placed in the context within which a student wants it to be understood.

### **IV. SECTIONS OF THE PORTFOLIO THAT MUST BE PRESENT**

Much of the content of the portfolio is largely left to you. However, five components are required as a part of the portfolio assessment process.

1. Leadership - Artifacts to demonstrate school counselor leadership roles - planning, organizing, coordinating, presenting, and delivering programs generating systemic change.
2. Advocacy - Items demonstrating ability to effect social change and advocate for students - skills to empower students and their families to remove barriers to high academic achievement and career success.
3. Teaming and Collaboration - Items demonstrating ability to locate resources and work with others to improve student achievement and success - learning about resources and cooperation with others to benefit student learning.
4. Counseling and Coordination - Items demonstrating effective brief, solution-focused counseling and coordination of resources working with families and coordination of programs, projects, and resources.
5. Assessment and Effective Use of Data - Items demonstrating skill in assessing student needs and collecting, analyzing, and presenting data - identification of needs, removing barriers, and securing resources to support the advocacy.

## **V. OTHER SECTIONS YOU MAY CHOOSE**

Background Information

Life Role Priorities

## **VI. ASSESSMENT OF PORTFOLIO**

All students in the School Counseling program will be required to complete a professional portfolio. The preparation of the portfolio will culminate during the program and presented to the program coordinator prior to completion of the MA program or at the Exit Interview. The Program Coordinator will review your portfolio and if the it is viewed as deficient in a certain area, the coordinator will let you know where it is lacking and will require you to resubmit your amended portfolio before completion of program.