

STUDENT COUNSELOR PORTFOLIO

Since January 1997, students admitted to the School Counseling Program have been required to create a portfolio. Upon completion of the program requirements, candidates for the credential and/or MA are required to bring their portfolios to the Exit Interview.

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 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 that 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 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

The preparation of the portfolio will culminate during the program and presented to the program coordinator at the Exit Interview. The Program Coordinator will review your portfolio and if 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.

Additional Portfolio Information:

Carney, Cobia and Shannon (1996) suggest that portfolios do not consist of a mass compilation of documents, but careful consideration and evaluation must take place. Portfolios should be composed of materials that document trainees' development, competence and skills. Based on Carney, Cobia and Shannon's article, trainees might include (a) **artifacts**: materials produced in training such as research papers; (b) **reproductions**: materials used in actual practice such as videotapes, and (c) **reflections**: thoughts about self-development such as self-evaluations (p. 124). More specific information is found in the appendix of their article as quoted below:

1. **Human Growth and Development** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills in relation to counseling persons across different developmental levels and stages.

Artifact: Developmental assessment of a case, including identification of developmental stage, transitional issues, and application of appropriate developmental theory to counseling issues.

Reproduction: Videotape of actual or role-play session demonstrating one phase of this developmental assessment.

Reflection: Evaluation of videotaped session including recommendations for next session, self-evaluation as counselor, and evaluation of overall session. Develops the student's ability to assess and evaluate their abilities.

2. **Social and Cultural Foundations** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to counseling in a multicultural and diverse society.

Artifact: Discussion paper focusing on a multicultural counseling case (Sue & Sue, 1990). Focus should include identification of multicultural or diversity issues for the counselor and client, problems in the counseling process, and recommendations for more appropriate multicultural counseling approach.

Reproduction: Group presentation that uses a case staffing format to identify issues raised in discussion paper. Presentation can include a counseling session demonstration integrating recommendations from staffing.

Reflection: Position papers/journal entries based on reactions to assigned topics or general class discussions or lectures. Papers and entries can reflect student's integration and processing of course content and discussion. Selection of specific entries should be left to the individual student.

3. **Helping Relationships** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to the theories and processes of counseling and consultation.

Artifact: Development of an organizational or individual consultation plan (Dougherty, 1995). The plan should include identified person or population to be served, issues to be addressed by the consultant, and services to be provided.

Reproduction: Videotape of actual or role-play initial consultation session. When used in conjunction with the consultation plan the session can focus on establishment of the consultation service and identification of needs.

Reflection: Integrated theory paper where the student considers the development of his or her own theoretical approach and identification (Corey, 1996).

- 4. Group Work** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to the group development process, dynamics, theories, and other group work approaches.

Artifact: Group session plan including goals, objectives, strategies and techniques, and plans for evaluation. Session plan can be used in conjunction with the following components.

Reproduction: Supervised leadership session using live supervision. Supervision can provide the student with immediate formative evaluation and a written evaluation for the portfolio.

Reflection: Group leadership session evaluation. The students can provide a self-assessment of their leadership of a group (supervised). This evaluation can help the students examine their leadership style, skills, group dynamics, and questions for their supervisor.

- 5. Career and Lifestyle Development** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to career counseling, development and related life factors.

Artifact: Career counseling plan for a client (e.g., practicum, undergraduate volunteers, college career center) including identification of career issues, application of career test battery, assessment and counseling recommendations.

Reproduction: Audiotape of session where client is provided information and interpretation of career test battery.

Reflection: Self-assessment of one's own career development including the development of goals, resume, and identification of employment settings (Hazler & Kottler, 1994).

- 6. Appraisal** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to both individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.

Artifact: Research paper focusing on a special issue in assessment and evaluation (e.g., gender, multicultural, legal and ethical).

Reproduction: Audiotape of actual or role-play of an intake interview (Pipes & Davenport, 1990).

Reflection: Critiques of tests across areas of assessment. Develops understanding of assessment measures while enhancing abilities to identify limitations and appropriate test usage.

- 7. Research and Program Evaluation** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related to research methods, basic statistics, and ethical and legal issues.

Artifact: Research project examining legal and ethical issues in counseling cases (Herlihy & Cory, 1996). Project involves identification of issues and recommendations based on the application of legal and ethical principles and guidelines.

Reproduction: Research proposal including development of research questions, design, sampling, and selection of methodology.

Reflection: Critique of research article considering design, limitations, and application to counseling. This activity provides not only an assessment of student's research knowledge but improves their ability to be consumers of research.

- 8. Professional Orientation** components should demonstrate knowledge and counseling skills related professional development, ethical and legal principles, history and roles, organizational structures, professional standards and credentialing.

Artifact: Professional presentation with other students or faculty member. This provides evaluation from faculty observers and feedback from program evaluations.

Reproduction: Conference attendance with project evaluation session(s) and discussing potential application of session content to practice or professional development.

Reflection: Development of a professional portfolio including examples of counseling skills (e.g., group development plans, professional disclosure form) and professional credentials (e.g., resume).

9. Clinical: Relates to knowledge and counseling skills developed in practicum and internship.

Artifact: Case presentation of a client focusing on case conceptualization, treatment goals, and client-counselor dynamics.

Reproduction: Videotape or audiotape of a counseling session including treatment plan and session evaluation (Young, 1992).

Reflection: Session progress notes including self-evaluation of session and questions for supervision.

(pp. 130-132)

Source: Carney, J. S., Cobia, D. C. & Shannon, D. M. (1996). The use of portfolios in the clinical and comprehensive evaluation of counselors-in-training. Counselor Education and Supervision, 36, 122-132.

Two other authors suggest that counselors and counselor trainees need to create portfolios. Rhyne-Winkler and Wooten (1996) delineate possible contents of the portfolio as quoted below:

Introduction

- Title Page
- Introductory comments
- Table of contents

Program Planning

- Assessment of needs, program goal setting, formulating plan of action, program evaluation
- Initiating and coordinating school wide guidance and counseling activities
- Time management and schedule of services
- Organizing a functional, up-to-date counseling office
- Soliciting input from teachers and staff in developing the school wide counseling program

Counseling

- Developing a theoretical base
- Selecting and applying counseling techniques both for individual and for group counseling
- Using appropriate assessment and diagnostic procedures in structuring individual and group counseling services
- Documentation through audiotapes, videotapes, or both
- Including a sample case study
- Informed consent as it applies within the school counseling setting
- Documenting understanding of privileged communication, parental rights, and rights of minors as these apply within the school setting

Consulting

- Documenting knowledge of consulting, processes and techniques with students, teachers, parents, and administrators
- Presenting instructional and informational programs to groups of students, parents, and teachers (i.e., parent education, group guidance, teacher in-service training)
- Interpreting achievement and aptitude data

Coordinating

- Examples of effective communication with students, parents, staff
- Examples of activities advocating for all students
- Documenting assistance to teachers with integrating guidance activities into the curriculum
- Documenting use of appropriate referrals

Student Appraisal

- Samples of interpretation of test results and student data
- Participation in non-standardized educational assessment according to professional competencies
- Demonstrating appropriate use of standardized tests

Educational And Professional Development

- Statement of educational and professional goals
- Written strategies or outline to meet goals
- Statement of educational philosophy
- List of accomplishments
- Record of attendance at workshops and seminars
- Record of workshops, seminars, presentations, and classes taught
- Summary of evaluations
- Samples of writing
- Copies of transcripts, standardized test scores
- Summary of research conducted
- Evidence of knowledge of and adherence to ethical standards

(pp. 149-150)

Source:

Rhyne-Winkler, M. & Wooten, H. R. (1996). The school counselor portfolio: Professional development and accountability. The School Counselor, 44, 146-150.