



## Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

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Dear Colleagues:

The June 2016 issue of the *Journal of Counseling & Development* raises questions around CACREP's practice of accrediting counseling programs housed in institutions that allegedly "disaffirm or disallow diverse sexual orientations." We recognize that this is a timely, sensitive issue that invites a response from CACREP.

Before we can undertake any discussion around diversity expectations in CACREP programs, it is important to understand CACREP's philosophy of accreditation. The preface of the 2016 CACREP Standards states:

*"Although the 2016 CACREP Standards delineate accreditation requirements, they do not dictate the manner in which programs may choose to meet standards. Program innovation is encouraged in meeting both the intent and spirit of the 2016 CACREP Standards. Program faculty and reviewers should understand that counselor education programs can meet the accreditation requirements in a variety of ways."*

CACREP standards provide a **framework** of educational standards that is intended to provide flexibility for programs and the institutions that house them. As a result, programs vary widely in how they meet CACREP Standards, providing the kind of diversity necessary to sustain healthy academic and practitioner communities within the counseling profession. This respect for institutional and programmatic diversity has been embedded throughout the CACREP Standards since the first standards were published and remains central to CACREP's approach to accreditation.

Within this framework, CACREP expects accredited programs to "adopt and adhere to" the ACA Code of Ethics and "provide the knowledge and skills that enable students to fully comply with the ACA Code of Ethics" (Guiding Statement on CACREP 2016 Standard 1.O). This includes a responsibility on the part of accredited programs to prepare students with an understanding of multicultural characteristics, theories and models, competencies (2016 CACREP Standards 2.F.2.a-c), and strategies for identifying and eliminating prejudice and discrimination (2016 CACREP Standard 2.F.2.h), regardless of any conflicting institutional, program, or student values or perspectives.

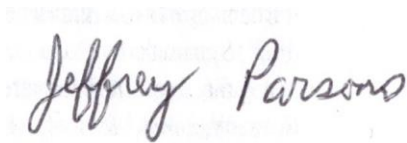
CACREP also expects programs to make continuous and systematic efforts to "recruit, employ, and retain a diverse faculty" (2016 CACREP Standard 1.Q.) and "attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students" (2016 CACREP Standard 1.K). It is important to note that the 2016 CACREP Standards do

not define diversity. Rather, programs have the responsibility of implementing admission and employment practices that are justifiable within institutional and program contexts. This approach allows space for programs housed in public institutions **and** programs housed in private institutions that serve specific populations (such as programs in historically black universities and colleges, universities that serve deaf and hard of hearing populations, and faith-based institutions).

To be clear, CACREP does not consider the practice of recruiting toward specific populations in a manner that is consistent with institutional mission to be an act of discrimination; rather an act of advocacy in meeting the needs of these cultural groups. This stance applies to programs housed in the full range of institutions that serve diverse populations, including faith-based institutions whose codes of conduct or statements of faith may be perceived as exclusionary. However, CACREP expects programs in these institutions to provide the training necessary to prepare students to serve multicultural populations.

We hope this response provides some clarity on CACREP's practice of accrediting counseling programs in any institution, including faith-based institutions, while articulating a broader perspective of program diversity. The delicate tension between institutional rights to serve specific cultural groups and program responsibilities to train ethical, competent professionals requires careful consideration, professional judgment, and clear expectations on CACREP's part. It is our hope that the counseling profession as a whole can navigate diversity challenges within its ranks in similar fashion.

Signed on behalf of the entire CACREP Board,



Jeffrey Parsons  
CACREP Board Chair



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CACREP President and CEO