

Entry-Level Award Recipient

The Imposition of Transformational Excellence

by Halima Dargan

Epsilon Upsilon Chapter, Xavier University of Louisiana

“With great power comes great responsibility.” While it is a cliché, there is truth in that statement. Power can manifest in multiple ways, two being the position of a boss and a leader. A boss will stand on the sidelines, give directions and insist on particular results, but a leader will get into the trenches alongside you while working towards a goal together. A leader exudes transformational excellence. This is the kind of influence that not only changes the individual, but the people around them as well.

As a graduate student in a CACREP program and the vice president of the Epsilon Upsilon chapter of CSI, transformational excellence is imperative, first, to experience as a student from an advisor or mentor and second, to exude, as a developing leader in the counseling profession. When I think of transformational excellence, I am reminded of a quote from Marianne Williamson which says, “... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” A transformationally excellent leader has an amount of fearlessness, knowledge and compassion that imposes itself on those around him/her and inspires them to do the same.

These skills can be used to guide and mentor others not only in the counseling profession, but anyone aspiring to make a difference. This can be in the form of encouraging others to explore places they have never been, promote beneficence, and pursue opportunities that would increase competence and open their worldview. Leadership skills can also be used to implement programs, like CSI, that promote continued education, research and advocacy.

When it comes to promoting transformational excellence, there is no act too big or too small. Principle #1 and #2 from the CSI Principles and Practices of Leadership Excellence (1999), the philosophy of leadership and the commitment to mission, respectively, express that an excellent leader puts service to others above all things and embodies the mission of the organization. I believe that if these two principles are ingrained in an individual, then everything they do, no matter the size, will exemplify transformational excellence. Individually, I can promote volunteer opportunities and wellness events for the community, continue to advocate for the profession as I enter into the job search phase of my career, and continue to empower individuals just beginning their counseling journey through mentorship.

Organizations like CSI and CACREP are already on the path to making transformational excellence commonplace. Through research and advocacy initiatives those in the counseling profession are allowed to expand their career and increase their expertise, the mentoring aspect allows for transformational excellence to be spread among students and practitioners. It is important for the organizations to always remember the smaller operations that keep them going. Whether you are an individual or an organization, transformational excellence is those who desire to make a change having the support necessary to fulfill their potential and make a difference in the world.

References

- Chi Sigma Iota. (1999, 2011). *Principles and practices of leadership excellence*. Retrieved from www.csi-net.org.
- Gibson, D. M. (2015). "Transformational excellence." *CSI Exemplar*, 30, 6-7.

Doctoral Students, Professional Counselors, and Counselor Educators Award Recipient

Transformational Excellence

by Tanisha Johnson

Alpha Upsilon Alpha Chapter, Argosy University, Atlanta

The counseling field is a profession that entails collaborating with others to promote change within the individual or within the community. Mason and McMahon (2013) consider counselors to be transformational leaders who have the ability to inspire change, create a clear vision, model the way, and encourage others. The results of developing into a transformational leader stems from the idea of transformational excellence, which can be seen within all professional efforts.

Transformational Excellence seems to be more about the quality of a counselor's identity. Dr. Niles indicated in a 2015 interview with Donna Gibson (2015) that transformational excellence is seen when an individual strives to be more than mediocre. In addition, transformational excellence is a growth process that involves self-reflection and action. As a graduate from a program accredited by the Counsel for Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and as a counselor educator within a CACREP program, transformational leadership seems to begin in the place where professional development begins. Counselor educators have a unique opportunity to establish a culture of leadership with a foundation in transformational leadership. The skills and knowledge about the counseling process, competence, and professional identity are imparted to counselors-in-training through their education program (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As gatekeepers to the counseling profession, counselor educators set the standard for professional practice through mentoring, modeling, and professional engagement. Without training and attention, the expectation that counselors be transformative and strive for higher standards could not begin to be engrained into the counseling profession's culture.

In their research on leadership development in early career counselors, Luke and Goodrich (2010) seemed to identify core concepts that can lead to demonstrating and promoting transformational excellence through participation in organizations like Chi Sigma Iota (CSI). Some of those ideas identified were that leaders emerge when individuals have authentic learning experiences, genuine beliefs and values congruent with the practice of counseling, and are provided opportunities to engage in leadership. Mentorship, teaching, and advocacy for professional organizations that promote leadership and excellence in professional work are small activities that allow leadership to be integrated in the culture of the counseling profession. Efforts that encourage counselor participation in leadership activities like scholarship, advocacy,

and leadership are the efforts that develop and promote transformational excellence within the profession of counseling, which are activities that CSI and CACREP promote.

Transformational excellence, while a new term within the counseling literature, is not a new idea to the counseling profession. Counselors are encouraged to be mentors, teachers, and advocates to new generations of counselors to safe guard the profession. In addition, counselors model the way for positive professional practice, which is the essence of transformational excellence.

References

- Gibson, D. M. (2015). "Transformational excellence." *CSI Exemplar*, 30, 6-7.
- Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M. (2010). Chi Sigma Iota chapter leadership and professional identity development in early career counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 50, 55-78. Retrieved from ProQuest Central database.
- Mason, E. C., & McMahon, H. G. (2009). Leadership practices of school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(2), 107-115. Retrieved from ProQuest Central database.
- Newsome, D. W., & Gladding, S. T. (2014). *Clinical mental health counseling in community and agency settings* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Ronnestad, M. H., & Skovholt, T. M. (2003). The journey of the counselor and therapist: Research findings and perspectives on professional development. *Journal of Career Development*, 30(1), 5-44. Retrieved from ProQuest Central database.