

Position Statement on Inclusion/Belonging

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is committed to working collaboratively with institutions to ensure that the principles of differences, fairness, and access for all students, foundational to the Counseling profession, remain integral to graduate counseling and mental health education. CACREP is dedicated to supporting programs as they prepare competent Professional Counselors and is committed to protecting the public.

The CACREP Standards, consistent with CACREP's mission, core values, and beliefs, are written by expert stakeholders in the Counseling profession, including practitioners, employers and industry representatives, educators, professional associations, and other communities of interest. The CACREP Standards are the minimum preparation requirements to ensure professional competence to enter the Counseling profession, to subsequently safeguard and protect the public.

The construct of inclusion is defined as the action of considering, acknowledging, and incorporating an individual into a group structure, and the practice and policy of providing access to opportunities and resources for all people involved (Mullin et al., 2021). The CACREP Standards and Policies recognize and honor differences and value impartiality in ensuring access for all people to counselor education programs, access to Counseling services, and preparing clinically and culturally competent Professional Counselors to meet the workforce demand.

Prioritizing Human Dignity

CACREP-accredited programs promote environments in which all individuals are respected, acknowledged, and welcomed within their cultural context. An inclusive educational setting models the therapeutic relationship by affirming all different identities, promoting belonging, and supporting the holistic well-being of students, faculty, and clients alike.

Program Access and Integrity

Program access must include providing opportunities to all members and stakeholders of the Counseling profession. Program integrity entails ensuring the alignment between the program's outlined core values and observable actions, policies, procedures, and decisions consistent with their program and institutional missions and state laws. Program integrity also entails ongoing self-evaluation, transparency, accountability for all misalignments, and continuous improvement for all individuals.

A sampling of considerations includes:

- **For program success:** Demonstrating, valuing, and respecting diversity in all identities and perspectives within advisory councils; and maintaining consistency across university leadership, including transparency with and accountability for a) the processes of all parts of program development, b) annual and regular reporting for maintaining accreditation, and c) communicating errors and corrections while maintaining alignment with ethical and legal standards.
- **For faculty success:** On-boarding with holistic hiring practices, and the necessary individual resources to support fairness and accessible experiences through neutral evaluation for all individuals.
- **For student success:** Incorporating/integrating student support services at the start of admission to determine longitudinal needs for each learner, and providing targeted, necessary interventions and resources.

- **For client success:** Particularly for those receiving services during the practicum and internship experiences, ensuring that the client's needs and cultural contexts are considered in concert with legal and ethical standards through client-centered language.

Relevant 2024 CACREP Standards

The following CACREP Standards address the program's responsibility for providing information about expectations, practicing fairness, and providing access:

Standard 1.I The counselor education program intentionally creates and effectively maintains an inclusive and equitable learning community that respects individual differences.

This entry-level standard requires intentional design and evaluation of curricula, delivery models, and student experiences. Programs must consider the unique learning needs and available resources of all students, ensuring their success.

Standard 1.M The student handbook, for all program delivery types, includes diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies.

Standard 1.N Syllabi consistent with program delivery types are available to students enrolled in the course at the beginning of each academic term and include diversity, equity, inclusion, and accommodation statement.

These standards seek to ensure informed consent by the students in counselor education programs relative to differences, fairness, access and belonging for all students consistent with the mission of the institution.

Standard 1.Z Core counselor education faculty participate in professional activities, scholarly activities, and service to the profession. All core counselor education faculty must identify with the counseling profession through each of the following: 1. have sustained memberships in professional counseling organizations; 2. relevant professional counseling credentials; and 3. show evidence of sustained professional engagement through at least two of the following: a) professional development and renewal activities related to counseling, b) professional service and advocacy in counseling, c) ongoing counseling practice, or d) research and scholarly activity in counseling commensurate with their faculty role

This standard provides flexibility to programs regarding the professional engagement activities of individuals they designate as core faculty consistent with the mission of the program and institution, which in turn affords flexibility in hiring faculty.

Standard 2.F.2 The counselor education program solicits feedback from a designated advisory committee regarding proposed curriculum modification and program improvement. The advisory committee comprises representatives from the program and community partners with diverse identities and perspectives.

Input from stakeholders, including members of the community in which the future Professional Counselors will work and where the program is delivered, allows for relevancy of the curriculum and continuous improvement that is consistent with the mission of the program and institution. Representation open to all individuals strengthens counselor education by integrating the voices of the communities future Professional Counselors will serve.

CACREP Policy

When ethical preparation of Professional Counselors, as defined in the accreditation standards, conflicts with state laws, CACREP Policy A.2.i affords programs the opportunity to demonstrate alternate ways in which to meet the intent of the Standards and Policies in question to ensure preparation of a competent professional and to protect the public.

References

- Mullin, A. E., Coe, I. R., Gooden, E. A., Tunde-Byass, M., & Wiley, R. E. (2021). Inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility: From organizational responsibility to leadership competency. *Healthcare Management Forum, 34*(6), 311–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0840470421103823>
- Chan, C. D., Cor, D. N., & Band, M. P. (2018). Privilege and oppression in counselor education: An intersectionality framework. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 46*(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12092>
- Clark, M.; Kempf, J.; Paul, D.; Sheikh, S.; Gleason, B.; & Odrunia, K. (2025). Recruitment and retention of minoritized students in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 64*(2), 196–207.
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2024). 2024 CACREP standards [PDF]. <https://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-Standards-Combined-Version-4.11.2024.pdf>
- Ratts, M. J.; Singh, A. A.; Nassar McMillan, S.; Butler, S. K.; & McCullough, J. R. (2015). Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC). Updated competency model outlining counselor self-awareness, client worldview, relationship, and advocacy capacities. Endorsed by American Counseling Association and AMCD.
- Shaikh, Afroze N.; Gummaluri, Sravya; Dhar, Jyotsna; Carter, Hannah; Kwag, Daun; Ponce, Javier E.; Mason, Erin C. M.; and Peters, Harvey C. (2024) "Application of the Principles of Anti-Oppression to Address Marginalized Students and Faculty's Experiences in Counselor Education," *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling: Vol. 6: Issue 3, Article 8*. <https://doi.org/10.7290/tsc06laio>
- Jangha, A. G.; Reyna, M.; David, G. S.; Ramirez, S.; Johnson, M.; & Barcenas, G. (2025). Infusing antiracism into counselor education: A Model for CACREP Programs. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 64*(1), 81-95.