

FITNESS FOR THE PROFESSION OF COUNSELING AND HUMAN SERVICES

*A Policy Statement from the Faculty and Staff of the Department of Counseling and Human Services, Panuska College of Professional Studies, University of Scranton.
(Undergraduate Student Policy)*

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Entry into the profession of Counseling and Human Services is more than initiating a new career path or beginning a new job. It is similar to starting a lifelong journey. As in many other fields of endeavor, there is an intensive and rigorous training program to complete, which has academic and clinical requirements attached. However, because counseling and human services undergraduate majors will be entering a profession that deals with human living and a way of living in its own right, there are professional and personal challenges that students will encounter.

Meeting these challenges and learning to grow from them is an integral part of succeeding in the counseling and human services profession. As counselor educators, the faculty and staff of the Department of Counseling and Human Services are committed to facilitating the professional development and personal growth of the undergraduate students, and to the education, supervision, and mentoring of students in all aspects of their professional counseling journey.

The education of professional human services professionals demands evaluation of one's values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns. In many ways the deepest challenge students will encounter is the combined task of self-assessment, self-correction, and self-direction in collaboration with others and across many areas of life: academic, clinical, professional, and personal. It is our hope and expectation that each undergraduate student who joins the Department will succeed in these tasks.

To that end, we list below a number of the attributes, characteristics, and behaviors that we believe are important for success in both counseling and human services training and practice.

Students in the undergraduate program will be evaluated on a continuing basis with reference to these professional and personal attributes as well as to their academic performance and growing clinical skills. The list below is not exhaustive but is meant to provide a firm basis for discussion between students and faculty. Descriptions are given to help students in evaluating their own strengths and growing edges in each domain.

An important note: The faculty hope that providing these characteristics will help undergraduate students understand what is expected of them and will stimulate self-assessment for continued growth. Ongoing professional and personal growth is an important practice, whether one is an undergraduate trainee or a human services professional. It is in this sense, then, that the faculty and staff of the Department commit themselves to fostering the development of our students as well as of one another. It is our hope to become a learning community of fellow professionals – faculty, staff and students.

For all of us, it is to be hoped that growth will build upon our uniqueness as individuals while moving us toward professional excellence. With this in mind, the following attributes are provided to aid in our ongoing development.

Professional/Personal Attributes: Counseling and Human Services

Professional/Personal Attributes	<i>Description</i>
<p>1. Commitment to Wellness</p>	<p>Wellness is a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully. It is particularly important as it impacts professional and clinical practice. “Commitment” includes:</p> <p>An understanding of, and decision to pursue, wellness as a lifestyle over the life span. Willingness to assess issues of wellness in one’s lifestyle and life-environments; an ongoing choice to become the best one can be spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, and vocationally.</p>
<p>2. Commitment to Learning</p>	<p>Demonstrated ability to self-assess, self-correct, and self-direct; to identify needs and sources of learning; to continually seek new knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Demonstrated academic- and life-management skills: For example, ability to prioritize and manage a variety of commitments, time and stress; critical thinking skills; problem-solving and ethical decision-making skills; quality participation in class exercises and assignments; timeliness.</p> <p>Commitment to excellence as a human services professional.</p>
<p>3. Core Academic and Clinical Competencies</p>	<p>The human services profession, through its accrediting and certifying agencies (i.e., CSHSE, NOHS) have identified the knowledge-base that is essential for success in professional human services. These core areas include: Introduction to Human Adjustment, Human Services Systems, Case Management and Interviewing, Counseling Theories, Research Methods in Human Services, Multiculturalism in Human Services, Administration in Human Services, Career Seminar, Group Dynamics, Crisis Intervention, and elective courses in Counseling and Human Services. Acceptable performance in these academic areas is essential.</p> <p>In addition, clinical competency and an acceptable level of functioning in internships are required and expected (see <i>Internship Manuals</i> and specific Program Objectives elsewhere in the <i>Program Manual</i>). The ability to form effective collegial working relationships with peers and supervisors.</p> <p>It should be noted that, in a number of academic courses involving these core academic and clinical areas, students</p>

	<p>will be challenged to review their own values, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, behaviors, and biases. Willingness to engage in this self-review, its challenges and potential growth, is a critical element in growing as a professional counselor.</p>
<p>4. Professional Identity</p>	<p>Commitment to ongoing development as an entry level human services professional and member of the “helping professions.”</p> <p>Commitment to high standards of practice as a human service professional.</p> <p>An understanding of one’s motivation for choosing the counseling profession. The ability to critically assess one’s own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as they relate to the standards of excellence and ethics, and the best practices of the counseling and human services profession.</p> <p>The ability to exhibit appropriate professional attitudes and conduct; ability to represent the profession ethically and effectively. Willingness to assume roles of service and advocacy.</p> <p>Ability to demonstrate theory-into-practice, that is, to translate learned values and content knowledge into professional/personal attitudes and action.</p> <p>Developing participation in the varied roles of the human services professional and participation in professional organizations through membership, service, and scholarship.</p> <p>Ability to see oneself as connected to a wider whole of regional/global needs, helping systems, and resources. A commitment to advocacy on behalf of clients and larger society, as well as to the pursuit of social justice, as consistent with one’s professional identity.</p>
<p>5. Personal Maturity</p>	<p>Ability to live and function at an appropriate level of emotional, psychological, and relational well-being; freedom from significant impairments that would affect one’s ability to perform as a human services professional. The ability to understand ambiguity and to patiently address areas of growth. Ability to balance personal and professional self-awareness.</p>
<p>6. Responsibility</p>	<p>Demonstrated ability to fulfill professional commitments and to be accountable for actions and outcomes. Demonstration of effective work habits and attitudes (e.g. reliability), evident in classes, internships, and other areas of student performance.</p> <p>Demonstrated ability to act and respond in a variety of situations with honesty and integrity. Knowledgeable about professional ethical standards and competent in applying those standards to concrete situations.</p>

<p>7. Communication and Interpersonal Skills</p>	<p>Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively (e.g., speaking, body language, reading, writing, listening) for varied audiences and purposes. Having sensitivity to diversity in one's communications.</p> <p>Demonstrated ability to interact effectively with clients, families, colleagues, other helping professionals, and the community and to deal effectively with multiple diversities in a pluralistic society.</p> <p>Effectiveness in establishing positive interpersonal relationships on an individual and group basis; openness to constructive criticism; understanding and openness toward differences; ability to develop appropriate support systems.</p> <p>The ability to identify sources of and seek out appropriate feedback from faculty and peers, and to utilize and provide feedback for improving personal and professional interactions; "supervis-ability."</p> <p>Ability to be appropriately assertive and self-advocating.</p>
<p>8. Cultural Competence</p>	<p>Demonstrated knowledge, awareness, and skills with cultural, diversity, and inclusion factors in the helping professions.</p> <p>Self-awareness of one's own cultural identities as well as assumptions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors towards others.</p> <p>Demonstrated ability to understand and discern the concepts of power, privilege, prejudice, bias, and discrimination; and their implications for clientele, the profession, and communities.</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge of and sensitivity to identity markers including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, sexual/affective orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, religion/spirituality, and social class/socio-economic factors.</p>
<p>9. Problem-solving</p>	<p>In both professional performance and personal development, the ability to recognize and define problems, analyze data from varied sources, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes. The ability to seek out resources for help, support, and insight.</p>
<p>10. Stress Management</p>	<p>The ability to identify sources of stress that (potentially) affect personal and professional functioning, and to develop effective coping behaviors. Existence of appropriate boundaries between personal stressors and professional performance. Obtaining appropriate supports, resources, and help when needed.</p>

STUDENT RETENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Acceptance into the undergraduate counseling and human services program does not assure graduation from it. Successful completion of the Bachelor's degree in the Department of Counseling and Human Services is based upon the continuous evaluation of students to insure (a) effective demonstration of academic competence, (b) each student's commitment to the program and the profession, and (c) their continued growth in personal, professional, and emotional characteristics and qualities related to successful performance in a helping profession. The evaluation process serves two primary functions:

1. To provide students with direct feedback relative to their progress that will enable them to enhance their strengths and identify and remediate growing edges and weaknesses in their academic, professional, and personal development.
2. To provide faculty with information about student progress which facilitates decisions in the best interest of students and the profession.

A student must have a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.0 at the end of their prescribed curriculum to fulfill the degree requirements. In addition, all students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 to remain in good standing. If a student's GPA drops below a 2.0, they will be placed on academic probation. If satisfactory progress is not made toward removing probationary status, the student is subject to dismissal by the Dean in consultation with the student's Program Director (see *Undergraduate School Catalogue*). Students whose GPA is below 2.0 will not be allowed to register for Internship in Counseling and Human Services [CHS 380], or Advanced Internship in Counseling and Human Services, [CHS 481].

Students are expected to adhere to the [Ethical Standards for Human Service Professionals](#) developed by the National Organization of Human Services (NOHS). Copies of the Ethical Standards are available online and also appear in the CHS Program Manual, and both Internship (CHS 380) and Advanced Internship (CHS 481) manuals. Students are also expected to adhere to the [Academic Code of Honesty of the University of Scranton](#).

The Department's annual student review process offers a vehicle for counseling and human services faculty to evaluate student academic, professional, and personal progress. Any faculty member may raise questions about a particular student's performance in any of the above areas at any point during the student's program. Additionally, a review will take place at least yearly with the initial review taking place during the student's first year as a Counseling and Human Services major. Written results of the review will be placed in the student's advising file, which is retained in the Department.

It is the experience of the faculty and staff that the majority of students engage fully in the undergraduate program and progress appropriately. In fact, many of our students excel in all areas of their development as counselors and human services trainees. However, at times, there are those students who need additional support.

Students who have not demonstrated satisfactory progress are provided feedback and support by the Program Director, Department Chair, and/or CHS faculty. This review process insures that each student is given feedback about academic, professional, and personal development throughout the program as they attain knowledge and skills in required and elective courses and clinical experiences.

The following procedures are in place for students needing further support:

Process 1:

Students receive feedback in a meeting with their Program Director and/or Academic Advisor. In consultation with the Program Director and the PCPS Advising Center, the student will write a plan that addresses “growing edges” in that student’s development. Assuming that this plan is adhered to and the student’s performance improves to a satisfactory level, there is no need for further process.

Process 2:

Students may be unwilling and/or unable to follow through with **Process 1**; there is either lack of sufficient progress in, or resistance to, **Process 1**. In this case the Department in collaboration with the PCPS Advising Center will recommend to the Dean that the student be placed on probation and a more formal remediation plan be developed between the Program Director and student, and ratified by the Department’s retention committee. This committee is composed of (1) the Program Director, (2) the Department Chair, and (3) at least one other full-time CHS undergraduate program core faculty member, and the student’s Academic Advisor or the PCPS Dean of Advising.

A remediation plan may include but not be limited to the following:

1. Identification of the problem areas.
2. Expected behavioral and/or attitudinal changes.
3. Potential methods for achieving and demonstrating change.
4. Time line for completion.

Each student involved in this process has the option of bringing an advocate (neither a family member nor a lawyer) to meetings with the retention committee.

A copy of the plan will be given to the student and one will be retained by the Program Director, retention committee, the PCPS Advising Center, and the Dean. Satisfactory completion of the plan and consistent demonstration of appropriate conduct will be assessed by the committee on an agreed timeline, and will result in a decision to recommend removal from probation to the Dean.

Process 3:

If processes 1 & 2 fail, the entire CHS faculty may (1) recommend voluntary termination or resignation to the student and/or (2) recommend dismissal to the Dean. If dismissal from the program is recommended, the Department will forward that recommendation to the Dean for disposition.

Alternate Process to Address Immediate Fitness for the Profession Concerns

In rare cases, the faculty may become aware of issues or behaviors that raise doubt about a student's ability to either (a) successfully complete the program, or (b) move forward as a student in the Counseling and Human Services major. When such information becomes available, the faculty has a duty to review the information fully and carefully, to notify the student of concerns and the outcome of the review, and to select a course of action that is commensurate with accepted ethical and legal procedures as well as the "best practices" of the profession. In these instances, the faculty, in consultation with the Dean, may find it necessary to forego the step-by-step procedures listed above and move directly to recommend probation and remediation or dismissal from the program.