

Professional Assessment Statement for Midcourse Review

Caitlyn M. Bennett, Ph.D., LMHC, LMFT, NCC
Graduate Studies in Counseling

I am incredibly fortunate to serve as an Assistant Professor in the Graduate Studies in Counseling (GSC) department at Rollins College. Thus far, my experiences at Rollins College have been motivating, fulfilling, and encouraging. Throughout my Professional Assessment Statement, as aligned with the GSC tenure and promotion criteria (criteria is denoted with *green headers*), I describe my experiences, growth, and development in the areas of (a) Teaching; (b) Research and Scholarship; (c) Service; and (d) Clinical Experience and Supervision. I am a firm believer that my teaching, research, service, and clinical work greatly enhance and influence one another.

(a) TEACHING

Teaching Philosophy

As a counselor educator, I have recognized the role that experiences, thoughts, behaviors, and self-beliefs play in student learning and development, aligning with social cognitive theory (SCT). Because of this, I am intentional in infusing course activities and assignments that enhance personal awareness and understanding; as students in the GSC program are adult learners who will be serving vulnerable clients, it is essential that they develop personal awareness of their experiences, thoughts, behaviors, and self-beliefs. Thus, assignments that I utilize in my courses not only focus on essential course topics, but also on developing needed personal insight. For example, in CPY 550 Dynamics of Marriage, Relationship, and Family Systems, students are responsible for creating and analyzing a family genogram that explores intergenerational messaging, experiences, and cultural identities; in CPY 603 Addictive Disorders, students are responsible for engaging in video and/or written journals to reflect on their abstinence project experience (*see 'Sample Assignments' in Canvas, Teaching page*).

SCT also highlights the importance of self-efficacy in one's learning process. Similarly, I believe that self-efficacy serves as a critical component that can either enhance student learning or deter students from growth. Students' self-efficacy becomes particularly apparent as they begin applying learned skills in real-life contexts. To provide space for students to embody the role of the counselor to enhance self-efficacy, I incorporate practice opportunities, such as live demonstrations (*see 'Sample Assignments' in Canvas, Teaching page*). Additionally, as anxiety can decrease self-efficacy, I aim to provide support, structure, and encouragement to students. Supportive of this, one student noted in their evaluation of my teaching that: "She is supportive of our own mental health, outside life, and school life. Dr. Bennett provides a lot of support in class and is always open to any questions. I love taking classes with Dr. Bennett, she creates a great atmosphere to learn in."

In addition to creating assignments and class opportunities that increase student awareness, self-efficacy, and knowledge, my teaching practices focus on honoring and exploring diversity. The Diversity Council at Rollins College emphasizes the importance of making sure to "...*model a campus environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive to all of our administrators, faculty,*

staff, and students.” Similarly, I believe that students process information depending upon individualized perspectives that align with their own identities (e.g., age, family system, cultural background, gender identity, etc.); thus, it is essential that the classroom community is one that is inclusive and safe. In my work with students, I make it a practice to not make assumptions or hold preconceived notions based on their stated or visible identities. I hope that mirroring such behaviors become practices that my students infuse within their own clinical work and social contexts. In addition, I honor the diversity of students by encouraging discussion around and reflecting upon issues of culture, diversity, and social justice. I incorporate experiential exercises that invoke reflective thought and allow students to practice new skills. Such exercises include role-plays of counseling scenarios for clients with intersecting identities, reflective written and video journaling, and self-assessments of their development. I believe experiential activities challenge students to think critically about counseling related topics from an inclusive and multicultural perspective, which is imperative in developing multiculturally competent and autonomous clinicians to serve a diverse society. Aligning with a mission of Rollins College, I also believe in the pursuit of providing educational opportunities that “...*educates students for global citizenship and responsible leadership, empowering graduates to pursue meaningful lives and productive careers.*”

As a counselor, I have witnessed the power that empathy and unconditional positive regard serve in relationships. Similarly, these concepts deserve to be implemented in the classroom for further student growth. As such, I integrate Rogerian principles of: (a) unconditional positive regard; (b) genuineness; (c) warmth; (d) collaborative goal-setting; and (e) appropriately used humor. I have found that infusing these principles not only positively influences student development, but also provides opportunities for students to observe appropriately modeled behaviors that they can then implement in their work with clients. Reflective of this belief, students noted in their course feedback: “Dr. Bennett is respectful and understanding. She is easy to talk to and very approachable” and “I love taking Dr. Bennett's courses because [she] is so empathetic and makes learning fun!”

Self-Assessment in Pedagogical Practices

As someone who believes that humans, and especially educators, benefit from lifelong learning and growth, I know that my teaching practices will require refinement throughout my career. I have found it beneficial to receive feedback from students around the midpoint of the semester (*see ‘Sample of Midcourse Feedback’ in Canvas, Teaching page*); this helps me to adjust sooner in their course experience rather than solely having feedback at the end of their course experience. During my review of CIEs at the end of the semester, I write down notes to reflect upon and make modifications on course syllabi based on received feedback.

While students do note that my grading is fair and that my provided feedback is helpful, some students have made note of the timeliness of receiving an assignment grade. Prior to receiving this feedback, I had personal awareness that my timeliness on grading, particularly for longer papers, would benefit from being expedited. When I truly reflect on this, I come back to the pressure that I put on myself to ensure that adequate feedback and time is spent on the grading process itself, based on the specific assignment at hand. For example, in CPY 550, students spend great time and energy in creating a personal family genogram. The development and analysis of one’s personal and intergenerational family can be an emotionally difficult process;

as such, I want to ensure that I spend time on reviewing and giving feedback to such a personal assignment. However, I also recognize that speeding up my grading process will allow students to review and incorporate their feedback into their learning sooner.

Albert Bandura once stated that “Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success, but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure.” In reflecting upon this, and in implementing a pedagogical approach that focuses on the self-efficacy of students, I am reminded of the parallel process of my own self-efficacy in my teaching. It is my belief in self, coupled with my motivation and passion to continue my growth in being an effective educator, that drives me to continue moving forward. As an Assistant Professor, I have experienced moments in my career where I doubted myself, causing self-disbelief to paint an inaccurate image in my mind of who I was or was not as an educator. As I continue moving forward in my career at Rollins College, I plan to continue being reflective on my own abilities and confidence; I find that when I am present, mindful, and intentional, I can mitigate the uncertainty that comes with wavering self-efficacy.

(b) RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

My areas of research and scholarship broadly focus on: (1) Counselor Education and Supervision and (2) Outcome-based Research in Counseling.

1. At least one peer-reviewed published article in a peer-reviewed journal, and one additional published peer reviewed article, book chapter, or book.

For this review period, I had three refereed publications (*see 'Refereed Publications' in Canvas, Research and Scholarship page*). The first publication examined gender and social intelligence as predictors of internet gaming disorder, an upcoming mental health diagnosis that will be recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2022. For college students, internet gaming has the potential to cause significant distress, with impacts on their academic success and emotional well-being. In addition to general editing and review that comes with a collaborative writing process, my contribution to this manuscript was focused primarily on content related to: (a) internet gaming and social intelligence; (b) internet gaming and gender; and (c) social anxiety of college students. Research activities that I completed prior to this review period focused on college students and their lived experiences with anxiety, stress, and depression. Thus, my prior research experiences assisted in my contribution to this manuscript. As previously mentioned, I am a strong believer in my teaching being enhanced and influenced by my experiences in research; the internet gaming manuscript is no exception. For example, in my teaching of CPY 603, being engaged in active research about addiction allows for me to intentionally integrate current research to further enhance student learning.

As a former (2017-2021) member of the *Specialty Standards and Statements* committee for the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling (AARC), I had the opportunity to collaborate in the development of the *Standards of Care for Research in Group Work*; upon completion and review of these standards, they were published in two well-known counseling journals. As group counseling and assessment are critical aspects of the counseling profession, this project provided another opportunity for me to stay active with up-to-date standards that can be shared with current and future students.

I also co-authored (accepted - in review) a book chapter focused on a culturally informed and sex positive approach to sexuality. Additionally, the chapter explores how sexual scripts and sexual messaging from society, family, and culture influences one's sexual functioning, wellness, and satisfaction. I was grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with my colleague as well as engage with more scholarship and material that can be integrated into the courses I teach.

2. Regular, ongoing refereed and/or invited presentations at national and international professional conferences totaling a minimum of 4 national/international presentations.

For this review period, I had three presentations accepted at national/international conferences (see 'Refereed Presentations' in Canvas, Research and Scholarship page). The first presentation is a research and clinical area that brings about a sense of excitement; I am passionate about exploring the influence of discrimination on physiological and emotional well-being. This presentation has also served as a catalyst to begin writing a conceptual manuscript.

The second and third presentations listed were acceptances for the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), the flagship professional organization for counselor educators. Unfortunately, I had an unplanned medical procedure that prevented me from being able to attend; however, my co-presenters were able to present.

3. Other professional activities that indicate a consistent pattern of scholarship, such as: participating in seminars in which scholarly work is required; service as a referee or reviewer for professional journals and/or publishers; invited lectures; receipt of external grants or fellowships; workshop presentations; collaboration with students on presentations and/or research; other publications such as training manuals; presentations at local, state, and regional professional conferences; and coordinating professional conferences.

I served as a reviewer for three counselor education and counseling- journals, including: (a) Teaching and Supervision in Counseling (2018-2021); (b) Journal of College Counseling (2019-2022); and (c) Journal of Mental Health Counseling (2019-2022). I appreciate the opportunity to serve as a reviewer as it allows me to give back to my field while also helping to refine my own professional writing.

For this review period, I had three invited presentations (see 'Invited Presentations, Panels, Webinars, & Interviews' in Canvas, Research and Scholarship page) at regional, national, and international conferences. In 2021, myself and a colleague were invited by the Texas State University, CSI Sigma Tau Sigma Chapter to present at their 11th annual Kaleidoscope of Counseling Conference. This presentation topic is one that I have presented on at additional counseling conferences and am currently co-authoring (first author) a conceptual manuscript.

Within the American Educational Research Association (AERA), graduate students often hear about lived experiences of being a faculty member at an R1, research-intensive university. As an invited panel member during the 2021 AERA Conference, I was asked to specifically speak about the experiences of working at a liberal arts college.

I was invited by Dr. Peggy Ceballos, past-president of Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), an international honor society for the counseling and counselor education profession, to serve as a co-moderator

during their CSI Days (March 2021). We asked panelists to explore: (a) definitions of globalization; (b) best practices to engage in counseling interventions, training, and research abroad; (c) suggestions for counselor educators to infuse globalization in the curriculum; and (e) current and future areas of research related to the globalization of the counseling profession.

I was a recipient of the 2021 Faculty Research and Development Committee (FDRC), *Individual Development Grant* for my proposal titled: Bringing Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) into Graduate Counseling Courses. My hope is to develop a strong, secure knowledge and training-base to effectively integrate EFT into the family and relationship courses I teach; this will further enhance students' abilities to learn about an empirically supported approach to counseling. Similarly, engaging in EFT training provides the opportunity for developing future research studies that focus on enhancing relationships amongst populations of interest, including LGBTQIAP+ couples and families. Developing a research agenda in EFT also creates chances to include students in action-based research to further their education. Additional studies could include scholarship of teaching and learning in which I track the outcomes of student knowledge and skills in relationship-focused courses. As I have shared, I strive to integrate an experiential, transformative learning model into my courses to enhance students' opportunities for learning, development, and engagement.

(c) SERVICE

I strongly believe in the value and benefit of service at the department, institution, community, and professional levels (*for a list of GSC faculty responsibilities, see 'Service' page in Canvas*).

1. Membership on at least one of the A&S faculty governance committees.

In 2021, I was nominated to serve as a member of the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC); I am also serving as the FAC secretary. Serving on FAC has been an invaluable opportunity to continue developing community and connections at Rollins College.

2. On-going departmental service.

Currently, I serve as the Director of the Cornell Counseling Clinic (CCC). The CCC serves as a hands-on laboratory and extension of the classroom whereby students in their final year of graduate training provide free counseling services to Rollins students. Traditionally, the CCC served only Holt and Crummer students. However, in 2020, I began cultivating a working relationship with CAPS, allowing for more clients to receive services from the CCC. Collaborating with CAPS has been a wonderful and beneficial relationship as there has been an increase in the need for mental health services on college campuses, with Rollins College being no exception. Since starting as CCC director, I have implemented several changes, including: (a) Utilizing a telehealth platform for interns to provide counseling services via WebEx; (b) training interns on how to effectively use WebEx to facilitate counseling sessions; (c) updating the clinic from paper records to Titanium, a HIPAA-compliant, Electronic Medical Records system; and (d) training students on how to use Titanium.

3. Service to the college as reflected by activities such as presentations, college committee participation, special projects, etc.

In addition to serving on FAC, I was invited by Dean Sanders to serve as a member of the Holt Student Success Committee, with a primary goal of focusing on ways to enhance the emotional and physical wellness of Rollins students. Questions that we are tasked with exploring include: (a) What are we doing to support student success in their Physical and Emotional well-being?; (b) What barriers exist for Holt students in engaging with/seeking support in terms of their Physical and Emotional well-being?; and (c) How can we expand our opportunities/support for Holt students in these areas?

I am also a Confidential Support Faculty for Title IX Student Support. Within this role, I am a support person for Rollins students who may have experienced sexual assault, harassment, and violence. During the fall 2021 semester, I was invited as a mental health support for the Intro to SWAG class as they hosted a Rollins community forum on intimate partner violence.

4. Service to the community.

As a licensed counselor, I provide counseling services to individuals, couples, and families in the Greater Orlando community. My clinical specialty focuses on anxiety, stress, family of origin issues, sexuality, and LGBTGEQIAP+ experiences for adolescents, young adults, and couples. I also integrate a holistic approach to counseling to help clients increase awareness and coping related to the intersection of physical and mental health. Engaging in clinical work allows me to stay on top of my counseling skills and provides for invaluable opportunities to bring in “real life” clinical experiences into the classroom. Throughout my teaching, students often comment on how their learning is enhanced through examples of my current clinical work.

5. Elected office or committee work within national/international professional organizations.

Currently, I serve as a Co-Chair for the *Emerging Leaders program* for the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES). Additionally, I am also the Webmaster and Communications chair for Division E (Counseling and Human Development) of AERA.

(d) CLINICAL SUPERVISION AND EXPERIENCE

My work and identities as a supervisor and counselor wonderfully inform my teaching practices and relationships developed with students.

1. Attain and maintain licensure in Florida in Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, or Mental Health Counseling.

I am both a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC; 2017) and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT; 2021).

2. Attain and maintain Florida Approved Supervisor credential.

I am a Florida Approved Qualified Supervisor (2021) for both registered mental health counseling and registered marriage and family therapy interns.

3. Attain and maintain National Certified Counselor credential.

I am a Nationally Certified Counselor (2016).