Building a Consensus of the Professional Dispositions of Counseling Students

Counselor educators have the responsibility to evaluate students and to gatekeep those who are deemed incapable of providing effective services to future clients (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). The counseling profession's Code of Ethics (2014) clearly state that supervisors must evaluate and monitor supervisee limitations that could negatively affect services provided to clients. Institutions that abide by CACREP 2016 standards require faculty to systematically assess the professional dispositions of students throughout their training. This includes identifying key professional dispositions, measuring these dispositions over time and reviewing outcomes to make informed decisions.

Recent events highlight the lack of clarity for counselor educators to serve in evaluative and gatekeeping roles, specifically in enforcing student nondiscrimination when serving sexually marginalized populations (e.g., The *Ward v. Wilbanks*, 2010; Kaplan, 2014). The highly publicized nature of *Ward v. Wilbanks* made clear the litigious risks involved in counseling programs living up to their gatekeeping responsibilities (Burkholder, Hall & Burkholder, 2014) and it is not uncommon for students to use litigation to challenge school dismissal decisions and for counseling programs to defend themselves (Baldo, Softas-Nall, & Shaw, 1997; Frames & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, & Maxwell, 2002; McAdams, Foster, & Ward, 2007). Students are often dismissed due to personal issues or emotional and psychological difficulties (Brear, Dorrian, & Luscri, 2008) and the risks of students pursuing litigation is greater when dismissal is based on personal, nonacademic reasons (Olkin & Gaughen, 1991). Faculty members are often reluctant to dismiss students due to possible litigious challenges (Baldo et al., 1997; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995), taking additional responsibility in addressing the interpersonal deficits of

students due to former roles as clinicians (Kerl et al., 2002) and the lack of preferred models of pedagogy to determine the best remedial and developmental approaches to meet the needs of students (McAdams & Foster, 2007).

Over the past three decades there have been repeated calls for consensus in the area of professional dispositions (Borders & Benshoff, 1992; Hensley, Smith, & Thompson, 2003; Rust et al., 2013). Evaluative criteria have traditionally focused on the knowledge and skill sets of practitioners (Kaslow, Borden, Collins, et al., 2004) with professional dispositions of counselors only more recently being included (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Swank, Lambie & Witta, 2012; Swank, 2014). Clinical competencies in counseling have been described as a "moving target with an elusive criterion" (Robiner, Fuhrman, & Ristvedt, 1993, p.5), and though there is a greater understanding towards evaluation of students' knowledge and counseling skill sets, a greater understanding of professional dispositions is needed (Henderson & Dufrene, 2012; Rust, Raskin & Hill, 2013).

Much of the literature on professional dispositions has been conceptual in nature, detailing student remediation policies and evaluations of specific programs (Baldo, et al., 1997; Frame and Stevens-Smith, 1995; Kerl, et al., 2002; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; McAdams, et al., 2007). The policies proposed share the commonality of providing guidelines or rubrics to assess students along several domains of professional dispositions, including areas such as flexibility, personal responsibility, ability to receive feedback, etc. However, defining the professional dispositions among these rubrics was not possible due to limited overlap among the evaluative criteria. This could be due to different programs valuing certain dispositions more than others, or using different word variations accounting for similar dispositions or behaviors.

Faculty abiding by the CACREP standards and the ACA *Code of Ethics* are actively evaluating students and supervisees and the authors of this study sought to find a common ground of evaluation for the professional dispositions assessed. This article will share results from a content analysis of CACREP accredited counseling programs and the themes that emerged on the professional dispositions from the student retention policies and evaluations already in place. The term professional dispositions is used to encapsulate other terms that have been in the literature, such as non-academic behaviors, personal characteristics, professional performance, and personal development. Professional dispositions in counselor education will be defined as the ability to function effectively in a professional capacity with clients and others, and takes into account the personal characteristics of individuals such as the core values, attitudes, and beliefs that either enable or restrict that ability (Kerl et al., 2002; McAdams & Foster, 2007; Spurgeon, Gibbons, & Cochran, 2012). The research question guiding this study is: among CACREP accredited counseling programs, what are the professional dispositions that are most prevalent in student retention policies and evaluations of master's level counseling students?

Method

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis to identify the most recurring professional dispositions of counseling students reported in student retention policies, evaluations and rubrics of CACREP accredited counseling programs. Student retention policies were commonly found in counseling student handbooks and were usually accessible via program websites. To control for extraneous content being coded within handbooks, specific inclusion criteria were determined prior to the start of data analysis. The inclusion criteria included: (a) sections within counseling student handbooks headed as "Student Retention Policy," or containing similar wordings to differentiate evaluation of students; (b) sections of the handbook that include

at least two areas of student evaluation, protecting client welfare, or protecting the counseling profession; and (c) supervisor evaluations or disposition rubrics referenced within sections identified as student retention policies. Student retention policies of specific graduate programs were usually inclusive of all counseling tracks, however some programs utilized different evaluative criteria for specific tracks. To control for misrepresentation of frequency counts, all relevant policies and evaluations were included, though evaluative criteria listed more than once within the same institution were only coded once. Policies that did not differentiate between master's level and doctoral level students were still included, though policies intended solely for doctoral level students were not included in the study.

The research team consisted of two independent coders and an expert who served as a peer debriefer during the coding process. The coders were made up of a counselor educator doctoral candidate at the time and a licensed professional counselor who had taught graduate level coursework to counseling students. The expert was chosen based on having more than ten years of experience as a PhD level counselor educator and supervisor, being involved as a faculty in student retention and remediation processes, and being published in the area of remediation policies and disposition rubrics.

Data Analysis

This study followed an emergent process outlined by Stemler (2001) and Henderson and Dufrene, (2012). The steps of content analysis include; (a) defining units to be researched, (b) selecting the population from which units are sampled, (c) developing a plan for analysis, (d) coding the text within the units and, (e) analyzing the data.

The units of research and population sampled include student retention policies and evaluations referenced within CACREP accredited master's level counseling programs. The study

included all CACREP accredited counseling master's programs listed on the CACREP website. At the time of the investigation, there were 274 CACREP accredited institutions listed, with some of those institutions having multiple counseling programs and counseling tracks. A five step process was used to maximize the potential for programs to be included: (a) checking program websites for student retention policies, (b) sending an email to the CACREP correspondent of the program detailing the purpose of the study and providing informed consent, (c) sending a second email two weeks later, (d) making a phone call attempt to corresponding faculty or staff and (e) making a second phone call attempt. By the end of the process, 224 programs were included in the study which accounted for 82% of the programs listed on the CACREP website. Of the 224 graduate institutions sampled, counseling programs were from public and private institutions, traditional and faith based programs, and were distributed by ACES region as follows; WACES ($n = 20$), NCACES ($n = 59$), NARACES ($n = 42$), SACES ($n = 86$), RMACES ($n = 16$) and Canada ($n = 1$).

The plan of analysis included two phases; establishing word frequency counts, and categorizing frequencies into shared themes. According to Stemler (2001) establishing word frequency counts assumes that words mentioned most often are the words that reflect greater importance and for the purpose of this study, provides indication of the professional dispositions most valued within the counseling profession. This phase included one coder reviewing each unit of analysis of graduate programs and coding any word or phrase connected to professional dispositions or interpersonal traits. All units of analysis (i.e. counseling student handbooks, or student retention policies copied from program websites) were uploaded into the nVivo 10 program and used in the coding process. Words and specific dispositions that were coded were organized into nodes and each disposition reviewed was either coded into a separate node, or a

pre-existing node if the same ordering of words or similar content were used. The goal was to establish a comprehensive list of all dispositions used to assess students in counseling programs and to establish a total word frequency count and determine how often the specific dispositions were used. Nvivo would report the frequency count of words coded within each node and the additional coder would review each node and respective unit of analysis policy to provide a reliability check. Multiple meetings were held to compare results and make revisions to coding and naming of nodes as necessary. This followed a similar process to Henderson and Dufrene's content analysis study (2012).

The second phase of categorization included analyzing the nodes for patterns and interrelationships with other dispositions. An inductive process, each word and phrase was analyzed in how and what the authors specifically intended to measure. Potential nuances between word phrases were then evaluated. Those that shared similar themes were closely assessed on whether both should be a separate disposition or whether one could potentially subsume the other. To control for the inferential process of categorization, the peer debriefer was consulted as needed to provide semantic validity of the study (Krippendorf, 2013). A series of meetings were held to compare results from the peer debriefer, the main researcher and the additional coder. Necessary revisions were made until a consensus was reached between all three members. Analysis of the data was complete once categories were as mutually exclusive and exhaustive as possible and agreement was reached on each category (Stemler, 2001).

Results

Of the 224 programs that had student retention policies that met the inclusion criteria of the study, 47 of those programs failed to mention any workable specific dispositions to be coded. All 47 of these programs had student retention policies with the majority being clearly headed

within student handbooks. These sections would detail the importance of student evaluation and the remediation process, but either failed to mention the specific dispositions and competencies expected of students, or just reported adverse behaviors that would bring about remediation. As the lack of adverse behaviors does not provide evidence of demonstrating the dispositions expected of students (e.g. a student's uncooperativeness in professional settings does not demonstrate that the student is able to be cooperative with peers), these retention policies were not used in the analysis. These programs account for almost 20% of all CACREP accredited programs and present an alarming finding that will be further explored.

In total, 177 programs had reported specific dispositions in their policies, or specific rubrics of evaluations referenced in their student retention policy. Of these programs, 964 dispositions were coded, with a total of 82 nodes accounting for all codes. These 82 nodes were grouped into 7 categories or themes indicative of the personality traits, values and attitudes of professional dispositions expected of counseling students. The seven dispositions were; (1) openness to growth, (2) awareness of self and others, (3) integrity, (4) emotional stability, (5) flexibility, (6) compassion and (7) personal style. A summary of the categories and code tallies can be found in Table 1.

Openness to Growth

The largest of the dispositional categories shared the theme of openness to growth and consisted of 237 codes that made up 19 separate nodes. This category consisted of nodes that included students' willingness to learn and grow both professionally and personally and letting faculty and supervisors be a part of that process. The more prominent nodes, willingness to accept and use feedback, consisted of 67 codes ($n = 67$), and openness to new ideas ($n = 27$) were common findings throughout student retention policies across programs, due to them being a part

of the Professional Performance Review Policy (PPRP; McAdams et al., 2007) and the Professional Characteristics Evaluation Form (PCEF; Kerl et al., 2002), dispositional rubrics used by many programs throughout the country.

Other nodes included: a) values professional and personal growth ($n = 32$), b) initiative and motivation ($n = 34$), c) willingness to grow professionally ($n = 14$) and d) willingness to learn and work with diverse populations ($n = 9$). The language around these dispositions was similar among many graduate programs and was not part of any specific rubric or evaluation. For many programs, dispositions listed in student retention policies were ones that were created from rubrics specific to the graduate programs and the prevalence of these dispositions demonstrate a shared belief in the importance of students demonstrating these behaviors.

Awareness of Self and Others

The second largest dispositional category shared the theme of awareness of self and others and consisted of 186 codes that made up 19 nodes. This disposition included students' ability to be introspective of their own needs, strengths and areas of improvement, as well as an awareness of others with regards to recognizing cultural differences and the importance of working within those differences. Self-awareness ($n = 40$) was the largest node of this category and was defined by several programs as the ability to recognize one's own values, perspectives and attitudes and how they relate to one's behavior. This node is not part of a specific category of commonly used rubrics (e.g. PPRP, PCEF), though was still a common reference among student retention policies throughout the country. Though definitions of self-awareness varied among programs, the common themes included self-examination with acceptance of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and recognizing how one's own sense of self can influence others. Other nodes in this

category include accepting personal responsibility ($n = 39$) and demonstrating a sensitivity to diversity and others ($n = 28$).

Integrity

The dispositional categories of integrity and emotional stability had the same number of codes (158) and tied for the third largest in the study. Integrity was made up of seven nodes and was defined as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles and reflected the graduate programs' expectations of students abiding by the ACA *Code of Ethics* and respecting the confidentiality and boundaries expected of professional counselors. The largest node was the attention and adherence to ethical practices ($n = 93$) and despite this node making up most of the codes within this category, the separate node integrity ($n = 32$) was thought to be more foundational in nature, and better at encapsulating the various dispositions that were more centered on students' adherence to ethical practices. Other nodes within this category include judgement ($n = 12$) and respects privacy and confidentiality of others ($n = 11$).

Emotional Stability

Emotional stability had a total of 158 codes and was made up of ten nodes. This dispositional category included nodes that reflected a students' ability to handle different sources of stress associated with graduate study and practice. Specifically, it relates to how well one can manage conflict with others, and what thoughts and behaviors students demonstrate that give evidence to self-care while maintaining a receptivity to learning and being able to work with clients, regardless of external stressors. The largest nodes in this category were; maturity ($n = 37$), deals with conflict ($n = 33$), and stability ($n = 30$). All three of these nodes used similar language to describe demonstrating self-control in relationships, with special regards to anger and

impulsivity. Other nodes include reliability ($n = 22$), manages stress appropriately ($n = 19$), and tolerates ambiguity ($n = 7$).

Flexibility

The dispositional category of flexibility was made up of 98 codes that made up eight nodes that reflected students' ability to adapt to new situations both within the environment and with others, via cooperating with colleagues, authority figures, and clients. The largest nodes of this category included cooperating with others ($n = 42$), general flexibility ($n = 39$) and flexible in meeting client needs ($n = 6$). Specifically, behaviors that are more geared toward students responding to environmental demands via independent monitoring to assess whether an adjustment in response is necessary, and the efforts given to adjust to those demands appropriately.

Compassion

Compassion contained 75 codes and made up of 12 nodes that describe students' acceptance and respect of others regardless of differences and the ability to hold a positive regard of clients. Empathy was the largest node of this category ($n = 20$) and a common disposition listed within retention policies. While most programs offered little definition of the indicators that appropriately demonstrate empathy, several programs offered behavioral definitions that included a combination of being sensitive to and understanding of the thoughts and feelings of another with the ability to convey that understanding to others. Other nodes within this category include respect for individual differences ($n = 13$) and respect and appreciation of diverse populations ($n = 9$).

Personal Style

Personal style was the least occurring theme within retention policies and consisted of 52 codes that made up 11 nodes. This category included nodes around distinct personality characteristics that graduate programs felt were required for students to demonstrate in their

interactions with clients and others. The nodes of positive attitude ($n = 19$) and a general listing of attitude ($n = 6$) predominantly make up this category. While most programs were vague in offering definitions of these dispositions, the context used in defining the traits include demonstrating sincerity and having a positive predisposition towards clients and others. Other dispositions include being genuine ($n = 7$) and demonstrating warmth ($n = 5$).

Discussion

The current study examined the professional dispositions that were most referenced within student retention policies of CACREP accredited graduate programs. A main goal of the study was to provide evidence of the most common themes found within student retention policies on the professional dispositions used in evaluation of master's students. These themes provide a foundation for building consensus within the counseling profession, and counselor educators can use the categories as a reference point in reviewing the criteria used in the retention policies and evaluation rubrics within their respective graduate programs. While the categories found within the current study are not necessarily indicative of consensus, the themes are in use by a large number of CACREP accredited counseling programs, and provide a viable starting point. Additionally, the large number of programs using these dispositions can provide a framework for other counseling programs who are in the process of restructuring their student evaluation process to abide to the new CACREP 2016 standards of identifying their key dispositions for student evaluation (CACREP, 2016).

Counselor educators who uphold their gatekeeping responsibility with students who refuse to work with diverse populations, specifically sexually marginalized populations, has been a contested area for the counseling profession (Hutchens, Block, and Young, 2013). Evaluating multicultural competence is a complex area and graduate programs' retention policies support this

by detailing expectations that cover several different disposition categories, including students' openness to grow, awareness of self and others, and compassion. One such example is that students demonstrate an awareness of cultural differences in others and how their own social location influences the work they do with clients, while remaining open to learning about systemic issues of privilege and oppression. It is important to note that many of the dispositional rubrics within counseling programs capture students' ability to work with diverse populations as being an area of ethical practice (PPRP; McAdams et al., 2007). In addition, when Julea Ward was challenged with her refusal to work with sexually marginalized populations, as being a violation of the *ACA Code of Ethics*, her response was one of defensiveness and rigidity, "Who is ACA to tell me what to do? I answer to a higher power, [and] I'm not going to sell out God" (Dugger and France, 2014, p. 136).

Solely citing the ACA *Code of Ethics*, a dispositional category of integrity, as a means to adhere to this aspect of practice may be limited in success, and if any indication of the dispositions that many counseling programs value, undermines the full scope of what is required to provide effective multicultural competence practices. Should a student display deficient attitudes or practices around multicultural competence, counselor educators need to address the issue as one not solely based on integrity, but one that is a combination of openness to growth, awareness of self and others, and compassion.

A lot of research has demonstrated that common factors within the therapeutic relationship are major determinants of successful therapeutic outcomes (Herman, 1993; Norcross; 2010; Elkins, 2016). The traits of openness to self-examination, awareness of self and others, genuineness, approachability, honesty warmth have all been identified as necessary for clinicians to establish positive interpersonal relationships in individual and small group contexts (Duba,

Paez, and Kindsvatter, 2010). The problem with students who are resistant to working with diverse populations, encompasses more than working with a specific population and highlights concerns about the very dispositions and traits necessary to effectively provide services to all clients. Counselor educations can look at the context of the student in question and focus on one or more of the dispositional areas as needed for remediation.

Another finding from the study was the alarming number of programs that failed to mention the specific criteria used to evaluate students within their student retention policies. Of the 227 programs that had retention policies that met inclusion criteria, 47 of those programs did not mention specific dispositions from which evaluations of students were based (roughly 20% of the programs sampled). Though the specific dispositions expected of students could have been located in other areas of the student handbook or mentioned elsewhere within the graduate program, that nothing was mentioned in the policies in which evaluation of students is a central topic is concerning for two reasons.

First, the lack of transparency puts those graduate programs at greater risk for liability by not offering clear procedural due process to students. Students dismissed from programs could argue that they were dismissed unfairly and that faculty expectations were not clearly described, citing the handbook as evidence. Should a court ruling agree with the student on not being given procedural due process, the consequences could be disastrous for the counseling program. Though policies with these programs clearly state faculty involvement in evaluating students, they fail to mention the specific dispositions expected of students, thus a lower likelihood that students would have the ability to self-monitor themselves. Another concern for these programs is that they will need to identify the key professional dispositions required for evaluating students, to adhere to the new CACREP 2016 standards (CACREP 2016, Section 4 Standard G). In addition, without

graduate programs detailing specific evaluative criteria, students would be unable to self-assess, an area considered a key competency for effective counselors and mental health professionals (Kaslow et al., 2007; Rodolfa et al., 2005; Ruben, Bebeau, Leigh, et al., 2007).

Second, the ideal climate for which evaluation can take place is one that is transparent and fosters a sense of trust and understanding, where students would feel empowered to engage in a bottom-up discourse and voice their own areas for growth with faculty and supervisors (Foster and McAdams, 2009). By not listing specific dispositions, it is unlikely that students would be able to understand what is expected of them, let alone trust the evaluative process. This lack of understanding and trust could lead to a climate where students would be guarded with faculty and secretive about areas that could be of possible concern, a setting antithetical to effective evaluation. Programs that used language that was punitive in nature and listing behaviors of what not to do are arguably insufficient in promoting a climate of trust and understanding. In addition, students who graduate are likely to become supervisors with the responsibility of evaluating and adhering to the gatekeeping process of their future supervisees. Providing a climate in which students are active in their own evaluative process not only fosters greater potential for faculty meeting student needs, but also prepares those students to better perform future evaluative responsibilities.

Implications

The results of this study provide the most prevalent dispositional categories used within CACREP accredited programs and we hope that the categories found from this study may spark more discussions around which dispositions counselor educators can hope to facilitate in graduate students during their training process. Such discussions would further the evaluative process by challenging professionals to critically examine how they wish to evaluate students and whether quantifying and measuring certain dispositions is possible. Once assessments can accurately

capture professional dispositions, counselor educators can then utilize strategies to facilitate these dispositions during graduate training and utilize more targeted strategies for students in remediation.

Suggestions for future research include any studies or research that further the discussion on establishing a consensus on the professional dispositions expected of graduate students. The results of this study provide a snapshot of "what is" and for consensus to occur, an agreement of "what should be" needs to take place among counseling professionals. A Delphi study using the disposition categories found within the current study would be a considerable step in forming the consensus process (Clayton, 1997). Experts can evaluate the fit of the categories and add or remove the areas they feel to be a necessary part of evaluation. With the results of such a study, the final categories could form an assessment and be empirically validated through factor analysis and predictive validity measures such as client satisfaction surveys or supervisor evaluations.

Another finding from the investigation was the wide range of variance in student retention policies among graduate programs, with some using specific evaluations or rubrics, while others failed to mention any evaluative criteria at all. Another study could investigate students' attitudes around faculty and supervisor evaluation, specifically investigating perceived importance and comfort around it. The results of such a study could be used to determine whether the ideal climate of evaluations exists today, and could serve a necessary foundation for dialogue between students and counselor educators in how such a climate could come to be the norm.

Limitations

A possible limitation of the study include the timing of securing retention policies from faculty of other programs, in that communication efforts with faculty was done mostly in the summer months, a time when faculty are less available for correspondence. Because of this, an

additional step was added to correspond with faculty members within the fall semester, which resulted in the second most effective yield in retention policies. Should other studies hope to replicate the current study's methodology, then it is advised that attempts to correspond with faculty coincide more within the academic school year.

Another limitation is that shared word choices of dispositions may have different meanings and intentions among different graduate programs, and may not be as appropriate a fit within the categories of the current study. Some graduate programs' retention policies listed criteria that were vague and offered little clarification or definition, and using other programs' definitions may not be compatible with the intent of those programs. However, this demonstrates the need for further discussion in clarifying the specific criteria in student evaluation. In attempting to clump the many word combinations of dispositions into themes, more discussion can take place among counseling professionals about what they wish to see demonstrated in counseling students, which in turn would guide evaluation efforts.

Conclusion

Evaluation of supervisees within counseling has evolved to focus less on adherence to theory and specific skill sets, to more fully account for the factors that contribute to developing the therapeutic alliance between counselor and client. The current study's investigation of the dispositions graduate programs use to assess students provides evidence that the counseling profession is evolving in kind. Much like what was proposed by Rodolfa et al., (2005), professional dispositions should be seen as *foundational* to the competencies and skill sets the graduate programs focus their training efforts on. Specifically, a student's professional competency, such as maintaining healthy boundaries and upholding ethical practices, would be severely compromised if they were shown to demonstrate a lack of integrity, as integrity is a disposition

that is foundational to those competencies. The area of professional dispositions has been a contested area within mental health and it is the hope that the results of the current study can provide a step forward in leading to consensus within the counseling profession.

Such a consensus would allow counselor educators to have greater safety in enforcing remediation policies and would provide greater transparency in evaluative procedures, thus fostering a more ideal climate around evaluation. The implications of such a climate are all positive, with students being able to better voice areas of growth within themselves, fostering a greater ability to self-assess and allowing faculty to better meet their students' needs. Students would also be better suited for supervisory responsibilities, having taken direct action in their own evaluative process. Lastly, counselor educators can have greater clarity in evaluative practices, with the hope of making student remediation less a retroactive process and more a proactive one. Though there is still a great deal of research that needs to be done before a consensus can be reached, providing a foundation to facilitate such a dialogue is a significant starting point.

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Table 1. Nodes, Word Frequency Counts and Phrases from Analysis

CATEGORIES/NODE	#	PHRASES FROM RETENTION POLICIES/*infrequent dispositions*
Openness to growth		
Willingness to Accept and Use Feedback	67	"Inclined or prepared to listen to supervisors and to ungrudgingly carry out directions." "The student demonstrates the ability to receive, integrate, and utilize feedback from peers, instructors, and supervisors."
Initiative and Motivation	34	"Initiative is demonstrated by offering ideas and suggestions to others, setting goals for self- improvement, seeking advice and feedback, and independently searching for, creating, or modifying plans and materials."
Values Professional and Personal Growth	32	"Demonstrated openness to self-examination and personal and professional self- development."
Openness to New Ideas	27	"Remain open to ideas, learning, feedback, and change."
Values Introspection	16	"Value self-awareness and self-examination, and take responsibility for seeking professional help for issues that might impede one's counseling practice."
Willingness to Grow Professionally	14	"Willingness to risk self in new experiences and groups (e.g., active participation in learning experiences that challenge and develop skills and clarify values)."
Willingness to Learn and Work with Diverse Populations	9	"Students demonstrate willingness to engage in professional interactions with persons from diverse cultures."
Openness	8	Openness
Openness to Supervision	8	"Receptiveness to supervision."
Commitment to Lifelong Learning	7	"The competent professional is a lifelong learner."
Seeks Supervision	4	Seeks Supervision
Other	11	*Cooperates with Remediation Plan* (3), *Receptive to Feedback* (2), *Responding to Supervision* (2), *Effective Use*

		of Supervision, Self-Directed, Openness to Take Interpersonal Risks, Critical Thinker
Awareness of Self and Others		
Self-Awareness	40	"Demonstrates ability to recognize and monitor personal stress and emotional reactions to professional responsibilities." "Candidate consistently displays accurate introspection, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses and; consistently displays an understanding of the impact of personal issues within the therapeutic relationship."
Accept Personal Responsibility	39	"Exhibits ability to take responsibility for one's actions." "Takes personal responsibility for one's own behavior."
Awareness of Own Impact on Others	30	"Recognizes her/his personal and professional impact upon others."
Sensitivity to Diversity	15	"Sensitivity to issues of diversity and respect for individual differences."
Sensitivity (to others)	13	"Demonstrates sensitivity toward others."
Personal Awareness of Strengths and Limitations	12	"Student respects self and possesses an awareness of strengths and limitations."
Reflections	9	"Demonstrating willingness and ability to use self-reflection to promote professional growth."
Reflective	8	"The competent professional is a reflective practitioner." "Reflectiveness."
Awareness of Power Differences in Therapy	4	"The student demonstrates sensitivity to real and ascribed differences in power between themselves and others, and does not exploit or mislead other people during or after professional relationships."
Other	16	*Awareness of Cultural Self and Others* (3), *Introspective to Self-Care Needs* (3), *Wellness* (3), *Sensitive to Mental Health Needs of Clients, Mindfulness, Capacity for Insight, Demonstrates Realistic Expectations of Self, Learns from Experience, Awareness of Environmental Factors Influence Client Success, Appropriately Addresses limitations with Clients*
Integrity		
Integrity	32	"The student respects the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people."

		"The student respects the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and choices regarding self-determination." "The student behaves in accordance with the program's accepted code(s) of ethics/standards of practice."
Attention and Adherence to Ethical Practices	93	"Understand, appreciate, and adhere to professional standards of ethics and practice." "Ability to understand and demonstrate ethical and professional behavior."
Judgment	12	"Students must display sound moral and ethical judgment."
Respects Privacy and Confidentiality of Others	11	"Student maintains client/colleague/peer confidentiality as defined by the ACA Code of Ethics."
Respects Professional and Personal Boundaries	7	"Demonstrates appropriate boundaries: sexual, ethical, and professional."
Other	3	*Trustworthiness* (2), *Exhibits Personal Courage and Strength*
Emotional Stability		
Maturity	37	"The student demonstrates appropriate self-control (such as anger control, impulse control) in interpersonal relationships with faculty, peers, and others." "The student exhibits appropriate levels of self-assurance, confidence, and trust in own ability." "The student follows professionally recognized conflict resolution processes, seeking to informally address the issue first with the individual(s) with whom the conflict exists."
Deal With Conflict	33	"Ability and willingness to deal with conflict." "Demonstrates the ability to manage conflict resolution appropriately."
Stability	30	"Personal stability, as indicated by consistent affective, cognitive, and behavioral management in the program, including successful management of all personal issues that may prevent performance of the duties of a professional counselor."
Reliability	22	"Fulfills obligations promptly, consistently, reliably, and according to expectations stated by professor or supervisor."
Manages Stress Appropriately	19	"Cope effectively with stressors precipitated by the academic and clinical expectations/requirements of the program and additional stressors such as jobs and family situations."
Tolerate Ambiguity	7	"Tolerates demanding workloads and stressful conditions. Demonstrates the ability to function in ambiguous situations. "

Balance	5	"Student appears to maintain a balance in his or her life."
Other	5	*Confidence Balanced with Humility* (3), *Self-Acceptance and confidence, Psychologically healthy*
Compassion		
Empathy	20	"Exhibit and understand the importance of respectful, genuine, and empathic attitudes toward clients, thereby promoting client dignity, self-determination, and welfare."
Respect for Individual Differences	13	"Student shows a respect for individual differences."
Interested in Welfare of Others	9	"Student conveys an interest in the welfare of others."
Respect and Appreciation of Diverse Populations	9	"Respect for and celebration of diverse people and cultures."
Respect (for others)	8	"Effectively demonstrates respect."
Acceptance	5	"Acceptance of Diverse Ideas and Values."
Other	11	*Fairness in Treating Others* (3), *Non-judgmental* (2), *Respect Client Welfare* (2), *Respect Dignity and Self-Worth of Others* (2), *Unconditionally believes in client growth, Appreciates client strengths*
Flexibility		
Flexibility	39	"The ability to adapt to situations and experiences, and to adjust one's behavior appropriately."
Cooperativeness with Others	42	"Student exhibits cooperative behavior as evidenced by a willingness to give others time and space to articulate their views."
Flexible in Meeting Client Needs	6	"Exhibit and understand the importance of the ability to engage clients, acknowledging the unique nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels and across cultures."
Collaborate with Others	5	"Ability to consult/ collaborate with others."
Other	6	*Cognitive Flexibility* (2), *Flexible in Professional Relationships* (2), *Creativity, Maintains objectivity*
Personal Style		
Positive Attitude	19	"positive attitude." "Demonstrates a positive attitude."
Genuineness	7	"This quality is most evident when you are real, authentic

		and congruent in interactions with others; what one sees in you is consistently portrayed in a variety of situations and circumstances."
Attitude	6	"Attitude."
Warmth	5	"Exhibits authenticity, warmth, and appropriate interpersonal skills."
Patience	4	"Shows appropriate level of patience."
Sense of Humor	4	"capable of not taking self "too seriously"; imparts joy and optimism into difficult situations."
Other	7	*Authenticity* (2), *Congruence* (2), *Optimism, Curiosity, Openness to be real with clients*

Note. Words in bold denote the names of each category. Select dispositions that were listed frequently include sample phrases from retention policies to provide evidence of how dispositions were coded and chunked within specific categories. Specific nodes were chosen to reflect general range of dispositional categories.