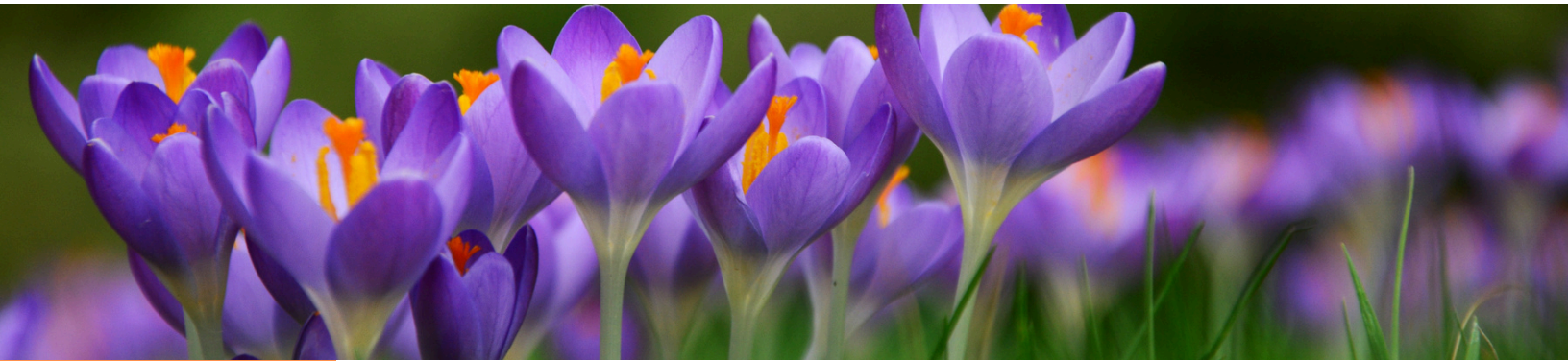




COUNSELOR EDUCATION UPDATE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM AT WCSU



THIS ISSUE

School Counseling
Intern of the Year
PAGE 1

Farewell! and
Welcome!
PAGE 2

Counselors Corner
PAGE 3

Professional
Development & HRSA
Grant Update
PAGE 4

CSCA, Electives,
Networking
PAGE 5

Student & Faculty
Highlights
PAGE 6

HUNTER MERRILL

2024 School Counseling Intern of the Year

Congratulations to WCSU 2024 graduate, Hunter Merrill, who was selected by the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) as their **2024 School Counseling Intern of the Year!**

Hunter, who interned at Head O'Meadow (HOM) Elementary School in Newtown, CT, was nominated by her site supervisor, Lisa Kilcourse. Lisa shared why she nominated Hunter for this award.

As a WCSU alumni of the Counselor Education program I am honored to be Hunter Merrill's supervisor. She is FABULOUS and was a true lifesaver in many instances. Hunter began her internship at HOM School in August 2023; however, it was her fourth year in our school. Prior to this commitment, Hunter was a paraeducator and then a building sub (while completing her practicum in Danbury) at HOM school. While she was a paraeducator, I was impressed by her calm and caring demeanor while working with students on many different levels, including those with behavioral challenges. Fast forward to this school year and I am even more amazed.

The 2023-2024 school year was a tough year in our building for many different reasons. Hunter took initiative to do what's best for kids. I was so impressed each week with what she brought to the table. Hunter's positive attitude and problem-solving mindset helped us meet kids where they are at. Hunter stepped up and stepped in for all typical and nontypical school counseling duties. She participated in our MTSS meetings, school climate meetings, and A team meetings. She also delivered k-4 classroom lessons on her own with impeccable classroom management skills. Her individual and group counseling were beautifully executed with time management to get our students back in their classrooms and entering calmly. **"I can't wait to see where Hunter ends up. In my eyes, she is already a School Counselor. Any school will be lucky to have her!"**

Hunter says working with Lisa during internship was an invaluable learning experience. She was an excellent mentor and I couldn't imagine working and learning alongside anyone else. **"Thanks to Lisa's confidence in my abilities, I took on significant independent work early on in my internship which allowed me to grow and become more confident in my abilities."**



CLASS OF 2024

2024 COHORT

You say goodbye, and I say hello - The Beatles, 1967

Farewell!

This is always a bittersweet time of year as one group of students graduates and leaves WCSU, and the other starts their Counselor Education studies just a week later. We are happy to wish the 2024 graduates good luck as they leave WCSU and wish them success as they enter the counseling profession.

We are excited for our graduates and look forward to hearing more about their accomplishments. We hope they will remain in touch with WCSU as involved alumni and mentors so current and future students can learn from their advice and experiences.

and Welcome!

2024 has been a banner year for applicants to WCSU's Counselor Education program. We are thrilled to welcome 27 Clinical Mental Health Counseling students and 13 School Counseling students as they begin their courses this summer session and officially start the path toward a career in counseling.

This new 2024 cohort has a wide range of interests and experience. This will make class discussions richer, deeper and more interesting as students share and learn from each other.

We are excited to have this group of students join the WCSU Counselor Education family and we look forward to getting to know them better.



COUNSELORS CORNER

Annette Andronaco and Francesca Pulice SC '24, Dr. Jessica Gutheil, Advisor

Counselors Corner is a group of Counselor Education students who united to plan opportunities for fellow students to get together both socially and for professional development. The group was created to replace Chi Sigma Iota, the counseling honor society that is no longer active on campus.

Not all activities have been planned by Counselors Corner, but we're glad that some spill-over has occurred, like when the 2nd year cohort decided to plan a "Friendsgiving" (or maybe "Cohortsgiving?") when they were on campus for the November Clinical Skills Labs the week before Thanksgiving. A huge potluck lunch was enjoyed while students relaxed and reconnected.

During the Fall '23 semester, Counselors Corner hosted a Winter Holiday get-together on Dec 8th. The group enjoyed good conversation and hot chocolate, appetizers and yummy desserts. We also welcomed Erika Daniels, CMHC '23, who answered questions about her new job and the transition from graduate student intern to professional counselor.

This inspired another event for a larger audience! **Q&A WITH ALUMNI**, was a remote event held on April 4th. Alumni shared what they learned as Counselor Education students, how they've integrated that knowledge into their current roles, and words of wisdom for both new students beginning their studies, and students graduating soon and starting their journey to professional practice.



NOV 2023:
(RIGHT)
COHORTSGIVING,
2ND YEAR
STUDENTS
CELEBRATE WHILE
ON CAMPUS FOR
SATURDAY
CLINICAL SKILLS
LABS



DEC 2023: WINTER
HOLIDAY SOCIAL,
CASUAL
CONVERSATION AND
SCRUMPTIOUS SNACKS



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HRSA GRANT UPDATE

Dr. Lorrie-Anne Monte, Program Director

Each year, the Counseling Education program offers a professional development series of speakers. The presentations are via Zoom, which allows us to also invite the School of Nursing-Psych APRN and the MS Addiction Studies students. Bringing in speakers who use counseling skills in their daily work brings theory to life and allows students to interact with professionals.

Spring 2024 speakers included:

- February 21st, Mindy Solomon LCSW, from Family & Children's Aid, spoke about **ACEs, (Adverse Childhood Experiences)** with SC, CMH and other groups invited.
- On February 27th, Diana Perry PsyD, from CREC (Capitol Region Educational Council) presented **UPLIFT: Foundations of Trauma-Informed Care** with a module on **Self Care, Staff and System Wellness**, and returned on March 27th to speak about **Peer Support**.
- April 3rd, Ralph Cohen PhD, Professor Emeritus, CCSU Marriage and Family Therapy Program, IFS Senior Lead Trainer and IFS Training Coordinator, CCSU Office of Continuing Education presented an overview of **IFS (Internal Family Systems)**, and how it may help clinicians help their clients.
- On April 8th, John Crocker M.Ed, Founder & Director of MASMHC, Director of School Mental Health & Behavioral Services, Methuen (MA) Public School District, spoke on **Trauma Informed Counseling in the Schools** to SC and other interested students.

These programs are supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$766,200 with 0% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov) or contact Grant Program Director, Dr. Lorrie-Anne Monte, montel@wcsu.edu or University Assistant, Christina Davis, davisc@wcsu.edu.



Activities of the 2021-2025 HRSA grant continue for year three (July '23-June '24) of the four-year grant.

Development of a simulation program with a counseling focus continues to be refined. Actors ("Simulated Patients" or SPs) are recruited primarily from social work, nursing, and psychology departments to portray patients/clients during monthly clinical skills labs. Using SPs allows counseling students to practice skills in a safe environment. (See photos on page 6.)

Counselor Education and Nursing professors have been working together on an Interprofessional Collaboration to develop a pilot study simulation scenario. Nursing Professors Navninder Kaur and Aisha Chahal sought CE input on their doctoral study to evaluate any differences using mannikins or simulated patients while teaching cultural competency to undergraduate nursing students. We provided sample scripts, support materials, and trained the simulated patient recruited by the Nursing professors. We also provided two Social Work students, who are experienced SPs for CE, to team with nursing students to rehearse the Simulation scenario. The study continued with 2nd and 4th year Nursing students participation in clinical simulations.

The vast majority of HRSA funding goes to third-year Counseling Education students who receive stipends during their fall and spring semester internships. As these students move forward to beginning their professional careers, we send them HRSA surveys asking about their internship experience, their sites, populations served, future plans, etc. The annual report, which includes (anonymous) information from 3rd year students, is due to HRSA each July.

CSCA CONFERENCE

NETWORKING & TRAINING



Wednesday, May 22, 2024 - Sacred Heart University

This annual event brings together K-12th grade School Counselors from across the state, representing urban, suburban and rural school districts. Some of its goals are to share experiences, perspectives, insights and the latest trends in the counseling and educational-related field.

- Guest Speakers
- Sponsors and Exhibition Hall
- Graduate Student Poster Presentation
- Breakout Sessions (over 30! Including 2 presented by SC interns.) WCSU is represented by **Dr. Monte, Professor Darragh, Dr. Lomas, and Dr. Bernhardt.**

"How to 'Grow & Thrive' a Practicum/Internship Student!"

- Presenters: Lorrie-Anne Monte, Ph.D, Co-chair Educational Psychology Dept., Counselor Education Program and CACREP Coordinator, WCSU and Curtis Darragh IV, Professor, School Counseling Program, WCSU, Certified School Counselor, Danbury Public Schools

This workshop will help develop growing and thriving practicum and internship students. Learn from Western Connecticut State University professors on how to be a superstar during your practicum/internship. You will learn numerous strategies to engage and set yourself apart. Get ready to energize and flourish through our workshop.

"Why kids in Connecticut bring weapons to school and what school counselors can do about it."

- Presenters: Gabriel Lomas, Ph.D., Certified School Counselor, Professor, Founder for Center for School Safety, Amery Bernhardt, DM (Homeland Security), Center for School Safety Director, Former SRO

This workshop will share findings from a study which asked school administrators about weapons in CT schools during the 2022-23 school year. Attendees will learn reasons why students reported they bring weapons to school. Interactive portions will focus on what counselors can do to reduce the presence of weapons on campuses.

CT Counseling Association - CCACounseling.com
(See website for information, news & events)
May 3, 2024 - Spring Renewal: Elevating Excellence through Professional Development, Cromwell CT;
See website News sections for Graduate Student Scholarships available to CCAC members.
On-going - professional networking & training ops.

NY Mental Health Counselors Assn - NYMHCA.org
April 12-14, 2024 - New York State of Mind:
Celebrating the Mental Health Care Community,
Albany NY

CT School Counselor Assn - CSCA.wildapricot.org
May 22, 2024 - CSCA 2024 Annual Conference
On-going - professional networking roundtables,
e.g., 1st Year SC; Elem./Middle/High; FAFSA and College applications, etc. Join a committee - recruiting now!

NYS School Counselor Association - NYSSCA.org
Nov 21-23, 2024 - The Drive Behind Thrive, Annual Conference, Albany NY

Westchester/Putnam/Rockland (School) Counseling Association (WPRCA) - Fall Guidance Expo date TBA

Western CT Coalition - WCTCoalition.org
Hope In Action: Monthly on-line training available
Naloxone Overdose Prevention Training
QPR Suicide Prevention Training

ELECTIVES!

See Banner or Open/Close to register for all classes. If you have any problems registering, contact Christina Davis, davisc@wcsu.edu for assistance.

SUMMER:

Always popular is EPY 698: **Psychopharmacology**, taught by Dr. Diana Naddeo on Wed, 5/20-6/22, 6-8:30 pm, Synch.

FALL:

A newer elective getting great reviews is EPY 598: **Understanding the Veteran Experience**, taught by Dr. Sharon Young, on Mon, 8/27-12/15, 5:30-8 pm, Synch.

STUDENTS ON CAMPUS AND FACULTY IN THE COMMUNITY

STUDENTS PRACTICE CLINICAL SKILLS WITH SIMULATED PATIENTS/CLIENTS



FEB 2024: (ABOVE) 2ND YEAR SC STUDENTS MAKING CONNECTIONS AT CLINICAL SKILLS LABS



FEB 2024: (LEFT) "SIMULATED PATIENTS" JOIN SC ADVANCED GROUP THERAPY. MAR 2024: (BELOW) CMHC GROUP THERAPY



MAR 2024: (LEFT, BELOW) "SIMULATED PATIENTS" WITH COUNSELING & HELPING RELATIONSHIPS 1ST YEAR STUDENTS



DR. NADDEO FEATURED ON PODCAST AND AT CONFERENCE

PODCAST: SPECIAL ED ON SPECIAL ED - Demystifying Psychological Evaluations

The November 28, 2023 episode welcomed Diana Naddeo to demystify psychological evaluations of school-aged children. Dr. Naddeo is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Owner of the Center for Assessment and Psychotherapy and Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling at WCSU's Counselor Education program. This episode looks at the significance of psychological evaluations, offering invaluable perspectives for parents, educators, and professionals in the field.

Known for her comprehensive approach to pediatric psychological assessments, Dr. Naddeo integrates emotions, personality, learning and behavior to offer a holistic understanding of her patients. Her expertise spans psychiatric diagnosis, educational assessment, and a myriad of treatment approaches aimed at crafting effective plans for patients and their families.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: COUNCIL OF PARENT ATTORNEYS AND ADVOCATES (COPAA)

Dr. Naddeo co-presented a breakout session for attendees of the COPAA Annual Conference in Atlanta, March 7-10, 2024 on the topic of Interpreting Psycho-Educational Evaluations

Imagine you just received your student's psychoeducational evaluation; now what? This session helped parents/advocates/attorneys understand how to read the report and interpret the data. Commonly used assessments such as the WISC, and WIAT were dissected to help attendees truly understand what the data is telling them about their student so they can use the evaluation to better advocate for their student.

Dedicated to seeing "the whole child," Dr. Naddeo values the relationship between herself and her patients, and strives to create a warm, accepting and easy-going atmosphere while also emphasizing the need to undo old patterns of behavior that are barriers to healthy functioning. She says, **"Every child's learning journey is unique, and psychological evaluations are key to unlocking their full potential."**