

Career Connections

Counseling

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Counseling is a professional activity that involves interpersonal contact with individuals or small groups to help improve their functioning in some important domain of their life experience (mental health, physical health, career, spirituality, etc.). Because there are so many important life domains, the counseling field is wide open to a variety of career paths. The Counseling Career Connections program is meant to give students who are interested in this field some guidance. There are many different professional disciplines that can lead to a career in counseling—clinical psychology, social work, pastoral counseling, school counseling, marriage counseling, occupational counseling, and nursing are just a few. No matter what your major or what specific profession you hope to pursue, completing some or all of the elements of the program described here will prepare you for working as a counselor and will give you the knowledge and experience you will need to get a job or go to graduate school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Exploring Options

As soon as you determine that you would like to pursue this program, you should take a trip to the Career Center (3rd floor of the Campus Center). Fortunately, the Career Center has a variety of books and pamphlets in this area.

It is also a good idea for you to talk to people who have experience in this field in order to get a sense of how they approach the field. There are several people on campus who can give a variety of perspectives on this field—Skip Dine Young (a licensed clinical psychologist in the Psychology Department); David Reetz (Coordinator of Counseling Services); Katie Dine Young (a licensed clinical psychologist in Counseling Services); and Margaret Krantz (in Career Services).

Every year, Hanover graduates a number of students who pursue a career in counseling. Therefore, there are a large number of alumni in different stages of their career that are available for you to talk to about what they do. The Career Center keeps an active list of these alums who have agreed to talk with students. Give one or more of them a call—typically they are very eager to share their working knowledge and experiences, especially with current Hanover students. In some cases, job shadowing is even a possibility.

Academics

Choosing Your Major

There is no single major you should choose if you are interested in pursuing a career in counseling. Because the field is so diverse, there are many ways into it. In general, most liberal arts degrees would be helpful in preparing students by giving them skills in critical thinking, writing, and speaking. However, there are a number of majors that over the past several years seem to be the most common for this field—sociology, psychology, theology, English, communication, and biology. Instead of feeling like you need to pick the “right” major, it is usually better to pick the major in which you are most interested and then plan your co-curricular experiences to compliment the major and your career goals.

In terms of course work, Hanover currently offers two courses that are directly related to a career in counseling. Many students will want to take at least one of these courses.

PSY 332: Counseling and Psychotherapy (note that this course has several pre-requisites).

There are many other courses that are offered at Hanover that may be of interest to you as you pursue this program. The following are some suggestions; they should not be taken as requirements. Look them over, along with other possibilities, and discuss them with your academic and/or career program advisor.

BIO 161: General Biology I: Heredity and Evolution

BIO 185: General Biology II: Cells and Systems

BIO 221: Genetics

COM 322: Language and Communication

COM 327: Interpersonal Communication

Literature classes

Spanish as a language (counselors proficient in Spanish are in high demand)

Philosophy courses (especially those dealing with ethics, medicine and social conditions)

HF 231: Personal and Community Health

PSY162: Neuropsychology (NW LADR; linked with BIO161 or 165)

PSY 243: Behavior Disorders

SOC 219: Social Problems

Theology courses (especially those dealing with ethics, medicine and social conditions)

THR 131: Acting: Psychology and Technique

Special Note: The courses listed above would provide you with some general skills and knowledge that would be useful in any area of counseling. However, at some point you will need to choose a specific discipline that you plan on entering (e.g., social work, psychology, marriage and family, etc.). Many of these disciplines will require graduate training beyond the bachelor’s level. These graduate programs may have specific pre-requisite course requirements. You will need to do some research into programs in which you are interested in order to determine whether you will need to focus your course selection. You can work with both your Career Connections Advisor and your Academic Advisor in making these choices.

Co-Curricular Activities

There is much more that you can do while at Hanover to help prepare for a career in counseling than just academic work. The activities suggested in this section are where you can really get the *feel* for whether counseling is right for you. There are too many possibilities for any one person to do all of them. Therefore you will need to pick and choose those that best meet your particular needs. It may be helpful to think of three different ways that on- and off-campus activities can be helpful to you. First, they can supplement the knowledge that you are getting in the classroom. Second, they can give you first-hand exposure to some of the phenomena (e.g., mental illness) that will be a part of your working experience. Third, they can provide you with an opportunity to act as a helper in interpersonal situations that will be invaluable practice, even if the helping situations are exactly the same as those you might later experience. Not all of these activities will provide you with all of these benefits, but a thoughtful selection of the following should provide you with the skills and experiences you need.

On-Campus Activities

There are numerous clubs, organizations and activities that already exist on Hanover's campus that can be useful. Several academic departments have clubs associated with them that might be interesting to you, even if you are not majoring in that area—Sociology, Psychology and Communication. LINK (Love Is Needed by Kids) and CMFK (College Mentors for Kids) are both student organizations that take positive approaches to improving adjustment and mental health. Peer Advising and Resident Advising are both activities that have many advantages including the opportunity to learn strong interpersonal and communication skills. Finally, campus theme housing based on a topic related to counseling is another possibility for those willing to take some extra initiative. All of these activities are particularly beneficial if students take on active leadership roles.

Off-Campus Activities

There are several outstanding local opportunities for volunteering and working in settings that will prepare you to be a counselor. Madison State Psychiatric Hospital is an outstanding opportunity within a few miles of Hanover's campus. Madison State is always looking for volunteers, and there are many things that students can do in this setting, from playing basketball with hospitalized adolescent boys, to spending time with patients on the geriatric unit. There are also several community agencies in the immediate area where counseling skills are essential—Quinco, LifeSprings, Girls Inc., Turning Point. Some students have received valuable exposure at these out-patient treatment settings in the past. For those students with cars and a little extra time, the city of Louisville is less than an hour away, and there are plentiful opportunities in the numerous hospitals and counseling centers in this urban area (e.g., Seven Counties Mental Health Center and Life Springs).

Work Experience

On-Campus Jobs

We strongly recommend that you spend the summer between your sophomore-junior and/or junior-senior years working in a setting that is directly related to the counseling field. Any

work in a setting that gives students exposure to some form of counseling is likely to be the best way for students to decide if this field is for them. Students who have the financial resources to volunteer or work for limited pay in their summer positions will find that they have many more options available to them, but there are some positions that do pay reasonably well.

Related Summer Jobs

Some of the most common settings that students have found summer work in the past include—university/teaching hospitals, state psychiatric facilities, VA centers, summer camps for special populations, community mental health centers, residential treatment centers, psychological/psychiatric offices, the court system, and juvenile detention centers. In these settings, students can work in both direct care and research capacities.

Summer jobs in counseling facilities can be approached in the way most other summer jobs are—looking at advertisements in the newspaper and sending out resumes to places that are likely to hire students. However, there are a number of precedents that have already been set by former Hanover students—e.g., Englishton Park is a summer camp for children with behavioral and learning difficulties that is particularly receptive to Hanover students.

Internships

Internships are another outstanding way to gain summer experience. An internship can be distinguished from a regular summer work experience by the presence of activities that are specifically designed for your educational purposes. While these programs will expect work from you, they are also likely to be more thoughtful about what you are getting out of the experience. Unfortunately, summer internships in counseling, especially paid ones, are not extremely plentiful. However, if you are willing to put some effort into the search, and you are geographically flexible, there are some exciting opportunities out there.

If you find an internship site, you should think about the possibility of making it an official Academic Internship in which you do background reading, write a paper and publicly present your experience. David Harden, Internship and Career Connections Coordinator, can help you organize this kind of experience if you are interested.

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(last revised June 2008)