

## **Benchmark Interview With A Counselor Educator**

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### **Author Note**

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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### **Interview**

The counselor educator that I interviewed for the Benchmark Interview was Dr. Myers, who happens to be a professor at Liberty University. He agreed to this interview, which took place virtually, and requested that I destroy the video tape once the information was transcribed, which I agreed to do. This was an enlightening interview.

We discussed about his experience in counselor education and his views on counselor educators' roles and responsibilities. Dr. Myers shared his belief that counselor educators are the key guardians in the field of counseling. He stated that the teacher in the classroom is the one, whom he thinks has the most influence in "forging paths and styles" and has a "really powerful role in that." He also expressed his belief that counselor educators must have a balance between being a clinician or theorist and a teacher and that good counselor educators are those, who balance both well. Concerning the counselor educator's interaction with students, he said, "Really, a majority of the things that I want to say to students they already will come up with if I give them the time and the space and the challenge to do it."

I spoke with Dr. Myers about his personal philosophy of teaching and learning and how it informs his assessment and evaluation practices. He thinks of teaching like translating and that you must know a little about that person's language and where they are, in order to be able to translate the information. He shared about the field dependent teacher (someone oriented and in tune with the people around them) versus the field independent teacher (someone who is connected to the material more than the student's connection to the material). He further expressed the difficulty with doing this online and how it is important to either wait synchronously with them and chat or further explore into "the student's discussion boards and start thinking." He stated that it translates into assessment in the part where he is an easy grader,

is field dependent, looks at the context, and “orients” himself to the student’s position or location, as best as he can, and assess that way. He said that he pushes for critical concrete and critical thinking.

I asked the counselor educator about his understanding and practice of screening, remediation, and gatekeeping in counselor education. Dr. Meyers responded that you need to understand what it is that you are looking for in students (an awareness) and what would you see that tells you. He said that you must systemize that, must build a mechanism that triggers that, and then must have a system that processes those triggers. He credited Liberty for being pretty good with gatekeeping, which he referred to as understanding the student’s context, while also understanding the difference between a lack of development and being impaired, concerning the student’s ability to properly deal with feedback, stress, and challenge of school versus work.

We explored Dr. Myers’ view of the counselor educator’s role as a mentor. He stated that he wished that he could be a better mentor and have a better opportunity to do so. He elaborated that an issue with being at such a large program is that things become like a machine. He shared his difficulty in only being able to connect occasionally with students. He said that he felt that he does an “ok” job and that he tries to pace himself so that he can give reasonable and good input when responding to papers. He finally said, “I have to manage my own self and understand the context of the program to really feel like I'm a valuable mentor to the students.”

Dr. Myers shared his thoughts about multicultural considerations in curriculum development and how these considerations are associated with preparing counselors. He stated that he had an issue with “the obsessed nature of multiculturalism and counseling” and that he believed that they have gone too far with this. He said that he is worried that people are so hyper focused on multiculturalism and diversity that people are not focusing on the theory of change

and the theory of development. “What I hear a lot of is sort of victim language and oppressor and oppressed categories,” he disclosed. He expressed that he does not see a lot of growth or the building of resiliency taking place but sees a lot of blaming, division, and group segregation. He then expressed his inner turmoil about his possible resistance and whether this was due to White privilege and with feeling kind of uncomfortable or encroached upon.

Concerning his ideas about present and future concerns in the field of counselor education, Dr. Myers stated, “I think they're distracted, and I think they need to go back to mental health, as opposed to minority issues.” He clarified that he was not saying that they should go away but said that they have focused on it so much and need to return to mental health. He suggested that they could develop counseling and wellness in a much stronger and more developed way. He also shared his belief that they could “drop career counseling and put wellness in the curriculum.” He said that he believes that we are currently experiencing a wellness issue. He ended by saying that he wished that counseling would focus more on prevention rather than on treatment.

### **Personal/Professional Reactions**

I thoroughly enjoyed this interview, both personally and professionally. Personally, I was impressed that Dr. Myers was genuine and authentic with his responses. He fearlessly shared things that I did not expect him to say and invited me to share my feedback, especially concerning his view on multiculturalism. Professionally, he taught me about the importance of having a good balance as a clinician/teacher, being a field dependent teacher, about reaching each student where he/she is, and about managing self well. Everything mentioned will help me to become a better and more effective counselor educator. I need a balance, need to understand

how to reach each student, must work through my own idiosyncrasies, and have to practice self-care, in order to be the best CE that I can become.

### **Obtained Information**

The information obtained from Dr. Myers aligns with my understanding about the roles and responsibilities of a counselor educator in several ways. Dr. Myers is ethical and congruent with who he is as a person and as an educator (Haddock & Whitman, 2019). He looks at the CE as the gatekeeper in the counseling field. He introduced me to the concept of being a field dependent teacher, which I can agree with and implement. While he did not say it forthright, Dr. Myers appeared to activate the student's prior knowledge by trying to understand what the student already knew and believed (Vela, 2020). It is important to be able to reach and teach each student. Concerning multiculturalism, I understand the need for a healthy balance with wellness and prevention. I respected his honesty and would want to explore this subject more.

### **The Experience and Growth**

This was a positive experience for me overall. I learned about being a field dependent teacher and about Dr. Myers' view about reaching the students and how that fuels his assessment of their understanding. I believe that his thoughts align with my thoughts. His view of multiculturalism made me think, and I enjoyed providing my feedback. I realize that it is important to have a balance with multiculturalism and therapy. We must stay focused.

I see the interaction of a biblical worldview through this assignment. Like Scripture talks about being a light and letting your light shine, Dr. Myers shines, is empathetic, is ethical, and reaches people where they are. Christ does the same. I will be present and will do the same wherever I might be teaching. This encourages me to be intentional with everything that I do and influences my philosophy of teaching, as I do everything as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

**References**

Haddock, L. R., & Whitman, J. S. (2019). *Preparing the educator in counselor education*. Routledge.

Vela, J. C. (2020). *Teaching and learning in counselor education*. American Counseling Association.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix I: Email Confirmation**

Dr. Myers responded to my email about the summary on Saturday, November 11, 2023 @ 9:31 PM and wrote, “I approve of this as a summary of the conversation.”

### **Appendix II: Interview Questions**

1. The CE’s experience in counselor education and their views on the roles, responsibilities of counselor educators.
2. The CE’s personal philosophy of teaching and learning, and how it informs their assessment and evaluation practices.
3. The CE’s understanding and practice of screening, remediation, and gatekeeping in counselor education.
4. The CE’s role as a mentor.
5. The CE’s understanding about multicultural considerations in curriculum development and how these considerations are associated with preparing counselors.
6. The CE’s ideas about present and future concerns in the field of counselor education.