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Interdisciplinary and Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations in Counselor Education and Supervision

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Introduction to the Special Issue

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Interdisciplinary and Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations in Counselor Education and Supervision

Christian D. Chan , Erin C. M. Mason , W. Bradley McKibben 

Abstract

Interdisciplinary research has exponentially developed in response to federal funding opportunities, more complex needs in the community, and program expansion within schools. Given the counseling profession's unique qualities, counselor education and supervision researchers can elicit robust platforms to cement counselors as key collaborators in community-based interventions, public health initiatives, and large-scale programs. Bringing together a collection of five articles, this special issue focuses on interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaborations in counselor education and supervision.

Significance to the Public

This special issue focuses primarily on interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaborations that enhance the development, training, and supervision of counselors. Interdisciplinary training, practice, and research in counseling could sustain a greater impact on community needs.

Keywords: interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, collaboration, counselor education, supervision

The counseling profession has grown immensely in the last several decades through burgeoning records of empirical research and a unique professional identity steeped in wellness models, developmental approaches, multiculturalism, and social justice. Given the history of counselor professional identity, researchers have documented timely opportunities to foster noteworthy contributions of counselors with the expansive training curated by the CACREP 2024 Standards. Across Master's and doctoral curricula, counselor training is distinct through its intensive supervision standards and provision of services to community members, stakeholders, and the public-at-large. The CACREP 2024 doctoral standards show a significant depth across several

areas beyond the scope of research and practice, namely teaching, supervision, leadership, and advocacy (CACREP, 2023).

Based on new employment opportunities and placement of professional counselors in the last decade, federal funders have taken a vested interest in expanding educational and training opportunities for professional counselors, supervisors, and counselors-in-training (Brubaker & La Guardia, 2020). Notably, public stakeholders, legislators, and federal funders have begun to embrace the impact of counselors-in-training in light of trauma-informed practice (Felter et al., 2022), Medicare coverage (Fullen & Westcott, 2024), mental health shortages in rural areas (Johnson & Brookover,

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2020), and critical mental health initiatives within schools (Goodman-Scott et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2023). As a result, the counseling profession has become a more salient force in public health and educational initiatives. The expansion of the counseling profession through myriad outlets, indeed, has ushered in more robust opportunities to proliferate counselor professional identity and further direct impacts on community stakeholders (Dari et al., 2019). Promoting the counseling profession as a substantial discipline within scholarly, practical, and clinical initiatives encourages legislative and community advocates to better grasp the unique qualities of counseling practice and foster more opportunities for service and program expansion (Moorhead et al., 2023; Storlie et al., 2016, 2019). Rather than siphoning resources and engaging in a territorial battle with other disciplines, establishing counseling as its own distinct discipline allows for the profession to enhance the milieu of treatment and comprehensive programs, especially in light of school and educational systems, integrated behavioral health, and large-scale mental health programs. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaboration has underscored opportunities to grow the discipline of counseling internationally beyond the auspices of the United States (Ng et al., 2023). The increasing number of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaborations in counseling, counselor education, and supervision illuminate (a) the impact of counselor training in multiple scientific, practical, and community spaces; (b) the expansion of counselor training beyond the United States; (c) development of emergent focus areas in counselor training from other specialties; (d) distinctions in licensure and scope of practice; and (e) complex intricacies underlying training and research in counselor education and supervision.

Along with the massive growth of interdisciplinary initiatives embedded into school and clinical practices, the steep rise in research related to interdisciplinary practice highlights a much needed discourse on nuanced ways to train and supervise counselors to meet these demands. While interdisciplinary initiatives may be burgeoning across the field (e.g., Afarin & Jensen,

2020; Agaskar et al., 2021; Alessi et al., 2022; Schmit et al., 2018; Schmoyer et al., 2025), the articles in this special issue answer the call to promote more interdisciplinary research. More importantly, they illuminate distinct nuances in which counselors and counselors-in-training not only gain from collaborating with other disciplines, but also by contributing to robust educational opportunities. In Fields et al. (2025), they implemented an interpretative phenomenological analysis to uncover lived experiences of counselors-in-training engaging in integrated behavioral health modules and a simulation, thus illustrating an interprofessional education (IPE) opportunity with family nurse practitioners and psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioners. What is compelling about the findings of their study are the emotional experiences underlying IPE as students across myriad disciplines attempt to tackle real-world issues in clinical care. As students translate the modules and simulation to real-world practice, Fields et al. (2025) highlighted the long-term impact on the students in their study, namely a vision for an interdisciplinary future that is valued. Similarly, Whitbeck and Griffiths (2025) implemented an IPE event to foster collaborations between counseling and occupational therapy students, thereby developing a symbiotic relationship. Outlining the steps and elements of a new innovative program, Whitbeck and Griffiths (2025) revealed the potential to further evaluate and conduct empirical research with IPE programs that could sustain IPE as a noteworthy exercise. In doing so, Whitbeck and Griffiths (2025) initiated a platform for embedding holistic and integrated care as a routine practice that supports the development of mental health professionals and well-being of clients. At a more institutional level, Corbin and colleagues (2025) discussed the promise of a counselor education program established within an osteopathic medical school. With a diverse group of exercises, unique learning environment, and exposure to numerous mental health professionals, Corbin et al. (2025) elaborated on innovative approaches that could cement interdisciplinary learning in counseling as a viable possibility. More importantly, Corbin and colleagues (2025) underscored practical ways that

counselor educators can integrate IPE and interdisciplinary learning across the entire curriculum aside from a single event or series. Throughout each of these aforementioned projects, the authors explicated differing approaches with a clear hope to foster interdisciplinary practice and research in counselor education and supervision.

Articles in this special issue also elevate the impact on school and youth. Through an IPA study, Montague et al. (2025) uncovered the lived experiences of collaboration among school-based professionals, namely school counselors, school-based mental health counselors, and school social workers. This study is especially timely in that school districts and comprehensive school counseling programs are attempting to treat acute mental health issues that could further stymie the learning environment in schools and outcomes related to academic achievement and student wellness. What is especially promising in their study is that they found insights to prepare school-based professionals for collaboration, while navigating challenges and advantages. Finally, Holmes and colleagues (2025) described a large-scale federally funded program to embed a broad range of services to target recidivism and support justice-involved youth and emerging adults. These services are integrated within a counselor education program, which show the practical ways that counselor educators can leverage federal funding to support a more robust treatment milieu. Meanwhile, the massive scale of the Holmes et al. (2025) project serves as a catalyst for interdisciplinary learning and research that assist counselors-in-training to directly address issues facing the community. Similar to the other projects outlined in this special issue, Holmes et al. (2025) ushered in a sophisticated intervention that allows counselor education programs to move beyond theoretical implications and make a greater community impact.

Taken together, the articles of the special issue highlight the varied impact of the counseling profession in collaborations with several disciplines: nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, osteopaths, medical professionals, social workers, and peer recovery specialists. Each of

these articles marks a springboard for counselor education and supervision practice and research. While outlining key implications for practice, they expand the scholarly discourse for an interdisciplinary future. In doing so, we encourage researchers to further take up their work as opportunities for evaluation and innovative practices in counselor education and supervision research. Could there be timely opportunities for counselor education programs to expand their learning environment? Could there be a bridge that leverages multiple disciplines for real-world solutions in the community? Notably, all five articles were based in the United States. As Ng and colleagues (2023) identified, interdisciplinary collaborations are paramount to the global expansion of the counseling profession. Given that mental health and school counseling require specific nuances across countries outside the United States, it behooves counseling researchers to create interdisciplinary projects that can intentionally establish long-term and sustainable impact. As you metabolize each article, we hope that readers harness these opportunities and create more rigorous and impactful research in counseling, counselor education, and supervision.



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