2016-2017 CSI & CACREP Leadership Essay Contest

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Promoting Organizational Wellness: A Servant Leaders Perspective

When I think about “Wellness Leadership in Organizations,” the focus of wellness shifts from promoting individual wellness to promoting systemic wellness. Wellness, a positive aspect of well-being, refers to the holistic connection between one’s environment and one’s mind, body, and spirit that allows individuals to live more meaningful lives (Hainlen, Jankowski, Paine & Sandage, 2016; Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Though individual wellness can aid in creating meaningful lives for individuals, I believe in intentionally cultivating wellness throughout our CSI chapter and community at large because impacting the organization has greater potential to influence wellness systemically.

As president of the CSI Upsilon Nu Chi chapter and in collaboration with this year’s leadership team we generated a goal to live out the CSI leadership principles of service to others, respect for membership, and mentoring, encouragement, and empowerment through collaboration. It has been my mission to honor our vision and make wellness visible within our chapter, program, and community. With this mission in mind I have woven elements of wellness throughout our activities and events (e.g., establishment of a weekly “self-care happy hour” where students and faculty gather to participate in mindfulness activities such as guided meditations, coloring, and yoga) and I intentionally work to model aspects of wellness (e.g., emotional awareness, gratitude, humor, and self-care) daily. I have also been cognizant of the benefits of social support on one’s wellness and acknowledge that healthy social support systems aid in counselor trainees well-being throughout their training process (Minor, Pimpleton, Stinchfield, Stevens & Othman, 2012: Rybak, 2013). With the benefits of healthy social supports in mind, I co-facilitated a departmental wide “picnic at the pool” with a volleyball game at the start of the semester, encouraged a “movie in the park night,” and have endorsed holiday social events to promote social support and foster community within our challenging academic environment.
Recognizing that grassroots activism can make changes in the larger society, our chapter has also worked to infiltrate the local community (e.g. UNCG campus, surrounding high schools, alumni, and counseling professional) by hosting seminars and workshops that foster wellness in relationships (e.g. Healthy Relationships: Safe Teen Relationships Workshop and Parent Training). It is one thing to internally focus on fostering wellness but as servant leaders, we believe in implementing this year’s vision of the CSI leadership principle of service to others within our greater community as well. One way CSI and CACREP can promote wellness across diverse organizations is to implement wellness (e.g., mindfulness) training into counselor training programs and encourage it as a part of membership renewal. Mindfulness has been linked to increasing counselor and counselor trainee’s awareness, wellness, and overall well-being and counselor’s well-being also affect clients’ well-being (Christopher & Maris 2010; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010; Rybak, 2013). Awareness is the first step to taking action. Together we can act within our organizations to promote and implement wellness for ourselves, our communities, and for the future of our profession.

References


