

## **2015-2016 CSI & CACREP Leadership Essay Contest**

### **Third Place, Doctoral Students, Professional Counselors, and Counselor Educators Category**

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#### **A Meaning of Transformational Excellence and Strategies for Its Promotion**



As Dr. Niles anticipated in his reflection on “Transformational Excellence”, transformational excellence was a new term for me until I reviewed several more relevant references. Dr. Niles’s brilliant mind says, “Too many people aspire to good enough. This is the enemy of excellence.” But to clarify, excellence does not mean trying to achieve perfection (Gibson, 2015). This seemingly simple but profound notion helped direct my tendency to give a perfect meaning of words to something less academic but more personal. My updated view on transformational excellence suggests that it is a developmental process in which a doctoral student in counselor education like me reflects on and transforms her personal life experiences as

a family caregiver for her mother with pervasive depression to understand the importance of bringing more attention of the counseling profession to the necessity of investment in interventions for high-risk populations such as primary caregivers. Also, given a dearth in preventive interventions and research, I am interested in turning this into a topic of research in hopes of bridging the gap in the literature. I think that sharing stories or narratives of professional counselors, counselor educators, and students, using them as a catalyst for counseling practices, wellness training, teaching, and research are some of the actions that can be taken in the process of transformational excellence. New lessons or insights learned from those personal and professional experiences are priceless excellence that can be transformed into varying roles that professional counselors perform in leadership, practice, training, supervision, social justice and advocacy, and scholarship.

As a doctoral student in counselor education, a VP of communications for the Student Association at Graduate School of Education and Human Development at GW, and a primary caregiver, I have several ways to use my positions to promote and encourage transformational excellence in the counseling profession, using the suggestion of

practical advocacy strategies concerning counselors' professional and personal well-being at multiple levels (Dang & Sangganjanavanich, 2015). At a micro level, I can reflect on my current plan of actions for self-care to maintain personal wellness and manage multiple roles successfully. Meso level advocacy involves engaging in community outreach programs or clinical training sessions to share the new perspective from my personal experiences in caregiving and helping others to raise the awareness in the significance of preventive interventions for vulnerable individuals. To advocate at a micro level, I may be more rigorously involved with professional organizations and associations to help other counselors expand the scope of their practices for high-risk groups and with other scholars in the field to seek out opportunities for engaging in research on prevention programs for primary caregivers at risk. Importantly, CSI and its chapters and CACREP and its accredited programs may take a more active role in helping individuals in the field gain a new perceptual lens from their personal and professional experiences through self-reflection and share it with others within the field and between other disciplines in order to promote transformational excellence.

#### References

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