

2017

## Recruiting Undergraduate Students: Creating a Path to the Counseling Profession

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### Recommended Citation

Protivnak, J. J., & Yensel, J. F. (2017). Recruiting Undergraduate Students: Creating a Path to the Counseling Profession. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 9(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/91.1152>

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# Recruiting Undergraduate Students: Creating a Path to the Counseling Profession

## **Abstract**

Counselor educators must find ways to encourage undergraduate students to choose to pursue a graduate degree in counseling. Related helping professions (e.g., psychology, social work) may have a recruitment advantage. Faculty in disciplines with both undergraduate and graduate programs can encourage high achieving undergraduate students to continue into graduate programs within their discipline. Due to the lack of a discipline specific academic pathway and an undergraduate advising system directing students into counseling graduate programs, counselor educators must find innovative ways to recruit undergraduate students. The authors will discuss the issues involved in recruiting undergraduate students, present a framework for sharing information about the counseling profession, and provide strategies for recruiting undergraduate students into counseling graduate programs.

## **Keywords**

Counselor Education, Recruitment, Undergraduate Students

Recruiting students into counseling programs is challenging due to the lack of a standardized undergraduate path to professional counseling. While other graduate professions typically recruit undergraduates from within their own discipline, counseling graduate programs must recruit students from a wide variety of related majors (e.g., psychology, education, communication, international studies, multicultural studies, etc.). Beyond anecdotal evidence collected by counselor educators, it is unclear how undergraduate students are informed about the counseling profession and why applicants make the decision to apply to counseling graduate programs (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002). Upon examining the counseling literature, there was an absence of research related to recruitment of undergraduate students into counseling programs. Furthermore, there was sparse research on recruitment strategies from related professions. The authors reviewed research from related professionals (e.g., psychology, nursing, social sciences) and extrapolated those strategies for use within counselor education. The purpose of this manuscript is to discuss the challenges and opportunities for recruiting undergraduate students into counseling programs.

Recruitment of undergraduate students depends upon the awareness of the counseling profession as a graduate program option and the congruence with their personal skills and interests. St. John (2000) stated that “no college decision is more thought-provoking, gut wrenching and rest-of-your life oriented-or disoriented-than the choice of a major” (p. 22). The variety of jobs, credentials and specializations in the helping professions increases the confusion for undergraduate students to choose a graduate program (Norcross, Sayette, Mayne, Karg, & Turkson, 1998). There are a variety of factors that influence undergraduate students’ selection of a college major. Beggs, Ross, and Knapp (2006) reported that sources of information, job characteristics, interest in subject, and characteristics of the major influenced undergraduate

student's choice of major. In addition, pressure from parents, recommendations of friends and relatives, recommendations of counselors, genuine interest in the subject, university catalogs and brochures, popular media, financial aspects, occupational prestige, perceived quality of life, type of work, aptitude for subject, match between personality and subject, genuine interest in the field, faculty/program reputation, exposure to introductory course in the major, course variety, ease of earning a degree, class size, accessible faculty, wide variety of class sections, faculty mentor system, faculty activity with campus recruitment, past job experiences, job outlook/security, social benefit, and web assessments impacts choosing a major (Beggs et al., 2006). Undergraduate students often seek advice from other students, professors and academic advisors, departmental websites, and informational events within academic departments (Galotti et al., 2006). Introductory courses in a student's major are also factors that influence a student's decision to select and remain in a major field of study (Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005). Keillor, Bush, and Bush (1995) suggested that programs can increase the number of students in their major by improving the mentor relationship between faculty and students. Furthermore, academic programs with faculty who actively recruit students and maintain positive relationships with professionals increase the number of students in their programs (Keillor et al., 1995). While many undergraduate students struggle to make decisions about their educational and personal goals, few utilize the resources available through career services (Fouad et al., 2006). Garver, Spralls, and Divine (2008) found less than 50% of college juniors use career services, and college seniors utilize career services less frequently than juniors.

Decisions made regarding academic major significantly impacts an individual after graduation. However, many undergraduate students are more focused on developmental and immediate issues such as relationships, autonomy, creating a self-identity, dealing with peer

pressure, cultural milestones and money (Andersen & Vadehey, 2012; Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016; Galantas Von Steen, 2000). Many undergraduates do not possess a realistic conceptualization of their future career (i.e., salary, job), lack a clear understanding of the career path, and consequently may need to adjust their expectations to the realities of the job market (Sukiennik & Raufman, 2016). Undergraduate students may have difficulty conceptualizing long-term consequences of major selection on their career opportunities (Brown, 2015). Undergraduate students should weigh the perceived benefits (i.e., learning experience, social capital, expected higher earnings and lower unemployment) with the costs (i.e., increased debt, less free time, stress) when making the decision on whether to enroll in graduate school (Perna, 2004). Unfortunately, there is little data to support how undergraduate students make these decisions and the factors that leads them to enroll in the graduate counseling program. At the same time that undergraduate students are struggling to find a career path, reduced state funds for higher education has increased pressure on program faculty to increase and maintain enrollment in graduate programs. Participation in program recruitment activities is no longer just a responsibility of the graduate school or department chairperson. Woodhouse (2006) found that most of the university faculty surveyed listed recruitment as part of their responsibilities, and emphasized the importance of faculty involvement in recruitment. They found that graduate program coordinators and department chairs were most involved in the recruitment process.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

Bishop (2010) reported that recruitment is one of the most important activities for institutions of higher education. While there are numerous individual strategies for program recruitment, Harold and Ployhart (2008) hypothesized that there were four primary attributes important to recruiting prospective psychology graduate students: fit, funding, prestige, and

location. At the beginning of the application process, fit was the most important to prospective psychology students, followed closely by funding and prestige, then program location. The importance of program fit and funding opportunities increased when the graduate program communicated acceptance offers to the students. This suggests that recruitment strategies also need to change as the applicants move through the application process. Students who are offered admission to counseling programs do not always accept and enroll in coursework. Counselor educators must be aware of interventions that emphasize how the prospective counseling student fits with the counseling program and how they can pay the cost of graduate school.

Graduate program recruitment strategies include personal contact with students and participation in graduate program recruitment/career fairs. Wehner, Giardini, and Kabst (2012) emphasized the importance of personal contact with prospective students. They found that undergraduate students made their decisions based on “critical contact elements,” (p. 602). Critical contact elements included the first contact with an applicant by a counseling program representative, the applicants’ perception of the appeal of the physical building or counseling program office, and the programs efficiency at processing applications. Effective recruitment strategies involve building relationships with prospective students through personal interactions. Capomacchia and Garner (2004) identified the use of professional fairs, workshops, and campus visits as common ways to connect with potential applicants. In addition, building relationships with students’ family members can provide additional encouragement for a student to consider a graduate program. Counselor educators can speak with supportive mentors such as the undergraduate students’ faculty advisor to communicate the programs interest in their student and how the counseling program could be a good fit for their undergraduate student. Interpersonal relationships between students within graduate programs are important. Grapin,

Lee, and Dounia (2015) encouraged faculty to communicate how the program has opportunities for students to develop friendships with other students. Providing the option to participate in a cohort and creating structured learning communities that offer ongoing support for nontraditional students increases the interpersonal connection. Students experience greater academic success when they experience supportive relationships with other students and faculty (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

In graduate pharmacy training programs, Breland et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of communicating opportunities for students to be involved in research, participate in honors courses, and personal connections with faculty. Graduate assistantships that provide tuition waivers and stipends were strong motivators for prospective pharmacy students to select a graduate program. In another healthcare profession, Abdallah, Dowling, Findeisen, Knight, and Melillo (2013), addressed recruiting strategies for nursing programs. They proposed holding workshops and discussions in middle and high schools to introduce students to nursing as a career choice, and then following up with the high school students that expressed interest. Similarly, Perna et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of college counseling at the high school level particularly for underrepresented students. School counselors were encouraged to utilize all available resources and collaborate with universities to emphasize a college going culture. Counselor educators could build a mutually collaborative relationship with local school counselors and provide information about the pathway to become a professional counselor. Counselor educators could participate in high school career fairs, meet with individual students, and share the career path that led them to becoming a counselor. Although there is not an immediate recruitment return on the time invested with k-12 students, cultivating an understanding about the job of a counselor through career fairs, providing classroom guidance

lessons on relevant personal/social topics (i.e., suicide prevention, bullying, healthy relationships) and explaining how counseling can reduce distress can count as important professional advocacy service activities. It is possible that increased understanding of the counseling profession would lead some of the high school students to want to become a counselor and eventually apply to a graduate counseling program.

While results specific to counseling profession was not provided, the general occupation of 'Therapist' was listed as a female-dominated profession as women represented 80% of the total employed in the workforce (Department of Labor, 2014). The Department of Labor (2014) classified any occupation in which one gender represents 75% or more of the employed workforce as being a gender-dominated profession. Specific recruitment strategies are needed to encourage underrepresented populations to enroll in counseling programs (i.e., non-traditional older students, minority students, male students). Examining the demographics of the student population enrolled in specific academic programs to determine the students who are underrepresented is critical in determining program specific recruitment goals (Michel, Hall, Hays, & Runyan, 2013). Michel et al. (2013) recommended creating a taskforce within the academic program to develop additional strategies to recruit underrepresented students. At one time, women were an underrepresented population within counseling programs. In an attempt to identify recruitment strategies of women into counselor education, Anderson and Rawlins (1985) suggested not only creating networking opportunities for women, but also encouraging counselor educators to serve on campus wide committees that involved screening, recruitment, and outreach to female students who could be recruited into counseling programs. The involvement of counseling faculty in campus activities where there is a preponderance of males and underrepresented undergraduate students might create opportunities to have conversations about

counseling graduate programs. There are similarities in the need for targeted recruitment strategies from 30 years ago to today. Michel et al. (2013) found that isolation and lack of a voice were two factors commonly reported by male students in counseling programs. Sharing success stories of male students in program brochures and on websites were reported helpful in recruiting efforts. Michel et al. (2013) provided a list of successful recruitment strategies endorsed by counseling faculty members which included informing men about availability of jobs in the field, advising undergraduate male students about counseling careers, actively involving faculty in recruitment and retention of males, and changing the gender-based perception males may have about choosing counseling as a career path.

Underrepresented students often need financial aid to fund graduate school. Counselor educators can provide clarity to the process regarding how students can pay for graduate school through scholarships, opportunities for graduate assistantships and financial aid. Prospective students may be uncomfortable discussing their own ability to pay for graduate school and consequently may be unaware of the various funding opportunities. Informing non-traditional students – particularly those who have been out of school for years - about financial options (e.g., graduate assistantships) within a department may be particularly helpful. Communicating the funding opportunities available can potentially influence underrepresented students to feel more connected to a program (Capomacchia & Garner, 2004).

Poock (2007) provided the results of a survey of graduate admission professionals on specific activities used to recruit underrepresented students. Common strategies to attract and retain underrepresented graduate students included the graduate institution providing funding opportunities (i.e., assistantships, scholarships, grants), developing website, hosting graduate program visitation days. Other more creative, but less utilized strategies reported were brochures

that marketed the graduate program to a specific population, creating an undergraduate to graduate bridge program, creating an online virtual open house, and working with the office of minority students. By far, assistantship and funding opportunities were reported to be the most effective means to recruit underrepresented graduate students. Quarterman (2008) reported that barriers to program recruitment included a lack of structured recruitment events, lack of financial support, and lack of access of eligible pool of students to recruit. Overall, recruitment strategies will be more successful if counselor educators communicate how a counseling program is a "good fit" through the process of recruiting, accepting, and then enrolling students in coursework.

### **Identify a Fit with the Counseling Program**

The perceived fit with a graduate program was found to be the most important factor for attracting students during the enrollment process (Harold & Ployhart, 2008). In order to understand how to help students match themselves with helping professions, it is important for the undergraduate student to examine how his/her strengths and interests are matched for a particular career field. This can be accomplished through participation in career assessments and further discussions with career counselors to determine the types of career fields and graduate school options that may be likely to be a good fit. Often individuals choose the field of counseling because they were interested in working with people, regularly provided advice and support to friends or family, and/or may have received support from a helping profession in the past (Hazler & Kottler, 2005). Counselor educators can provide information regarding how an undergraduate students' perception of counseling compares with the realities of working as a professional counselor.

Anderson and Rawlins (1985) found that academic mentors support students as they make educational transitions from undergraduate to graduate school. The advocacy and support of an undergraduate academic mentor can assist with the selection of major. Academic mentors can share unwritten information about fields, help to access professional opportunities, and teach about political structures within departments increasing the ability to fit with a program (Anderson & Rawlins, 1985). It is important for counselor educators to build relationships with academic mentors in undergraduate programs who may encourage undergraduate students to pursue graduate study in counseling. In addition to faculty mentors, parents and family members may influence whether a student views themselves fitting within an academic program.

Because the psychological and emotional needs of students may be becoming a higher priority for families, it is increasingly likely that families will base their enrollment decisions, at least in part, on some sense of where a student would be "well-cared for." (Bishop, 2008, p. 3)

Bishop (2008) found that satisfaction of parents with the academic program was one of the major factors in whether a student will select an undergraduate program. The amount of influence that parents have on selection of a graduate program is unknown. With the reality of helicopter parents involved in the academic / social decisions of students at college (Lum, 2006), it is likely that those parents will have input regarding choice of a graduate program.

Maton et al. (2011) reported that graduate students from underrepresented populations may also experience barriers finding a fit with graduate programs. To identify opportunities that may lead to success, Levin, Jaeger, and Haley (2013) found that minority students' sense of harmony with a particular graduate program impacted their selection of and satisfaction with the program. Costello (2005) defined these concepts as the degree to which a students' personal

identity is congruent with the identity of a graduate program (i.e., students' perception of faculty attitudes toward minority students). According to Costello (2005), the greater incongruence between personal identity and the values of faculty, the less successful the student may fit with the graduate program. Levin et al. (2013) found that the concept of identity congruence also applies to the career choices and quality of experiences of minority students. If a minority student believes their career choice was not supported by the program faculty, then they may feel disconnected and less likely perceive they fit.

The incongruence between personal and program identity can be particularly challenging for Muslim students. Tummala-Narra and Claudius (2013) found that many graduate students in the United States who are Muslim reported feelings of isolation, religious misunderstanding, cultural disconnect, and discrimination. Social support is a factor impacting the acculturation of ethnically diverse students, and discrimination by the university community is a major barrier for cultural adjustment. Counselor educators can take action against this bias by incorporating multicultural information throughout the program to promote a greater understanding and a create a program characterized by support to fit the needs of underrepresented students.

### **Compare Counseling to Other Helping Professions**

Comparing personal interests and abilities to the characteristics of professions can be useful in determining a career that would a good fit for an undergraduate student (Holland, 1997; Sukiennik & Raufman, 2016). Providing undergraduate students with information about the counseling profession and how it compares to other helping professions is helpful to make an informed decision. However, when conducting a basic online search for general information about helping professions (i.e., counseling, social work, psychology), there is little clarity on the

differences between helping professions. There are few online resources available for undergraduate students to learn the difference among helping professions.

Students applying to helping professional graduate programs are often encouraged to select programs that match their academic credentials, research interests, career trajectories, financial needs, and theoretical orientations (Norcross et al., 1998). Since the counseling profession does not have a recognized undergraduate degree program, counselor educators must be intentional in communicating significant information about counseling programs. Investigating the job tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, values, salary, and projected growth within the helping professions are important for decision making. Since many characteristics of the helping professions overlap, undergraduate students could be encouraged to prepare a comparison table of helping professions. Table 1 provides information from the Occupational Information Network (O\*Net, 2017).

Table 1: Comparing counseling and related professions

<i>Field</i>	<i>Education (Minimum)</i>	<i>Projected growth 2014-2024</i>	<i>Sample of reported job titles</i>
Counselor - Guidance, School, & Vocational	Master's degree	5%-8%	School Counselor, Career Counselor
Counselor – Mental Health	Master's degree	14% or higher	Counselor, Therapist, Clinician
Marriage & Family Therapists	Master's degree	14% or higher	Family Therapist, Counselor, Psychotherapist
Psychologist - Counseling / Clinical	Doctoral degree	14% or higher	Psychologist, Counselor, Psychotherapist
Psychologist - School	Master's degree	14% or higher	School Psychologist
Social Worker - Child, Family, & School	Bachelor's Degree	5%-8%	Social Worker, Case Manager
Social Worker - Mental Health and Substance Abuse	Master's degree	14% or higher	Clinical Social Worker, Counselor, Clinical Therapist,

Furthermore, it is important to help undergraduate students understand the characteristics of the various counseling specialty areas: Addiction Counseling; Career Counseling; Clinical Mental Health Counseling; Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling; College Counseling & Student Affairs; Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling; and School Counseling as indicated by the 2016 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program Standards (CACREP). Undergraduate students could interview individuals working in the counseling specialty area, contact graduate counseling programs and professional associations (e.g., American Counseling Association), and/or review other information available online (e.g., U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) to determine education requirements, job tasks, work setting, employment outlook, and salary. It can be particularly beneficial for undergraduate students interested in counseling to complete a volunteer experience to explore different work environments in order to determine which profession is a good fit (Brown, 2015; Cuseo, Thompson, Campagna, & Fecas, 2016). Undergraduate college or major-specific advisors have a critical role in encouraging and directing students towards internship opportunities in the community. Counseling program faculty can build relationships with undergraduate advisors in related undergraduate programs (i.e., psychology, education, etc.), provide information regarding their graduate program and connect them with professional counseling alumni in the community who are willing to accept students who would like a shadowing experience. Real world experiences can help undergraduate students understand the counseling profession.

### **Increase Counseling Program Prestige**

Once an undergraduate student recognizes he or she wants to pursue graduate study in counseling, then the prestige of individual graduate programs may be a factor in a student choosing to apply to a graduate program. There are a variety of sources (e.g., U.S. News &

World Report, [www.topcounselingschools](http://www.topcounselingschools), [www.bestcounselingdegrees.net](http://www.bestcounselingdegrees.net)) that rank counseling programs each year. While the specific details regarding how each source determines program rank can be debated, counseling program faculty must recognize that this information is available to undergraduate students and may influence their perception of counseling programs. For the programs included in the list, the increase exposure may lead to increased opportunities to recruit undergraduate students. However, most counseling programs are not listed and it is outside of the control of the counseling faculty to be included in a formal list of top programs. There are other ways for counseling faculty to increase counseling program prestige.

Counseling faculty can apply for counseling program awards from professional associations (e.g., Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Outstanding Counselor Education Program Award), serve in visible public roles (e.g., president of state or national associations), produce scholarship in publications likely to be utilized by undergraduate students, and advocate for high quality training facilities and resources for graduate students. Improving the perception of program prestige could also include promoting the accomplishments of counselor educators and counseling program students across campus, within the community (e.g., in local newspapers), and throughout the counseling profession to highlight the quality of the counseling program. Counseling programs located within more prestigious universities (e.g., public perception of the overall quality of the educational and campus cultural experience of the university) may have advantages in recruiting applicants to counseling program. However, counselor educators at any university could intentionally build the positive public reputation for their program by promoting the outstanding accomplishments of their faculty and students within their university and surrounding community. One opportunity for program promotion in the community includes establishing a connection with a journalist from the local newspaper that is

assigned to report on university issues. Counseling faculty can regularly send ideas for stories and offer to arrange for interview and pictures featuring outstanding students and faculty.

### **Address Student Financial Concerns**

In addition to program fit and prestige, personal finances are a critical factor impacting whether an undergraduate student can afford to attend a graduate program (Cuseo et al., 2016; Doughty, 2009). While typical sources to finance graduate education include student loans, scholarships, grants, veterans benefits and personal salary (Cuseo et al., 2016), counselor educators can improve funding opportunities for their programs by working with alumni to develop new scholarships and advocating with their graduate school to develop new graduate assistantships. Counseling program faculty can work with their university foundation / development office to cultivate relationships with counseling alumni who have or are likely to provide donations to the university. There are frequent events in which counseling program faculty could speak to potential donors and discuss the importance of the counseling program and the ways that funding could enhance a program. There may be opportunities for counseling program faculty to establish partnerships with local agencies, schools, and colleges who are willing to fund a counseling program graduate assistant. This type of arrangement may include the graduate assistant working for 20 hours per week from the beginning of the program through completion of their internship. Additionally, it is important to advertise existing financial aid opportunities available within counseling programs, and to also communicate the variety of scholarships available through counseling professional associations. For example, the National Board for Certified Counselors Foundation offers a number of scholarships for master's students (e.g., military, rural, minority, career), the American Counseling Association Foundation offers

scholarships within their graduate student essay competition, and American School Counselor Association offers scholarships and graduate assistantships associated with their conference.

Counseling programs located in public universities have a recruitment advantage because tuition is typically lower than private and for profit institutions. However, undergraduate students may perceive master's programs in counseling to be financially disadvantageous when comparing the publicized financial aid opportunities and perceived prestige of doctoral psychology programs. Many counseling programs have assistantship opportunities available for undergraduate students accepted into counseling master's programs, graduate assistant funding opportunities are not clearly communicated. Unlike guides available for psychology doctoral programs such as the *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology* (Norcross & Sayette, 2016), the funding opportunities for master's program in counseling are not included in the comprehensive guide of counselor preparation programs, such as *Counselor Preparation: Programs, Faculty, & Trends* (Schweiger, Henderson, McCaskill, Clawson, & Collins, 2011). Undergraduate students seeking a graduate degree in counseling must rely on receiving information regarding funding opportunities if available on the counseling program websites or through discussions with faculty or counseling program support staff.

### **Involve Stakeholders in Recruitment Efforts**

Counseling program stakeholders (i.e., alumni, current students, university personnel, etc.) are important allies in communicating how the counseling program may be a good fit, clarifying information about counseling profession as it relates to other helping professions, developing funding opportunities for the counseling program, and reflecting the quality of the counseling program. Counselor educators can engage stakeholders through intentional action at the individual, university, and community levels.

At the individual level, stakeholders can be provided recruitment materials to utilize with students at the university, co-workers, friends and/or family members. While current counseling program students are an easily accessible population, counselor educators can connect with alumni by hosting continuing education workshops and sending regular program updates (e.g., program newsletter). Alumni can be invited to share how the counseling program was a good fit, and enabled them to reach their career goals. Alumni who are successful in the community or across the country serve as evidence of a counseling programs prestige. Counselors who work in local agencies or schools may also serve as part time instructors within the program. These individuals are also stakeholders who can be provided with recruitment materials and encouraged to recommend the counseling program to undergraduate staff at their agency. Part-time instructors can be invited participate in university graduate program information sessions, career fairs, and university committees. This creates opportunities for interaction between part-time faculty and undergraduate students. The perspective of a practicing counselor can be particularly impactful for an undergraduate student considering graduate program options.

At the university level, increasing stakeholder awareness of the counseling graduate program is important. Deans and other administrators frequently make decisions that impact funding opportunities (e.g., graduate assistantships assigned to a counseling program), and budgetary allocations that support department resources (e.g., technology, library resources, facility improvements, onsite counseling clinic, funding for student travel, etc.). Counselor educators should work with administrators at the university level to advocate for resources. The counseling program could develop undergraduate elective counseling based general education or first year experience courses (e.g., career and life planning course, mental health and wellness course) to create opportunities for undergraduate students to increase awareness of the

counseling profession. Once undergraduate counseling courses are developed, those courses could then be combined into an undergraduate minor in counseling. This pre-counseling undergraduate degree could help prepare students with a clear pathway into the graduate program. Beyond their own department, counselor educators could build relationships with faculty across their university, and then request to deliver short presentations about the opportunity for graduate study in counseling. These presentations could be provided to students in undergraduate courses of students (i.e., psychology, social work, human development).

In addition to collaboration with university faculty, it is important to connect with undergraduate academic advisors and the university career services staff to increase their awareness and understanding since they are directly influencing the decisions of undergraduate students interested in graduate study. The increased knowledge about the counseling profession by career staff and academic advisors may facilitate referrals of undergraduate students to the counseling program. The counseling program can also benefit from the positive work of organizations such as Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), the counseling international honor society. When CSI members are involved in campus wide events, their activities promote the counseling profession through positive interactions with undergraduate students. CSI student members should be encouraged to partner with undergraduate student organizations such as Psi Chi, the international honor society in psychology, and SEA, the Student Educational Association, on community service projects. These activities create valuable connections between graduate counseling students and undergraduates in psychology and/or teacher education. Finally, counselor educators can investigate opportunities to collaborate with undergraduate departments and develop six-year programs where students progress directly from the undergraduate to graduate major. While only a few bachelors to master's program agreed upon pathways exist at

universities (e.g., bachelors in behavioral science to masters in counseling in six years), more programs could likely be developed by counselor educators.

At the community level, counseling faculty have opportunities to increase awareness of the counseling profession to potential stakeholders outside the university (e.g., community members, parents, faculty from other universities). Connections with undergraduate faculty and academic advisors at other universities (e.g., sending mailing, inviting individuals to informational sessions) can provide opportunities for those individuals to communicate how the counseling program could be a good fit to their undergraduate students. Community level recruitment strategies such as advertising the counseling program through the local newspaper can be accomplished without cost by promoting a program accomplishment (e.g., local counseling student wins an award). Counseling program websites can serve as a way to connect with undergraduate students by including information about the characteristics of undergraduate students that may lead to a good fit with the counseling program, funding opportunities within the counseling program, and information highlighting the prestige of the counseling program (e.g., awards, resources, faculty publications, etc.). In addition to a counseling program website focused on undergraduate students, counselor educators should also look for creative ways to utilize social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) to connect with undergraduate students. For example, a counseling department located at a Midwestern university maintains a Facebook page that includes regular weekly posts. The regular Facebook updates include pictures of events, recognition of national and local celebrations (i.e., national school counselor week), acknowledgement of student and faculty accomplishments (i.e., presentations, publications, awards), and news about alumni in the community. While most of the individuals

who subscribe to the Facebook page are current and former students, some of the more popular posts are shared to a wider audience of family and friends.

### **Conclusion**

Counselor education is a vibrant profession that requires individuals to be recruited from a variety of undergraduate majors. It is important for undergraduate students to have an awareness of the counseling profession (i.e., their university has a counseling master's program), and understand the unique characteristics of the profession as distinct from other helping disciplines. Although, there is a lack of research on ways to help undergraduate students find their paths to the counseling profession and recruitment strategies. Counseling program faculty can utilize strategies found in other related professions to help create a pathway to recruit students. Strategies include helping undergraduate students identify how they may fit with the counseling profession, by comparing characteristics of the helping professions, improving the prestige by promoting their own counseling program, providing opportunities for funding, and involving stakeholders in program recruitment. Additional research is needed to expand the understanding of the most efficient strategies to recruit undergraduate students. Further qualitative research that includes as identifying undergraduate students' perception of counseling and related professions would be beneficial. It would be particularly helpful to understand how current counseling students discovered the field and what factors influenced their choice to enroll in a counseling graduate program. This could lead to action strategies to assist counseling faculty in determining the most effective ways to recruit undergraduate students. Increased intentionality to inform and recruit a diverse group of undergraduate students into the profession of counseling is necessary to serve the needs of our community in the future.

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