EXTERNSHIP IN
PSYCHODYNAMICALLY ORIENTED
STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

University Counseling Center
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Introduction

Stony Brook University is located 60 miles east of New York City on Long Island’s north shore. Stony Brook was built to serve the metropolitan New York City region and has come to symbolize access to higher education for Long Island and for New York City’s poor, minority and immigrant populations. The student body of 22,527 is one of the most richly diverse groups of university students in the nation, making it a wonderful place for an externship program. Counseling Center patients have always been far more diverse in terms of diagnosis, presenting problem and level of severity than students expect when they choose a counseling center experience. In addition, since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the number of students at Stony Brook with serious psychiatric disabilities/diagnoses has been steadily increasing. Students arrive with long-standing conditions, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (often subsequent to sexual or physical abuse), schizophrenia, and delusional disorder.

Purpose

The Externship Program at the University Counseling Center is designed to facilitate the development of psychodynamically informed clinical skills. Externs participate in intake interviewing, time-limited individual psychotherapy, and crisis intervention with senior staff support. On occasion, interested externs participate in outreach and consultation activities including facilitation of workshops and support groups for University students.

Program Description

I. The externship program at the Counseling Center accepts 3-6 students each year.

II. Externs must have some interest in psychodynamic/psychoanalytic models of intervention, though prior training in these modes of intervention is not a pre-requisite.

III. Externs are supervised by University Counseling Center Post-doctoral fellows in Clinical Psychology.

IV. Externs attend an orientation to the Center, and are given individual support to begin and to maintain a fruitful learning
experience. During the first few weeks of the externship, externs are expected to sit with a senior staff member in at least 5 intake sessions.

V. Externs anticipated weekly schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Approximate Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual therapy</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group therapy (optional, if available)</td>
<td>1 ¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical services Meeting</td>
<td>1 ¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Supervision</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Supervision/Case conference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externship psychotherapy Seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Preparation/Reflection/Notes and Admin</td>
<td>up to 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. The Use of Clinical Material Off-Site

Externs may wish to present clinical material including notes of sessions to an outside supervisory group in their home department. We try to accommodate this important learning experience, with the understanding that protection of the confidentiality of a patient’s treatment remains primary. The following guidelines are discussed with each extern individually:

Externs learn to:

- Explain the purpose of presenting case material to their patients
- Obtain a release of information from the patient in order to present particular material outside of the Center

For oral presentations of clinical material, release of information consent should be obtained and any identifying information disguised.

Clinical records must not leave the building. Students may summarize or take notes on their work for external supervision, but must obliterate identifying information and destroy this material promptly after the supervision.
Audiotapes are the property of the Center, must never be removed from the center, and should be treated with the same degree of caution as any written case material. All audiotapes must be erased at the end of the training year.

VII. Supervision of Externs

The UCC has offered externships or practica in psychology since the early 1980’s. The practice of Clinical Psychology at the University Counseling Center (UCC) at Stony Brook has been informed by a broadly defined, psychoanalytic perspective since its inception. Trainees inevitably work with a highly diverse group of students, so that the study of therapeutic work in cross-cultural situations is naturally embedded in the program. An indispensable component of self-scrutiny is awareness of the cultural ideals, standards, and values that we internalize, whether through embracing them, or having rebelled against them. Articles of faith are as suspect as “axes to grind.” Knowledge of and respect for cultural/ethnic alternatives in living, loving, and working are part of a professional appreciation for personal “otherness,” and are therefore prerequisites for meaningful and accurate levels of relatedness and engagement.

The supervisory relationship must provide sufficient safety, empathy, and mutual respect to facilitate the trainee’s use of supervision – to be optimally self-disclosing and available to feedback and support. Audiotapes of psychotherapy sessions are the primary “raw data” for Counseling Center supervision. Assignment of psychotherapy cases is monitored and regulated by the supervisor. The supervisor ensures that the trainee’s caseload (1) is sufficiently diverse in ethnic and gender representation, (2) is reasonably diverse in diagnostic categories and therapeutic challenges, (3) shows balance in representation of short-term vs. longer term treatment plans, (4) meets the trainee’s specific needs or interests.

VIII. Communication with Academic Programs

Communication between the UCC Director of Training and the academic programs of trainees is usually less formal than the reports required for the clinical psychology interns. The Director of Training is available to discuss the trainee’s learning needs with his/her Coordinator of Training at the outset and at the completion of the learning experience. Supervisors provide ongoing feedback to externs about their clinical progress and learning needs. Each student’s goals for the externship experience
are discussed at the outset of each semester. At the end of each semester, the supervisor completes the student evaluation form provided by the student’s home program.

IX. Application procedure

Interested applicants should send:

1. Résumé
2. Letter from the Externship or Field Placement Director of the academic program verifying that the necessary requirements to qualify for an externship have been completed.
3. Personal Statement - in which the applicant tells us about him/herself. It is entirely up to the applicant to decide what information and format s/he wishes to provide.

Qualified applicants will be invited to an on site interview with the UCC staff.

The application should be sent to:

Dr. Amira Simha-Alpern, Interim Training Director
University Counseling Center
Stony Brook University
Student Health Services, 2nd Floor
Stadium Road
Stony Brook, NY 11794-3100

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