School Counseling Advocacy Training

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INTRODUCTION

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) highlights this pillar of the school counselor's role:

- advocates for an equitable education for all students,
- identify individual and systemic needs,
- implement comprehensive changes,
- advocate alongside and on behalf of students, families, and communities

Based on Green and McCollum's (2008) Advocacy Counseling Paradigm, it is assumed that intentional training will enhance SCiT's competencies in advocacy and therefore increase their self-efficacy in advocating at their experiential component (e.g., internship). The increase in competencies and self-efficacy can result in more effective services and thriving learning environments.

The purpose of this study was to determine how effective classroom measures were in increasing the advocacy skills and knowledge in graduate school counseling students (also referred to School Counselors-in-Training or SCiTs). This study aimed to answer two research questions:

1. Does a graduate counseling course with implemented intentional advocacy training increase SCiT's perceived competencies in advocacy?
2. Do SCiT believe that they can apply learned advocacy content to their experiences at their experiential component?
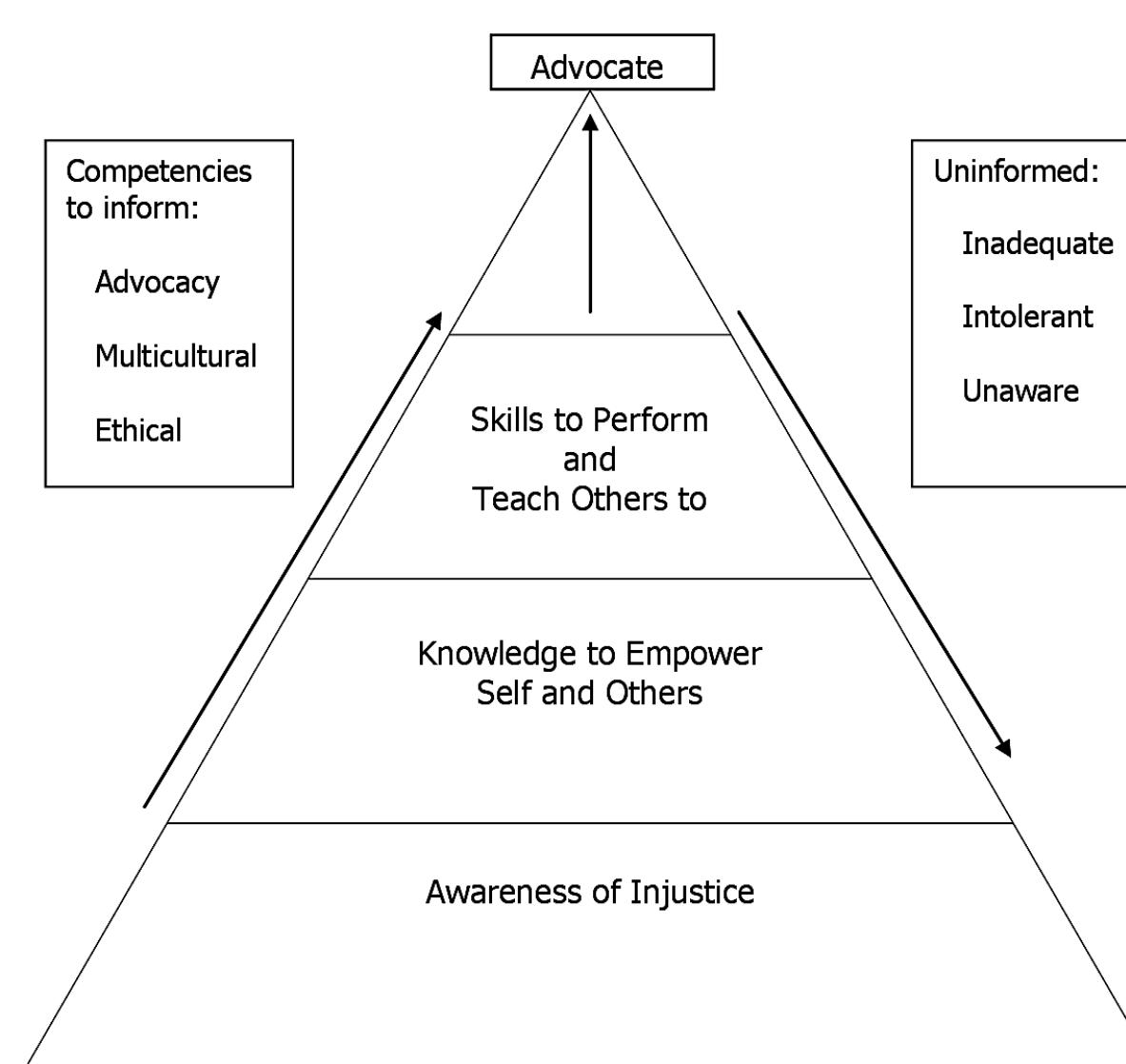
INTERACTIVE SECTION

Advocacy is not just for counselors and educators!

How do you advocate for yourself? Others?

Scan the QR Code and enter what motivates you to advocate. Consider what and who taught you about advocacy.

What barriers do you encounter when you advocate?

MATERIALS & METHODS

This quantitative study consisted of a pre and post survey design that focused on School Counselors-in-Training (SCiTs) perceived competencies in advocating.

Participants were enrolled in COUN 4840: Educational Strategies & Policies, a required course in the graduate school counseling program. Data collection began in 2024 Spring quarter and will continue until the 2025 Spring quarter.

Students were directed to complete *Student Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment Survey* (SACSA; Blueford, 2023; Ratts & Ford, 2010) via Qualtrics as part of a class activity and had the option to consent to participating in the study.

The *SACSA* is a 30-instrument that was modified with permission from the *Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment Survey*

The items are scored within six categories:

- Student Empowerment
- Community Collaboration
- Public Information
- Student Advocacy
- Systems Advocacy
- Social/Political Advocacy

INITIAL RESULTS

Qualitative

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process, the research team has coded the open-ended responses separately and then meeting regularly to discuss our codes, along with our alignment and differences in our choice of codes, along with noting our reactions and responses throughout the coding process.

Initial Themes (Pre-survey)

- Lack of knowledge in advocacy
- Concerned about barriers in place preventing advocacy and supporting all communities
- Willingness to learn and set aside their assumptions and biases

Quantitative

Once the post-survey data is collected, the research team will gather general descriptive statistics, along with a paired t-tests to compare the average scores of the self-assessment between when the participant is enrolled in COUN 4840 and two quarters afterwards. This will help determine if the class itself influenced the scoring, and therefore the perceived competency in advocacy.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- The second portion of data collection will take place in the 2024 Autumn quarter. Eleven students enrolled in the course participated in the pre-survey portion in the 2024 Spring quarter. Those participants will receive the post survey in the 2024 Autumn Quarter.
- Students enrolled in COUN 4840 in the 2024 Autumn quarter will receive the pre-survey as part of a class activity and then participants will receive the post-survey in the 2025 Spring Quarter.
- The final results will inform the revision of COUN 4840 and influence changes to the program curriculum.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

REFERENCES

Green, E., & McCollum, V. (2004). Empowerment through compassion: Training school counselors to become effective child advocates. *School Counselor, 42*(1), 40-46.

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Ratts, M. J., & Ford, A. (2010). Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment (ACSA) Survey©: A tool for measuring advocacy competence. In M. J. Ratts, R. L. Toporek, & J. A. Lewis (Eds.), *ACA advocacy competencies: A social justice framework for counselors* (pp. 21–26). American Counseling Association.