Rebecca Daniel-Burke: This is Dr. Rebecca Daniel-Burke, your host for the American Counseling Association’s 2015 podcast series. Today, we are speaking with Dr. Jennifer Nivin Williamson and Dr. Daniel Williamson on Unique Ethical Challenges Facing New Faculty. Dr. Jennifer Nivin Williamson is an Associate Professor at Lindsey Wilson College in the School of Professional Counseling and in the Counselor Education and Supervision Doctoral program. She is the co-founder of the Institute for Advanced Study. She earned her PhD from Baylor University; holds licensure as a professional clinical counselor, and as a nationally certified counselor. She currently serves as member at large for IAMFC, as chair of the ACES International Initiative, and as a member of the ACA Ethics Committee.

Dr. Daniel Williamson is an Associate Professor at Lindsey Wilson College, Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program. He has credentials as a licensed professional clinical counselor, nationally certified counselor, and a Human Services-Board Certified Practitioner. During his time at Lindsey Wilson College, he designed a curriculum for the master’s level Ethics and Professional Issues course, and has mentored multiple new faculty members. Dr. Williamson currently serves on the editorial board for the ACA journal, Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, and is currently co-editor of the Kentucky Counseling Association journal.

Welcome, Dr. Jennifer Williamson and Dr. Daniel Williamson.

Jennifer Williamson: Thank you, Rebecca, for having us this afternoon.

Daniel Williamson: We’re very excited to participate.

Rebecca: Great. Okay. Let’s dive into the questions. The first one – when we discuss new faculty, what hats might they be wearing during those early years as a faculty member?

Daniel: Rebecca, that’s a great question. For new faculty coming in to a counselor education program, whether it be at the master’s level or doctoral level, new faculty might be faced with the challenges of working on multiple levels and multiple domains. At the institutional level alone, often times, new faculty are given a free year to work on publication; to work on some of their own research, before they’re asked to start serving on committee. But there is still a significant amount of committee service that might be required. New faculty might be asked to serve on disciplinary committee, accrediting teams, especially with the accreditation regional and national programmatic, there can be a lot of work that can be asked of new faculty members in that realm.

Often times, new faculty with counselor education programs might be asked to provide supervision, both group and individual supervision, for the counseling interns. In addition to that, there are a number of programs where faculty are asked to take up the
stewardship mental, and asked to help provide guidance and oversight for course development. And the biggest, and probably one of the most challenging of those roles, is the academic advisor and gatekeeper for both the profession, as well as for the program. That’s just within the institution itself; we haven’t even talked about the organizational contributions in the state, national and international level, as well as in the community, pro bono services, that might be offered.

Jennifer: Yes, that makes me think about the article that we read in counseling today. In November 2014, they had a really great interview that David Kaplan, who’s the ACA Chief Professional Officer and ACA Director of Ethics, Erin Martz, interviewed Sean Spurgeon, who’s a member of the Ethics Revision Task Force. And with the new Code of Ethics, one of the things that the new code emphasized was that, graduate counseling faculty who worked with students; it raised the bar in terms of the faculty’s responsibility to students, because of that gatekeeping role that you mentioned.

And in terms of gatekeeping, the code now makes it very clear that the primary obligation of counselor education goes beyond the students to the welfare of future clients. So you have all those roles you’re trying to balance: instructor, supervisor, advisor, mentor, sometimes counselor outside of your counselor education duties. And now, this most potentially challenging of all of those is gatekeeper. So there’s a lot of hats to fill in that very, very first year for new faculty members.

Daniel: It’s a challenge, if you think about the future clients that will be served. It’s hard to imagine what type of clientele might be out there and waiting for help. And so, that, I think is representing a new challenge for counselor educators across the board.

Jennifer: It’s a shift in the way we think.

Rebecca: Another thing that occurred to me is, I’m assuming that the brand new professor or assistant professor or whatever the title is, that they would feel the least able to say no to those above them. Is that correct?

Jennifer: Absolutely. I think that there’s such pressure as a new faculty member really to please the people who are your supervisors, and especially for those who’re in tenure track positions, where those are the people who’re going to be making the decision whether you are going to be retained or not. And so I think that there is an ethical obligation for the new counselor educator to advocate for themselves. However, there is, on a very practical level, this necessity for diplomacy. So I think that the one way in which new counselor educators are equipped uniquely, is in that ability to build rapport that we have from our counseling training.
And so I think using those counseling skills where we develop relationships and we build rapport over time, I think that is an invaluable part of the success of a new counselor educator.

**Daniel:** From the departmental standpoint too – and this has been from some of my experiences – a lot of the administrators are the more seasoned faculty; they’re looking for those fresh new ideas. It’s not always that they’re looking for a water bucket person to serve in those roles and those tasks, but you’re looking for someone with fresh ideas, someone from an outside perspective. And so often times, departments could be a little overly eager in seeking that input from that new faculty person.

**Jennifer:** Well, and I think that one of the things the Revision Task Force has alluded to is that, it was so important that departments also take some ownership into setting new counselor educators up for success, and to be able to allow them to function in an ethical way. So I think that there are layers to the implementation of the 2014 Ethics when we talk about counselor educators.

**Rebecca:** And I know dual relationships; that’s always something that we have to talk about. Discuss how dual relationships pose challenges for brand new counselor educators.

**Jennifer:** There are a couple of ways that this can be challenging. New faculty are moving from the role of student to that of instructor. And for some, that’s a very gradual transition, they take on rules emphasis as they go through their doctoral program. For others, it’s much more abrupt, and this can be very difficult when remaining at the same institution, where you’re dealing with the same people that you dealt with as a student, or it can be difficult when you’re changing institutions. And so in many ways, there is this creation of a new identity that has to occur, and that can always be challenging.

The way that individuals navigate their social and professional relationships will change substantially when they go from that role of student to that of professional.

**Daniel:** It’s interesting too in the dynamic when you have a young, new professional joining a faculty. They’re now transitioning from the role of student to the role of faculty member and advisor. And if they’re put into a supervisory type of position or relationship, it’s a bit of a transition cognitively to shift from being a peer among other supervisees to now being the supervisor over, and working with a group of supervisees.

**Jennifer:** The 2014 Code of Ethics does give new faculty quite a bit of guidance in navigating these very nebulous relationships. So F.10.d. Nonacademic Relationships, the Code indicates that counselor educators avoid nonacademic relationships with students, in which there is a risk of potential harm to the students or to which they can
compromise the training experience or grade assigned. So there is a real reverence for the separation of a really, really healthy boundary between new faculty and students.

With counseling services, in F.10.e. the code is very, very clear that counselor educators do not serve as counselors to students that are currently in their classes or over whom they have power or authority. And I think that that's so important because we have people who have hearts for helping, and so these very clear and healthy boundaries, I think, are instrumental.

Daniel: Sometimes a little bit of senior faculty mentorships can go a long way in this respect when working with master's students or even undergraduate students, but especially those in a counselor Ed program. Helping the supervisor understand that they are not the counselor for the students; that they are to help students identify ways in which their own issues or concerns can get in the way of counseling, but not doing the counseling with that person, helping, directing them to right resources.

Jennifer: That’s a fine line.

Daniel: It certainly is.

Rebecca: It is a fine line. I remember when I was in my master's program in counseling for a long, long time ago. I remember that one of the doctoral students got hired and it suddenly felt like she was no longer my friend, and she had been my friend when she was a doctoral student. And it really hurt my feelings, so I asked her and she said she’s just trying to navigate this terrain. That must be a typical thing to have to be confronted with.

Jennifer: Yes.

Daniel: It really is. And the challenge is to continue to demonstrate empathy. I think that for a new counselor educator – I know it certainly was for myself – the expression of empathy, it could sometimes take a little bit of a backseat because you’re trying to establish a new boundary and a new role and a new relationship. And I think the empathy needs to remain so that people don’t feel socially isolated – they don’t feel that they’re excluded from the social relationship. But they can certainly be – you could see if they demonstrate that empathy.

It’s also important to make sure that when put into a supervisory role, we need to observe all the relationships we’ve had with the person prior to that moment. And if it constitutes a dual relationship, this might be something that will need to be considered.
Jennifer: I think this could be a challenge under the very, very best of circumstances, but it can also be daunting in addition to moving from the role of being a student to being a faculty member, also, when you’re in two positions with conflicting ethical obligations. For instance, as an advisor, a counselor educator might serve as an advocate who really wants to promote their students. However, as a counselor educator, who’s evaluating a student’s readiness and appropriateness for the field, they might have to make really hard decisions: like, pulling a student out of a placement for the protection of a client. And it’s really, really, really difficult.

And so I think that this poses a nebulous and treacherous dual relationship for counselor educators because they want to serve and protect. And I think those two goals are sometimes hard to navigate.

Daniel: I’m recalling moment. Every time I’m asked this question, I recall a moment earlier in my career. I was serving as a disciplinary member of a team, but I was also part of the gatekeeping community in a more structured role. And we had a grad student, who did everything that we hoped from graduate students. She formed admirably, she studied hard, she sought extra help, but she was one of the students that just didn’t get it. And in the videos, in the practicum experience, you could see how the clients were just running over her, and she didn’t even understand that she was being verbally abused by the clients. And for all intents and purposes, I loved the work she did, and I wish that for all graduate students; I wish that all graduate students will perform at her level. But she was just one of those that just, it wasn’t the best fit for her.

And so helping her find a place where she fit in a better capacity, was a critical piece. And sometimes that’s the hard line you have to take.

Jennifer: Well, and I think that you really speak to the fact that, that idea of being able to connect the institution with the world, that’s our real focus for the new Code of Ethics as well.

Daniel: I agree.

Rebecca: What advice do you have for new counselor educators when they’re challenged with circumstances beyond their current competence or current experience?

Jennifer: Rebecca, that’s a great question. I encourage the faculty I mentor to build strong consultation networks. I really like the ethical decision making model that Corey, Corey, & Callanan posed, because step five is to seek consultation. It’s crucial for a new faculty to build strong networks for consultation and for supervision in areas where they’re still seeking training. I think one of the biggest mistakes that new faculty make is to think they need to have all of the answers. It’s that, fake it till you make it mentality, in some situations.
And consultation is just an essential part of all counselors’ lives, because none of us have all the answers all the time. We are truly a community of scholars, clinicians and learners. We need it. And so consultation is crucial.

**Daniel:** Professional development in continuing education is a strong component here. Counselor educators, to me, the mark of a good counselor education program is the moment when the graduate is nearing the end of their academic training, and they realize what they don’t know, they recognize the areas where they are not well-trained. They understand what they’re well-trained in, but they also recognize what they don’t have; and so, seeking that training beyond that normal education, if it’s critical.

Often times, there’s a difficulty for a new faculty facing this because there may not be enough money allocation from the institution for the professional development. So maintaining and speaking of those relationships, that’s an important feature, not only while they’re in grad school but after grad school. And attending conferences, especially like the ACA conference and ACES; those are critical moments for the individual to be able to network and find other experts who can help provide guidance in those areas.

**Jennifer:** Part of their support network or their community.

**Daniel:** Absolutely. I think it’s a mistake too for faculty – to reiterate a point Jennifer was making about faculty feeling as though they have to have all of the answers. For new faculty, they feel the pressure to have all the answers. And it actually shows a more human side to the students, and helps the students understand that they don’t have to have all the answers, if they can see that their professors adopt that attitude as well.

**Jennifer:** Or, to encourage them to go with the old Rudolf Dreikurs quote, “We have to have the courage to be imperfect.”

**Daniel:** I agree.

**Rebecca:** Yes, yes. And, don’t many of us, as clinicians working with clients; we fall into that trap too. I think the best clinicians out there will say, “I’m not sure about the answer to that question but I’m going to find out.”

**Daniel:** Absolutely.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely.

**Daniel:** Being a counselor educator, to me – and something I’ve demonstrated with the students that I’ve worked with in the past – is that, rarely we will have the answers, but the answers lie within the client. And during the early stages when I’m working with new
master’s students who’re seeking that license of a clinician, that’s part of the training program. And I help them understand that you really, you need to have a working model to help people find the answers, but not possess the answer yourself. And I think that’s been a critical part of the training.

**Rebecca:** Yes. Here’s the big question because we’re all asking ourselves, if whether we’re counselor educators or students or clinicians or clients, and that is, how will technology pose challenges, in this case, for the new counselor educator?

**Jennifer:** Wow, this is a great question.

**Daniel:** That is a great question.

**Rebecca:** Yes, it’s a hard one.

**Daniel:** It is. And the number one question and the number one answer to that so far as of today, is still with your online presence. Social networking and healthy boundaries associating with that social networking, ways to communicate, the appropriate ways to communicate.

**Jennifer:** Well, technology is changing the way that many of us interact with the world. And there is unique challenges for counselor educators in technology under each of those hats that we wear. So I think that each of the hats pose unique challenges. In instruction, where you’re constantly trying to maintain confidence and an ever-changing technological world, and combining technological competence with pedagogy and andragogy competence that pose many challenges. In supervision, one of the largest violations we see is what you were talking about, Dan, and that’s an appropriate social media presence. We all have lives, our professional lives and our virtual lives. And counselor educators must realize that all three of those have a tendency to overlap with each other.

**Daniel:** I’ve found that we’ve actually become a victim of our own technological knowledge and presence. We are living now, and we’ve helped promote a society of immediate gratification, and so when someone sends an email, how often do we sit by our email waiting for that instant response. And that’s not always a healthy perspective to maintain. In addition to just the presence of social media and the type of communication, the ways we communicate, technology used in counseling labs, the big question is it HIPAA compliant. Is it something done appropriately?

With master’s level interns that are serving larger communities, especially if they’re providing any kind of counseling services for the campus, are there potential FERPA violations and concerns so you have both associated with much of the technology that
we’re using on these campuses. It’s such a virtual world now; we have to ensure that the confidentiality is maintained on both fronts.

**Jennifer:** Right. The bottom line is that, we have to realize that no matter what the medium that we’re using, we have to make sure that we realize that we have to produce a quality product and we have to function in quality ways. F.7.a of the new code says, whether in traditional, hybrid or online formats, counselor educators conduct counselor education and training programs in an ethical manner, and serve as role models for professional behavior. So I think that that’s the challenge, no matter what we’re using and no matter how we’re connecting, that we still keep that as a core of our identity as counselor educators.

**Daniel:** During the panel discussion at ACA with the Ethic Committee, several points were brought up about vows of communication as well as the technology being used. And so many of us have our cell phone technology, and our tablets that have client information or that you have student related information, you can access databases through your phone now. And people are leaving that technology laying around, and it’s not locked or it’s not secured in some way; that, your student information and client information makes the world information available at the fingertip of the person who accesses that device.

**Jennifer:** What I’m hearing you say is, the good news is that, it’s acceptable; the bad news is, it’s acceptable.

**Daniel:** Exactly.

**Rebecca:** Yes. Yes, exactly. Let’s choose Facebook, for example. We all know that Skype is not HIPAA compliant, but let’s choose Facebook for example. What kind of trap might a new faculty member fall into without realizing it?

**Daniel:** I think they’re differentiating a professional presence with a personal presence; it’s critical. If a person wants to use Facebook to represent an agency or some counseling or professional or professional identity, the friend list and the people they allowed to follow and some of the security protocols set up on that particular Facebook page, are critically important. Because it’s very easy for potential clients to find you through Facebook. If they do find you through Facebook, and they like your page or they friend request, and you somehow accept that or allow that person to follow, other people can actually access your public page and see who else is a friend or who else is following your profile.

With that, a potential breach of confidentiality. There have been cases in the past where there were professionals who were posting their weekly little journal moment, so they
had a column, and they’re posting these materials to their Facebook page. But it’s a personal Facebook page, and they’re trying to use it for professional means.

Jennifer: Well, and I think there are two pieces right there that you kind of alluded to. I think one is that, as you’re transitioning from student to faculty member, you did very different things with Facebook as a student than you will as faculty. I think is very, very difficult. And then the other piece of that is that, we really recommend to a new faculty and to new therapists, so you have a Facebook statement in your syllabus or in your own form of consent. And this is where you’re clearly identifying that this is my policy.

So for instance, we have a policy in our syllabus that says, “I will not be on Facebook with any of my undergraduate students.” And I clearly articulate that; that way, there are no hard feelings, there is no disappointment. It’s just a clear policy that we’re going to follow. And I think that those kinds of things are things we didn’t have mentored to us, so that’s new territory. And I think anytime you’re a trailblazer, it can be a little more difficult.

Daniel: Here’s some of that Yoda wisdom that I’ll like to spread around a little bit.

Rebecca: Yes, tell us.

Daniel: As counselors and counselor educators, much like the town preacher, we are always on, and now let me qualify what “on” means. “On” means that we are in the public eye; people are watching us. Many people know who we are; students certainly see that. So whether it’s a virtual online presence or it’s out in public; behavior, demeanor, these rants that you hear about people posting on Facebook, that can really go towards affecting the credibility of the individual.

Jennifer: Don’t rant about your administrators.

Daniel: Don’t rant about administrators; it’s certainly –

Rebecca: Yes. Yes, a clinician called me a little while ago, and he was really upset because he had been to some kind of party that was a faculty party, and they were all swimming so he had his shirt off, and he was holding his little child. And it was just a beautiful little picture, but he just realized that all of his clients saw him without a shirt on, which felt very uncomfortable for him. And he actually closed down his Facebook site at that point, because he didn’t realize that not only was he putting pictures up but other people were putting pictures up too. And he felt very uncomfortable with that.

Daniel: Yes, that’s a great point too, because identifying who has access, who can see that public information. There’s protocol built into Facebook, and it’s going to be incoming upon the user to make sure that they’re really tuned-in towards the new
policies are, that can turn off certain features. My wife and I both use our Facebook, but we use it to connect with our family and friends back home in Texas. And when we’re looking for a picture of the children, when people post pictures of us when we’re at family gatherings or reunions with old friends, we make sure that we have the screening protocol set so that we can screen things that are posted about us.

And that’s a critical piece, because we went to a reunion a number of years back with some very old friends of mine; I hadn’t see them in almost 30 years.

Jennifer: The 25th high school reunion.

Daniel: The 25th high school reunion. And hanging out with these real lovely people, and many of them were drinking alcoholic beverages so the pictures were covered in alcoholic beverage containers. Because we weren’t participating in that doesn’t mean – that the perception is there. So what people are posting about you, are including you in; that’s an important feature because even though you may not be posting, someone else might be posting for you.

Rebecca: Yes. And understanding your privacy settings, right?

Jennifer: Yes.

Daniel: Yes, absolutely.

Jennifer: Well, and one last piece of that – our Director of Core Services did a presentation to the students that talked about not having a red SOLO cup in your hands in pictures, because of that professional perception about what is in that cup.

Daniel: What does that cup represent?

Jennifer: Exactly. And so she says, completely a different perception. And I think for those of us who are more introverted, we haven’t thought a lot about our professional presence as it being perceived through the world. And so it’s a very, very important piece.

Rebecca: What personal and professional boundaries might pose challenges for new faculty?

Daniel: That is such a great question, especially when a new faculty coming in is trying to identify what their specific role is going to be and trying to understand the role. There is the paper version that departments provide, and then there’s the other category. Easily, a job description is offered; the person understands those clear boundaries. But then, the other category can often become quite murky. And so, understanding what
that role means and how those boundaries need to be maintained, is a valuable piece to the new faculty member.

Jennifer: I think about that old Robert Frost poem where he says, “Good fences make good neighbors,” it really makes me think about the ethical code with F.10.f., where it talks about student boundaries. And it talks about how basically nonprofessional relationships with students that are potentially beneficial are still going to be complicated. And so they talk about how we need to make sure that we think this through; we need to make sure we process through with the students and help them to understand where those boundaries lie.

And I think that in our role as counselor educators, one of the things we’re doing a lot is having conversations with people to clarify, this is my intention, this is where the boundaries lie. And then what do you always say about documentation?

Daniel: Document it to death.

Rebecca: That’s right.

Daniel: Absolutely. One of the things that Jennifer and I really enjoy doing is that, we have groups of former graduate students. Our program uses a cohort model, and so when we graduates students we graduate them in groups. Occasionally, every one or two months we have dinner with certain groups, and those dinners are focused around their professional growth, their development, and it’s a continuing mentorship that carries on beyond the classroom and beyond their own academic program. Those are valuable interactions, but each of the students have a clear understanding of what those interactions are and what those dinners mean.

And it’s interesting to see how even as of today, years later when we still meet with them and have those wonderful dinners and those wonderful conversations and we do the catch-up, they still maintain those appropriate boundaries. So it’s not a difficult task to master as long as it’s clearly and transparently communicated upfront. Once the relationship is established that way and you grow into that relationship, often times, those boundaries remain.

Jennifer: I think we have to realize that there is a process, and I think that often times, we don’t realize that as new faculty. And so I think, having really healthy boundaries really help with the notion of the relationship.

Daniel: I agree.
Rebecca: Yes. How is maintaining confidentiality a challenge? When you’re a new faculty member, I know HIPAA, FERPA, or other things. Would you like to comment on that?

Jennifer: Confidentiality is always a challenge.

Rebecca: It sure is, yes.

Jennifer: It seems like it would be so simple that you just don’t breach confidentiality, but because counselor educators wear a lot of hats, though a lot of counseling or guidelines for confidentiality might not be the same. So it’s important for new counselor educators to realize that they are ultimately responsible for their behavior, even when they’re asked to share information by an administrator of greater ranking influence. And I think that, as students, you have the mindset, well, my professor told me to do this, therefore I do it, and I’m compliant. But when you’re a new faculty member, that responsibility really starts with you.

And so, for instance, if a new assistant professor is supervising in the clinic, and the vice president emails asking for student records without appropriate client consent or appropriate client releases, the new assistant professor might have to refuse the request from the vice president. However, the counselor educator will feel the pressure of the office of the vice president when making that very, very ethical decision. So this is a good time for a conversation about the laws and the ethics of each office and each position. And this is where we went back to what we talked about earlier, rapport and communication are crucial when resolving this kind of an issue in a very delicate manner.

So I think that, the takeaway from that is that, whatever the decision that’s made, we as counselor educators are really responsible for our own actions.

Daniel: I think it’s critically important for any faculty member, whether it’s a new faculty member, brand new out-of-school or a person simply changing positions, understand all the masters that you will be serving and what those masters want. The organizational community, the accreditors, clientele; balancing what those masters want is a critically important skill that must be developed. And in each state the rules change, in each location the rules change. Let’s take for example, counseling labs or campus counseling centers, this can be very specifically problematic, just what Jennifer was saying.

When you have an administrator who’s asking for information about a student who might be a client in that counseling center, there may not be the freedom to share that information. And I don’t know that all campus administrators have a full-working understanding of that.
Jennifer: Well, I think they function from under a different sort of laws and guidelines; it’s not clinical, anyway –

Daniel: Agreed; the understanding too. And I think this is an important takeaway for all people teaching in a counselor Ed program who maintain a license. And this is something that was shared with me by the chair of the licensure board in Kentucky a number of years ago. Jennifer and I provided state-mandated approved supervisor training for those who went to supervise the provisionally licensed individuals. The licensee must remember that the independent license is an agreement between the license holder and the licensing board.

It doesn’t matter if the president of the university or the college comes in and demands information, or demands that something change. That license is that individual’s agreement with the licensure board, period. They are held indefinitely accountable for whatever actions, behaviors and decisions they make. To that end, now you’re going to find that you might – as an individual or the faculty member who’s licensed – might be found virtually at that crossroad. At the moment of intersection, we’ve had laws, rules, regulations, agency guidelines, institutional rules or policies –

Jennifer: And ethics.

Daniel: And then ethics. And those are all interesting points that might be in conflict.

Jennifer: And I think that the hardest thing for me as a new faculty member, was the first time I upset one of my bosses or one of my administrators. And I think that, what I had to realize is that, sometimes you upset people for the right reason. And I think after, you have the gift time, they realize, “Oh, we were really glad you did that even though we were unhappy with you at that time."

Daniel: There have been documented cases of counseling centers on campuses in the past that were asked to do things beyond the scope of what the faculty members could do. And I think it’s important – even though we’re trying to serve the master who is steering the institutional ship – I think it’s important that they maintain an understanding of what the ADA compliance are, the new ADA rules, for the Americans with Disabilities Act, HIPAA concerns, FERPA, and they take all those into consideration when making decisions.

Jennifer: I’ve a great story about this. I was in an institution one time that, I’d heard that they had the opportunity to have a new record system, that all the advisors and counselors and everyone would be able to put all of their records in, and then everyone would be able to see each other’s records, and we were horrified. They thought that it would be efficient because everyone could share and serve students well, where we
realized that we were under confidentiality rules. And so that was a very interesting conversation, and that system was not put in place.

**Rebecca:** Yes. The next question is something that’s kind of tricky for some people. I know that in my master’s program in counseling, there was one of the professors who was just a big flirt. And it just turned out that that wasn’t well-received. Is it acceptable for counselor educators to have romantic relationships with their students?

**Jennifer:** No!

**Daniel:** No!

**Rebecca:** No, no. Let’s all say no.

**Daniel:** There’s a danger for it. To me, and this is a personal message; it’s a personal value and personal advice, that, if a person is not maintaining their own personal relationships or they’re not doing something for themselves in maintaining themselves individually beyond the educational institution, then seeking out relationships for the student might be a warning sign. Might be that moment to take that under advisement. Again, let’s go back to the dual relationship rule; it’s such a bad policy. And then not only is it a bad policy, it’s against the Code of Ethics.

**Jennifer:** Well, and it’s one of the reasons why self-care is so important. I think that the Code of Ethics is incredibly clear on this; F.10.a. says that counselor educators are prohibited from sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with students currently enrolled in their program. F.3.b. is very clear that sexual or romantic interactions with current supervisees are prohibited. In other parts, it prohibits sex with clients. So I think that the ethical code is very, very aware of power differentials, and realizes that sexual relationships with individuals that are under your control or under your supervision or you have any kind of power over, even if it’s just a perception, those are prohibited as a protective measure to protect our clients, our students and our supervisees.

**Daniel:** I will toss this little warning out there too, because this is something I often bring to the attention of students – and I don’t want this to sound inappropriate in anyway – but often times, when teaching empathy and teaching people the active listening skill, and teaching them how to attend well, reflecting on ones experiences in life, how often have you had a person who really attended to what you said and then was able to reflect back that content and feeling? It leads to misunderstandings.

Counselor educators, people, new faculty members, any faculty member must remain consistently and constantly vigilant to watch for those moments where, for the first time, that graduate student is experiencing a person who’s really listening to them. There can be false sense of attachment that develops: reciprocated by the students sometimes,
that can lead to a faculty member getting in trouble. And this happens with clients, this happens with students, this happens with supervisees, and this is why the personal care, that factor of an individual’s life, is important. It must be attended to so that these moments don’t occur.

And blame can’t be shared with the students; it’s about the individual and the choices they are making independently.

**Jennifer:** It’s about that person in control. And counselor educators have to make sure that there are certain situations where they’re protecting those students and those supervisees.

**Daniel:** A critical mindset that the supervisors and faculty for counselor education programs must keep in their minds is that, they are to create circumstances and situations where their students can be successful.

**Jennifer:** Where they can thrive.

**Daniel:** Where they can thrive. And if they’re engaging romantic relationships or romantic delusions then you’ve got a problem. And that does not contribute to a successful environment.

**Jennifer:** I just want to throw out also that, this used to be a situation when there were allegations brought out about inappropriate sexual interactions with a “he said, she said” thing. And now, in this digital age, it now involves phone records and video and all kinds of Facebook interactions. And so, I think that it’s a bad idea because it’s an ethical issue. But it’s also something that, there is a camera everywhere, and so I think we really, really need to be aware of appropriate boundaries and appropriate relationships.

**Daniel:** I will offer this too – and I’m not trying to endorse any particular product or software program – but, the email systems that are available today from different companies, you can actually sign up for a free phone number through some of those programs. And what you can do is, with that phone number, set it up to forward to your personal cell. Often times, faculty share their cell phone information or their home phone information with students, which can violate the boundaries. There’s almost that sense of – you see, when that information is shared.

So beyond that, helping students understand this is my Google number or my Yahoo number; this is something I use –

**Jennifer:** My professional number.
Daniel: It’s my professional number; I’m going to share that with you. The service that we use is free of charge, but what it does is, when the voicemail is recorded, it also transcribes it and texts it to us, as well as emails us the transcription of that recording. So provides that documentation.

Rebecca: Yes. What happens when a new faculty member has an ethical conflict with a colleague or a supervisor?

Jennifer: Rebecca, you really ask the hard questions, don’t you?

Rebecca: Yes.

Jennifer: It’s important for the faculty members just in the very beginning to try to build rapport with their colleague supervisors and their co-workers. And that’s so important because when conflicts arise, it’s typically identified as that practice to go to the person, first, with whom the conflict is occurring, and to try to reach an amicable solution. So if you have that relationship; you have that rapport, sometimes you can do that just in the very beginning and alleviate a lot of suffering.

Daniel: Create an awareness.

Jennifer: Yes, yes, absolutely. And sometimes, people are just not aware that the issue is an issue. However, if that’s unsuccessful or if it’s impossible, it would be important to go to the individual’s supervisor. I would also encourage that the individual utilize an ethical decision making model when they’re approaching the situation for themselves. When analyzing the situation, looking at things step by step, he or she might be able to arrive at a solution that they haven’t identified before. Ultimately, if a conflict is egregious just enough, he or she can file a report with either the ACA Ethics Committee or with the State Licensing Board.

And so I think that’s the ultimate issue if you have something that’s just terribly egregious.

Daniel: And document everything. Document everything throughout her narrative piece. But when documenting these ethical concerns, – and I think this is a critical aspect of dealing with ethical violations or ethical situations or circumstances – it might be important to have others who witness the event, either write their interpretation or read the primary observer’s account of circumstances, and then sign what they witnessed. Having supplemental documentation never hurts, but document every conversation, document every step taken that lead towards the decision.

Jennifer: Save emails that have occurred; I think email trails are great.
Daniel: Yes, email trails are great. We enjoy using the phone services that we have to transcribe those voice messages. The idea here is to document it in every way possible to demonstrate that the decisions that were made, there was a process that was followed and certain steps were taken to arrive at that decision.

Rebecca: How might personal or cultural values be a challenge for new counselor educators? For one thing, they need to know what their personal and cultural values are, don’t you agree?

Daniel: I agree. It is interesting because I was having this conversation with my doctoral students last night. As we were in our conversation, I helped them identify the rules that they carry in mind, the rules that they carry in their heads, rules that they’ve heard from childhood from families or mentors, someone who’s important; and how those rules or those opinions and those thoughts can quickly become biases and restrict our thinking. Especially when we’re moving to a new location, getting to other areas, our cultural norms and the things that we’re so accustomed to, quickly become biases. I’m reminding of a story early in our career when we moved to the area where we are. We were over in the Eastern rural portion of the state.

Jennifer: Appalachian.

Daniel: In the Appalachian region. And when processing cases with master’s students about their clinical experiences, one of the students was demonstrating about showing a video of a counseling session. And it showed, a man, his wife and his mother-in-law in counseling together. And the students processing through it as though this was very normal. The husband was the client. And so I stopped the video and asked, well, who’re these other people and why are they there? What’s going on? I wasn’t aware that more people were going to be there because this is the intake session. And the student identified that is a cultural norm in that region for a man to show up to counseling or for some other type of services with his wife and his mother-in-law: and so, as his spokesperson.

Yes. And as a community and a cultural norm, as a counselor educator I was trained, this is a very confidential thing, we want to do this one-on-one, we want to establish that rapport. And so, this was a little bit in violation of what I believe. And so, putting myself up to these circumstances, opening myself up to this understanding, was a very powerful move to help me have a greater appreciation for the clients that we were working with.

Jennifer: Well, and I see that this is such an important piece, because so many counselor educators move for that first year on the professor track. And so we are trying to learn the rules with our students in other regions. That’s such a crucial piece, because sometimes we will not know the strengths and the values that exist within our
classroom. And so I think that we are in the position of the learner, and I think sometimes that can be a little awkward or a little scary, but I think it’s so important that we allow our students to teach us what it means to function in their communities. I think they have a unique vantage point.

Daniel: It’s interesting too because adapting our existing schema of what we believe and what we know, and accommodating of new perceptions, is critical. While we were teaching in Africa, very quickly we learned that relationships are much more important than timeliness. So we were teaching a class and the local students referred to it as “African time”. It was that, you will get to your destination eventually, but the interactions or relationships along the journey were much more important. And so, we as the teachers had to understand that tardiness wasn’t a sign of negligence, but rather it was a courtesy to someone else.

And so again, the idea of relationships in that culture was so much more important. So if the student showed up late, you just understood that, and it was part of the cultural norm.

Rebecca: I worked in Japan for a while, and I was supervising a group of counselors. And it was interesting because, in Japan, you really do not look in people’s eyes as much as we do here in America. So we consider eye contact something that’s important for the counseling relationship, and we will actually write in our case notes that somebody was able or unable to maintain eye contact. But in Japan, it’s considered, actually, an act of aggression, so you should not be looking in people’s eyes the way we do here. And it’s fine if you’re doing a counseling situation and they’re kind of looking around, as opposed to looking at you and maintaining eye contact.

Yes, so you have your story from Africa, mine from Japan. And then there are all of these subcultures that exist within America: like, the one in Appalachia which you were just talking about.

Daniel: Yes, it’s interesting too because something that I’ve discovered just teaching in Africa, but I’ve seen the relationship also to Appalachia. It’s common practice in Africa when you’re having a conversation with someone, to hold their hands. Something that was critically important for me not to do as a counselor educator, I was just taught, you just don’t touch your clients; just create the physical boundary. But I held hands with more people in Africa than I’ve ever held hands with people in my life, but it suggests the importance of the relationship.

And so even during counseling, and while counseling with a person, you’re communicating the importance of the relationship by holding hands. Now, this is the same characteristics that occur in Appalachia, especially in some of the more remote rural areas. Physical contact in holding the hands of the person that you’re working with
is a critical aspect of the relationship, and not doing so could harm the rapport that you’re trying to establish.

**Rebecca:** Go ahead, I’m sorry.

**Daniel:** I was just going to say, Jennifer just reminded me too that touching one’s arm is a strong part of the communication structure. And so physical contact is almost a necessity for communicating, especially communicating, it’s important to do it.

**Jennifer:** Well, and you were able to use that as an accommodation knowing that about the Ugandan people.

**Daniel:** One of the students in Uganda was blind in the counseling program at the university. And, of course, her being able to attend to people’s non-verbal was difficult because she couldn’t see.

**Jennifer:** She laughed at the first day when you gave the lecture on non-verbal attending.

**Daniel:** Right, she laughed. With the unique characteristics with her physical touch and proximity, she would sit next to the client; she would put her shoulder just gently against the shoulder of the client, and sit with their laps next to each other and hold the person’s hands. She read more non-verbals than the students who could see, which was a fascinating study in and of itself; she was able to pick up on more than all of the other students could combine.

**Jennifer:** But if you hadn’t understood that about the culture, you wouldn’t have been able to help her develop that technique.

**Daniel:** Right. It would have been a limitation.

**Jennifer:** Yes, yes.

**Rebecca:** Okay. How can new faculty be sensitive to the role of power differentials in the work relationship?

**Jennifer:** Wow. In our experience – and I know this was the case when I was a new faculty member – many faculty members don’t feel very powerful, so this the ethical consideration that goes without being considered. For instance, that, there is a very distinct power differential between students and faculty, and faculty are often times shifting, they’re thinking from being in the role of students, in the role of instructors. And so this has to be an intentional shift in thinking. It also requires individuals to kind recalibrate their gut or their instincts.
Daniel: There's also a power differential among the faculty as well. You hear the label “Senior Faculty Members” or “Tenured,” “Seasoned” and then you hear “Junior Faculty Members”; the perception that accompanies that. And often times, you see new faculty feeling very powerless or as though they should be subservient to the senior faculty or the tenured faculty.

Jennifer: We intentionally don’t use those terms at our institution.

Daniel: Exactly, for that very reason. And here’s the critical piece to remember for any new faculty member, especially new faculty coming out of their academic program seeking a faculty position; if an individual is less fortunate to experience an abusive power differential with faculty or supervisors during that educational experience, that does not give a person the permission to repeat that disruptive pattern; in other words, becoming the abuser. In cases in the past where I’ve witnessed faculty coming out of an academic program where they weren’t treated very well, and they felt the power to go in and mistreat the students the way they were mistreated, as though they were waiting for their turn to be that person.

Jennifer: It’s also like abuse in family systems.

Daniel: It really does, so it’s important to not do that. Mentoring – mentors in faculty provide a great example, and can provide a lot of guidance for that. I use this phrase often times with my students, but I think it’ll apply to you as well: like parents, mentors and faculty members can provide a great example of what to do as well as what not to do.

Jennifer: And I think that’s a great, great point. I think that it’s so important for a new faculty, in their interview, to explore is this the faculty who’s willing to invest in me, and to help me to navigate these systems.

Daniel: I agree.

Rebecca: I want to ask you both a last question, and that is: ACA now has over 55,000 members, most of whom are clinicians. Is there anything I have not asked you that you want our members to know?

Jennifer: Yes. You are part of a wonderful ACA community; there are resources at your disposal; don’t hesitate to reach out when you have a difficult ethical dilemma. A benefit of the ACA membership is: free, confidential, ethical and professional standard consultation. And you can contact Erin Martz, who’s the Director of Ethical and Professional Standards, or Michelle Wade, that’s the Ethics Specialist for ACA. Their number is 800-347-6647, extension 314. Or you can email them at
ethics@counseling.org. And I think that this resource is completely confidential; it's completely free. And I think this is just one piece of a beautiful community that you have as a new counselor educator.

And so I really recommend that if you have a difficult situation, that you reach out and you get some assistance with working through that situation, so that it goes in the best possible scenario.

Daniel: My little bit of Yoda advice here, to go back to that again, some of the pieces and parts we’ve addressed earlier is, don’t try to go it alone; ask for help, guidance and support. Always seek consultation. You’re not alone in the profession. Attending the ACA annual conference, ACES, as many as the professional development opportunities you can; gives you those networking opportunities. Connect with people, ask questions, and know that you don’t always have to have all the answers.

Rebecca: I love that. Well, I want to thank you so much, Dr. Jennifer Nivin Williamson and Dr. Daniel Williamson, for joining us today to discuss Unique Ethical Challenges Facing New Faculty. To view links to this program; to write to the presenter or the host, please go to www.counseling.org and click on the podcast page. This is Dr. Rebecca Daniel-Burke, your host for the ACA 2015 podcast series, signing off.