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Trends

A Vision for the Future of Counseling: The 20/20 *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*

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This article describes the development of the historic *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession.* An outcome of the *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* initiative, this document delineates a core set of principles that unifies and advances the counseling profession. *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession* has been endorsed by 29 major counseling organizations.

On April 9, 2005, the presidential teams of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB) met over breakfast at the ACA annual convention in Atlanta to discuss the future of professional counseling. In attendance were Sam Gladding, ACA president; Jim Wilson, AASCB president; Charles Gagnon, AASCB president-elect; Patricia Arredondo, ACA president-elect; Marie Wakefield, ACA president-elect-elect; Barry Mascari, AASCB president elect-elect; and—for administrative purposes—David Kaplan, ACA chief professional officer. The impetus for the meeting came from the AASCB. AASCB was concerned about a lack of unity within the counseling profession resulting in "multiple variations in state licensing titles and regulations [which] were hampering efforts to develop and implement the AASCB licensure portability plan" (Rollins, 2006, p. 26). The AASCB presidential team asked ACA to consider cosponsoring a major initiative that would not only address the issues of disparate licensure titles and scopes of practice but also work to unify the profession by developing a strategic plan for optimal positioning of the counseling profession in the year 2020. The ACA presidential team agreed to this request, and thus was born *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling.*

Historical Antecedents

There have been two historical antecedents to *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. The first occurred in 1988. Three distinguished counselor educators—Garry Walz, George Gazda, and Bruce Shertzer—were asked to speak about the future of counseling at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) conference held in St. Louis, Missouri. These remarks were subsequently published in a monograph titled *Counseling Futures* by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services (Walz, Gazda, & Shertzer, 1991).

Counseling Futures (Walz et al., 1991) reviewed the evolution of counseling and examined data regarding trends in counseling from 1980 through 1991. The monograph identified six major factors that were shaping counseling in the early 1990s: lack of funding for counseling research and program development; marketing forces; demographics; the acquisition and use of new knowledge; the proliferation of self-help resources available to the public; and computers and technology. Walz et al. hypothesized that these six forces would have specific effects on the future of counseling. They postulated 12 mega trends for the 1990s:

1. Due to aging of the population, counselors would need to develop skills in counseling older adults.
2. Due to both insurance companies and clients wanting evidence that they are getting value for their money, the need for outcome research would intensify.
3. Due to the centrality of family in a client's life, counselors would need to incorporate family counseling into their skill set.
4. Due to the increasing diversity of the United States, counselor education programs would need to recruit and attract a more multicultural student population.
5. Due to the increasing diversity of the United States, counselors would need to become committed to multiculturalism.
6. Due to strong evidence of effectiveness, peer counseling and client networking would increase.

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7. Due to the fact that too few people know about the services counselors provide, a comprehensive and systematic national marketing campaign would be developed to impact the visibility of our profession.
8. Due to the possibilities offered by technology, counselors would make a major commitment to investigating the utilization of computers and technology in counseling.
9. Due to the rapid expansion of knowledge, counselors would be challenged to keep up with new skills and information.
10. Due to increased public scrutiny, counselors would face increasing pressure to act ethically and within legal boundaries.
11. Due to clients' increasing desire for information and resources, counselors would need to focus on self-help techniques.
12. Due to the rise of special interest groups pursuing important social issues, counselors would need to develop advocacy skills.

The second antecedent to *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* occurred 10 years after the *Counseling Futures* (Walz et al., 1991) conference. At the impetus of Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), the honor society for the profession of counseling, representatives from ACA, the American College Counseling Association, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, the American Mental Health Counselors Association, the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, CSI, ERIC-CASS, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the North Carolina Counseling Association met for 3 days from May 27 to 29, 1998 (with a 2-day follow-up meeting on December 11 and 12, 1998, in Greensboro, North Carolina) to "share, discuss, and compare perceptions on a common vision for the advocacy of counselors and the services that they provide to others" (Chi Sigma Iota, n.d., p. 1). These Counselor Advocacy Leadership Conferences identified six critical themes for advancing advocacy for both clients and the counseling profession:

1. Counselor education graduate students should develop a clear identity as a professional counselor and take pride in this identity.
2. Associations representing professional counseling should work closely together to promote a common advocacy agenda.
3. Professional counselors should receive adequate compensation and be unrestricted in their ability to provide services within areas of competency.
4. Professional counseling should partner with sister professions on matters of mutual interest.
5. Professional counseling should promote rigorous research in the areas of client outcomes, counselor preparation, counselor employment, and public awareness; seek out research grants and contracts; and promote the use of research by clients, professionals, and legislators.
6. Professional counseling should advocate for optimal human development by promoting prevention and wellness.

The efforts of these two initiatives were taken into consideration as 20/20 began. In fact, the 20/20 project built on the foundation of the ACES and CSI conferences with the idea that it would take a longer sustained effort to move the profession of counseling forward.

Process

Oversight Committee

The seven individuals who met in Atlanta became the Oversight Committee and began to plan the process for *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. It was decided that all major organizational stakeholders in the counseling profession would be identified and invited to send a delegate. The word *delegate* was used deliberately as the 20/20 initiative was seen as analogous to the United Nations, where delegates from the systemwide community come together with the goal of promoting unity and the common good. The Oversight Committee also decided that its role would be limited to a focus on process and that the representatives from the counseling organizations would have full responsibility for content. In other words, this would be an organic process in which the delegates determined priorities, topics, and tasks and the Oversight Committee would then determine a method that would allow the delegates to accomplish their goals.

One of the earliest process decisions made by the Oversight Committee was that *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* would utilize a consensus model. Consensus was defined as a minimum of 90% of delegates giving their approval to a concept. Any concept that did reach consensus would then be sent to the 30 participating organizations for their review and—it was hoped—organizational endorsement. The Oversight Committee made it clear to the participating entities that each organization had full autonomy to decide the manner in which they would review for endorsement any concept that emerged from the 20/20 delegates.

Throughout the life of *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*, the core of the Oversight Committee has continued to consist of the presidential teams of AASCB and ACA, the two cosponsoring organizations. To date, the following 13 individuals have served as members of the Oversight Committee: Patricia Arredondo, Marcheta Evans, Sam Gladding, Charles Gagnon, Chris Greene, Lisa Jackson-Cherry, David

Kaplan, Lynn Linde, Colleen Logan, Barry Mascari, Vilia Tarvydas, Marie Wakefield, and Jim Wilson.

Participating Organizations

The Oversight Committee identified 30 major organizational stakeholders in the profession of counseling and issued invitations to participate in *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. These groups reflected the membership, accrediting, certifying, and honorary organizations within professional counseling. All 30 organizations accepted and named a delegate to the initiative. The participating entities (in alphabetical order) are as follows:

- American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB)
- American College Counseling Association (ACCA)
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
- ACA Midwest Region (ACAMR)
- ACA North Atlantic Region (ACANAR)
- ACA Southern Region (ACASR)
- ACA Western Region (ACAWR)
- American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)
- American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA)
- American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Association for Adult Development and Aging (AADA)
- Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education (AACE)
- Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)
- Association for Counselors and Educators in Government (ACEG)
- Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC)
- Association for Humanistic Counseling (previously Counseling Association for Humanistic Education and Development; C-AHEAD)
- Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC)
- Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD)
- Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW)
- Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC)
- Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC)
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)
- Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)
- Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ)
- International Association of Addictions and Offender Counselors (IAAOC)
- International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (IAMFC)
- National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)
- National Career Development Association (NCDA)
- National Employment Counseling Association (NECA)

Delegates

Each of the 30 participating organizations named a delegate to *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. Originally, 20/20 was conceived as a 2-year project and therefore delegates were asked to commit to the project for 24 months. As 20/20 evolved, the delegates determined that the initiative should continue on an ongoing and open-ended basis. As such, some of the organizations have replaced their delegate, some more than once. There have been a total of 48 delegates, 16 of whom are original appointees. The names and appointing organizations of all delegates to date are listed in Table 1.

Delineating Issues

The initial phase of *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* consisted of reaching consensus on issues that needed to be addressed to advance the profession of counseling. To begin this process, the delegates were asked to identify general areas of focus for the initiative. Delegate meetings were held at the 2006 AASCB and ACA conferences, and consensus was reached on seven strategic areas that needed critical attention by the counseling profession:

- Strengthening identity
- Presenting ourselves as one profession
- Improving public perception/recognition and advocating for professional issues
- Creating licensure portability
- Expanding and promoting the research base of professional counseling
- Focusing on students and prospective students
- Promoting client welfare and advocacy

After delineating the strategic areas listed above, delegates formed seven workgroups, with each workgroup focusing on one of the areas. Delegates self-selected into the workgroups, depending on the particular interest and expertise of the individual. Each workgroup was asked to generate potential topics to address during the course of the initiative. The seven workgroups generated 136 potential issues to be addressed by 20/20.

Concurrent with the delegates' brainstorming stage, the Oversight Committee solicited ideas from the counseling community. A town hall meeting was held at the 2007 AASCB conference in Sarasota, Florida. In addition, solicitations for issues to be addressed by 20/20 were placed in professional newsletters, websites, electronic mailing lists, and other media (e.g., *ACA e-News*).

The final step consisted of reaching consensus on those issues generated by the delegate workgroups and the public com-

TABLE 1

Delegate Roster 2005–2010

Organization	Delegates
American Association of State Counseling Boards	Barry Mascari
American College Counseling Association	Scott Borne, Perry Francis
American Counseling Association	Francene Haymon
American Counseling Association Midwest Region	Suzanne Dugger, Jean Underfer-Babalis
American Counseling Association North Atlantic Region	Laurine Browder, John Parkman
American Counseling Association Southern Region	Lynn Linde, Adriana McEachern
American Counseling Association Western Region	Rosemarie Woodruff
American Mental Health Counselors Association	Midge Williams, Deb Wells, Linda Barclay
American Rehabilitation Counseling Association	Caroline Wilde
American School Counselor Association	Eric Sparks
Association for Adult Development and Aging	Larry Burlew, Chris Moll
Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education	Brad Erford
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision	James Benshoff, Judi Durham, Tom Scofield
Association for Counselors and Educators in Government	Nancy Shrope, Grey Edwards, Linda Parker
Association for Creativity in Counseling	Shane Haberstroh
Association for Humanistic Counseling	Linda Leech, Cathy Malchiodi
Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling	Joy Whitman, Ed Cannon
Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development	Wyatt Kirk, Kent Butler
Association for Specialists in Group Work	Rebecca Schumacher, Burt Bertram
Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling	Mike Robinson
Chi Sigma Iota	Thomas J. Sweeney
Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification	Rebecca Rudman, Jill Falk, Cindy Chapman
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs	Carol Bobby
Council on Rehabilitation Education	Dennis Maki, Linda Shaw
Counselors for Social Justice	Rhonda M. Bryant
International Association of Addictions and Offender Counselors	Laura Veach
International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors	Bret Hendricks
National Board for Certified Counselors	Thomas Clawson
National Career Development Association	Judith Hoppin
National Employment Counseling Association	Bob Chope

ments that were appropriate for *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. The delegates met at the 2007 ACA conference in Detroit, Michigan, and reached consensus by having all 30 delegates agree that 22 of the original 136 issues fit within the scope of 20/20. These 22 items are listed in Table 2.

The 20/20 *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*

After reaching consensus on issues that would advance the counseling profession, the delegates decided that Phase I needed to be closed with a summary statement that reflected the variety of issues delineated in Table 2. The delegates determined that the seven consensus strategic areas (strengthening identity, presenting ourselves as one profession, improving public perception and advocacy, creating licensure portability, expanding and promoting research, focusing on students and prospective students, and promoting client welfare and advocacy) would form the backbone of the 20/20 *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*. A committee consisting of delegates Rosie Woodruff (cochair), Suzanne Dugger (cochair), Carol Bobby, Scott Borne, Tom Clawson, Eric Sparks, and Carrie Wilde was then charged with creating a document that reflected the seven strategic areas, provided context, and requested the endorsement of the participating organizations. The resulting document (see Appendix, p. 372) was finalized by the committee and approved by all 30 delegates.

Endorsements

After the promulgation of the *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession* by the organizational delegates, each organization itself was asked to formally endorse this document. At the time of the submission of this article, 29 of the 30 organizations participating in *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* have endorsed the *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*. This represents an endorsement rate of 97% of the organizations associated with professional counseling.

The one participating organization that, to date, has declined to endorse the *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession* is the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). ASCA has based their decision on their disagreement that there is a single counseling profession as conceptualized by *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. In an e-mail to the 20/20 Oversight Committee, Jim Bierma, the 2009 ASCA president, stated,

> The *Principles* [*for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*] are anchored on the idea that there is a single, common professional identity among counselors. . . . Throughout the 20/20 discussions, there was little consideration of the idea that there may be several counseling professions. . . . We believe it is premature to support the concept of a single counseling profession. . . . Therefore we have chosen not to sign the statement of support at this time. (H. E. Sparks, personal communication, February 6, 2009)

Significance for the Counseling Profession

While there have been antecedents as described near the beginning of this article, *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* represents the first time in history that every organization identified within counseling has collaborated in

TABLE 2

Consensus Issues for Advancing the Future of Counseling

I. Strengthening identity
1. The counseling profession should develop a paradigm that identifies the core commonalities of the profession.
2. The counseling profession should identify the body of core knowledge and skills shared by all counselors.
3. Counselor education programs should reflect a philosophy that unifies professional counselors who share a body of core knowledge and skills.
4. The counseling profession should reinforce for students that we are a single profession composed of counselors with specialized areas of training.
5. The accreditation of counseling programs must reflect one identity.

II. Presenting ourselves as one profession
6. The counseling profession should investigate the best structure for the future of counseling.
7. The counseling profession should create a common counselor identification that would also allow for additional designations of special interests and specialties.
8. While being unified, the counseling profession should respect counseling specialties.

III. Improving public perception/recognition and advocating for professional issues
9. The counseling profession should develop a clear definition of counseling for the public.
10. The counseling profession should present a stronger, more defined voice at the state and federal levels.
11. The counseling profession should promote one licensure title across the different states.
12. The counseling profession should work to educate the insurance industry about who we are, what we do, and the outcomes associated with counseling interventions.

IV. Creating licensure portability
13. The counseling profession should establish common counselor preparation standards that unify both the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs and Council on Rehabilitation Education standards into a single training model.

V. Expanding and promoting the research base of professional counseling
14. The counseling profession should encourage interest in research by practitioners and students.
15. The counseling profession should emphasize both qualitative and quantitative outcome research. At this time, many "best practices" are dictated to counselors by other mental health professions.

VI. Focusing on students and prospective students
16. The counseling profession should more actively work with undergraduates and undergraduate programs.
17. The counseling profession should promote mentor/practicum/internship relationships.
18. The counseling profession should endorse/require student involvement in professional counseling associations.

VII. Promoting client welfare and advocacy
19. The counseling profession should offer ongoing education and training for counselors on client and student advocacy.
20. The counseling profession should identify one advocacy project that would be completed annually within a selected community as a way to strengthen our counseling identity, present ourselves as one profession, and improve public perception.
21. The counseling profession should promote optimum health and wellness for those served as the ultimate goals of all counseling interventions.
22. The counseling profession should encourage evidenced-based, ethical practice as the foundation for counselors in training and professional counselors' interventions across settings and populations served.

an ongoing, organized effort to advance the profession. As such, 20/20 has become the United Nations of professional counseling. It represents the maturation of a profession that is acting collectively and proactively to engage in long-term strategic planning.

The promulgation of the 20/20 *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession* is also historic and marks an important achievement for professional counseling. It is the first time that representatives from well over two dozen counseling organizations have reached consensus on a set of core principles to guide the growth and healthy development of professional counseling.

With the promulgation of the 20/20 *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*, virtually all (97%) of the organizations representing professional counseling have finally spoken with one voice and committed themselves to a common vision for the profession. These 29 organizations have now publicly stated that they are more alike than different and that they represent one unified profession: the profession of counseling. This commitment will help to solidify the identity of professional counseling for the general public and for legislators. As such, it is predicted to lead to a better understanding of our profession and to an increased likelihood of passing legislation that is in the best interest of counselors and our clients.

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APPENDIX

Document Delineating Core Principles of the Counseling Profession and Requesting Endorsement

20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling
Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession

Preamble

As one of the organizations in the counseling profession, our organization supports the premise that strengthening our profession is essential. With this in mind, our organization participated in *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*. This was a representative process in which 30 counseling associations and organizations worked over a span of 3 years to identify where the counseling profession wants to be in the year 2020 and what it will take to get there.

Rationale

Professional counseling is approaching its 100th anniversary of the founding of the first counseling association. Since this time, we have become an established profession and made significant progress. As the profession expands and develops, continued attention to a unified counselor identity is important. The opportunity to establish a cohesive counseling identity leads to multiple benefits for professional counselors, including the presentation of a clearer image of professional counseling to clients, students, and the general public; and the promotion of legislative efforts that are in the best interest of the counseling profession and the people we serve.

We believe that the seven principles identified in this document constitute a beginning for developing a unifying vision and creating a long-term dialogue regarding these principles. Such a dialogue is important to identify the many approaches toward professionalism that can vary and, at the same time, are common to our profession. The following seven principles provide a foundation for unity and advancing the counseling profession as we progress toward the year 2020. The delegates of *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* identified these principles as important in moving the profession forward.

Principles

1. Sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors.
2. Presenting ourselves as a unified profession has multiple benefits.
3. Working together to improve the public perception of counseling and to advocate for professional issues will strengthen the profession.
4. Creating a portability system for licensure will benefit counselors and strengthen the counseling profession.
5. Expanding and promoting our research base is essential to the efficacy of professional counselors and to the public perception of the profession.
6. Focusing on students and prospective students is necessary to ensure the ongoing health of the counseling profession.
7. Promoting client welfare and advocating for the populations we serve is a primary focus of the counseling profession.

Statement of Support

Through our delegate to *20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling*, our organization participated in the development of this document and understands that the document represents a consensus that was reached by the delegates.

The signature below verifies that this document has been presented to the board members of our organization and that our board supports these seven principles.

We further agree to participate in a continuing dialogue within the counseling profession as a whole to facilitate and assess progress toward a unified professional position.

Signed:

President or Board Chair
Organization
Date