

Enlaces! Building Bridges to Spanish-Speaking Clients

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Programs and curricula in ethnic minority serving colleges and universities often are pulled by the unique needs of both their students and their surrounding communities. The psychology department at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles saw a need for a specialized training program for Spanish-speaking counselors. Faculty applied for an APA CEMMRAT grant to provide partial funding for piloting such a program. The following is a synopsis of a presentation at the 2001 APA Convention that describes this pilot program.

The Spanish-speaking population in the United States is growing rapidly. In 1997, 42.9% of the Greater Los Angeles Area population identified themselves as Hispanic; the projection for 2000 is 47.7% (Western Economic Research, Mill City, OR). As illustrated by the example above, and addressed by Dr. Cynthia de las Fuentes at the 1999 National Multicultural Conference and Summit, there is a serious shortage of Spanish-speaking counselors available to meet the needs of this population. Further, most counselors currently providing services to this population have taken counseling courses only in English and trained only in English. They have generally been left on their own to translate their education and training into Spanish application. Spanish-speaking counselors are not ordinarily trained in professional Spanish, do not necessarily have practicum training with Spanish-speaking clients, and typically receive only minimal training on cultural issues relevant to counseling the Spanish-speaking population.

Mount St. Mary's College has a proud history of providing a high quality liberal arts education to a diverse student body. In 1998, 31.6% of our psychology undergraduates and 49.4% of our psychology graduate students identified themselves as "Hispanic." Mount St. Mary's College also has a culture of service that attracts students who want to give back to their own communities. Since 1980, Mount St. Mary's College has offered an excellent Masters degree with Marriage, Family, and Child Therapy and Human Services/Personnel Services concentrations (through the Education Department from 1978-1985, and through the Psychology Department from 1986 forward). The Psychology Department has close connections with the Religious Studies Department, working with them to offer a graduate level Certificate for Pastoral Care and Counseling. The Religious Studies Department also offers a graduate certificate program taught entirely in Spanish that is designed to meet the needs of persons committed to Hispanic Pastoral Ministry. As an institution, Mount St. Mary's College is in an excellent and unique position to pilot a program to address the needs described above.

Objectives

The following measurable objectives of the project were reported:

1. Increasing enrollment of Spanish-speaking graduate psychology students
2. Improving the training and skills of existing counselors working locally with Spanish-speaking populations
3. Providing enrichment opportunities for non-Spanish-speaking graduate psychology students and counselors
4. Providing training in professional Spanish covering psychological concepts and terminology
5. Providing additional depth of training in multicultural issues in counseling, especially focusing on Spanish-speaking populations

6. Providing well-supervised practicum experiences with Spanish-speaking clients
7. Diversify the graduate psychology faculty

Certificate Program —

We propose to create a pilot certificate program at the graduate level for "Counseling the Spanish Speaking." Inspired by the Bilingual Counseling program at Our Lady of the Lake University (San Antonio, Texas), presented by Dr. Cynthia de las Fuentes at the 1999 National Multicultural Conference and Summit, this certificate would consist of 17 graduate semester units, to include the following:

PSY 203 Multicultural Counseling (3 units). Investigates the cross-cultural mores, values, and behaviors that are active in the process of counseling. Both theoretical aspects as well as practical considerations of counseling with various cultural groups are explored. (existing course)

PSY 255 Professional Spanish for Counselors (3 units). Taught in Spanish, this course covers psychological terminology and concepts. The theories and methodologies from a variety of theoretical perspectives are addressed.
(new course)

PSY 257 Counseling Issues for the Spanish-Speaking Client (3 units). Taught in Spanish, this course explores counseling-relevant mores, values, and behaviors of Spanish-speaking cultures represented in the Los Angeles area. Special emphasis is placed on the Spanish-language psychological literature. (new course)

PSY 269 Field Counseling Experience (6 units) This practicum course requires 180 hours of fieldwork, and relates counseling principles to the students' various experiences. Assessment, differential diagnosis, short term and long term interventions are emphasized. For certificate students, the practicum would necessarily involve Spanish-speaking clients. (existing course)

PSY 290 Special Topic Workshops (1-3 units) Workshops on different topics are presented as appropriate. For the certificate program, workshops would be offered on relevant topics such as Bicultural Identity Issues, Minority Community Resources, and Cultural Bias and Language Issues in Testing. (existing course)

Eligibility

In order to begin the certificate courses, a candidate would be required to demonstrate fluency in Spanish (e.g., AP, GSFLT, or other appropriate test scores) and completion of accredited graduate level coursework on counseling theories and procedures, laws and ethics, and psychopathology. Upper level graduate students enrolled in either Counseling or Religious Studies would be eligible to enroll, and certificate coursework would apply to their graduate degree programs. In addition, individuals outside of the university who have previously achieved at least a Masters level degree could attain the certificate by enrolling in the courses for continuing education units.

Schedule

Planning and development of the certificate program would take place during the 1999-2000 academic year; the certificate courses would be available during the 2000-2001 academic year. Evaluation of the certificate program during the 2000-2001 academic year would determine whether or not Mount St. Mary's College would fund the courses in subsequent years. If the certificate program appears fiscally viable, future enhancements to the program could include providing opportunities for students and counselors lacking Spanish fluency to participate with the addition of Spanish refresher and/or immersion courses.

Conclusion

This grant proposal to the American Psychological Association's Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs is designed to assist in the Training/Professional Development of Linguistic Minorities. By increasing the number of well trained Spanish-speaking counselors in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and diversifying the Mount St. Mary's College graduate psychology faculty, this program would help to meet the APA's Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training in Psychology (CEMRRAT) goals of encouraging psychologists to attain multicultural competence and increasing the number of people of color who are psychology students, faculty, and professionals. Further, this program specifically addresses CEMRRAT's funding priority of improving services to linguistic minorities. The demographic changes the Los Angeles area is experiencing indicate a strong need for innovative programs designed to better serve Spanish-speaking individuals, and the history and mission of Mount St. Mary's College uniquely position us to help meet this need.