



# NEWSLETTER

## RHO CHAPTER

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## INTRODUCING THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Hello everyone! My name is Fatima Akmal Leghari, and I am honored to be a part of this wonderful organization and serve as president for CSI for 2023-2024 academic year.

I am originally from Pakistan but moved to Tuscaloosa in July of 2022 to start my doctoral journey. I am a 2nd year doctoral student at UA studying Counselor Education and Supervision. My background has been in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. After graduating from Columbia University in 2020, I went back to Pakistan where I worked as a mental health counselor working with underprivileged and marginalized communities providing free and affordable counseling.

Through my experiences working in Pakistan, I came to realize the predominant Western perspective in the field of counseling and the need to adapt culturally when working with diverse clients. As I continue my journey towards a doctoral degree, I have come to appreciate the critical importance of multicultural counseling. In today's ever-diversifying world, it is imperative that we equip students at the master's and doctoral levels with the competence to navigate multicultural contexts. My journey as a counselor in both Pakistan and the United States has illuminated the fact that people from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, as well as differing socioeconomic statuses, often approach counseling and mental health through the unique lens of their cultural heritage. Negative perceptions about mental health counseling, stemming from cultural beliefs, can discourage individuals from seeking the help they need, ultimately impacting effective treatment.

My passion lies in advocating for multicultural counseling awareness and its significance. Together, we can create a profound impact on the lives of those we serve.



## MEET YOUR CSI LEADERSHIP TEAM

WITH JOINING CSI COMES THE AMAZING OPPORTUNITY OF BEING ABLE TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS, WHETHER THEY ARE IN YOUR SAME FIELD OR NOT. YOUR RHO CHAPTER LEADERSHIP MEMBERS ARE JUST SOME OF THE FEW PEOPLE YOU CAN REACH OUT TO WHEN YOU'RE IN NEED OF SOME HELP AND SUPPORT. LET'S GET TO KNOW THEM!



**FATIMA AKMAL LEGHARI**  
**2ND YEAR: PHD COUNSELOR**  
**EDUCATION & SUPERVISION**  
**CSI ROLE: PRESIDENT**  
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I am passionate about counseling because growing up in a place where mental health was often a taboo topic, I felt a strong calling to break those barriers and show people that our mental well-being can profoundly affect our lives and connections. My goal is to foster a greater awareness of mental health and to offer unwavering support and empowerment to the people I assist. It's incredibly rewarding to know that I'm making a positive difference in someone's life and helping them lead a more satisfying, fulfilling life.

Fun Fact: I have lived in 5 different cities in the past 8 years. (Kuala Lumpur, Columbus, New York City, Karachi, & Tuscaloosa)



**KAYLEEN GORDON**  
**2ND YEAR: CMHC**  
**CSI ROLE: CMHC REPRESENTATIVE &**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA CREATOR**  
**EMAIL: KSGORDON3@CRIMSON.UA.EDU**

I am passionate about counseling because if it wasn't for my own counselors growing up and the support of my family, I would not be who I am or where I am today. I was lucky enough at the age of 10 to receive the help I did regarding my mental health and in a way I want to give back. My dream population is children and adolescents in order to give these individuals at least one person who will support and advocate for them throughout their own mental health journey.

Fun fact: I have driven across the country six times and each time try to go a different route so I can see as much of the U.S. as possible.



**KHAYREE FILES**  
**2ND YEAR: PHD COUNSELOR**  
**EDUCATION & SUPERVISION**  
**CSI ROLE: PHD REPRESENTATIVE**  
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I am passionate about counseling because of all the ongoing lessons and experiences I can learn from each client I come in contact with. As a Black man, counseling and mental health was never something that was brought to the dinner table. But I have always had a knack for listening to people and wanting to help whenever possible. I have used my call into counseling to help break the stigma surrounding mental health in the Black community and pushing the limits of what we should share at the dinner table. It has been a tremendous journey full of success and failure, however, knowing I am in a profession that emphasizes advocacy and challenging society's status quo has only strengthened my passion.

Fun fact: I am an army brat and grew up overseas for most of my life. I have travelled throughout majority of Europe and lived there for 18 years. (Yes, I did learn another language; No, I did not retain the language.)



I am passionate about counseling because it is a profession that puts our humanity at the center. As counselors, we create a space for clients to bring their authentic selves, and we walk with them while they unlock their internal wisdom. To me, being part of that journey is a privilege.

**CAROLINA GOYENECHÉ GOMEZ**  
**3RD YEAR: CMHC**  
**CSI ROLE: COLLABORATOR**  
**EMAIL: CGOYENECHEGOMEZ@CRIMS**  
**ON.UA.EDU**

Fun fact: I had a 14-year career in sales, marketing, and advertising before pursuing my true passion for counseling.



With three years of experience as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, I have witnessed numerous success stories from individuals with diverse abilities and backgrounds. My passion for the role of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor stems from the belief that everyone in my community deserves an opportunity to be self-sufficient and achieve their professional goals. I take pride in my clients' determination to contribute to society and earn their way, cherishing the privilege of being part of their transformative journeys.

**BARBIE CEDERLOF**  
**2ND YEAR: REHABILITATION**  
**COUNSELING**  
**CSI ROLE: REHABILITATION**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**  
**EMAIL: QTBARBIE33@GMAIL.COM**

Fun fact: I don't know that this is a fun fact, but a unique opportunity that I got to take part in was to attend a Citizen Academy organized by the local police department. My unique experience was getting to get tased by the police, an experience I will never forget.



I am passionate about counseling because I feel like every human has good in them regardless of their past and trauma. I believe that everyone has the capacity to change and every person has a purpose, no matter how small. Art therapy is what really brought me to love counseling which has made me feel like my life's purpose is to heal others one day at a time.

**LAURA ACKER**  
**2ND YEAR: CMHC**  
**CSI ROLE: SECRETARY**  
**EMAIL: LEACKER@CRIMSON.UA.EDU**

Fun fact: I taught myself how to crochet during the pandemic.

# ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION CONFERENCE 2023

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**DR. HEATHER FYE**  
**RHO CHAPTER FACULTY ADVISOR**

The fall semester is always an exciting time as we welcome new cohorts of master's and doctoral counseling students! It is also when most are beginning a new academic year or new professional journey, which will ultimately shape and/or change lives. And how could I forget, it is football season!

Dr. Cook, Khayree Files, and I had the opportunity to present our research on trauma-informed practices in schools and school counseling programs at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference, which was held in Denver, CO during October 11-15, 2023. Specifically, we discussed how counselor educators and supervisors could integrate trauma-informed practices education into the school counseling curriculum across content and field-based courses. To help educators with understanding and infusing trauma-informed practices in schools, we shared the instrument we developed to measure trauma-informed practices in schools and school counseling programs. It is rewarding to be able to visit various regions of the country and engage in discussions with other counselor educators and supervisors.

Whether you are an aspiring counselor or counselor educator, if you are interested, I hope you will be able to attend and/or present at a future conference in an area of interest for you!

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**KHAYREE FILES**  
**PHD REPRESENTATIVE**

I recently attended the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision 2023 Conference in Denver, CO. I presented an education session with Dr. Fye about trauma informed practices in schools and a solo roundtable session about mentoring strategies for Black male counseling students. While my solo presentation did not go as planned, I was able to connect and speak about my topic with many other doctoral students who shared similar interests and concerns. I could feel myself starting to build a community geared towards my personal and research interests. In addition to presenting, I volunteered during the conference. My experience volunteering was unique as I provided customer service-related tasks. While the volunteering was not what I had expected, it was well worth the experience in that I met many counselor educators, students, and professionals with a range of experience and clinical backgrounds. I am using my experience from the conference to motivate me in creating a Black male graduate support group for the graduate students in the Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology, and Counseling, with a priority for counseling students

# CSI & CACREP LEADERSHIP ESSAY CONTEST

BY: FATIMA AKMAL LEGHARI



## Beyond Labels: The Dynamic Role of Professional Counselor Identity in a multifaceted world

In the dynamic field of counseling, the essence of our professional identity transcends qualifications and credentials. It lies in our unwavering commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and social justice. As counselors, the Professional Counselor Identity is not merely a title but a guiding principle that shapes our practices, advocacy, and the core of who we are. In a world where diversity thrives, yet inequities persist, the role of our professional identity in safeguarding the integrity of our inclusive counseling profession becomes paramount. Chi Sigma Iota and CACREP, institutions dedicated to empowering diverse individuals and groups, serve as beacons of this vital mission. This essay explores the multifaceted role of the Professional Counselor Identity in upholding and advancing the principles of inclusivity and equity within our profession, underscoring the imperative of this commitment to fostering a more just and compassionate world, one client at a time.

Growing up in Pakistan, I never acknowledged the multiple identities, how their intersections played a role of privilege, and how they impacted the understanding and views of the people and the world around me. When I moved to the US, these aspects that I considered a majority of my identity became a minority overnight, allowing me to acknowledge what it felt like to be on the other side for the first time. As a counselor, I need to discuss my identity with myself and my clients. To grow, I need to confront uncomfortable feelings, challenging questions, and differing viewpoints to better understand individuals and groups that differ from us. Acquiring multicultural counseling competencies is a fundamental component of the professional counselor identity. These competencies entail understanding how cultural factors impact mental health and well-being.

In my master's class, we dedicated a single class time to discuss multiculturalism, and I left feeling uncomfortable and unheard. Learning about multiculturalism is not merely a short class; it is a lifelong journey that we must take to keep learning and growing. Therefore, the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies model by Ratts et al. (2016) is so profound to understand. Upon initial reading, I was impressed by how there can be instances with a "Marginalized Counselor and Privileged Client" in a session; we rarely discuss this. Hence, it is essential to acknowledge the different identities that may be seen as privilege and oppression when working with clients. Once addressed, the work we do with clients can be empowering. As professional counselors, we are expected to develop cultural competence,

recognizing and respecting clients' diverse backgrounds and experiences. Diversity in counseling has been a close topic ever since I started my journey. My experiences working in Pakistan have made me question my positionality and how my identity impacts how I work with clients of different backgrounds than mine (Holmes, 2020).

In today's ever-diversifying world, we must equip students with the competence to navigate multicultural contexts. The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics highlights, "honouring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts" (Preamble, American Counseling Association). Through my experiences in Pakistan and the United States, I have understood that individuals from diverse backgrounds often approach counseling through the unique lens of their cultural heritage. Embracing cultural competence is essential for creating an environment where clients feel understood, valued, and supported in their therapeutic journey.

When starting my journey, I aimed to connect with faculty who shared my cultural identity, and I yearned for mentors who could truly empathize with my experiences. It was eye-opening when I discovered that racial and ethnically diverse faculty representation in CACREP programs stood at a mere 17% (Baggerly et al., 2014). As an international student and a minority in the United States, my voice carries significance, and as a prospective Counselor Educator, I am driven to ensure that our professional values integrate the voices of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, I have realized that adopting training and models from Eurocentric approaches can cause additional concern to Counselor identity and practice, which I aim to bridge in my work (Alvarez & Lee, 2012).

During my leadership and advocacy class, I realized that advocating for social justice is vital to the professional counselor's identity (Chang & Barrio Minton, 2022). This entails the critical recognition and addressing of systemic barriers and discrimination that can significantly affect the well-being of our clients. Two principles of leadership excellence resonated with me. Principle #8, Mentoring, Encouragement, and Empowerment, and Principle #9, Recognition of Others, stood out (Chi Sigma Iota Academy of Leaders, 1999). As stewards of the Professional Counselor Identity, we bear the responsibility of nurturing our growth and inspiring the remarkable contributions of our peers. Developing a professional identity is a gradual process that necessitates mentors willing to invest their time and energy in fostering leadership and advocacy.

Counselors' professional identity is intricately tied to their dedication to inclusivity, diversity, and social justice. A professional counselor actively promotes diversity and inclusivity within the profession and advocates for clients' rights. As mentioned under CACREP Core values, "promoting practices that reflect openness to growth, change, and collaboration; and creating and strengthening standards that reflect the needs of society, respect the diversity of instructional approaches and strategies, and encourage program improvement and best practices" (pg. 5, 2023) has been my motto since I have started my journey as a Counselor and Counselor Educator. This active engagement in fostering an inclusive counseling profession defines the counselor's professional identity. We must engage in meaningful conversations to foster inclusivity and diversity. We must take concrete actions to embrace and support individuals who bring unique perspectives to our field, acknowledging that their contributions are integral to our collective growth and professional counselor identity to best support clients and students.

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# It Takes a Village

**Spring  
2024**

**FOR BLACK MALE COUNSELING MASTER'S  
AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS.**

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## SPRING INDUCTION CEREMONY : 37TH ANNUAL INITIATION

BY: CAROLINA GOYENECHÉ GOMEZ



On April 21, 2023, the CSI RHO Chapter held the Annual Initiation ceremony. The 2022 to 2023 president of the chapter, Bree Williams, shared the chapter's accomplishments and introduced our International Speaker, who joined us through Zoom from India.

The Speaker was Mansi Sharma, an attorney and international mediator whose work has been centered on non-violent communication, peer mediation, and conflict resolution using Buddhist, Jain, and Gandhian Studies. The Speaker acknowledged shared similarities among mediator professionals and counselors. Some of the most significant remarks Ms. Sharma shared are:

**Energy:** Remembering that in all human interactions, we exchange energy. Counselors offer positive energy to clients but also receive clients' energy. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how to manage this energy to avoid burnout.

**Sound:** Ms. Sharma also discussed that counselors spend most of their time listening to people and, often, to difficult stories. All that sound enters counselors' bodies and minds, and she recommended finding practices to exteriorize these sounds and heal. Some of those practices are humming or voo sounds.

**Legacy:** Finally, Ms. Sharma wanted counselors to remember that the counselors' legacy is significant; however, leaving a legacy as humans is essential. Counselors must dedicate time and energy to other areas of life that remind them of their humanity to leave a meaningful legacy.

After an incredible speaker intervention, Dr. Fye shared remarks about CSI, and then the induction ceremony started. This year, the RHO Chapter had 17 inductees, an incredible number. The event concluded by celebrating the graduation of ten new counselors.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SPING INDUCTEES! WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU AND LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU EXCEL IN YOUR FUTURE!**



Make sure to join the Rho Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota on Facebook to get the latest information