

## Teaching Philosophy Charles F. Shepard

My teaching philosophy is rooted in my theory of how people change and learn. People change in response to a new, here-and-now experience that supports their intra- and interpersonal security. In other words, students learn in response to experiencing a new way of doing things that makes them feel better with themselves and with other people. This perspective has been informed by my training and practice applying attachment, family systems, queer, and critical race theories to the promotion of the well-being of clients and students throughout my career as a counselor and educator.

To bring my philosophy to bear, I take a service-first approach to teaching. I pay attention to a variety of systemic factors to ensure that students' highest-priority needs are being met. I emphasize equity over equality. I educate myself and partner or consult with other counselor educators from diverse backgrounds to help students grow as persons, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become service-oriented themselves. I consider what is the effect of my pedagogy on the least-privileged in society. Will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived.

I recognize the many roles that counselor educators play in the development of students. The counselor educator is first a person, then—but in no particular order—an instructor, mentor, advocate, evaluator, and gatekeeper to the profession. I cultivate in myself patience, passion, compassion, courage, kindness, generosity, accountability, curiosity, wisdom, and the knowledge that education is a process rather than a destination. To facilitate the educational process, I commit myself daily to understanding advances in human development and interpersonal processes to enhance learning through relevant experiential opportunities.

As a life-long learner, I believe that we learn together. Though I strive to join my students from a place of experience and leadership, I encourage students to take the reins of course content, ask questions, and experiment through a variety of experiential activities. I recognize that some learning must occur in isolation, the extent of which is dependent upon the students' cognitive developmental level. I recognize that other aspects of human existence (i.e., race, gender, culture, and socioeconomic class) influence our approaches to learning. I take these factors into account during every interaction I have with students, either as a group or individually.

Finally, I accept the responsibility to not only develop and train the next generation of practitioners, but also leaders in the field. I work to model tolerance of a sustained, wide span of awareness so I may understand phenomena relevant to students' experience as clearly as possible. I hope not to just educate, but also to inspire those in my care to service-oriented careers during which they, too, can understand more clearly and do more to promote wellness and ease suffering for individuals, families, and the communities in which they work and live.