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Remediation Practices and Considerations for Virtual Counseling Programs: An emphasis on due process

Abstract

Over the past 6 years, the number of accredited Masters Counseling programs has increased from 6 to 75, a growth rate of 233%. In the new expansion of educational technology, programs have better tools to implement a range of educational experiences alongside frameworks to deliver effective counselor education. Much of the counselor-training process involves gatekeeping to enter the profession. One crucial aspect of gatekeeping is training program's effectiveness at implementing remediation when needed. This article explores strategies and reflective case studies for remediation practices in virtual environments within a counselor education program. The article places an emphasis on applying remediation while ensuring student due process, a practice that can be applied to any training program in a higher education environment.

Keywords

Counselor Training, Gatekeeping, Remediation, Virtual Education

Cover Page Footnote

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Remediation Practices and Considerations for Virtual Counseling Programs: An Emphasis on Due Process

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Introduction

On March 6th, 2020 it was reported that several Universities in the United States switched to online learning. Due to concerns surrounding the growing cases of COVID-19, the transition to distance learning was immediate. In the following weeks the United States witnessed practically all institutions of higher education close their doors and deliver all services virtually (Baker, 2020). The event was perhaps a sprint to the inevitable, higher education has been drifting toward online delivery for quite some time. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, counseling organizations canceled their annual meetings and instead helped programs and counselors' transition swiftly to online delivery. Organizations, such as the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), offered immediate feedback and training to programs undergoing the abrupt switch to their counselor training programs, while other programs continued with business as usual (ACES, 2020). Before COVID-19, counselor education programs were increasing at a steady rate; however, recent events pushed innovation for almost all of counselor education.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) provides accreditation to counselor education programs that deliver training primarily through "Online" formats. At the time of writing this article there are 75 CACREP accredited counselor training programs that hold the "Online" characteristic (CACREP, 2019). As technology advances, distance education continues to drive further into the mainstream areas of higher education. For the first time in history, adult populations now have the accessibility and access to learning disciplines in every profession (Anderson & Dron, 2011). The question of learning outcomes in online versus traditional face-to-face formats has consistently yielded results that show no significant difference when compared with their brick and mortar counterparts (Fendler, Ruff, & Shrikhande, 2018). The prospect of accessible education using distance technology without the consequence of decreased learning outcomes has provided educators, institutions and accrediting bodies with confidence to move forward with distance education formats. However, there are still questions in how distance education should be delivered and the relevancy it should hold within the institution (House-Peters, Del Casino Jr, & Brooks, 2019). Even though learning outcomes in online versus face-to-face formats present no significant difference counselor educators continue to question the preparation students receive. Particularly in the areas of skills acquisition, clinical experiences and professionalism (Reicherzer, Coker, Rush-Wilson, Buckley, Cannon, Harris, & Jorissen, 2012; Wasik, Barrow, Royal, Brooks, Scott-Dames, Corry, & Bird, 2019). Additionally, as distance learning in counselor education continues to grow the gatekeeping process for online counselor education will present unique challenges and situations (Dougherty, Haddock, & Coker, 2015).

The process of student development, gatekeeping, and timely remediation are viewed to serve as the framework for counselor education. Remediation is an event that occurs simultaneously in the assessment and evaluation process (Dorn-Medeiros & Christensen, 2019). The Code of Ethics for the American Counseling Association (ACA) stipulate that counselor training programs actively practice gatekeeping strategies that involve remediation of counselor-trainees (ACA, 2014). Further, CACREP accredited programs are required to practice gatekeeping protocols via student retention, remediation, and dismissal procedures (CACREP, 2016). Notwithstanding the educational practices in online counselor training programs, it would behoove counselor educators to explore gatekeeping, particularly remediation, in the virtual environment. In addition, counselor educators have a duty to keep abreast with ever changing technologies and the resulting student interactions that are likely to emerge. One integral aspect of remediation in counselor education, student due process, is documented consistently in the literature (McAdams & Foster, 2007; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010; Wolf, Green, Nochajski, & Kost, 2014). Currently, there is a paucity of literature related to remediation practices in online counselor education programs. Further, the application of due process with remediation remains unclear in virtual environments. The purpose of this article is to explore the application of gatekeeping, specifically remediation, in counselor education within the virtual environment. This article includes a discussion of gatekeeping practices in virtual environments, best practices for remediation in counselor training within distance counselor education programs, the application of due process delivered through a distance program in counselor education, and some future considerations in virtual counselor education. Using two case examples the author will apply the due process practices outlined in McAdams and Foster (2007) conjunctively with remedial interventions detailed in Rust, Raskin, and Hill (2013) will be discussed. The cases presented highlight the means that faculty would conduct due process during remediation in a distance counselor education program. Case studies offer the means to conduct a variety of observations related to theories, policies, and programs. Further, using case studies enhances context-based understanding of an issue and the application of an idea (Ellinger & McWhorter, 2016).

Gatekeeping Practices in Virtual Environments

According to the ACA gatekeeping in counselor training refers to “the initial and ongoing academic, skill, and dispositional assessment of students’ competency for professional practice, including remediation and termination as appropriate (ACA, 2014).” Additionally, CACREP defines gatekeeping as “the ethical responsibility of counselor educators and supervisors to monitor and evaluate an individual’s knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions required by competent professional counselors and to remediate or prevent those that are lacking in professional competence from becoming counselors (CACREP, 2015).” Gatekeeping begins with the admissions process when the counselor educator makes the decision to admit a person to begin training to become a counselor. CACREP requires programs to begin gatekeeping during the screening process for applicants (Jorgensen & Brown-Rice, 2016). Counselor educators also act as a gatekeeper by documenting their observations and evaluations of student performance against student learning outcomes (SLO). SLOs are a standard of performance in a counselor training program that would indicate the proficient acquisition of a desired counseling skill and serve as a means toward gatekeeping when a skill is below the desired proficiency (Reicherzer et al., 2012). The act of remediation occurs as an outcome of the gatekeeping process throughout

counselor training, and is an action taken by a counselor educator or supervisor to fulfill their gatekeeping responsibility (Schuermann, Harris, & Lloyd-Hazlett, 2018). In contrast to traditional face-to-face programs, online education presents alternative forms of exchanges between peers and students; therefore, remediation actions will resemble unique interactions from traditional counselor training formats (Dougherty et al., 2015).

Academic Gatekeeping in Distance Education

The virtual environment poses unique challenges, particularly in the realm of academic honesty. Access to enhanced technology offers the student more capabilities to plagiarize and act unethically when submitting an assessment of their learning in the distance format. For example, having a friend submit an exam rather than taking the exam themselves (Reamer, 2013). To monitor unethical behaviors in the submission of materials online, Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Blackboard, implement software called “SafeAssign” to prevent plagiarism. Counselor educators informing and introducing controls such as “SafeAssign” would be practicing ethical use of gatekeeping methods for monitoring a student’s academic development and behavior (Moorhead, Hartwig, Neuer Colburn, Edwards, & Erwin, 2013).

Clinical Gatekeeping in Distance Education

Field experiences generally serve as the capstone for counselor-trainees, and when conducted through distance counselor educators hold additional responsibilities. Computer-based supervision practices require more efficient communication practices between all parties and require extra structures for the supervision (Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007). In addition to communication, counseling programs would benefit from empirically testing clinical skill assessments to accurately predict skill acquisition for more consistent and timely gatekeeping practices. Assessments that measure clinical performance in distance programs require frequent and intentional discussions regarding evaluative practices and program expectations of clinical requirements (Reicherzer et al., 2012). Gatekeeping practices surrounding clinical experiences in distance education are enhanced with consistent communication between all parties involved (ie. Counselor-trainee, site-supervisor, and university supervisor), as well as, valid and transparent assessments of clinical performance (Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007; Foster & McAdams, 2009).

Professional Gatekeeping in Distance Education

Professionalism in counselor education programs involves the routine evaluation of student dispositions throughout their time in the program. Dispositions generally indicate whether a trainee will be suitable for the counseling field and be able to acquire the integral skills a counselor possesses (Swank, Lambie, & Witta, 2012). Dispositions are defined as “core values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs needed to become an effective and competent professional (Spurgeon, Gibbons, & Cochran, 2012).” There is no consensus from counselor educators as to what specific dispositions are desirable to counselors. Therefore, the evaluation and observation of dispositions is a subjective process that relies on the counselor educator’s ethical duty and experience (Garner, Freeman, & Lee, 2016). Professional dispositions in online education emerge as different representations of one’s personality, values, and beliefs. Communication is occurring more frequently and through different mediums; therefore, the educator will have more

opportunities to monitor and evaluate professionalism through a diversified set of areas (Kirwan & Roumell, 2015).

Remediation Plans in Counselor Education

The ACA Code of Ethics identify remediation as an action to address the “inability of some students to achieve counseling competencies (ACA, 2014).” When ongoing evaluation of a student in the program yields areas for concern, counselor educators are ethically required to do the following: “1. Assist student in securing remedial assistance when needed, 2. Seek professional consultation and document their decision to dismiss or refer student for assistance, and 3. Ensure that students have recourse in a timely manner to address decisions requiring them and provide students with due process according to institutional policies and procedures (ACA, 2014).” The implementation of a competent remediation plan must consider the students’ cultural factors, as well as, an action to include them at every phase of the process. Further students have the right to due process in conjunction with remediation activities (Muse-Burke, Hanko, & Barna, 2018). The concept of due process emerges in many forms throughout the remediation process.

Remediation Procedures

Once a concern arises through faculty gatekeeping, the student is informed of the deficiency and the remediation process is initiated. Much of the literature related to the remediation process is centered on conducting a dismissal rather than specific steps to retain and improve (Henderson & Dufrene, 2012). Research demonstrates that trainees possess limited knowledge regarding the remediation process in their programs (Foster, Leppma, & Hutchinson, 2014). Therefore, a lack of guidance for counselor educators regarding unified procedural steps to remediation can place the program and educators at risk for legal action, particularly if the matter is mishandled (Dougherty et al., 2015).

Remediation Activities

Personal counseling has been identified as the most used remediation activity to address trainee issues of professional competence. Other forms of remediation activities include course repetition, additional assignments, and program sabbaticals (Forrest, Elman, & Shen Miller, 2008; Rust et al., 2013). In a recent study of common remediation practices in counselor education, the authors isolated four themes: 1. Personal counseling: planned personal counseling to address a deficiency, 2. Courses: repeating a course to demonstrate competency, 3. Assignments: repeating an assignment to demonstrate competency, and 4. Remediation procedures: procedures innate to the program’s gatekeeping process and include other activities to address trainee development. Remediation procedures referred to the supervision and consistent evaluation associated with remediation activities (Henderson & Dufrene, 2017). For counselor educators to practice ethical gatekeeping in online programs, remediation practices must retain the due process innately embedded in their delivery to the trainee. However, since there is no consistent data indicating valid and reliable activities, educators must rely on their professional judgement when choosing activities for a remediation plan (Rust et al., 2013).

Due Process

McAdams and Foster (2007) insist that at the time of remediation the effectiveness of the action is measured by the strength of a program's use of due process. One measure of effectiveness across all plans is their ability to enact due process. The concept of due process is innately found in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution; therefore, the notion of providing due process translates across actions taken by an entity. Many significant court cases that involved academic decisions and dismissal from a training program concerned whether the institution applied sound due process during the remediation to dismiss (Dugger & Francis, 2014; Jaschik, 2012). Since gatekeeping practices in counselor education include applied remediation it is crucial educators understand due process to ensure their program decisions are supported by outside observers. When implementing a remediation in counselor education the faculty and advisors should be aware of three primary forms of due process: 1. Substantive due process, 2. Procedural due process, and 3. Fundamental fairness. Substantive due process is a test for how relevant the plan is to a trainees' interests, its' comparability in scope to other forms of deficiencies, and no punitive intent exists. Procedural due process ensures the plan is clearly defined, promotes distinct support from faculty, implements clear evaluative standards, and receives thorough documentation. Last, fundamental fairness mandates that a competent plan be accessible for the trainee, be adaptable to meet the needs of the individual, and be within accepted practice (McAdams & Foster, 2007).

Tests of Due Process

To better identify and uphold the three forms of due process, there are tests of consideration, for each form of due process, that counselor educators can apply to ensure they are utilizing remediation in a fair and just manner. For Substantive due process there are three considerations that remedial actions and expectations are: 1. relevant to all compelling interests, 2. comparable with the severity and scope of the performance deficiencies and 3. be corrective rather than punitive in the intent and action. There are four main considerations for Procedural due process are: 1. be clearly defined in advance of their execution, 2. receive distinct faculty supervision and support, 3. be regularly evaluated and reported and 4. be thoroughly documented. The three considerations for Fundamental fairness are as follows: 1. be accessible in the context applied, 2. possess adaptability for individual student differences and 3. be consistent with accepted practice (McAdams & Foster, 2007).

Remediation Practices in Virtual Environments

First, remediation through any format must ensure the students due process rights are preserved during any actions. Studies into best practices for remediation in online counselor education programs are limited. However, it is important that educators first understand that remediation scenarios will likely be different based upon the divergent forms of interactions between faculty and students compared to face-to-face based programs (McAdams & Foster, 2007). Remediation practices in virtual environments operate to best serve the trainee if faculty take a proactive stance, rather than a reactive stance. For example, faculty that build a culture of professional development within their online communications and materials will have an activity to rely upon in the event of a remediation action (Dougherty et al., 2015). It would behoove

faculty to provide thorough materials and communication of expectations from the moment a trainee enters the program to ensure their success in the virtual environment (Rust et al., 2013). Additionally, virtual literacy – communication practices through virtual platforms, is a concept that needs to be introduced to students entering an online program (Al Ghamdi, Samarji, & Watt, 2016).

Case Examples Utilizing Due Process in Virtual Environments

The following cases are reflective of direct experiences by the author and represent potential disputes that occur in virtual environments. The author educates primarily in virtual settings and discussed the cases from the actions taken to remediate the following issues in their education programs. These two cases were chosen because they depict an evaluation that presented an area of concern where the counselor education faculty took remedial action. The case studies are illustrative in nature, attempting to present realism to yield a better understanding for how educators can apply due process in a virtual environment (Baskarada, 2014). Further, these cases should not be generalized in the context of all counselor education programs. According to Ellinger & McWhorter (2016) a case study should not be used to generalize a population on which a theory is applied.

Case Study One

Joe is a student enrolled in an online graduate degree program in school counseling. Joe is currently in the Practicum stage of his program and was placed at a site to be supervised conjunctively by a faculty member and on-site school counselor. The site is two counties away from the institution and in a different town from where Joe lives. Joe participated in scheduled weekly group supervision through videoconference during the practicum and was required to attend individual supervision with his site supervisor. Joe's faculty supervisor consulted at midterm with Joe's site supervisor and was scheduled to meet with the site supervisor before giving Joe his final evaluation. Before the scheduled final consultation, Joe's site supervisor contacted the faculty supervisor, expressing concerns with Joe's behavior on site. The site supervisor revealed that even though Joe had been performing exceptionally in observed direct counseling, he had been skipping individual supervision meetings over the past 3 weeks. Joe had confided with the site supervisor that he felt they had met enough and preferred to just complete his regularly scheduled hours. Joe's site supervisor had accepted one absence, but after reminding Joe of his requirement to receive weekly individual supervision he became visibly angry and refused to meet with the site supervisor. After the site supervisor insisted on adhering to the individual supervision requirement, Joe declined to corroborate his counseling activities and recordings with his site supervisor. Joe's university supervisor and adviser emailed Joe with the directive to not return to his site.

Plan of Action

After calling and speaking with Joe's site supervisor, Joe's university supervisor and faculty adviser scheduled a videoconference meeting with Joe to discuss how to proceed. The videoconference witnessed Joe attending via his computer at his home, the university supervisor at their office, and Joe's faculty adviser at their own office space. During the visit, Joe offered a

retelling of events and Joe's university supervisor discussed contact with Joe's site supervisor. As the situation was discussed, Joe's university supervisor virtually shared his screen to walk through the professional performance review evaluation that each student receives during the semester, as well as, the field experience evaluation. Joe's university supervisor confided that Joe would not be passing the semester's field experience due to being in no position to receive a final evaluation. Further, they explained on screen the professionalism violations that would be recorded on Joe's disposition evaluation, which the program called its' professional performance review, for that semester. Joe's faculty adviser then virtually shared the student handbook and scrolled through the remedial actions to take in the instance a student receives an unsatisfactory professional performance evaluation. Joe was presented this material during the virtual orientation when entering the program and was explained supervision expectations in the field experience virtual orientation the semester before enrolling in practicum. Joe's university supervisor and faculty supervisor created a remediation plan according to the handbook where Joe would repeat his field experience at an alternative site, write an apology to the site supervisor, and receive two hours of individual supervision per week during the practicum repeat. The plan was digitally signed by Joe and his faculty adviser. Joe's professional performance evaluation was completed and kept on file with the created remediation plan. Joe agreed with the understanding that, if not followed, a second remediation according to the handbook would occur and Joe would face removal from the program.

Applying Due Process

McAdams and Foster (2007) define three forms of due process counselor educators should be aware of in their programs: 1. Substantive due process, 2. Procedural due process, and 3. Fundamental fairness. In the case of Joe the counselor education faculty navigated through each form in the actions taken as a result of Joe's behavior. An important consideration in due process is the adaptability and accessibility of the action/expectation. Additionally, delivering education online is most effective when the technology mediums are accessible to all students (Williams van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016). Therefore, counselor educators must ensure that all forms of technology used to provide due process are accessible to students in the program. The counseling program in this case study focuses on orienting students to the technologies used in the program, as well as utilizing technologies that are created with universal designs.

Substantive due process

At the forefront is the suspension of Joe's field experience, which doesn't fall in the program's remediation procedures, but instead represents actions of the program to set the stage for focusing on Joe. The actions to suspend Joe's activities at his field experience site, initiating a virtual meeting between the university supervisor and adviser, and the development of a remediation plan represents attention given to Joe's best interests. By suspending Joe's field experience the program is protecting the welfare of Joe and his clients. The meeting and remediation plan are centered around the potential for future learning, rather than a punitive action, satisfying the tests of substantive due process.

Procedural due process

This form of due process originally began when Joe attended the program's virtual orientation in the videoconference and was presented with the handbook detailing the program's policies for violations and remediation. The orientation is crucial as it defines the procedure well in advance of the Joe's violation. Once a violation had occurred, Joe's behavior at his field experience site, the faculty were able to enact the procedures found in the handbook through different virtual mediums. Additionally, the agreement of a remediation plan initiated a further set of procedures centered around Joe's completion of the plan, and further actions that may need to be taken. Throughout the process, from violation to remediation, the program was able to follow the procedure outlined when Joe initially entered the counseling program.

Fundamental fairness

The last form of due process largely depended on the severity of the violation and ensuring similar violations receive the same actions. The counseling program's mission and objectives focus entirely on preparing counselors, and actions taken revolve around the ideals of student learning. Based upon the test of fundamental fairness, outlined in McAdams and Foster (2007), the remedial actions/expectations were accessible to Joe in that he could pursue a repeat of his field experience under more direct supervision. The initial and remedial actions are adaptable to other students exhibiting the same behavior. Last, the actions are consistent with best practices to protect student and client welfare according to the ACA Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014).

Outcome

A counseling program delivered online will attract students that live outside the immediate vicinity of the institution. Therefore, it is crucial that counselor educators understand the communities and locations their students may be working and practicing. Further, the nature of the program offered communities where Joe lived the opportunity to receive counseling training and better serve their community rather than the community where the institution is located. By conducting a virtual orientation, the program immediately introduced students to the primary nature of face-to-face interactions in the program, and guided students to view program materials via a videoconferencing platform, including the professional performance review and remediation process that Joe was guided through. The faculty at the institution, through enhanced technologies, were enabled to enact a remediation through distance seamlessly and just as effective as traditional, face-to-face settings. The experience afforded Joe more comfortability as the meeting was accessible in an environment familiar to Joe using videoconferencing from his home. Remediation, at its' core, should initially be used as a learning tool to promote productive outcomes rather than punitive action (Henderson, 2010). By agreeing to increased oversight during the next field experience opportunity, Joe could learn from the remedial experience and receive full faculty supervision and support.

Case Study Two

Emily is currently enrolled in her second semester in a counseling program that primarily delivers core subject matter online. Emily is completing a counseling theories course that requires weekly online exams. The exams present a mix between multiple choice and short essay

questions to assess student learning of the main theory discussed for the week. Emily's weekly submission was analyzed using an integrated software in the LMS to check for plagiarism. Emily's essay responses in the exam showed significant plagiarism for her submitted works.

Plan of Action

The instructor of the course contacted Emily and revealed the results of the analysis. The instructor then contacted Emily's faculty adviser and required Emily to attend a videoconference meeting to discuss the plagiarism behavior and steps to remediate. Attending the meeting Emily was reminded of the program's policy's surrounding ethical behaviors and code of ethics she was presented when entering the program. When entering the program, Emily digitally signed a statement agreeing to have read the ACA Code of Ethics and agreeing to follow guidelines. Additionally, Emily also signed agreeing to understanding the program and university's stance on plagiarism. The actions for plagiarism activity were discussed and the course would result in an unsatisfactory grade with the stipulation to repeat the course along with an unsatisfactory disposition score. Further, to remediate the disposition Emily was to write a paper discussing the unethicality behind the act of plagiarism. Emily's faculty adviser typed out the plan and virtually shared it with Emily to digitally sign.

Applying Due Process

Again, the focus of Emily's program is to provide accessible learning technologies online, while ensuring she receives evidence-based learning experiences. Activities, such as plagiarism, can be controlled in online environments by using software found on most LMS platforms. A key aspect of delivering remedial learning experiences in online programs is to first lay the foundation for students understanding those policies through virtual orientations and discussions (Rust et al., 2013). Even though the counseling program utilizes varying degrees of assessment, they have aligned their definitions and policies with the university's stance on plagiarism.

Substantive due process

Emily wishes to continue the pursuit of becoming a counselor, and the program's aims are to ensure Emily receives the best possible training. Therefore, the actions of the program to have Emily repeat the course and obtain a second exposure to the material ensures she understands the plagiarized module in the context of the entirety of the course. The remediation of the disposition helps remind Emily of professional ethics and not only is it in Emily's best interest but future clientele and colleagues. The actions taken are deficiency focused with no punitive intent and compare to the outcomes of the same violations in any other content course.

Procedural due process

By aligning program policy with the university definition and actions for academic honesty, the program built internal support for their remedial decisions and procedures for plagiarism cases. Further, asking Emily to attest and agree to read, understand, and follow the ACA Code of Ethics when first entering the program enacted procedures to align Emily's behaviors to ethical outcomes. Emily also engaged in the procedures when first entering the program and being

oriented to the evaluation of dispositions, remediation policies and procedures, and academic honesty.

Fundamental fairness

The notion of fundamental fairness tests the accessibility of the remedial action and the plans adaptability to similar situations. Emily will have the opportunity to repeat the course and learn further about applying ethical behaviors through creating a work on plagiarism. The plan can be adapted to other students committing the same violations. By also focusing on the ethical nature of the behavior, the counseling program is helping Emily to improve her ethical decision-making skills which could protect herself and clients in the future.

Outcome

Using initial orientation and reading of the ACA Code of Ethics, Emily was introduced to the expectations and guidelines of the counseling training program. Further, employing the use of an LMS system's analysis tool allows the program to better secure the learning process, even when a student is training to become a counselor in a virtual setting. The remediation plan and actions on the part of the faculty proved to follow remedial interventions that are supported in the literature, further ensuring due process for Emily (Henderson & Dufrene, 2017). A remediation meeting through videoconference afforded Emily the same benefits as Joe, helping to streamline the process and increase fairness. The remedial actions proved to pass the tests of due process, especially in their applicability across the program. By retaking the course, Emily receives additional training and the opportunity to better learn the plagiarized material in the context of the rest of the course. Further, Emily has a chance to apply more ethical decision-making skills that will help others in the future.

Future Considerations

Within any environment, the ACA Code of Ethics requires counselor training programs require counselor educators to evaluate and engage in the remediation of student learning (ACA, 204). Distance environments, as shown in the case studies, provide unique opportunities and scenarios to remediate student deficiencies. When incorporating concepts such as due process and making special considerations in the implementation of remediation activities counselor educators are improving the practices of their programs in the virtual space. When modifying/creating a program's remediation policies and procedures, it is crucial to consider due process, especially in the context of the student's well-being and to ensure students, clients, and supervisees are protected from harm. Therefore, it is vital for programs in the virtual environment to build procedures that are well defined, clear monitoring guidelines of student learning and behaviors, and dismissal protocols that align with ethical evaluations standards defined by ACA and CACREP (Dougherty, 2015).

As more programs continue to pursue learning activities in virtual spaces there is a need to incorporate learning communities with the purpose being to engage and support all members of the program. Studies have shown that virtual learning communities have no significant difference on student perception than face-to-face engagements at brick and mortar institutions

(Murdock & Williams, 2011). Hence, virtual programs have a unique opportunity to utilize learning communities to enhance the outcomes of their programs. Consequently, many of the popular learning tools incorporate some form of social communication algorithm to promote further connections between the parties using their platform. While social media tools are valuable to the success of a virtual counseling training program, the interactions between students need to be monitored to ensure ethical behaviors. To uphold due process considerations, counseling programs would follow best practices to integrate a social media policy into their evaluative processes (Willow, Tobin, Chong, Jeffery, & Strohmeyer, 2018).

Regardless of the medium counselor education programs must be mindful of due process, and how to deliver this concept to the student. Focusing on programmatic process, procedures, and opportunities demonstrates the key forms of due process can be applied toward any learning environment. As counselor education utilizes progressively advanced technologies, faculty will likely have even more oversight to evaluate student performance. With increased power comes greater responsibility to always be mindful of student well-being and learning.

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