

Leadership Interview

Nicole Taylor

School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

Author Note

Nicole Taylor <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6065-5111>

Nicole Taylor is a contracted therapist for the Wyndhurst Counseling Center.

Correspondence regarding this document should be sent to Nicole Taylor at
ntaylor7@liberty.edu.

Leadership Interview

The person I interviewed for this assignment is a director of a university counseling center where she has worked for the past three years. In this role, she has grown the university counseling center and increased resources available to the university as well as to her clinical staff. Prior to this job, she was a program coordinator for a local community agency where she oversaw over 20 staff members providing clinical and administrative duties. She also served on multiple community boards for advocacy projects within her agencies as well as the large community.

I have known this person for most of my clinical career, as she served as my supervisor when I was still a resident in counseling. When we first met, she was over one program and a few staff, and by the time she left the agency she was over multiple programs and a large set of staff. Through this transition, she remained organized and pleasant, and was regularly making time for staff needs and advocating for both staff and clients in larger meetings. My observation of her approach to leadership included firm standards, care for staff, clear and regular communication, and upholding ethical standards of care. She regularly held staff training meetings to ensure care standards were consistent and crisis management was handled appropriately. Because of these things, I wanted to learn more about her approach to leadership and what motivates her to remain in an advocacy role when faced with difficulty.

During the interview, I realized the depth of this person's heart for advocacy, particularly within underserved populations. She has had opportunities to join outpatient settings in private practice but feels this is not a good use of her skills despite the financial benefits. This resonated with me, because it is part of the reason I decided to branch into my own practice – I wanted the ability to provide reduced cost services to individuals who cannot afford full-cost therapy. She

has advocated for new programs within the passions of her staff, to connect mental health services to various groups including athletes, the LGBT+ community, and highly academically successful students. She has fostered a sense of connection on her team that has encouraged staff to pursue their passions with the knowledge that she will advocate to university leadership on their behalf.

She also expressed a desire to educate future counselors and is actively pursuing her PhD so that she can do this. We were able to connect on this and discussed the potential for leadership within our community given our current roles and the potential. A member of her team is passionate about a research interest of mine, so she connected the two of us before the interview was completed. Because I am in my research dissemination class, I was excited for a new connection to present with or work on research in our mutual interest area. The importance of networking and connection is clear within the field, particularly within the advocacy realm of our work.

As I was listening to her approach for connecting students with counseling services, I reflected on my own experience with college students. I have a passion working with transition age adults who are learning how to live independently while juggling the responsibilities of students. This person is connected to multiple university counseling services and agreed to help connect me with the directors as a referral source. Now that I am running my own private practice, I have the autonomy to offer additional services beyond the outpatient therapist role. I plan to brainstorm ways I can provide support to students who have limited access to outpatient therapy due to finances or the limitations of student counseling services.

I have noticed a pattern in leaders I have worked with to be a balance of a ‘go getter’ attitude that incorporates self-care and general wellness. The mindset behind advocacy work is to

find a passion and pursue ways to foster awareness, communication, and change within this area of the counseling field. One thing that I noticed in the interview was her desire to make services accessible to students in crisis, establishing a crisis plan and referral network for students in need of higher levels of care. As a leader, she makes herself regularly available to staff who need additional support when navigating a crisis. One of the ways the counseling center has implemented this is through an app that is available for free to all students the day after they enroll in the college. The app provides opportunities for scheduling, health coaching, resources on self-care, and additional resources within the community including transportation support, childcare, and food and housing resources.

One thing that I had not considered was the extent of her liability insurance coverage as a director of a school counseling center. She discussed how her license covers all clinical staff and basically the entire college network, further reinforcing the importance of having strong clinical staff on her team. I knew that all that I supervised would be additionally covered under my license, but I had not considered the extent of this coverage on a college campus. This information gave me new perspectives on assessing staff within my own practice to ensure that they meet my standards for clinical work and patient care.

As we talked, I also thought about her focus on staff development and team building, as she commented multiple times on the relationships that have been built between her staff members. I could hear the connection happening during our meeting as staff laughed and talked with each other. The collective that I just joined currently does not have any staff connection opportunities, although most of the staff have previously worked together. I plan to introduce this to the group, to see if we could have a scheduled staff meeting once per month or connect on professional development opportunities. I know this is a great way to advocate for my own

needs, as well as the team I hope to develop in my practice. I currently am providing supervision to a Bachelor's intern, a Master's practicum student, and a resident in counseling, and I hope to extend this type of leadership at least in my interactions with them.