

Conference Proposal: Preparing Doctoral Counselors for Grant Writing Through Skill

Development and Imposter Syndrome Awareness

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Abstract

Doctoral students and early-career counselor educators are increasingly expected to secure external funding to support research, training, and community-based mental health initiatives. Despite this expectation, many emerging scholars experience significant barriers to grant seeking, including limited formal training, lack of mentorship, fear of rejection, and imposter syndrome. These challenges often result in the avoidance of grant opportunities, even when students possess strong scholarly ideas.

This presentation explores the intersecting structural and psychological barriers that prevent doctoral learners in counselor education from engaging in grant writing and proposes practical, developmentally appropriate strategies to address these barriers. Drawing on empirical literature related to early-career researchers, academic self-beliefs, and doctoral socialization, the session will provide attendees with concrete tools for demystifying the grant-writing process, increasing confidence, and fostering persistence after rejection. Emphasis will be placed on counselor educators' ethical responsibility to prepare students for scholarly advocacy through grant-funded work that supports marginalized populations.

Conference Proposal Objectives

The objectives of this conference proposal are to:

1. Examine common structural barriers that limit doctoral students' engagement in grant writing, including lack of training and mentorship.

2. Explore the role of imposter syndrome and fear of rejection in shaping doctoral students' avoidance of grant opportunities.
3. Identify evidence-based strategies counselor educators can use to scaffold grant-writing skill development in doctoral training programs.
4. Promote grant writing as a form of professional advocacy and scholarly leadership within counselor education.

Measurable Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this presentation, attendees will be able to:

1. **Identify** at least three common barriers that prevent doctoral students from pursuing grant funding.
2. **Explain** how imposter syndrome impacts doctoral students' confidence and persistence in scholarly tasks such as grant writing.
3. **Apply** at least two practical strategies for supporting doctoral students' grant-writing development within counselor education programs.
4. **Develop** one actionable idea for integrating grant-writing instruction or mentorship into their own academic or supervisory context.

Rationale and Relevance to the Conference

Grant funding plays a critical role in advancing counselor education, research, and mental health service delivery, particularly for programs that serve underserved and marginalized communities. However, doctoral students often enter counselor education programs without adequate preparation for grant seeking, despite the profession's increasing emphasis on external funding and scholarly productivity. The literature consistently demonstrates that early career

researchers experience heightened anxiety, avoidance, and self-doubt related to grant writing, often exacerbated by imposter syndrome and limited mentorship (Brandt et al., 2020; Chen, 2021; Lovitts, 2005).

This proposal is highly relevant to professional counseling conferences that prioritize counselor preparation, supervision, leadership, and advocacy. By addressing both the technical and psychological dimensions of grant writing, this presentation aligns with CACREP expectations for doctoral training and supports counselor educators in fulfilling their role as mentors and advocates. The session emphasizes how improving grant-writing competence among doctoral students ultimately strengthens the profession's capacity to secure resources, support innovation, and address systemic inequities through funded initiatives.

Presentation Format and Rationale

Proposed Format: Roundtable Discussion

A roundtable discussion is the most appropriate format for this presentation because it allows for collaborative dialogue, shared experiences, and peer-to-peer learning among counselor educators and doctoral students. Grant-writing challenges and imposter feelings are often deeply personal and context-specific; therefore, an interactive format encourages participants to reflect on their own experiences while learning from others. This format also supports the exchange of practical strategies, mentorship models, and programmatic approaches that attendees can adapt to their unique institutional settings.

References

- Brandt, N. D., McManus, I. C., & Richardson, J. T. E. (2020). Self-beliefs and academic achievement: Imposter syndrome and self-handicapping in students. *Personality and Individual Differences, 150*, 109457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109457>
- Chen, Y. (2021). Early career researchers' challenges in grant writing: A qualitative study. *Research Management Review, 26*(1), 1–20.
- Lovitts, B. E. (2005). Being a good course-taker is not enough: A theoretical perspective on dissertation development. *Studies in Higher Education, 30*(2), 137–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500043093>