

CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Job Description

Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist

Salary Level:
19

Date Revised: 05/02/2019

Position Purpose

The Community Colleges offer a broad range of two-year liberal arts degree programs as well as many technical, occupational and career programs. These programs attract traditional students as well as non-traditional students, including those pursuing academic training or degrees following absences from higher education, those intending to increase occupational skills, those entering higher education from other countries and students with disabilities which make their participation in higher education more difficult than for students without these limitations. In order to facilitate and accommodate the full range of students, the Colleges provide learning assistance services such as diagnostic testing, specialized instruction, laboratory assistance and tutoring services for students requiring them as well as advice and counseling on career direction, academic course selection and personal or social problems.

Counselors act as applied educational specialists concerned with the problems of individuals, with special attention given to the needs of those least able to act as their own advocates. While many student services positions provide advising and support services, counselors are engaged in activity that utilizes their professional expertise gained through a counseling degree at the master's level or MSW.

Supervisory and Other Relationships

The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist typically works under the direction of the Director of Counseling or other administrator. The position may lead support staff or student workers as assigned, and may supervise graduate students in counseling internships.

The position is required to have extensive cooperative and collaborative relationships with students, faculty, staff and with professionals in peer organizations and professional associations. These relationships may involve a very high degree of sensitive and confidential information. The incumbent is expected to represent the College in a positive manner and to collaborate with academic and student services departments to contribute to retaining students.

Major Accountabilities

The role of counseling within the total educational process is to aid in providing a learning environment which supports students as they clarify basic values and interests, formulate educational-vocational goals, and explore alternative strategies for goal achievement. The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist is accountable for

contributing to the academic, career, personal and social success of the College's students through effective performance in these essential functional areas:

- Student counseling/learning disabilities program development;
- Student counseling;
- Diagnostic assessment, supportive guidance, supervision, and evaluation of support services
- Liaison and consultation with faculty and staff.
- Budget Management

Examples of Essential Duties and Accountabilities

The following examples of duties and accountabilities illustrate the general range of tasks assigned to the position but are not intended to define the limits of required duties. Other essential duties may be assigned consistent with the general scope of the position.

A. Student counseling/learning disabilities program development: The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist is accountable for participating in and contributing to the development of sound programs for guiding and counseling the College's students in academic, personal, career, and social progress as well as assisting students with learning and other disabilities to participate in the College's academic instruction. This accountability includes such essential tasks as:

1. Research, analyze and assess students' developmental needs and initiate programs designed to meet those needs.
2. Participate in development of comprehensive student counseling and guidance programs based on research and assessment information as well as campus-wide programs for Campus Resource Team, women's issues or programs to assist students of differing national/ethnic cultures.
3. Determine and arrange appropriate instruction services for students and provide self-development courses for students who lack the basic skills for suitable job placement and/or who need and desire specialized knowledge and skills to become more effective as individuals and as employees and employers.

B. Student counseling: The Counselor is accountable for providing professional counseling to students to contribute to their successful academic, career, personal, social and College experience. This accountability includes such essential tasks as:

1. Act as a facilitative guide by supporting students' efforts to achieve life goals.
2. When student's needs or problems impede personal or educational progress, yet cannot be addressed from within the college itself, counselors provide referral to appropriate community agencies or health care providers
3. Providing professional interpretation to students of their assessment instrument results and their implications for academic and personal plans and strategies;
4. Counsel students on appropriate academic courses;
5. Counsel students on appropriate personal and social actions, including those related to adapting to different language and cultural situations;
6. Conducting seminars and orientation sessions for students on academic, career, and personal strategies;

7. Conducting workshops and other group conferences on issues such as those particularly affecting women, those returning to or entering higher education who have special circumstances or needs, and those adapting to the College from other countries and cultures;
8. Provide crisis counseling, intervention and referral services for students requiring therapeutic counseling and or counseling services which extend beyond the scope appropriate for a community college counselor.

C. Diagnostic assessment, supportive guidance, supervision and evaluation of support services: The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist is accountable for performing or supervising diagnostic testing; providing professional guidance on best approaches for students' learning and delivery of useful learning assistance services to students. This accountability includes such essential tasks as:

1. Selecting appropriate diagnostic tests; performing or supervising administration of diagnostic tests; interpreting/overseeing interpretation of diagnostic test results; advising and guiding students on learning strategies best suited to their needs.
2. Arranging for and providing tutorial, classroom and laboratory assistance to students according to their needs; performing/overseeing content and profess instruction for students and faculty; advising faculty and staff on needed assistance for students; may including providing in-service training on needs of students as well as advocating for needed accommodations.
3. Conducting on-going evaluation of data related to disability services including working with the Institutional Research area in compiling data to assist in student retention; assisting faculty and staff in identifying trends and researching best practices in student retention; compiling and reporting on data regarding student retention and success in the classroom.

D. Liaison and consultation with faculty and staff: The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist acts as liaison to faculty in the early identification of at-risk students and is accountable for advising faculty and staff on appropriate actions and assistance for students requiring special attention and accommodations. This accountability includes such essential tasks as:

1. Acts as a liaison for academic and support services such as tutoring, financial aid, student activities and other support services.
2. Introduces and orients students to Student Activities, Career Counseling, the Library and other services.
3. Maintains records of student academic progress; interpret and evaluate the results of assessments and interviews to determine appropriate courses of action to assist students in academic, personal and social situations;
4. Provide guidance and recommendations to faculty and staff on strategies of optimum assistance to students;
5. Participate with faculty in instructing courses and workshops in such areas as relativity of academic course work to career opportunities or cross-cultural issues;

E. Budget management: The Counselor/Learning Disabilities Specialist is accountable for the fiscal integrity of the College's learning assistance program. This accountability includes such essential tasks as:

1. Planning and estimating program services and costs;
2. Developing operating budgets appropriate for planned services;
3. Monitoring and controlling expenses in compliance with operating budgets.

Professional Participation and Development

In addition to the accountabilities listed above, the position is required to carry out the essential duties of:

- Attendance and participation at convocation and commencement ceremonies;
- Service on assigned committees and task forces;
- Attendance and participation at committee, staff, informational and professional meetings.

These may involve attendance at evening or weekend events.

The incumbent is required to maintain currency in the position's required fields of professional expertise and competencies, including, but not limited to, participation in professional organizations.

The incumbent is required to maintain complete confidentiality of student records and other information of a confidential nature.

Minimum Qualifications

- Master's degree in counseling, social work or closely related field.
- 2 – 5 years of experience in a professional counseling capacity which includes crisis counseling and intervention.
- Demonstrated knowledge of a full spectrum of professional counseling theory, techniques and methods.
- Experience with assessment and diagnostic testing methods and instruments administration and interpretation.
- Familiarity with laws and regulations applying to students with special needs.
- Basic information technology literacy skills;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Experience with diverse populations.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience in higher education
- Experience designing and developing special needs interventions and accommodations in an academic environment.

These skills and abilities are acquired through a combination of education, experience and training which typically include a Masters degree in counseling or a closely related field together with from two to five years of experience in a professional counseling capacity; or a combination of experience and training which would lead to the competencies required for effective performance of the position's essential duties.

Work Situation

Incumbents typically perform their work in offices, conference rooms and lecture facilities. The work does not normally require the exertion of significant physical effort. Reasonable accommodation will be provided for incumbents and candidates with physical limitations.

Job Context

The Counselor position is distinguishable from many other student service positions by the breadth, depth and nature of the counseling services provided. Counselors are expected to utilize a full range of knowledge and skills normally obtained through a masters degree in counseling or social work program, and by performing the full range of counseling services including assessment, career exploration, community resource, consultation services, educational information (e.g. transfer procedures, academic policies), educational skills, general administrative services (assistance with admission, registration, and graduation) personal growth experiences, professional development referral resources, research and teaching (e.g. seminars and workshops).