

## **WCU Counseling Program Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

We believe professional counselors must learn to understand and support individuals whose sex, gender identity and expression, age, race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, veteran status, marital status, parental status, religion, spirituality, ability status, health status, political beliefs, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, immigration status, geographical region, language, and other identity factors might be different than their own. We further seek to understand life experiences from multiple perspectives including those for which historical oppression, systemic and systematic discrimination, and other social injustices have created socio-political, economic, and educational inequities. Specific to western North Carolina, we acknowledge the effects of colonization on the Cherokee people and the impact of slavery on people of color from the African continent.

Our Counseling program acknowledges how inequalities and inequities are embedded in our institutions. We believe that personal, cultural, and institutional discrimination create privilege for some while creating cultural and systemic barriers for others. Our program is committed to advocating for social justice, challenging stereotypes, processing power and privilege, and promoting ongoing self-reflection. We expect students, faculty, supervisors, and other stakeholders, to demonstrate a genuine desire to examine their preexisting prejudices, assumptions, and biases and actively engage in scholarship, practice, and advocacy to effectively transform communities, institutions, and systems. Growth in knowledge and awareness is intentionally promoted across a stand-alone cross cultural course, the integration of cultural content across all courses, and in professional development beyond the classroom. We recognize the necessity to recruit and support students and faculty from diverse backgrounds to ensure representation of varied perspectives, identities, and voices. We deem this statement to be a living document and remain open to review and revision through conversations among all stakeholders.

These beliefs and actions reflect our core values and enable everyone to work effectively and ethically with all clientele to meet the professional standards of the American Counseling Association, American School Counseling Association, and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.