

Self-Evaluation Year Three

I am a counselor whose primary objective is to serve our students. I do so to the best of my ability. This is my counseling philosophy with emphasis on acts of service. This philosophy of mine has a few components that will be discussed throughout this self-evaluation. I realize that in order to perform the required tasks at an optimum level, I must be willing to continuously grow and improve my skills as much as possible. This year, West LA College and the counseling department has gone through some changes. These changes have called for counselors to be flexible and adaptable more than ever. It has also called for our counselors to be an efficient and a reliable source for our students. The first place a student comes to for answers and support is the counseling department. Since the counseling department is the central station for information, it is imperative that counselors are up to date with the academic changes, rules and regulation. My counseling philosophy propels me to answer the call to be a counselor that our students can rely on. To accomplish this, I must get educated in the areas that are considered a weakness. The academic side of counseling is a strength mine. I am well versed in the requirements of a certificate, an associate and bachelor's degree at West LA College. I am also very knowledgeable in the area of transfer requirements. What I didn't realize was how much our students deal with inside and outside of our campus. I understood that student have obstacles that they incur once they leave campus. To see those obstacles and barriers come to our campus via government agencies, was something I have never experienced before; I had to prepare myself and be ready.

More than ever the words of “Create a safe space” was tried and tested this school year. My philosophy of serving our students, also include creating a safe haven while they are in pursuit of higher education. When it comes to my engagement and interaction with students, I make sure students understand that I am on their side and willing to do what’s necessary to assist them. This year I had to deal with students who were afraid to come to campus. They were afraid to attend classes. They were afraid to seek counselor because they did not know who they could trust. This was because across the nation we experienced ICE agents determined to disrupt the livelihood of undocumented people which included our students. To address this fear our students possessed, myself along with other faculty and staff members had to use our voice to emphasize the importance of their safety. I attended seminars and trainings that helped me better understand what our undocumented go through and how to help fight the good fight. Business cards, pamphlets, and information was posted everywhere possible to emphasize that we were not willing to compromise their safety. I made sure that signs and important reminder cards were available in the event they came face to face with agents; they knew how to respond. This was done so that they understood my stance. These were effective practices I had to learn to gain the trust of our undocumented students.

Collaboration amongst colleagues is another important component of my counseling philosophy. There is no way a counselor can know everything. We have counselors that are well versed in certain areas where I may not have as much knowledge. I lean on them for support and information just like they lean on me. It takes an enormous amount of teamwork to accomplish the goals and objectives of the department. I am an advocate of training and equipping counselors with the tools to be as efficient as possible. Tacit knowledge is something

that is not conducive to our department's success. Explicit knowledge is the key to help ensure that the team is performing at adequate levels. This year, I have been trusted to help train our counselors so that they are prepared to efficiently address the needs of our students. I appreciate the confidence our Dean and Department chair have in me to train counselors as it shows that I was able to digest the teachings and execute them adequately. Our leaders have an open-door policy, and I make sure to take advantage of these opportunities to discuss current and future practices. These visits generally happen during my profession time (PT) which helps me keep up with the latest news and changes. Having a great working relationship with my fellow counselors and staff members is something I feel is necessary to promote collegiality.

This year was heavily spent improving my responsibilities within the pathways that I am the lead counselor of. The Aviation and STEM pathways take a lot of my attention because the students in these areas need a specific style of academic counseling. Despite this, I have been able to attend some importance conferences, workshops and committee meetings that has help with my growth as a counselor. I had the privilege to attend the A2MEND advisor training conference in Berkeley, CA. This conference was one that helped me refresh and remember my purpose as a human and as a counselor. Sometimes when we go through the daily tasks of counseling, we can forget the reasons we became a counselor. In my case, the reminder of my counseling philosophy and purpose was much needed and was accomplish at this conference. It aligned so much with recommendations that were given before from a fellow counselor (Bukasa); to dig deep and ask questions in order to learn more about the student that is in front of you. Collaborations and participation have taken place within our UMOJA program which launched fall of 2025. I have lent my experience, suggestions and counseling skills to that

departments as they start a new chapter on our campus. This is something new to me but nonetheless was something that I was able to embrace. I was also invited to be represent the counseling department as a member of the Behavior Intervention Team. This opened a new window in understanding some of the illnesses occur students deal with from a mental perspective. When dealing with behavior issues, it is not a clear as it may seem. To be a part of discussions with management and law enforcement presented an opportunity from both sides to learn from each other. From a counselor's perspective, we desire punishment of a student to not be quick and harsh without understanding. These conversations with law enforcement and disciplinarian are beneficial so that the message can effectively be given to student how to respond to frustrating situations.

When there is an area that needs strengthening, that means there is room for growth and improvement. I rely heavily on our veteran counselors and leadership to identify areas that needs addressing. This is how I become a better counselor. The intent of criticism and correction from them is to make me better. I take it as an opportunity to practice and make a weakness, a strength. This is done by writing down the correction and criticism followed by identifying solutions and answers to the areas that need improving. The solutions and improvements are then put into practice so that it becomes a natural habit. I am a part of a great counseling team. I have a Dean and Department Chair who are very supportive and care about my growth as a counselor as much as I do. I am a servant and the quest to improving myself as a person and a counselor remains ongoing.