

COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTER PROFESSIONAL STAFF INVOLVEMENT
IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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College counselors today face increasing challenges, with fewer resources than in the past. Little has been known as to whether college counselors take advantage of resources and benefits available through involvement in professional organizations in these increasingly challenging professional times. College counseling center professionals in one state in the Southwest were surveyed regarding their professional organization involvement ($N = 152$). Participants were selected by targeting specific 4-year institutions with undergraduate populations and specific counseling professionals who work in college counseling centers within these schools. Most college counselors surveyed were involved in professional organizations, and involved in a variety of ways within these organizations. Many professional organizations catering to college counselors were identified. Specific motivations for involvement and hindrances to involvement were identified. In addition, no significant difference was found among the involvement of professional counselors versus psychologists.

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By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1990 VanZant stated “it is difficult to comprehend how a counselor can ‘grow’ with the profession without belonging to professional organizations and taking advantage of their resources and services” (p. 244). Counseling professional organizations have existed for many years, with the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the Association for Applied Psychology, and the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (NAWDAC) being among the first (Dean & Meadows, 1995; Meadows, 2000). Over time, these organizations have evolved and merged into a variety of professional organization choices for today’s college counselors.

Gallagher (2003) noted “the pressures on college counselors to keep up with the growing demands, often without additional resources, can at times be overwhelming” (¶6). The average ratio of college counselors to students is 1 to 1,697 (Gallagher, 2006), and many college and university budgets have been cut in recent years. Thus, college counseling centers often attempt to provide “more” for “less.” Humphrey, Kitchens, and Patrick (2000) noted a decrease in state funding for higher education, and Spooner (2000) observed that one of the biggest issues facing college counselors is deteriorating budgets. Also, recent litigation aimed at college counseling centers, such as the Elizabeth Shin case (Glater, 2006), in which an MIT student set herself on fire and her parents filed a wrongful death suit against the university, may cause additional stress for counselors. Recent campus tragedies, such as the April 2007 Virginia Tech incident have added to the growing challenges college counselors face. In these

challenging professional times, college counselors may benefit from increased encouragement, support, and resources. Londono-McConnell and Matthews (2003) noted the need to explore ways to retain college counseling center professionals, suggesting involvement in professional organizations as a way to achieve this.

Other contemporary challenges for college counselors exist. Many believe that more college students are seeking treatment for psychological problems, and are taking medication for these problems, than in the past. Although, some recent literature has challenged whether the problems of college students are actually increasing in severity or whether this is merely a perception (Bishop, 2006; Schwartz, 2006; Sharf, 1989; Sharkin, 1997), many have reported increases in the severity of presenting problems in the college student population (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2006; Gallagher, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Humphrey et al., 2000; Kadison, 2006; Kitzrow, 2003; Pledge, Lapan, Heppner, Kivlighan, & Roehlke, 1998; Young, 2003). A 2007 U. S. Department of Health and Human Services report suggested that advances in mental health treatment and resources enable more individuals with mental illness to attend college than in the past. In the 2006 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors, Gallagher noted that 91.6% of directors reported an increase in students coming to counseling who are already on psychotropic medication. He also reported that 92% of directors believe that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of clients with severe psychological problems. The directors also expressed greater concern regarding self-injury reports, long-term care referrals, increased demand for services, crisis counseling, needs of learning disabled students, and an increase in eating disorders,

sexual assaults, and sexual abuse history as compared to 2004 (Gallagher, 2006). Stone and Archer (1990) predicted this increase in psychological problems and pathology among college students in an article in the early 1990s. The American College Health Association (ACHA) National College Health Assessment (NCHA), which provides comprehensive national data on the health of college students, suggested that students experienced many mental health problems more frequently in 2005 than was reported in the 2003 NCHA data. In this most recent study, more students reported experiencing anorexia, anxiety disorder, bulimia, depression, seasonal affective disorder, substance abuse problems, and suicide attempts in 2005 than in 2003 (ACHA, 2003, 2005a). A study by Benton et al. (2003) also found that counseling centers may be seeing students with more critical needs than they did a decade ago, Kadison (2006) noted an increase in severe psychiatric and medical problems on college campuses, and Schwartz (2006) found an increase in the use of psychotropic medications, but no increase in pathology. Although many researchers have documented an increasing severity in college student problems, some have noted the need for further empirical evidence and study to investigate this trend (Bishop, 2006; Sharf, 1989; Sharkin, 1997). Regardless, college counselors can benefit from increased support and resources in increasingly stressful times.

Statement of the Problem

College counselors today face providing more services with fewer resources than in the past (Hodges, 2001). One way to increase resources and support for college counselors is through professional organizations. Most counseling professional organizations provide numerous resources and benefits for members. College

counselors have a variety of professional organizations to choose from, and they can be involved in a variety of ways within organizations. However, no available research regarding college counselors and whether they are involved in professional organizations was found. Little is known as to whether college counselors take advantage of resources and benefits available through membership and participation in professional organizations in increasingly challenging professional times. Little is also known about what motivates college counselors to be involved in professional organizations and what prevents them from being more involved.

In addition, numerous ethical codes and accreditation standards address the importance of counselor involvement in professional organizations. However, no research studies were found that address how college counselors are following the expectations of these standards.

Review of Related Literature

College Counseling

Spooner (2000) defined college counseling as educated counseling professionals delivering counseling services in a higher education setting. College counselors are responsible for a variety of services within postsecondary institutions. Most provide support for social, academic, and personal development of college students.

Individuals today recognize college counseling as an established and distinctive profession. VanZandt (1990) stated “Through role statements, codes of ethics, accreditation guidelines, competency standards, licensure, certification, and other standards of excellence, the counseling profession has reached . . . acceptance as one of the ‘professions’” (p. 243). Hodges (2001) also noted that college counseling has

developed into a set of services offered only by college counseling professionals with specialized training. Over the past few decades, college counselors have rallied to define themselves as a distinctive group of helping professionals who work with the specific population of college students. Rollins, Garcia, and Thomas (1999) noted that the development of professional organizations and credentialing were two of the primary contributors to the professionalism of counseling.

History. Many authors have written about the evolution of college counseling (Archer & Cooper, 1998; Bishop, 2006; Davis, 1998; Dean & Meadows, 1995; Hodges, 2001; Meadows, 2000; Stone & Archer, 1990; Vacc & Loesch, 2000). Heppner and Neal (1983) provided a concise summary of this evolution, dividing the history of college counseling into four distinct time periods: before 1945, 1945-1955, 1955-1970, and 1970-1982. In the first period, campus personnel helped students to solve problems in a variety of roles. Career, educational, health, financial, personal, and moral problems were addressed in much the same way by advisors, deans, and counselors. Later in this first period, many college personnel recognized the need for more professional, clinical, and specialized counselors. In the second period, research and assessment in many college counseling centers increased, which provided the profession with more credibility and sophistication. Also, as veterans returned from World War II, vocational counseling became a larger focus, and counseling and student personnel work evolved as differentiated professions. In the third period, the role of college counselor expanded to include personal counseling. However, the majority of services provided during this time were still vocational in nature. Also, college counselors began to provide additional services such as training, outreach, and consultation. In the fourth period, many college

counselors continued to increase personal counseling while decreasing vocational services. Budgets and resources for counseling services were limited. Also, many counselors expanded their role to include the entire campus environment (Heppner & Neal, 1983).

From 1982 to the present, college counseling has continued to evolve. Several authors have written about the current and future status of college counseling. Stone and Archer (1990) outlined many issues facing college counseling in the 1990s, noting the diversity of college counseling centers and settings and the challenges this diversity presents for the profession. Hodges (2001) also noted the increasingly diverse campus clientele. Meadows (2000) suggested the diverse nature of college and university counseling creates challenges for the identity of the profession and for generalizing research. Pace, Stamler, Yarris, and June (1996) proposed the future of college counseling centers will need to be more interactive and collaborative with the campus community, and Meadows observed that with increased research and scholarly writing, more people have become aware of college counseling services. According to Sampson, Kolodinsky, and Greeno (1997), the evolution of the Internet could create future possibilities and problems for college counselors as technology develops and expands. Also, Gallagher (2006) and Guinee and Ness (2000) reported that career counseling has been moved out of many college counseling centers into its own separate location on campus. Thus, college counselors are in a professional field that continues to evolve (Bishop, 1995, 2006; CAS, 2006).

Types of centers. Most colleges and universities provide some type of counseling services for students. However, these services may vary greatly from institution to

institution (Spooner, 2000). Demographics of student population, geographic location, social needs, political environment, financial status, historical mission, and size of institution may determine the type of services provided (Bishop, 2006; CAS, 2006; El-Khawas, 1996; Moore, 2000; Sandeen, 1996; Vacc & Loesch, 2000). Small colleges may provide counseling services different from large universities; public institutions may provide services different from private ones; and structure and location of services may also vary (Archer & Cooper, 1998; Spooner, 2000).

Whitely, Mahaffey, and Geer (1987) found significant differences in services and staffing patterns of counseling centers related to accreditation status, type of institution, and size of staff. They conducted a cluster analysis of counseling center functions and identified five primary types of counseling centers on college campuses. First, the macrocenter provides a broad array of services including testing, personal and career counseling, consultation, and training. This type of center typically provides an extensive range of both personal counseling and career-focused functions and houses most all “counseling”-type services. Second, career planning and placement centers provide career services, with minimal personal counseling. This type of center has a primary focus of career services and job placement. Third, the counseling orientation center is similar to the macrocenter, but with fewer career services. It concentrates heavily on personal counseling. Fourth, the general-level service center provides a broader scope of services, including “dean of students”-type functions. This type of center has a wide range of services across all functional categories. Fifth, the minimal service center provides only minimal services in all areas. Either by design or circumstance, this type of center provides some counseling and has few other functions.

Stone and Archer (1990) noted that most available research regarding college counseling centers comes from two categories, macrocenter and counseling orientation center. As with recent research, this study primarily focuses on college counselors who provide services for students within these two types of centers. However, it is important to note that many college counselors work in higher education positions outside of these two types of centers. Despite differences in types of centers and services, the commonalities of college counseling centers produce a distinct professional field that continues to develop and grow (Bishop, 2006; Kadison, 2006).

Student affairs. College counseling centers are usually housed within the division of student affairs at colleges and universities. Sandeen (1996) listed counseling services as one of many functions of student affairs. This was supported by an unpublished study by Benton (2006) in which almost 88% of college counseling center personnel reported being part of the student affairs division. It is important to note the connection between college counselors and student affairs.

Spooner (2000) noted that student affairs and college counseling are often overlapping professions, and Magolda (2003) suggested that all student affairs staff work together to promote learning and preparation for adult life. College counselors may have professional preparation in student affairs, and student affairs professionals may have an educational background that includes counseling. Unlike other counselors, college counselors provide services for the specific population of college students and are trained to address their specific needs and characteristics. Both college counselors and student affairs professionals work with this population and may benefit from collaborating and working together toward common goals.

According to Dean (2000), college counselors at smaller colleges are more likely to be actively and collaboratively involved with other student affairs departments than are those at larger universities. Larger schools tend to have more staff members and more specialized roles on campus. They are also typically able to provide a larger range of services than smaller schools. Connections with other student affairs professionals happen frequently in smaller schools because they tend to have more interaction with, and be less separated from, others in student affairs (Dean, 2000; Thomas, 2000).

Unlike other student affairs professionals, college counselors are expected to have more experience, more advanced counseling skills, and credentials that qualify them to be called professional counselors (Winston, 1996). This distinguishes responsibilities of college counselors from advising or “counseling” that other student affairs professionals may do with students. Spooner (2000) noted that student affairs professionals tend to be generalists who have broad training in many areas of higher education, but college counselors tend to have specialized education and training in therapeutic, clinical, and developmental counseling tenets. Credentials such as licensure and certification further distinguish the specialization of college counselors from others in student affairs.

Disciplines. College counseling center personnel may receive their education through several different types of programs and disciplines. Professional counseling, social work, psychiatry, psychology, and marriage and family therapy are examples of common college counseling professional preparation. Other professional staff such as career counselors, academic advisors, dieticians, nutritionists, health educators, testing

coordinators, and disability specialists may be housed in the college counseling center as well as administrative staff, graduate assistants, and interns. However, Stone and Archer (1990) noted that college counseling center personnel are most likely to identify with two disciplines: professional counseling and psychology. Gallagher (2006) reported that 84.7% of center directors were either professional counselors or psychologists. In addition, an unpublished study by Benton in 2006 ($N = 215$) surveyed college counseling center personnel and asked about their primary identified professional field. Most of those surveyed reported that psychology was their primary discipline, while professional counseling ranked second. In a study by Whiteley et al. (1987), 83% of licensed counseling center professionals were either counselors or psychologists.

Whereas most college counseling center professionals provide similar services, the academic backgrounds of these professionals may be diverse. Instead of promoting individual disciplines as being the “best” for college counselors, these professionals tend to work together toward common goals. Maples (2000) observed that a passion for working with college students transcends the academic background of college counselors. Little is known about similarities and differences in the services provided by counseling professionals in different disciplines. The majority of college counselors seem to be professional counselors and psychologists; however, knowledge about the professional organization involvement of professionals within these disciplines is limited.

Professional Organizations

Purposes. Professional organizations exist for many purposes. According to Scott (1980), professional organizations can promote creative leadership and excellence in a specific discipline; provide ongoing opportunities for professional growth,

expression, and peer contact; and provide opportunities for cultivation of professional beliefs, attitudes, and standards through discussion and collaboration. These organizations may provide training, guidance, direction, incentives, peers, and information about the profession.

Professional organizations can bring together members of a profession and determine how to better meet the needs of that profession. Spruill and Benshoff (1996) suggested that professional organizations are one way to promote professionalism among counselors-in-preparation. College counselors can most likely benefit from membership and participation in one or more of these organizations.

Types of organizations. Some professions have only one or two professional organizations to choose from (Elder, 1984); however, counselors have many options for membership and participation. These options reflect the complexity of the counseling field (Dean & Meadows, 1995). Maples (2000) highlighted several professional organizations that may be helpful to college counselors, including the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American College Counseling Association (ACCA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). ACCA is a division of ACA that is designated for college counselors. College counselors involved in APA are typically a part of Division 17, the Society of Counseling Psychology. They may also participate in countless other organizations, such as the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development; the Association for Specialists in Group Work; the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling; the Association for Assessment in Counseling; the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; the Association for Humanistic Education and Development; the BACCHUS Network™; the

National Christian Counselors Association; and the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling (Vacc & Loesch, 2000). The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American Mental Health Counselors Association, and the National Association of Social Workers are three other organizations that may appeal to counselors (Echterling et al., 2002).

Counseling center directors have their own professional organizations. The Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD) provides guidance for counseling center directors through the standards of professional counseling, psychology, and higher education (AUCCCDa, n. d., ¶ 1). AUCCCD also has state chapters for counseling center directors, such as the Texas University and College Counseling Directors Association (TUCCDA, n. d., ¶ 1).

College counselors may also participate in student affairs professional organizations. Two of the largest student affairs associations are the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). Nuss (1996) outlined a detailed history of student affairs professional organizations. Within ACPA, Commission VII, Counseling and Psychological Services, includes college counseling (Dean & Meadows, 1995). These organizations provide a wider conceptualization of how college counseling fits into student affairs and the greater university.

Selection criteria. With various types of professional organizations to choose from, selecting the most fitting association(s) may not be an easy decision for any professional (Elder, 1984). Specific criteria may be used when choosing a professional organization.

Elder (1984) suggested five criteria to measure value of the organization and its fit for an individual. First, assess the organization's goals and compare them with the goals of the individual. Second, review the organization's membership and determine whether its members participate in activities of interest to the individual. Third, observe the organization's structure and probability of becoming involved. Fourth, note services and programs and determine opportunities the organization will provide for its members. Fifth, be aware of the organization's reputation to ascertain whether the group does what it says it does. Similarly, Hall (1993) noted that "a professional's personal goals should be consistent with the goals of a professionals [sic] organization" (p. 34). In most cases, individuals can choose to be members of more than one organization. Elder concurred that many individuals choose dual membership. She also observed that the association that meets the needs of a young professional may not be the one that meets the needs of an experienced one. Blimling (2003) also cited the importance of communication between professional organizations that have a common purpose.

Benefits. Professional organization membership and participation may benefit counselors in a variety of ways. Stamler (1997) identified one benefit as a decrease in the isolation of individuals in the helping professions. Counselors who participate actively in professional organizations increase the amount of time they have to interact with professionals at other centers and other schools. According to Elder (1984), participation in organizations may enlarge the counselor's number of friends and establish a network of colleagues. Thomas (2000) also noted that isolation is common for counselors who work on small staffs. Professionals on small staffs may have to work harder to create support systems; and interaction with other professionals may help to

decrease isolation and increase professional collaboration and consultation. Davis and Markley (2000) also noted the importance of cultivating social support systems in order to maintain counselors' health and wellness. Echterling et al. (2002) identified meeting and socializing with other professionals as benefits resulting from professional organization involvement. Decreasing isolation is a primary benefit of professional organization involvement.

Elder (1984) identified another benefit of participation in professional associations, asserting that participation ensures some degree of positive visibility for the professional and for the institution the professional represents. This visibility may be mutually beneficial for the counselor and the respective college or university, bringing recognition to both. The counselor may benefit from increased credibility when involved in professional organizations. According to Echterling et al. (2002), joining a professional organization is one way to establish an identity as a professional. Counselors who participate actively in these organizations may be viewed as having increased leadership experience and potential (James and Greenwalt, 2000). Hall (1993) further noted that involvement in professional organizations may be considered a determinant of professional commitment. Thus, counselors may gain respect and acclaim, both personally and for their institution, by being involved in professional associations.

Another possible benefit of professional organization involvement is a decrease in burnout, which is generally defined as an emotional overload and exhaustion resulting from intense interactions between counselors and clients (Davis & Markley, 2000). Counseling can be emotionally exhausting and taxing. Janes and Emener (1999)

observed that counselors are becoming increasingly susceptible to burnout. In a study by Magnuson, Norem, and Wilcoxon (2002), 10 counselors, each with more than 15 years of experience and recognized as being highly involved in the profession, participated in a qualitative inquiry. The study was designed to identify how leaders in the counseling profession promote individual growth and avoid burnout. The findings reveal that “professional investment and passion have a substantive impact on minimizing burnout (Magnuson et al., 2002, p. 23).” According to the researchers, commitment to professional and personal growth may be an essential tool in avoiding professional burnout. Committing to professional and personal growth through professional organizations is a possible benefit of such involvement. The study was conducted with only a small number of counseling professionals, and other studies are needed for further information.

One of the greatest benefits of professional organization involvement may be opportunities for professional development. Professional development opportunities may be provided by a variety of organizations in many locations, and it is important to note that these may be sponsored by professional organizations or by other means. Some counselors seek professional development from programs outside of professional organizations; however, most professional organizations provide many accessible opportunities for counselors to maintain their skills and increase their knowledge base of counseling-related issues (Vacc & Loesch, 2000). Engels and Associates (2004) contributed specific counselor competencies on a variety of topics and issues, including the pursuit of continuing education. They noted that attending professional workshops and conferences is one way for counselors to meet this performance guideline. Even

though professionals are expected to have certain skills and knowledge when they are initially hired for positions, it is necessary to broaden areas of expertise and to stay abreast of new information throughout their careers (Cooper & Miller, 1998; Winston & Creamer 1998). Many sources agree continued professional development is important for professional counselors. Hall (1993) identified information acquisition as one of the reasons why individuals might join professional organizations. Also, Carpenter and Miller (1981) noted professional preparation does not end with formal education, but is career-long. VanZandt (1990) stated that “as new developments, issues, ideas, and concerns evolve within the profession, counselors must keep abreast of this information and, at times, be actively involved in promoting and influencing action that will affect the future of the profession” (p. 244). Winston and Creamer (1998) agreed that professional development is not only beneficial to the individual, but also to the mission of the institution the individual represents. A study by Benton et al. (2003) suggested a greater need for continual education for college counselors regarding diagnosis, client conceptualization, cultural and environmental factors, crisis intervention, and trauma debriefing. Pledge et al. (1998) also stressed a need for training in diagnosis, suicidal ideation, psychopathology, crisis intervention, and substance abuse.

Another benefit of involvement in professional organizations is continued education and an awareness of trends in the counseling profession, the campus environment, and college student population. Engels and Associates (2004) included awareness of current trends as a performance guideline for professional counselors. Kadison (2006) wrote that college mental health has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. He suggested that changes in technological advances, managed care,

medications, student body, and campus life influence our approach to college students. Winston and Creamer (1998) suggested the importance of remaining current with contemporary events. Current works such as Kadison and DiGeronimo's *College of the Overwhelmed* (2004) and Howe and Strauss's *Millennials Rising* (2000) have highlighted the changing culture of college students. Atkinson (2004) and Bishop, Lacour, Nutt, Yamada, and Lee (2004) also cited characteristics of the current student population. Research data from yearly surveys such as National Survey of Counseling Center Directors (Gallagher, 2004, 2005, 2006), Core Institute Alcohol and Drug Survey (2004), and American College Health Association National College Health Assessment (2003, 2005a) have provided updated information on the college student population. Hodges (2001) also noted that economic, political, technological, and demographic changes in higher education and society provide insight into the current and future challenges college counselors face. According to Chang (1999) and Hodges, the college student population is becoming increasingly diverse. Through professional organization involvement, college counselors can consult with other professionals working with a similar population of clients to discuss the changing needs of college students and how best to address these needs.

Other benefits of involvement in professional organizations were outlined by Hall (1993). These include assistance in reaching personal and professional goals, stimulation through communicating with others, and self-assessment through social comparison. According to Hall, this type of self-evaluation can be accomplished only through connection with other individuals. Also, maintaining collaborative relationships with professional organizations is a way to enhance professional training (Guinee &

Ness, 2000). Other possible benefits of professional organization involvement are access to counseling publications, access to professional resources, professional liability insurance programs, professional conferences, political involvement systems, and advocacy the association provides for the profession (Vacc & Loesch, 2000). These are just a few examples found in the literature concerning how professional organization involvement may be beneficial for college counselors.

Definition of Involvement

In order to determine whether or not college counseling center personnel are involved in professional organizations, one must understand how involvement is defined for the purposes of this study. The researcher found specific types of professional organization involvement in the literature. Chernow, Cooper, and Winston (2003) surveyed student affairs professionals in Georgia and identified 10 separate types of professional association involvement, including (a) read the association's journal, (b) read the association's newsletters, (c) attended conferences, (d) attended workshops/programs separate from the conferences, (e) served an elected/appointed office other than a committee/task force chair, (f) served on a committee/task force, (g) chaired a committee/task force, (h) used placement services for recruiting, (i) used placement services for seeking a position, and (j) subscribed to the listserv/on-line discussion list. They identified an additional example, lobbying efforts, which was selected in only one case. This example can include political involvement and advocacy that the association provides for the profession. As in the study by Chernow et al., Elder (1984) also identified receiving an organization's newsletter, attending conferences, and chairing a committee as types of professional organization involvement. She also

identified voting for an organization's officers, presenting at a conference, and being an editor of a newsletter as types of involvement. Echterling et al. (2002) also cited attending conferences and workshops, conducting presentations, lobbying efforts, and committee membership as types of involvement. Publishing in an organization's journal or newsletter and mere membership in a professional organization may be defined as other types of involvement.

For this study, involvement refers to 1 or more of the above 16 criteria found in the literature. Therefore, involvement is defined by the number and type(s) of criterion activities in which the individual counselor has participated.

Ethical Responsibilities

Most professional organizations have ethical codes or standards of practice that outline ethical expectations of their respective members. These codes identify ethical responsibilities regarding a variety of topics, including potential pitfalls, in their profession. The ethical codes of counseling professional organizations address counselor participation and involvement in professional organizations to a varying degree and specificity. Winston and Creamer (1998) and Vacc and Loesch (2000) noted the importance of knowing professional ethical standards, and Patterson (1999) reminded counselors of their responsibility in maintaining ethical professional competence. Ethical standards provide a framework for the profession and outline expectations and professional standards.

Similar to ethical guidelines provided by professional organizations, Engels and Associates (2004) provided a specific competency guide that may be used as a foundation for all professional counselors. They outlined detailed competencies and

performance guidelines on a variety of ethical issues. This competency guide may be used as a foundation for counselors and is complementary to counseling professional organization ethical codes. Engels and Associates asserted that professional counselors “exhibit a thorough knowledge of ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies” (p. 9).

The newly revised American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics specifically addresses the expectations of its members’ professional affiliation(s). This code asserts the professional responsibility of counselors to be actively involved in local, state, and national organizations that foster the development and enhancement of counseling (ACA, 2005). The American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct is less specific, noting importance of maintaining professional competence in practice, but not specifying whether this is achieved through professional organization membership or through other means (APA, 2002). The APA code does not mention organizational involvement explicitly as a member expectation. However, one could infer that professional competence may be maintained through collaboration and consultation with other professionals in such an organization, for example, attending conferences and workshops, and reading professional journals.

Other counseling associations mention professional development and organizational involvement in their ethical codes. Counselors may also be involved in any of these professional organizations or others. The ACHA Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education requires professionals to participate in ongoing professional development and service (ACHA, 2005b). The American Mental Health

Counselors Association (AMHCA) Code of Ethics “recognize[s] the need for continued education and training” (AMHCA, 2000). The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics is the most specific regarding professional organization involvement. This code notes social workers’ role in maintaining the integrity of the profession. According to NASW standards, social workers may achieve this by teaching, consultation, research, presentations, attending professional meetings, legislative testimony, and participation in professional organizations (NASW, 1999). The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), the credentialing board that awards national counselor certification, has its own *Code of Ethics*. These standards promote professionalism in counseling and recognize continuing education as a means to advance competency in counseling practice (NBCC, 2005). Also, the ethical standards for student affairs professionals in the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) include serving professional organizations as a way to contribute to the development of the profession (ACPA, 1992).

Accreditation Standards

In addition to ethical codes and standards of practice for counselors, college counseling center accreditation standards outline specific expectations of college counseling personnel participation and involvement in professional organizations. According to Archer and Cooper (1998), accreditation of college counseling centers contributes to providing quality programs and services in the mental health of college students. Different types of college counseling center accreditation may be established through three primary sources, the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS), the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), and

the APA accreditation of psychology internships (APA, 2005; Archer & Cooper, 1998; CAS, 2006; Maples, 2000).

IACS serves as an official accrediting organization for counseling centers (Archer & Cooper, 1998; Boyd et al., 2003). According to Boyd et al., the IACS standards outline essential practice standards and program elements in a counseling center that provides excellent services to students. IACS standards provide expectations for training and professional development of staff members. These expectations are outlined more specifically than many of the professional organization ethical codes and standards of practice. IACS standards specify that continuing education and training opportunities be allowed for all staff members, whether on- or off-site. According to IACS, if training occurs off-site, time and financial resources to attend conferences and workshops will be provided by the counseling center (Boyd et al., 2003).

IACS (Boyd et al., 2003) outlined other specific standards regarding professional involvement:

Staff members should hold membership in and participate in appropriate professional organizations. Staff members should attend relevant campus colloquia and seminars and local, regional, provincial, and national professional meetings. Staff members should be encouraged and supported in accepting leadership responsibilities within their respective local and national organizations.

(p. 174)

These standards outline detailed expectations of IACS accredited college counseling centers. However, these standards apply only to those centers that are IACS accredited. According to Archer and Cooper (1998), those that are accredited may

experience many benefits. For example, in an early national survey of college counseling center directors, 89% reported that the accreditation process helped them to maintain ethical and professional standards (AUCCCDb, n.d., ¶ 2). However, accreditation requirements and costs may not be feasible for many small colleges (Archer & Cooper, 1998). Those centers that are not accredited may not emphasize such a commitment to the profession as those that are accredited.

Other groups provide accreditation standards for colleges and universities. CAS has established standards for many programs, including counseling services, within higher education and represents a collaboration of professional associations (Maples, 2000). The *CAS Self-Assessment Guide for Counseling Services* (2006) provides college counselors with specific standards to assess, develop, enhance, and evaluate campus counseling services. These standards denote that college counseling programs must provide professional development opportunities for staff, including professional workshops and conferences (CAS, 2006). The standards also mandate that college counseling center personnel adhere to ethical standards and principles of behavior (CAS, 2006). Both professional development opportunities and ethical standards may be accessed through involvement in professional organizations.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges provides another type of accreditation. SACS is the regional accrediting body for higher education institutions in the southern states (SACS, 2001). The SACS accreditation does not highlight counseling services or professional organization involvement specifically; rather, it provides a general framework for student affairs programs on college campuses.

APA accredits psychology internships within college counseling centers (APA, 2005; Archer & Cooper, 1998). According to the *Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology*, the accreditation process “is intended to promote consistent quality and excellence in education and training in professional psychology” (APA, 2005, p. 3). According to these guidelines, approved internship sites provide opportunities for ongoing professional development and adherence to the *APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2002). Although these standards do not specifically refer to professional organizations as providers of professional development opportunities, sites can utilize associations as a development resource to assist in meeting this standard.

Counselor Competencies

As mentioned previously, Engels and Associates (2004) outlined specific competencies and performance guidelines for professional counselors. They addressed involvement in professional organizations in a variety of ways within these guidelines. According to Engels and Associates, professional counselors are expected to be active members of professional organizations. They gave national, state, local, and specialty organizations as examples of these associations. They also noted the importance of understanding the history and value of the counseling profession, understanding the important issues and events related to the counseling profession, and understanding the identity and role of professional counselors as related to other mental health professionals. These and other issues are typically addressed through the mission, goals, and history of counseling professional organizations. They stressed the

importance of advocating for the counseling profession by joining ACA and other counseling organizations.

Previous Research

After a review of the relevant literature represented in specific books and journals such as the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, *Journal of College Student Development*, *Journal of College Counseling*, *Journal of American College Health*, *College and University*, *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *Guidance and Counseling*, *Counseling Psychologist*, *NASPA Journal*, and *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, the researcher found only one research study on a related topic. In this study, Chernow et al. (2003) surveyed a proportional, stratified sample of all student affairs professionals in Georgia listed in the 1998 Directory of Student Affairs Personnel. They examined the level of involvement of student affairs professionals in professional associations at different stages of their careers. The research design was a criterion group design, a one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The survey response rate was 63% ($N = 139$). The results revealed that entry-level professionals in student affairs tend to be more involved in professional organizations than experienced ones (Chernow, et al., 2003). However, this study fails to delineate different disciplines within student affairs such as college counselors; therefore, it gives no information about the specific professional involvement of this group. The findings were also limited to student affairs professionals in Georgia, and therefore may not be generalized to other populations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether college counselors are involved in professional organizations. The study attempted to clarify how college counselors are involved and what is preventing them from being more involved. The study also compared professional counselor involvement in these associations to psychologist involvement.

The results of this study may provide professional organizations with information to better meet the needs of college counselors. Also, the results could provide college counselors more information regarding the purpose and benefits of professional organizations, and their potential roles in the greater counseling profession. This study will clarify whether or not college counselors are taking advantage of the resources and benefits provided through professional organizations and determine what issues are preventing them from being more involved. Reasons for noninvolvement may be used by professional organizations to increase involvement.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Question

How much and in what ways are college counseling center professional staff involved in professional organizations and what factors encourage and discourage this involvement?

Research Assumptions

1. Most college counseling center professional staff are involved in professional organizations.
2. Most college counseling center professional staff desire to increase involvement in professional organizations.
3. College counseling center professional staff will cite a variety of motivations for being involved in professional organizations.
4. College counseling center professional staff will cite a variety of reasons for not being more involved in professional organizations.
5. Those college counseling center professional staff who are involved in professional organizations are involved in a variety of ways.
6. There is no difference in the amount of involvement in professional organizations of professional counselors as compared to psychologists.

Definition of Terms

ACHA – American College Health Association

ACPA – American College Personnel Association

ACA – American Counseling Association

ACCA – American College Counseling Association

AMHCA – American Mental Health Counselors Association

APA – American Psychological Association

AUCCCD – Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors

CAS – Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

Involvement refers to membership and participation in professional organizations as defined by 16 specific criteria found in the literature: (a) read association's journal, (b) read association's newsletters, (c) attend conferences, (d) attend workshops/programs separate from the conferences, (e) serve elected/appointed office other than committee/task force chair, (f) serve on committee/task force, (g) chair committee/task force, (h) use placement services for recruiting, (i) use placement services for seeking position, (j) subscribe to listserv/on-line discussion list, (k) participate in lobbying efforts, (l) vote for organization's officers, (m) present at conference, (n) act as editor of organization's newsletter or journal, (o) publish in association's journal or newsletter, (p) is a member of organization. Involvement is defined by the type(s) and number of criterion activities in which the counselor has participated.

LBSW – Licensed baccalaureate social worker

LCDC – Licensed chemical dependency counselor

LCSW – Licensed clinical social worker

LMFT – Licensed marriage and family therapist

LMSW – Licensed master social worker

LMSW-AP – Licensed master social worker – advanced practitioner

LPC – Licensed professional counselor

MSW – Masters in social work

NASW – National Association of Social Workers

NBCC – National Board for Certified Counselors

Personal counseling refers to clinical, personal counseling with an appropriately credentialed counselor who has specialized education and training in therapeutic, clinical, and developmental counseling tenets.

Professional association refers to a professional organization. The terms are used interchangeably.

Professional organization refers to a group that is formed by members of a specific profession, around common issues or goals. The terms professional organization and professional association are used interchangeably.

Professional staff refers to individuals who work on college campuses and have advanced degrees and responsibilities. Administrative staff, support staff, and student workers do not fit these criteria.

SACS – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

TCA – Texas Counseling Association

TCCA – Texas College Counseling Association

TUCCDA – Texas University and College Counseling Directors Association

Methods

College counseling center professionals were surveyed regarding their professional organization involvement. Participants were selected by targeting specific 4-year institutions with undergraduate populations in one state in the Southwest and specific counseling professionals who work in college counseling centers within these schools. The criteria used to target specific institutions and counseling professionals within these institutions are outlined.

Institutions

The study surveyed college counselors who work in counseling centers at 4-year colleges and universities in one state in the Southwest. The SACS Commission on Colleges (2007) list of accredited colleges and universities and the Carnegie Foundation (2006) classification of institutions in higher education were used to determine which institutions to target for this study. In an effort to reduce variance of the participant pool, specific criteria were used to determine the targeted institutions. Included in this study were institutions that met SACS criteria as Levels II, III, V, and VI and met the Carnegie Foundation enrollment profile description of ExU4 (exclusively undergraduate 4-year), VHU (very high undergraduate), HU (high undergraduate), or MU (majority undergraduate). Descriptions of SACS Levels and Carnegie Foundation enrollment profile descriptions are outlined below. Institutions with both undergraduate and graduate populations were included in these classifications. The number of institutions that met both SACS and Carnegie Foundation criteria was 73.

SACS divides higher education institutions into levels regarding the highest degree offered by each institution. SACS Level I institutions were excluded from the

study because their highest degree is an associates degree (2007). Also Carnegie Foundation enrollment profile category ExU2 (exclusively undergraduate 2-year) were excluded. These institutions were excluded because student needs and type(s) of counseling services may differ in 2- and 4-year institutions. Spooner (2000) acknowledged some general differences in 2- and 4-year institutions, noting that smaller institutions sometimes combine counseling services with advising, disability services, and financial aid to best utilize resources. Other differences such as demographics of student population, social needs, financial status, and size of institution may determine the type of counseling services provided for college students (Bishop, 2006; CAS, 2006; El-Khawas, 1996; Moore, 2000; Sandeen, 1996). Two- and 4-year institutions sometimes provide counseling services in different ways; therefore, individuals from 2-year schools were excluded from the study.

Carnegie Foundation enrollment profile MGP (majority graduate/professional) and ExGP (exclusively graduate/professional) were also excluded. Institutions excluded by these criteria include seminaries and trade schools that have student populations different from those at 4-year undergraduate institutions. Community colleges and schools devoted exclusively to distance education do not meet the criteria of this study; therefore, individuals from these institutions were not targeted.

Participants

Targeted participants were college counseling center professionals whose primary responsibility was personal counseling. Participants were primarily professional counselors, psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, and psychiatrists that provide personal counseling for student clients (Gallagher, 2004,

2005, 2006). Both full- and part-time professionals were targeted. Interns, graduate assistants, and administrative staff were excluded because they do not meet the criteria of permanent and/or professional staff.

Other exclusions include professional staff identifying primarily as career counselors, academic advisors, dieticians, nutritionists, health educators, testing coordinators, and disability specialists which may be housed in the college counseling center. These individuals may refer to themselves as “counselors” but were excluded because their professional organization involvement tends to be in associations that are not primarily personal counseling oriented. Individuals with dual roles were included.

Gallagher (2006) reported that in most institutions, career counseling has been moved out of college counseling centers into its own separate location on campus. Counselors housed in a separate career center were not targeted. Other college counselors who work in areas other than the primary college counseling center were not targeted.

Individuals were assessed for participation in the study by accessing each college counseling center Web site and, when possible, gathering information about each individual counselor, including job title, job responsibilities, and education. This helped to clarify which counseling center staff met the criterion of a personal counseling focus. It was necessary to contact some counseling centers by telephone for additional clarification of who to include. When the researcher was unable to determine which staff members to include from a particular institution, all individuals were included.

Instrument

Survey questions were developed based on available research found in the literature review to address the research question. Survey items were structured, prescribing the response alternatives from which respondents must choose, in order to promote clarity and accuracy of data collection and analysis (Alreck & Settle, 2004). The only exception was a few questions asked for “other” responses not listed in the structured question. Questions regarding demographic information of the participants and their institutions were developed using the *National Survey of Counseling Center Directors* (Gallagher, 2004, 2005, 2006). Other demographic questions regarding participants’ professional field and discipline were developed using findings of the Gallagher survey and an unpublished survey developed by Benton (2006).

Demographic survey questions included gender, age, racial/ethnic identification, size of school, type of institution, location of institution, length of employment, professional discipline, licensure, highest degree earned, and professional organization membership.

A list of the most common counseling professional organizations which cater to the study population was developed and reviewed by a panel of experts on the study committee. Nine organizations were identified. Participants were asked in which of the common counseling professional organizations listed they are currently a member.

Next, survey questions were developed regarding the present professional organization involvement of participants. Sixteen types of involvement were identified. The 11 separate types of professional association involvement identified by Chernow et al. (2003) were as follows: (a) read association’s journal, (b) read association’s newsletters, (c) attended conferences, (d) attended workshops/programs separate from

conferences, (e) served elected/appointed office other than committee/task force chair, (f) served on committee/task force, (g) chaired committee/task force, (h) used placement services for recruiting, (i) used placement services for seeking position, and (j) subscribed to listserv/on-line discussion list. They also identified lobbying efforts as a type of involvement as one participant noted. Elder (1984) identified voting for an organization's officers, presenting at a conference, and being editor of a newsletter as three additional types of involvement. Echterling et al. (2002) recognized mere membership in a professional organization as a type of involvement. Also, publishing in an association's journal or newsletter is another type of involvement contributed by a panel of experts on the study committee. These 16 criteria were used to guide survey questions regarding professional organization involvement. Each of these 16 types was listed as types of involvement on the survey.

Information was also gathered regarding factors that motivate college counselors to be involved, or prevent them from being involved, in professional organizations. Possible reasons for involvement and noninvolvement from the literature, anecdotal sources, and professional consultations were included in the survey. According to Holt and DeVaney (2002), several factors discourage professional conference attendance, including missed work; high cost of food, travel, registration, and accommodations; lack of support from administration; and rising dues. Other information regarding motivations for involvement and reasons for noninvolvement were not found in the literature; therefore, other choices for these survey items were developed from consultation with a panel of experts on the study committee. Reasons for professional organization involvement and noninvolvement were listed in the last two survey questions.

A pilot instrument was distributed to 10 college counselors prior to data collection to gain information about nonresponse bias and other factors that may interact with the survey and distribution (Alreck & Settle, 2004). Six individuals completed the pilot survey and provided feedback used to further develop the instrument. Due to pilot survey feedback, Education Specialist degree was added to the highest degree earned demographic question, and ACPA Commission for Counseling and Psychological Services was added to the list of common professional organizations from which participants will choose. Other pilot survey feedback was positive, including the fact that 100% would be “very likely” to complete this survey if it were emailed to them.

Data Collection

College counselors in one state in the Southwest who met the criteria for this study received the survey and informed consent via email (see Appendix A). Of the 265 individuals targeted in the study, one email address could not be obtained, four individuals opted out of the study, and two individuals were from institutions that did not meet the study criteria. Also, two individuals did not complete half of the survey items and were not counted in the results (Alreck & Settle, 2004). Of the remaining 256 surveys sent to possible participants, 152 individuals completed the survey. The final response rate was 59.4%.

Opinions vary as to what rate is considered an acceptable response rate in survey research (Babbie, 2007; Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Researchers commonly report a 30% to 40% response rate from survey distribution (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001) although some report much lower rates (Porter & Whitcomb, 2003). According to Babbie (2007), a 50% response rate is adequate and a 60%

response rate is good in survey research. According to this criterion, this study's response rate of 59.4% is acceptable, but a higher rate would have strengthened the generalizability of the results.

Surveys were distributed via an online survey distribution company, Survey Monkey. Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) noted that online administration of surveys is flexible, fast, and inexpensive. Kiernan, Kiernan, Oyler, and Gilles (2005), found that Web survey participants were more likely to respond (95%) than were mail survey participants (79%). Other studies found similar results (Parker, 1992). However, some of the earlier research (Parker, 1992) seemed more optimistic about advantages of online data collection than recent research. More recent studies noted oversurveying effects and increased spamming as future concerns for online researchers (Couper, 2000; Porter & Whitcomb, 2003). Babbie (2007) observed that online and mail surveys have many of the same strengths and weaknesses.

Although individuals working in an educational setting are more likely to respond to questionnaires than the general population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), several methods were used to further increase survey participation and response rate. First, the survey introduction was personalized. Each email accompanying the survey was addressed to "College Counselor." Although personalizing the contact did not have a large impact on response rates of online surveys, research on personalizing paper surveys shows an impact (Porter & Whitcomb, 2003). Second, Porter and Whitcomb found statements of scarcity had a positive impact on survey response rates. Statements informing participants that they have been selected to participate and information about the limited time to complete the survey were included in the

information provided to recipients. Third, the layout of the survey was carefully designed to be as easy and quick to complete as possible. By limiting the number of survey questions and utilizing the accessible Survey Monkey program, respondents were more likely to complete the survey. Porter and Whitcomb found a substantial number of respondents clicked on the hyperlink to the online survey, but after viewing the first page did not continue with the survey. The researcher felt that keeping the survey as short and user-friendly as possible would encourage the recipients to complete the survey. Fourth, survey recipients were informed that email reminders would be sent to nonrespondents. Green (1996) conducted a postal survey and found that warning respondents that reminders would be sent increased survey response rate. Counseling center directors were also emailed and asked to encourage their professional staff to respond. Fifth, an incentive was used to increase survey participation. Participants in this study were included in a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to *Amazon.com*. Alreck and Settle (2004) cited several advantages to this type of inducement, including having to purchase only one prize. Information about the inducement was included in the initial email that accompanied the survey. Sixth, a pilot survey was distributed to a small group of individuals to gain additional information about nonresponse bias and other factors that could interact with the survey and distribution (Alreck & Settle, 2004).

Lack of Internet access and use of the Web are frequent sources of bias in online data collection (Alreck & Settle, 2004) and was most likely not an issue with this study. Most university staff frequently use email as a source of communication, and a high percentage of college counselors routinely use the Internet. Survey results were accessed from the online distribution company and analyzed.

The initial email inviting college counseling center professionals to participate in the survey was sent on April 24, 2007. After 1 week, a reminder was sent to nonrespondents, and 1 week later, another reminder was sent. A final reminder to nonrespondents was sent on May 14, and the survey was closed on May 15, 2007.

Statistical Analysis

The study is primarily quantitative and descriptive in nature. The data were exported from the online distribution program into an *SPSS* program for analysis. Descriptive statistics and frequency tables were used to synthesize most of the research data and reflect trends of professional organization involvement.

Demographic information was used to note trends in professional organization involvement. Factors examined included gender, age, racial/ethnic identification, size of school, type of institution, location of institution, length of employment, professional discipline, licensure, highest degree earned, and current professional organization membership. Each of the 16 types of involvement was treated as equally important, therefore given equal weight when a composite involvement score was derived. Independent samples *t* test was used to compare the involvement of professional counselors to psychologists. Motivations and hindrances to professional organization involvement were analyzed in a tabular format of frequencies.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes analysis of data collected to answer the stated assumptions and research question: How much and in what ways are college counseling center professional staff involved in professional organizations and what factors encourage and discourage this involvement?

Data were collected using Survey Monkey, an online survey distribution company, and were analyzed using *SPSS 15.0* statistical data analysis program. Results include participant information, research assumptions, and data analysis. Discussion includes implications for college counseling, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. Participant information follows.

Results

Participants

The first survey questions asked respondents general demographic information. Because this is the first known study of the professional organization involvement of college counseling center professionals, little is known about the participant population in this area. Therefore a detailed description of the participant demographics is outlined below.

Of the 152 participants, 47 male (30.9%) and 105 female (69.1%) college counseling center professionals completed the online survey. Most participants' (81.6%) ages were evenly distributed between 31 and 60 years of age. The largest range was 51 to 60 years of age ($n = 42$; 27.6%), and the smallest, 70+ years of age ($n = 1$; 0.7%). One respondent did not indicate age (see Table 1).

Table 1

Age

Range	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	12	7.8
31-40	41	27.0
41-50	41	27.0
51-60	42	27.6
61-70	14	9.2
70+	1	0.7
No response	1	0.7
Total	152	100.0

Several racial/ethnic groups were represented in the participant sample. However, the majority of participants ($n = 111$; 73%) identified White/Caucasian as their primary racial and/or ethnic group (see Table 2). All other racial/ethnic groups were 26.9% ($n = 41$) of participants, including 4 participants who reported “other” as their racial/ethnic identification. No participants reported Native American as their racial/ethnic identification.

Table 2

Racial/Ethnic Identification

Group	Frequency	Percentage
African American	12	7.9
Hispanic American	17	11.2
Native American	0	0.0
White/Caucasian	111	73.0
Asian American	4	2.6
Bi/Multiracial	4	2.6
Other	4	2.6
Total	152	100.0

Participants were also asked about the size of their institution. Institution sizes were as follows: under 2,500 (11.3%), 2,500 to 7,500 (21.2%), 7,501 to 15,000 (23.2%), and 15,000 or more (44.4%). One respondent did not indicate institution size. Public schools were represented by 71.1% of the participants ($n = 108$), and private schools by 29.0% ($n = 44$). Participants reported that their institutions were located in the following locations: large urban area (37.5%), moderately sized city (36.8%), small town (21.7%), and rural area (4.0%).

Participants were asked how long they had worked as college counselors. The largest group ($n = 54$; 35.5%) reported working less than 5 years, with the smallest ($n = 9$; 5.9%) working more than 30 years (see Table 3).

Table 3

Counseling Tenure

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5	54	35.5
6-10	40	26.3
11-20	40	26.3
21-30	11	7.2
30+	9	5.9
Total	152	100.0

Participants were asked whether they hold a current professional license. The majority of participants reported professional licensure ($n = 126$; 82.9%), and only 11.8% ($n = 18$) did not. A few participants ($n = 8$; 5.3%) reported temporary licensure (see Table 4).

Table 4

Current Professional License

Licensure	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	126	82.9
No	18	11.8
Temporary license/intern	8	5.3
Total	152	100.0

It should be noted that some respondents with temporary licensure may have been counted in the 82.9% reporting professional licensure. Temporary or internship licenses such as the licensed professional counselor intern (LPC-i) and licensed marriage & family therapist associate (LMFTA) are considered a type of license, and some may have reported accordingly. Also, a few participants may hold both a professional and temporary license. For example, 1 participant reported holding a licensed chemical dependency counselor (LCDC) and an LPC-i. In this survey question, respondents could choose only one response; therefore, all licenses may not be represented in Table 4. Table 5, however, gives more detailed information regarding licensure, as participants were instructed to select all professional licenses they currently hold.

Table 5

Professional License Type

License	Frequency	Percentage
Licensed professional counselor (LPC)	54	35.5
Licensed chemical dependency counselor (LCDC)	4	2.6
Licensed clinical mental health counselor (LCMHC)	1	0.7
Licensed marriage & family therapist (LMFT)	12	7.9
Licensed psychologist	59	38.8
Licensed social worker (LBSW/LCSW/LMSW/LMSW-AP)	16	10.5
Other	7	4.6
No response	18	11.8

Consistent with data reported in Table 4, 18 participants in Table 5 did not respond, possibly indicating no current professional license.

Licensed psychologist ($n = 59$) and licensed professional counselor ($n = 54$) were the most common licenses held by participants. The survey did not give a structured response for participants with temporary licensure. Those individuals who listed other responses of LPCi or LMFTA were counted in the structured choices of LPC and LMFT, respectively. Seven participants listed other types of professional licenses: 5 held a type of medical license, 1 a certified rehabilitation counselor, and 1 a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC). The LCPC is recognized in some states, but is not a license issued by the state in which the study was done.

Participants were asked to report their highest degree earned in counseling, psychology, or related field. Most participants held a doctoral degree ($n = 84$; 55.3%).

Table 6

Highest Counseling or Related Degree Earned

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	1	0.7
Masters	52	34.2
Masters in social work	15	9.9
Education specialist	0	0.0
Doctorate	84	55.3
Total	152	100.0

Education specialist degree was added from pilot survey feedback; however, no participants reported this degree. Only 1 participant reported bachelors as their highest counseling-related degree (see Table 6). Other participant demographic information is discussed within the following stated assumptions.

Assumption 1

1. Most college counseling center professional staff are involved in professional organizations.

A list of 10 of the most common counseling professional organizations which cater to the study population was developed and reviewed by a panel of experts on the study committee and feedback from the pilot study. Participants were asked to select all of the 10 common counseling professional organizations listed in which they hold current membership. Even though membership is only one type of professional organization involvement, this question indicates what specific organizations college counseling center professionals are involved. The American Psychological Association (APA) had the most members ($n = 54$), with 35.5% reporting membership. The American Counseling Association (ACA) had the next highest ($n = 31$), with 20.4% reporting membership (see Table 8). Other professional organizations not listed in the 10 structured choices were to be listed in the “other” choice (see Appendix B). A high number of “other” professional organizations were reported, with 75 individuals (49.3%) listing at least one professional organization not listed in the 10 structured responses. This was expected due to the large number of local, state, and national/international professional organizations catering to college counseling

professionals. Refer to Appendix A for a list of all 62 professional organization membership reported by participants.

Table 7

Professional Organization Membership

Organization	Frequency	Percentage
American College Health Association (ACHA)	11	7.2
American College Personnel Association – (ACPA) Commission for Counseling and Psychological Services	16	10.5
American Counseling Association (ACA)	31	20.4
American Psychological Association (APA)	54	35.5
American College Counseling Association (ACCA)	28	18.4
Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD)	17	11.2
Society of Counseling Psychology – APA Division 17	19	12.5
Texas Counseling Association (TCA)	16	10.5
Texas College Counseling Association (TCCA)	17	11.2
Texas University and College Counseling Center Director’s Association (TUCCDA)	27	17.8
Number of individuals listing “other” responses	75	49.3
No response	17	11.2

Seventeen individuals (11.2%) did not answer this question, possibly indicating no membership in professional organizations. Therefore, 135 participants (88.8%)

indicated membership in at least one professional organization, meeting the first assumption of this study.

Information regarding this assumption was also obtained through an additional survey question. Participants were asked how many years they had been involved in professional organizations. The involvement range of 6 to 10 years was the highest (27.6%), with 42 college counseling center professionals indicating they fall into this range (see Table 8).

Table 8

Length of Involvement

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5	37	24.3
6-10	42	27.6
11-20	41	27.0
21-30	14	9.2
30+	12	7.9
No response	6	3.9
Total	152	100.0

Most of the participants (71.7%) reported that they have been involved in professional organizations for more than 5 years, also meeting the first assumption of the study. Six participants did not answer this question, possibly indicating no past or present involvement in professional organizations. However, some of those not involved

may have responded “Less than 5 years,” since no structured survey item indicated no involvement.

Assumption 2

2.) Most college counseling center professional staff desire to increase involvement in professional organizations.

Participants were asked if they desire to increase their involvement in professional organizations. More participants reported they did not want to increase their involvement ($n = 77$; 50.7%) than those who did want to increase their involvement ($n = 74$; 48.7%). One individual did not respond to this survey question. Although the difference between the two groups was small, the second assumption of the study was not met.

Assumption 3

3.) College counseling center professional staff will cite a variety of motivations for being involved in professional organizations.

Participants were asked to select from 11 structured responses all motivations for being involved in professional organizations. Participants were instructed to select all motivations that applied (see Table 9). Staying up-to-date on current trends and issues was the motivation selected most frequently, with 92.8% ($n = 141$) of participants selecting this motivation. Collaboration with other professionals in the field was the second most selected motivation, with 80.9% ($n = 123$). Third and fourth most selected were mandatory Continuing Education Units ($n = 105$; 69.1%) and access to materials published through organizations ($n = 95$; 62.5%), respectively, whereas only 8.6%

(n = 13) selected recruiting other professionals as a motivation for professional organization involvement.

Table 9

Motivations for Professional Organization Involvement

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Collaboration with other professionals in the field	123	80.9
Staying up-to-date on current trends and issues	141	92.8
Access to published materials	95	62.5
Chance to travel/get out of the office	76	50.0
Mandatory CEUs (Continuing Education Units)	105	69.1
Mandatory professional liability insurance	33	21.7
Job requirement/expected to be involved	46	30.2
Service opportunity to the profession	59	38.8
Networking/using placement services to find a job	29	19.1
Recruiting other professionals	13	8.6
Counseling advocacy the organization(s) provide	52	34.2
Other	2	1.3
No response	5	3.3

Five individuals did not select a motivation for professional organization involvement. Twelve individuals responded with other motivations for involvement. One of these responses clearly fit into one of the structured categories and was counted as

such. Nine individuals elaborated on their structured responses and gave additional comments which did not directly answer the survey question and were, therefore, not counted in the data. Noted comments included: "I've found our national organization . . . to be out of touch with clinical practice and practitioners. [This organization] has become an organization primarily benefiting researchers." "I enjoy helping and am curious at how I get selected into things." "I like the people in this field, so I get to see more of them when I'm involved!" Personal renewal and legal counsel were other motivations for involvement noted. These two responses were determined by a panel of faculty and college counselors to be independent of the structured choices and did not fit into the existing categories of motivations for involvement. These two were counted as such in the data. The variety of responses selected in the data meet the third assumption of this study.

Assumption 4

4.) College counseling center professional staff will cite a variety of reasons for not being more involved in professional organizations.

Participants were asked to select, from 12 structured responses, what is preventing them from being more involved in professional organizations. Participants were instructed to select all of the hindrances that applied (see Table 10). Job responsibilities too demanding to be more involved was the hindrance selected most frequently, with 57.2% ($n = 87$), and financial cost/too expensive was the second most selected hindrance, with 50.0% ($n = 76$). Personal life/family responsibilities was selected third most frequently, with 48% ($n = 73$).

Several individuals noted other hindrances and comments in the “other” response category. Seven of these responses were determined by a panel of faculty and college counselors to fit into existing structured categories and were counted as such in the data.

Table 10

Hindrances to Professional Organization Involvement

Hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
Financial cost/too expensive	76	50.0
Lack of financial support from college administration	42	27.6
No time-off provided by administration for conferences/workshops	11	7.2
Not valued by college/university administration	17	11.2
Job responsibilities too demanding to be more involved	87	57.2
Planning to get more involved by have not yet	39	25.7
Need information on how to get more involved	7	4.6
Personal life/family responsibilities	73	48.0
Not a priority	30	19.7
I do not want to be more involved	26	17.1
I am already very involved	22	14.5
I am working and in graduate school and do not have time	6	3.9
Other	3	2.0

Several other individuals elaborated on their responses and gave additional comments which did not directly answer the survey question. Noted comments included: "Difficult to set limits once others see you as being a participant." "Membership and involvement in professional organizations by the Counseling Center director is encouraged by the administration but is not encouraged for other staff members." "I am nearing retirement. It was more important to me when I was younger." Three other hindrances to involvement listed were geographic location, professional development meetings outside of professional organizations, and not confident time spent is efficient for social change or professional growth. These three hindrances were determined by a panel of faculty and college counselors to be independent of the structured choices and did not fit into the existing categories of hindrances to involvement. These three were counted in the data. The variety of responses selected in the data meet the fourth assumption of this study.

Assumption 5

5.) Those college counseling center professional staff who are involved in professional organizations, are involved in a variety of ways.

Participants were asked to select from 16 types of professional involvement found in the literature and developed by a panel of experts on the study committee ways in which they had been involved in professional organizations during the past 5 years. Participants were asked to select all types that apply. Almost all participants ($n = 139$; 91.4%) reported attending a conference sponsored by a professional organization, and 90.8% ($n = 138$) reported membership in a professional organization. Third and fourth most frequent responses are read an association's newsletter ($n = 127$; 83.6%) and

Table 11

Types of Professional Organization Involvement

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Member of professional organization	138	90.8
Read an association's journal	122	80.3
Read an association's newsletter	127	83.6
Published in an association's journal or newsletter	22	14.5
Attended professional organization conference	139	91.4
Attended workshop/program separate from conferences	106	69.7
Served an elected/appointed office	31	20.4
Served on committee/task force	35	23.0
Chaired committee/task force	17	11.2
Used placement services for recruiting professionals	17	11.2
Used placement services to seek a position	14	9.2
Subscribed to the listserv/on-line discussion list	89	58.6
Participated in lobbying efforts	34	22.4
Voted for an organization's officers	84	55.3
Presented at conference	69	45.4
Editor or on the editorial board of a newsletter or journal	9	5.9

Note. From "Professional Association Involvement of Student Affairs Professionals," by E. K. Chernow, D. L. Cooper, and R. B. Winston, Jr., 2003, *NASPA Journal*, 40(2), p. 48. "The Importance of Professional Involvement," by P. Elder, 1984, *Journal of National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors*, 48(1), p. 17. *Thriving: A Manual for Students in the Helping Professions*, by L. G. Echterling, E. Cowan, W. F. Evans, A. R. Staton, G. Viere, J. E. Mcgee et al., 2002, p. 256.

read an association’s journal ($n = 122$; 80.3%), respectively, whereas only 5.9% ($n = 9$) of participants reported being the editor or on the editorial board of a newsletter or journal (see Table 11). The number of types of professional involvement selected by each participant varied and is recorded as the participant involvement score. The mean number of types of involvement reported, or the average involvement score, is 6.91 (see Table 12); therefore, out of the 16 types, the average number involvement types selected by participants is approaching 7. Therefore, the fifth assumption of the study is met. Additional information about the professional involvement score is noted in the sixth assumption.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics of Professional Involvement

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Involvement scale	152	6.91	3.07

Assumption 6

6.) There is no difference in the amount of involvement in professional organizations of professional counselors as compared to psychologists.

Participants were asked which professional discipline they primarily identify (see Table 13). Psychologists made up the largest group ($n = 72$; 47.4%), and professional counselors, the second largest ($n = 50$; 32.9%). These data are consistent with the latest national college counseling center director survey data distributed by Gallagher (2006). This national study of directors also reported psychologists as the largest group and professional counselors as second largest. Other participant responses were career

counseling, clinical neuropsychology, mental health nurse specialty, Christians in student development, counseling psychology, and art therapy.

Table 13

Counselor Professional Discipline

Discipline	Frequency	Percentage
Professional counseling	50	32.9
Marriage and family therapy	6	4.0
Psychiatry	4	2.6
Psychology	72	47.4
Social work	14	9.2
Other	6	4.0
Total	152	100.0

As mentioned earlier, the 16 types of professional involvement listed in Table 11 came from relevant literature implying content validity. The list was also reviewed, examined, and approved by a panel of experts on the study committee, also implying face validity. Internal consistency reliability on the dichotomous involvement scores is computed in Cronbach alpha. The alpha coefficient is .80 for the entire sample ($N = 152$), .75 for the professional counselor group ($n = 50$), .85 for the psychologist group ($n = 72$), and .82 for the combined professional counselor and psychologist group ($n = 122$). These coefficients are either satisfactory or acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). They indicate participants provided consistent responses, possibly implying that the 16 items

tap on different aspects of professional involvement, supporting the construct validity of the involvement scale.

One interest of this study was to investigate differences in involvement of counselors and psychologists. As there were only two groups and one dependent variable, the independent sample *t* test was used for data analysis. However, before performing the analysis, the three assumptions for *t* test were examined: independence of observations, normal distribution, and equal variance (Gall et al., 2003).

First, the ratio scale scores were obtained independently and randomly. Surveys were sent independently to participants via email. Also, completed surveys were submitted individually through Survey Monkey, meeting this assumption. Independence was not personally monitored; however, after reviewing the data, there was no indication responses were duplicated. Obviously the sample was not random, but from the relatively high response rate, no clear evidence of systematic bias for participants exists. Therefore, this sample may be a representative sample of, and generalizable to a larger population. Participants were not different from nonparticipants, and participants were not biased in any systematical way (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003).

Second, outliers could impact the data distribution and normality; therefore, data were checked for outliers. Hair, Black, Babib, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) suggested using standard scores up to 4 as the criterion to detect the univariate outlier for sample sizes larger than 80. For the present study, a standard score of 3 was used. Based on this rule, no outliers were detected. The normality of the involvement score was examined based on transformed z-scores for skewness and kurtosis. Hair et al. stated that commonly used critical values to judge normality are ± 1.96 (.05 level) or ± 2.58 (.01

level). The z-scores for skewness and kurtosis in the present sample are 3.04 and 1.40, respectively. Therefore, the normality was not met due to the skewness of the data. To remedy the non-normality of the data, data transformations by taking the inverse, squared, and square root were tried. None of those strategies improved the normality of the data distribution; hence, the original raw score without any data transformation was retained for data analysis. Boneau (1960) noted that even when the three assumptions are not met, the *t* test provides an accurate estimate of statistical significance. He observed that such violations produce only a minimal effect on the statistical test.

Third, the equal variance assumption was also not met: $F = 5.84, p = .017$. Several possible approaches can be used to process data when this assumption is violated. One way is to use a nonparametric test to limit the scope of generalization (Gall et al., 2003). The second strategy is to adjust the data statistically. Glass, Peckham, and Sanders (1972) stated that the *F* or *t* statistic tends to be conservative when large variance is associated with large cell size, as in the present study. Therefore, the threshold for statistical significance should be more liberal. However, there are no rules of thumb about the more liberal alpha level. The *SPSS* software package provided the *t* statistic based on adjusted standard error and degree of freedom as the third option. This approach was applied in the present study (see Table 14). Results showed that the group difference did not meet the .05 level of statistical significance: $t(118) = -1.958, p = .053$; therefore, there is no statistically significant difference between the professional involvement of professional counselors versus psychologists. This meets the sixth assumption of the study. The practical significance of the difference in η^2 is .03, implying that 3% of the variance on involvement could be

explained by the discipline. The mean-type effect size in Cohen's d is .34. Those two indices, from two different perspectives on practical significance, are small but may be meaningful (Cohen, 1988).

The group differences were further examined through the cross-tabulation in phi coefficient on the 16 items. Only 3 items on the involvement scale showed significant differences: served on committee/task force, chaired committee/task force, and presented at conference. The phi for these items are $r_\phi = .244, p = .007$; $r_\phi = .195, p = .031$; and $r_\phi = .199, p = .028$, respectively.

Table 14 presents means and standard deviations on the composite involvement score of the two groups. The mean involvement score for professional counselors is 6.40 ($SD = 2.74$), and for psychologists is 7.51 ($SD = 3.53$). The psychologist group seems to have a higher involvement score than the professional counselor group, but this group seems to have higher standard deviations as well.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics and Group Differences on the Involvement Score

Counselors ($n = 50$)				Psychologists ($n = 72$)				t	p	η^2	d
M	SD	Skew	Kurt	M	SD	Skew	Kurt				
6.40	2.74	.79	1.83	7.51	3.53	.36	-.26	-1.958	.053	.03	.34

Note. Skew = Skewness and Kurt = Kurtosis.

Discussion

College counselors face increasing challenges, with fewer resources than in the past (Spooner, 2000). Most researchers have noted an increase in the perception and severity of college student problems in recent years (Gallagher, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Kadison, 2006; Kitzrow, 2003; Young 2003). Benefits of professional organization involvement have been outlined in the literature, including increased support and resources for college counselors. However, little is known as to whether college counselors take advantage of these resources and benefits available through involvement in professional organizations in increasingly challenging professional times. Results indicate the importance of and rationale for promoting professional organization involvement for college counseling center professionals.

Specific college counseling center professionals from one state in the Southwest were surveyed regarding their professional organization involvement. Participants were college counseling center professionals whose primary responsibility was personal counseling. Participants were from 4-year undergraduate institutions in one state in the Southwest and specific counseling professionals who work within these institutions.

Research assumption 1 indicated most college counseling center professionals were involved in professional organizations, as 135 participants (88.8%) reported membership in at least one organization, and 121 participants (71.7%) reported that they had been involved in professional organizations more than 5 years. Participants reported highest membership in APA and ACA. Results indicate most college counseling center professionals are following the expectations of accreditation standards and counseling ethical codes by being involved in professional organizations.

Additional information regarding involvement was addressed in research assumptions 5 and 6.

Research assumption 2 indicated more college counseling center professionals lacked the desire to increase their involvement in professional organizations (50.7%) than those who did (48.7%). Results failed to support the notion that college counseling center professionals desire to be more involved. However, the difference between groups is small. The results may be somewhat misleading because some participants may not want to increase involvement because they are already involved. Assumption 4 addresses other reasons for not being more involved in professional organizations.

Research assumption 3 indicated participants cited a variety of motivations for being involved in professional organizations. Staying up-to-date on current trends and issues was the motivation selected most frequently, with 92.8%, implying that college counselors may be self-motivated, desiring personal growth and continued competence through professional organizations. Results may also indicate that college counselors possess genuine care and concern for the client population of college students. Collaboration with other professionals in the field was the motivation selected next most frequently with 80.9%, implying that college counselors may desire support and encouragement of other professionals who understand their job and responsibilities. This collaboration may also decrease burnout and provide college counselors with needed support networks. Three other motivations were selected by over half of participants: mandatory CEUs (69.1%), access to materials published through organizations (63.0%), and chance to travel/get out of the office (50.0%). These

motivations give further insight into the benefits college counseling center professionals seek through involvement in professional organizations.

Research assumption 4 indicated that participants cited a variety of reasons for not being more involved in professional organizations. Job responsibilities too demanding to be more involved was the reason selected most frequently, with 57.2%. Results were consistent with recent literature which addresses an increase in college students on psychotropic medications, an increase in mental health issues, and an increase in client loads, coupled with a decrease in financial support for counseling services. Results indicated college counseling center professionals' job responsibilities may be hindering them from experiencing support and training through professional organizations. This could have a negative effect on the future of college counseling if challenges continue to increase and support continues to decrease. Also, financial cost/too expensive was selected as the next most frequent reason for not being more involved, with 50.0%. Personal life/family responsibilities was selected by 48.0% of participants.

Research assumption 5 addressed how college counseling center professionals were involved in professional organizations. Results indicated participants were involved in an average of six or seven areas within professional organizations. Attended conference sponsored by professional organization was selected most frequently, with 91.4%, and member of professional organization was selected by 90.8% of participants. Results indicated that most college counseling center professionals reported membership and conference attendance. Read an association's newsletter (83.6%) and

journal (80.3%) were selected next most frequently. Only 20.4% reported serving an elected/appointed office.

Research assumption 6 further addressed college counseling center professionals' involvement by examining the possible differences in involvement of professional counselors as compared to psychologists. During data analysis, no difference was found between the two groups. However, three specific types of involvement showed significant differences. Served on a committee/task force, chaired committee/task force, and presented at conference were found to have significant differences. Psychologists appeared to be more involved in these three areas than professional counselors; however, no difference was found in overall involvement between the two groups. Although professional counselors and psychologists have unique disciplines and professional identities, results indicated similar trends in professional organization involvement.

Implications

College counseling. College counseling center professionals are facing increased challenges. Deteriorating budgets, litigation, severity of client problems, and increased psychotropic medications are just a few of these challenges (Benton et al., 2003; Gallagher, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Glater, 2006; Kadison, 2006; Spooner, 2000). Results of this study indicate most college counseling center professionals are involved in professional organizations. However, job responsibilities too demanding to be more involved was the primary hindrance to involvement. If challenges and demands of college counselors continue to increase, will professional organization involvement decline in the next few years? Or will college administrations recognize the need for

increased support and resources for college counselors during these challenging times and encourage professional involvement? Also, how will the recent Virginia Tech incident affect the future of college counseling and professional involvement?

Professional counselors, psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, and psychiatrists who work in college counseling centers may have more similarities than differences in their approach to college counseling. Commonalities provide all college counseling center professionals the opportunity to work together toward common goals, despite their specific discipline or training.

Professional organizations. Counseling professional organizations provide a wealth of education, information, and support for college counselors; however, in this study, financial cost/too expensive was the second most frequent reason selected as a hindrance to involvement. Professional organizations are faced with providing needed resources and support while keeping dues and conferences costs affordable for college counselors. If college counseling center budgets continue to decrease, professional organizations may face declines in membership and involvement. Organizations may need to find more creative and less expensive ways to provide resources to college counselors. Online resources, cheaper conference locations, local workshops, video conferencing, conference sponsorship, and conference scholarships may be some ways professional organizations can continue to provide quality services while keeping costs low. Other motivations for and hindrances to professional organization involvement were addressed in this study and may provide helpful information for organizations catering to college counselors.

Also, the number of professional organizations that cater to college counselors is quite large. College counseling participants in this study cited membership in 64 different professional organizations. Participants reported highest membership in ACA and APA. Participants reported fewer memberships in organizations that cater specifically to college counselors, such as ACCA, ACPA - CAPS, APA Division 17, and AUCCCD. How can these organizations work together to provide resources and support? Certainly advocacy for college counseling and continuing education are two areas in which these organizations can benefit by working together.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to college counselors in one state in the Southwest who met specific study criteria. Regional differences, institutional differences, and other unknown factors could prevent the results from being generalized to other populations.

Because each type of professional organization involvement discussed in the study was given equal weight, the study did not address the extent of involvement of each type. For example, a participant who presented at one conference was counted the same as a participant who presented at 10 conferences.

The response rate was 59.4%. Response rate helps to determine the accuracy of the results; therefore, a higher response rate may have produced more accurate data and less response bias (Babbie, 2007). Porter and Whitcomb (2003) noted that as spam increases, individuals are more likely to be annoyed with unsolicited emails. Junk email may have been a primary cause for those who did not respond because it is becoming difficult for individuals to determine which emails are “junk” and which are not. Future researchers will face these issues in online research.

Also, the timing of the survey distribution may have resulted in a lower response rate. The survey was distributed at the end of the academic year, when college counselors tend to be busier than usual. In addition, the April 2007 Virginia Tech tragedy occurred during data collection; news of this event was broadcast nationally and was directly relevant to the target population. Many emails and counseling listservs were devoted to discussing the event. The survey may have been lost in the deluge of online communication about the tragedy. If data collection had occurred at a different time, the response rate may have been higher.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the results of the study, several recommendations for further research are made. First, the study could be replicated with college counselors nationally or in other states. Additional studies could include community college counselors and/or college counselors who work in higher education outside of the college counseling center. A study with a larger sample size would allow for study comparison and more detailed statistical analysis.

Second, researchers could investigate each type of professional involvement more extensively. A Likert scale could be used to measure the degree of involvement of each type.

Third, more information could be gathered regarding differences among counseling disciplines. Studies could be done to further examine trends in involvement of professional counselors, psychologists, marriage and family counselors, psychiatrists, and social workers.

Fourth, using this study, researchers could identify specific actions of professional organizations that would increase membership and involvement. College counselors could be asked what organizations can do to be more responsive to their needs. Professional organization leadership could also be surveyed for further information regarding membership and involvement. Similarities and differences among organizations could be examined.

Conclusion

College counselors provide much needed services for and assistance to the college student population. Most college counselors are genuinely concerned for college students and desire personal growth and continued competence to serve them better. Most want to stay up-to-date on current trends and issues in order to provide the best services they can to this unique population of clients. Their jobs are frequently difficult and draining. Most college counselors have demanding job responsibilities and desire opportunities for support and collaboration.

Thankfully, professional organizations provide resources and benefits that support college counselors' arduous jobs. Organizations provide opportunities for travel, service, advocacy, and continuing education, while offering access to numerous publications, materials, and online programs. Many organizations also provide avenues for acquiring professional liability insurance, and placement and recruiting services.

College administrators and counseling center directors can provide support by encouraging professional organization involvement of college counselors. This may include providing financial support for conferences and allowing time-off from job responsibilities. Administrators and directors can also help by advocating for additional

counseling positions when job responsibilities become too demanding for existing staff. The future of college counseling may depend on administrative support, as the future of college students well-being may depend on college counselors.

APPENDIX A
COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTER PROFESSIONAL STAFF SURVEY AND
INFORMED CONSENT

College Counseling Center Professional Staff Survey

Are you:

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71+

What is your primary racial/ethnic identification?

- African American
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- White/Caucasian
- Asian American
- Bi/Multiracial
- Other

What is the size of your institution?

- Under 2,500
- 2,500 -7,500
- 7,500 -15,000
- Over 15,000

Is your school:

- Public
- Private

Is your school in a:

- Large urban area
- Moderately sized city
- Small town
- Rural area

How long have you worked as a college counselor?

- Less than 5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 30+ years

Which professional discipline do you primarily identify with?

- Professional Counseling
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Social Work
- Other _____

Do you hold a current professional license?

- Yes
- No
- Temporary license/intern

If yes, what license do you hold? Select all that apply.

- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
- Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC)
- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)
- Licensed Psychologist
- Licensed Social Worker (LBSW/LCSW/LMSW/LMSW-AP)
- Other _____

What is your highest degree earned in counseling, psychology, or related field?

- Bachelors degree
- Masters degree
- Masters in Social Work (MSW)
- Education Specialist
- Doctoral degree

Which professional organizations are you a current member? Select all that apply:

- American College Health Association
- American College Personnel Association – Commission for Counseling and Psych Services
- American Counseling Association
- American Psychological Association
- American College Counseling Association
- Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors
- Society of Counseling Psychology – APA Division 17
- Texas Counseling Association
- Texas College Counseling Association
- Texas University and College Counseling Director's Association
- Other _____

How many years have you been involved in professional organizations?

- Less than 5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 30+ years

Do you desire to increase your involvement in professional organizations?

- Yes
- No

Many professional associations/organizations are available to college counselors (i.e., American Psychological Association, American Counseling Association, etc.). Please check “yes” or “no” as to whether you are involved in professional organization(s) in the following ways. Please note your involvement in the past 5 years. Select all that apply:

Yes No

- Member of professional organization
- Read an association’s journal
- Read an association’s newsletter
- Published in an association’s journal or newsletter
- Attended conference sponsored by professional organization
- Attended workshop/program separate from conferences
- Served an elected/appointed office other than committee/task force chair
- Served on committee/task force
- Chaired committee/task force
- Used placement services for recruiting professionals
- Used placement services to seek a position
- Subscribed to the listserv/on-line discussion list
- Participated in lobbying efforts
- Voted for an organization’s officers
- Presented at conference
- Editor or on the editorial board of a newsletter or journal

What motivates you to be involved in professional organizations? Select all that apply:

- Collaboration with other professionals in the field
- Staying up-to-date on current trends and issues
- Access to materials published through organizations (brochures, CD's, etc.)
- Chance to travel/get out of the office
- Mandatory CEUs (Continuing Education Units)
- Mandatory professional liability insurance
- Job requirement/expected to be involved
- Service opportunity to the profession
- Networking/using placement services to find a job for myself
- Recruiting other professionals
- Counseling advocacy the organization(s) provide for the profession
- Other _____

What is preventing you from being more involved? Select all that apply:

- Financial cost/too expensive
- Lack of financial support from college administration
- No time-off provided by administration for conferences/workshops
- Not valued by college/university administration
- Job responsibilities too demanding to be more involved
- Planning to get more involved but have not yet
- Need information on how to get more involved
- Personal life/family responsibilities
- Not a priority
- I do not want to be more involved
- I am already very involved
- I am working and in graduate school and do not have time right now
- Other _____

Informed Consent Notice

My name is Kimberly “Sparkle” Greenhaw and I am a graduate student in the Counseling Program at the University of North Texas. I am conducting an online study about professional organization involvement of college counselors. You are one of the college counselors that have been selected to participate in this study. It will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be included in a drawing for a \$50.00 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

[If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following informed consent notice and click to enter study at the bottom of this page.](#)

You will be asked complete a questionnaire about your professional organization involvement. The survey will be available for the next 3 weeks. Email reminders will be sent to non-respondents. Participation in this study may benefit you by examining trends of professional involvement and providing organizations with information to better suit the needs of college counselors. Your responses may help us learn more about how college counselors are involved in professional organizations and what encourages and discourages this involvement.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to skip any question you choose not to answer. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study; however, if you decide to withdraw your participation you may do so at any time by simply leaving the web site.

Your name will not be requested in this study **and your email address will only be used to track non-respondents and to randomly select the winner of the gift certificate.** Your responses will **not** be **used to identify you or your institution and** will be kept, **along with all research records**, confidential by the Principal Investigator. No individual responses will be disclosed to anyone because all data will be reported on a group basis. Your information and/or email address will not be released. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Sparkle Greenhaw. Faculty sponsor is Dr. Carolyn Kern, Department of Counseling, Development, and Higher Education, University of North Texas.

When you complete the survey, you will be included in a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate for Amazon.com. One email address of a survey respondent will be randomly selected. The winner of the drawing will be emailed within 2 weeks of the survey deadline.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board. Please contact the UNT IRB with any questions regarding your rights as a research subject. If you agree to participate, you may print this document for your records. If you would like to receive the results of this study, please contact the Principal Investigator.

By clicking below, you are confirming that you are at least 18 years old and you are giving your informed consent to participate in this study.

[Click Here To Enter Study](#)

APPENDIX B

ALL PARTICIPANT PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

All Participant Professional Organization Membership

Professional Organization	Frequency
American Psychological Association*	54
American Counseling Association*	31
American College Counseling Association*	28
Texas University and College Counseling Center Director's Association*	27
Division 17 - Counseling Psychology*	19
Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors*	17
Texas College Counseling Association*	17
American College Personnel Association – Comm. for Couns & Psych Services*	16
Texas Counseling Association*	16
Texas Psychological Association	12
American College Health Association*	11
National Association of Social Workers	9
American Group Psychotherapy Association	5
Texas University and College Counseling Centers	5
American Association of Marriage & Family Therapy	4
Association of Counseling Center Training Agencies	4
Christian Association for Psychological Studies	4
Association for Coordination or Counseling Center Clinical Services	3
Association of Women in Psychology	3
Dallas Psychological Association	3
Houston Psychological Association	3
National Career Development Association (Local Association)	2
American Association of Christian Counselors	2
Asian American Psychological Association	2
Bexar County Psychological Association	2
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators	2
National Latina/o Psychological Association	2
Piney Woods Counseling Association	2
San Antonio Group Psychotherapy Association	2
Abilene Marriage & Family Association	1
Abilene Psychological Association	1
American Academy of Pain Management	1
American Art Therapy Association	1
American Association of Suicidology	1
American Nurses Association	1
American Psychiatric Association	1
American Psychiatric Association of Graduate Students	1
Asociacion de Medicas de Nuevo Lardo	1
Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development	1
Association of Black Psychologists	1
Association of Christians in Student Development	1
Association of Mexican American Social Workers	1
Association on Higher Education and Disability	1

Austin Psychiatric Society	1
Christian Counselors of Texas	1
Coalition of Clinical Practitioners in Neuropsychology	1
Dallas County Medical Association	1
Division 29 - Psychotherapy	1
Division 40 - Clinical Neuropsychology	1
Fort Worth Psychological Association	1
Greenbelt Counseling Association	1
Latino Psychological Association of Texas	1
Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers	1
National Academic Advising Association	1
National Academy of Neuropsychology	1
Society of Indian Psychologists	1
Texas Association for Marriage & Family Therapy	1
Texas Association of College and University Student Personnel Administrators	1
Texas Association of Social Workers	1
Texas Medical Association	1
The Reitan Society	1
Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy	1

Note N = 152

**Listed in structured survey responses*

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