

**Doctoral Program in Counseling**

# **DOCTORAL RESEARCH GROUPS:**

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

**Department of Counselor Education  
Florida Atlantic University  
Boca Raton, Florida**

**November 2004**

## **DOCTORAL RESEARCH GROUPS**

An important component in the design of the proposed Ph.D. in Counseling is the inclusion of designated Research Groups. The department has identified specific areas of research concentration based on faculty expertise, interest and community needs. These Research Groups involve faculty with specific interest and expertise and doctoral students in a mentoring relationship.

All doctoral students will be expected to meet and work with one of these established Research Groups and eventually develop dissertation research as an extension of the existing focus in the chosen group. Admission to the doctoral program, in part, is determined by a prospective student's prior experience or interest in the focus of one the Research Groups.

These Research Groups serve several important functions for students, the department and faculty, the university, and the state of Florida.

1. Students will be better served by increasing collaboration in research design, evaluation of proposals among students, and through working with a team of faculty and doctoral students on research over the course of their doctoral program.
2. The department will be able to establish itself as a leading research center in several distinct areas thus increasing the program's visibility and strengthening its ability to obtain significant external funding in these areas.
3. The University will benefit because of the increased presence as a research university that produces research in specific areas.
4. The community and the State of Florida will benefit because of our focus on action research and program development/evaluation designed to improve the quality of programs and service to children, families, school and adults.

## **THE RESEARCH GROUP EXPERIENCE**

As noted earlier, all Ph.D. students in this program undertake their dissertation research in one of the department's Research Groups. Students become involved with a Research Groups of their choice early in their doctoral studies. Such early involvement serves to foster mentoring and immerse students in the department's culture of leadership and empirical investigation. Students gain valuable experience as a team member in a Research Group and learn to plan and design research, develop testable hypotheses, choose and design assessment and intervention methods, as well as to collect, analyze and publish study results. Both quantitative and

qualitative methodologies are involved in investigating issues and concerns that are of vital importance to the children, adolescents, couple and families as well as their communities.

## **CURRENT RESEARCH GROUPS**

As of Fall 2004, faculty in the Department of Counselor Education at Florida Atlantic University are actively involve in one of two Research Groups. Both Research Groups are described in terms of their basic focus, rationale, current and planned studies, and involved faculty. A third Research Group--on optimal human functioning-- is in the planning stage and will likely be operative in Fall 2006.

### **CHILD, ADOLESCENT, COUPLE AND FAMILY INTERVENTIONS**

Focus: The focus of this research group is to improve physical, social and psychological wellbeing among children, adolescents, couples and families through empirical investigation of the construct of resilience and the assessment of resilience interventions in clinical and nonclinical settings.

Rationale:

1. Based on faculty interests and previous research.
2. Intervention outcomes are too often are missing in research.
3. Addresses the needs of adolescents and families in South Florida

Studies:

1. Impact of family education intervention on child/adolescent resiliency.\*\*
2. The buffering effect of family on acculturative stress and resiliency.\*
3. The impact of increasing family resilience on school achievement and social adjustment.\*\*
4. The Impact of family resilience on disease progression (and coping style) in HIV (chronic diseases) in young adults.\*\*

Faculty: Drs. Paul Peluso (Coordinator), Len Sperry, Michael Frain, and William Nicoll

\* current studies

\*\*planned studies

## ***School Counseling Outcome Research Group***

**Focus:** The focus of this research group is to improve the practice of school counseling through developing research-based programs for children and adolescents with an emphasis on enhancing academic, social and self-management skills. Of particular interest is the investigation of comprehensive approaches that address the academic, social and emotional needs of students and that stress prevention and early intervention.

**Rationale:** Of all the helping professions, counseling is the one that values the application of the developmental model, i.e., strengths, prevention, and wellness; however, very little outcome research exist on the impact of school counselor led interventions and programs on child and adolescent academic and social performance. Faculty involved in this research group have expertise and interest in the developmental model and in expanding the current research base related to the link between academic, social, and emotional learning.

**Current Studies:** The following dissertation studies have been or are being completed by doctoral students in this research group:

1. The effects of a culturally translated school counselor-led intervention on Hispanic students' academic achievement.
2. The effects of the Ready to Learn program on reading achievement of second- and third-grade students.
3. The effects of student participation in the Cultural Spanish Translation of the Student Success Skills program on student Achievement
4. Measuring the Effects of the Student Success Skills Program on Student Pro-social and Bullying Behaviors
5. The effects of a culturally translated school counselor-led intervention on academic achievement of Haitian fourth and fifth grade students

### **Additional School Counseling Outcome Research topics in the proposal stage:**

1. The effects of a school counselor-led classroom and small group program on high school drop-out rates.
2. The effects of the Ready to Learn program on K-1 students attending, listening and social skills.
3. The effects of story telling and mindfulness interventions on Pre-K student attending, listening and cooperation skills.

**Additional topics of interest:**

1. Effects of school counselor-led interventions on student cognitive and behavioral engagement. (various age groups with or without a parent component)
2. Effects of school counselor-led interventions on student self-efficacy. (various age groups with or without a parent component)
3. Effects of school counselor-led interventions on measures of student wellness. (various age groups with or without a parent component)
4. Effects of school counselor-led interventions on classroom climate. (various age groups with or without a parent component)
5. Effects of school counselor-led character education interventions on climate and achievement. (various age groups with or without a parent component)

Current Department of Counselor Education Faculty serving on doctoral committees involved in the School Counseling Outcome Research Group: Dr. Greg Brigman, Dr. Linda Webb, Dr. Elizabeth Villares, and Dr. Paul Peluso.

Other Department of Counselor Education faculty who have indicated an interest in serving on doctoral committees involved in the School Counseling Outcome Research Group: Dr. Michael Frain.