Welcome to “Marketing Yourself for Counseling Field Experience Opportunities.” I am Dina Bergren, one of the Career Services Advisors at Walden.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Walden Career Services Center, our mission is based on preparing our learners to navigate career transition through educating, coaching, and advising. Here is our Career Services Team.

My picture is on the left, followed by my colleagues, Nicolle Skalski, Denise Pranke, and Andrea Obrycki. Our Senior Director of Career Services is Lisa Cook.

Joining us today is Dr. Kristi Cannon, Field Experience Director for the School of Counseling. Dr. Cannon supports students and faculty in all aspects of the field experience process. In addition to her work at Walden, she maintains a small clinical practice in Austin, Texas where she specializes in neurofeedback therapy as well as the treatment of adolescent and women’s issues. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor (TX) and National Certified Counselor (NCC), is active in many state and national counseling organizations, engages in research, publication and presentations at the state and national level, and
serves as an editorial review board member for the *Journal of Humanistic Counseling* and the *Journal for Creativity in Mental Health*.

With that intro, I will now hand it over to you, Dr. Cannon, to discuss our objectives.

Slide 4:
Thank you all for joining us on this call. I want to make sure to hit upon these key points:
- Define the purpose of Field Experience
- Provide strategies on how to conduct a proactive search
- Market yourself and Walden University
- Create tailored application materials that highlight your unique qualifications
- Develop a step-by-step plan to land your Field Experience site
Hope this information today will be of great value and interest to you as well.

Slide 5:
Let’s start off by talking about the purpose of field experience. I mentioned the fact that it is part of your program requirements. All of the counseling programs, both at the master’s and doctoral level, have a field experience component. This is also a requirement for accreditation. Field experience is important because we would like you to demonstrate the skills and objectives you are learning in your academic curriculum. It is placed at the tail end of your program to put into practice all that you are learning in your academic curriculum and at residency.

It is also important for preparation for licensure. Some of our master’s programs require field experience for preparation for licensure. Others are not licensure leading programs, but we still have that component because you need the opportunity to practice, be in supervision before working with clients.

I often mention that we don’t work with widgets in this profession, we work with people. So, fundamentally, it’s one of those things we need to be doing to help you prepare and move forward to post-graduate work.

In addition to licensure, we also want to help you flush out the development of your counseling skills. You’ll have a great period of time in your curriculum when you’re learning the theory, learning the philosophy, practicing skills, attending Residencies 1 and 2, and practicing techniques. You’ll then start field experience where you’re actively working with clients one on one.

In addition, you’ll be gaining exposure to the counseling field: working with clients, and working with colleagues and professionals. You have an ethical obligation you have to start implementing when working with clients. Through these activities, you start gaining exposure beyond the academic realm. Also Field Experience allows opportunities to network, mentor, and build references not only as a
student, but certainly as you’re moving forward to postgraduate work to build future career opportunities for you.

And, finally, it’s helping you build marketability. One of the challenges you’ll find as a student (and this certainly was the case for me), is if you are introverted, marketing yourself as a professional can be a challenge. However, it is something that we have to do fundamentally in this profession because it’s one of those things where you’ll be making presentations, engaging with clients, with professionals. Field experience builds a fast array of requirements for you and I’m certainly hopeful that you’ll find it to be a great experience.

Slide 6:

The next step is we want to make sure you are knowing your target. What we specifically mean by knowing your target is to ensure that you involve research in your target of a field experience site. Often I hear students say that I am looking for any place that will take me. What can be limiting to taking that approach is that you need time to research and understand the needs of the site. Identify the sites and site supervisors that can not only help you meet program requirements, but are going to help you in aiding and equipping you to locate the right opportunity for you. Being that you’d like to work with specific client populations, that you’d like to have a certain level of supervision, that you’d like to be trained in a particular theory; all of these things you want to think about in your own professional development. Approach your search with a certain intentionality, having your specific goals in mind.

Slide 7:

The first step you want to take in targeting your search is to really understand your program of study. Each of our counseling programs have a specific set of program requirements that have to be fulfilled, both from a site and site supervisor perspective. And again, one of the areas that I find that students are often limited is that they don’t understand enough what is requirement of their individual program. So for this reason, I really want to emphasize that each of you has access to the Field Experience Manual. You can find it in your Student Portal in the Forms section. If you scroll down all the way in the Forms section, there is a section of Field Experience forms. Within that, is the Field Experience Manual. The manual is updated regularly; we do this twice a year. The information will include all the necessary requirements for your individual program. This lends itself from our CACREP accreditation.

All of our programs are built on CACREP standards, which stands for Council of Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs. It’s very important that our students understand this, as sites will often support students from a variety of different programs and different schools of thought. For instance, social work. Many times the requirements overlap, but sometimes they do not. So it’s very important for you, as a student, to really know... for example, if you’re in the mental health counseling program, your site can not simply be substance abuse. This type of facility may not allow you
to work with mental health clients, while a dual diagnosis facility might. You want to be very familiar with your program; make sure you are aware of that information and access your field manual on a regular basis.

In addition to that, we want to make sure we are emphasizing, particularly to our master’s programs, that your approved supervisor has to be on site with you at all times you are seeing clients. This is a policy we have for our field courses. This exceeds any requirement CACREP has, but this is what we do to make sure you are overseen and are provided appropriate supervision. This is very important that you know this going in, and that you can communicate it to your potential site supervisor or any potential sites, to make them aware of this requirement.

The other requirement to keep in mind for those of you who are in the master’s programs: every program except Career Counseling with have a requirement of 10 hours leading or co-leading groups in the internship portion of your Field Experience. Keep this in mind as you identify sites that you will need to meet not only your individual goals, but your programmatic goals as well.

Slide 8:

Now, let’s get some input from the audience. Please chat in your responses in the Questions box: What are some ways to research a potential Field Experience site? One idea is to contact a site you’re interested in and see if they accept interns. Research their website: the history, mission, client population, job titles, supervisors, and challenges they may have. Look them up online. Contact the site and ask to speak to the administrator. Or even do a site visit to learn about their environment and employees. Maybe pick up some brochures. If you know of some sites already you can do a Google search. Talk to other professionals and counselors. For instance, if you belong to a professional association such as the American Counseling Association or the American Mental Health Counseling Association, you can talk professionals and get some insights from them. Find out if a site has an appropriate supervisor. Search for local mental health facilities - check directories and dexonline. Volunteer with an organization to try out a fit. Professional peer referrals (where other Walden students completed internships/practica); talking to others in the Walden community. Faith-based health services Also, through LinkedIn Networking with family and friends; former co-workers. Joining LinkedIn Groups, using LinkedIn to gain insider information and connect with other counseling professionals. Great, thank you for your input. Next, Dr. Cannon will share her insights into site supervisor requirements.
Slide 9:

I thank you for these great ideas. I can certainly echo that if you can gain exposure to a site, and I certainly love the idea of volunteering, getting yourself acclimated is a wonderful first step.

In addition to knowing program requirements, we have requirements on who can and cannot serve as a site supervisor.

In the counseling master’s degree programs, our site supervisors are required to hold at least a master’s degree in counseling or a related profession. For us, related professions include social work, psychology, and marriage/family therapy. They also need to hold appropriate certifications and/or licenses related to that degree. That license has to be a terminal clinical degree. That they are able to practice as a clinical on their own.

The site supervisor should be certified or licensed in the state, district or province where the student is completing the field experience.

A minimum of two years of pertinent professional experience in the program area in which the student is enrolled

They will need training in counseling supervision. This is different than experience. Make sure to inquire about this. We will also be providing and requiring site supervisors to participate in a Site Supervisor at the start of each term. For those who do not have training in supervision required, we can provide a specific one-hour training program that requires them to take a quiz at the end and would qualify for Continuing Education Units at the end. Let them know that, if they don’t have the training, they will be required to complete it.

The requirements are the same for our doctoral programs, except your supervisor needs to be a state licensed supervisor or they otherwise meet the requirements in your state of being a supervisor to licensees in your state for post-graduate licensure. If you have any questions regarding this, you can always reach out to me or to the field coordinators.

The other thing to keep in mind is that you’re consulting your state licensure requirements. Some states’ licensure bodies do require supervision requirements that exceed any of our particular program requirements. You want to make sure you’re clear on that.

Now I’d like to turn it over to Dina who will spend some time discussing professional branding.

Slide 10:

Thank you, Dr. Cannon.

Now that we’ve discuss researching the site, let’s shift focus to your professional brand, or what makes you stand out from other Field Experience applicants and counseling students. To help us with this, let’s launch a poll:
How well do you know your professional brand?
Yes, I know my unique strengths, abilities, and value and can market them effectively
I have some ideas about my brand but I’d like to develop it further.
No, professional branding is new for me. Can you tell me more?
I’m going to give a few seconds for all of you to make selections.
We’ll now share the results.
42% said: I have some ideas about my brand but I’d like to develop it further.
32% said: No, professional branding is new for me. Can you tell me more?
Professional branding is a very hot topic in career development and is very helpful as you try to convey to others how you stand out in the search process.
24% said: Yes, I know my unique strengths, abilities, and value and can market them effectively.
For those of you, hopefully you’ll gain a few additional tips about branding.

Slide 11:
Knowing your brand helps you stand out from others and market yourself to potential sites.
Your professional brand is:
what makes you stand out from other applicants
What you’re best known for
Your greatest strengths
And it conveys how you can add value to others
In other words, when you think about your brand, you want to think about your interests, skills, personality, and values. Take time to reflect on those. What is it in your prior experience that makes you valuable as an intern? Think about your academic achievements and what you’ve accomplished. Related volunteer/work experience in social services. Your professional contributions, maybe through professional associations. Maybe you volunteered at the ACA or attended professional events? Your community involvement. And specialized knowledge areas. All of these activities help define your brand.
As part of your Field Experience search, you will also need to market Walden’s brand. Dr. Cannon, can you share some tips on how to educate potential sites about Walden?

Slide 12:
I think it’s a very good point. This is an area where students struggle a little bit more. Again, I want to make sure you know the fundamentals of your program, but outside of that, talking about Walden University and who we are. MHC is currently CACREP accredited. All of our other programs are built on CACREP standards. These are the maximum standards in counseling training. That is very important that you’re clarifying this to your field sites. It helps demonstrate the rigors of our programs. We are also accredited through the Higher Learning Commission. It’s also important to mention the social change mission. Our entire profession is built around social change. Stress the social change mission, and certainly what you are doing to carry it forward. Talking about qualified faculty, driven by CACREP. We are looking for faculty with certain levels of degrees and experiences. They are engaging in publishing and social change activities outside of work. Talking about the diverse global perspective. Walden is part of the Laureate network, which supports a variety of global universities. We have a diverse and global perspective. Also discuss the national and international student populations. Of course the other thing unique to our program is our residency
experiences - training, clinical experience, you are often provided opportunities for taping and role plays - to make sure you’re ready for your field experience. 

Finally, the rigorous curriculum as you understand yourself. I encourage you to review the www.waldenu.edu site to be able to market Walden and make others familiar with Walden.

Slide 13:
Our next poll is a quiz. Please type in your responses to the following question:
What is the most common method used by a site supervisor to fill a Field Experience position?
- Review “cold” resumes
- Contact potential interns at universities
- *Review qualifications and letters of recommendation to determine whether the applicant is a “match”

The third selection is correct. Site supervisors want to know how your skills, experience and academic background directly match their needs. This means that every application you send out needs to be tailored toward the specific site.
If you diligently research the site and site supervisor, identify what is unique about you, and share the value of your education, you’re able to communicate the FIT between what you have to offer and the needs of your target site.

Dr. Cannon, could you tell us a little more about how to convey this “fit” to potential sites?

Slide 14:

Wonderful, thank you.

One of the things that is key is questioning if this is a good fit for me. It’s very important as you’re securing a placement to ask these questions of yourself...

What values and contributions can you bring to the site?
What knowledge and skills will be most useful?
Do your qualifications match their needs?
Will you fit in with the people/culture?
Does the site afford you the opportunities you need to complete program requirements?
It’s important again that you’re researching the sites, the populations they serve. Remember that you’re interviewing them as much as their interviewing you.
Next, Dina will discuss how to create your application materials...

Slide 15:

Today, we will cover how to create a career portfolio, cover letter, and academic-style resume (or CV), to increase your chances of landing a site.

Slide 16:
Why take the time to create a career portfolio versus simply sending a resume?
A career portfolio:
Sets you apart from other applicants
Leaves a lasting impression
Allows the site to learn more about you
Includes accomplishments and achievements to reference during an interview
Dr. Cannon, what types of documents should students include in a portfolio for Field Experience?

Slide 17:
What should you include in your career portfolio?
Cover letter
Curriculum vita (CV)
Walden-specific items:
Walden University Information
Counseling Program Information (requirements and course descriptions)
Application Papers and Assignments (your materials only) - relevant to the population you are interested in working with at the field experience or research that would be relevant to the site where you are seeking a field experience
Letters of recommendation- this can make or break the interview for you!
Copy of the Field Experience Manual
Next we’ll look at specific tools to help create a portfolio.

Slide 18:
Career Services offers an OptimalResume system to help create an online portfolio to share with site supervisors and other counseling professionals. You are able to access OptimalResume via the Career Services Center website or directly through the waldenu.optimalresume link.
You can also print out your portfolio documents, organize them into a professional-looking binder, and bring your tactile portfolio with you to the interview. That way, you can SHOW potential supervisors examples of your work and achievements, and leave a lasting impression.
Next, let’s take a closer look at two components of our portfolio – the cover letter and CV.

Slide 19:
Provided here is a sample cover letter for Counseling Field Experience.
Your cover letter should be written using a Standard Business Letter Format, include 3-5 paragraphs of information, and be limited to one page in length.
At a minimum, your contact information should include your name, mailing address, phone number, and email address. You may also want to include a link to your LinkedIn profile and/or your online career portfolio.

Slide 20:
The introductory paragraph should:
Identify the purpose of your letter.
Mention how you heard about this opportunity, especially if another counseling professional or networking contact referred you to the potential site
Briefly describe why you’re interested in this specific site.
Second and Third Paragraphs should”
Mention accreditation, your counseling program, and the quality of instruction. All counseling programs are built on standards required by CACREP, which are the highest professional standards out there in the field. You also want to mention that Walden is regionally accredited as well.
Emphasize academic achievement, related coursework, and knowledge areas you’ve gained in your Walden program.

Slide 21:
Reference volunteer/paid experience and transferable skills.
In the Fourth and Fifth Paragraphs, express your enthusiasm, specify the practical experience you’d like to gain, and reference your career portfolio and curriculum vita (CV).

Slide 22:
In the last paragraph, provide the Counseling Field Experience Director’s contact information (so the site has a contact person in case they have more questions about the program). Conclude with a general statement expressing interest in a future discussion. Following this format and tips can help you create a targeted, well-written letter that conveys your unique value as an applicant. The second document to include in your portfolio is your CV.

Slide 23:
A CV is a biographical description of your educational and work background. It places emphasis on your academic experience and professional development activities. A resume is typically 1-2 pages; however, a CV can be longer in length, sometimes up to 5-8 pages depending on the level of your experience. The Career Services Center website includes a complete CV guide that can take you step-by-step through creating the main sections of your CV. Provided here is a link to the guide.

Slide 24:
These are common sections of a CV that you might consider including in your document. These sections are also described in detail in the CV document. If you do not have enough experience to fill a section (for instance, you may not have experience with grants), you can simply leave it out. The number of possible CV sections/formats is almost limitless. Your CV should be unique to you.

Slide 25:
These are some additional sections you may want to include in your CV. Look at the list and see which of these sections you may have experience with and include those in your document. Remember that order matters! Play your strongest cards first. For example, if you’re seeking a field experience site, do not put your volunteer experience counseling adolescents all the way at the end. This information should be listed on the first page. Now that you have your portfolio ready, what other tools can help you market your skills?

Slide 26:
Share your many accomplishments with potential sites by developing and practicing your CART Stories! To craft these stories:
Think of a challenge or problem you faced.
The action you took to address the challenge.
What was the result, who or who was impacted?
And be sure to Tie the example into your future role as an intern.
Write down your stories, memorize them, and practice them.
Avoid general terms without examples (e.g. hardworking, great communications skills, strong work ethic). Instead, you want to SHOW, NOT TELL, by focusing on specific accomplishments.

Slide 27:
Here is an example of a CART story:
In 2007, I volunteered at Lawrence House, a facility for mentally ill and chemically dependent adults. During my time there, I recruited 10 patients to plant a permanent vegetable garden at the facility. My initiative helped promote physical activity, healthy eating, and sustainability, thereby improving both the physical and mental well-being of patients. As an intern at your facility, I hope to practice counseling techniques under supervision and further help mentally ill adults take initiative in their daily lives. You can see here how she tied in her Challenge-Action-Results statement to her future role as an intern. CART Stories help show that you are qualified for your target position as an intern and can ‘Walk the Talk’

Slide 28:
What are some other considerations when researching your Field Experience site?

Slide 29:
In the book, The Job Hunter’s Survival Guide, Career Development guru, Richard Bolles, discusses the top 5 search methods for finding a job. These search methods can also be translated in the Field Experience search:
Take a holistic approach to your search (identify interests/skills, goals, environments, sites, people, marketing your brand, etc.)
Build network of counseling professionals and ask for their input.
Research sites and contact via phone or site visit.
Reach out to any site that interests you.
Ask counseling professionals in your network about field experience openings.
Keep in mind that Field Experience sites are looking for well-written materials, evidence of academic success, strong letters of recommendation, prior work or volunteer experience, and interns who are ethical, enthusiastic, and possess strong interpersonal skills.

Slide 30:
Gear up for your search by creating a branded introduction (in-person, phone, or video)
Practice your CART stories
Strengthen your online presence by becoming active on LinkedIn, which is currently the largest professional networking site. We highly recommend that students join LinkedIn.
LinkedIn can also help you research potential site supervisors, connect with other counseling students and professionals, participate in discussions, and gain valuable insider tips.
Build your field experience search skills.
Finally, don’t wait too long to start your Field Experience search! Be active and intentional in your efforts. Ideally, you want to start your preparation a year in advance.

Slide 31:
How do you make the initial contact with a potential site supervisor? Here is an example of language you could use when setting up an informational meeting....

Hi, my name is _________________ and I’m a graduate student pursuing a master’s degree in mental health counseling at Walden University. I received your name from ________________. I understand that you’re engaged in counseling clients with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. I am wondering if we could meet for 20 to 30 minutes to discuss your insights into your specialty and the possibility of my completing a field experience at your site.

As you can see here, this is a very friendly, none-threatening approach.

Slide 32:
To pull everything together, we would like to present a step-by-step approach you can apply during your own search.

Contact site supervisor directly (phone or in-person)
Arrange an informational meeting, either face-to-face, by phone, or Skype— the use of technology is increasing for that purpose.
Dress professionally; this is your one chance to make a positive first impression.
Provide targeted application materials.

Slide 33:
Meet with site supervisor (share stories, ask questions, bring articles to share, express your enthusiasm and interest)
Leave your career portfolio so they can continue to learn about you after your meeting.
Follow up (thank you letter, email, phone): express interest; mention how you can add value to the site.
And finally.....Land the practicum/internship!

Slide 34:
Tell everyone you know you are searching. You never know—maybe a family member, friend, co-worker, or someone in your community will have a tip for you...
Join special interest groups related to your field, which can include professional associations such as the American Counseling Association, and LinkedIn Groups such as [Counseling Professionals, Mental Health Networking, United States Mental Health Professionals, and many others].
Ask experts for advice. (use phone directories to locate clinics and facilities in your area).
Expand your search (geographically, number of facilities, knock on more doors).
Be open to new settings and populations.
Work on your professional image (assume the “brand” of your future role).
Partner up with another student or professional, and practice your site search and interviewing skills!

Slide 35:
Reach out to the field experience office for assistance.

Slides 36:
Check out the Career Services Center website:
Review the Resumes and CVs tab.
Schedule a career advising appointment via myWalden portal (we would love to work with you individually).
Register on the OptimalResume system.
View our archived webinars.

Slide 37:
We have over 50 career-related webinar topics including:
Using OptimalResume’s Portfolio Builder and other functions
Building Your Professional Brand, Using LinkedIn, and many other topics.

Slide 38:
Get connected to us by joining the Career Services LinkedIn Group, following us on Twitter, reading success stories on our blog, and registering on the OptimalResume system. Access everything from our the Career Services Center website.

Slide 39:
With that, we have only a few minutes left for questions. I will now monitor our questions.
Will the PowerPoint be archived? Yes, it will be available one week after live delivery.
I am confused. Does the site supervisor need a license to be a site supervisor in my state? All site supervisors are required be licensed or certified in their degree field (e.g. LPC). So, yes, the requirement is that the site supervisor needs to be licensed or certified according to their state or territory they live in.
We are receiving feedback that this is great information to have! These webinars are essential resources for us!
Do most students in internships get paid? It is certainly a great opportunity if you can. There are a few situations where you can get paid and complete fieldwork. If you are beginning a new employment opportunity within the first 6 months of your internship/practicum, you can use your exact same job for purpose of field experience.
If you are at your current employment and you have another opportunity to complete field experience in a unique setting (with a new supervisor, not with the same client), you may have that opportunity. Getting paid is not always the case. Keep in mind that you don’t want to start that employment any longer than 6 months from when you’re looking to start field experience or you’ll be ineligible.
For the sake of time, we’ll go ahead and conclude our program.

Slide 40:
To learn more, here are a few additional resources to help you with all aspects of your search. There are many good books out there and also online tools. I can’t emphasize enough the importance of practicing and preparing for your search!

Slide 41:
With that, I want to thank you for joining us here today. Thank you, Dr. Cannon. Good luck, everyone, with your field experience search!