



College of Education

Division of Counseling  
and Family Therapy

8001 Natural Bridge Road  
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499  
Telephone: 314-516-5782

## **Gerald and Deanne Gitner Excellence in Teaching Award**

### **Nominee:**

**Angela D. Coker, Ph.D.**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Division of Counseling and Family Therapy**  
**College of Education**  
**University of Missouri – Saint Louis**  
**407 Marillac Hall**

### **Nominator:**

**Mark Pope, Ed.D., Professor and Chair**  
**Division of Counseling and Family Therapy**

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April 27, 2007

Selection Committee

Gerald and Deanne Gitner Excellence in Teaching Award  
University of Missouri-St. Louis

This letter is to nominate Dr. Angela Coker for the Gerald and Deanne Gitner Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Coker is an assistant professor in the Division of Counseling and Family Therapy in the College of Education at the University of Missouri – Saint Louis. She is completing her second year here at the University.

Ever since Dr. Coker stepped onto our campus, she has consistently been rated very highly by students who are enrolled in her courses as well as by faculty who have observed her teaching. Further, she has developed and taught innovative courses that address issues of social importance to the St. Louis metropolitan region and enhance the standing of the university in the community.

In fact, a course that she developed received local and national media coverage. In the Winter Intersession of 2007, Dr. Coker taught a course in Counseling the African American Client which was filled to capacity one week after the course opened on the campus website. A reporter for the *St. Louis American* (the largest local independent African American newspaper in St. Louis) heard about this course and requested permission to attend and to write a story about the course. That story was picked up by The Black Press of America (a specialized news service for the African American community) and made available to newspapers all over the world.

This course used innovative and effective teaching strategies to help the students identify their own racial feelings as part of breaking down their stereotypes to enhance their ability to understand African American clients and provide effective counseling. Dr. Coker is a model of this master counselor behavior.

Students also consistently comment on her high standards that promote academic excellence. She challenges her students to break away from their preconceived notions of race and class and to move to a deeper understanding of the individual in the context of their lives, their culture, and their socio-economic environment.

She is truly an outstanding teacher of students who care deeply about the kind of professional counselor that we are growing in our program. She brings that caring to everything that she does. It is with great honor that I nominate her for this important early career teaching award.

Collegially,



Mark Pope, Ed.D., Professor and Chair  
Division of Counseling and Family Therapy  
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**Philosophy of Teaching**  
**Angela D. Coker**

Teaching is about the development of the human spirit. It should create in a person opportunities to develop new levels of consciousness, not only about a particular subject matter, but more importantly, about themselves, and the world. I believe people grow when they are in environments that are supportive, honor diversity, and encourage personal reflective thinking. Secondly, I believe students grow when challenged intellectually and can apply knowledge learned to their own lives.

As a counselor educator in particular, my approach to teaching is similar to my approach to counseling and appreciation of multiculturalism. I am person/student-centered. I respect diversity, and work to create an intellectual community of inclusion, recognizing that all students are different and have something to contribute in the construction of knowledge. In counselor education, fostering critical thinking is not just about presenting new knowledge and developing clinical skills, it is about creating in a student the ability to identify and understand the varied contextual realities of clients' lives, understand how and when to employ specific counseling theories, and therapeutic strategies. Further, I believe in finding students' strengths and building on them by encouraging critical self-reflection. Central to my role as a counselor educator is to encourage students to answer the following questions: What is my basic belief about human nature? What is my belief about how individuals change and grow? How might my own biases or assumptions about human nature help or hinder me as a counselor working with individuals culturally different from myself?

In the introductory counseling course (CNS ED 6000), we require all students to seek personal counseling as: a) a self-reflective learning tool and opportunity for personal growth, and b) as a vehicle for vicarious learning as they observe advanced clinical counseling skills performed by others. I also encourage students to maintain a personal journal in order to log what they have learned and discuss "ah ha!" moments along the way. I also believe students must

engage in dialogue with each other in order to construct knowledge. As a result, I place a heavy emphasis on class participation and small group work, giving students numerical points for engaging intellectually in class. Also, I continue to enhance the integration of technology into my teaching. I now use MyGateWay as a primary means of managing class records. Through this system, my students are able to access their current class grades on-line, in addition to communicating with me and other members of the class. Recently, I participated in a university sponsored technology workshop designed to teach faculty how to use the internet to conduct virtual classroom and web-conferencing. Integrating more technology into my courses is a goal of mine so that I can further enhance student learning. I am particularly interested in learning how to integrate technology to enhance clinical supervision.

Due to my training and experience in student affairs, I am keenly aware that students achieve better in school when they feel a sense of belonging to their academic environment and interact more with peers. As a result, I took my entire CNS ED 6000 class to the College of Education's annual event: Night at the Science Center to view the documentary, *Hurricanes on the Bayou* (this film focused on raising America's consciousness about protecting our nation's wetlands and natural resources, particularly as it relates to the Louisiana region devastated by Hurricane Katrina). As an instructor, I had two goals: First, I wanted to use that event as a means of extending students' learning outside of the classroom and foster their sense of connection to the university. Secondly, while this film did not focus on a direct counseling issue, I wanted to provide students with an example of what social advocacy means by raising their level of awareness about the impact negative environmental conditions can have on the cultural viability of a community.

Teaching in counselor education also means helping students develop positive identities as professional counselors. I work to do this in a variety of direct and indirect ways. First, by direct means I require students (in my Foundations of Community Counseling, Community Practicum, and Community Field Experience classes) to conduct community agency visits, and

complete interviews with professional counselors so that they can: a) network and develop a greater sense of professional identity, and b) learn about the world of counseling through the eyes of seasoned trained professionals. A big part of our counselor education program is supervised field experience where students apply what they have learned in class and then counsel real clients. Indirectly, I a) maintain professional state licensure as a professional counselor, b) remain actively involved in relevant professional organizations, and c) consistently share professional experiences and case stories as a counselor. Some of the ways in which I seek student feedback and assess my effectiveness as a teacher are through class exams, clinical supervision, in-class dialogue, communication on MyGateWay, and mid-semester evaluations.

A major component of counselor education is to increase students' understanding of multiculturalism and human diversity. Topics typically included within this discussion are: race, gender, sexual orientation, language differences, immigrant status, physical abilities, class status, and religion. In general, courses that deal with developing multicultural competencies, particularly when working with people of color generally paint a broad stroke and discuss generic counseling strategies for working with *all* people of color, instead of being more culturally-specific. In order to fill this void, I created a class called, *Counseling the African American Client*. The course is designed to assist counselors with developing cultural competencies when working with African American clients. This course is a highly interactive, intense seminar-style learning community. Students are exposed to new information and gain knowledge from an ensemble of invited guest speakers (professional counselors in the St. Louis area who have worked extensively with African American clients). Topics covered in this course include: African American history, African American value systems and worldview, mental health challenges, and help-seeking behaviors. To enhance student learning, I used a variety of media teaching tools (e.g., videos, songs, and internet website links). Further, to enhance my teaching in the area of cultural competencies, I wrote and produced a media DVD teaching tool, which demonstrates (through two case scenarios) appropriate rapport building and counseling of African

American clients. The culminating teaching activity resulted in requiring students to complete a final class presentation, by identifying a counseling issue relative to African American clients, discussing challenges faced by the identified group, and presenting specific culturally appropriate counseling strategies. With this learning activity, students had to conduct in-depth research and present their findings. Not only was this class a huge success (23 students enrolled, with several on the waiting list), but it was personally rewarding on a number of different levels: First, offering such a race-specific counseling course helped fill a multicultural void in academia. Several students enrolled in this course were professional counselors already working with clients. They reported that they not only enrolled in the course in order to satisfy state continuing education requirements, but wanted to increase their multicultural knowledge base as well. Second, this course filled a psychological and intellectual hunger experienced by many African American students who enrolled in the course. Many of whom had never experienced a counseling course where their cultural group was treated as the center of analysis. Many students shared their joy in participating in such a class. For them, it was a very culturally affirming, validating, and a healing experience. Further, as an African American instructor, I felt I was able to serve as a role-model for those wanting to achieve professionally and academically. Third, so often predominantly white universities develop the negative reputation of not reaching out and connecting well with surrounding communities of color. I believe offering such a course like *Counseling the African American Client*, helped to maintain the university's image as a school that cares about diversity, wants to maintain positive relationships with the surrounding African American community, and does so by offering courses deemed culturally relevant and useful. In this capacity, I believe I was still teaching about diversity and honoring differences.

As a public intellectual with very strong working-class family roots, I recognize that teaching is not just about the disseminating of information. It's about social responsibility, and giving back to one's community. As a teacher, I operationalize my understanding of social responsibility by mentoring others. I am particularly sensitive to the unique challenges

experienced by students on our campus. Many of whom are first-generation, adult returning students who have full-time jobs along with full-time family/life responsibilities. I mentor by developing positive relationships with them, demonstrating respect, helping them learn how to do research, by sharing professional information, and creating opportunities for enhanced student learning. In fact, I created an opportunity for several doctoral students to gain group leadership and multicultural counseling experience through a collaboration with a community agency called *The Haven of Grace* (a residential shelter for homeless pregnant women). Through this collaboration, I designed an on-going outreach project with the hopes of cultivating a new training site for students. This mentoring has resulted in a research project, and one upcoming presentation at a national counseling conference.

Contributing to the knowledge of teaching and learning is something that I believe strongly in. In addition to presenting at professional conferences, I am currently working on the development of two research manuscripts. One of which will be a reflective analysis of my experiences teaching the African American Counseling course. The second manuscript will be a discussion about the ways in which teachers can collaborate with African American parents to enhance student achievement.

Nominee: Angela D. Coker, Ph.D. (25)

**Syllabi from Courses**

**Division of Counseling & Family Therapy**  
**CNS ED 6404**  
**COUNSELING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CLIENT**  
**Winter Intersession 2007**

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

Angela D. Coker, Ph.D., LPC, NCC

407 Marillac Hall

Tele. 516-6088

E-mail: cokera@umsl.edu

Appointments: Made by appointment

- I. **PREREQUISTE:** Graduate status
  
- II. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is designed to promote an understanding of African American client's psychological development, multicultural issues in counseling, and an exploration of therapeutic counseling strategies.
  
- III. **COURSE GOALS:** Students will be able to:
  - a. Increase awareness and understanding of the psychological development of African Americans as it is related to personality, identity, and behavior.
  - b. Explore theoretical models associated with counseling African American clients
  - c. Explore multicultural issues and strategies in counseling African American clients.
  - d. Explore African American mental health within the context of historical, environmental, and cultural factors.
  - e. Explore sources of personal and collective sources of strength associated with African Americans.
  - f. Develop an enhanced sense of multicultural competency working with African American clients.
  
- IV. **COURSE CONTENTS**
  - a. Theoretical models of African/African American psychological perspectives.
  - b. Racism/Chattel slavery and its effects/legacy on the psychological development of the African American personality.
  - c. Gender & sexual orientation issues
  - d. The African American family
  - e. Counseling children and teenagers
  - f. Racial identity development
  - g. Media influence on psychological development
  - h. Client/counselor therapeutic match
  - i. Counseling issues presented into counseling
  - j. Counseling strategies

**V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- a. **Reading**- All students are expected to read the text and supplemental reading as assigned by the instructor.
- b. **Participation & Attendance (15%)** - All students are expected to participate in class discussions and small group work. You are allowed only **one** emergency absence. If you miss more than 1 class meeting for any reason, your final grade will be lower a full letter. Each subsequent missed class results in a continued lowering of your final grade.
- c. **Team Oral Presentation (60%)** - Each student will select a partner in class. As a team you will be required to give a 15-20 minute presentation on a particular issue or need related to counseling African American clients. Examples include: counseling in the public schools, biracial issues, sexual orientation, counseling the elderly, spirituality and the Black church, or African Americans and depression, or counseling clients with HIV/AIDS (just to name a few). Each presentation must include suggested therapeutic strategies. Since this a collaborative effort, both members will share the same grade.

Your presentation should be structured in the following way:

1. Introduction
2. Brief Overview about the population
3. Major Points for counselors to consider
4. Suggested counseling strategies (based on theory)
5. Audience Q and A section

The presentation will be graded according to the students' demonstrated research and understanding of the identified issue, effectiveness at summarizing the key points with in the time limit, and ability to justify their positions stated in the face of questioning from the audience.

- d. **Reflective Paper (25%)** - Each student will be required to write a reflective essay describing their own personal experiences and interactions with African American people. Questions to be answered are: What are the strengths and/or gaps in your experiences? In what ways can you draw on these experiences in order to enhance your therapeutic relationship with African American clients? To what extent are you comfortable counseling African American clients? What issues are you comfortable talking about with African American clients? Where are the gaps in your understanding concerning African American culture? Here the instructor is looking for your ability to understand, synthesize, integrate, and apply the material learned in class to your own professional development as a counselor. Papers should be 5-7 pages in length. Late papers **will not** be accepted.

**VI. EVALUATION FOR STUDENTS:**

Participation 15%

Team Presentation	60%
Reflective Essay	<u>25%</u>
<b>Total points</b>	<b>100</b>

A = 93% an up	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79 %	F =below 70%
A- = 90-92%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76 %	
	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72 %	

## VII. REQUIRED TEXT:

Parham, T.A. (2000). *Counseling persons of African decent: Raising the bar of practitioner competence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### Required Supplemental Readings:

Bailey, F.B. & Paisley, P.O. (2004). Developing and nurturing excellence in African American male adolescents. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 82, 10-17.

Coker, A. D. (2004). Counseling African American women: Issues, challenges and interventions strategies. In G.R. Walz, & R. Yep (Eds.), *VISTAS: Perspectives on Counseling 2004* (pp. 129-136). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association and Counseling Outfitters/CAPS Press.

Franklin, A.J. (1999). Invisibility syndrome and racial identity development in psychotherapy and counseling African American men. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 27, 761-793.

Holcomb-McCoy, C.C. & Moore-Thomas, C. (2001). Empowering African-American adolescent females. *Professional School Counseling*, 5, 19-26.

Jenkins, Y.M. (2000). The stone center theoretical approach revisited: Applications for African American women. In L.C. Jackson & B. Greene (Eds.), *Psychotherapy with African American Women: Innovations in Psychodynamic perspectives and practice* (pp. 62-81). New York, NY: Guilford.

Jung, C.G. (1930). Your Negroid and Indian behavior. *Forum*, 38, 193-199.

McIntosh, P. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack.

Romero, R.E. (2000). The icon of the strong black woman: The paradox of strength. In L.C. Jackson & B. Greene (Eds.), *Psychotherapy with African American Women: Innovations in Psychodynamic perspectives and practice* (pp. 225-238). New York, NY: Guilford.

Parham, T. A. (1989). Cycles of psychological nigrescence. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 17, 187-226.

**Recommended Supplemental Readings**

Akbar, N. (1996). *Breaking the chains of psychological slavery*. Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions & Associates.

Cross, W.E. (1971). The negro-to-black conversation experience. *Black World*, 7, 13-27.

Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.

Guthrie, R.G. (1976). *Even the rat was white*. New York: Harper and Row.

Kambon, K. (1992). *The African personality in America: An African-centered framework*. Tallahassee, FL: NUBIAN Nation.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. (2001). *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity – A Supplement to Mental Health: A report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
<b>Jan 3</b> (Wed.)	Overview of Course & Introductions Multicultural Counseling Competencies Self-Awareness & Perceived Competencies	Parham Preface Jung article
<b>Jan 4</b> (Thurs)	Understanding history & current states of affairs A paradigm shift Dealing with Racism & Discrimination Stereotypes, Media Images, White privilege article Issues Impacting the African American Community	Preface & Ch 1& 3Parham & McIntosh
<b>Jan 5</b> (Fri)	Counseling African American Families and Couples <b>Guest Speaker: Dr. Joe Worth (6:15p)</b> Dir. of Counseling, Florrisant Valley Comm. College	Handouts
<b>Jan 6</b> (Sat)	Racial Identity Development Understanding Personality & how to measure it Counseling African American Men Counseling African American Women Counseling considerations. Video: Thomas Parham <b>Guest Speaker: Dr. Niyi Coker, E Desmond Lee</b> Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Dance, & Media Studies	Parham article Ch 4 – Parham Franklin article Romero article Coker article Jenkins article Ch. 8 – Parham
<b>Jan 7</b> (Sun)	The Intersections of Race & GLBT issues Counseling Models for African Americans <b>Guest Speaker: Chris Neimeyer</b> Library and Information Resources (1:30p)	Ch 7 - Parham
<b>Jan 10</b> (Wed.)	Counseling Children <b>Guest Speaker: Judy Saurage, LPC (6:15 p)</b> Grace Hill Mental Health Director – Head Start <b>Guest Speaker: Tracy Bumberry, LPC, RPT (7:30 p)</b> School Counselor, Twillman Elementary School	Handouts
<b>Jan 11</b> (Thurs.)	Counseling Teenagers <b>Guest Speaker: Tracie Berry-McGhee, LPC</b> Imani Counseling and Consulting Service (6:15p)	Bailey & Paisley article Holcomb- McCoy & Moore-Thomas article
<b>Jan 12</b> (Fri.)	Raising the Bar for what passes as competence Counseling Strategies <b>Guest Speaker: Karolyn E. Senter, Ph.D. (6:15 pm)</b> Staff Counselor/Group Services Coordinator Student Health Services Washington University in St. Louis	Ch. 9 - Parham
<b>Jan 13</b> (Sat.)	Student Presentations & Class Wrap-up	Handouts

**CNS ED 6404 – Gender Issues in Counseling  
Division of Counseling & Family Therapy  
Summer 2007**

Instructor: Angela D. Coker, Ph.D., LPC, NCC  
Telephone: 314-516-6088  
E-mail: cokera@umsl.edu

**PURPOSE OF COURSE/OVERVIEW**

This course is designed to promote a more comprehensive understanding of women and men's psychological and social development, and issues involved in counseling them. Students will examine the role gender plays in men and women's conceptualization and response to life problems and tasks.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S)/ADDITIONAL COURSE READINGS**

**Required Text:**

Bartholomew, C.G. (2003). *Gender-sensitive therapy: Principles and practices*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

**Supplemental Readings:**

Good, G.E., Gilbert, L.A., Scher, M. (1990). Gender aware therapy: A synthesis of feminist therapy and knowledge about gender. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 68(4), 376-380.

**Suggested Readings:**

Collins, P.H. (1993). Toward a new vision: Race, class, and gender as categories of analysis and connection. *Race, Sex & Class*, 1(1), 25-43.

Franklin, A.J. (1999). Invisibility syndrome and racial identity development in psychotherapy and counseling African American men. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 27(6), 761-763.

In addition, other readings will be added to list.

**COURSE OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES**

**Students will be able to:**

- A. understand gender theory and the impact society has on the development of individuals.
- B. Understand the role gender plays in client's lives, the counseling relationship, and the counseling process.
- C. Identify their own attitudes and values that effect their clinical work with men and women.
- D. Expand their current understanding about multicultural issues in counseling.
- E. Identify and understand the core components of gender-aware therapy.

- F. Identify ways of improving men and women's mental health beyond the counseling relationship.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

**Course content will include (but not limited to) the following topical areas:**

- A. Sexism
- B. Homophobia
- C. Media Influence
- D. Feminist Identity Development
- E. Media Influence
- F. Sexual Harassment
- G. Counselor/Client Therapeutic Match
- H. Multicultural Competence and Skills
- I. Masculinity and Manhood

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- A. **Attendance.** Students are expected to attend every class meeting. If you miss more than two class meetings, your final grade will be lowered one full grade. For each class you continue to miss, your grade will continue to be lowered one full grade.
- B. **Reading.** All students are expected to read the text and additional readings as assigned by the instructor.
- C. **Participation (Class & Small Group Discussions).** This class involves heavy student participation. If you do not wish to participate in any activities, discussions, or examine your beliefs and values, you may not want to take this course. If you are seriously opposed to a particular activity or assignment, please see the instructor for an alternative assignment.
- D. **Collaborative Research Paper (In APA format).** Select a colleague in this class to work with. Identify a topic dealing with gender issues. Your paper should be 10-15 pages at length and divided into two parts: A Literature review of a gender issue in counseling. The second part must deal with a discussion of appropriate skills, competencies, and strategies identified as useful in helping gender specific clients cope with a particular issue. Be sure to cite scholarship other than the assigned text. You must have at least five different sources.
- E. **Team Presentation.** Your team presentation will be an extension of your research paper. Your presentation must be 20-minutes in length. Here the instructor is looking for your ability to understand, synthesize, integrate,

apply, and present material learned in class. **\*Note: Each team member shares the research paper and presentation grades.**

**EVALUATION OF STUDENTS:**

Research Paper	50 points
Presentation	30 points
Class Participation	20 points

A	=	100-93
B	=	92-81
C	=	80-70
D	=	69-60
F	=	59 & Below

**From:** <Pope>, "Mark L." <PopeML@msx.umsl.edu>  
**Date:** Tue, 23 Jan 2007 17:25:43 -0500  
**Conversation:** Great article in St. Louis American  
**Subject:** Great article in St. Louis American

Colleagues – In last week’s *St. Louis American*, there was an excellent article on the class that Angie Coker taught during the intersession, *Counseling the African American Client*. Here’s the link for the article titled “Freud Didn’t Study Us.” It’s a very important article on race and education. Thank you, Angie. This is exactly the kind of public relations that we, as a division, a college, and a university need in our community. - Warmly, Mark

[http://www.stlamerican.com/articles/2007/01/11/news/local\\_news/localnews04.txt](http://www.stlamerican.com/articles/2007/01/11/news/local_news/localnews04.txt)

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Mark Pope, Ed.D., NCC, MCC, MAC, ACS  
Professor and Chair  
Division of Counseling & Family Therapy  
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Thursday, January 11, 2007 6:02 AM CST

### **UMSL teaches culturally competent counseling**

By Meliqueica Meadows  
Of the St. Louis American

“Because of the response of students, we have to offer it at least once a year,” said Mark Pope, chair of the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

He was talking about Professor Angela Coker’s class *Counseling the African-American Client*, which is being offered for the first time in the winter intersession.

Twenty-three students initially enrolled in the nine-day pilot course and Coker, assistant professor in the College of Education, said she had to turn people away.

Techniques and insights for dealing with African-American clients are sorely lacking in many graduate-level counseling programs.

“The higher you go in education, the whiter it gets,” Coker said. In particular, Coker added, people of color are “not represented in Jung, Freud or Adler’s theories.”

“Black people as a group have been subjugated and invisible in terms of psychology,” said Coker.

“Historically in psychology, black people were never studied unless it was to illustrate a negative point.”

Through the course, Coker hopes to provide students with an understanding of the psychological development of African-American clients while delving into multicultural issues in counseling and therapeutic strategies for reaching the black community, which is under-served by the mental health industry.

Elizabeth Clay, an elementary school counselor at Dewey International Studies School, said when she learned of this class she “couldn’t pass it up.”

“I work with girls groups, African-American males and staff who don’t know how to work with our kids,” Clay said, adding that she hopes the work will “enhance what I am doing” in the St. Louis Public Schools.

Coker said she hopes students come away with “a better sense of self-awareness about how they feel about African-American people.”

“Many of our students come from sheltered backgrounds,” she said. “You need to like and respect the people you serve.”

Key issues, according to Coker, include the social stigma of mental health services and a cultural mistrust about counseling in the black community. A lack of counselors of color, few counseling centers in minority communities and financial limitations are all barriers that prevent many African Americans from voluntarily seeking services.

“I think the going rate is \$75-\$80 per hour,” she said. “But even with a co-pay of \$25 per hour each week, sometimes you haven’t budgeted an extra \$100 a month for counseling.”

Coker said, “Counseling is a white, middle class activity.”

Because of the communal nature of relationships within the African-American community, Coker said, “It’s almost unnatural to go to someone other than a family member or a friend.”

Coker said African Americans often present their concerns in secondary forms like hospital emergency room visits and negative attention from law enforcement.

“A white person with a brief case coming up to the front door in the black community is not good news unless they’re holding a big check and a bouquet of flowers,” said Joseph Worth, associate professor of counseling at St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley, a guest lecturer.

Worth said the often punitive or remedial character of mental health services in the black community is a deterrent to blacks actively seeking help.

Worth’s lecture on the effects of trauma illuminated circumstances that could influence the lives of black urban students, according to Scott Deppong, a white social studies and psychology teacher at Beaumont High School. In the future, he said, he would be “slower to react to some of the behavior.”

“Now I’ll think, ‘He may be behaving this way because he has experienced something beyond the scope of a 16-year-old,’” Deppong said.

“It probably has nothing to do with school and class. It’s the 16 hours they spend outside of the classroom, and then they have to come in here and survive and not appear weak to their peers.”

Deppong said, "I think it helped me open my eyes."

Pope, the department chair at UMSL, said, "We're pleased with the class because our whole program is structured around social justice and cultural diversity."

UMSL's Family Therapy program is one of of only two nationally accredited programs in counseling in Missouri and the only Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational program (CACREP) in St. Louis. The program, according to Pope, is "very selective" and only admits about 50 percent of all applicants.

"It is critical for our students to have this kind of preparation as they go out to deal with people in St. Louis," Pope said. "And I'm happy that we have someone like Coker on staff to do it."

For more information, call (314) 516-5782 or visit [www.umsl.edu](http://www.umsl.edu).

**From:** "editor@blackpressusa.com" <editor@blackpressusa.com>

**Date:** Wed, 14 Feb 2007 00:23:14 -0500

**To:** "pope@umsl.edu" <pope@umsl.edu>

**Subject:** BlackPressUSA News Story - Counseling Counselors of African-Americans

**Angela Coker (cokera@umsl.edu)** sent you this article from **BlackPressUSA.com**,  
"Your independent source of news for the African American community."

Retrieved 4/27/2007 from

<http://www.blackpressusa.com/news/Article.asp?SID=3&Title=National+News&NewsID=11946>

## NATIONAL NEWS

### **Counseling Counselors of African-Americans**

by Meliqueica Meadows

ST. LOUIS (NNPA) -- Mark Pope, an experienced therapist, knew he encountered something truly original when students were clamoring to get into a class.

"Because of the response of students, we have to offer it at least once a year," says Pope, chair of the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

He was talking about Counseling the African-American Client, which is being taught for the first time by Professor Angela Coker.

Twenty-three students initially enrolled in a nine-day pilot course and Coker, assistant professor in the College of Education, said she had to turn people away.

Techniques and insights for dealing with African-American clients are sorely lacking in many graduate-level counseling programs. "The higher you go in education, the whiter it gets," Coker said. In particular, Coker added, people of color are "not represented in Jung, Freud or Adler's theories."

"Black people as a group have been subjugated and invisible in terms of psychology," said Coker. "Historically in psychology, black people were never studied unless it was to illustrate a negative point."

Through the course, Coker hopes to provide students with an understanding of the psychological development of African-American clients while delving into multicultural issues in counseling and therapeutic strategies for reaching the black community, which is under-served by the mental health industry.

Elizabeth Clay, an elementary school counselor at Dewey International Studies School, said when she learned of this class she "couldn't pass it up."

"I work with girls groups, African-American males and staff who don't know how to work with our kids," Clay said, adding that she hopes the work will "enhance what I am doing" in the St. Louis Public Schools.

Coker said she hopes students come away with “a better sense of self-awareness about how they feel about African-American people.”

“Many of our students come from sheltered backgrounds,” she said. “You need to like and respect the people you serve.”

Key issues, according to Coker, include the social stigma of mental health services and a cultural mistrust about counseling in the black community. A lack of counselors of color, few counseling centers in minority communities and financial limitations are all barriers that prevent many African Americans from voluntarily seeking services.

“I think the going rate is \$75-\$80 per hour,” she said. “But even with a co-pay of \$25 per hour each week, sometimes you haven’t budgeted an extra \$100 a month for counseling.”

Coker said, “Counseling is a white, middle class activity.”

Because of the communal nature of relationships within the African-American community, Coker said, “It’s almost unnatural to go to someone other than a family member or a friend.”

Coker said African Americans often present their concerns in secondary forms like hospital emergency room visits and negative attention from law enforcement.

“A white person with a brief case coming up to the front door in the black community is not good news unless they’re holding a big check and a bouquet of flowers,” said Joseph Worth, associate professor of counseling at St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley, a guest lecturer.

Worth said the often punitive or remedial character of mental health services in the black community is a deterrent to blacks actively seeking help.

Worth’s lecture on the effects of trauma illuminated circumstances that could influence the lives of black urban students, according to Scott Deppong, a white social studies and psychology teacher at Beaumont High School. In the future, he said, he would be “slower to react to some of the behavior.”

“Now I’ll think, ‘He may be behaving this way because he has experienced something beyond the scope of a 16-year-old,’” Deppong said.

“It probably has nothing to do with school and class. It’s the 16 hours they spend outside of the classroom, and then they have to come in here and survive and not appear weak to their peers,” he adds. “I think it helped me open my eyes.”

Pope, the department chair at UMSL, said, “We’re pleased with the class because our whole program is structured around social justice and cultural diversity.”

UMSL’s Family Therapy program is one of of only two nationally accredited programs in counseling in Missouri and the only Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational program (CACREP) in St. Louis. The program, according to Pope, is “very selective” and only admits about 50 percent of all applicants.