

BENCHMARK LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT

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Author Note:

I have no conflict of interest to disclose. Communication regarding this paper should be submitted to Anita Woods Department for Counselor Education and Supervision, 1971 University Boulevard, Lynchburg, VA 24515, United States, Email: awoods38@liberty.edu.

Benchmark Leadership Interview Assignment

A good leader is both born and created. This statement is not an empirical finding. There are many theories about what makes an effective leader. I believe that an effective leader has the characteristic of consideration. Consideration is part of the behavior theory (Chang, 2022). Consideration is the ability to understand and respect the heart of a man, e.g., empathy. Other characteristics of an effective leader are the ability to organize, be a visionary, and create synergy within a group. A leader creates structure and organization (Chang, 2022). A leader sees a need and begins researching how to fulfill that need while employing others to join the mission. A leader is transparent, honest, and flexible (SAMHSA, 2005). A leader is a counselor.

The leader in the counseling profession that I interviewed is Dr. Kristy Ford. Dr. Ford achieved her MS in professional counseling from Georgia State in 1999. After graduating with her MS, Dr. Ford began the journey of obtaining the experience and hours needed to become a licensed counselor in the state of Florida. During her time between educational pursuits, Dr. Ford began advocating by working with the Department of Juvenile Justice in instituting trauma-informed care with clients and still supports that mission today. In 2016 Dr. Ford graduated with her Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from Liberty University. She believes that external behaviors are a result of trauma not simply an isolated willful act of defiance. She also believes that authorities working with this population need to take a more informed approach rather than harsh discipline as a common approach to addressing maladaptive behavior. Dr. Ford believes “Trauma begets trauma” (Ford, 2024). Harsh disciplining techniques used in juvenile corrections settings are not seen as effective in addressing the existing trauma. In 2009 Dr. Ford was a campus counselor for college students at the local college. Later she was asked to serve as

an adjunct professor, which she did for two years. She desired to educate licensed mental health counselors.

In addition to advocating for trauma-informed care with the Department of Juvenile Justice, Dr. Ford is the President of the Pregnancy Center in Marianna, Florida. Pregnancy Center is a Christian ministry focusing on educating women who are facing life-changing circumstances. Dr. Ford owns a counseling private practice. She is also a part of Liberty University's core faculty as the Director of the Online Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program as an Associate Professor. Dr. Ford loves teaching. She prefers the face-to-face teaching method but appreciates online teaching as well.

One of Dr. Ford's goals is to increase the number of licensed counselors for the state of Florida through education and supervision. Her favorite courses to teach are skills and the practicum internship.

Support/Challenge Leadership

When it comes to leadership Dr. Ford is Super Woman. She is a great example of advocacy and leadership. She is leading through the education of her students and helping add more licensed counselors to the field. She is an example of leadership and advocacy with involvement with the pregnancy center and the Department of Juvenile Justice. I was amazed by Dr. Ford's busy schedule and her advocacy involvement. Dr. Ford stresses the need for counselor self-care to prevent burnout.

By listening to Dr. Ford, I was inspired by the possibilities for my life. She is involved in supporting so much and she is doing it with faith in God and a servant's heart. Just listening to her has inspired me. It caused me to broaden the possibilities of my potential.

I had the opportunity to experience Dr. Ford in my last internship class for my master's degree at Liberty. She had a lasting effect on me. I believe you are a leader when you lead without announcing your authority but set an example. This is Dr. Ford. She is an example of synergy, empathy, servant, structure, and vision.

Much of what Dr. Ford talked about during the interview was her passion for teaching. We discussed the gap between counseling and spirituality not only in the profession but also in advocacy forums. Per Dr. Ford, advocating for the profession is imperative. When it comes to advocacy, she believes in, “keeping the faith-based voice at the table” (Ford, 2024).

Conclusion

Listening to Dr. Ford, I was inspired by the possibilities for my life. She is involved in supporting so much and she is doing it with faith in God and a servant's heart. Just listening to her has inspired me. It caused me to broaden the possibilities of my potential. I don't believe that this interview changed my perception of what it takes to be a leader. It solidified my ideas about what characteristics and knowledge it takes to be an effective leader. Dr. Ford is a mirror of fearlessness and faith.

References

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