

NMFP-AC: Years of Advocating for Higher Education Support for Addiction Counselors Pays Off for the Profession

By Paula Horvatic, PhD, NMFP-AC Program Manager

The *Now is the Time: Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors (NITF-MFP-AC)* is part of the President's Plan to increase behavioral health services for youth in America. And for the first time since the national Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) was established in 1974, funds to support Master's level education for addiction counseling became available through the 2014 Consolidated Appropriation Act. Originally the MFP enhanced services to minority communities through specialized training of mental health professionals in psychiatry, nursing, social work and psychology. Over the years, the MFP was transferred to the Center for Mental Health Services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the program was expanded to include marriage and family therapists and professional counselors. Clearly, including addiction counseling as an eligible discipline for the MFP was a long time in coming, and NAADAC played a significant role in advocating for its consideration for over eight years.

NAADAC responded to the Request for Applications issued by SAMHSA and was one of two organizations awarded the \$3.2 million four-year grant to identify and select students going into their last year of a Master's Degree in addiction counseling at an accredited institution of higher learning to receive a tuition stipend as part of the NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors (NMFP-AC). NMFP-AC Fellowships are open to any Master's Degree addiction counseling student with a commitment to working with transition age youth in underserved populations in underserved communities, including minority and LGBT populations. Closing in on the first year of the grant, much has been accomplished.



NMFP-AC
 NAADAC MINORITY FELLOWSHIP
 PROGRAM FOR ADDICTION COUNSELORS

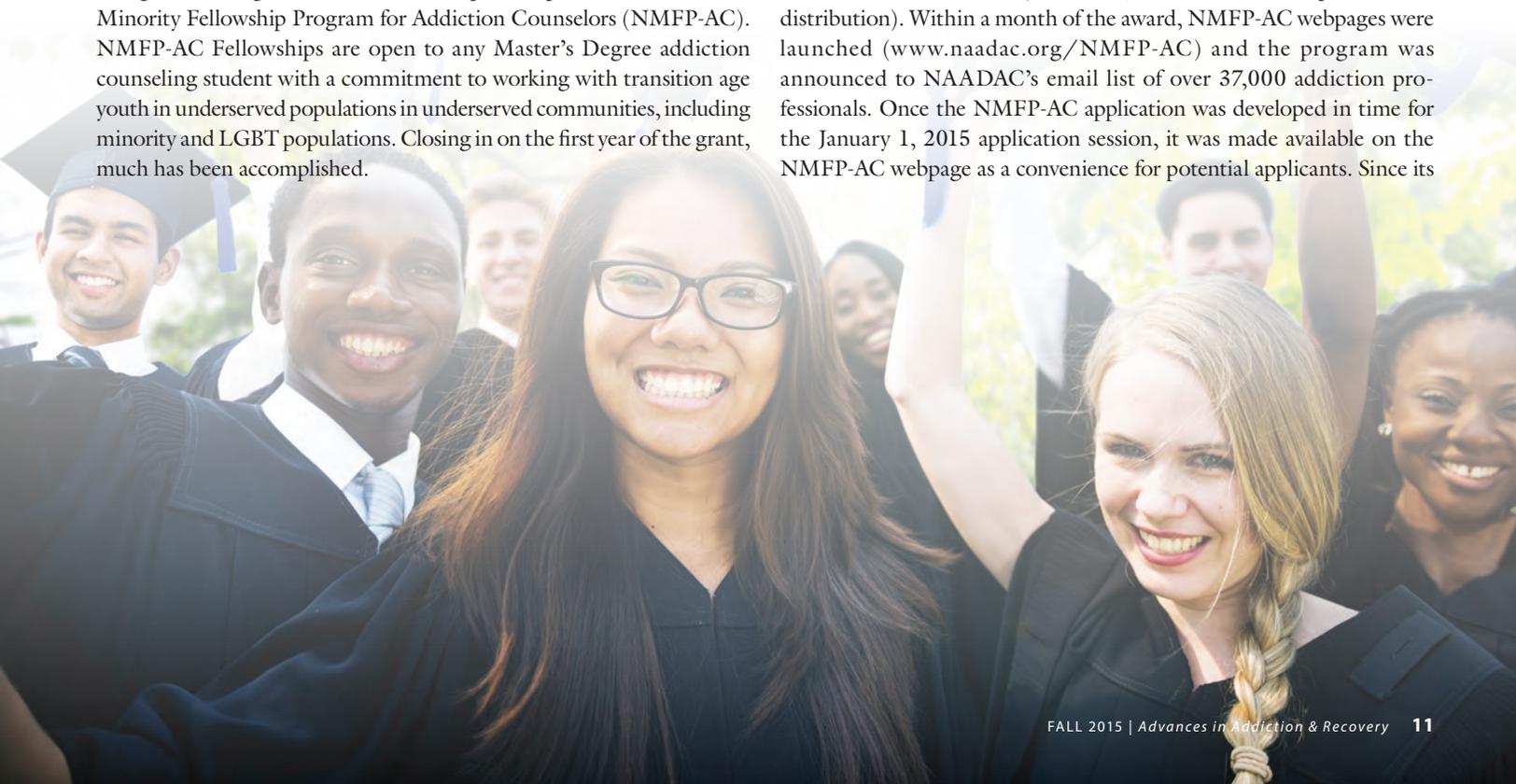
Selected Highlights

An Advisory Committee was established consisting of individuals representing a wide cross-section of stakeholders from recovery, consumer and treatment communities for adults and adolescents, as well as national organizations and centers operating in the field. Although its purpose is to provide leadership for the NMFP-AC, the Advisory Committee was also envisioned as an adjunct workgroup, so committee members

rolled up their sleeves to create plans and policy, develop associated documents for administering the project, select and support fellows, provide education, and assist with monitoring and evaluation.

NAADAC extended the use of its sophisticated secure cloud-based database and management system (IMPak) and created a customization to collect and manage all incoming and outgoing NMFP-AC data and information. IMPak was used to develop a portal for fellows that will progress with them; first to house their applications and supplemental documentation, then to track program requirements and milestones, and eventually to evolve into an online career profile to market their skill sets to potential employers through the NAADAC website.

NAADAC's Communication Department provided multiple layers of support for the NMFP-AC, beginning with the design of a logo for all forms of distribution (letterhead, website and other publications distribution). Within a month of the award, NMFP-AC webpages were launched (www.naadac.org/NMFP-AC) and the program was announced to NAADAC's email list of over 37,000 addiction professionals. Once the NMFP-AC application was developed in time for the January 1, 2015 application session, it was made available on the NMFP-AC webpage as a convenience for potential applicants. Since its



launch, the NMFP-AC webpage remains a popular area of the NAADAC website.

An objective of the NMFP-AC included improved training in cultural diversity, recovery-based practices, and evidence-based practices for working with transition age youth in underserved populations and communities. Toward this objective, NAADAC pledged the development of a series of six webinar trainings, the last of which was offered as a live event on August 26, 2015. The webinars are free to Fellows, NAADAC members, and the public and are available on-demand through the NAADAC website. After viewing each required webinar, and finishing and passing the corresponding online quiz, each Fellow receives a continuing education certificate to document the completion of this education requirement of the NMFP-AC.

Finally, the selection of the first cohort of NMFP-AC Fellows was announced on July 15, 2015. Applicants were vetted through a rigorous review and selection process. Once it is determined that an applicant has met all of the eligibility criteria, the application and all required supporting documents are sent to a reviewer, who scores each component with the aid of scoring rubrics designed specifically for the NMFP-AC. Applicants receive points for academic honors, professional association memberships, work experience in addiction/substance use disorders, letters of recommendation, application essay, and grade point average. A total score is derived and a cut-off score applied to determine the final selection of Fellows. The amount of time and effort required to develop (draft, review, revise) the necessary documents and procedures for the review and selection process by the NMFP-AC staff and advisory committee members cannot be overstated, and is a measure of their commitment to this historic workforce award.

An online orientation for new NMFP-AC Fellows was conducted on August 21, 2015 by NMFP-AC staff. A general overview of NMFP-AC requirements was discussed regarding tuition stipends, NAADAC memberships, the assignment of mentors, access to webinars, completion of the Individual Fellow Development Plan, and suggestions for future communication. The effort and patience of all was rewarded when hearing the gratitude for the Fellowship opportunity expressed freely by the Fellows during the online session. Enthusiasm was evident in their introductions and in the personal stories they shared. The NMFP-AC is off to a good start, with nothing but success anticipated in the future for this cohort of fellows.

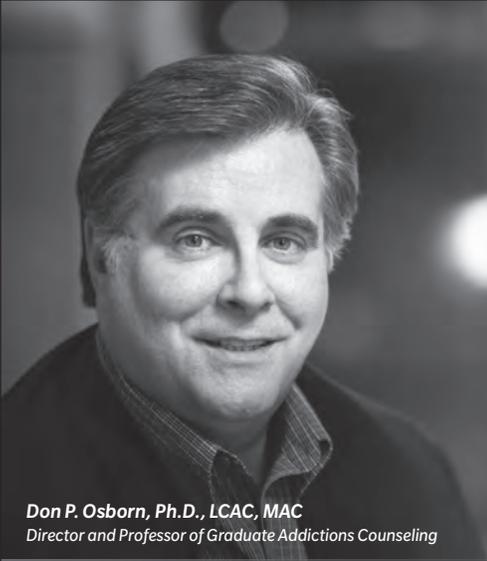
Application Period for Second NMFP-AC Cohort Opens December 15, 2015

NAADAC will be looking for qualified applications for its second NMFP-AC Cohort in late 2015. Be sure to spread the word!



Paula Horvatic, PhD, is the NAADAC Program Manager for the Now is the Time: Minority Fellowship Program for Addictions Counselors (NITT-MFP-AC) grant awarded by SAMHSA. Her career in higher education at three university medical schools focused on improving clinical curricula, evaluating competencies and teaching medical interviewing and health behavior. In addiction medicine, she directed projects funded by NIDA and SAMSHA. Her leadership contributions to SAMHSA included the Panel V Workforce report for the 2000 National Treatment Plan, and chairing the 2006 committee that revised TAP 21: Addiction Counseling Competencies: the

Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Professional Practice. Horvatic is looking forward to recruiting students to the MFP-AC, partnering with college and universities, and continuing to contribute to the development of the addiction workforce.



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