



# ALISA HOUSEKNECHT AWARDED SACES RESEARCH & BEST PRACTICE GRANT

Alisa Houseknecht, a doctoral candidate [Counseling and Counselor Education program](#), was recently notified that she was awarded a Research & Best Practice Grant from the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES) for her dissertation research titled, "Motivation, Belonging, and Support: Examining Factors that Affect Persistence in Counselor Preparation Programs."

SACES works to empower and support diverse counselor educators and supervisors in scholarship, advocacy, community, education and supervision. Since 2009 the association has awarded the grants with the purpose of funding innovative best practices and research studies related to counselor education and supervision. According to [Jacqueline Swank](#), associate professor of counselor education and Houseknecht's faculty mentor, only 15 percent of submissions were awarded grants. The competition is open to both professionals and students.

*"Getting this award affirms the importance of the research that I am doing," said Houseknecht, "and reiterates that my study has the potential to contribute something significant to the profession."*

Houseknecht and the other award recipients will be recognized at the SACES conference in Myrtle Beach in October.





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Alisa Houseknecht

## Q & A WITH ALISA HOUSEKNECHT

**Tell us about your academics, affiliations and research.**

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Counselor Education program and anticipate graduating in May 2019. I have a master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling from the University of South Florida. I am a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and a Registered Mental Health Counseling Intern in the state of Florida. My research interests include diversity issues in counseling and counselor education, assessment and program evaluation.

**What does this award mean to you?**

Getting this award affirms the importance of the research that I am doing and reiterates that my study has the potential to contribute something significant to



the profession. I'm proud to have received such positive feedback and support from the college of education and the field of counselor education.

### **How do you hope your research will impact society?**

Counselors from diverse backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in the counseling profession. As the U.S. population becomes more diverse, counselor educators are challenged to not only prepare culturally competent practitioners, but to train racially and ethnically diverse counselors. I hope my research identifies specific factors that affect the experiences of underrepresented students in order to develop strategic plans and interventions to successfully retain these students. In the long run, I believe my research will impact society by increasing the number of underrepresented counselors that can meet the needs of a diverse society.

### **What advice would you give to someone interested in our counselor education programs?**

The counseling programs at UF have consistently been ranked one of the top 10 in the U.S., so I would encourage someone interested in our programs to meet our students and faculty and find out what makes us one of the best in the nation. Our faculty have the knowledge and experience to help students pursue a career as a counselor or counselor educator specializing in a variety of areas.

### **Is there anything that you'd like to add?**

I would especially like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Jacqueline Swank, for her unwavering support and encouragement. She has been instrumental in my success over the last two years and I am so grateful to have her as a mentor.





The Counselor Education program at the University of Florida, currently ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation and has consistently ranked top 10 since the 1990s when U.S. News & World Report began ranking counseling and counseling psychology programs housed in colleges of education.

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