**Position Statement 1**

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Department of Education and Counseling, Counselor Education Program

COUN 503

Dr. Justin Jordan

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I hope to use my master’s degree from Longwood University to continue my journey helping others cope with mental health challenges and substance use. As someone who has struggled with substance use and depression, I understand the value of mental health professionals in a highly personal way.

While I have a strong background in the substance use counseling field, my understanding of mental health is rudimentary. I am fascinated by the human mind, and I wish to learn as much as I can about it to help others reach recovery and bring about substantive change in their lives.

Society has made great strides, but those with mental health challenges and substance use disorders continue to face stigma wherever they go. I hope to contribute to shattering that stigma and I yearn for a day in which such illnesses are treated with the same compassion and given the same weight as other maladies.

Clinical supervision and leadership in this field is of high interest to me. I’m eager to continue accruing knowledge and someday pass it on to the next generation of clinicians (and perhaps even to an earlier generation). Starting my own practice also intrigues me, but I have a feeling my true purpose lies in working at public mental health agencies or nonprofit organizations.

We clinicians also can play a part in helping clients advocate for themselves and take ownership of the progress made toward smashing the stigma. As a person in long-term recovery who practices abstinence from all drugs, I remain open-minded to any pathway one uses to recover and better their lives. I hope to apply that mindset to mental health as well.

I am indescribably excited about this new chapter in my life, and I can’t wait to see what kind of knowledge I’ll gain here at Longwood. When I finished my undergraduate studies in 2001 and took a job on a newspaper copy desk, I was an unhappy young man with an addiction that had a tight grip on my life. Having an opportunity to do what I’m doing now wasn’t something I had even briefly considered. I look forward to seeing what further surprises the future holds.