**Position Statement 2**

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Longwood University

Department of Education and Counseling, Counselor Education Program

COUN 503

Dr. Justin Jordan

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After taking Introduction to the Counseling Profession, my passion for the profession has increased. I already knew I would spend the rest of my working life in counseling but taking this class has opened my mind to so many avenues within the field.

Two things that altered my perspective are hearing some of my classmates’ advocacy presentations and hearing about the professor’s experience with advocacy. My ideas for what I might do as a counselor have broadened.

Initially, my plan was to work primarily in substance use and with — for lack of a better term — “mild” mental health disorders. I didn’t believe I was equipped to work with those who suffer from severe mental illness. After hearing advocacy presentations and the experiences of my classmates, I am more interested in gaining the skills necessary to work with those afflicted with eating disorders and those who have suffered severe trauma.

Regarding advocacy, I have a personal stake. Prior to committing to recovery, I had several criminal convictions related to my addiction. Because of those, I am not eligible to work at any facility licensed by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services until 2027. This fact, of course, limits my opportunities for field placement to outpatient private practices, office-based addiction treatment programs, and Longwood Counseling and Psychological Services. I have researched the issue and followed the related legislation in the General Assembly, but I haven’t done much else. Taking this class has ignited a spark in me to advocate for myself and others in similar situations. The law could be changed — if we fight hard enough.

The panel of professionals sharing their experiences with the class also was enormously helpful to me. When I’m eligible to work for a community services board, I plan to do so. Hearing Nick Stansfield talk about working at Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services validated my desire to provide services in the public sector.

I’m pleased that I chose Longwood University for my graduate studies. So far, the things I’ve learned have planted useful seeds. I still plan to work in substance use counseling, but other parts of the field I hadn’t previously considered have become attractive to me. And who knows what else will happen during my studies and after their conclusion? I look forward to finding out.