Developing and Strengthening Internships: From Conception to Accreditation

Resources for Developing Internship Programs: Conception to Accreditation

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Funding

Before seeking funding, determine what you need for the internship to be successful: # of interns, staffing (including training/supervision), office space, technology (computers, phones, recording equipment), and financial support (travel, support services, salaries, benefits). Obtain state licensing laws/rules and regulations, APPIC membership guidelines and APA accreditation guidelines. Develop your program to meet those guidelines, in that order, as resources become available. Determine what resources you already have and what additional resources are easily accessible.

When looking at the costs of an internship program, look also at the financial benefits (cost-benefit analysis; see *Psychology Internship Development Toolkit* link on ACCTA website for examples):

* Look at the # of hours of service provided by interns/stipends (cost of their service provision per hour) vs. that of staff
* Look at the hours of service provision by interns in relation to the amount of staff time needed for training/supervision
* If interns can supervise practicum students, you will likely be able to add additional hours of therapy at little cost

The first person to get on board, after your director, is the person above him/her in the reporting line (e.g., V.P., Asst. V.P.):

* Tie the internship to the mission of your division and university – service to students (Student Affairs) and education (University)
* Use IACS standards (approximately 1,200 students for every staff member) for the number of staff you should have – interns are a cost-effective way to expand staff
* Show hard data for number of clients being seen; if you have a waiting list, present this also
* Early in the process, make the counseling center an integral part of the university community – be responsive to other departments, serve on committees and work with student groups; utilize their feedback/support with funding sources

Other sources of funding:

* Student Service Fees – enlist aid of students in student government or organizations you have helped – find out who is on the committee and don’t hesitate to discuss your plans with those who are supportive/appreciative of your Center (e.g., faculty with whom you have consulted; groups for whom you have done presentations/outreach; and even students who have been clients of the center who are very open about the good work that has been done by your staff)
* Psychology and other academic departments – ask for funding from departments for which you train practicum students, or arrange to have faculty serve as supervisors or seminar presenters to free up your own staff
* Utilize the salary of a staff member who has resigned/retired for stipends instead of replacing the staff member (won’t work with small staffs)
* Redirect other counseling center funds into the internship – e.g., money for contract counselors, some travel funds, practicum stipends
* Contract with outside departments/offices/groups to provide consultation, training, or other services for a fee, which will be dedicated to the internship
* Search for grants that may fund internship creation and/or accreditation

Miscellaneous:

* Start off with a part-time internship or with fewer interns than your end goal
* Have your intern slots listed as staff positions and have their salaries in the same category as other staff salaries – it may be easier to get them cost of living raises if increases are linked to a staff position, rather than requesting raises for the internship program

Motivating and Organizing Staff

**Advertise/promote advantages of having an internship program:**

* Prestige
* Increased ability to attract quality staff
* Opportunities for staff to train/teach
* New ideas will be coming into the center
* Training role will keep staff on their toes
* Potential for adding diversity to the staff

**Organize staff:**

* Get your director on board – you will need both financial and administrative support
* Recruit staff members most interested in training to serve on Training Committee
* Identify interests and expertise of staff and incorporate into program
* Licensed Psychologists – serve as primary supervisors and engage in same training activities as other staff
* Master’s level/unlicensed/other mental health professionals – seminar facilitators, seminar presenters, group supervision, group co-leader/supervisor, core coordinators, case supervisors

**Miscellaneous:**

* Identify staff members opposed to internship program and explore opposition – attempt to address concerns; try to find a place for them in program (e.g., seminar facilitator or presenter)
* Address with Director the need for training activities to count as direct service

# Timeline

* Count on approximately 1 year from self-study to accreditation
* Work with what you have and build upon it until you’re ready to pursue accreditation

Example from Texas State:

* 1. Year 1 – only got funding for one position; no psychology interns due to state licensure requirements for two interns; intern from doctoral counseling program (not psychology)
  2. Year 2 – requested/obtained additional funding for second intern; joined APPIC
  3. Years 2-4 – 2 interns, 2 licensed psychologists
  4. Year 5 – 2 interns, hired 3rd psychologist
  5. Year 6 – funding for 3rd intern – 3 interns, 3 psychologists
  6. Year 7 – hired 4th psychologist and wrote self-study; site visited last 2 days of internship year
  7. Year 8 – Received notice of accreditation – retroactive to visit

## APPIC Membership

* Join APPIC as soon as feasible (have to have at least 2 interns in place) –– even if not ready to apply, go ahead and obtain application materials so you will know what APPIC is looking for and can structure your program accordingly
* If you are a member, you must use the match for all slots; you can use separate lists if required to save a slot for a local intern or want specific characteristics
* Many academic programs require either an APA-accredited or APPIC internship
* Ask to see completed APPIC applications from other ACCTA sites who have recently completed applications
* APPIC web site and match listserv are very useful
* Application deadlines are April 1st and September 1st; application fee is $300; if not APA/CPA accredited, membership will be reviewed every 3 years; current dues are $450 plus the match fee of $115 (see [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org) for additional information)
* Requirements for membership:
  1. Training Director must be licensed psychologist, present at least 20 hours/week
  2. Must have at least 2 FTE doctoral level licensed psychologists on staff
  3. Must have a minimum of 2 FTE interns during any training year; must already have interns in training at time of initial application
  4. Must provide at least 2 hours/week individual supervision (whether full- or part-time internship) and at least 2 additional hours of training activities (e.g., seminars, group supervision, grand rounds, etc.)
  5. At least 25% of interns’ time spent in providing face to face psychological services to clients/patients
* APPIC application for membership is good groundwork/preparation for accreditation
* Include completed application form, training program brochure or written statement (e.g., from web), training calendar/seminar schedule, due process procedures, and intern certificate (application form/instructions can be found on APPIC website)

### Getting Interns

* The easiest way to get interns is to join APPIC; prior to APPIC membership it may be helpful to send information to academic programs (clinical and counseling).
* Contact academic TDs at regional doctoral programs because many students want to stay in the area
* Send information to all non-APA accredited academic programs since they are more likely to allow their students to go to non-accredited internship sites
* If not an APPIC member, go through the APPIC match if at all possible (non-membership APPIC match fee is $240)
* Write to the ACCTA listserv if you have openings after Phase II of the Match –TDs may know of past practicum students who have not been matched
* Contact local/regional academic programs post-match to see if any of their students remain unmatched – they may have applied only to APA programs in the area and their program may be more likely to remove APA-site requirement if they are not matched
* Plan procedures for reviewing, interviewing and ranking ahead of time to expedite the process

# Self-Study

* It is a good idea to attend an APA Self-study Workshop and/or Site Visitor Training prior to your own self-study and site visit (frequently offered at APA, APPIC and ACCTA conferences at no cost to participants). That way you have a solid understanding of the accreditation process, what APA and the site visitors are specifically checking for, etc.
* Obtain release time to work on the self-study unless you are going to spread it out over time
* Be prepared for pressure – it’s like writing a dissertation
* Obtain instructions from APA for writing the self-study (<http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/about/policies/self-study-instructions.aspx>)
* Write out everything your interns do – service, receiving and providing supervision, training seminars, staff meetings, research, etc. – to get an overall picture of the internship
* Be aware of what your center is like philosophically – both as an agency and as a training site (e.g., research oriented, nurturing/mentoring, etc.) –use this and above as a starting point for choosing your training model. It’s also helpful to read articles about some of the different training models. The first volume of *Training and Education in Professional Psychology* (August 2006) includes classic articles discussing models of professional training.
* ACCTA members generally agree that Domain B can present the most challenges – it’s a good idea to play with this before trying to write the self-study – it will help to see where you need to tweak the program to make sure you are following your training model and philosophy
* Get copies of other self-studies from ACCTA members and off the APPIC web site
* Gather, analyze, and synthesize outcome data for interns (e.g. evaluation results for your various competency areas) and get help from staff, if necessary, presenting this in spreadsheet form. APA expects to see quantitatively how your interns are doing.
* Decide who is going to write the self-study – if your Training Committee is highly involved, you can have different people write different sections and have one person edit it for consistency. Be sure to access the corporate memory of your center, as well as the wisdom of former Training Directors and others involved in past training.
* If you’re having trouble getting started, pick a section/subsection that is easy for you (e.g., history of program or resources) and write it first – doesn’t necessarily have to be written in order
* Start trying to write during down times in your center (if such times exist) so that you don’t feel so pressured when you’re facing a deadline for applying
* Cost – duplicating, postage, printing (multiple drafts)
* Make enough copies for APA (4), your own center, V.P., and two site visitors – you will have to send those out once you have chosen site visitors
* Send your self-study to APA in a way which you can track (e.g., Return Receipt mail, UPS, Airborne Express, etc.) – this helps with the anxiety

## Accreditation

* Let APA (Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation) know you are interested in applying for accreditation and they will send you the Accreditation Guidelines and Procedures, instructions for writing the self-study, etc.
* Keep in touch with APA as you go through the process; you will not know about any changes to the process or directions unless you do so – they only send updates/information to accredited programs or those they know are in the process of applying.
* You will communicate with the APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (Susan Zlotlow), but the accreditation decision will be made by the Commission on Accreditation (CoA).
* Fees - $2,250 non-refundable application fee and $3,400 site visit fee (due after the visit); $2,250 annual accreditation fee. APA and various other sources now offer grants to assist with accreditation.
* Applications can be submitted anytime, but the three submission deadlines if you want to fall within a certain cycle are Sept. 1st (January through March), Jan. 1st (April through August), and May 1st (September through December). There is no guarantee that you will fall within a certain visit cycle as an applicant program - you may have to rewrite a portion of the self-study, readers may take longer, etc.
* In general, a site is not approved for a site visit until the CoA believes there’s a good probability that it will be accredited – you may be given a list of questions to answer for the site visitors
* Choose several dates that are acceptable to you for a two day site visit.
* Once you have been approved for a site visit, you will receive a list of 3 names from which to pick a site visit chair and a list of 5 names from which to pick your second visitor. If there is a conflict of interest you cannot have that person as a site visitor. If you cannot find a visitor from a list who is willing to do the site visit you can ask for another list. Not everyone on the list is willing to do a site visit – some have already done too many that year, timing isn’t good, didn’t agree to be on the list, etc. Don’t worry or take it personally if someone turns you down.
* Prepare your staff for the visit. All staff in your center and other offices that help train and/or use services of the interns may be interviewed (e.g., all center staff, psychiatrist, Disability Services staff, Residence Life staff, etc.). It’s helpful to have a retreat to acquaint counseling center staff with the training model and information from each domain. Staff may not be aware of all of the interns’ activities.
* Prepare an Executive Summary of the self-study (3-4 pages) for the VP/ university administrators, and meet with them ahead of time to prepare them for things they might be expected to comment on (e.g. funding and stability of the resources devoted to the internship program, how the internship program is compatible with the university’s mission).
* The site visitors will determine the visit schedule – usually request you to draft a schedule and then they will approve or request changes
* Site visitors pay for own travel, lodging, meals, etc.
* Site visitors must complete their report to APA within 30 days of the visit. The report will be sent to you and you will respond within 30 days by correcting any inaccurate information and/or clarifying any misperceptions.
* Your self-study, site visit report and response will be read by CoA readers prior to the CoA meeting (check Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation web site for CoA meeting dates). The CoA will vote and you will receive official notice of their decision within 30 days of the meeting.
* The decision letter will contain the number of years your program is accredited (maximum of 7 years) and will inform you of any issues that need to be addressed in your annual report or next self-study. Accreditation is retroactive to the last day of the site visit.
* Susan Zlotlow may be willing to tell you the decision prior to letters going out, but you may not advertise or present your program as accredited until you get the letter.
* Be assertive and stay in touch with Susan – if you haven’t heard anything from APA after a reasonable length of time (anywhere in the process), call Susan; she will be responsive.
* Anytime you send something to APA – self-study, response to site visit report, etc. – send it return receipt requested or by other traceable mail – APA has been known to lose things.
* It may take 9 – 12 months after submission of the self-study to learn your accreditation status – don’t guarantee interns, directors, VP’s any particular timeline
* Once accredited, you will be expected to submit an annual report to APA each year. A reminder and report forms will be sent to you electronically and you will typically have 4 months to complete the report.
* Inform APA of any **substantial** changes to your program (e.g. changes in core training staff and/or budgetary cutbacks that may affect the program) before your next self-study is due.