The mental health counseling, school counseling, and dual degree Master’s programs and counseling psychology doctoral program at Boston College adhere to the scientist-practitioner training model in preparing graduates for employment in academic, research, and/or service delivery settings. The program faculty adheres to the Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and the American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA), as well as the APA Guidelines and Principles for Accredited Programs in Professional Psychology (APA, 2005).

Although faculty interests are diverse, there is a shared emphasis on social justice as a critical foundation for training, research, and professional practice. This emphasis reflects one of the foundational and overall missions of Boston College as a university. The social justice emphasis is congruent with the Multicultural Counseling Competencies of the ACA, as well as the APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists; the APA Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients; the APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Girls and Women; and the APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults. Together, these standards and guidelines apply to all aspects of professional behavior, including (but not limited to) the practice of counseling and psychotherapy, supervision, teaching, classroom behavior, research, consultation, and collegial relations.

Members of our community are committed to educating each other about the existence and effects of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, classism, religious intolerance, and other forms of invidious prejudice and discrimination. Evidence of bias, stereotyped thinking, and prejudiced beliefs and attitudes will not go unchallenged. However, we are also committed to creating and maintaining a positive educational climate that (a) allows for open inquiry, free expression, and effective conflict resolution; and (b) promotes understanding and respect for all aspects of human diversity. Faculty members and students will engage with each other in a manner inclusive and respectful of each party’s background and sociodemographic identities and group memberships.

Where appropriate, faculty members will examine their own values, biases, and prejudices in the course of their interactions with students in order to model and facilitate the processes in which they would like students to engage, such as self-examination, self-disclosure, discovery, and introspection. Assuming that no one is free from biases and prejudice, faculty members will remain open to challenges from students with respect to their own held biases and prejudices.

Students should be aware that self-exploration and self-knowledge are prerequisites for effective counseling, teaching, and research. Consequently, many courses and training experiences require students to engage in self-reflection. This might include self-disclosure and personal introspection about attitudes, beliefs, opinions, feelings, and personal histories that might be expected to have injurious effects on members of the counseling community and/or clients if left unexamined.
The specific implications of this position are elaborated as follows:

1. Freedom of expression is protected and encouraged. Students are expected to express themselves in a professionally responsible manner that demonstrates respect for others. Students are expected to address values or belief systems that are incongruent with the standards of the profession, that impede culturally competent counseling, and that may have injurious effects on clients. Students are also urged to address values and belief systems that differ or conflict with those of fellow students by maintaining an open mind, showing respect and empathy for others, and a commitment to continuing the dialogue. When necessary, faculty members or a neutral party may play a facilitative role in these difficult dialogues.

2. We emphasize appreciation of diversity over the notion of ‘tolerance’ of students and/or clients from minority and marginalized groups in society. Faculty members and students in our programs must work together to foster and maintain a welcoming and affirming environment for individuals from across diverse backgrounds. Unprotected forms of expression—threats, verbal abuse, and harassment—are not tolerated. There are no acceptable excuses for such behavior; therefore, students are cautioned about what they may say as a “joke” or “in the heat of the moment.” In addition to challenging these blatant expressions of biases and prejudices, we will raise awareness of and challenge subtle expressions of biases and prejudices.

3. Throughout their training, students should expect to work with faculty, colleagues, and clients whose life experiences might be different from their own with respect to some aspect of human diversity, but similar with respect to others. Learning to work with people rather than labels or on the basis of stereotypes toward members of particular diverse groups is a central goal of professional training. Students are urged to recognize their own biases and/or conflicting values so that they are able to avoid imposing them on clients for whom imposition of the student’s belief systems might be harmful.

4. The program takes seriously its values regarding respect for diversity as put forth in this statement. Students who believe that they cannot or will not work with a group of clients simply because of the clients’ ascribed sociodemographic identity or group membership should be prepared to remain open to critically reflect on and evaluate these beliefs as they relate to the professional standards of our field.