

ASU offers bilingual counseling to Spanish speakers

Counselor Training Center expands the support it has provided since the 1950s

By Sona Patel Srinarayana, ASU News

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Arizona is one of the five states in the nation with the highest percentage of Hispanic residents, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, and about 32% of the U.S. population identifies as Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Even so, finding a bilingual counselor is a challenge for many in the local Latino community, and the situation is only exacerbated by Arizona's shortage of mental health professionals.

Addressing these gaps and the high demand for counseling services in the Hispanic community is a priority for the School of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, part of the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts at Arizona State University.

Meeting this need led the school to launch bilingual counseling services at ASU's Counselor Training Center — aligning with the university charter's inclusivity and public value mission, as well as ASU's Hispanic-Serving Institution designation.

Ayşe Çiftçi, director and professor in the school; Jamie Bludworth, Counselor Training Center director, director of master's training and clinical associate professor; and Cristalís Capielo Rosario, director of PhD training and associate professor, were the catalysts behind bringing this initiative to life — an idea that many in the school have dreamed of making a reality for decades.

“For nearly 70 years, the (center) has provided minimal to no-cost in-person counseling services and, more recently, virtual counseling services to ASU students, faculty, staff and the broader community,” Çiftçi says. “Offering services in Spanish closes an accessibility gap and also creates an opportunity for our graduate students to learn bilingual counseling skills.”

[Laura Jimenez Arista](#), clinical associate professor and Spanish practicum supervisor, supports students who offer counseling in Spanish. She says, “It has been an honor to team up with our faculty to bring this idea to fruition and provide more inclusive services to those in need.”

Where theory meets practice

The Counselor Training Center benefits go far beyond community impact.

Master’s and doctoral students in the School of Counseling and Counseling Psychology receive required clinical experience at the center as counselors-in-training. Master of Counseling student Angelica Pentland is one of many counselors-in-training this semester, and one of a few doing sessions in Spanish.

“Being able to create a more accessible space where individuals feel welcome to share their unique experiences in the language they feel most comfortable speaking is incredibly rewarding, and it fosters a sense of openness and trust that can be important for healing and growth,” Pentland says. “Language plays a vital role in how we communicate and express ourselves. Within it lies many untold stories and struggles.”

Counselors-in-training meet with actual clients and are supervised by licensed clinical faculty in the school to provide research-based guidance. Those offering sessions in Spanish, like Pentland, are supervised by bilingual licensed clinical faculty with SIELE (Spanish) certification.

The concept of infusing experiential learning into a student’s academic journey is a cornerstone of the applied learning pedagogy at the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, and the Counselor Training Center’s clinical offerings are a prime example of how real-world experiences are integral for students as they prepare for their future careers.

Following graduation, Pentland says she will use her applied education to support students socially and emotionally in a public school setting as a school counselor.

Prioritizing mental health in the community

Bludworth says the Counselor Training Center serves clients who need support with depression or anxiety, personal problems, relationship or family challenges, life transitions or career counseling.

He adds that the center operates independently of [ASU Counseling Services](#) — as the Counselor Training Center sees local community members in addition to the ASU community.

“Our goal at the (center) is not to make a profit, but to provide counseling to the ASU and broader communities and to give our students the critical training they need, so they can make a real

impact in the world after they graduate,” Bludworth says.

The center offers in-person and telehealth appointments from Monday through Friday in Payne Hall on the Tempe campus. Counseling services in Spanish will be available on Mondays from 9–11 a.m. In the near future, sessions will be offered at ASU’s Polytechnic campus.

Check out the [center's website](#) to learn more and schedule a visit.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



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