

Reid Swetland (MACO '98)



Current title: Associate Dean of Campus Engagement and Mental Health Counselor at the Center for Student Counseling & Wellness at Gordon College.

Family: Wife, Janice; Children, Luke & Natalie

Favorite professor: Dr. Pendleton & Dr. Polischuk, as well as Dr. Rosell and Dr. Hugenberger.

Favorite class: Christ in the Old Testament

Favorite memory: Wonderful relationships with our neighbors in Graham Hall, and our intentional group with the Henry and Kelly Knapp and Grant and Sandi Lowe.

What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and where are you serving now? Do you have a particular specialization?

When I finished my degree in December of 1997, we were expecting a baby, so I became the primary caregiver to our son and counseled in the evenings at a community-based out-patient clinic. In 1999, I started at the Gordon College Counseling Center and am now in my twenty-third year there.

What do you love about your work?

Identity formation (spiritual, personal, sexual, vocational, etc.) has always been my main interest, so I could not ask for a better environment to focus on those than getting to work with college students.

What are the particular challenges of serving as a therapist in your context?

There's always been the battle against the stigma of mental health needs, especially by Christians, so there's been a great opportunity to help people understand and respect their mental health as just as important as their physical health. Getting to help people understand various facets of their mental health, specifically the role and function of their emotions, hopefully helps them to live more fully into the person God is calling them to be.

What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence on your counseling practice?

Particularly for the work in a community based out-patient clinic, I felt equipped with both a clinically and theologically informed framework of loving everyone as image

bearers of God (Imago Dei), and that income level should not limit a person's ability to receive quality care.

How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?

Working with college students requires seeing people as "in development," and having a developmental mindset has been helpful for parenting, church ministry, and how I think about really important cultural issues. There's an old adage that "change is inevitable, but growth is intentional." Our stages of life are always changing, and we can choose to grow (in faith) or not.

What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are beginning therapists?

Two things. Not that I know a lot about farming, but I've likened counseling to farming. Every person you encounter is in a certain season of their life. Part of a counselor's role is to figure out what season your client is in, and what work needs to be done. Am I tilling soil and removing rocks? Maybe someone else will come along after me and plant seeds, or maybe I'm planting seeds based on someone else's work. Perhaps counseling is a season of water and sunshine needed for growth. Hopefully I'm not a manure spreader, but we've all had to shovel hard issues. And then there's the season of harvest when people make great changes that are internalized and integrated. But, we never know how long we'll get to work with someone, so being mindful of seasons has always been helpful for me. The second is, being a counselor/therapist means you get to be like Jesus, because you're encountering someone in their point of need, loving them, and helping them to move forward.

Do you have any publications or links to share?

You can [visit our department's Instagram page](#) to view our video series called Words Matter where we talk about words that have clinical origins that are misappropriated in the cultural vernacular. I also manage a side account called [@shrinkwithsign](#), which has humorous messages mental health support and dad jokes.