High attrition rates among doctoral students are of great concern. Based on national statistics in the United States, at least 50% of students who start a doctoral program do not complete their degree (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Lovitts, 2000). Although factors leading to attrition can vary given the individual student and the discipline, the faculty-student relationship is the most commonly noted problematic factor across disciplines (Fedynich & Bain, 2011; Lovitts 2001). However, the research on doctoral advisor-advisee relationships remains sparse, particularly in counselor education (Protivanak & Foss, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to explore the demographic profile of counselor educators during the dissertation phase of their doctoral programs by examining counselor educators’ expectations of an ideal mentor, perceptions of their advisory working alliance and perceptions of their advisors’ willingness to mentor, as experienced during the dissertation phase of their doctoral programs. Additionally, this study explores the relationship of these perceptions and cross-cultural advising based on differing gender, race or both with time-to-degree.
This study was motivated by the following five research questions: (1) What are the ideal mentor expectations of counselor educators during the dissertation phase of their doctoral programs? (2) What are the perceived advisory working alliance experiences of counselor educators during the dissertation phase of their doctoral programs? (3) What is the relationship between the perceived advisory working alliance as measured by the AWAI-S and time-to-degree? (4) What is the relationship between the perceived willingness to mentor and time-to-degree? (5) What is the relationship between cross-cultural advising based on differing gender, race or both, and time-to-degree?

The research design chosen for this study was a cross-sectional survey design. The data was collected through three online self-administered instruments (a) the Ideal Mentor Scale (IMS; Rose 2003, 2005); (b) the Advisory Working Alliance Inventory-Student Version (AWAI-S; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001); (c) a demographic questionnaire. The researcher utilized a purposive sampling method to solicit full and adjunct counselor educators working in CACREP-accredited master’s and doctoral counseling programs across the United States. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience during the dissertation phase of their doctoral program.

The findings of this study support that the phenomenon of mentoring in doctoral education is as valued and expected in Counselor Education as it is in other disciplines. However, there was neither a statistically significant relationship between time-to-degree and perception of dissertation advisory working alliance nor did the advisory working alliance, perception of advisor’s willingness to mentor and cross-cultural advising relationships predict time-to-degree. However, expectations of an ideal mentor and the perceptions of the advisory working alliance provided insight into the dissertation advising experiences of counselor educators. Limitations of this study, implications for Counselor Education and doctoral training, and recommendations for future research are identified.