

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Zobaida Laota Awarded \$20,000 Counseling Fellowship From NBCC and Affiliates**



Greensboro, NC—The NBCC Foundation, an affiliate of the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), recently selected Zobaida Laota, of Greensboro, North Carolina, for the National Board for Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship Program (NBCC MFP). As an NBCC MFP Fellow, Laota will receive funding and training to support her education and facilitate her service to underserved minority populations.

The NBCC MFP is made possible by a grant first awarded to NBCC by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in August 2012. The Foundation is contracted by NBCC to administer the NBCC MFP, as well as training and collaboration activities, such as [webinars](#), that are open to all National Certified Counselors (NCCs). The goal of the program is to strengthen the infrastructure that engages diverse individuals in counseling and increases the number of professional counselors providing effective, culturally competent services to underserved populations.

The NBCC MFP will distribute \$20,000 to Laota and the 22 other doctoral counseling students selected to receive the fellowship award. Laota is a graduate of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and of North Carolina State University, in Raleigh, and is currently a doctoral student in the counseling and counselor education program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Laota has lived her life between Sudan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia, which has influenced her worldview and desire to serve minority populations significantly. Her current research interests are centered on the diverse Muslim population in the United States as well as immigrant and refugee populations. Laota is currently a member of the Behavioral and Mental Health Committee at the Islamic Association of Raleigh and sees examples of the many barriers that affect these populations globally in her own community. These barriers include cultural and linguistic barriers, limited understanding and competence by practitioners to work with this population, and stigma surrounding mental health and help-seeking. Laota hopes to achieve her goals of reducing the health disparity that exists for minority populations in the United States through the support of the MFP. Laota believes that the academic space provides a powerful platform for change and hope through education, research, and service to the community and the counseling profession. As a future counselor educator, she hopes to use this academic platform to train counseling students and professionals to work with minority populations, including the Muslim, immigrant, and refugee populations in the United States. As a counselor, Laota hopes to continue to providing services to individuals across cultures with dignity, respect for their worldviews, and compassion. This career path integrates her identities as a clinician, educator, researcher, mentor, and social justice advocate. This fellowship will provide Laota with needed professional development and mentorship opportunities to continue on her journey to achieving these goals.

The NBCC Foundation has also awarded 30 \$8,000 master's-level fellowships through the [MFP-Youth](#) (MFP-Y) and 34 master's-level fellowships of up to \$11,000 through the [MFP-Addictions Counselors](#) (MFP-AC). The Foundation plans to open the next NBCC MFP application period in fall 2018. To learn more about the NBCC MFP and its fellows, please visit [www.nbccf.org/Programs/Fellows](http://www.nbccf.org/Programs/Fellows).

## ABOUT THE NBCC FOUNDATION

The NBCC Foundation is the nonprofit affiliate of the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), based in Greensboro, North Carolina. NBCC is the nation's premier professional certification board devoted to credentialing counselors who meet standards for the general and specialty practices of professional counseling. Currently, there are more than 64,000 board-certified counselors in the United States and more than 50 countries. The Foundation's mission is to leverage the power of counseling by strategically focusing resources for positive change.

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