

## **Counselor Education Program Evaluation – 2023-24 Annual Report**

What follows is a summary of student learning outcome data that were reviewed in relation to the program objectives along with recommendations and/or specific modifications to be implemented.

### **1. Current students and graduates will develop and demonstrate a professional counseling identity**

#### Summary of Data:

Data points we reviewed came from student performance in courses and from student self-report. The student measures related to this outcome revealed all students demonstrated knowledge and skills at or above the expected level related to professional counseling identity. Aspects measured in professional counseling identity include history and philosophy of the profession, professional and ethical standards, and counseling skills. These scores are similar to last year with some scores increasing. Many measures were scored at exceptional with 100% of students in both tracks meeting this level. There were no students who scored in the unsatisfactory category or progressing category. Site supervisors and alumni mostly agreed or strongly agreed with this as evidenced by their ratings. All students are members of national counseling organizations, but smaller percentages are members of state counseling organizations or CSI. There are currently 27 students who were newly inducted into the CSI chapter in the spring joining the 35 existing members.

#### Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

Students appear to be excelling with regard to their knowledge about the profession of counseling and almost all are joining various professional organizations. In particular, faculty have increased the number of measures used to assess ethics and professional identity. Measures indicate maintenance of high scores from the start of the program to internship in ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and applications of ethical and legal considerations in counseling among both tracks. This is a continued stabilization in the exceptional category over the past several years. This high standard may be due to the inclusion of our ethics course for all students. At the end of their program all students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that overall the program prepared them prepared them for ethical decision making and professional practice. We may want to look at other ways to assess professional counseling identity in the future to make sure we are collecting an accurate reflection.

### **2. Current students and graduates will exhibit self-reflection and self-awareness and demonstrate professional growth**

#### Summary of Data:

Data points gathered from student fitness reviews, the multicultural counseling course, and during practicum and internship courses. Students demonstrated the ability to self-reflect at

mostly exceptional levels of self-awareness, with the majority of students exceeding expectations. Proficient and emerging ratings for self-awareness were noted during practicum, however these scores increased during internship and at fitness reviews. Additionally, 100% of students were rated as meeting or exceeding criteria for awareness related to their belief system, values, and limitations. Seventy-five percent of students were rated as proficient or exceptional in regard to understanding the impact of their heritage, attitudes, understanding, and acculturative experience on their views of others, which is a decrease from last year. This data demonstrates that generally students possess reasonable levels of awareness related to cultural factors as they progress throughout the program and that they grow in this awareness as they reach graduation.

Data also demonstrated growth in professional domains during the program. Data was collected from exit surveys, comprehensive examinations, fitness reviews, and internship. Exit surveys indicated that 100% of school counseling students and 97% of clinical mental health students agreed or strongly agreed that the program prepared them well for professional practice. During comprehensive exams at the end of their programs, school counseling students were rated at an average of 92% being exceptional at applying a professional counseling orientation and ethical practice and the remaining students were rated as proficient. During fitness reviews, students across the program were rated at 100% for meeting or exceeding criteria overall in the Professional Responsibility category. This data suggests that all students demonstrate high levels of professionalism throughout the program and most students believe that they grow in their professionalism from the beginning to the end of the program.

#### Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

As expected, we see slight variation in the level of self-awareness demonstrated by our students. A small number of students were rated at basic/emerging levels in self-awareness and professional growth and these ratings were mostly during the beginning stages of their participation in our program. We expect that this is due to typical developmental factors and learning to gain deeper insight. Most students were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations areas of self-reflection, self-awareness, and professionalism. Students' application of ethical and legal considerations through the comprehensive exams remained consistent with the previous year.

### **3. Current students and graduates will exhibit critical thinking skills**

#### Summary of Data:

Data was gathered from the CMH and SC comprehensive exams, one school counseling specific course, and two courses that are required for all CMH students and electives for SC students. All students demonstrated critical thinking skills at expected levels with an overall increase in students scoring in the proficient and exceptional levels as compared to last year.

#### Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

We continued to examine the data points identified to measure this outcome. We will continue to use these classes and exams as this seems to broaden our ability to have a clearer picture of

our student's development of critical thinking skills. We will continue to review courses to evaluate where we can better support students with critical thinking over the course of their development in the program. In addition, we will determine the best assessments for the objective when we transition away from comprehensive exams starting in Spring 2025. Ethical Issues in Counseling in one course to consider for this.

#### **4. Current students and graduates will apply culturally sensitive counseling, career, and human development theories to individual and group counseling practice**

##### Summary of Data:

Numerous data points were examined for this objective and results varied across the different points. Regarding culturally sensitive counseling, the majority of students demonstrated an ability to apply knowledge at or above expected levels across different measures throughout the program. As expected, levels of culturally sensitive counseling data were lower in the introductory courses. All except one student were rated at meeting or exceeding expectations at the comprehensive exam stage in this area. Based on exit survey data, most students agreed or strongly agreed that they were prepared to implement culturally relevant interventions upon graduation. For application of knowledge related to human development and counseling theories, most students received ratings at or above the expected levels with lower levels occurring earlier in the program. Exit survey data indicate that 92% of school counseling and 67% of clinical mental health students agree or strongly agree that the program prepared them to be grounded in theory. The majority of students also demonstrated application of career counseling knowledge, with a very small percentage performing at a lower progressing level early in the program. Overall, data revealed students are at or above expectations for this outcome showing progress over time with lower ratings being received in the earlier content courses as compared to the practicum experience and comprehensive exam.

##### Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

Variation in student performance is expected, and for the most part, students seem to be grasping and applying knowledge in a positive trend throughout the program. Upon graduation, the majority of students report having the knowledge necessary to implement all aspects of this outcome. According to exit surveys, students the past two years were less confident in their ability to apply interventions grounded in theory than in other recent years. We will look throughout the curriculum to ensure theory is covered consistently throughout the courses. We may need to examine how to better capture application of these areas to group settings, as this was not clearly communicated in the data that was gathered, or look at revising this outcome.

#### **5. Current students and graduates will identify and use counseling interventions and techniques that are grounded in research**

##### Summary of Data:

The program assessed this objective via assignments and projects that require students to identify and apply research to counseling practice as well as projects that require the collection and analysis of original data. Students demonstrated the ability to understand and apply

research-based theories and models of counseling within didactic and field placement courses at proficient and exceptional levels. Students also displayed increased growth in using essential skills that are grounded in theory in both types of courses. Our assessment data indicated that students overall increased their ability to identify evidence-based practices and how to critique research to inform counseling practice. Growth was noted in this area from the start to the end of the program with almost all students scoring within the proficient to exceptional range. Nearly all students noted strongly agree or agree in their exit surveys that the program adequately prepared them to apply interventions grounded in theory and/or research.

Modifications and/or Action Plans:

We continue to see our students move from scoring at the proficient level early in the program to scoring exceptional in the areas of applying research to their counseling practice. Students continue to apply research-based theories and systems approaches to conceptualizing clients at proficient and exceptional levels. Students were able to transfer formative and theoretical learning into applied practice at greater mastery from practicum to internship courses. Almost 100% of students scored at the proficient and exceptional levels related to the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession and how to critique research to inform counseling practice. It will be important to continue to focus on application of evidence-based practices as students progress through the program.

**6. Current students and graduates will identify processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination and avenues for advocacy**

Summary of Data:

All students demonstrated ability at or above the expected level in relation to awareness of factors that influence how people view others. All students were able to identify processes for advocacy in their varied settings. All students demonstrated awareness on the comprehensive exam stage regarding the effects of power and privilege. All students demonstrated adherence to ethical standards, with a slight increase from the previous year.

Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

Students appear to be gaining desired knowledge and dispositions related to their role as advocates and in awareness of intentional and unintentional oppression. As this is such an important part of counselors' roles, we will monitor whether it seems we are measuring this accurately.

**7. Current students and graduates will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to identify and use culturally relevant assessment strategies**

Summary of Data:

Students demonstrated skills to prepare and conduct culturally relevant assessments through assignments that required application of knowledge. Less students received ratings of proficient or above in the area of effectively selecting, preparing for, conducting, interpreting, and using assessments for diagnostic and intervention planning, than in the recent past.

#### Modifications and/or Action Plans:

Our students demonstrate progressing or proficient knowledge of using culturally competent assessment related skills in counseling. They are proficient in their abilities to demonstrate effective initial assessment meetings, selection and use of assessment tools, and interpretation of assessment results. As we move forward, we can continue to strengthen the training related to assessment strategies related to high-risk clients. This objective may also be modified to include data related to trauma-informed practices.

### **8. Current students and graduates will identify opportunities and processes for collaborating and consulting**

#### Summary of Data:

School counseling students are assessed throughout the program regarding their collaboration and consultation skills implemented with parents, teachers, and administrators. Almost all students were rated at the proficient and exceptional level. CMH counseling students demonstrated almost 100% at exceptional levels in understanding collaboration and consultation within supervision over the course of their internship experiences as assessed by University and Site Supervisors. In their exit surveys a large percentage of School Counseling and CMH students in the program stated that they strongly agree, with a small percentage stating they agree, that they gained skills to effectively collaborate with others. This was similar to last year's ratings.

#### Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

We will continue to examine other places in the program where we can assess this standard for all students to get a better picture of how they are growing developmentally regarding collaboration and consultation throughout the program for each focus area (school and CMHC). It seems that there may be an increased need to assess this aspect more intentionally over time, particularly within the CMHC track to determine their understanding and application of collaboration in the field.

### **9. Current students and graduates will acquire knowledge and skills in their counseling specialty area**

#### Summary of Data:

Data points we reviewed came from courses in the specialization areas (school and CMHC). Overall, students demonstrated growth both in knowledge and skills based on most ratings of proficient or exceptional in their specialty areas throughout the program. Data shows that, students demonstrated high levels in areas such as using a systems approach, understanding the impact of crisis and trauma, and cultural factors. CMHC students were rated at 100% proficient and exceptional on the diagnostic domain of their comprehensive exam and school counseling students were rated at similar levels on the school counseling portion of their comprehensive exam. In the foundational course, school counseling student data indicates most ratings at the exceptional level related to classroom lessons (developmentally

appropriate, measurable objectives, cooperative learning, real world application). Additionally, 100% of students were rated proficient or exceptional in advocating for and explaining school counselor roles. Exit survey data from both programs indicate that most students strongly agree and agree that the program prepared them for professional practice.

Summary and Modifications or Recommendations:

We feel mostly satisfied with the knowledge and skills students are developing in their specialty areas and will monitor for additional opportunities to assess knowledge and skill development specific to each specialty. In particular for CMHC, there might need to be a measure of skills earlier in the program in order to determine growth over time. We recommend that CACREP standard 5.G.3.c be assessed as part of EDC 8510 Leadership in School Counseling or during EDC 8410 Internship Final Evaluation to assess knowledge and skill of SC students in the area of: Core curriculum design, lesson plan development, classroom management strategies, and differentiated instructional strategies. This will help demonstrate growth from the beginning to the end of the program in the area and may be helpful to assess how we are training future school counselors who do not have a teaching background. Additionally, it may be beneficial to assess growth in other areas of practice such as college/career readiness that is a big part of the school counselor role.

**10. The program will focus on a commitment to inclusion and equity as evidenced by increased representation of students from underrepresented populations in our program graduates and community partnerships.**

Demographic data from the past year indicates consistent representation of underrepresented populations in the counselor education program. In conjunction with the CCC grant, faculty have had more opportunities for trainings related to cultural humility and responsiveness and are currently reviewing the curriculum to enhance culturally responsive pedagogy. In addition, the CCC grant has provided opportunities to serve high-needs schools with the community.

While this is a new objective and the assessment standards are being solidified, the objectives and findings will be identified as the program transitions to the 2024 CACREP standards and officially posted with the 2024-2025 annual review.

2024 Admissions	School counseling	Clinical mental health counseling
total applicants	135	151
total applicants offered admission	23	25
total applicants who accepted offer	16	18
average undergrad GPA of 2023 cohort	3.94	3.68
<b>Current Student Demographics</b>		

<b><i>Ethnicity</i></b>		
White	34	43
Hispanic or Latino	1	1
Black or African-American	6	4
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	
Two or More Races	2	4
Unknown		1
<b><i>Gender</i></b>		
Female	40	43
Male	4	10