

Counselor Education Program Review

Response to Unit Program Review Report

The Counselor Education masters program in the Department of Higher, Adult, and Counselor Education engaged in an academic program review in April of 2013. The department and Counselor Education program faculty in particular wish to thank Dr. Loretta Bradley (Texas Tech University), Dr. Janna Scarborough (East Tennessee State University), and Dr. Shari Sias (ECU, Department of Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies) for their service as external reviewers of our program. The diligence, expertise, and insights they brought to the task are greatly appreciated as we continuously seek to improve our program.

The purpose of this response is to address comments and recommendations made by the external review committee in the Unit Program Review Report for the Counselor Education program. Overall, the external review was very positive, and the reviewers highlighted many strengths of the program. Reviewers also provided recommendations for improvement. Those identified strengths and areas for improvement will be addressed in this response.

The reviewers made a point of acknowledging the positive comments received from students and alumni and those of internal and external constituents and colleagues regarding the dedication, passion, enthusiasm, professionalism and hard work of the Counselor Education faculty members. It was noted that the Counselor Education faculty have developed a clear identification with the counseling profession (i.e., professional identity) as evidenced by the earning of appropriate degrees (CACREP accredited), service to the profession at the local, state, and national levels, and scholarship appearing in refereed counseling journals. The reviewers also noted the faculty commitment to excellence as evidenced by direct on-site advisement of students (to facilitate student progression and successful completion), the pursuit of CACREP accreditation, and on-going program assessment to enhance program implementation.

The external reviewers also identified the Counselor Education faculty's diverse experiences and interests as strengths for providing enrichment to students while continuing to maintain a shared program vision. Faculty were also praised for demonstrating strong support to site supervisors and part-time instructors by responding to questions promptly and in a professional manner, while also providing supervision training for site supervisors. Furthermore, it was noted that all of the Counselor Education faculty have embraced the pursuit of CACREP and participated in and contributed to that process on top of an "already heavy workload."

Finally, with regards to strengths of the program, the Counselor Education program was seen as being responsive to the needs within East Carolina University and the community at-large as evidenced by providing cohort learning models to counties that had asked for such support, the creation of the McClammy Counseling Laboratory and the connections being forged on-campus and beyond as a result, and the service learning activities students experience through the

curriculum during their time in the program. In addition, the program reflects attention to Counselor Education best practices by moving to a 60-hour curriculum, matching that curriculum to reflect professional standards, knowledge and student outcomes, assessing program to make program revisions, and infusing diversity and ethics throughout the curriculum.

Reviewers noted several areas for improvement in their report, as well, related to the program/curriculum, and to resources. To start, the reviewers emphasized the need for the program to follow through on earning accreditation. They stated that the lack of this counseling accreditation inhibits opportunities for student recruitment, graduate employment, and certification possibilities. The Counselor Education faculty have collectively made the decision to pursue CACREP, and have been working intently on this goal for over the past two years. Over the course of that time, various steps have been taken to prepare the Counselor Education program for this accreditation process. This includes a change in curriculum (move from 48 to 60 hours), designing and implementing various policies and programs (i.e., advising responsibilities, the McClammy Laboratory along with appropriate practicum and internship procedures, etc.), and an improvement in assessment processes that allow for the collection and analyzing of program data.

The Counselor Education faculty worked for over a year to complete the CACREP self-study report, in excess of 1100 pages. The self-study was submitted in December of 2012. Since that time a site visit was approved and is scheduled to take place during the first week of June, 2013. The Counselor Education faculty is currently preparing for that visit and hope that the end result will be accreditation for the Counselor Education program.

The second recommendation from the review committee was to hire two full-time faculty members. If approved, gaining one additional faculty member would help to bring the faculty-to-student ratio in line, as required by CACREP. In addition, the additional faculty would address workload issues the committee cited (i.e., recruitment and admissions, advising, field placement and clinical supervision, assessment coordination, counseling laboratory supervision). Finally, the addition of a second full-time faculty member would aid with the above mentioned items, along with helping deal with growth in credit hour production/enrollment anticipated due not only to accreditation but also increased cohort offerings to meet identified needs in rural areas.

The third recommendation focused on marketing of the program. The committee acknowledged the value of a CACREP accreditation and suggested this distinction will aid in the marketing of the Counselor Education program and potentially provide opportunities for program expansion in the future. As a byproduct of the CACREP self-study, the Counselor Education faculty members have designed a three year program-specific strategic plan (see Appendix I) for recruiting a more diverse student population student population. Program faculty have started working on this plan in Fall semester 2012. The faculty intend to increase marketing tools (brochures, web presence, etc.) in an effort to continue to attract students to the program. This effort will also include the

continuing relationships with various school systems within the state to meet the needs of those communities.

The final suggestion for improvement focused on enhancing the student assessment and evaluation process. The Counselor Education faculty have worked diligently to enhance the assessment of the program, and have attempted to better explain these procedures as a result of completing the CACREP self-study. The review committee did see a copy of the Counselor Education assessment information present in the CACREP study and copies of various assessment documents were made available. The committee encouraged faculty to implement this comprehensive assessment plan. As a result of the program review, the Counselor Education faculty intend to review the number of electives available to students in the program (i.e., consider reducing this number) and examine the potential for adding additional concentration-specific courses in order to meet standard expectations and specialization-specific outcomes. This process will begin in earnest after the site CACREP site visit is completed (early June, 2013), as no curricular changes can be made in that time. In response to the reviewers' request that we more formally solidify the Counselor Education assessment plan and create an additional clinical/skills focused component, the faculty have modified the existing assessment plan to clarify documentation procedures and the longitudinal process of program evaluation (see Appendix II) and have developed a competency evaluation/skills checklist that was implemented in all clinical experiences courses during the Spring semester 2013 (see Appendix III).

The Department of Higher, Adult, and Counselor Education, and in particular, the faculty members of the Counselor Education program at East Carolina University would like to thank the members of the program review committee who gave of their time to help improve the program. The faculty appreciate the professional manner in which they approached the task, and the efforts spent in giving the program a thorough review.

Appendix I

Counselor Education Strategic Recruitment Plan: Attracting, Enrolling and Retaining Culturally Diverse Students

Counselor Education faculty have developed a three year plan for increasing the cultural diversity present within the program's student population in the areas of gender, racial and ethnic identity and sexual identity. A review of the current student population revealed that there is limited diversity in these areas and to ensure that the program is sufficiently preparing counselors to meet the needs of client populations in our region, faculty believe that targeted recruitment is necessary. Thus the strategic plan follows:

- I. 2012-2013
 - a. Assess current student population and determine areas of specific need for
 - a. targeted recruitment
 - b. Enhance Counselor Education program website by featuring current students from underrepresented groups. Additionally, develop a rotating banner of student profiles featuring students from diverse ages, racial/ethnic identities, in-state and out-of-state residency, full-time and part-time status (following the lead of the Graduate School) to help strengthen the site as a recruitment tool.
 - c. Partner with student organizations serving target demographic groups to provide program recruitment information (marketing materials and student/faculty speakers as appropriate) including, but not limited to:
 - a. Arab Student Union
 - b. Black Students Union
 - c. Chinese Students and Scholars Association
 - d. ECU African Students' Organization
 - e. ECU Hillel
 - f. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Union
 - g. International Students Association
 - h. Student Association of Latino Spanish Affairs
 - d. Plan and facilitate a question and answer session about careers in
 - a. counseling hosted by the Counselor Education Association for cultural
 - b. student groups served by the Student Activities and Organizations office
 - e. Connect with current partners in Local Education Agencies, Community
 - a. Colleges, Clinical Mental Health Agencies and across the University to share recruitment materials and identify outstanding potential applicants.

- f. Assess success of efforts upon conclusion of admissions process during the Spring semester and make recommendations for changes as necessary
- II. 2013-2014
 - a. Continue to implement strategies B-E above with revisions to plans and processes as determined in Strategy F
 - b. Provide a workshop with a key cultural leader from the field of Counseling and a topic interesting and appropriate for undergraduates in other “helping professions” programs across campus, including Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Child Development and Family Relations, etc. During either the opening or closing of the workshop share brief information about the field of Counseling and the Counselor Education program.
 - c. Seek funding for a graduate assistantship or scholarship to support a student from an underrepresented student group
 - d. Assess success of efforts upon conclusion of admissions process during the Spring semester and make recommendations for changes as necessary
- III. 2014-2015
 - a. Continue to implement all strategies from above with revisions and/or deletions as necessary as determined by assessment/evaluation (Strategy D in Section II above)
 - b. Develop a mentoring program pairing student leaders in program with promising potential applicants from targeted demographic groups (identified through professional partnerships and student organizations)
 - c. Connect students in program with culturally-competent professionals in the community in mentoring relationships to support student retention
 - d. Have faculty provide targeted outreach to local community colleges, school systems and the university to assist with recruitment
 - e. Assess success of efforts upon conclusion of admissions process during the Spring semester and make recommendations for changes as necessary
 - f. Develop future steps for continued targeted recruitment

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Appendix II

Counselor Education Assessment Plan Student Progress Assessment & Program Assessment

The MS in Counselor Education at East Carolina University prepares graduate students to serve as professionals in the field of counseling in the professional specialization areas of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling and Student Affairs and College Counseling. The program has been reviewed and approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to academically prepare and endorse candidates for school counseling licensure. Additionally, the program is currently accredited by NCATE and is pursuing accreditation by CACREP. The program provides classroom-based and experiential instruction for students, as well as intensive clinical experience practica and internships.

Assessment is critical to promoting the professional development of each individual student and for the effective facilitation of the overall program. Assessment of student progress occurs throughout the student's matriculation through the program utilizing a number of different methods. For each individual student, this assessment process is used to guide and support the student's professional development. For the program, this overarching assessment process is utilized to continue to refine and improve the professional development experiences offered to students. Formal assessment of student progress is comprised of the following benchmarks:

- Benchmark I: Preparedness for Program Participation ~ Admissions Evaluation: Faculty review and selection of applicants for admission to program
- Benchmark II: Professional Performance, Knowledge and Skills ~ Biennial Professional Performance Review: Counselor and Adult Education Professional Performance Review (CAEPPR) conducted at the conclusion of each Fall and Spring semester (SLO assessment incorporated)
- Benchmark III: Professional Awareness and Knowledge ~ Comprehensive Exam: Completion of the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE)
- Benchmark IV: Professional Practice & Skills ~ Clinical Skill Competency Evaluation conducted in clinical experiences courses
- Benchmark V: Professional Preparedness ~ Professional Licensure Exam: National Counselor Exam &/or Praxis II

Benchmark I: Preparedness for Program Participation ~ Faculty Selection of Applicants for Admission to Program

Benchmark I has been established to allow program faculty to form a baseline evaluation of students' potential preparedness for program engagement. Benchmark I is a critical step in identifying students who are likely able to matriculate through the program successfully and it is comprised of a number of different indicators including standardized test scores, undergraduate GPS, an essay describing the potential student's professional goals, an interview with program faculty and an additional writing

sample completed following the interview. These components are the basis for faculty determinations about student admissions and students who are admitted to the program have successfully completed Benchmark I. This benchmark is also a critical element of overall program assessment as faculty review all student applications and from this data derive a profile of applicants who were accepted and applicants who were denied admission. This information is used to determine how effectively the program is recruiting students from a diverse pool of applicants, particularly from high-need regions of the university service-area.

Student Progress Assessment: The Counselor Education faculty reviews applications for admission into the Counselor Education program during the Spring semester for both Summer and Fall admissions. All potential applicants first submit an application for admissions to the Graduate School and these applications are screened by the Graduate School and based upon students' GPA and GRE or MAT scores, all applicants are designated as qualified or not qualified for admission. All applications (both qualified and not qualified) are forwarded to faculty for review. The program process for considering applications and rendering admissions determinations include four steps: faculty review of application packet, applicant interview with program faculty, applicant's completion of essay, and finally determination of admission. Program faculty review applications and vote to determine if applicants are invited for a campus interview. Applicants who receive a majority of approval votes from faculty are invited for an interview. Applicant interviews are conducted by all available program faculty and following the interview, applicants complete an essay elucidating their reasons for deciding to pursue a degree in counseling. All members of the faculty then consider all information elicited during the interview, the application packet and the essay and render a determination regarding program admission for each applicant. Applicants who are invited to enter the program have successfully achieved Benchmark I.

Program Assessment: Each year, a demographic profile of accepted program applicants and those who were denied admission is developed and shared with program faculty. This information is utilized to make determinations concerning strategic admissions initiatives and needed academic preparatory support for promising but not qualified applicants.

Benchmark II: Professional Performance, Knowledge and Skills ~ utilizes the CAEPPR – Biennial Professional Performance Review

Benchmark II is intended to assess students' professional performance, knowledge and skills twice a year (during each regular term academic semester). This Benchmark is fulfilled utilizing the Counselor and Adult Education Professional Performance Review (CAEPPR). This review serves as a means of assessment and also a tool for remediation for students who are determined to evidence areas of concern within their professional performance, knowledge and skills as they matriculate through the program. In addition to serving as a formal assessment of a student's individual competencies in these areas, the data from Benchmark II is compiled into an annual report that illuminates patterns of strengths and challenges in the development of student competencies across the program.

Student Progress Assessment: Faculty complete a review for all students biennially at the completion of each academic semester. The purpose of this monitoring and review process is to ensure that all graduates of ECU Counselor and Adult Education Programs possess personal and professional characteristics that contribute to their professionalism and/or helping capacity. Additionally, the policy serves as a means to assess students' successful achievement of student learning outcomes aligned with CACREP professional standards. This policy was vetted and approved by the program faculty, department faculty, the Dean of the College of Education and the University Attorney. For students who are determined to be performing below a satisfactory level of professional performance, a remediation plan will be developed collaboratively by the referring instructor and the advisor and shared with the student. Students have one academic semester to improve their performance to a satisfactory level. Students who do not improve to a satisfactory level are provided with additional remediation strategies and given one month to evidence a defined level of improvement, which is noted and explained within the remediation policy. If students fail to improve to a satisfactory level of performance during this month, faculty will convene and render a determination resulting in either further remediation or the student's dismissal from the program, as deemed necessary. The faculty communicates this decision to the department chair, the Dean of the College of Education and the Student in a written letter. If dismissal is deemed the appropriate course of action, faculty consider the student's case and, as determined appropriate by the faculty, make suggestions of other potential degree programs. Students who receive all fives on each semester's CAEPPR have successfully demonstrated competence in the standards, thus achieving Benchmark II. (Benchmark II is an ongoing process occurring each fall/spring semester during which the student is enrolled in the program.)

Program Assessment: Annually reports indicating percentages of students successfully achieving student-learning outcomes and evidencing competencies and percentages of students who did not successfully achieve competencies in the standards is prepared and shared with faculty. The faculty are responsible for reviewing this data, critically evaluating program strengths and challenges that can be inferred from the data, and discuss strategies to enhance and strengthen the program.

Benchmark III: Professional Awareness and Knowledge ~ Comprehensive Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE)

Students typically sit for the comprehensive exam during their final semester of the academic program or upon completion of the core curriculum courses. The findings from the CPCE are utilized to make determinations about student competency in the areas of awareness and knowledge for the eight core curricular areas. Student outcomes are utilized to make inform program evaluation and to provide information about needed curriculum changes.

Student Progress Assessment: All students in the program must take and pass the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) in order to fulfill the program requirements for graduation. The CPCE is offered by the program once during the Fall semester and once during the Spring semester. The CPCE assessment of knowledge aligns with CACREP's eight core curricular areas. Required passing scores are established by the faculty and are set at one standard deviation below the national mean. Students who successfully pass the CPCE have fulfilled Benchmark III.

Program Assessment: The Counselor Education Assessment Coordinator compiles outcome data from each administration of the CPCE and shares it with faculty. From the scores provided, faculty critically consider each of the courses taught in the eight core curricular areas and make determinations of necessary revisions to help strengthen learning opportunities in each core area.

Benchmark IV: Professional Practice and Skills ~ Clinical Skill Competency Evaluation conducted in clinical experiences courses

The professional practice and skills component of the Counselor Education Assessment plan focuses on the assessment of students' clinical skills. This evaluation is conducted in the three clinical experiences courses: COAD 6482: Supervised Counseling Practicum, COAD 6991: Counseling Internship I and COAD 6992: Counseling Internship II. For each area of clinical skill evaluated, a student's level of competence is assessed as either Developing (D), Competent (C), Mastery (M). Each student's Clinical Skill Competency Evaluation follows the student through the clinical experiences coursework to show skill development over time.

Student Progress Assessment: The clinical skill competency of all students in the program is evaluated during practicum, internship I and internship II. Students are required to achieve at least 80% competency on the skills evaluated by the end of the program and remediation is provided to students who have not achieved at least 80% competency by the mid-point of the academic semester of COAD 6992: Counseling Internship II.

Program Assessment: The Counselor Education Clinical Experiences Coordinator compiles outcome data from the Clinical Skill Competency Evaluation annually and shares it with faculty. Faculty explore outcome data to discern which skills seem to present particular challenges for students and to make determinations about ways to enrich learning opportunities across the curriculum to address clinical skill development concerns.

Benchmark V: Professional Preparedness ~ Licensure Exams, NCE or Praxis II

The professional preparedness of students is assessed through the completion of licensure exams, including the National Counselor Exam (NCE) and the Praxis II for School Counselors.

Student Progress Assessment: The majority of students enrolled in the program take either the National Counselor Exam (NCE) or the Praxis II. For students pursuing a professional specialization in Clinical Mental Health a passing score on the NCE serves as fulfillment of Benchmark IV. For students pursuing the School Counseling professional specialization, a passing score on the Praxis II: School Guidance and Counseling serves as fulfillment of Benchmark IV. For students who are pursuing a professional specialization in Student Affairs and College Counseling, these national standardized exams are not required for professional credentialing. For these students, Benchmark IV is optional.

Program Assessment: The program's Assessment Coordinator receives NCE reports following the test administration and these reports share the program average, national average and CACREP-accredited university averages for each of the eight core areas. Additionally, average results are disaggregated into

five Counselor Work Behavior Areas with university, national and CACREP program averages reported for each. This data allows program faculty to compare student outcomes to national standards and to identify challenges within the program curriculum that need to be addressed and core curriculum areas that need to be strengthened. Student pass/fail rates for the Praxis II are also tracked providing additional information to strengthen the program and School Counseling professional specialization.

Foundational Program Assessment Information Informing Curriculum Changes: Surveys of Employers, Graduates and Current Students

Additional information utilized specifically for program assessment, but not used for student progress assessment is not included as a separate Benchmark. This additional Program Assessment data includes surveys of employers, graduates and current students. Survey results are shared with faculty during a yearly program planning retreat and with stakeholders annually in coordination with the College of Education Office of Assessment and Accreditation.

Appendix III

Clinical Skill Competency Evaluation

Clinical experiences faculty evaluate the skill attainment of all students using this evaluation sheet at the end of all clinical experiences coursework, including the following courses: COAD 6482: Supervised Counseling Practicum; COAD 6991: Counseling Internship I; COAD 6992: Counseling Internship II

Students are evaluated as attaining one of the following three levels of skill development: (D) Developing, (C) Competent, or (M) Mastery. Students must achieve competency for at least 80% of the skills evaluated by completion of the program. Remediation will be provided for students who have not achieved at least 80% competency by the mid-point of the semester of Internship II.

Student Name: _____ Student Banner #: _____

Student Professional

Specialization: _____

Clinical Skill Evaluated	Practicum	Internship I	Internship II
Establishing Rapport			
Inquiry Skills			
Conveying Empathy			
Paraphrasing			
Reflection of Feelings			
Affirmation			
Summarization			
Perception Checking			
Reflection of Content			
Pacing			
Focusing			
Clarifying Statements			
Goal Setting			
Therapeutic Use of Silence			
Summarization of Previous Sessions			
Congruent Verbal and Non-Verbal Behavior			
Clear Integration of Theoretical Framework			
Awareness of Body Position and Physical Presentation of Self and Client			
Implicit Feelings			
Identifying Patterns			
Highlighting Strengths & Resiliencies			
Graphic Language/Use of Metaphor			
Appropriate use of Self-Disclosure			
Immediacy			
Confrontation			
Feedback-Giving			
Facilitating termination			