

**Unit Academic Program Review  
East Carolina University  
College of Education  
Department of Higher, Adult and Counselor Education  
Counselor Education Program**

A unit program review of the Counselor Education program in the Department of Higher, Adult, and Counselor Education in the East Carolina University College of Education was conducted on April 8-9, 2013. The program review committee was comprised of one internal reviewer, Dr. Shari Sias of the Department of Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies, and two external reviewers, Dr. Janna Scarborough of East Tennessee State University and Dr. Loretta Bradley of Texas Tech University. This document serves as the Review Committee Report, in accordance with the *Procedures for Academic Program Review* manual.

**1. Program Overview.**

The Master's of Science degree (M.S.) in Counselor Education has a long history at East Carolina University, dating to 1951. The program is specifically designed for individuals planning to enter the counseling profession. There are three specialization areas: School Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and Student Affairs and College Counseling. The program is under the auspices of the Department of Higher, Adult, and Counselor Education, as is a master's degree program in Adult Education and an Ed. D concentration in Higher Education Administration within the College of Education. It is noted that the Counselor Education program is one of few programs within East Carolina University that was identified in the recent Program Prioritization Committee (PPC) process as a program in which to *invest*.

We would like to particularly acknowledge the comments from students and alumni, and those of internal and external constituents and colleagues regarding the dedication, passion, enthusiasm, professionalism and hard work of Counselor Education faculty members.

**2. Program Strengths.**

After review of the self-study and interviews with East Carolina University administration, faculty, constituents and students, several strengths were noted in relation to (a) faculty and (b) program/curriculum.

**(a) Faculty:**

**- Clear identification with counseling profession (i.e., professional identity), as evidenced by:**

- faculty degrees in (CACREP accredited) Counselor Education;
- service in professional associations at the local, state, and national levels; and
- scholarship published in refereed counseling journals.

**- Commitment to program excellence, as evidenced by:**

- direct on-site advisement provided in order to facilitate student progression and successful completion;
- seeking CACREP accreditation (the importance of CACREP accreditation was endorsed by constituents [site supervisors, part-time faculty], alumni, students, and faculty);
- on-going program assessment resulting in changes to processes in order to enhance program implementation; and
- faculty commitment to implement processes requiring an excessive amount of time and attention (i.e., fieldwork placements and program assessment coordinators).

**- Diverse faculty experience and interests provides enrichment to students while maintaining a shared program vision, as evidenced by:**

- faculty incorporate professional experiences and exhibit passion for subject matter within teaching;
- faculty members exemplify the scholar/teacher balance; and
- faculty demonstrate a collective vision focused on program excellence.

**- Strong support provided by the faculty to site supervisors and part-time instructors, as evidenced by:**

- prompt, professional responses to inquiries regarding course content, student issues, and programmatic expectations and procedures; and
- provision of supervision training for site supervisors incorporating theory and practice.

**- Comprehensive view of faculty workload, as evidenced by:**

- Faculty is committed to teaching, scholarship and service plus advisement, mentoring, gatekeeping, assessment and evaluation, collaboration on scholarly publications and presentations with students, and to achieving and maintaining accreditation. The writing and submission of the CACREP self-study, while acknowledged as an extensive project, was embraced by the entire faculty despite adding to an already-heavy workload.

**(b) Program and Curriculum:**

**- Responsiveness to needs within East Carolina University and the community at-large, as evidenced by:**

- cohort offerings in response to identified need for qualified school counselors in a rural setting;
- McClary Lab and collaboration with ECU Student Services; and
- students are engaged in service learning activities within East Carolina University and the surrounding community throughout their tenure in the program.

**- Program reflects attention to counseling best practices, as evidenced by:**

- move to 60-hour curriculum to support professional licensure and accreditation;
- curriculum revisions to reflect professional standards, knowledge and student outcomes;
- evaluation results are utilized in making program revisions; and
- strong infusion of ethics and diversity throughout the program.

**- Opportunities for students to pursue multiple areas of interest/specializations, as evidenced by:**

- students may take coursework in areas outside their identified specialization, in order to increase employability and licensure options.

**3. Areas for Improvement.**

After review of the self-study and interviews with East Carolina University administration, faculty, constituents and students, areas for improvement were noted in relation to (a) program/curriculum and (b) resources.

**(a) Program/Curriculum:**

**- Lack of counseling accreditation, which:**

- inhibits opportunities for student recruitment, graduate employment, and certification possibilities.

**- Articulate and implement a comprehensive assessment/evaluation plan**

- Enhance the current assessment plan to include specific attention to skills development, in addition to knowledge and awareness of student learning

outcomes (e.g., skills developed in courses; field site assessments of skill implementation such as rubrics for counseling session evaluation, case conceptualization and record keeping review).

- Collect and review outcome assessment information in order to assist in program development (e.g., employment rates, assessments from employers and site supervisors).
- Assure long-term collection and maintenance of data for longitudinal assessment and development (e.g., Qualtrics).
- Address specialization of student learning outcomes and on-the-job requirements, in addition to core curriculum.
- An additional course in each specialization, in place of an elective, may allow for breadth and depth of focus on unique specialization knowledge and skills.

#### **(b) Resources**

##### **- Full-time faculty to student ratio:**

- Student/faculty ratio is outside the professional expectations.

##### **- Workload:**

- Faculty have many demands beyond workload calculation of teaching, scholarship, and service (i.e., recruitment and admissions, advising, field placement and clinical supervision, assessment coordination, professional gatekeeping, counseling laboratory supervision).

##### **- Marketing:**

- There is a need to increase internal and external marketing of the program.
- There are opportunities to expand the program into rural areas in order to meet identified community needs (i.e., cohort possibilities).
- Increase awareness of the existence of a quality counseling program in order to facilitate collaboration with units and colleges across ECU, thus maximizing opportunities for shared resources and projects.

#### **4. Recommendations for Improvement.**

In order to effectively address the above-detailed Areas for Improvement, the committee respectfully offers four recommendations, as follows:

**First: Achieve and maintain CACREP accreditation.**

CACREP accreditation is a recognized standard of excellence for potential students, licensure boards, doctoral programs, and employers. Upon completion of a CACREP- accredited degree program, graduates are immediately eligible for National Counselor Certification (NCC). The Veterans Administration and military employment also require graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, and attainment of the accreditation enhances the program's ability to recruit both in- and out-of-state students.

Graduates who chose to begin their careers in North Carolina will be academically eligible for North Carolina Licensed Professional Counselor status with the implementation of the 60-hour requirement beginning June 30, 2013.

**Second: Hire two full-time faculty members.**

It is the committee's understanding that the Counselor Education program had a faculty member retire and that position was not returned to the program. Though we recognizes the difficult economic realities all public universities face, it is recommended that this position be returned which would bring the faculty-to-student ratio in line with professional expectations (e.g., CACREP) and address the workload issues discussed above (i.e., recruitment and admissions, advising, field placement and clinical supervision, assessment coordination, professional gatekeeping, counseling laboratory supervision).

The committee also recommends adding another full-time faculty member – bringing the total full-time faculty roster to six – due to an anticipated growth in credit hour production/enrollment. Such growth is anticipated as a result of expanded cohort offerings which meet identified needs in rural areas.

Faculty are also encouraged to continue and expand their collaboration across East Carolina University and in the communities it serves. This will produce more opportunities for interdisciplinary projects, grant-writing and other program-building initiatives.

**Third: Develop and implement a strategic marketing plan.**

Marketing, in concert with the items detailed in the previous recommendations, is a too-often-overlooked source of credit hour production and increased enrollment.

The inherent value of CACREP accreditation grows exponentially when internal and external marketing efforts, designed to raise awareness of a program's excellence, are carefully planned and consistently executed. The give-and-take with other departments, community services and individuals which such initiatives create often alert faculty and, ultimately, college and University administration to additional opportunities for program expansion.

Further, through active collaboration with units and colleges across ECU, additional opportunities for maximizing shared resources and projects will become also evident.

**Fourth: Enhance the student assessment and evaluation process.**

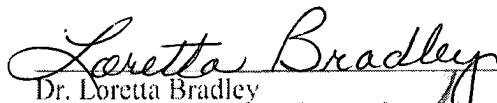
In addition to focusing on student knowledge and awareness, specific skills and overall learning outcomes should be emphasized and quantified. Faculty members are encouraged to implement the comprehensive assessment plan they outlined during the program review.

To achieve this, consider reducing the number of electives and adding additional concentration-specific courses in order to meet standard expectations for specialization-specific outcomes (e.g., additional required school counseling focused course, course addressing common mental health issues and therapeutic treatment).

In summary, the committee would like to thank the Counselor Education faculty, students, and East Carolina University administrators for their openness to the review process. The program's pursuit of excellence is a benefit to the students and the clients they will serve.

Respectfully Submitted,

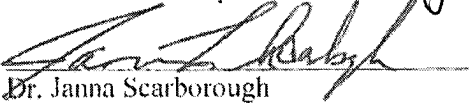
Committee Members:



Dr. Loretta Bradley

4/16/13

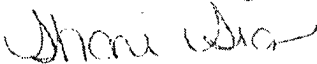
Date



Dr. Janna Scarborough

4/16/13

Date



Dr. Shari Sias

4-16-13

Date