

PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT 2013-2014
Counselor Education M.A. and Ph.D. Programs - Western Michigan University

The Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology conducts systematic evaluations of its programs, including surveys of current students, alumni, site supervisors and employers. The surveys of the aforementioned groups are only part of the program evaluation process. Faculty also use informal means of evaluation, including meetings with students, graduates, and others for the purpose of gaining a more holistic view of stakeholder perceptions of the graduate program in counselor education. The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the key findings from the survey, including areas of strength and areas of improvement, and to indicate select program modifications that either have been made or will be made in response to the data we obtained. We appreciate and value the input that our students, alumni, site supervisors, and employers provided as part of this evaluation. It is through a transparent process of inquiry that a program is able to hear from its stakeholders and make improvements that will ultimately improve graduate counseling programs at Western Michigan University.

The Counselor Education program evaluation took place in three phases during Summer and Fall of 2013. Phase I consisted of surveys of site supervisors and employers of students in all counselor education program options. Phase II consisted of surveys of program graduates in all counselor education program options. Phase III consisted of surveys of current students in all counselor education program options. In addition to the surveys, the counselor education unit director also held a meeting and phone conference call with doctoral program graduates. Following is a summary report of the findings from the surveys as well as a section highlighting strengths and areas of improvement for both M.A. and Ph.D. program options in counselor education. At the conclusion of all of the results, we will highlight some of the program modifications we have made or will be making as a result of the program evaluation.

Field Supervisor and Employer Survey

Field Supervisors

Surveys were disseminated to a list of individuals who have previously served as site supervisors for counselor education interns from clinical mental health counseling, college counseling, marriage, couple, and family counseling, and school counseling programs. Emails containing a link to the survey were sent to the list of site supervisors. A total of 37 field supervisors responded to the survey. Some individuals did not respond to all questions, so when reporting the results, we will use the percentage of participants who responded accordingly.

The majority of field supervisors (70%) reported serving as supervisors for 1-2 interns over the past three years. Field supervisors from every respective program area were represented (clinical mental health counseling; college counseling; marriage, couple and family counseling; school

counseling), though the majority of them worked in either a school or clinical mental health setting .

Field supervisors were asked to rate WMU counselor education interns on their level of knowledge and skill in areas identified as important by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Sample items include the history and philosophy of the counseling profession, ethical codes of the counseling profession, social and cultural diversity, theories of counseling, human development across the lifespan, research methods, assessment, professional identity, and group work. A rating of 1=very poor; 4=satisfactory; and 7=Excellent.

For all ten knowledge items on the core CACREP areas, site supervisors' mean score was over 5, indicating a perception that WMU interns were knowledgeable. Site supervisors were also asked to rate WMU counselor education interns on their skill or ability to apply their knowledge to real, practical situations. Mean scores on individual items ranged from 5.1 to 6.0, indicating that this group of site supervisors believed that WMU counselor education interns were more than satisfactory in their ability to apply their skills in real-world counseling environments. **On the same scale of 1 to 7 with 7 being excellent, they rated the overall competence of WMU counselor education interns as 5.8. When asked to rate counselor education interns on their overall competence as entry-level counseling professionals, over 94% of respondents indicated they were satisfactory to excellent.**

Field supervisors reported strengths of interns in the areas of theories of counseling, social and cultural diversity, and overall individual and group counseling skills. One field supervisor said the following:

“The two students I have supervised have truly been an inspiration and have grown significantly while at their placements. I truly have valued the experience working with these [individuals] and will love continuing to partner with WMU...”

Some of the areas for improvement that field supervisors noted were more training in responding to crisis and trauma, more communication with CECP faculty, and for school counseling students specifically, field supervisors indicated more training in college and post-secondary planning would be beneficial for students.

Employers and Supervisors of LPCs

Employers and Supervisors of Licensed Professional Counselors who completed their graduate training at WMU were also asked to respond to their overall impression of counselor education M.A. graduates' perceived knowledge and skill in counseling. A total of ten employers/supervisors responded to the survey invitation. Most of the employers who responded

worked in a clinical mental health or school counseling setting. Employers and supervisors, like field practicum supervisors, were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 (1=very poor; 4=satisfactory; 7=excellent) the perception of counselor education program graduates' competence in topical areas including ethics, lifespan development, assessment, theories, social and cultural diversity, effects of crisis and trauma. **Mean scores across all items ranged from 5.0 to 6.2. Individual counseling skills and knowledge of ethical codes were rated the highest at 6.2. When asked to rate their perception of the overall level of competence of WMU counselor education M.A. graduates, employers and supervisors rated them as 5.9 on a 7 point scale.** One hundred percent (100%) of employers/supervisors indicated the overall competence of graduates of the counselor education programs as satisfactory to excellent. One quote from an employer/supervisor of WMU's counselor education MA graduates said the following:

"The individuals with whom I worked were working towards their licensure requirements.....the particular aspect that impresses me most has been their ability to reason through very complicated ethical situations that they encounter at their respective work sites and formulate a response that not only adheres to the ethical and legal obligations they hold, but a response that also considers the best interests of the client(s)."

Another employer/supervisor commented on the counselor education program's change a few years ago to phase out the 48-credit hour community counseling program in order to align with the 2009 CACREP Standards for a 60-credit hour clinical mental health counseling program. The employer said the following:

"The focus on clinical mental health counseling has been an improvement over the previous community agency counseling. Students are better prepared to provide diagnoses for mental health conditions. Western's program continues to prepare students to be effective counselors."

Employers and supervisors indicated that, overall, graduates were well prepared, teachable, and eager to jump in and do the required counseling work. One employer indicated that the program could improve by helping students recognize the demands of paperwork in various counseling settings and to further assist students in learning how to balance the needs to provide direct counseling services with the administrative tasks and responsibilities.

Alumni Survey

M.A. Graduates

Surveys of M.A. Graduates from 2009-2013 took place in two waves. The first wave (Part A) sought pertinent demographic information, including employment setting, licenses or certifications held and professional association memberships. The second wave (Part B) asked graduates to rate how well their program prepared them in a series of knowledge and skill areas

reflected in the accreditation standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

Part A was emailed to approximately 250 graduates from counselor education program options in clinical mental health counseling (CMHC); college counseling (CC); marriage, couple and family counseling (MCFC); and school counseling (SC). A total of 74 graduates responded to Part A for a response rate of nearly 30%. School counseling graduates comprised 60% of Part A respondents.

Part A. Please note that due to the significant differences in number of respondents by program area, it is difficult to make any meaningful comparisons between groups. Therefore, we will only report aggregate data for survey respondents. All respondents reported graduating from the program between 2009-2013. Sixty-eight people responded to the question, “What licenses do you currently hold?” A total of 43 respondents (63%) indicated they hold the Limited License as a Professional Counselor or License as a Professional Counselor. A total of 3 respondents (4%) hold the Limited License as a Marriage and Family Therapist. A total of 36 (53%) hold either the endorsement as a school counselor or school counselor license.

A total of 45 (or 61%) of the 74 respondents indicated they are currently working in the counseling profession at the time of the survey. Three of the respondents indicated they are currently pursuing an advanced degree (i.e. Ph.D.) since completing their master’s degree. Forty-nine of the respondents (66%) indicated they currently hold membership in a professional organization.

Part B. Approximately 51 out of the more than 250 people surveyed responded to Part B. Part B of the survey consisted of a series of questions regarding how well the program prepared them for their eventual professional role. All MA programs were represented in the responses to Part B, though school counseling graduates accounted for over 60% of respondents. Given the small response rate from some program areas, the most useful data is in aggregate form. **When respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their overall program experience, the mean ratings across all program areas was 5.52 (1=very poorly; 4=Satisfactorily; 7=very well).** Individual program means ranged from 4.25-6.66.

One of the areas rated consistently lower than others was graduates’ perceived readiness to deal with the effects of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events. Although in most cases, respondents indicated they were prepared “satisfactorily to very well” in this area, the overall rating was lower (with the exception of the graduates from MCFC program) than in most other knowledge and skills/practices areas. This is not altogether surprising given this is a new standard in the 2009 CACREP Standards. However, faculty have already begun addressing this

area for improvement. Specific steps that have been taken are included in the section on program modifications.

Ph.D. Graduates

Twenty-six graduates of the Ph.D. program (from 2006-2013) in Counselor Education were also invited to provide feedback on their overall experience in the program. A total of 10 of the 26 graduates from the counselor education doctoral program responded for a response rate of 38.5%. On a scale from 1-7 (1=very poorly; 4=satisfactory; 7=very well), doctoral program graduates reported a mean rating of 4.67 on their overall doctoral program experience. Doctoral program graduates reported a mean rating of 6.4 in the training in application of theory and skills to supervision and a mean rating of 6.3 in the theoretical frameworks and models of clinical supervision. Graduates reported a mean rating of 3.9 in the area of strategies for responding to community, national and international crises and disasters. This is one of the newer CACREP Standards; faculty will be considering ways they can better attend to this throughout the curriculum.

Current Student Surveys

M.A. Current Students

All students in MA programs in counselor education were invited to complete a survey on their experience in the program. The number of respondents varied by question, because current students are at different stages of their degree program. On a scale from 1-7 (1=very poorly; 4=satisfactory; and 7=very well), **current MA students reported a mean rating of 5.37 on their overall experience in the program.** Current students reported a mean rating of 6.0 on ethics, licensing laws, ethical decision making models and group dynamics/process and therapeutic factors of group work. Current students reported a mean rating of 4.1 on the orientation session for new students. Faculty have already discussed the orientation process and are in process of making changes in response to this feedback.

Ph.D. Current Students

Surveys were distributed to 22 current doctoral students in counselor education. A total of 10 students responded for a 45% response rate. Students were asked to rate their perception of how well the program prepared them in several knowledge and skill areas from the 2009 CACREP Accreditation Standards. Current doctoral students were also asked to identify the greatest strengths in the program as well as suggestions for improvement. On a scale from 1-7 (1=very poorly; 4=satisfactory; and 7=very well), **current doctoral students reported a mean rating of 5.7 on the item “overall experience in the program.”** The two areas rated highest in terms of how well the program is preparing them in knowledge or skill were “experiential opportunities to provide individual or group supervision under the supervision of a program faculty member” (mean of 6.5) and “experiential opportunities to teach or co-teach graduate level counseling classes” (mean of 6.1).

National Counselor Exam Results 2013-2014

The National Counselor Exam (NCC), sponsored by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) is the licensing exam for licensed professional counselors in Michigan. MA students who are nearing the end of the program may apply to take the NCE through WMU. For 2013-2014, current MA students who completed the exam had a 90% pass rate.

Update on Program Modifications – Completed or In Process

The Counselor Education program in the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology is continually seeking to make improvements for the benefit of our students and for the counseling profession. We have made a number of program modifications over the years, many of which are directly tied to the program evaluation process. Following is a brief highlight of some of the changes that we have either completed or changes that we are considering in the near future.

- Nearly six years ago, the CACREP Accredited Community Counseling program curriculum was revised from a 48-credit hour curriculum to a 60-credit hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling program option. While the name and credit-hour requirements of the program changed, the program retained its accredited status as a community counseling program. This change was done to help align the program with the 2009 CACREP Standards, to help prepare us for the next accreditation visit, and to help better prepare our students for positions around the United States.
- The following course objective has been added to the course CECP 6080 Counseling and Lifespan Development: “Effects of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on persons of all ages” (CACREP II.G.3c). This was made more explicit due, in part, to responses from graduate and current student surveys.
- The School Counseling curriculum has been revised. Some graduates of the school counseling program had previously indicated that some of the content of CECP 6290 Organization and Principles of Elementary School Guidance and CECP 6300 Organization and Principles of Secondary School Guidance was redundant. CECP 6290 and 6300 have now been deleted and replaced by CECP 6370 Organization and Principles of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program. Additionally, a new course was created, CECP 6380 School Counseling for Postsecondary Career and College Readiness. Both of these changes will help better prepare school counselors for positions around the country.
- Chi Sigma Iota International Counseling Honor Society, Mu Beta Chapter, has been reactivated. They have already had an induction ceremony and sponsored or co-sponsored the invitation of two scholars to the WMU campus, Dr. Carol Bobby and Dr. David Fennell. Dr. Bobby was here in Spring 2014 and Dr. Fennell in Fall 2014.
- Adoption of the TK20 Assessment and Data Management System to help improve measurement and tracking of student learning outcomes.

- The MA Orientation process is being revised. The new process has been reviewed by the Unit Director and piloted by a small sample of current students in the program. One Counselor Education faculty members is currently making revisions and plans to propose the new format to faculty by Spring 2015.