

Annual Program Report for Programs in Counselor Education

September 1, 2018

Introduction

Welcome to our annual assessment report. The Department of Counselor Education compiles this report annually on our programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling from data and processes which occur ongoing throughout the previous year. The report is a summary of evaluations conducted throughout the year primarily to insure and demonstrate program effectiveness. The various assessments address our comprehensive evaluation plan as defined in our CACREP self-study.

Before we summarize the results, we would like to call attention to a few highlights from the past year.

First, we are excited to report that our program in Counseling has been recognized by the Graduate School as “The Most Loved Graduate Program at UL” for a second year in a row! Many of the stories shared by alumni and current students were taken into consideration during the competition and we are humbled and grateful for the recognition. Thank you for participating so enthusiastically. The trophy, which is ours for another year, and the commemorative plaque, which is ours to keep, are on display in the department office.

Also, congratulations are in order for Dr. Latifey LaFleur and Dr. Marc Bourgeois who have been promoted to Associate Professor and have been awarded tenure! It is encouraging to see that we who know them best are not the only ones who appreciate their hard work and expertise!

Two members of our faculty continue to represent the program in leadership positions in state and national organizations. Dr. David Spruill was elected President of the Louisiana Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Dr. Spruill has also served on committees during this year which helped to pass laws in the interest of Counselors and Family Therapists. Dr. Katherine Hermann-Turner was named President of the Association for Adult Development and Aging. The association is a national organization. Both have made leadership and service to the profession a hallmark of their work and we are happy to share their accomplishments.

Finally, the Zachary Esters Service Award has been fully funded and those funds have been endowed at the UL Foundation to provide an annual award *in perpetuity* for one student in Counseling. The award will be made to a deserving student for the first time in Spring 2019 and will include a cash prize and a plaque. As you know, this is a dear project to my wife and me (Esters) and I am grateful for the outpouring of love and support from those close to our program. I offer my sincerest gratitude for such a fitting memorial to my son as we approach the second anniversary of his death. Thank you all.

Target Elements Subject to Evaluation

1. Department Mission

Our department mission is reviewed by the faculty annually with the intent of maintaining it as a living statement of our core principles and intent. As in the past, we have determined that the mission statement continues to be an accurate representation of such. No changes were made to the mission statement which is:

“It is the mission of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, working together in partnerships with schools, community agencies, and university colleagues, to develop Professional Counselors in the areas of personal growth, academic excellence, and professional competence. Through an experiential, contextual, and systemic curriculum, and by integrating theory, research, practice, and leadership, the faculty promotes scholarly inquiry, ethical practice, respect for diversity, and a strong professional identity among the next generations of Professional Counselors.”

2. Curriculum

The big news the past couple years has been a revised format for several courses in the curriculum. Namely, we have begun to offer 3 courses (501, 514, and 525) as hybrid (in-person/online). An additional course, COUN 502, being prepared for this format was not quite ready for implementation this fall but will be ready in Fall 2019. Note that course content remains consistent. The only difference is the method of instruction. Students have been calling for more flexibility in the curriculum so we hope this has a positive impact.

Student Evaluations of Instruction (SEI) have been consistently positive across courses and instructors. Students have consistently expressed their belief that the courses are relevant and meet or exceed expectations.

The comprehensive examination given to all students is a measure of student competencies and is standardized for counseling students across the country. Recall that our program uses the CPCE which assesses knowledge of the 8 core areas covered in all CACREP accredited programs. As has been our practice, we evaluate program students by comparing them with students across the country who must take the CPCE as an exit exam. Also, as has been our practice, we, as a group, have done very well! Over 3 semesters (Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018) 23 students have taken the test with an 87% first time pass-rate. Among the students taking the test, 3 students achieved scores at or above the 90%ile nationwide! The few students who had difficulties with the exam have been given the opportunity for remediation and are scheduled to retake the exam in Fall 2018. Also of note, several years ago we implemented taking the PRAXIS for School Counselors as a requirement for that program. As in the past, this year we have a 100% pass rate on that exam.

Each year the faculty reviews the requirements for licensing in Louisiana as a Professional Counselor and certification in Louisiana as a School Counselor with the intent of modifying our curriculum to respond to the evolving licensing and certification demands. No changes were made during the past evaluation period so no changes in the curriculum were required.

3. Program Objectives/Outcomes

The curriculum is reviewed annually to assure alignment with CACREP Standards. As this year marks the middle of our CACREP accreditation period, we will begin to look at how our programs will be responding to the new standards. There have been no changes in how our courses align with the existing standards. This is reflected in course syllabi and demonstrated by students grades, standardized test scores, and exit interviews, as well as reports from internship sites.

Student grades continue to be overwhelmingly good across all courses. An overall GPA across all classes and the past 3 semesters yields a cumulative program GPA over 3.5. Our students continue to prove that they are capable and motivated. Their success is also a testament to the rigorous admission process which over the past year saw 68 applications, 33 acceptances, and 28 enrollments to our program.

As noted in a previous section, we continue to look at the CPCE scores as evidence of student success and accomplishment of program objectives. The scores showed over the past year that no systematic weaknesses existed in the curriculum and in as much as the CPCE addresses CACREP standards, our students were meeting and exceeding those standards.

We are also happy to report that exit interviews with students indicate that they felt prepared by the instruction and experiences they had while enrolled in our program. Likewise, interviews and surveys conducted with site supervisors indicate that our students perform well and demonstrate knowledge and competencies expected or exceeding expectations.

4. Current Students

We have noted previously that students were achieving high marks in their courses and that they were performing well on standardized measures. This is our history and the past year was no exception. We believe much of their success is due to the hard work of the faculty in teaching to the standards, but also to the level of selectivity of the program. This past year 28 students were admitted to the program as compared to 24 the previous year. The department received 68 applications and admitted 33 students. Of the 33 admitted, 28 enrolled for Fall 2018. Those students submitted a record of their undergraduate work, scores on the GRE, an account of work and volunteer experience, a personal statement, and a series of rigorous interviews in the selection process. We attracted many top-level students in 2018 and look forward to their matriculation and eventual emergence as counseling professionals.

Last year we updated the instrument used to evaluate students after their first semester, upon application to practicum, and upon application to internship. This is the second year we have used the Professional Performance Review and we are pleased with the process and with the results. No systematic weaknesses were identified, and indeed, no specific deficits were identified among students who had completed their first semester and were enrolled for their second semester. Likewise, no issues warranting intervention were identified among those entering practicum or internship.

5. Faculty

Faculty are evaluated by the students every semester. We are pleased to report that COUE faculty were rated as high or higher than the College average across all courses for Fall 2017, Spring 2018, and Summer 2018. This has become a pattern of which the faculty are proud and committed to perpetuating.

Faculty are also evaluated by the Department Head, Dean, and Provost. Evaluation of merit is based on performance in Research, Teaching, and Service. The scale for the evaluation is on a continuum from 1-5 with 1 being “unsatisfactory” and 5 being “exceeds expectations”. All faculty and the department head earned scores greater than 4 for the last evaluation period.

Conclusion

We hope this report has outlined some of the things we are doing in the Department of Counselor Education. I encourage you to review our website frequently for updates and annual statistics on enrollment and graduation.

The faculty wishes to convey our collective gratitude to our students who prove year-in and year-out that the future of counseling is bright. We also wish to thank the Dean of the College of Education and the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs of the University for their ongoing support of our program.

If I can answer any questions or provide more information, please email me (Esters) at esters@louisiana.edu or call me at 337-482-5261.