

Annual Program Report for Programs in Counselor Education

September 1, 2019

Introduction

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.

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

First, we are happy to report that the Department was the recipient of a generous gift from Better Options Initiative, a local non-profit organization formed to study and effect change in the identification, treatment, and outcomes of high conflict divorce. The gift was granted as a result of a proposal submitted by the Department to the organization to create and produce a seminar series addressing Parental Alienation and related consequences of high conflict dissolutions of domestic partnerships involving children. The seminar series will bring in nationally and internationally recognized speakers and contribute to the Department commitment to enhance our students' skills and competencies with regard to relationship and family counseling.

We are also happy to announce that Dr. Katherine Hermann-Turner was granted tenure and promotion! Dr. Hermann-Turner is a critical component of our core faculty and we are pleased she will be recognized as such.

We were happy to report in 2018 and in 2019 that our Department had garnered the award for "Most Loved Graduate Program at UL" for two years running. We elected to not compete for a third year, deciding rather, to "retire our jersey" and make room for other deserving programs! We have no doubt that if we would have encouraged our students and alum to participate that they would have responded as enthusiastically as before. Maybe again in a couple years...!

Two members of our faculty continue to represent the program in leadership positions in state and national organizations. Dr. David Spruill is finishing his year as President of the Louisiana Association for Marriage and Family Therapy with a successful conference and a growing membership in the organization. Dr. Katherine Hermann-Turner served as President of the Association for Adult Development and Aging. Both have made leadership and service to the profession a hallmark of their work and we are happy to share their accomplishments.

In an update on the Zachary Esters Service Award, which is awarded to one student who has demonstrated distinguished service to the department or the field of Counseling, we are happy to report that the first recipient was Layla Greene Touchet. Layla is a School Counseling major and is well deserving of the honor.

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

Perhaps the most significant change to the curriculum is the move from 48 credit-hours to 60 credit-hours for the degree in School Counseling which will begin next Fall. We are early on this as it is not required by CACREP for a couple more years. The decision was made so that the students would be enrolled in time for our next CACREP visit sometime in 2022.

Additionally, the Department has committed to refocus on Relationship and Family Counseling. As such, we have made COUN 510 a required course for students in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and an “encouraged” elective for School Counseling.

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 2018, Spring 2019, and Summer 2019) 27 students have taken the test with an 96% first time pass-rate. 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. The key changes that were made during the past evaluation period, namely the increase in the number of credits required in School Counseling and the addition of COUN 510 as a required course in Clinical Mental Health were in response to pending CACREP requirements and departmental option and were not in response to licensing or certification requirements.

3. Program Objectives/Outcomes

The curriculum is reviewed annually to assure alignment with CACREP Standards. Last year marked the middle of our CACREP accreditation period and we are making small changes to reflect changes in the standards. Primary to that effort was our study of using the College of Education system for program evaluation. While there have been issues with our program tapping into that program evaluation system, we hope to have our standards aligned with the program and begin implementing it next year. There have been no changes in how our courses align with the existing standards and only minor adjustments were necessary to align with the new standards.

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 32 students were admitted to the program as compared to 28 the previous year. The department received 72 applications and admitted 32 students. Of the 32 admitted, 27 enrolled for Fall 2019. 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 2019 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 third 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 2018, Spring 2019, and Summer 2019. 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. We 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 continued support of our program.

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