

**COUNSELOR EDUCATION
PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY
(Updated April 9, 2010)**

Program evaluation, which is a continuous activity for the Counselor Education program, is based on data from a variety of sources including (a) surveys of alumni, employers of graduates, and supervisors that occur at least every three years; (b) yearly evaluations of the program students submit anonymously with their annual self evaluations; (c) feedback from members of the Counselor Education Advisory Board; (d) other meetings and interactions with students, supervisors, and employers throughout the academic year; and (e) other appropriate evaluative data.

Alumni Responses:

- ⇒ Of 33 alumni who responded to the surveys, 22 rated the overall program as Very Good, 9 rated it as Good, and 2 rated it Adequate.
- ⇒ The majority of alumni were certified in their respective specialization areas (e.g., Certified Elementary School Counselor) and/or as Nationally Certified Counselors. A smaller percentage of alumni were working toward or had earned their LPC.
- ⇒ Alumni ratings for practicum and internship were consistently high, as were their ratings of their counseling training and learning counseling competencies.
- ⇒ Alumni in general were satisfied to very satisfied with their advising experience, although a small percentage of students noted dissatisfaction with their advising. In recent years advising ratings have been very high.

Employer and Supervisor Responses:

- ⇒ On a scale from Very Good (5) to Very Poor (1), all employer ratings were *Very Good or Good* for the following areas: academic preparation, counseling skills, professional development, knowledge of current issues, knowledge of legal and ethical issues, and skills in dealing with diversity. The administrative skills area was rated as *Good to Adequate*.
- ⇒ Areas noted as strengths for interns and graduates included strong counseling skills, strong multicultural awareness and training, dedication and commitment to the field of counseling, professionalism, strong academic training, and the ability to translate "book learning" into practice.
- ⇒ Strengths of the program included the practicum experience, the focus on research based approaches to counseling, and faculty commitment to students.
- ⇒ Suggestions for improvement included better preparation for graduates to work with clients with mental health disorders, more content on drug and alcohol counseling, more experience with the "real world" work of counselors, increased training in the areas of cyber-bullying and ways to use technology in counseling, more small group experience for students, and more face-to-face contact between faculty and internship supervisors.

Student Responses:

- ⇒ Students were consistently very satisfied with their interactions with faculty, noting faculty were open, accessible, flexible, and knowledgeable. They appreciated the quality of teaching by program and departmental faculty, and the variety of educational

experiences offered in required courses. Students also appreciated faculty are actively involved in research and professional service yet still available to work with students outside of the classroom.

- ⇒ Students reported appreciating how the administrative staff is very supportive and encouraging.
- ⇒ Students appreciated the breadth and depth of the program as well as the logical sequencing of courses, noting they had flexibility to pursue their own specialized interests. They noted faculty encouraged independent and group learning, as well as develop of creative and critical thinking inside and outside of the classroom.
- ⇒ Students valued the multicultural counseling focus of the program, noting that this focus was infused throughout all of their courses.
- ⇒ Practicum and internship were consistently noted as essential courses that allowed students to get hands-on, skill focused training throughout the program. Students also appreciated the focus and quality of faculty who oversee the clinically-focused courses.
- ⇒ Other assets students noted about the program were the warm and welcoming environment in the department, the opportunities to create community (e.g., Climate Committee, formal and informal opportunities to meet with the department head every semester, Rho Alpha Mu chapter of Chi Sigma Iota), the small classes, and the practical and applied focus of many of the courses. Students liked the orientation activities provided at the beginning of the year, including the departmental picnic, and would like to see a more social activities that include faculty and staff offered throughout the year.
- ⇒ Students also noted the following areas where the program could be strengthened: more interaction between first and second year students and doctoral students, increased financial assistance for students and not requiring summer courses, more opportunities to learn about and engage in conferences and presenting at conferences, and more opportunities to earn electives without adding time to the program. With regard to the Cedar Clinic practicum, students wanted increased space, quieter counseling rooms, and more computers in the "session notes" room. We recently made changes to the Clinic so students have access to more computers, they have a larger room to observe tapes with the new digital recording system, and we have added white noise machines to the counseling rooms. A few students also recommended that the CEDAR Clinic practicum be expanded to two semesters so students can gain additional counseling experience.

Other appropriate evaluative data:

- ⇒ PRAXIS exam results for school counselors were well above state and national averages in all 5 areas and total scores.
- ⇒ National Counselor Exam (NCE) results were all above state and national averages in all 8 CACREP areas, all 5 Counselor Work Behavior areas, and total scores.

Changes in the program based on evolving needs and consumer evaluations:

- ⇒ Second year secondary school counseling students are paired with first year students to promote interaction. New elementary school counseling students were assigned mentors from second year students for similar purposes. A program has been developed for second year students to reach out to incoming first years students beginning in Fall 2010.
- ⇒ Previously a small number of faculty advised all master's students, but now advisees are more evenly spread across faculty members to replace the previous policy that had all

school counseling students advised by the elementary and secondary program coordinators. Additionally, a yearly advisor evaluation form was developed to provide additional feedback to advisors on their work.

- ⇒ The Cedar Clinic facility has been updated so all sessions are recorded using new digital recording technology. We have also expanded the "session notes" room so students have greater access to Clinic computers to write session notes.
- ⇒ Faculty discuss funding opportunities at meetings every spring, and are always looking for additional graduate assistantship opportunities for students.
- ⇒ A Counselor Education Newsletter has been established based on student, supervisor, and alumni comments. All six issues are available on the Counselor Education website <http://www.ed.psu.edu/cned/ced.asp>.