

# ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW at UNIVERSITY of TOLEDO

## VISIT TEAM REPORT FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

### External Reviewers:

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### Visit Summary

The visit provided a comprehensive opportunity to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the Counselor Education (CE) program in the School of Intervention and Wellness at the University of Toledo.

We experienced an overall positive impression of the University of Toledo and the Counselor Education program. We based this impression on our examination of documents provided to us (particularly the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP] self-study), as well as a day of meetings with: the Interim Provost, Director of University Accreditation and Program Review, Associate Vice Provost, CHHS Dean, CHHS Associate Dean, CE Department Chair, CE full-time counseling faculty, school secretary, and current CE doctoral and master's students.

The reviewers found that the Counseling Education program faculty and administrators are committed to taking action to help the Counselor Education program leverage its strengths and take action to address areas in need of improvement.

### Program Framework

1. Comment on the general structure and purpose of the program(s) reviewed.

The review included consideration of the following Counselor Education programs:

- Master's Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (M.A.)
- Master's Program in School Counseling (M.A.)
- Doctoral Program in Counselor Education (Ph.D.)

All three Counselor Education programs are accredited by CACREP and have therefore undergone rigorous review of their adherence to the CACREP standards, which are the standards of excellence in the counseling profession. The Counselor Education faculty are now preparing for their next CACREP review.

The master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) is a 60 credit hour program, consisting of traditional didactic courses (e.g., Diagnosis and Mental Health Counseling) as well as experiential courses (Counseling Practicum, Counseling Internship) that includes hands-on experience at mental health related sites. Students are trained to assist clients with mental health concerns, including mental and emotional disorders; substance abuse; family and couple problems; career issues; and other issues that cause distress. The CMHC program prepares students to become Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs). As LPCs, graduates will find jobs as counselors in mental health agencies, hospitals, substance abuse/recovery agencies, private practice, and so forth.

The master's program in School Counseling is a 48 credit hour program, consisting of didactic courses (e.g., Professional Orientation to School Counseling) and experiential courses (Counseling Practicum, Counseling Internship) that includes hands-on experiences in school settings. Students are trained to provide mental health service to K-12 students, in an effort to assist with their academic and social success. The School Counseling program prepares students to become Licensed School Counselors and to assume positions as elementary, middle, or high school counselors. It should be noted that by 2023, CACREP accredited School Counseling programs must increase their credit hours to 60 (from the current 48); this will require increased resources (perhaps new faculty) for UT's School Counseling program to maintain accreditation.

The doctoral program in Counselor Education consists of a minimum of 60 credit hours. The purpose of this program is to prepare leaders in the profession (e.g., faculty members with teaching, service, and research responsibilities). It includes an 18 hour residency requirement, during which students work closely with faculty and peers for at least five hours a week on research, teaching, and supervision. Students also have opportunities for practical experience in their practicum and internship courses.

2. Assess the overall program in terms of curriculum, content, course sequencing, relevance/appropriateness of offerings, community engagement, and research. Please identify strengths as well as areas for improvement. (HLC 3.B. and 3.E.)
  - a. Curriculum and content; relevance/appropriateness of offerings. The curriculum and content, found in the plans of study and syllabi, are sound. The faculty are planning a few significant improvements; one that they shared with us is splitting the master's level Counseling Theories and Techniques course into two courses (one for theories and one for techniques/skills). This is a wise decision, as it will more closely adhere to state licensure requirements and CACREP requirements, and provide improved training for master's counseling students. Master's students will have more time to learn counseling theories and, importantly, practice and receive feedback on their counseling skills before they see their first clients/students. The counseling skills course is especially important

for gatekeeping, which is one the mandates in our Code of Ethics (American Counseling Association, 2014).

Regarding the doctoral program, Counselor Education has made an important change to the 600 hour doctoral internship, as required by CACREP. They have moved from having a strictly clinical/counseling internship to requiring students (in collaboration with their committee) to select 3 of 5 areas for their internship experience: clinical/counseling, teaching, supervision, research, and leadership/advocacy. Incorporating these experiences is vital to preparing doctoral students to become Counselor Education faculty members.

One concern is the high number of part-time faculty in the counseling program, due to only having four full-time faculty members. This can lead to courses that have too much variability, that are not consistent semester to semester. Adding one or two faculty members will address this concern.

- b. Course sequencing. Perhaps the most important aspect of sequencing is having appropriate prerequisites for practicum and internship; these prerequisites prepare master's students to serve clients/students in schools and the broader community. School Counseling master's students are required to take three courses prior to Internship and CMHC students are required to take four. These courses focus on the fundamentals of counseling, such as orientation to the profession, counseling theories, counseling skills, and group work.

Doctoral students must have the necessary coursework to prepare for their 600 hour internship that may involve teaching, supervising counselors-in-training, research, leadership and advocacy, and counseling. Additionally, the doctoral internship is intended to strengthen students' professional identity and development. It is not clear from the Doctoral Program Handbook what prerequisites (if any) are required before beginning internship, so faculty may wish to add this information to the handbook.

- c. Community engagement. The counseling curriculums have built-in community engagement experiences. Master's students complete their master's practicums and internships in schools or mental health facilities. In practicum, they must complete 100 hours of supervised experience (40 direct hours of client/student contact) and in internship they complete 600 hours (240 direct contact hours). The entire curriculum prepares master's students for careers that center on community service and engagement.

Similarly, doctoral students provide counseling services in the community during their practicum. For internship, they possibly will continue to provide such counseling services, as well as advocate for clients' and students' needs.

Faculty also provide service to the community. For example, Dr. Roseman provides consultation to the Toledo Public School District as a Facilitator on their Comprehensive Mental Health Advisory Board.

- d. Research. The Counselor Education faculty are engaged in scholarship, in the forms of publications and presentations, as evidenced by their vitas. It is particularly impressive that untenured faculty have had strong starts on their research agendas. Faculty are publishing in well respected, often flagship, counseling-related journals, such as *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Professional School Counseling*, and *Career Development Quarterly*.

Faculty actively disseminate their scholarship at professional conferences, such as those held by the American Counseling Association, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, the National Career Development Association, and the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling. These organizations are central to and highly esteemed in the counseling profession.

Of note were doctoral students' comments about how supportive counseling faculty are of student research. One student said, "mentorship is tremendous" when describing research mentorship.

3. What are the major strengths and/or the areas of concern related to the general framework of the program(s) reviewed? Are there any additional comments about the structure of the program(s)?

A major strength of the Counselor Education program is that the faculty has been able to maintain the structure of programs while being understaffed. With only four full-time faculty, three of whom are untenured, the faculty has three thriving graduate programs. This speaks to the commitment of the faculty to students and the counseling profession. A related concern of overburdening faculty is discussed in the Faculty and Staff section below.

4. What actions, if any, would you recommend regarding the program framework?
  - a. Implement the intended change of splitting the master's Counseling Theories and Techniques course into two distinct courses.
  - b. Clarify the prerequisite courses and/or experiences needed for doctoral students to begin internship.
  - c. Hire one or two more faculty members to better ensure consistency across courses. This would also allow faculty to spend more time on activities such as research/scholarship and community engagement.

### **Faculty and Staff**

5. What are the program's major strengths and/or the areas of concern related to program faculty and staffing? Are there any additional comments about program faculty and staffing?

The program's strengths include a supportive and dedicated full-time faculty who prioritize the personal and professional development of master's and doctoral students. The Counselor Education faculty have earned doctorates in Counselor Education from CACREP-accredited programs, identify with the counseling profession, engage in professional development, service,

and scholarship within Counseling. Diversity is a strength of the full-time faculty (e.g., half the faculty are individuals who are minority). The faculty publish research in counseling journals, frequently present at national and state counseling conferences, and provide significant professional leadership and service to the counseling program (i.e., editorial board member, officer position in associations, committee chair, and committee member). Additionally, the faculty each have accepted leadership responsibilities within the program which allows the program faculty to have authority over curricula and program operations. The part-time faculty have relevant preparation and experience in relation to the courses they teach and the majority hold a degree in Counseling and maintain counseling licensure (i.e., LPC, LPCC, or LPSC). The school secretary holds institutional program knowledge and an understanding of how to handle the daily tasks necessary to operate a program within a university. Her knowledge and job skills are a strength and resource for the faculty and students. The highly experienced school secretary and the number of graduate assistants are significant resources (e.g., GAs teach master's courses, assist with CACREP reporting, etc.) and strengths of the program. Administrators remarked that the new Counseling Education faculty have demonstrated strong research productivity and is a strength of the School. Master's and doctoral students appreciated the courses and were able to identify something positive about each full-time faculty member.

The most significant area of concern related to program faculty is the lack of program faculty. Currently, the program is not in compliance with the CACREP requirement of 5 full-time faculty to operate a master's and doctoral program. Furthermore, the program is out of compliance for maintaining the full-time equivalent (FTE) students to FTE faculty ratio of 12:1.

A further concern is the significant turn-over of existing faculty and current lack of program faculty. Over the past six years, six faculty have left the Counselor Education program (i.e., 3 retirees and 3 resignations). Most concerning is the 3 faculty who resigned from the program since 2016. While 3 new faculty have been hired to replace the faculty who resigned, the reasons for why those faculty left should be explored. Since there is a lack of senior faculty within the Counselor Education program, the majority of program operation responsibilities (i.e., curricular development, chairing dissertations, committee services, advising students) fall on the junior faculty while they are also engaging in tenure and promotion responsibilities. There is concern that the existing junior faculty may leave as a result of frustration with excessive program operation responsibilities and seek another Counselor Educator program where junior faculty would be afforded greater opportunity to focus and build their research line.

The advertisement for a counselor educator position is positive and would meet the minimum of 5 full-time faculty required of a CACREP accredited master's and doctoral program. The addition of a 6<sup>th</sup> faculty in Fall 2020 would elevate the program from meeting the bare minimum to have opportunities for excellence. The additional of faculty would also reduce the programmatic burden inappropriately placed on junior faculty and would hopefully lead to retention of junior faculty. The turnover of counselor educator faculty is costly and disruptive to a master's and doctoral program, and places undue burden on the chairperson of the school.

6. What actions, if any, would you recommend regarding program faculty and staff?

The following actions are recommended to strengthen Counselor Education program faculty.

- Complete a successful search for an Assistant Professor in Counseling for Fall 2019. This will meet the minimum of 5 faculty required by CACREP. When appropriate shift some program responsibilities (i.e., academic advising, supervision of doctoral interns, chairing dissertations) from the other junior faculty to this new junior faculty member.
- Initiate a search for a 6<sup>th</sup> Counseling Faculty as an Associate Professor for Fall 2020. Bringing in a seasoned faculty member would benefit this faculty that largely consists of Assistant Professors (3 of 4). It is not a secret that the Counselor Education program at UT (as well as at other institutions) brings significant revenue into the university through large number of credit hours generated by master's and doctoral graduate students at relatively low cost to the institution. Furthermore, a unique aspect of the UT Counselor Education program is that they support an undergraduate Counseling minor. The total revenue generated by the Counselor Education program should be leveraged as an argument that the program should be provided with faculty beyond an accreditation minimum. In addition to the 6<sup>th</sup> faculty handling program responsibilities of junior faculty (i.e., academic advising, supervision of doctoral interns, chairing dissertations, supervision of field experiences) the 6<sup>th</sup> faculty member could be assigned new responsibilities of the development, coordination, and supervision of a Counseling Clinic.

### **Students**

7. What are the major strengths and/or the areas of concern related to students in the program(s)? Are there any additional comments about students in the program(s)?

The master's and doctoral students interviewed reported that they were very satisfied with their program. They reported that they have strong relationships with faculty and have taken courses that have been academically relevant to their preparation as counselors and counselor educators. There are no significant concerns regarding the performance of master's and doctoral students in the Counselor Education program. Based upon the CACREP vital statistics report, the students are performing well. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program was reported to have a 100% completion rate, a 95% pass rate for the licensure exam, and a 95% job placement rate for graduates. The School Counseling program was reported to have a 100% completion rate, a 100% pass rate for the licensure exam, and a 90% job placement rate for graduates. The doctoral counselor education program was reported to have an 85% completion rate and a 100% job placement rate for graduates. The diversity of the students in the master's and doctoral program is a strength. In 2017-18 the Counselor Educator program had 15 students (15%) designated as minority master's students, and 6 students (21%) designated as minority doctoral students. Finally, the number of doctoral graduate assistantships are a significant strength of the Counselor Education program. However, it would be helpful if the Counselor Education program also offered a number of GA's to master's level students.

8. What actions, if any, would you recommend regarding students in the program(s)?

The following actions are recommended to strengthen Counselor Education students.

- Examine ways to continue to support minority students to matriculate and graduate from both the master's and doctoral program. A mentoring program could involve program graduates or students further along in the program who are minority mentoring newly admitted minority graduate students. Counselor education faculty should explore the possibilities to develop funding from alumni to designate funding to support the education of minority students (e.g., scholarships, graduate assistantship opportunities).
- Develop / identify GA's for master's students. This could include opportunities for GA's across campus or partnerships with counseling agencies (e.g., agency funds the GA).

### **Performance Measures**

9. Utilizing the provided program assessment plans, please comment on the appropriateness and alignment of the metrics identified to measure the program's student learning outcomes. (HLC 4.B.)

The measures used by the Counselor Education faculty are appropriate for measuring student learning outcomes. Students in the master's programs are assessed using the "Student Continuous Evaluation Form," which rates them in the areas of progress toward program objectives, counseling skills, personal characteristics, and professional conduct. This assessment is clear and practical. Master's students are assessed using this measure a minimum of two times during the course of their program. The CMHC "progress toward program objectives" aligns very closely, almost word-for-word, with the objectives laid out in the master's handbook. The School Counseling "progress toward program objectives" is not as clearly tied to the objectives listed in the master's handbook, though there is a relationship.

The "Doctoral Continuous Evaluation Form" documents students' progression through coursework, residency, comprehensive exams, and dissertation, which comprise the major stages of doctoral work. The "Progress toward Program Objectives" on this form aligns with the objectives as set out in the doctoral handbook.

10. What are the major strengths and/or the areas of concern related to program performance measures? Are there any additional comments about program performance measures?

Strengths include:

- a. One strength is the inclusion of personal characteristics and professional conduct in student assessments. These are such vital areas in profession counseling, areas where students need clear expectations laid out for them. Students may have strong counseling skills, yet lack the necessary interpersonal and professional skills they need to be successful. Giving them feedback on these items throughout their program will better ensure students' success in internship and in their future counseling careers.

- b. The student handbooks' "Retention Policy" includes the same listings of personal characteristics and professional conduct as are listed in the "Continuous Evaluation Forms"; the expectations of students in these area exactly match the assessment form, so the evaluation should not be a surprise to any student.

Concern:

- a. The draft of the CACREP report we were given uses the word "indicator" in the "assessment of students" section (4.F.). The phrase "Key Performance Indicators" (KPIs) is new in the 2016 CACREP standards; CACREP reviewers may be looking for this language in their review.

11. What actions, if any, would you recommend regarding performance measures?

- a. We suggest that the program use the descriptor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) instead of simply indicators, to be consistent with the language used by CACREP.
- b. Consider more closely tying the School Counseling "Student Continuous Evaluation Form" to the objectives listed in the master's handbook, similar to the CMHC program.
- c. Consider adding "Leadership and Advocacy" to the objectives in the doctoral handbook, to make it consistent with the doctoral "Student Continuous Evaluation Form."

### **Ethical and Professional Practice**

12. Are there strengths or opportunities regarding how integrity and ethical behavior for faculty and students are promoted in the program(s)? Please explain. (HLC 2.E.)

The Counselor Education program faculty and students exemplify ethical behavior consistent with the American Counseling Association (ACA) ethics and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) ethical code for counselor educators. The reviewers are not aware of any ethical violations or breaches of the integrity of scholarly practices conducted by faculty, students, or staff.

Ethical behavior is promoted through the program through coursework (i.e., COUN 7530, 8410, 8480, 8940) and the program faculty have a comprehensive Retention policy which highlights the program's requirements for student performance, the retention and remediation procedures, the dismissal process, and the university academic grievance procedures.

A potential area of concern is having the majority of doctoral dissertations chaired by junior faculty. This is a function of lack of senior faculty and the number of current and new doctoral students being admitted into the program. Typically, a first-year faculty member who just graduated from a doctoral program would be afforded the opportunity to serve on dissertations and learn the process. This provides a developmental process for new faculty to learn and further develop their understanding of research procedures. However, at the UT Counselor Education program first year faculty are taking on doctoral chair responsibilities as a function of not having anyone else available to handle that responsibility.

A recommendation is to not increase the number of new doctoral students admitted to the program in the short-term until the existing junior faculty can demonstrate that they can successfully and consistently engage in the production of methodologically appropriate, ethically sound dissertation studies, and bring current doctoral students through completion/graduation.

### **Current Resources**

13. Based on information provided, are program resources used effectively and appropriately? Please explain. (HLC 3.D.4)

The human resources (4 faculty, 1 secretary) are used very efficiently to handle all responsibilities required within the master's and doctoral program. The concern is burn-out and problems with retention due to the programmatic requirements placed upon newly hired junior faculty that take their attention away from developing their research, teaching, and service required for their tenure and promotion.

The facility and operational budget resources appear to be adequate and used efficiently by the program. It was identified that one facility resource, the Counseling Clinic, could be used more effectively if the program was provided with a faculty member to develop it. The Counselor Education program has use of rooms within a Counseling Clinic, but does not operate the clinic. The space is just utilized by counseling students to practice with each other; students we interviewed said they wished they could have an in-house clinic. It is common for Counselor Education programs to operate a small clinic, which provides opportunities for live practice of master's students and supervision for doctoral students. It appears a bit unusual that the UT counselor education program would not operate a counseling clinic given the space, technology, and support available within the clinic area on the first floor.

14. What actions, if any, would you recommend regarding program resources and efficiency?

The following actions are recommended to strengthen the program resources and efficiency.

- A successful search for a 5<sup>th</sup> faculty member, retaining the existing four faculty members, and hiring a 6<sup>th</sup> faculty member in Fall 2020 would place the UT Counselor Education program in a strong position (e.g., as a point of comparison, a master's only Counselor Education program at a state-university in Ohio has seven Counseling faculty). Trying to operate a quality master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, master's in School Counseling, and Counselor Education doctoral program meeting all of the expectations inherent and placed upon faculty by the University of Toledo and CACREP is unrealistic for junior faculty. While the faculty are eager to handle all of the expected program responsibilities, the reality of their lack of experience can be a threat to program operation as issues can be missed or arise not intentionally, but due to lack of experience.
- All of the programmatic operational materials should be placed on a university shared cloud drive and not be maintained within external hard drives of the chair of the school, school secretary, or individual faculty members. In order to ensure program sustainability, it would be important to have a well-organized electronic system for whoever remains in the Counselor Education program to be able to access files and minimally operate the program if key individuals leave the program.

15. Please provide any additional comments, strengths, or areas of concern that were not specifically addressed above.

Despite being understaffed, the four full-time faculty members in the University of Toledo's Counselor Education program are doing an amazing job educating and nurturing their graduate students. This was particularly apparent to us when we talked with students, who described faculty as "responsive" (e.g., timely responses to emails), "knowledgeable," "attentive," and caring. One master's student discussed her lack of support while an undergraduate, but said the Counselor Education faculty are "treating me like a human being ... I have a whole team behind me." Doctoral students value the practical experience they receive in their program and appreciate hands-on learning about common concerns of faculty, such as student remediation and CACREP reporting. Students noted that faculty frequently check with them about maintaining self-care while in graduate school.