

ASSESSMENT REPORT  
COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MASTER'S DEGREE LEVEL

**Period Covered:** Academic Year 2009-2010

**Date Submitted:** October 15, 2010

MISSION AND GOALS

**Institutional Mission:** NMHU is a diverse comprehensive quality university serving the global community by integrating education, research, public service, and economic development, while celebrating our distinctive Northern New Mexico cultures and traditions. We achieve this through a University-wide commitment to quality student-centered education.

**School of Education Conceptual Framework:** "To provide quality education through teaching, service, and research."

**Program Mission:** The mission of the NMHU Counseling and Guidance Program is to train entry-level counselors and prepare them for positions in community service agencies as **mental health counselors**, in school systems as **school counselors**, or in rehabilitation settings as **rehabilitation counselors**. Throughout their training program the emphasis is on the **growth** and **development** of each student to promote a **positive self-concept** and to maximize **individual potential** in all domains, personal and professional. The program is **student-centered** and **outcome-based**, seeking to train individuals who are skilled in working with **culturally diverse populations** and who are **ethical, competent, and reflective practitioners**. Proactive knowledgeable professional counselors are crucial to the growth of the profession.

**Criteria of Program Success:**

Based on the program mission statement there are three criteria by which the success of the Counseling and Guidance Program is measured.

1. Students are adequately prepared to pass one or more of the three licensing exams: the **NCE (National Counselor Exam)**, the **PED School Counselor Exam**, and the **CRCC (Council for Rehabilitation Counselor Certification) Exam**.
2. Students are adequately trained to be **effective counselors**.
3. Students are **adequately prepared** to enter the work settings of their professional orientation.

### **Intended Student (Educational) Outcomes:**

The achievement of the above criteria of program success is demonstrated by attaining the following student outcomes.

1. To demonstrate a **comprehensive understanding** of the knowledge base of the Counseling profession.
2. To demonstrate the **effective use of counseling skills**.
3. To demonstrate the **appropriate application of a counseling theory** to a specific problem.

### **Means of Determining Program Success and Student Outcomes**

**Success Criterion 1:** Students are adequately prepared to pass one or more of the three licensing exams.

**Student Outcome 1:** To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge base of the Counseling profession.

### **First Means of Program and Student Assessment for Success:**

1. **The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE)** is administered each semester to students in their first or second semester of Internship. It measures the student's overall mastery of **eight core areas of knowledge** determined by the **National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)** as being necessary for entrance into the Counseling profession. These areas constitute the **general knowledge base of the Counseling profession**, and are tested in **New Mexico's Counseling and Therapy Practice board's** licensing exam for the **LMHC (Licensed Mental Health Counselor)** exam. They also constitute the **areas of competency** for the **School Counselor License** as defined by the **Public Education Department (PED)**.

### **Analysis of Data Collected:**

We administer the CPCE in both the fall and spring semesters. The exams are sent in to the NBCC for scoring, and the scores are printed out and sent back to us. We give the same exam to students at both Rio Rancho and main campus. But we no longer receive scores in one report. Rio Rancho has its own report and the main campus has its own.

In the fall of 2009 we administered the CPCE to 4 students with the result that 2 passed and 2 had to retake the exam the following semester, spring 2010. We generally have more students taking the CPCE in the spring than in the fall, and spring 2010 was no exception. We had 11 students take it in that semester with the result that all but 2 passed.

When we examine the scores we conclude that those who did not pass simply did not prepare well for the exam. Further, the lowest scores overall appear to be in the areas of Career and Lifestyle Development, and Appraisal. These are the two courses that have been increasingly offered online or ITV. This suggests that Distance Education may not be as effective as classroom instruction.

### **Use of Data for Program Modification:**

We try to identify those content areas of the CPCE (there are 8 discrete content areas) that have the lowest overall score. With these two administrations we see that the content areas of Career and Lifestyle Development and Appraisal had the most frequent of low scores.

We must discuss this among the faculty in order to determine if indeed Distance Education via the internet and/or ITV is as effective as face-to-face classes.

**Success Criterion 2:** Students are adequately trained to be effective counselors.

**Student Outcome 2:** To demonstrate the effective use of counseling skills.

### **First Means of Program and Student Assessment for Success:**

1. **Internship evaluations** are completed by the student's **Internship site supervisor** at midterm and at the end of each semester in which the student is enrolled in the Internship. The evaluations measure the composite skills of effective counseling that include the ability to **assess the client's problem**, the ability to **formulate an appropriate and accurate treatment plan**, and the ability to **attain the treatment goals** through the effective and appropriate use of the **interactive skills** that comprise the **essence of counseling**.

### **Analysis of Data Collected:**

The Internship evaluation forms are turned in at midterm and at the end of each semester. They are completed by the student's site supervisor. In the fall, 2009, there were 12 students in either the first or second semester of their internships at main campus, 15 at Rio, and 3 at Farmington. In the spring, 2010, there were 10 at the main campus, 8 at Rio, and 2 at Farmington. The evaluations showed that our students were consistently performing effectively in their various counseling roles. We had no cause for concern with any of our students during these two semesters. They all seem to be functioning at or above expected levels of effectiveness.

In all cases the feedback we have received from the site supervisors suggests that our students are well-prepared and adequately trained to enter the Counseling profession.

### **Use of Data for Program Modification:**

Though there was little need for modification of the Internship part of the program, at least not based on the site supervisors' evaluations of our students, we nonetheless have modified our Internship seminars by offering more supplemental theoretical interpretations of the clients that the interns are working with. This seems to be effective in helping students to expand their own theoretical orientations.

**Success Criterion 3:** Students are adequately prepared to enter the work settings of their professional orientation.

### **First Means of Program Assessment for Success:**

1. We send out an **Alumni Survey** every three years to students who have graduated within that three-year period. This instrument measures the **student's overall level of satisfaction** with the training and preparation he and she had received. Included is a scale that reports the student's perception of the **relevance of the courses** as well as an assessment of how well the program **prepared the student for entrance into professional work settings**.

We have maintained the three-year period between sending out the survey because, first, the average for most students to **complete their program of study** is **three years**. Second, it can take up to **several months** before a graduate **finds employment in a counseling setting**, be it in mental health, school, or rehabilitation. Thus, with the time spacing between surveys students should have a better estimate of **how well they were prepared** for entering the Counseling profession.

### **Analysis of Data Collected:**

We had sent out our last Alumni Survey early in the fall of 2007 and the returns were completed by the end of that semester. We are in the process of sending out the next group of surveys this semester. We again hope to have most returns by the end of this semester.

### **Use of Data for Program Modification**

Based upon the last survey's results we have been offering more courses online and ITV. This is especially true of the Rehabilitation Counseling courses. This is having mixed consequences. On the one hand it is convenient for many students who live in outlying areas. But on the other, we wonder about the quality of learning that is accomplished in internet courses, as evidenced by the results of the CPCE.

The fact that our courses follow the standards of CACREP (Council on Counseling and Related Educational Programs), PED (Public Education Department), and CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) means that all students who go through our program in any of its three tracks need to qualify for licensure and/or certification. Since these licenses are based on standardized exams, it is essential that the students master the course material. If the internet and ITV courses are not being as effective as traditional classroom instruction in getting the material across, then we need to reexamine this trend.

**Student Outcome 3:** To demonstrate the appropriate application of a counseling theory to a specific problem.

**First Means of Student Outcome Assessment for Success:**

1. The **Professional Paper** is the student's final major paper in which the student **thoroughly researches a specific counseling theory**. The paper is of professional quality in content and format, using the **APA Publication Manual** as the standard. Included in the paper is research into a **specific problem** that is typically encountered in the counseling setting, such as **depression, anxiety, or impulse-control disorders**. The third part of the paper covers **research into the application of the theory to the problem**. All parts of the Professional Paper are taken **from the literature** and there are **no reports** from actual cases that the student has been working with.

**Analysis of Data Collected:**

Since initiating the Professional Paper we have been generally satisfied with the product that most students produce. At the same time, however, we continue to see some difficulty that our students are having with the discipline of researching a particular counseling theory. The difficulty seems to be around the ability to focus their thinking and clearly express their ideas. As a result, the faculty has had to closely monitor the students' progress in the writing of the paper, and we typically have to do several editings of their papers along the way.

With this concern we have noticed over the last several semesters that the quality of writing has decreased significantly with our students. While we are aware that this is not a problem unique to the Counseling program, that it is found across the university, we are sufficiently concerned as to institute a writing sample from the student in his or her initial application packet for admission into the Counseling program.

**Use of Data for Program Modification:**

We continue to use the 1 semester-hour course called Professional Paper for the explicit purpose of helping our students write their papers. For the past year we have left it up to the student as to whether he or she would want to take this

course. However, we have made this course mandatory for those students whose writing skills need significant work to produce a quality Professional Paper.

In this course we meet regularly with the students, guiding them through the process of writing their Professional Papers. This includes a close review of the APA writing guidelines, exercises in organizing thoughts and major concepts into headings and subheadings, and work in grammatical structure of sentences and paragraphs.

### **Second Means of Student Outcome Assessment for Success:**

1. The student's **Oral Exam** is based on the **Professional Paper** and is the **student's presentation** of his or her findings in doing the research. The Oral Exam is also the **forum for questions** from the committee members regarding the **student's overall mastery** of the **coursework** and **training** received in the program.

### **Analysis of Data Collected:**

The greatest problem we have encountered has been in the actual writing of the Professional Paper. Not only does there seem to be a major difficulty in writing coherent sentences and paragraphs, but there are also serious problems in organizing thoughts through writing. While some of this difficulty may be due to the increased abstract and theoretical content of the paper, we believe that most of the problems are the result of the students' general difficulty in organizing thoughts and expressing their research in clear structured ways.

We have found that with the completion of the Professional Paper the Oral Exam has become something of an anticlimactic experience for the students. We also feel that the Oral Exam may be somewhat redundant as far as the students' having a meaningful experience to round off their training.

### **Use of Data for Program Modification:**

We are in the process of deeply considering the usefulness of the Oral Exam. We may substitute the presentation of the students' Professional Papers to a group of their peers and do away with the faculty-based Oral Exam. We believe that this may have more meaning for our students as they stand before their peers as examples of having successfully completed the program.