

Department of Counselor Education Doctoral Program Evaluation, 2016

Context and History:

Before initiating the newly established Ph.D. degree in Counselor Education and Counseling, and aligning the program with CACREP standards, our department granted an Ed.D. degree that was utilized almost entirely by former counseling master's degree students, who were currently licensed and working in the community or on the University of Montana campus. The degree, then titled "Counselor Education," included a doctoral research sequence, comprehensive exams and various electives. This may give the reader an understanding of the program evaluation materials found here. When surveying recent graduates, all are alumni of the Ed.D., as the full Ph.D. curriculum was not yet in place. What follows is in two sections: 1) Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the CACREP 2016 Standards in Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. students and 2) Surveys results of (a) current doctoral students and (b) doctoral graduates, conducted in Autumn Semester 2015. The reader will note that the doctoral graduates' survey applies entirely to Ed.D. graduates, who did not experience the full CACREP-based Ph.D. doctoral program. In addition, supervisors are not solicited for feedback, as all supervisors of doctoral students and graduates are faculty in the Department of Counselor Education relying on other means to share feedback.

Analysis of the doctoral Student Learning Outcome data

Ph.D. students enroll in eight required core courses beyond the master's degree in addition to comprehensive exam and dissertation requirements. Additional academic work is required, depending on the doctoral student's academic, clinical and employment histories, interests, and needs.

Student Learning Outcomes are measured in six areas in the required doctoral curriculum. These areas include: Advanced Counseling Theory, Supervision Theory and Practice, Teaching and Pedagogy, Research and Scholarship, and Leadership and Advocacy. The faculty reviewed the doctoral Student Learning Outcomes, evaluated on a scale from 1 to 3 with 1 being "does not yet meet expectations," 2 "meets expectations," and 3 "exceeds expectations." Analysis occurred in two ways: 1) analysis by individual student and 2) the mean rating across students. Because the number of doctoral students is small, the faculty thought it important to look at performance by individual student as well as reviewing evaluations as a group, because one score significantly shifts the mean.

Current Student Learning Outcomes include doctoral students who are second year (n=3). In the case of the Supervision area, both first and second year students, who took the course together, were evaluated via the related doctoral CACREP-based standards (n=5).

Although department faculty review individual performance, details of that review will not be summarized in this report to protect student confidentiality and attend to FERPA regulations. Because the doctoral program is small, careful evaluation of individual student progress and learning is especially important so that unique challenges are addressed directly or via referral. The Student Learning Outcomes report has reminded the faculty of this.

Measuring Student Learning Outcomes across students: The faculty considers a “mean” rating of “2” to refer to acceptable knowledge and/or practice. Thus a “mean” score below “2” is cause for attention. The number of students evaluated is small – three to five – and thus one student’s lower or higher rating easily shifts the “mean.” Indeed, a statistical “mean” isn’t justified, as the “n” is too small for adequate reliability.

The Department of Counselor Education doctoral program is small in number, thus “change” may sometimes be premature. Clear trends are not yet available and individual student strengths and weaknesses have a profound effect on what is seen as a programmatic strength or a weakness.

Areas to Improve. When considering student learning outcome data and future changes, because of the small sample, faculty agreed to review data and make programmatic adjustments in areas where more than one student scored below a mean of 2. These areas include:

- 1) In the area of Advanced Counseling Theory, standards 1d (evidence-based counseling practices) reflected a mean of 1.3 (n=3).
- 2) In the area of Supervision, standard 2h (administrative procedures and responsibilities related to clinical supervision) reflected a mean of 1.6 (n=5).
- 3) In the area of Research and Scholarship, 4h (professional writing for journal and newsletter publication) reflected a mean of 1.4 (n=5).

Implementing Change.

- 1) Doctoral students need additional exposure to evidence-based theoretical models. Though this is already a major aspect of the Advanced Theories course, it will receive more attention here, and additional attention in the Doctoral Internship course. (Standard 1d).
- 2) Whether a first or second year doctoral student, those enrolled in the Supervision course will be assigned at a master’s level counselor-in-training to supervise concurrently with the course for additional exposure to administrative procedures and responsibilities related to clinical supervision. (Standard 2h).
- 3) In the area of Research and Scholarship, professional writing is considered a developmental process that is measured every fall for every doctoral student. Should students be rated below the mean during their second year of

measurement, they will receive direct instruction from their advisor and additional campus resources on professional writing. (Standard 4h).

Areas of strength. Student Learning Outcomes of 2.5 or above included: 1 b (integration of theories relevant to counseling); 1c (conceptualization of clients from multiple theoretical perspectives); 4a (research designs appropriate to quantitative and qualitative research questions); 4g (research questions appropriate for professional research and publication); 4j (design and evaluation of research proposals for a human subjects/institutional review board); 4l (ethical and culturally relevant strategies for conducting research); 5g (strategies for leadership in consultation); and 5h (current topical and political issues in counseling and how those issues affect the daily work of counselors and the counseling profession).

Analysis of Stakeholder Survey Data

Current doctoral students. As in the preceding sections on Student Learning Outcomes, small numbers affected results of the current student surveys. Some student surveys were incomplete because the doctoral student had not yet taken the relevant course and occasional areas were marked as “N/A.” The total number of doctoral students who responded to the current student survey was 9, and depending on whether the student was an Ed.D. or a Ph.D. student and where the student was in the program (first semester or finishing the dissertation), some areas were left blank or rated lower because the student had yet to take the associated course.

Areas to Improve. Any ratings below a “3” on the 5 point scale are reviewed here for programmatic change considerations

- 1) In area 6 (knowledgeable and skilled in providing advanced clinical counseling) one student rated this area as a “2.” A further comment was added: the Department should provide more advanced clinical experiences for doctoral students.
- 2) In area 8 (experience conducting research) one Ed.D. student provided a score of “2,” and noted that the student had not yet taken the research classes. Most ratings were 4 or 5.
- 3) In area 9, experience in scholarly work including presentations and professional writing or writing grants, one student provided a score of “2,” and stated that the student had not yet taken research courses. Most scores in this area were “4.”
- 4) In area 10, experience teaching a CACREP core or specialty course, one Ph.D. student had not yet taught a CACREP core or specialty course and rated this area as a “2.”

Implementing Change. The number of doctoral students (9) responding was enough to notice trends, though in some cases areas that one student found weak others

noted as strong. Based on the data described above, two primary programmatic changes will occur:

- 1) There is some confusion for post MA/pre-licensure doctoral students regarding the Department of Counselor Education's responsibility to find clinically-based employment for students who wish to complete the licensure process while enrolled in the program fulltime. In the current admissions process (2016), faculty have been clear with applicants about licensure. Montana has strict requirements regarding post MA graduation supervised hours: these must *all* be face-to-face with clients with 67% of these hours being "direct." Time that doctoral students spend supervising does not count, nor does teaching. We have been clear with newly admitted students that we cannot find qualifying employment for them and that their doctoral studies will take considerably more time if they are also employed in the community.
- 2) All current doctoral students were given the stakeholder survey at the same time, although they are practicing with differing levels of exposure to the program. The next time we collect data from this stakeholder group we will differentiate between first, second, and third year doctoral students to better understand their level of program exposure.

Areas of Strength. Areas of strength included instructional theory in a university environment; advising; research supervision and mentoring; respect for individual differences and diversity; respect for personal boundaries, training experiences, and individual theoretical orientations; serving the profession and the public as an advocate and as part of the profession; knowledge regarding professional issues in the field; knowledge of ethical and professional issues; competencies in advanced clinical counseling and knowledge of cultural contexts; privilege and oppression when teaching. Areas of strength exceeded areas of weakness.

Alumni. As described in the introduction to this review, the Department of Counselor Education curriculum has been in transition, culminating with the addition of the Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision curriculum that has now been in place for two years. The Ed.D. continues to exist, but is not historically fully designed around the CACREP doctoral standards. This is important because all current graduates experienced the Ed.D. The total number of alumni who completed the survey was five, which is not surprising. Until our 2013 admissions and the addition of new faculty hires, we kept the number of doctoral students small. An alumni survey two years from now will identify trends and areas requiring change more clearly.

On a scale of "1" to "5" all survey results were at rated "3" or above, with the exception of one alumni of "1" in two areas: 1. Ability to implement instructional theory and assess learning in a university environment, and 10. Experienced teaching in a minimum of two CACREP common core or specialty courses. These former Ed.D. doctoral graduates were not required to perform teaching

responsibilities in the department. This has now been rectified and all Ph.D. students teach at least one CACREP core course or co-teach two core courses before graduation, and some teach more than this.

Areas that received a “5” on a scale of 1 to 5 included every area of the alumni survey, sometimes with multiple ratings of “5” by different individuals: supervision skills, serving the profession and public as an advocate, knowledge of professional issues in the field, knowledge in providing advanced clinical counseling, knowledge and skills in multicultural areas, experience in developing and conducting research, experience in scholarly presentations and grant-writing, experience teaching two CACREP-based core or specialty courses. In sum, the ratings in the alumni survey were scattered, but by far the majority were three or higher and many were rated “5.”