Department of Counselor Education

Annual Evaluation Summary
Academic Year 2016-17
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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform our department’s stakeholders (e.g. students, alumni, site supervisors, etc.) on the assessment data collected by the department, as well as inform those stakeholders on program modifications we’ve made as a result of collecting and analyzing those data.

While our department is in a constant process of collecting and analyzing data, this report will outline several specific data elements that have been integral in assessing the work of our program, our faculty, and our students. Specifically, this report will discuss data collected on:

- Our New Student Orientation program held each semester for newly matriculated students;
- Data collected every two years from our site supervisors on program and student performance;
- Data collected annually from our alumni on program performance;
- Data collected every two years from our alumni employers on student and program performance;
- Data collected regarding administration of our comprehensive examination;
- Data collected on student performance on the National Counselor Examination (NCE) and PRAXIS II exam for school counseling candidates;
- Aggregate data regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to standards established by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Academic Programs (CACREP).

This report will also outline program modifications made as a result of these data, as well as other substantial program changes made during the 2016-17 academic year.

It is our hope that through this report, we can inform our stakeholders on the effectiveness of our program, the successes of our students, the modifications made, and the ways in which we are constantly working to improve our teaching, student learning, and our overall academic program. Thanks for your attention and we hope this report is useful. If you have any feedback, please don’t hesitate to reach out to our department’s Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Cheryl Neale-McFall (610.436.2559 or cneale@wcupa.edu).
Summary of Program Assessment Data

New Student Orientation
At the beginning of each academic semester, we hold an orientation program for new students who have matriculated to the department. Goals of the New Student Orientation are as follows:

1. Students will connect with faculty and other students to help with transition to a new environment, college, program.
2. Students will be able to articulate the expectations of graduate level work in the Department of Counselor Education.
3. Students will develop an emerging understanding of the ethical, legal, and professional obligations of professional counselors/counselors-in-training, and the consequences for violation of these standards.
4. Students will understand course sequencing for their particular track.
5. Students will be exposed to information in their particular track, which will help them to be successful in the program.
6. Students will understand the requirements for licensure and/or certification.

At the conclusion of the program, we assess how well we met these goals through a simple survey instrument. The results of that survey are as follows:

**Fall, 2016**

Question 1: This orientation helped me to connect to fellow students  Yes=41  No=0
Question 2: I can articulate the expectations of graduate level work in the Department of Counselor Education  Yes=40  No=1
Question 3: I understand the course sequencing for my major  Yes=40  No=1
Question 4: This orientation helped me feel better prepared to start the program  Yes=41  No=0
Question 5: I know where I can go to get more information  Yes=41  No=0
Question 6: I have prior experience in the field of counseling  Yes=12  No=28

**Spring, 2017**

Question 1: This orientation helped me to connect to fellow students  Yes=19  No=0
Question 2: I can articulate the expectations of graduate level work in the Department of Counselor Education  Yes=19  No=0
Question 3: I understand the course sequencing for my major  Yes=19  No=0
Question 4: This orientation helped me feel better prepared to start the program  Yes=18  No=1
Question 5: I know where I can go to get more information  Yes=19  No=0
Question 6: I have prior experience in the field of counseling  Yes=6  No=12
Site Supervisor Survey
The department surveys our site supervisors in an effort to better understand their experiences working with our department. Specifically, the survey is designed to determine how well our department liaises with our sites, aggregate student performance on site, and how well students are prepared for their work in the field.

Overall, there were 43 participants who completed the Site Supervisor Survey. Of the 43, 10 supervised WCU counselor education students for internship, 3 supervised WCU counselor education students for practicum, and 30 supervised WCU counselor education students for both internship and practicum. The breakdown of setting included: 5 Elementary school; 2 Middle school; 11 High School; 17 Student Affairs settings; 4 College Counseling settings; 3 Community/Agency settings; 4 Inpatient/Outpatient settings and 1 other.

When asked about the Quality of Communication between the Site Supervisor and their WCU faculty member, 24 said that the communication was either Excellent or Very Good, 12 stated Good, 6 stated Fair, and 1 stated Poor. Data show that 70% of Site Supervisors felt that they thought the communication between themselves and WCU faculty was either Good, Very Good, or Excellent. Of the 43 participants, 29 (67%) had attended our Site Supervisor Seminar.

The following set of questions answered by Site Supervisors gauged how well we prepared our students in regard to specific counseling skills and characteristics. The first question centered on acting in an ethical manner. Responses showed that 91% of participants thought WCU did an Excellent (51%) or Very Good (40%) job preparing our students to act in an ethical manner when working with clients, with the remaining 5% rating the preparation as Good and 2 declined to answer. Next, participants were asked if they felt that WCU prepared our students with the necessary skills to be effective for that individual site. Data show 98% of Site Supervisors rated the students as Good (9%), Very Good (49%) or Excellent (40%) concerning necessary skills for the site. There was one participant who indicated Fair for this item.

Site Supervisors were asked how well they thought WCU prepared the supervisees to meet the counseling needs of clients from diverse backgrounds. Overall, the majority (93%) of Site Supervisors thought WCU did a Good (12%), Very Good (50%) or Excellent (28%) job of preparing our students to work with client from a diverse background, with 3 participants selecting Fair. In regard to preparing students to maintain appropriate records, the responses were very similar with 96% selecting Good, Very Good or Excellent and 4% selecting Fair. The next question focused on being an effective advocate, where participants (35%) selected Excellent, 42% Very Good, 21% Good, and 2% Fair.

The last two questions regarding WCU’s preparation for our students surrounded working with clients in a holistic manner and empowering clients. Again, the majority of Site Supervisors (77%) selected Excellent or Very Good, 18% Good, and 4% Fair.
We also gave the Site Supervisors an opportunity to openly respond to how WCU might improve the preparation of our counseling students to meet the needs of the sites and their clients, as well as to leave any additional feedback to any of the above questions. The themes extracted from the question surrounded timing of practicum (i.e.: summer) and year-long internships, higher-level counseling skills, increase trauma-focused knowledge, and WCU does a nice job preparing its counseling students.

In regard to the last qualitative question about additional feedback to the survey questions, only four Site Supervisors responded. They seemed appreciative for soliciting feedback and many praised WCU for our preparation and program.

**Alumni Survey**

Similar to the Site Supervisor Survey, at the end of each academic year, the department surveys our alumni in an effort to better understand their experiences as students in our programs. Our goals are to understand their level or preparation, support, and overall experience as master’s students in our department.

In 2016/2017, there were 82 participants who completed the Alumni survey. Of the 82 participants, 39 (48%) graduated in 2016 and 43 (52%) graduated in 2017. Thirty-nine (47.5%) in this subgroup graduated with a MS in Higher Education/Student Affairs and 43 (52.5%) with a MS in School Counseling. Of the professional organizations in which participants were a member, the two greatest responses were ASCA (33%) and NASPA (32%) with 18% for ACA.

When asked about their current employment status, 80% were employed in the field, with 20% not employed in the field of counseling.

**Employer Survey**

The department has attempted to survey employers of our alumni in order to understand how well students are prepared for their work as professional counselors. In 2016/2017 we had a total of 12 responses. Of the 12 participants, seven were from Higher Education/Student Affairs settings, three were from elementary schools, one was from a middle school and one from a high-school setting. Personality, interview skills, previous experience (in the field) and references were named as the top reasons employers hired these individuals. Areas that received the highest ratings regarding training that our graduates received included: overall counseling skills, knowledge of current issues, ethical/legal issues, skills related to diversity, and administrative skills. Employers commented on our students being up-to-date in the field, their ability to build rapport, excited to come to work, ability to implement high-quality educational programming, and being accountable, respectful and inquisitive. Regarding how we could improve our program, participants noted increased information on assessment and evaluation, more training on college and career opportunities, and how to work with students with mental health needs. In the future, we hope to gain additional participants to add to the employer data.
Comprehensive Examination

Students in the department are required to complete a case-based comprehensive examination at the conclusion of their academic program. The purpose of this examination is to assess the student’s ability to conceptualize a real-life case example, as well as develop empirically-supported intervention strategies that are intentional and based on the needs of the client and the presenting concerns.

Students initially take the examination over the course of a weekend. Students are required to answer eight questions about the case, some of which have multiple elements. Students who do not successfully answer all eight of the questions are required to remediate the exam. Students who respond with less than acceptable answers on one or two questions are required to re-take the exam with a new case, answering only the questions they did not successfully complete on the first administration. Students who do not successfully complete three or more questions must retake the entire exam.

In spring and fall of 2016, 67 students took the exam, of which 62 successfully completed during the initial administration (92.5%). The five students who did not successfully complete the initial exam were successful in their remediation.

In spring and fall of 2017, 66 students took the exam, of which 58 successfully completed during the initial administration (88%). The eight students who did not successfully complete the initial exam were successful in their remediation.

While students were successful in their completion of the exam, the department decided to move toward all student taking the CPCE, as it had been normed and validated and used in over 400 counseling programs.
National Counselor Examination (NCE) and Praxis Examination

Students may choose to take the National Counselor Examination in order to earn the Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) credential; this examination is also an option in Pennsylvania as a testing requirement for the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential. In 2016-2017, five students took the NCE, of which all five passed the exam. Candidates for certification as Professional School Counselors also are required to take the PRAXIS II examination for certification by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In 2016-2017, 46 students sat for the PRAXIS II examination, of which 44 passed the exam on their first attempt (96%).
**KPIs and CACREP Standards**

In an effort to align with the CACREP 2016 standards, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were created based on our department mission statement and the 2016 standards. The purpose is to provide the department with data to determine the effectiveness of our teaching, as well as the outcomes for our students.

In order to assess student learning for each KPI, faculty determine the percentage of students who successfully completed the course assignment (exam, presentation, project, case study, etc.) and report those data back to the department.

**Synopsis of Spring 2016/Fall 2017 KPI CACREP Data**

All current outcomes were met for both spring and fall semesters. Once the CPCE data is available (end of Spring 2018), we will be able to compare the specific core class pass-percentages from the CPCE to the KPIs that incorporate the core classes to make sure there is alignment with the data. In addition, we will review the pass rate standards that we currently have, as well as the specific assessments, to make sure we are accurately measuring the KPIs to the best of our abilities. In addition, we do not offer every class every semester, therefore it is difficult to compare semester to semester for each KPI.

One finding that was made came from the higher education practicum field course (EDC 592), where many of the students received ‘N/A’ on their final site evaluation. We are aware of this issue and we are currently creating a plan to address the concern with both university faculty and site supervisors. Currently, we are in good standings with meeting all of our KPIs from both spring and fall of 2017.
Subsequent Program Modifications
Student learning appears robust and faculty teaching is meeting the program objectives. However several modifications were made:

- Comprehensive Examination: While students were successfully completing the exam, the department’s assessment committee examined whether this tool was effective in (a) assessing comprehensive learning in the department’s programs and (b) if it is the most effective means of measuring student learning re: CACREP standards and program objectives. Faculty decided to implement the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) starting in the spring of 2018.

- Common Assignments: While we have been successful in assessing student learning, the use of common assessments in every course has been considered in the context of academic freedom. The Assessment Committee and Department of Counselor Education has now moved to the KPIs as are outlined in the 2016 CACREP standards.
Other Substantial Program Changes
Due to the focus of our Higher Education/Student affairs program, this program no longer resides in our department. As of spring 2017, we are no longer accepting new applicants for this program; however, we are diligent in providing our current HE/SA students with a quality education that continues to focus on the importance of counseling.

Exciting news: We received our 8-year CACREP-reaccreditation for all three of our current programs!