

**COUNSELING PROFESSIONS
DEPARTMENT**



**PROGRAM EVALUATION
SUMMARY
2005 & 2008 REPORTS**

Executive Summary

The following report is provided to constituents and stakeholders of the UW-Superior Counseling Professions Department as a means of communicating to you our commitment to on-going quality review and to improvement of the department and its programs in Community Counseling and School Counseling.

In 1997 the Counseling Department sought CACREP Accreditation and initially received provisional status. This was moved to full accreditation status in 1999 after the department made appropriate changes in order to meet the CACREP Standards. As part of the Accreditation the department agrees to on-going program review. In 2004-2005 a Program Evaluation was carried out (Myska & Milunovic, 2005) and its findings shared with the faculty and students in May 2005 and then with UW Superior governing bodies in 2005-2006. Steps were taken to address programmatic and course concerns raised by graduates based on their responses on the survey. The UW Superior Faculty Senate Council on Program Budget and Review suggested somewhat different changes so that the department might better address the undergraduate mission and liberal arts focus.

In 2007-2008 the Counseling Professions Department began a Self Study for renewal of CACREP Accreditation and as part of this a new Program Evaluation was undertaken (Hoyt, 2008). While the review from CACREP is not yet complete and is not part of this report, findings from the 2005 and 2008 studies are presented for review and discussion by interested persons. The Counseling Professions Department staff will utilize information from the 2008 study and feedback from interested parties to continue improving the programs. Preliminary steps for addressing the issues raised in the study are laid out at the end of the overview. The new findings from Hoyt now need to be factored in with the Goals and Objectives already discussed at a Department Retreat in August, 2008. The expectation is that the steps at the end of this report will be modified - first through ongoing departmental discussion, second with feedback from constituents and stakeholders, and third with CACREP feedback and review.

The Counseling Professions department is committed to providing its students the best education and training that our resources (personal, departmental, and campus) can provide and to providing the university community and the greater region a valuable resource in return. Your constructive comments on how we can improve in our services to students and the community are always welcomed.

2005 Program Evaluation Summary

In 2004-2005 Amy Myska [School Counseling] and Dobrivoje Milunovic [Community Counseling], two graduate students in the Research-based Program Evaluation course, carried out a program evaluation of the Counseling and Psychological Professions Department through a survey of graduates since 2001. They based their review on the CACREP Core Standards.

To ascertain whether the graduate program was meeting these standards recent graduates of the programs were sent a 31 question survey and asked to give their perceptions and evaluations of specific courses as well as their overall impressions of the Counseling Program. Graduates were also asked to specify particular topics that they believed should have been covered in more detail. Eighty-five graduates from between spring 2001 and fall 2004 were identified and sent surveys.

The report states that based on the results from the 2005 study, the Program was effectively meeting the standards set forth by CACREP. Of the 18 questions on the survey that used a 5-point likert scale [1 = Poor, 3= Average, 5=Excellent], the 35 respondents gave highly positive feedback. The Community Counseling graduates indicated a response of 4.0 or higher on 9 of the 18 questions. School Counseling graduates indicated an average response of 4 or higher on 14 of the 18 questions. All counseling components had an average response of 3 or higher. Myska and Milunovic concluded that the results indicated an overall high degree of satisfaction with the two programs. On questions related to the 8 Core Standards both the Community and the School Programs had ratings of 3.5 or higher and the reviewers concluded that graduates saw the programs as effectively meeting CACREP standards. (See Table 1 on page 4.)

They concluded that while there were several limitations to the study (small sample size and no previous survey results to compare theirs to) results from the study could be used to improve the graduate program. They also noted that it could be used for comparison with future studies.

Recommendations given in their 2004 study were:

1. An active alumni system that updated addresses and contact information
2. CACREP and University Counseling Programs develop guidelines for program evaluations for future program reviews
3. Since the CPP department makes changes in-between surveys such changes should be described in future evaluations so that graduates can give response relevant to the present program offerings

Specific findings from the 2005 study are shown in Table 1. Not all questions had 35 responses. There were 11 Community Counseling respondents, 16 School Counseling respondents, and 8 Human Relations respondents. HR students do not take the clinical courses so they could not respond to questions 21 and 22. These 18 questions used a likert scale of 1-5 with one representing poor and five representing excellent.

Table 1: 2005 Average Responses for 5-point Likert Questions 10-27

Survey Question	Community Counseling	School Counseling	Human Relations	Overall
10. I have skills to interview, assess, and counsel clients with a variety of characteristics, problems, and behaviors	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.0
11. The program provided basic understanding of counseling processes, theories, and models.	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.3
12. I feel competent that I understand and can address the problems of clients from a variety of backgrounds	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.9
13. The program provided a basic understanding of the legal and ethical issues of research and research methods	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.8
14. The program provided an understanding of the developmental problems and issues of persons across the life span	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.0
15. The program provided an understanding of career development	3.5	4.1	3.3	3.7
16. The program provided an understanding of the roles and functions of counselors in my particular setting	3.5	4.3	4.0	3.9
17. The program provided an understanding of ethical issues related to counseling and effective strategies for handling situations	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.9
18. The program provided strategies for effectively working with parents and families	3.9	3.7	4.1	3.9
19. The program facilitated positive relationships with other students in the program	4.3	4.4	4.0	4.3
20. The program provided an understanding of the roles and skills required to work with other professionals and support personnel	3.6	3.7	4.0	3.8
21. The Individual Practicum experience prepared me for Internship	4.5	4.3	-	4.4
22. The Group Internship experience prepared me for the Internship	4.0	4.3	-	4.2
23. The Internship experience prepared me for my present career	4.2	4.0	3.0	4.2
24. Program faculty were knowledgeable about counseling services and issues	4.5	3.0	4.1	4.4
25. Program faculty were interested and involved in my professional development	3.8	4.4	3.6	4.0
26. Program faculty were available for consultations when needed	4.2	4.4	3.9	4.2
27. Overall I feel I was enrolled in a quality counseling program	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.1

Myska and Milunovic (2005) also had a section for qualitative responses in their study. The main concerns mentioned by community counseling students were on licensure, employment, and wanting more on using the DSM IVR for diagnosis. School graduates wanted more on working with families and parents and more hands on experiences. Both groups wanted more on Self-injurious behaviors and interventions.

In further analysis by the department, areas that received any ratings of 1 or 2 on the Likert-scale were identified. These are presented here starting with the highest percentage in the 1-2 category:

#15 – Career: 11% rated it a 1 or 2;

#16 – Role and Function and #25 - Faculty Interest: 9% rated these a 1 or 2;

#12 – Diversity - 8% rated it a 1 or 2;

#24 – Faculty knowledgeable, #20 - Working with other professionals, and #13 – Legal/Ethics issues in research - 6% rated these a 1 or 2;

14 – Lifespan, #17 – Ethical Issues, #21 Individual Practicum, #23 Internship - 3% had rated it a 1 or 2.

These areas were considered ones the Program should respond to even though the averages for all of them were strong. Any item that received an average of less than 4 was also noted and the faculty person teaching in that area asked to consider how to encourage learning and to improve coverage of these topics specifically.

Between the 2005 study and the 2008 study, major changes occurred in the Multi-Cultural Counseling and Career Counseling courses as they were taken on by a new faculty person and revamped. The Research course integrated a major component on Ethics and Legal Issues which is taught in the summer and then reviewed in the fall section of the course. Counseling Adolescents and Family Counseling integrated more strategies for working with families and parents on children's issues. Awareness that some students perceive that they lacked sufficient understanding in their "Role and Function" and their "Work with other professionals" led to discussions of how to infuse these topics into various courses. It was left to coordinators to work on this in their respective Internships.

While less germane to CACREP, one clearer decision from the 2005 study was that the Human Relations Program needed to be reconsidered. It was the faculty's opinion that too many students were opting into that program when they found the academic or clinical aspects of other programs too difficult. Requirements were changed so that students had to declare HR their choice from the start and to develop a specific plan for their educational program with their advisor within the first semester. In 2005-06 no new students were allowed into the HR program. It was also decided that with limited faculty any additional programs beyond the two main ones had to be curtailed.

2008 Program Evaluation Summary

A new evaluation was planned in the summer of 2007, was researched that fall, and a survey sent to graduates in early 2008. Again the purpose of the evaluation was to garner graduates' opinions of the education and training they had received, how it had prepared them for their careers, and how it might be improved. The CACREP Core Standards were the focus but so too were areas that had been of concern in 2005. Contact with graduates from the last four years was attempted and 35 surveys were returned. Demographic data and perceptions about the training and work since graduation were analyzed. Another area asked about was if the graduates would provide the department with contacts at their place of employment so that it might gauge employer perception of the Program.

The new author, Hoyt, had slightly different interests from Myska and Milunovic (2005) but covered the eight core areas using a similar likert scale. In his case the question focused on level of satisfaction with 1 meaning “not at all satisfied” to 5 meaning “extremely satisfied”. A 3 meant satisfied and is reasonably equivalent to the 3 meaning average in the 2005 study.

Of the 35 respondents, 59% were graduates in School Counseling, 29% in Community Counseling, 6 % in Human Relations, and 6% did not specify. Most (95%) felt that their degree was relevant to the position they were in and 77% believed that they were presently in positions that they were appropriate for the degree earned.

Table 2: 2008 Responses to the 8 Core Standards

	Mean & Range	% Unsatisfied (1-2)	% Satisfied (3)	% more than satisfied (4-5)	% satisfied or better (3-5)
Human Growth & Development	3.85 & 3-5	0%	27%	73%	100%
Multicultural knowledge	3.59 & 2-5	6%	42%	52%	94%
Theory knowledge	3.73 & 1-5	6%	21%	73%	94%
Group counseling	3.91 & 1-5	6%	15%	79%	94%
Career issues	3.58 & 2-5	9%	43%	48%	91%
Assessment	3.33 & 1-5	18%	30%	52%	82%
Research & Ethics	3.91 & 3-5	0%	24%	76%	100%
Professional Development	4.18 & 2-5	3%	12%	85%	97%

With the program-specific questions, Hoyt (2008) prepared a second table. He noted that the weakest points were still well into the “satisfied” category and can be viewed in Table 3. Participants rated the advisement process as the lowest with a 3.52, with the second-lowest score as the Individual Counseling Practicum which rated at a 3.81. The strongest points were providing a Challenging Environment at 4.10 and Support and Guidance from faculty which scored at a mean of 3.97. Of the percentage of respondents who rated these categories “satisfied or better”, the mean for all categories in this subgroup was 90.5%. (See Table 3 on the next page for presentation.)

Three qualitative questions were also asked regarding the subjects’ reason for their overall satisfaction, why or why not they would recommend the program to a friend or colleague, and any other pertinent information they would like to add in regards to their education at UW-Superior. According to Hoyt (2008), responses in the qualitative data were diverse but some patterns did seem to surface. All of the participants stated they were satisfied with their education at UWS. Participants talked about the quality of the professors and the convenience of classes being offered at night to help working families.

Table 3: 2008 Responses to Specific Questions

	Mean & Range	% Unsatisfied (1-2)	% Satisfied (3)	% more than satisfied (4-5)	% satisfied or better (3-5)
Individual Practicum	3.81 & 1-5	12%	24%	64%	88%
Group Practicum	3.88 & 2-5	9%	21%	70%	91%
Support and Guidance from Faculty	3.97 & 2-5	12%	15%	73%	88%
Adequate Advisement Process	3.52 & 1-5	18%	30%	52%	88%
Challenging Environment	4.1 & 2-5	6%	5%	88%	94%
Overall Satisfaction	3.82 & 2-5	6%	21%	73%	94%

The most common concern given by respondents on the qualitative questions was in regards to confusion about the licensing requirements. Hoyt (2008) found that participants in the Community Counseling and Marriage and Family foci consistently reported concerns about not fully understanding the complexities and requirements of licensure in their desired fields. Other concerns were frustrations in regards to the marketability of their chosen degrees and the difficulties in finding jobs where other degrees are preferable. Some School Counselors discussed that the program was too theory-based in nature and should otherwise focus on school-specific situations and other obligations of school counselors outside the realm of counseling students.

In regards to whether graduates would recommend the counseling program at the University of Wisconsin Superior, Hoyt (2008) found that 91.5% stated that they would recommend the program to a friend or colleague. The convenience of night classes was the most common response, as well as the design of the program according to CACREP guidelines, and the ability of the program to provide growth personally and professionally. Of the three responses that stated they would not recommend the program, each stated problems with certain members of the faculty and philosophical differences. Hoyt further notes that these were not described in detail, but appeared to be individual differences as many other comments were made highly praising of the faculty and staff.

The third question was open ended and answers were diverse but focused on aspects that they found difficult after graduation. Hoyt (2008) noted that some school counselor graduates wanted additional training in the educational system, such as grant writing and grief counseling. With community counseling graduates, the majority focused on help with finding a job and providing better information on the licensure process. Marketability of the degree was also a common response, as some respondents stated that they did not feel fully informed about the necessities to obtain licensure and after licensure the difficulties in finding a job and being eligible for third-party payment by insurance companies.

Hoyt (2008) also compared the present results with that found by Myska and Milunovic (2005) and noted the following. In comparison, several areas that were identified in the prior study showed consistent areas of strength as well as areas that still could be enhanced. All areas with lower ratings were still in the “satisfied” or higher categories. He wanted readers to be aware that lower scores should be seen as relative before any determination of weakness is assessed. In the prior study, the authors pointed out that respondents gave slightly lower scores in the areas of multicultural and career issues. These were also areas of relative weakness in the current study but again were still within “satisfied” parameters. The prior study also noted that in regards to multicultural issues, respondents rated this as a “3” or lower 32 % of the time. In the current study this rose to 48 % (ratings of 1-3). He suggests that future studies should pay careful attention as to whether there is a trend in this category or if this was a temporary variance or related to other issues regarding multicultural education.

While the results of the 2008 study showed positive results according to CACREP and program-specific guidelines, Hoyt noted that several of the same limitations described in the Myska and Milunovic (2005) arose in this study as well. Low participation in this study again emphasized the need for an active alumni updating system. However, it was not apparent to the researcher if this was a matter of updated alumni records or the need to simply increase participation of the alumnus on record.

The second limitation also described in the 2005 study was the limitation of well-defined CACREP evaluation requirements. Other than stating that an evaluation must be done every three years (CACREP, 2005), nothing is specifically stated as to what areas need to be focused on in each study. Although CACREP, as stated earlier, feels that this provides flexibility for each instructional institution, the evaluations provide little comparison of quality between institutions as well as may open institutions to manipulating study questions to show positive results.

In summary, results of 2008 satisfaction rates in providing CACREP-based counseling were overall positive. Participants consistently stated that they were satisfied or better in all CACREP based aspects of the counseling education process. School counselors were the most satisfied with both their education and preparation for their careers, while community-based graduates were satisfied with their education but were seemingly unsatisfied with their knowledge of the licensure process and at times questioned whether a Master’s degree in counseling was the best choice to find a job in the helping professions.

A new recommendation discusses that the program make a greater effort to help address this disappointment with future graduates by better educating the students on what careers they can expect with a graduate degree in community counseling, as well as advising students about having more realistic expectations of how the mental health community values an LPC license in comparison to other related licensures.

References

- Hoyt, J. (2008, May). *Preliminary findings from the evaluation of the counseling professions program*. Poster presented at the Spring Program Evaluation Presentations at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, Superior, WI.
- Myska A. & Milunovic, D. (2005, May). *Program evaluation of CACREP accredited UW-Superior counseling and psychological professions program*. Poster presented at the Spring Program Evaluation Presentations at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, Superior, WI.