

Augusta State University
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Special Education

Counselor Education Program
Tri-Annual Systematic Program Evaluation Report
(in accordance with CACREP Standard I.AA. Evaluation)
2006-2009

To ensure that students in the Counselor Education Program at Augusta State University are attaining the highest quality educational preparation in accordance with the best practice standards in our field (the standards set by CACREP - the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs), program faculty outline in this report those areas reviewed or revised in the last three years (2006-2009). An electronic version is available online at www.aug.edu/elcse. The report is written to comply with the CACREP standard I.AA which states *“Distribution of an official report that documents outcomes of the systematic program evaluation, with descriptions of any program modifications, to students currently in the program, program faculty, institutional administrators, personnel in cooperating agencies (e.g., employers, site supervisors), and the public.”*

We take this opportunity to thank our community and school advisory committee members who provide continual guidance on curricular, clinical and evaluative aspects of candidate training. Thanks are also due to a capable cadre of adjunct instructors, guest lecturers, and site supervisors - experienced community professionals who consistently provide valuable oversight and education, and who share a wealth of counseling experiences to bring the real world of counseling to the classroom. We would also like to thank our program graduates and employers of graduates for returning surveys and providing valuable feedback for program improvement. And lastly, thanks is given to our many students, who work hard during their tenure in the program, rise to the challenges without complaint, and remain strong advocates and change agents in their roles in the community, and who help to make our jobs as counselor educators worthwhile.

CACREP Section I. EVALUATION

AA. Program faculty members engage in continuous systematic program evaluation indicating how the mission, objectives, and student learning outcomes are measured and met. The plan includes the following:

AA.1. A review by program faculty of programs, curricular offerings, and characteristics of program applicants.

With the introduction of the new CACREP Standards for Counselor Education Programs in 2008 and their subsequent adoption on July 1, 2009, counseling program faculty have met regularly and rigorously compared each element of the 2009 standards with current program practices. Recognized changes needed to be made are described below.

- Discontinued practice of allowing students to “rollover” clinical hours accrued during the practicum semester into internship.
- Reviewed core curricular areas and specialty area standards (community counseling and school counseling) and adjusted course syllabi as needed.
- Created matrices which crosswalk core and specialty area standards with the specific course(s) in which the standard elements are addressed.
- Replaced and/or updated course texts to latest editions
- In preparation for the change from a 48-hour Community Counseling program track to a 60-hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program track by 2014, created a new advising sheet and four new courses to address the CMHC standards. These courses and advising sheet are working their way through the university approval process with an anticipated approval date of January 2011.
- Discontinued use of on-campus training facility for community track practicum students in August 2007. Prior to this time, students enrolled in the community track provided free counseling services to members of the community, under the supervision of program faculty. Use of the facility to provide free counseling services was discontinued due to low enrollment in the practicum courses (one or two students) during 2006-2008. Community track students now complete their practicum placements in community settings, just as they do for internship. The Counselor Education Training Center facility is still utilized for students in their communication skills or other classes that require videotapes to be made, for program applicant interviews, and other program meetings.
- Beginning in fall 2008 semester, faculty began offering the Site Supervisor/Supervisee Orientation sessions in spring and fall semesters. These meetings are held on campus at the beginning of the semester prior to students beginning a new practicum or internship placement. Faculty provide specific training in supervision to site supervisors, then bring site supervisors and students together to review expectations during the practicum and internship, complete the required paperwork, and determine a starting schedule for each candidate.

In addition, faculty have examined the following:

- Reviewed results of the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE), the required exams for school counselor certification in Georgia, as they became available after each test administration. In 2006, the pass rate for program completers was 100%. In 2007-08, the pass rate for program completers was 100%. In 2008-09 the pass rate for program completers was 98%.
- Reviewed National Counselor Exam (NCE) descriptive statistics as they became available after each test administration. In last three years, student mean scores were above the national average in most areas. In 2006-07 the pass rate for program completers was 88%. In 2008 the pass rate for program completers was 75%. In 2009 the pass rate for program completers was 91%.

- Current counseling program mission statements and program objectives were reviewed with both program advisory committee members in regular meetings, as well as with students during a focus group discussion. Both groups approved the current mission statements and objectives. Students participating in the focus group discussions made several suggestions regarding coursework in the community counseling track that are under review by program faculty.

Over the last three years the Counselor Education Program community counseling advisory committee provided the following: input on the diverse student recruitment plan; input on the creation of new courses for the transition from the 48-hour Community Counseling Program to the 60-hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling track; approval of the new site supervisor/supervisee orientation and training process; a review of semester supervisor evaluation of student progress mean results; a review of graduate exit survey results; and an examination of Counselor Education Program mission statement and program objectives.

Over the last three years the Counselor Education Program school counseling advisory committee provided the following: input on the diverse student recruitment plan; approval of the new site supervisor/supervisee orientation and training process; a review of semester supervisor evaluation of student progress mean results; a review of graduate exit survey results; an examination of CEP mission statement and program objectives; suggestions for mentoring students after graduation; and input for new evaluation of on-site supervisors' experience rubric. The group also provided informal feedback on the strengths and areas for growth of the school counseling program, which included the following:

1. Areas of strength
 - a. Candidates are required to do a staff training during internship course.
 - b. Candidates must participate in an interview as part of the application process.
 - c. Candidates are able to:
 - i. take initiative
 - ii. use a variety of technology
 - iii. utilize their strong clinical skills
 - iv. know when to confer with supervisor
 - v. anticipate problems and be proactive
 - vi. display professionalism in interactions with others, ethical decision-making and maintaining confidentiality
 - vii. make good connections with students and staff in the schools, as noted by faculty requests for candidates to see particular students or come to their classes more.
2. Areas for growth
 - a. Provide more preparation for the GACE school counseling exam to reduce candidate anxiety
 - b. Provide more strategies for classroom management
 - c. Consider exposure to different levels (elementary/middle/high)
 - d. Consider a "shadow week" where candidates would switch internship sites with another candidate
 - e. Prepare candidates to provide better consultation with parents

- f. Prepare candidates to work more effectively with children with behavioral difficulties

Faculty have reviewed new student applicant data for the last three years. The table below describes the data and is followed by a discussion of noted trends.

2006-2009 Applicant Demographics

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	Totals
County				
Richmond	17	9	16	42
Columbia	5	4	11	20
Burke	0	0	2	2
McDuffie	0	0	0	0
Aiken	7	2	4	13
Edgefield	0	1	1	2
Other	7	5	12	24
Ethnicity				
African-Amer.	9	10	17	36
Caucasian	26	10	28	64
Hispanic-Amer.	1	0	1	2
Other	0	1	0	1
	Diverse pop. 28%	Diverse pop. 52%	Diverse pop. 39%	Diverse pop. 38%
Age				
21-30	24	15	28	67
31-40	7	4	11	22
41-50	2	1	4	7
51-60	3	1	3	7
61 and over	0	0	0	0
Track				
Community	11 = 31%	10 = 48%	21 = 46%	42
School	25 = 69%	11 = 52%	25 = 54%	61
Totals	36	21	46	

Applicant data is reviewed by faculty each semester. There has been a notable increase in the number of students applying for the community track since becoming accredited in 2006. Trends from data displayed above also indicate that more applicants are coming to the program from other than local demographic areas and the numbers of diverse populations are strong.

Near the end of both the spring and fall semesters, faculty conduct a systematic review of each student's progress which includes a review of students' academic grades, results on key

assessments, and consideration of dispositions and competencies consistent with professional training guidelines. Students experiencing difficulty are identified and actions taken as the faculty deem appropriate. In the last three years, 13 remediation plans have been written to help students develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to be successful in the counseling profession. Of those, seven students successfully completed plans, and are either continuing in the program or have graduated, and six students were dismissed or voluntarily left the program.

AA.2. Formal follow-up studies of program graduates to assess graduate perceptions and evaluations of major aspects of the program.

Alumni surveys were conducted in both 2007 and 2010. Program graduates either agreed or strongly agreed that the academic competence of the faculty is an asset to the program, that faculty demonstrated a positive responsiveness to student concerns and were available to students outside of class time, that ethical standards were continually taught and maintained by faculty and supervisors, and that faculty encouraged an awareness of personal growth and conveyed its importance in the counseling field. One hundred percent of the respondents said they would recommend Augusta State University's counseling program to others interested in entering the school or community counseling profession. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their curricular experiences in the program. A majority of respondents also noted that they were highly satisfied or satisfied with their practicum and internship experiences, including the site selection process, the appropriateness of the site, and the quality of supervision provided by both faculty and site supervisors. Comments revealed that students saw the faculty as highly knowledgeable, competent, inspirational, caring, and invested in their personal and professional growth.

Areas for program improvement revealed through graduate comments in the alumni surveys include more training for some site supervisors, more curricula regarding working with persons with chronic and persistent mental illness and psychopharmacology, and clarifying expectations for the practicum and internship courses earlier in the program. Some of these areas have been addressed by inviting guest speakers to lecture on psychopharmacology in the assessment and diagnosis class and developing the site supervisor/supervisee orientation sessions in spring and summer semesters, beginning in Fall 2008, to outline expectations of students and supervisors and provide supervision training.

Graduate exit survey results from 2007-2009 revealed that over 90 % of students in the ELCSE department and/or program were satisfied with the graduate admissions process, advising, interaction with the department administration/staff, and courses. Over 95% indicated that the programs had met or exceeded their expectations. Over 85% were satisfied with field placements and certification processes.

AA.3. Formal studies of site supervisors and program graduate employers that assess their perceptions and evaluations of major aspects of the program.

Site supervisor mean evaluation results from 2006-2009 for the school counseling program reveal that over 90% of site supervisors believe that program candidates increase social/emotional and career development and enhance students' academic success. Supervisors rated candidates as either excellent or very good in their ability to advocate on behalf of students,

to provide leadership and manage a comprehensive school counseling program, to use outcome data in order to facilitate student success, to provide effective individual, group, and classroom guidance services for all students, and to collaborate and consult with others.

Site supervisor mean evaluation results from 2006-2009 for the community counseling program reveal that over 90% of site supervisors believed that students were involved and exhibited personal and professional growth through the supervisory process, that they were effective in their roles as counselor and consultant at their respective sites, that they focused on specific client behaviors, that they monitored and evaluated progress towards client goals, and that they terminated sessions appropriately. Over 85% of site supervisors indicated that students were effective in their organization and preparation with clients, including organizing case material, developing mutually-agreed upon goals, and structuring the counseling session. Although these scores are relatively high, given other feedback from graduate surveys, effectively managing client information is an area on which faculty will focus more attention in future community counseling track courses.

Employer surveys conducted in 2007 and 2010 revealed that the majority of employers of school counseling graduates rated them adept at the following: increasing students' social/emotional, career, and academic growth; providing leadership in the school/agency setting; providing individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance services; attending to varying developmental levels of students/clients; conducting individual assessments and writing treatment plans, using student/client data to drive decision-making about services/programs; attending to diverse student/client needs; consulting with others. Employer comments noted excellent overall preparedness, knowledge of student data, leadership skills, and effective communication skills with students and colleagues.

According to survey results 100% of employers of community counseling program graduates rated them as able to accurately assess client needs, to develop treatment plans and appropriate interventions, and to effectively manage counseling groups. One hundred percent of employers rated community counseling graduates as excellent or very good in utilizing effective communication skills, collaborating or consulting with other professionals, maintaining appropriate ethical standards, developing positive relationships with clients, displaying compassion and genuine helpfulness, and several other areas. Comments noted students' motivation, willingness to learn "on the job" skills, preparedness to work in the counseling field, and strong clinical knowledge, including assessment and treatment planning skills.

AA.4. Assessment of student learning and performance on professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards.

Students are assessed in all courses, and course objectives and evaluative measures are aligned with CACREP professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards. Faculty created new key assessments for evaluating student progress which incorporate CACREP 2009 common core curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge standards, as well as specific curricular standards for community counseling and school counseling programs. The assessment rubrics are designed to measure student progress at set times throughout the program and provide students with clear feedback about their progress. Summary evaluative data is reviewed at faculty meetings as it becomes available. Key assessments currently include:

- Professional Counseling Development Evaluation (PCDE) rubric (conducted during Counseling Theories course, Practicum course, and Internship II semester, replacing former Interpersonal Characteristics Survey and Mid-Program Review).
- Systematic Assessment of Students at end of every semester
- Site Observations
- Site Supervisor Evaluations of Practicum and Internship
- Impacting Student Learning Project (school)
- Client Development Project (community)
- Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE II-school)
- Dispositions
- Portfolio Review
- Exit Surveys
- Follow-up studies of graduates and employers

AA.5. Evidence of the use of findings to inform program modifications.

As noted above, faculty have completed the following tasks:

- Reviewed the 2009 CACREP standards, cross-checked standards with objectives in course syllabi, and ensured that each standard is reflected and evaluated through course assignments. Revised some course assignments as needed.
- Developed new process (Site Supervisor/Supervisee Orientation and Training) for meeting with site supervisors and students new to practicum and/or internship each semester based on student and graduate feedback. Supervision training is also provided to site supervisors.
- Created technology plan which describes how student competency in use of technology is infused into curriculum so that students no longer must take technology as a separate course for Georgia or South Carolina school counselor certification.
- Limited Communication Skills course to twelve students to provide for more intentional learning experience.
- Changed course textbooks for Career Development Theories, Practicum and Internship courses because students requested to learn more about specific interventions related to various theoretical orientations.
- Included more video presentations regarding up-to-date interventions for children in the Human Development and Child and Adolescents Counseling courses

AA.6. Distribution of an official report that documents outcomes of the systematic program evaluation, with descriptions of any program modifications, to students currently in the program, program faculty, institutional administrators, personnel in cooperating agencies (e.g., employers, site supervisors), and the public.

The Program Evaluation Report is posted on the program's website and significant individuals including university administrators, program faculty, site supervisors, advisory committee members, graduates and their employers, and current students are invited to review it.