



CALDWELL UNIVERSITY

Graduate Programs in Counseling

PROGRAM EVALUATION: Report to Stakeholders Spring 2023

Recognizing the importance of and need for efforts toward continual improvement, the Graduate Counseling Program at Caldwell University engages in a systematic and ongoing evaluation of our mission, goals, and outcomes of student learning and professional progress. Elements of the assessment process include: enrollment and graduation rates, and student learning outcomes. Additionally, feedback is sought from faculty, program graduates, site supervisors and employers of program graduates. This annual report focuses on a variety of updates and outcomes for the academic period between fall 2021 and spring 2023.

1. NEW HIRES: 2 Faculty positions

In the spring of 2023, two new faculty members joined the Graduate Counseling Program. Both new hires are significant in that they meet the “Core Faculty” requirements set forth by CACREP. Dr. Lauren Clark started her position as an Assistant Professor with the Graduate Counseling Program in the spring of 2023. Dr. Clark’s specialty area is in clinical mental health counseling, but her research interests include school counseling and school violence prevention. Dr. Clark completed her doctoral studies in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of New Orleans, a CACREP accredited program. In addition to her PhD, Dr. Clark is also a licensed counselor and holds the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential.

Dr. JennaLeigh Iseman also started her position as a full-time faculty member with the Graduate Counseling Program in the spring of 2023. Dr. Iseman’s specialty area is in clinical mental health counseling with a wide variety of populations and diagnoses, including children and adolescents as well as adults, families, couples and groups. Dr. Iseman’s dissertation was entitled “Examining the Relationship Between Acute Stress and Psychosocial Functioning through the Lens of the COVID 19 Pandemic.” Dr. Iseman completed her doctoral studies in Counselor Education and Supervision at Pace University in 2021. In addition to her PhD, Dr. Iseman also holds the credential of LMHC, or Licensed Mental Health Counselor.

2. NEW POSITION: Clinical Coordinator

In the fall of 2022, Dr. Stacey Solomon, accepted the position of Clinical Coordinator, in addition to her role as a full-time faculty member. As Clinical Coordinator, the focus is on the field experiences of Clinical Mental Health Counseling students, School Counseling students, and Clinical Mental Health Counseling with Art Therapy students during their practicum and internship experiences. The Clinical Coordinator has a job description that includes the functions that are required by CACREP, including the

vetting of new site supervisors, bi-weekly contact, and annual site visits with active and/or new site supervisors. Additionally, the Clinical Coordinator holds practicum/internship orientations for students, and assists the student in selecting, interviewing and accepting a placement for clinical work. The Clinical Coordinator's role also includes working with sites to complete affiliation agreements between the site and the university, and maintaining contact with the site to assist in communication about the students' progress. The Clinical Coordinator works closely with the faculty teaching the practicum and internship courses over the course of the semester. Data for program improvement related to practicum and internship is collected by the Clinical Coordinator at various points during the semester.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Conclusions regarding student learning outcomes are reached by assessing various aspects of the Graduate Counseling program. Core courses include Signature Assignments, which link certain course objectives to their achievement; the Comprehensive Exam challenges students near the end of the program to apply their knowledge to the treatment of a case; and the national exam (NCE) provides outcomes which can be compared to national results.

The Graduate Counseling Program faculty use the results from formative (annual) and summative (bi-annual) data analysis of the learning outcomes. The information is then used to guide recommendations for modification to the overall program, course offerings, teaching, assessment methods, and policies. Results of the data analysis and program modifications are included in our Annual Outcomes Report, posted on the Graduate Programs in Counseling website:

<https://www.caldwell.edu/graduate/academic-department/graduate-psychology-and-counseling-programs/>

Consistently, results indicate that the majority of our students continue to be successful in outcome measures, as indicated by the data for the National Counselors Examination (NCE), and Graduation and job placement rates. The most recent data available from 2021-2022 is outlined below:

Year and Program	Number of 2021-2022 Graduates	Completion rate	NCE pass rate	Job placement rate/employment as a counselor
2021-2022				
Clinical Mental Health Counseling	7	92	92	96%
Clinical Mental Health Counseling with Art Therapy	16	94	90	100%
School Counseling	9	92	50	70%

The National Counselors Examination (NCE) results continue to indicate that our students are adequately prepared with knowledge in the eight core areas of Counselor Education curriculum, as outlined by New Jersey licensing standards and the CACREP accreditation standard. During the 2021-2022 academic year the 2 tracks of students required to take the exam for licensure had an average 91% pass rate (for the students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Programs and Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program with Art Therapy).

Signature Assignment aggregate data previously indicated that the process required further standardization. Specifically, a system for collecting and analyzing the data was implemented to further standardize the process. Another previously identified issue indicated a variance in student outcome score. This issue was attributed to the individual faculty members' approach to scoring the assignment. Based on this issue, Signature Assignment instructions/expectations were revised on an ongoing basis for the past two academic years. Although these changes have yielded better results, continued issues with obtaining Signature Assignment data led to the development of a standardized pre and post test which was piloted in the Spring 2023 semester. The intent of these (pre and post) tests will be to eventually replace the Signature Assignments and use the exam to evaluate students early on in the program and then at the end of the program. The exam contains the 8 core academic areas outlined by CACREP and the National Counselor Examination (NCE).

Comprehensive Exam results were also targeted in the 2021-2023 academic years. The faculty had a goal of improving the comprehensive exam process, specifically embedding it in the students Internship class. This change meant that students would base their work on an actual client, versus the previous process that utilized a fictional case study. The new process was piloted in the spring of 2022 with 1 student from each track taking the exam as a component of their internship. Based on the positive feedback and outcomes from the piloted group, the fall 2022 semester had a total of 10 students take the exam under the new format. The group was composed of 1 student from the Clinical Mental Health Counseling with Art Therapy track, 2 students from the School Counseling track, and 7 students from the Clinical Mental Health Counseling track. Each of the 10 students went through a faculty review process and after a series of revisions, each of the 10 students passed the examination.

4. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK:

Faculty, site supervisors, and employers of graduates are surveyed both formally and informally regarding their experiences with Caldwell students and alumni. In the past, an online survey was developed for gathering information from supervisors, but use of the online tool was discontinued due to the poor rate of responses.

- a. **Faculty** had previously suggested research and formal writing as an area for focused improvement. As a result, increased short research assignments are integrated into several

courses and Program Faculty indicate that they are monitoring changes in student performance on the written portion of the comprehensive exam (as noted above).

- b. **Site Supervisors.** (Appendix 4.c. Full report) Students have regular, systematic opportunities to formally evaluate practicum and internship supervisors each semester.

Summary from 2021-22

Scale is 0 – 4 with 4 being the very satisfactory and 0-6 with 6 being very satisfactory for the evaluation of the supervision received.

SC: 14 placements were evaluated. On a 4-point scale, the satisfaction with the practicum internship course was 3.6; with site experiences was 3.6; and with site quality was 3.7. Site supervisor evaluations were on a 6 point scale and total was 5.4. Lowest scores in supervision were for report writing/training in documentation and opportunities to conduct intakes.

CMHC: 28 placements were evaluated. On a 4-point scale, the satisfaction with the practicum internship course was 4.0; with site experiences was 3.5; and with site quality was 3.5. Site supervisor evaluations were on a 6 point scale and total was 5.4. Lowest scores in supervision were for report writing/training in documentation and opportunities to conduct intakes. Lowest scores in supervision were for opportunities to administer and score tests and opportunities to conduct intakes.

- c. **The Employers Survey** (Appendix 4.c. Full report) provided strong positive responses regarding training from Caldwell University Graduate Counseling program. Especially strong were group facilitation skills (100% Strongly agree). The lowest score was 88.5% strongly agreed or agreed that graduates were “able to explain therapeutic choices with literature, theory and research support”; 11.5% were neutral.

Areas for improvement were drawn from the qualitative comments. Specifically, treatment planning and (school counseling) 3 tiered intervention planning and documentation were identified as needing more focus to fully prepare students for their roles in the field.

These areas were recently targeted through the comprehensive exam instructions and courses connected to the “helping profession” in all tracks. Program faculty will continue to monitor this over time as more graduates are trained with the program improvements, now emphasizing treatment planning and documentation. Employers reported many employees exceeded expectations upon being hired, hence demonstrating a comprehensive and overall strong program training model. There will be no program modifications at this time recommended.

d. **Program Modifications Based on Evaluation for AY 22-23**

Program Component	Summary of Modification for Academic Year 2022-23
Professional Dispositions Measurement	<p>A change was made to the program evaluation plan to measure one professional disposition over three points in time during the program rather than multiple dispositions once. For academic year 2022-23 the PEP professional dispositions measure was modified to:</p> <p><i>Graduates will cultivate maturity and professionalism required for practice and to conduct research by developing the professional disposition of self-reflection through a signature assignment Group Process reflection paper, self-assessment, and goal setting during the internship course and reflection and self-assessment during the comprehensive exam oral defense [CACREP 4.G]. The three measures of this KPI can be reviewed in supporting the document <4.G.- Revised KPI for Professional Disposition.pdf>. These revisions will strengthen the data tracking for this KPI and will ensure the measurement of dispositions for each student over multiple points of time.</i></p>
Assessment of Students - Policy on Probation, Dismissal and Remediation beyond the GPA	<p>A program policy is proposed and under review to add a policy regarding remediation, probation and dismissal beyond the student GPA:</p> <p><i>To maintain the ethical standards of the field, counselor educators and supervisors are required to observe students' behavioral performance beyond GPA to assess knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions. To this end, faculty members will internally complete an annual review of student performance. Following this review, should the need arise for intervention, a student remediation plan outlining how to improve their engagement with the core values of the counseling field will be initiated. Additionally, remediation plans may be introduced as needed and identified by the faculty, beyond the annual review for students that need additional support for developing the counselor identity (knowledge, skills and professional disposition). Refer to the Graduate Catalog for additional probation and dismissal policies governing all graduate programs.</i></p>
Signature assignments for Program evaluation	<p>For academic year 2023-24, a modified PEP model is underway (piloted in Spring 2023) that will include pre and post testing of the KPIs. This was instituted to improve objectivity and allow an apples-to-apples comparison for whoever teaches the assignment including adjuncts, improving Inter Rater reliability. The faculty believes that moving from signature assignments will improve our outcomes and measure. Some of the concerns include: rating scales that are not clear enough, meeting or not meet measures are subjective compared to a test. This change will assist in further understanding the outcomes.</p>
Signature Assignment Revision	<p>Course 545, Signature assignment modification -examined component 3, course CPS 545, The student assignment for the signature assignment is to identify Self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role. [CACREP 2.F.1.1] The challenge was that they wrote about it but did not support with literature. The template for this assignment will be changed for the spring</p>

	2023 semester to add the language “emphasize the literature “ to support answers about self-care and ethics.
Comprehensive exam	The comprehensive exam was rewritten to - Be more comprehensive to incorporate all 9 core content areas - Apply an actual internship case that is embellished where needed - Standardize the scoring through use of more full time faculty who developed the tool. Strengthen areas of including examples of group interventions and add to the directions that each content area shall be supported by the literature.
NCE as Program Evaluation Data Point	Will phase out use of the NCE test scores as a data point due to changes in NBCC policies of providing outcomes. The new test questions will be piloted in Sp23 to replace the NCE measure.
Attracting and Retaining a diverse study body	Faculty will meet with new admissions personnel to create a plan for attracting and retaining a diverse student body. The undergraduate student body is increasingly diverse and efforts to recruit from this pool may be a focus.
Assessment of Faculty by students (SOR)	To improve the low response rate, core faculty will remind the students in class, suggest to the faculty to provide time to complete the assessment tool in the course time, request or reminder,
Student Satisfaction Survey results	In response to the student satisfaction survey results, the following modifications were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full time tenured faculty is now in the clinical coordinator position - crisis counseling will be offered in F22 and F24 and an Art and Trauma Study abroad will be proposed for Sp24 - Faculty will integrate more content regarding diverse populations and culture into all coursework
Student assessment of the sites and internship experiences	Faculty will encourage sites to offer opportunities for intakes, assessments appropriate to the specialization and documentation. During the site visits this year, the Clinical Coordinator will add this as a prompt on the site visit form to survey and encourage.

5. SUMMARY:

Having graduated 32 students in the 2021-2022 academic year, we recognize that the success of these young professionals is in part due to our valued stakeholders support of them and of the Graduate Counseling Program. By sharing these findings, it is our hope that you will also be a part of program monitoring, ensuring fidelity to our mission and goals, and helping us achieve ongoing program development. Our continuous efforts toward those ends will certainly be directed toward the 160 enrolled students whom we welcomed this past August for the start of the fall 2022 semester. We invite you, after having reviewed this report, to respond with questions, recommendations, or other feedback to the Program Coordinator.