**ANNUAL PROGRAM REVIEW 2021**

**September 20, 2021**

**LSU Counselor Education Program**

**Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling Concentrations**

The LSU Counselor Education program is a 60-hour master's program in counseling with two distinct concentrations: School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The degree prepares students to function as professional counselors in a variety of human service settings such as schools, college counseling centers, mental health treatment facilities, and private practice. Our program prepares students to meet the mental health needs of clients in the state of Louisiana and nationally. Our goal is to prepare students to master the knowledge and skill areas specified by current preparation standards and best practices in the counseling profession. Graduates use their knowledge and skills to help individuals, couples, and families from diverse populations to enhance life adjustment, foster personal growth and wellness, promote social justice and advocacy, and expand competencies in coping with environmental demands across the lifespan.

The LSU Counselor Education program is evaluated on an annual basis through a process specified by our Office of Institutional Effectiveness as part of the SACS Accreditation process. The evaluation includes a 3-year assessment plan for program and for student learning outcomes, assessment methodology, findings and analysis of the ongoing assessment, and an action plan (listing program impact and findings for improvement). This report is required for submission each year (See the 2020 Student Learning Assessment report, attached). In addition, a Program Impact Report is conducted every three years. The 2021 Program Impact Report is attached to this document.

In addition to this ongoing assessment, the program typically conducts an annual review of additional data measures related to our CACREP accreditation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions starting in March 2020, we did not publish an annual review in the fall of 2020. Therefore, this review reflects findings from our review of data collected during the past two years. Please note that this document supplements our annual report for SACS with additional program review findings.

1. **We conducted a review of programs, mission statement and objectives, curricular offerings, and characteristics of program applicants.**

In fall 2021 we reviewed both concentrations in terms of the mission statement and objectives. We updated some of the wording in our objectives to better reflect current terminology in the field.

Over the past three years a number of changes have been implemented to revise curricular offerings to optimize student learning:

1. Per feedback from LSU’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, we plan to revise our program goals so that those referring to improving knowledge are stated more behaviorally. We plan to implement those changes for the upcoming year.
2. The faculty plans to review the program of study to look at course sequencing, especially for the third year. One problem has been that our current sequence only requires 6 credit hours for the last two semesters. This has been an issue for those students with assistantships as they need to take 9 hours to maintain their position.
3. Last year the university changed the Summer school offerings from one 10-week term to two 5-week modules. This required considerable modification of assignments and pedagogy to accommodate the shortened time frame. Feedback from students suggested that it may be better to have students only be able to take one required class each module to make the workload and learning experience more optimal. We plan to implement this change in the upcoming Summer semester.

We also reviewed our Graduate Student Handbook and made editorial changes and updates to the information so that it is as current as possible. We also prepared a video orientation to our Graduate Student Handbook, outlining important issues and emphasizing that students are expected to abide by the ACA Code of Ethics throughout their matriculation in the program. We sent this to all students through a Qualtrics Survey in which the training component was embedded into the survey. All students are expected to complete the training, acknowledge that they understand the expectations of the handbook, and also to acknowledge that they understand they are to abide by the ACA Code of Ethics throughout their matriculation in the program.

We also reviewed applicant data in terms of the demographics of the candidates who are applying to our program. In our fall 2021 review meeting, we noted an increase in out of state applicants, admits, and out of state student enrollment in the program. While the diversity of the applicant pool could still be improved, as our applicants are overwhelmingly female, Caucasian, and from social sciences majors, we have been successful in recent years in increasing the diversity of the students who enroll in the program. The LSU Graduate School offers tuition exemption to students from under-represented groups, which helps with recruitment, and faculty are active in securing Graduate Assistantships for students with offices across campus, including counseling-related positions such as Offices of Student Services in various Colleges across campus, Career Services, Disability Services, and Campus Life Offices.

1. **We conducted formal follow-up studies of program graduates to assess graduate perceptions and evaluations of major aspects of the program.**

Students complete an Exit Survey at the end of their last semester in the program. The survey asks students to rate advising, accessibility of faculty, quality of instruction and clinical experiences, and extent to which students felt prepared. Table 2 shows student mean scores for 2019- 2021. Ratings indicate that students felt very prepared (mean scores of 4.75, 4.87and 4.55 for the respective years). In addition, the quality of instruction and clinical experience provided by counseling faculty was rated highly. Instruction by outside faculty was rated somewhat lower.

The narrative portion of the Exit Survey asks students about strengths of the program and suggestions for improvement. Common responses for strengths of the program included:

-Really got to know professors

-Amazing faculty who did everything in their power to help you succeed

-Quality classroom instructions

- Built strong relationship with my cohort

-Encouraging and empathetic atmosphere that faculty set created a setting of high standards and openness to feedback

-Faculty incorporated knowledge and examples from working with clients into the clinical training

-I know faculty really care and go above and beyond for students

Suggestions for improving the program included:

* Try rearranging the curriculum for the last two semesters
* Adding more faculty so more opportunities for electives
* For school counseling students, more training in classroom management
* Hard to stay on Zoom for all those classes.
* Offer coursework on the business aspects of counseling

These results suggest that students felt that they received quality instruction and training. The program also plans to conduct a survey of employers and graduates in the upcoming year.

1. **We conducted formal studies of site supervisors and program graduate employers that assess their perceptions and evaluations of major aspects of the program.** 
   1. Site Supervisors: We collect feedback from site supervisors at our annual site supervisor workshop (held each spring) and on our student evaluation forms. We ask site supervisors the question, “What can we do to better prepare students for their experiences at your site?” See Table 1 for actual site supervisor comments. Many supervisors commented on the quality of preparation of LSU students. Some of the supervisors asked that we consider offering on-site electives; better training on electronic health records; and for school counselors, a better understanding of the overall school climate.
   2. Employers and recent graduates: Due to the pandemic we did not conduct an employer survey in 2019-2020. We plan to reinstitute this survey in the 2021-22 year. However, we did conduct a survey of recent alumni (see attached). We reached out to our alumni to request feedback on the LSU counselor education program. We asked what type of work alumni were currently doing, what special achievements they had since graduating from the program, if they networked with colleagues from their cohort, and what advice they would give to future students. Fifteen alumni responded to the questionnaire. All alumni reported special achievements including having earned state licensure (LPC), LPC-S, various certifications (NCC, NCSC), district school counselor of the year, Recognized ASCA Model Program award (RAMP), PhD, and having presented on counseling topics at state and national conferences. Alumni specialized in a wide range of counseling including: sexual trauma, domestic violence, couples counseling, career counseling, sexual offender treatment, perinatal mental health, restorative justice, substance use, and play therapy. All respondents had collegial relationships and were currently networking with prior classmates.
2. **We conducted an assessment of student learning and performance on professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards.**

The program is assessed annually based on student learning measures and clinical performance. We use two major types of measures to assess our program outcomes. *The Counseling and Counselor Skill Scale* (CCSS) is a formative measure that assesses counseling skills, professional behaviors and other counseling competencies. It is administered each semester starting in Fall of the student’s second year as part of the skills class, practicums and internships. The rating scale is completed by both the LSU faculty supervisor as well as the site supervisor.

Our summative measure is the *Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination*, a national counseling exit exam. It has eight subscales that are aligned with outcomes 1-8. In Spring of 2020 COVID mitigation measures closed the group testing center on campus. Because the CPCE was no longer available, the faculty developed an alternative exam mirroring the subscales and item format of the CPCE which students took online. This Alternative CPCE was used in both Spring 2020 and Spring 2021. We plan to return having students take the national CPCE exam in the testing center in Spring 2022. Outcome 9 (Family Systems) requires a separate measure as the CPCE does not have a subscale for this area. Initially a course rubric was developed as a primary measure but the faculty decided that it was not a good assessment of skills. In Spring of 2019, a measure of family counseling skills, the *Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scale*, was added and administered at midterm and at the end of the semester in the Family Counseling Course. We feel that these measures provide a nice balance of both formative skill measures as well as summative knowledge measures for our program outcomes. Per feedback from LSU’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, we plan to add a summative knowledge measure for the Family Outcome for Spring 2022.

Our program outcomes have consistently met and often exceeded our targets. In terms of the CCSS, each year program targets were met and often exceeded ideal for 2019-2021. Data consistently showed improvement from midterm to end of semester ratings, using both faculty and site supervisor ratings. Over that time period the faculty also worked with site supervisors about how to rate this measure so that there would be greater consistency between faculty and site-supervisors. Table 1 list comments of site-supervisors for improving the program collected with each CCSS evaluation for the practicums and internships for 2020 and 2021.

Please see Tables 3-9 for CCSS scores for midterm and final for practicum and internship through fall 2020- spring 2021.

With regard to the CPCE, our exit exam, Figure 1 shows mean total CPCE scores for the last three years. A national comparison was only available for 2019 as a result of COVID mitigation measures and closure of our testing center for 2020 and 2021. As discussed in #3 above, 2020 and 2021 mean total scores reflect results from an alternative exam the faculty developed that mirrored the subscales of the CPCE. Results show that we scored higher than the national mean for 2019. This finding is consistent with the previous three years (216-2018). Scores for 2021 dipped somewhat in comparison to 2020 (110.93 vs. 106.53). Considering that both were the Alternative CPCE exam, it may be that the somewhat lower scores were the result of a full year of online classes due to COVID restrictions. Means are somewhat higher with the alternative exam but all scores were above our minimum subscale score of at least 11 (out of 17). While means for the previous two years have improved, it is difficult to interpret as these may be artifacts of using an alternative exam. Nevertheless, we have used this data and variations in subscale means to inform programmatic changes:

For the 2019 exam, Social and Cultural Foundations was the one area for which we did not meet our target on the CPCE measure, although we did exceed the national average. One major change we made was to split the Multicultural Counseling course into two sections, one for counseling majors and one for non-majors. This course was often over-loaded with students from other programs. The subsequent two years showed improved CPCE scores for this subscale.

While particular courses address certain objectives, we plan to continue our efforts to infuse knowledge and skill training in area such as analysis, multicultural, group, and human growth and development throughout courses in the curriculum to build and broaden student mastery.

In the past students took the CPCE during the same semester they were completing a full-time internship. Per feedback from our students, we have now split the internship into two half-time courses. Starting in Spring 2020, the CPCE was taken with a half-time internship which allowed more time to devote to exam preparation.

**Commentary on specific course content and pedagogical changes:**

**2019**

1. For ELRC 7345 Counseling Skills, a class for Communication majors was identified which will serve as subjects for counseling session videotapes.
2. In practicum and internship, a refresher on the use of assessment measures as part of the student's case formulation and treatment planning activities was added. This included a review of behavior and symptom measures that were introduced in ELRC 4600 Disabling Conditions, ELRC 7348 Substance Abuse and ELRC 7333 Analysis of the Individual.
3. In ELRC 7334 Vocational Counseling, Activities at the Career Center were arranged to build on real-world applications of vocational appraisal and counseling techniques.
4. In ELRC 7393 Family Counseling, self-reflective activities were added to help students recognize personal family issues.

**2020**

1. In ELRC 7334 Vocational Counseling, a comprehensive portfolio with traditional   
   career counseling components (i.e., career genograms, timelines) and creative career techniques (narrative table of contents, future fantasy, workplace ecomaps) was added. All components included reflection papers to increase depth of meaning and connection to career counseling.
2. In the first semester course, ELRC 7391 Counseling Across the Lifespan, course content was revised to focus on seminal theorists. Each class now includes developmental case analysis activities. The overall content of the course was revised to ensure alignment with the CPCE content domain for human growth and development.
3. In ELRC 4600 Disabling Conditions, developmental aspects of psychopathology was infused into case formulation (predisposing, precipitating and perpetuating factors) exercises. Students were required to complete 8 case formulations.
4. In ELRC 7330 Group Counseling, a group counseling protocol paper was added. A number of changes have been made to the Group Counseling course. The curriculum has been broadened to include training for conducting counseling with children, adolescents and those with serious mental illness. A major challenge has been finding a community professional to run the experiential group for our students in the group counseling class. We were able to secure funding for a local professional and plan to continue our efforts in this regard for the upcoming Spring course.
5. The program of study was modified so that the practicum was moved up a semester, starting in the Spring of the second year. The internship which had been full time in the Spring of the third year was now split into two half-time courses in the Fall and Spring of the third year.
6. Because the entire program transitioned to an online format in March of 2020 due to COVID mitigation at the university, numerous adjustments were made in coursework and assignments. For those in practicum and internship we implemented a concentrated training in telehealth.
7. Online teaching of all courses was initiated in mid-March of 2020, necessitating that not only classroom instruction but also clinical supervision were delivered in a Zoom format. Further the Counseling Skills class had to deliver all of its instruction and training virtually.

**2021**

1. Ongoing training in both the practicums and internships in telehealth were infused into each course and formally added telehealth modules to both of these courses in the future. We also plan to add a telehealth segment in our annual site supervisor training in the upcoming year.
2. Continued attention will be paid to increasing reliability between program faculty and site supervisor ratings on the CCSS. In the past School Counseling faculty tended to have somewhat higher ratings than the CMHC faculty. This year scores were much more comparable, suggesting that efforts to improve reliability were helpful. We plan to have faculty meet prior to their midterm ratings to discuss ratings for each anchor on the CCSS. Further, we send site supervisors specific instructions on rating anchor points on the measure each time they are asked to complete the evaluation on their supervisee.
3. Group counseling training in the program will be broadened to reflect the varied types of groups including school aged children and the seriously mentally ill (i.e., groups in intensive outpatient and inpatient settings).
4. Per feedback from site supervisors and exit interviews, we plan to infuse more training for the school counseling students in classroom management, IEPs, and 504 plans.
5. Online classes in Spring and Summer necessitated continued adjustments to teaching and clinical supervision.

Table 1

CCSS Site Supervisor Comments for Improving the Program: Practicums and Internships

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| --- | --- |
| Practicum CMHC | 1. By offering a course or elective taught by one of the supervisors at a field placement such as River Oaks. This class would be geared towards acclimating the students on policies/procedures/standards; documentation; response; treatment planning; residential authorization; knowing the difference between an FVA, PEC, 9 CEC; and classifications of medications and assessments. 2. By offering a course or elective taught by one of the supervisors at a field placement. This will give the student the opportunity to acclimate to policies and standards for documentation, reporting, and next steps of specific cases. Ex: policies from the commission; DHH, etc. 3. Continue to work with them on basic counseling skills: rapport building, progression of sessions, etc. 4. Nothing at this time. Student seems well prepared. 5. The students appear to have a very good understanding of theories and are using their graduate training to transfer this knowledge to real clinical experiences. 6. Continue to work with them on basic counseling skills: rapport building, progression of sessions, etc. 7. Students are well prepared. 8. It would be helpful to see one taped session. Perhaps next academic year the clinic will be open, and I will be able to view from our screens. 9. So far, I have found them to be well prepared. 10. The students appear to be adequately prepared for field experience. 11. Maybe more exposure to assessment instruments. 12. We are looking into electronic records, so that may be an area in addition to treatment planning. 13. I would like to see student interns paired with a sight that matches their interest, so they have an opportunity to “test the waters” while being closely supervised and guided to determine if it is a good fit before they have a job post-graduation. Also having a variety of experiences so they have a possibility of branching out if desired. 14. I would like to see LSU’s practicum students be able to have a caseload of more than 5 clients at a time in order to have a variety of clientele and start to learn about work balance while under close supervision from both site and program supervisors. 15. I think offering the students more opportunities to speak to professionals in the field to get more firsthand knowledge and experience of what to expect in session would be beneficial. 16. The student could be better prepared by having more simulated counseling activities. |
| Practicum School | 1. More experience with younger populations, including a child counseling or play therapy course to be required in the school counseling track. 2. Continue stressing an emphasis on personal growth and wellness. 3. Student showed hesitation in working with elementary aged students as well as in doing large group guidance lessons. The skills courses in grad programs focus primarily on working in a 1-1 typical clinical setting; it would be helpful to focus on the skills needed to perform as a counselor in other settings. 4. Continue to offer skill-building opportunities within the academic program) listening, question-asking for client information/insights, reflecting). And continue to provide the rich engagement the students have with you all as their supervisors and instructors – this truly enhances their professional and personal growth. |
| Internship CMHC | Fall 2020   1. More practice in a group setting to be more comfortable with speaking in front of groups or larger numbers of people. 2. In my opinion, the program has done a good job preparing student for her field experience. It may be helpful to introduce treatment planning a little earlier in the program in order for the student to gain knowledge and experience with this prior to entering practicum and internship experiences. 3. The program seems to be doing a good job in preparing student for her internship work. I think timing of certain material and skills could be modified a bit. For example, learning about termination could be done a little earlier in order for her to be able to practice the skill after learning it and then have classroom discussion about the experience. 4. More practice in a group setting to be more comfortable with speaking in front of groups or larger numbers of people. 5. I think the students are well-prepared for their field experience. I think it’s important for the program to do some sort of scanning or evaluation process to make sure that they are being paired up with adequate supervisors and are not missing out on weeks or months of valuable learning experience/discussions/time. 6. Making sure students are aware of the different demographics that they may come in contact within various workplace environment to ensure the student has an eclectic overview of different treatment modalities that can ensure the student is able to provide the client/patient with the utmost continuity of care. 7. I think having the students observe an IOP program is a great experience so they can see the different functioning levels. Perhaps having students go out into the community and interviewing different types of counselors to see how their jobs differ or what a typical day is like for each of them. 8. I think students would benefit from learning about the different settings they could possibly work in after graduation. 9. Because obtaining enough hours is such a stressor; I think encouraging future interns to consider Grad-Assistantships that would allow for direct hours would be beneficial. 10. I believe LSU does an excellent job preparing their students. They appear to have a strong background in counseling skills (schooling, previous volunteer experiences, etc.) Continue the great work! 11. LSU does an excellent job of pairing students with an appropriate but challenging site. It is always helpful when we have a student that is self-motivated and isn’t afraid to ask questions. 12. Explore sample documentation for different sites.   Spring 2021   1. Student seems to be well prepared for her work in internship. 2. This program seems to do a good job preparing students for internship. Maybe more focus on diagnoses and treatment planning earlier in the program. 3. I have always felt your program effectively prepares your students for field experience. I would not change anything and look forward to working with others in the future. 4. I was happy to have them on our team for two semesters, I observed them mature and grow during this time. The second semester was beneficial in allowing them to experience different groups. 5. I feel they are appropriate prepared for field experience. I would not suggest changing anything. 6. I believe having two semesters at our facility has enabled them to grow more than they would have if they split their experience. They were well prepared. 7. The same as usual. If students are chosen for LSU MHS site, please encourage them to find a Grad Assistantship that allows for supplemental hours. 8. I think having just one class dedicated to Burnout/Compassion Fatigue in the semester would be beneficial for the students! 9. I think it is to provide general information, as it would be difficult to be more specific unless the intern knew well in advance where they may be placed. Perhaps an interview at different settings prior to being assigned. 10. In my opinion, this student was well prepared. If there was anything I might suggest, which is no reflection on this student; let the student know that they may not get to experience everything they want to learn. For example, one on one counseling is not a big part of our services and of course most students want the chance to experience that. So to keep them from being disappointed, it may be explained before. 11. No suggestions to offer, \_\_ and my recent interactions with the staff have left me impressed with the entire program. 12. I have no input for this question. My interactions with the program always leave me impressed. |
| Internship School | Fall 2020   1. LSU does an amazing job preparing their students to become school counselors. Thank you for all that you do! 2. No notes at this time. 3. More information about special education law, 504 accommodation laws, and other educational system things, not just the therapeutic notes. 4. General knowledge of school workings is usually the weakest area for the interns. They get exposure to that here, but I am concerned the lack of a full-time semester won’t allow for as deep of an understanding. (And maybe it will. My only intern in this new model already had school experience so this student will be my first true comparison of the 2 models.) 5. I still prefer internship being 1 full time semester. I just feel like it gives school counseling interns a better opportunity to be part of the school and see more of the aspects of how schools run that they don’t get in a part time experience. 6. This doesn’t apply to this student but… more education on the non-counseling type roles of the school counselor. Ex: 504 plans, IEPs, ESL, PBIs, behavior plans for students (especially special education). More classroom management experience and education. How to de-escalate a child and what the logistics around that look like (removing children from the room), things like that. 7. I am not familiar with the steps already being taken in the program, so I am not able to offer suggestions for change. Student came to us well prepared and eager to learn.   Spring 2021   1. Continue to build skills around lesson (classroom), classroom management, building a curriculum map/using data to plan these classroom interventions. 2. Student was well-prepared and ready. I appreciate her eagerness to learn and receive feedback. She was always asking questions, researching, and talking through student concerns. 3. LSU does AMAZING!! Job preparing students to become school counselors. Thank you for all that you do! 4. I just feel the school counseling interns are missing out on a lot by not having a full-time semester. 5. I wish I had more knowledge on writing and producing Behavior Plans and functional behavior analysis. We have other school professionals who conduct those but having more experience would be extremely helpful. I feel like counselors are expected to work more with behavior now than in the past. 6. Since the intern was working in a full-time position, it would be nice to see an intern who is a full-time graduate student. Our school would love to continue to have interns. |

Note: \* 2020 and 2021 reflect scores on an alternative CPCE that the faculty developed because the national test was not available due to COVID restrictions.

Table 2: Exit Questionnaire Feedback Counselor Education Students 2019-2021

CCSS Subscale 7345 Counseling Skills scores Fall 2020

**Table 3. ELRC 7345 Counseling Skills: CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale 7345 Counseling Skills scores Fall 2020

**Table 4. Spring 2020 School Practicum and Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final \* Note: due to COVID-19 restrictions, no data collected for School Counseling CCSS final**

**CCSS Practicum Midterm Scores for School Counseling Program Spring 2020**

**Table 4. ELRC 7364 CMHC Practicum: CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale scores for Midterm and Final Spring 2021, Clinical Mental Health Counseling

**Table 5. ELRC 7399 School Counseling Internship (Fall): CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale scores, midterm. Internship School Counseling Fall 2020

CCSS Subscale scores, final. Internship Fall 2020, School Counseling

**Table 6. ELRC 7399 CMHC Internship (Fall): CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale Scores, Internship Midterm and Final, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Fall 2020

**Table 7. ELRC 7399 School Counseling Internship (Spring): CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale Scores, Internship Spring 2021 Midterm, School Counseling

CCSS Subscale scores, Internship Spring 2021 Final scores, School Counseling


**Table 8. ELRC 7399 CMHC Internship (Spring): CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale Scores Internship Spring 2021, Midterm. Clinical Mental Health Counseling

CCSS Subscale Scores, Final. Internship Spring 2021, Clinical Mental Health Counseling


**Table 9. ELRC 7364 CMHC Practicum: CCSS Subscales Midterm and Final**

CCSS Subscale Scores, Midterm and Final. Practicum Spring 2020, Clinical Mental Health Counseling 