

Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses

Based on the data we have collected over the last 3½ years, we have found that there is significant evidence to the strength of our curricular design. Students who graduate from our program stand a very high chance of passing the necessary licensure/certification exams (see Table 1).

When considering the outcomes related to projects, assignments, tests, etc. and overall outcomes of individual classes, it also seems clear to us that our students are learning the necessary information and demonstrating the ability to apply such curricular lessons when working with clients.

However, the data also suggested to us a number of areas of our program that were in need of either adjustment or significant changes.

Program Strengths

The program strengths identified through either quantitative or qualitative feedback provided by current students (overall assessment data spreadsheet), former students, site supervisors, faculty, and/or other key stakeholders:

- Our program does an excellent job of preparing students to enter the field of professional counseling with the necessary skills to make an immediate impact.
- Our program supports students academic development, skill acquisition and personal growth
- Our graduates are well-equipped in the areas of ethical practice, counselor identity and counseling skills
- Our school counseling students are now more prepared for the multitude of different roles and activities they face as professionals
- Our clinical mental health counselors are skilled in developing treatment plans, providing effective therapeutic means and assessing outcomes in counseling
- Our program prepares all of our students across the 8 core CACREP areas as well as all of the individual standards within either school counseling or clinical mental health counseling
- Through the efforts of Dr. Hughes and now Dr. Sartor, our program has developed and maintained a number of excellent practicum and internship sites that support the development of our students.
- Across many individual standards, the data suggests that our students develop increased skills as they transit from practicum to internship
- Our program has developed a comprehensive and clear set of admissions standards that allows us to better assess the fit between applicants and our program/field

Program Weaknesses

The program weaknesses identified through either quantitative or qualitative feedback provided by current students, former students, site supervisors, faculty, and/or other key stakeholders:

1. The Clinical Mental Health program needed to include coursework on addictions/substance abuse, crisis counseling and psychopharmacological agents.
2. Because so many of our graduates seek licensure in the state of Arkansas, the program needed to be changed from 48 to 60 SCH. NOTE: In Texas, 48 SCH are required for licensure while in Arkansas 60 hours are necessary.
3. The School Counseling program needed to be more generalized to include other models and ways of being a school counselor than the narrow focus previously being taught.
4. The program needed to have more specific developmental check points for faculty to more routinely and systematically assess students' potential for success as a counselor.
5. The program needed a clearer way of assessing and quantifying clinical skills.
6. The program needed to focus more on the skills, knowledge and awareness of students regarding career information and career counseling.
7. Due to the significant drop off in outcomes measured by the Human Growth and Development course and the HGD section of the COMPS (CMH Standard C.7), the program needed to add more information and educational opportunities on HGD processes in other courses.
8. Due to the significant drop off in diagnoses and treatment planning (CMH Standard G.1), our program needed to add additional curricular devices to aid in student's ability to retain their ability to accurately and professional diagnose clients.

Review with faculty

Although our program has always held regular meeting to discuss curriculum, student issues, and programmatic changes, upon the collecting of our assessment data, we felt it imperative to begin a formal process of CACREP-specific meetings. In the fall, 2012 semester, the faculty met regularly to discuss, assess and determine changes needed as a result of the data collected.

The 2 hour meetings took place on the following dates/times:

Date	Time	Areas Discussed
9/13	1-3	Reviewed overall CACREP self-study; Assessed section I
9/27	1-3	Assessed section II
10/11	1-3	Assessed section III; Finalized Section I
10/25	1-3	Finalized Sections II and III; Assessed CMH and School Standards
11/8	1-3	Program data for both CMH and School
11/29	1-3	Program data for both CMH and School; Reviewed Program Objectives

It should be noted that throughout this process, the faculty met in sub-groups (e.g., CMH; Practicum/Internship) to analyze and assess the associated data. Additionally, the faculty engaged in meaningful dialogue regarding the program and data we collected via email. The 2-hour program faculty meetings to discuss student issues and program policies, procedures and changes took place on the following dates/times:

Date	Time	Areas Discussed
9/21	10-11:30	Student issues/concerns; counseling student handbook
10/19	10-11:30	Student issues/concerns; use of programmatic data
11/30	10-11:30	Student issues/concerns; graduate policies and procedures

Dissemination to Key Stakeholders

This report and the associated data have been disseminated to all key stakeholders related to our program. The following steps were taken to assure the possibility of all stakeholders having both access and the opportunity to provide us with further feedback regarding both the data and our changes to the program.

1. The documentation of the data and the program outcomes document were placed on our program's website (the document we have shared with our key stakeholders is Appendix D: Comprehensive assessment plan). We used this format to make all of our results and changes both transparent and clear to the public and our key stakeholders. All groups were invited and encouraged to both review and comment on our program outcomes.
2. Students were notified of the information via email, notification on our program's BlackBoard site, and in classes.
3. Site supervisors and personnel in the position to hire our graduates were notified via email
4. The Counseling Program Advisory Board was notified via email
5. Our University Administration was notified through both email and in-person meetings
6. Former students were notified via email

Because our program views the assessment process as an on-going part of our program, as we embark on new curricular or structural changes to the program, we will update all of our stakeholders.

Review of standards

In reviewing the standards, we are confident that we meet all of the 2009 CACREP standards. We are pleased that the data demonstrates clearly that our students acquire the necessary knowledge and develop the necessary skills to enter the counseling field fully prepared. However, the program faculty has discovered a number of areas that we will be assessing closely to determine if the programmatic changes and considered alterations over the

past several years are having an impact on our students and the program (these are noted in the program weaknesses section of this document).

This self-study documents our current views, analysis and assessment of our program in regard to the 2009 CACREP Standards.

Re-evaluation of objectives

In the fall, 2012 semester (11/29), the program faculty met to discuss and re-assess the objectives that guide our program. Because we feel that the objectives clearly state our overall goals for both students and our programmatic offerings, no changes were made.

Re-evaluation of Mission Statement

In January, 2013, the program faculty met to discuss and re-assess the program's Mission Statement. Because we did not feel that our previous mission statement reflected our program's true mission and ultimate goal, the faculty re-authored the statement to reflect our current guiding vision.

After discussion and analysis, we changed our Mission Statement from:

The mission of the Counseling Program is to provide quality instruction in counseling to prepare graduate students for employment in counseling, mental health services, school counseling, and related areas. Students receive training in preparation for the licensing exams in the areas of Licensed Professional Counselor and SBEC certification as a School Counselor.

To what we believe is a more reflective statement of our core mission:

The Texas A&M University-Texarkana Counseling Program, through high quality instruction and educational opportunities develops talented counselors, life-long learners and leaders in our field. Graduates of our program serve the mental health and educational needs of the diverse residents of Texas, boarder states, throughout the country, and around the world. Graduates are expected to serve as actively engaged agents of change in providing care for diverse populations. Through ethical practice and professional conduct, our graduates are expected to advocate for the field, serve their clients and meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

Program Changes

Our counseling program has never been stagnant. Throughout the years, we have worked to develop it into a highly regarded program within the state, region and country. In regard to the CACREP accreditation process, we have worked very hard over the last decade to

construct a program that meets or exceeds all of the standards associated with full accreditation. To do this, we have met on a regular basis to discuss both our program and the CACRTEP standards. In the last 3 ½ years, we have had the opportunity to finalize all of the necessary elements to a CACREP worthy program.

With the full and unwavering support of our University administrator's, we have made some substantial changes to the program to enhance our student's educational experience. The following list denotes those major changes we have agreed to for the benefit of our program's development.

- In 2012, we hired Dr. Teri Sartor to serve as our third full-time counselor educator and supervisor.
- In 2011, based on the observed need by the program to better assess the aptitude and likelihood of success by applicants to our program, we added an in-person individual interview with the faculty.
- In 2012, based on several factors, our program embarked on the process to change our Clinical Mental Health program from 48 SCH to 60 SCH. Not only does this change meet the accreditation standards of CACREP, but specific to our region, it allows our graduates to meet the necessary educational requirements for BOTH Texas and Arkansas. The need for this change to 60 SCH was suggested by current students, recent graduates as well as local agencies (on the Arkansas side of Texarkana).
- In 2010, the need to better assess and provide clear feedback to students in the pre-practicum course was recognized. In an effort to provide a more productive and clear direction of feedback regarding the basic counseling skills sequence, a counseling skills rubric was added to the course (used in the review of taped counseling sessions).
- In 2012, based on the perceived need for improvements in the Career Counseling course, the class was changed from in-person to web-enhanced format. This change allowed for greater infusion of technologies used in career counseling today.
- After a thorough review of our core curriculum as well as our electives, in 2011, two courses (Counseling the Substance Abuser and Crisis Intervention) were brought back into the regular rotation of courses offered. These courses are now both required courses for students in the Clinical Mental Health program.
- In 2011, a New Student Orientation was added to the program.
- In 2010, based on the feedback of site supervisors, current students and recent graduates, Psychopharmacology was added to our list of elective courses. In 2012, this course became a required course for students in the clinical mental health program.
- In 2011, both the School Counseling and Assessment in Counseling courses (both required for students in the School Counseling degree program) were changed to reflect current trends nationally in utilizing the ASCA National Model. Prior to that time students were only taught Texas-specific information.
- In 2011, based on the need to further reach and teach our students in the Research course, the book was changed to.....
- In 2012, based on the need to better assess and recognize students' strengths and weaknesses across the program, the faculty developed and implemented a Counseling Student Performance Evaluation. This document was piloted in two Internship sections in the fall of 2012.

- Currently, the faculty are working on developing a course that covers advanced counseling skills. This class will be taught Summer, 2013.
- Based on feedback from students, the program faculty have worked to modify major assignments to allow student to more specifically target their chosen specialty areas.
- In January of 2013, the faculty met and re-worked the Mission Statement for the counseling program.
- In 2012, the faculty met and discussed and approved the Program Objectives.
- In January 2013, the program met and changed pre-requisites for counseling program courses.
- In 2012, based on feedback from the Counseling Program Advisory Board to work toward writing multiple choice questions more closely aligned with the ways they are on the NCE, the faculty began to review and make changes to their existing exam questions.

The Next Steps

The counseling faculty views the assessment process as an on-going, core and regularly scheduled part of the operation of our program. Therefore, although we are very pleased with our current program and its coverage of CACREP standards, preparation of our students for licensure/certification, and development of professional counselors, we will continue to collect, assess and analyze data to guide our understanding of strengths and weaknesses of our program.

This semester (Spring, 2013) we will be doing the following tasks:

- Submit our self-study for CACREP review
- Continue to collect and analyze data at the individual student level
- Meet with our Counseling Program Advisory Board
- Host another site supervisor training
- Collect and analyze feedback from key stakeholders regarding our overall program assessment

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Calendar of Programmatic Assessment Events

The program faculty believes very strongly in the processes involved in both developing and maintaining an actively engaged assessment feedback loop. Because we believe that we have put into place all of the necessary pieces of the assessment plan, collected meaningful data, and analyzed these data for programmatic changes, we want to make sure we stay on track in the future with all of these important activities.

The following calendar of events represents our future plans for on-going and systematic review of programmatic data at all levels (individual student data, standard-specific data, course outcomes, and programmatic data). Having had the chance over the last three years to hone and focus our collection and use of data, we understand the major components of the calendar that are necessary as well as how best our program works regarding such meetings and data-driven decision making.

Date	Agenda items to be covered	Type of meeting	
September	Meet with program students about program	1 ½ hour – 2 hour meeting	Will happen in conjunction with student orientation
September	Host site supervisors training	2 hours	Will be taped and placed on website for viewing by site supervisors as well
October	Review mission statement and program objectives	1 ½ hour – 2 hour meeting	Will be a meeting dedicated to these two critical guiding elements to our program
October	Survey site supervisors, former students and hiring agencies		Will be an assessment instrument used to capture the experiences of our key stakeholders regarding our program
November	Review of updated data set (see attached excel spreadsheet); discussion of curricular changes	All day retreat	Will be held from 9-4 and will focus on assessment data and program curriculum elements only
November	Meet with advisory board	1 ½ hour – 2 hour meeting	Will be used in conjunction with other pieces of data to inform programmatic changes - will result in assessment report to be distributed to key stakeholders
December	Post assessment outcomes and program changes on web for key stakeholders		
April	Meet with advisory board	1 ½ hour – 2 hour meeting	
*September-May	Meet as program to discuss student issues, data, and overall program	1 ½ hour – 2 hour meeting	Will occur 2 times per month throughout the academic calendar year