

**Program Review:
MS Program in Counseling Psychology
April, 2017**

A. A summary of the activities of the review committee and materials reviewed

The MS Counseling Psychology (CP) external review committee consisted of David Rosenthal (Review team Chair), Rehabilitation Psychology-School of Education; Tracy Schroepfer, Social Work; and Kristin Eschenfelder (GFEC Representative), Library and Information Studies both in College of Letters and Sciences. School of Education Associate Dean Carolyn Kelley charged the committee.

The reviewers received self-study and other documents before the site visit including:

- The self-study review conducted by the CP Faculty
- The 2005 review of the CP program
- Graduate School data (including applicants/acceptances, and exit surveys)
- MS Counseling Psychology Handbook
- State of WI Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) requirements
- Department and program web sites

The site review team conducted the review meetings at the Department of Counseling Psychology offices on Thursday, April 20, 2017. To accommodate one of the reviewer's schedule, some additional meetings were held the subsequent week.

The primary meetings and interviews were conducted with:

- CP Department Chair, William Hoyt
- MS Program Co-Training Directors & Student Services Coordinator (Carmen Valdez, Steve Quintana, Andrea Palm)
- Other CP faculty (Travis Wright, Lynet Uttal, Corissa Lotta)
- MS students (1st and 2nd year cohorts)
- Dr. Stephanie Graham, followed by a tour of the Counseling Psychology Training Clinic (CPTC)
- SoE Associate Dean, Dr. Carolyn Kelley

Organizational Arrangement

The MS-Counseling Psychology program is housed in and administered by the Department of Counseling Psychology in the School of Education. The Counseling Psychology Department consists of 6 tenured faculty (Alberta Gloria, William Hoyt, Stephen Quintana, Mindi Thompson, Lynet Uttal, and Carmen Valdez), two pre-tenured faculty (Stephanie Budge and Travis Wright) as well as 1.5 academic staff, who serve as clinical faculty (Stephanie Graham and Corissa Lotta).

Beginning fall of 2015, the Masters curriculum was revised to be a 60-credit program designed to satisfy the new State of Wisconsin licensure requirements that will take effect in 2018. Thus,

the Program is no longer be a 48-credit Master's program; rather, newly enrolled students are expected to complete the new 60-credit curriculum. Students should expect to take two full academic years and parts of two summers to complete all the coursework and most of the required internship hours.

The program has stated learning outcomes and an assessment plan.

The 60-credit degree requires a 600-hour (240 direct service hours) supervised field-based internship in a community agency. MS Counseling graduates are eligible to complete post-degree requirements for licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor in Wisconsin. Upon completion of a program of clinical instruction and intensive field experiences, approximately 12 students graduate each year.

The MS-Counseling Psychology is in the process of moving from CACREP accreditation (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) to the more research-friendly MPCAC (Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council) accreditation.

B. An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program

Strengths/Assets

The Counseling Psychology MS program is consistently ranked 4th in the nation by US News and World Report (2018). CP faculty members are highly committed to the success of their academic programs and have created a supportive academic community.

During the last 10 years, the Department added the Counseling Psychology Training Clinic (CPTC), which is an in-house clinic where first year MS students can observe live psychotherapy sessions and participate in clinical staffing. The CPTC specializes in providing culturally-competent care to under-represented students at UW-Madison and under-served populations in the Madison community.

The MS program graduation rate is strong (83%) and time to degree of students in the MS program comport with campus peers (2.2 years). Most students complete their degree in two years with a summer term. Due to licensing requirements in other states, many students enrolled in 60 credits before formal CP adoption of the new 60-credit curriculum.

The MS program is strong in the area of diversity. It's 10 year degree completion rate for domestic targeted minorities (DTM) is very strong compared to campus peers (79%), and DTM comprise about 30% of the MS class, a higher ratio than peer programs on campus. At the same time the CP-MS is highly competitive with a 17% overall admit rate (42% for DTM). The CP-MS program emphasizes multiculturalism and social justice, broadly-defined, in its teaching, research, practice, and service. Many students described how they chose to attend Madison because of this emphasis.

The review team met with MS students from both the first year and second year cohorts. Reviewers perceived the students to be candid and comfortable in discussing the positives and challenges of the MS program. In general, the students expressed satisfaction with the quality, content, scope and sequence of the curriculum, student-faculty interactions, and mentorship.

In the most recent alumni survey, respondents who graduated in 2016 or earlier, all reported being employed in the counseling field (79%) or enrolled in further graduate studies (21%).

Challenges

Licensure Related Challenges:

The Program has faced a number of challenges due to the move from a 48-credit to a 60-credit MS program per WI Licensure Board requirements. In 2016-17, some CP courses were combined with Rehabilitation Psychology in order to meet the new licensing requirements without any new resources. This strategy was possible because Rehabilitation Psychology (RP) now has the same accreditor as CP and similar counselor program requirements.

License - Combined courses: According to interviews with the CP Department Chair and some CP students, integrating the two disciplines, as well as departmental and cohort cultures, has proven challenging. Students expressed concerns about courses in which RP and CP curricula were combined and courses taught by RP short term staff. One challenge created by combined CP-RP courses was that in taking combined classes in their first term, the incoming CP cohort felt that it failed to build cohesiveness as a cohort. In order to address this issue, the CP faculty told reviewers that for the 2017-18 academic year they will have only one combined class in the first semester. A second challenge of CP-RP combined courses was that the CP students felt that the RP courses were not as high quality (especially those taught by STS) as the CP courses and that they were too large in size. A final challenge with combined CP-RP courses was differences in training cultures and differences in student foci. The two groups wanted emphasis on different topics and preferred different terms. For example, CP focuses heavily on cultural identity while the emphasis for Rehabilitation Psychology is on disability. Students discussed the challenge of making the material relevant for both sets of students. One student identified, "We are all feeling what we aren't learning."

License - Cost: The new licensure requirement of 60 credits brings an increased cost for students. Most MS students, as professional students, are not funded. The CP faculty advise students to take sufficient plateau credits so they can get through the program as cost effectively as possible. The 60-credit program can be completed in two years and one summer, which is the same as 48-credit program before licensure changes. In order to accomplish this, however, students now need to increase the number of credits they take, meaning they cannot work part time or, if they have a TA position, it will result in their having a longer time to degree. Some students reported having part time jobs, and it may be increasingly difficult for students to work and complete degree requirements in a timely fashion. This could lead to either a longer time to degree or more debt. Further, faculty reported to the reviewers that they have concerns regarding whether curriculum is too limiting for the student in terms of clinical training. Now that students are taking 60 credits in the same time period as they did for 48, faculty feel there is a constant

tension for students in terms of meeting the required course credits and making certain that they still have time for the clinical training they need.

License - Communications: The change to the new licensure requirements created communication challenges for the first cohort of students having to meet the 60 credit mandate. Students reported miscommunication about curriculum changes and described how faculty provided different information about practicum requirements and course sequencing. Program faculty corrected problematic information and clarified uncertainties as they arose but students reported feeling frustrated and anxious. The students report that the content in the Handbook contains accurate “broad strokes,” however, they cautioned that they do not necessarily trust it for details because there have been so many recent changes. One student expressed “the Department has figured it out at the last minute so far. The trick is to not freak out and let the faculty figure it out. It is anxiety provoking.” The students acknowledge that they have had to adapt quickly to licensure changes and they remain concerned about potential future changes within the program. We expect the communications challenges to be short lived as CP adjusts to its new curriculum.

Accreditation:

The Department faculty feel that over the past 10 years their historical accreditor, CACREP, has become exclusionary in their practices. Consequently, the program is moving to the MPCAC (Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council) as an accreditor. CP will be applying for the MPCAC accreditation in summer or fall of 2017 for the MS program. MPCAC is in the process of being accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an accreditor.

Risks: The review committee did not see that the CP Program’s change in accreditors has negatively impacted students and program graduates to date. This is because most states’ licensing requirements allow for different accreditations (not exclusively CACREP), although CACREP is actively lobbying states to be written into state licensure requirements. Because of this, CP has tried to make their course titles and descriptions map to CACREP requirements so that if someone compares their transcript against CACREP requirements, they can easily see the match. Further, as one staffer noted, some students get confused because they don’t understand why CP is not CACREP accredited. The program faces minor risks associated with student confusion and associated with waiting for MPCAC’s approval as an accreditor.

Internship Sites:

Students voiced concerns and confusions to the reviewers regarding the difference between practicum and internship hours, and also how they can obtain their first 100 hours of practicum (with 40 direct hours) within their first year as dictated by the curriculum. Students reported that they were unable to complete their hours because of unexpected changes to the traditional venues for achieving the hours (i.e., undergraduate clients from the CP 650 designated class, and Diversity Forums). Moreover, they were not given other structured make-up opportunities. Later, students were told they could “roll over” unfinished direct hours from their first year to their second year.

A related problem is competition for field placements. This year's first year class was a larger class and so there has more competition for limited site placements.

Students suggested that the department should pull undergraduate volunteers from more than one class in order to ensure enough direct hours for first years. Students also discussed being able to petition the department to count paid work toward hours. Students also suggested they would like a more formal placement for their first year practicum that did not require as much set up work for the student. Finally, students reported that the program did not inform the clinical site supervisors about the new hours requirement necessitated by the 60 credit MS, and so some sites were not well prepared to meet the student's needs upon arrival.

Student Grievance regarding a faculty member:

In spring 2016, MS students filed a grievance with the CP Department against a CP faculty member. The Counseling Psychology Executive Committee, in conjunction with the School of Education Deans Office, has taken steps to respond to the grievance and the factors that led up to it. Students report that the Department was receptive to working with them on the issue and that in discussing the grievance with the other CP faculty, they were receptive and affirming. Steps taken by the CP Department have included: (1) providing peer evaluators who conducted mid-semester and end of semester listening sessions and generated reports based on the discussion. (2) Creating a report for the faculty member and discussed the concerns in a meeting with the faculty member. (3) Creating a 2 year teaching development plan for the faculty (3) Moving the faculty member to only teach undergraduates, and (4) removal of the faculty member from supervising the graduate students. Although the students do not report complete satisfaction by the grievance process, the committee believes that the Department is doing what it can to address student concerns and be as transparent as possible, while abiding by HR policies.

C. Recommendations for future directions

Combining courses: Counseling Psychology, in concert with Rehabilitation Psychology, needs to be more strategic in integrating the two programs in order to maintain course efficiency while improving the students' learning experiences. The program has indicated a desire to extend orientation to the program through the first two semesters of the program. These orientations could include an overview of RP and how RP student views and philosophies may differ from the Counseling students' perspective. Each combined course could begin with an explicit discussion of the differences and potential friction points between CP and RP cohorts. Advantages of combining the cohorts, beyond efficiencies, could be articulated in order to raise awareness and appreciation.

Accreditation: To reduce student confusion, develop clear and persuasive language for students and alumni about why CP is moving the MPCAC accreditation, how it will benefit the department, and how it should not impede student's professional goals.

Communications: Update student handbook and advising materials to ensure program information is up to date given changes. Formalize "back up" mechanisms for students not able

to complete required field hours in first year. Consider conducting exit interviews to evaluate effectiveness of communications.

Internship Sites: Increase availability of internship and practicum sites. Provide increased structure for first year students seeking sites and hours. Ensure that all sections of 650 include Diversity Dialogs and inducements to encourage undergraduates to act as volunteers regardless of who is teaching.

Cost: Create more 33% Teaching Assistantships through undergraduate teaching and summer teaching in order to provide more funding for MS students while minimizing hours of work. Pursue EdGRS/AOF fellowships.

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