

Annual Program Report

**MS in Counseling**  
**with specializations in**  
**Mental Health Counseling**  
**and**  
**Addiction Counseling**

**Date: August, 1, 2017**

**Author: Cheryl Almeida, Ph.D.**

---

---

## INTRODUCTION

The MS in Counseling program in 2016-17 graduated its second cohort of students in May. 20 students completed the 20 course program in 18-months.

Graduate placement surveys were sent out to Cohorts 1 & 2 resulting in the following:

### Cohort 1:

Of the 17 students accepted into the first cohort, 14 graduated in February of 2016 (82% retention). Seven students graduated with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health and seven with a specialization in Addiction Counseling.

14 graduates responded to the placement survey.

Of those responding, 100% are currently working in counseling or related areas in positions including: Autism Clinician I, Staff Therapist, consultant/trainer, therapist/consultant/patient intakes, family Clinician, Emergency Services Clinician, Residential Worker, academic counsellor, Clinician I, MATCH-ADTC Clinician, Social Learning Clinician (credentialed), and Clinician

One graduate has passed the NMHCE and is now a Licensed Professional Counselor in Connecticut.

### Cohort 2:

Of the 22 students accepted into the cohort, 20 completed the program in 18 months in May of 2017 (91% retention). 15 students graduated with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and 5 with a specialization in Addiction Counseling.

15 graduates responded to the placement survey.

Of those responding 100% are currently working in counseling or related areas in positions including: FT Staff Therapist, MS clinician, MDFT Clinician, School Adjustment counsellor, Masters Level Clinician with an addiction's population, Clinician, Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient Program Coordinator, Substance Abuse Counselor

### Cohort 3:

In June of 2016, the MS in Counseling program welcomed its first "part-time" students into the program. 17 full-time and 4 part-time students registered for classes. Full-time students carry a graduate course load of 3-4 course throughout the 6 term program. Part-time students take 2 courses/term for 10 terms (approx. 2 ½ years). Current retention for the full-time students is 94% (16/17 remain).

### Cohort 4:

In June of 2017, we admitted our largest class to date. 20 full-time students and 4 part-time students registered for classes.

---

During the AY 2015-16, the MS in Counseling program director authored a self-study for CACREP accreditation.

The report was submitted in December of 2016. The program is currently addressing reviewer comments in anticipation of a CACREP team site visit in the fall of 2017.

---

As a result of reviewer comments, changes have been made to the overall program Outcomes Assessment Plan. Our comprehensive assessment plan has fast-tracked to enable the university to gather all formative and summative program outcomes and Student Key Performance Indicators by the spring of 2018.

*The action plan and calendar for the roll-out of the assessments is available in the Appendix of this document. [ADD HYPERLINK](#)*

Data gathered in 2015-16 was utilized to address specific concerns to Program Outcome #1 as well as other identified areas. See chart below.

## 2. PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS

The review of data collected during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic year led the counseling faculty to make the following modifications:

| Program/Curricular Modification   | Linked Assessment Outcome                               | Action Taken  |
|---|---|---|
| Modify Curriculum in order to increase student knowledge and competencies in understanding legal issues and laws relating to counselors | Outcome #1  | Modified CSLG 5250 to incorporate lectures and discussions of specific legal issues; modify CSLG 6899 Counseling internship seminar to include case studies relating to the outcome. Outcome will be reassessed in the summer of 2017 |
| Modify curriculum in order to meet CACREP standards in research – specifically statistical knowledge                                    | Not meeting: Section 2, Counseling Curriculum F.8.h, i  | Course objectives to RSCH 5150 were revised to include advanced statistical methodology and SPSS applications   |
| Articulate the nuances of certification vs. licensure   | CACREP review comments                                  | Incorporate state licensing and national certification and examination into New Student Orientation   |
| Provide Site Supervisor orientation and training  | Consultant recommendation in preparation for self-study | Program director developed a training power point to be shared with all site supervisors.   |
| Use of program titles that clearly identify the counseling programs and degrees/ accurately reflecting the program specialty area       | CACREP review comments                                  | Nomenclature for each specialty area has been modified to reflect CACREP accreditation requirements: MS in Counseling has been changed -> MS in Addiction Counseling and MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (Fall 2018)          |

|   |                        |   |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Identify 3 CORE faculty meeting CACREP qualifications | CACREP review comments | The program has identified Dr. Cheryl Almeida, Dr. Heather Cosimini and Dr. Mari Dias as CACREP CORE faculty. |
|---|------------------------|---|

## 1. STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- i. Have there been any significant demographic shifts within the student body in recent years?

---

*No significant demographic shifts.*

### Cohorts 1, 2, 3: Enrollment by Ethnicity

| Ethnicity                         | Fall 2014 | Winter 2014 | Spring 2015 | Summer 2015 | Fall 2015 | Winter 2015 | Spring 2016 | Summer 2016 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| American Indian or Alaska Native  |           |             |             |             |           |             |             | 1           |
| Black or African American         | 1         | 1           | 1           | 3           | 2         | 2           | 2           | 5           |
| Hispanic or Latino                | 1         | 1           | 1           | 6           | 5         | 4           | 4           | 5           |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific |           |             |             | 1           | 1         | 1           | 1           | 1           |
| Non resident alien                | 2         | 2           | 2           | 3           | 3         | 3           | 2           | 1           |
| Two or More Races                 | 1         | 1           | 1           | 2           | 2         | 2           | 1           | 3           |
| Unknown                           | 2         | 2           | 2           | 3           | 3         | 2           | 1           | 1           |
| White                             | 10        | 10          | 9           | 20          | 20        | 20          | 11          | 23          |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>17</b> | <b>17</b>   | <b>16</b>   | <b>38</b>   | <b>36</b> | <b>34</b>   | <b>22</b>   | <b>40</b>   |

## 2. STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

- i. How do the rates of student retention/attrition and Student Progress Rates (SPR) of this program compare with University averages and Faculty targets?

---

*The student retention rates for the MS in Counseling program exceed the University averages and faculty targets.*

*Retention: graduated in 18 months*

*Cohort 1: 14/17            82%*

*Cohort 2: 20/22           91%*

*Cohort 3: 16/17           94% (projected for November, 2017)*

## 3. STUDENT ORIENTATION AND SUPPORT

- i. What methods were used this year to support commencing students to orientate into the program and the University? What methods are used to support final year students to transition into post-university life? How were these evaluated? What are students and staff saying about the effectiveness of these initiatives?

---

*Student orientation is conducted yearly during the last week in May by the Program Director. An orientation power point, handouts and student speakers highlight this first cohort*

meeting. Topics including schedules, registration, internships, licensing and work load are addressed. This year three counseling graduate students, Brittni Turchetta (Cohort 1), Elizabeth Page (Cohort 2) and Gianna Giannini (Cohort 3) addressed the incoming cohort.

Exit Interviews and post-graduation meetings are conducted annually in August and November. August meetings (incorporated into the final internship seminar) focus on interviewing and resume preparation, anxiety, and job search strategies. During the November meeting and exit interview survey is conducted in the CSLG 6500 compiling updated contact information, placement data and programmatic feedback from the graduating students.

Program faculty have commented on the success of the orientation – integrating students quickly and efficiently. Students comment that their questions have been answered and they have been introduced to faculty and a student support system.

#### **4. STUDENT AND GRADUATE FEEDBACK**

- i. On a general level, what are students and graduates saying about their experiences in this program?
- ii. What are the main strengths for students/graduates? What are the main issues for them? What actions are in place or are planned to address these issues or further the successes? Please note actions in the action plan.

---

98% of graduates feel prepared to work in the field as Master's level clinician. They regard the instruction provided by the program as "excellent" and the faculty knowledgeable and accessible. 98% of the graduates felt the course curriculum prepared them for working in the field and examination preparation/licensing in their home states. One exception was California which requires additional coursework in addiction counseling.

Students indicated they struggled finding appropriate level internships, even with university support. Competition from students in other local institutions was often cited as a main reason.

Action Plans:

1. Students who intend to move to states with additional courses requirements will be advised to enrol in additional courses to meet these state requirements.

2. The program internship coordinator will continue to build relationships in the community to leverage student internships. Students who have difficulty finding appropriate sites may delay the commencement of an internship up to 2 terms without delaying graduation.

#### **5. FACULTY/STAFF FEEDBACK**

- i. What is in place to enable staff to provide feedback on their perceptions of this program?
- ii. What are faculty most positive about in terms of their involvement with this program? What are the main issues raised by them? What actions are in place or are planned to address any issues? Please note in the action plan.

---

*Counseling faculty meet three times/academic year to discuss programmatic issues and student concerns. They also have easy access to the program director and can discuss perceptions on an on-going basis.*

*Faculty have responded positively to the demographics of the cohorts – academically strong and ready for the rigor of graduate work. They have developed challenging assignments and take pride in their role in the preparation of future counselors.*

*Faculty struggle with the outcomes assessment process. Still in its infancy, the program director has worked closely with the outcomes assessment team to develop a comprehensive formative and summative assessment plan. The plan attempts to minimize extraneous and burdensome work, however, in its initial stages, there is a learning curve which has been difficult to master. Outcomes staff have scheduled trainings for all faculty involved in the process to provide information and insight into using the “Taskstream” system and efficiently integrating assignments to assess student learning and program outcomes.*

## **6. GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT**

- i. How do the rates of graduate employment compare with sector benchmarks for this field?

---

*Student placement data is extremely positive. Based on graduate student survey responses, all students responding were working in their field. It is not known if the non-respondents are unemployed, under-employed, or continuing on with their education.*

## **7. ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY, THE PROFESSIONS AND THE COMMUNITY**

- i. Briefly outline existing, new and or planned relationships with industry, the professions and the community. How have they provided input into the program this year?

---

*During the upcoming academic year the program will survey employers of program graduates. There are also plans to initiate an advisory board of professionals in counseling to provide input into the program’s development.*

## **8. PROGRESS AGAINST REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Outline the status of implementation of any program review or accreditation recommendations, including evaluations of their effectiveness.

---

*The program has submitted a comprehensive self-study to CACREP for accreditation. Currently the program director is responding to reviewer questions and writing an addendum to the initial report (due in September)*