



## Mental Health Counseling Program Assessment Report

November 1, 2013

Welcome to the First Program Assessment Report of the SOU Masters in Mental Health Counseling Program. In the following pages we provide a brief summary of our on-going program evaluation efforts and the changes that we will make as a result. This newsletter launches our annual communication to all program constituents: current and future students, alumni, site supervisors and employers of our graduates. Each group provided essential feedback that we have used to better understand our successes and areas needing improvement. We thank you for your candid responses and many suggestions. This report is also provided for faculty, staff, administrators, and the general public.

*The MHC Faculty*

### The Assessment Process

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the organization under which our program is accredited. When CACREP Standards were revised in 2009, the SOU MHC program expanded the program assessment process. We continue to survey New Students, Graduating Students, Alumni, and Site Supervisors each year. We also review characteristics of applicants and results of the exit exam (CPCE) that is required of all graduating students. In 2013 we began asking Employers of our graduates for feedback.

We are implementing assessment of 128 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) throughout the curriculum. The SLOs specify detailed counseling competencies, both knowledge and skills, that are essential for entry-level mental health counselors. Each SLO is paired with an assignment in a specific class; the student's work is evaluated and also becomes part of our program assessment process. In this way we, as a program, learn the degree to which we are teaching effectively.

Each fall, MHC Faculty review assessment data that we collect during the year to determine what we are doing well and where there are opportunities for improvement. We compare results within the program to determine what issues need to be addressed; the exit exam allows an assessment of students' knowledge in comparison to external benchmarks. We identify specific changes to make with curriculum, staffing, policy, and procedures and we establish a timeline for the changes.

### Assessment Results

**Applicants:** We continue to attract more applicants. In 2013 our applicant pool increased 133% to 85 completed applications; 12.9% identified as being members of a racial

minority, which is a significant increase. GRE and GPA are, on average, fairly consistent with previous years; however, the cohort of new students appears to be better prepared for graduate school because we are selecting students from a larger pool.

Program strengths: Survey results indicate that a majority of new, graduating and former students highly value the following:

- Staff and regular faculty are accessible, helpful; excellent advising and mentoring.
- Site supervisors are excellent.
- Classroom environments, learning resources, and small class size
- Clear course syllabi, objectives, grading, and class process.
- Workload is challenging but fair.
- Internship and supervision
- The overall program structure
- Most would highly recommend the program to others.
- Alumni are employed (100% of respondents) in the counseling field.

Opportunities for improvement: Student surveys identify the following issues:

- Application process might benefit from interviews.
- Some students want access to course syllabi before the start of the term.
- The link between developing a professional identity and belonging to ACA or AMHCA is not clear. Some students report that they do not belong to any professional organization at the end of their first term. But concurrent data indicates that membership is near 100%.
- Some students and supervisors would like some content earlier and expanded (Crisis skills, community resources, assessment, alcohol & drug, business issues re: future practice)
- More opportunities to engage in research with faculty
- More specialized courses on theory and practice
- Some adjunct faculty members are not clear about graduate program expectations.
- Clearer feedback to students re: course expectations and counseling competencies

Supervisors and/or employers recommend strengthening the following areas:

- The intern selection process needs revision; internship sites would value information on student background, supervisors' assessment.
  - Some site supervisors did not receive a current Internship Manual.
- The following knowledge and skills could be strengthened:
- Assessment and diagnosis
  - Suicide assessment
  - Addictions assessment and intervention skills
  - Selecting interventions
  - Collaboration with other professionals and referral skills

Exit exam results: Our students, on average, continue to score well above the national average in all eight sub-areas and in overall total score of the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE). Thus, our students demonstrate a strong basic fund of knowledge in the counseling field in comparison to a national sample of masters and doctoral level students.

SLO results: We assessed 61% of the 128 Student Learning Outcomes. We are still fine-tuning this system so results are considered tentative. Of those SLOs that were assessed, 78% reached criteria – which means that all students achieved the equivalent of a passing grade (80% or higher) on the assignment that measured the particular competency. Of the 22% SLOs where students did not meet criteria at the time of assessment, most did succeed within a short period of time after the end of the class.

### **Program Changes**

Given the identified strengths and opportunities for improvement, we are continuing with or making the following changes:

#### Admissions:

- We are continuing to offer WRGP for out of state recruitment and Sports Lottery scholarships for diversity recruitment.
- We will consider using interviews as part of admissions for 2015.

#### Staffing:

- We have implemented an expanded review of adjuncts and supervisors in 2013-2014.
- We will provide new adjuncts with more mentoring, oversight, and an orientation.
- One adjunct was not renewed to teach based upon concerns expressed in student feedback and course evaluations..

#### Curriculum: We will implement the following changes this year:

- We will encourage professional identity by requiring that students belong to ACA or AMHCA by the end of the fall term.
- We will post course syllabi on MHC website, where possible.
- We will consider reorganizing class schedule or class content to bring important assessment, community, agency, and referral content earlier in sequence.
- We will consider where and how to use guest speakers or panels on community resources, business issues.

#### Curriculum issues that are already being addressed:

- Specialized courses are offered via required elective offerings.
- There are more research opportunities; students can use Research as elective credit.
- Teaching Assistantships can also be used for elective credit.
- Clearer feedback: SLO mapping and competencies will begin in Fall 2013.
- Crisis (575) will expand suicide content and skill practice.

- Career (549) will include student activity to explore own future career plans.
- Addiction (525) expanded to address more A & D assessment and intervention.
- Internship selection was changed to Match Process for 2014; all site supervisors will be notified and site database developed.
- All supervisors will receive an updated copy of the Internship Manual each year.

### Future Development of the Assessment Process

While response rates to surveys were considerably better this year than in the past, we hope to improve. In 2013 – 2014, we will require survey completion by all new and graduating students. We will also look at ways to increase survey response rates for alumni, supervisors and employers.

We will continue implementation of the SLO process by assessing all 128 SLOs. This year we will include the practica and internship SLOs and will also work closely with adjunct instructors to assess SLOs in their courses. During next fall’s MHC Faculty Retreat (Sept 2014) we will again review the assessment data and will initiate a validity check of 25% of the SLOs. The validity check will involve the MHC faculty as a whole reviewing a random selection of student work from Student Portfolios; we will start with the SLOs in experiential courses including practica and internship (502, 504, 506, and 510).

Dr. Josie Wilson (Emeritus Professor) holds the position of Assessment Coordinator through Fall 2015. Please address comments about our assessment efforts to her.

### MHC Faculty & Staff 2013 – 2014

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