



**COUNSELING PROGRAM
ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2015-2016**

Annual Improvement Plan

Purpose: The Counseling (CNS) Program is dedicated to improve the Program curriculum, organization, and communication by frequent and routine evaluations. Various groups help in the evaluation process: CNS students during their last semester of the Program, graduates of the CNS Program within six months of graduating, employers of recent graduates, and practicum and internship site supervisors. Through an anonymous survey format, each of these groups provide feedback on the strengths and challenges of our Program curriculum and student educational experiences. The surveys are the Program Evaluation, the Graduate Survey, the Graduate Employer Survey, and the Site Supervisor Evaluation of Counseling Program. The CNS faculty compile, analyze, discuss and utilize the feedback to determine future foci and/or changes to the Program. In addition, at the end of each semester, CNS faculty review the progress of each student on all CACREP standards and utilize this information to enhance program curriculum and develop student remediation, if necessary. Lastly, we share the reports with our Advisory Board and discuss possible changes to the program.

Major Findings: There were a few trends found throughout the four surveys for both strengths and challenges of the Program.

Program strengths. Survey participants strongly identified the:

- ❖ Approachability of faculty
- ❖ Rigor of program
- ❖ Emphasis on self-awareness, theory and practice within program
- ❖ Program support
- ❖ Diversity in Curriculum
- ❖ Clinical focus of program
- ❖ Diversity amongst faculty and their commitment to support of students

Site Supervisors: Overall, the site supervisors ranked the counseling program between adequately prepared and well prepared on all standards. The highest rankings were in professional/personal growth, professional identity, ethics, and openness to feedback. Supervisors also ranked the students skills highest in career/lifestyle development (though there were three not applicable) and human growth and development. The overall ratings in actual skills were fairly consistent and at the high end of adequately prepared.

Need for Program improvement. There was no consensus on which course needed to be improved; however, one student noted that 617 was too vague, and 619 was too uncomfortable. It seems that counseling faculty would benefit from tracking individual students earlier so that both faculty and student can learn that counseling may not be a good fit prior to investing too much time, energy, and money in the process of earning a counseling degree. There was a theme for the relevancy of courses for school counselors (e.g., CNS 676, CNS 689, and ADM 630). Furthermore, it was suggested that CNS 624 should be adjusted to the focus on application of theory. In addition, results from the Midpoint Clinical Application Examination indicate that students are struggling with case conceptualization and application. Also, we had two students who needed remediation on the CPCE.

Site Supervisors: While many of the standards increased in score, there were seven areas where the scores did decrease minimally. Overall, the site supervisors rated the counseling program's preparation of students in the professional skills of leadership and the technical skills of appraisal, establishing counseling relationships and theory a little lower. One site supervisor did comment about the need for school counseling students to understand the difference between counseling in an agency setting and counseling in a school setting. This seems to be related to historical views of counseling and the continued struggle to move the counseling profession to be more consistent with standards set forth by ASCA, ACA, and CACREP. Another site supervisor had concerns regarding the CIT's knowledge regarding the school system.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's): In addition to the above surveys, the CNS faculty also reviewed each CACREP standard for every student in courses the previous academic year. Below is an overview of the results.

Met or Exceeded Core Standards: All students met or exceeded the core standards measured in the following classes: CNS 618- Issues in Mental Health Counseling, CNS 734- Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling, CNS 752- Trauma and Crisis Counseling, CNS 619- Foundational Counseling Techniques, CNS 725- Middle/Secondary School Counseling, CNS 790- Practicum (fall 2014, spring 2015), CNS 794- Internship I (fall 2014, spring 2015), CNS 795- Internship II (fall 2014, spring 2015), CNS 635- Human Growth and Development (fall 2014, spring 2015). No Core Standards were assessed in CNS 676- Diagnosis and Treatment Planning, CNS 722- Substance Use and Addictions Counseling, or CNS 748- Expressive Activities Counseling.

Developing or Did not Meet Core Standards: CNS 617- Introduction to Counseling: One student did not meet standards. This student stopped attending class and did not participate in assignments. CNS 720- Elementary School Counseling: One student did not meet standard G.8.e that is assessed on the final exam. This standard will need to be assessed in the research course. Another student dropped the course and withdrew from the program. CNS 686- Career Counseling: One student did not meet standard G.4.e assessed via an exam. The student passed the exam and did well in the rest of the class. Another student did not meet standard G.4.f assessed in the assessment paper due to not submitting the assignment. CNS 692- Group Counseling (fall 2014): One student did not meet any standards. Student stopped attending course. Another student was developing on standard G.6.c assessed via the group counseling approach paper. This standard will need assessed in another course. CNS 692 (spring 2015): Two students were developing in standard G.6.e assessed via weekly reflection paper and group participation. These students missed two of the group experiences. CNS 624- Theories of Counseling: One student did not meet standards. This student dropped out of program without withdrawing from the class. CNS 635- Human Growth and Development (summer, fall 2014): One student was developing in standards G.3.a., G.3.d., and G.3.h. all of which are assessed in the Development Case Study Project. These will need to be assessed in another course. CNS 671- Multicultural Counseling (summer 2014, spring 2015): Two students were developing in standard G.2.d. assessed in the Developmental Case Study Project.

Met or Exceeded Clinical Mental Health Counseling Standards: All students met or exceeded the CMHC standards measured in the following courses: CNS 625- Legal and Ethical Issues, CNS 618- Issues in Mental Health Counseling, CNS 734- Marriage, Couple, and Family

Counseling, CNS 752- Trauma and Crisis Counseling, CNS 722- Substance Use and Addictions Counseling, CNS 790- Practicum (spring 2015, fall 2014), CNS 794- Internship I (fall 2014, spring 2015), CNS 795- Internship II (spring 2015). No CMHC standards were assessed in CNS 692- Group Counseling. No CMHC Standards assessed in CNS 748- Expressive Activities Counseling

Developing or Did not Meet CMHC Standards: CNS 617- Introduction to Counseling: One student did not meet standards. Student stopped attending class and did not participate in assignments. CNS 676- Diagnosis and Treatment Planning: One student was developing standard D6 (Risk Assessment Assignment), J2 (Case Studies), and K2 (Case Studies). These will need assessed in another course. CNS 671- Multicultural Counseling: Two students were developing standard E2 (Cultural Exposure Assignment). CNS 694-Advanced Counseling and Supervision: Two students from the fall and two from the spring did not meet standards I1 and J1 (both assessed in Advanced Techniques Paper). Two students did not meet standard D7 (Record Keeping) due to submitting incomplete files.

Met or Exceeded School Counseling Standards: All students met or exceeded the SC standards measured in the following courses: CNS 671- Multicultural Counseling, CNS 635- Human Growth and Development (Summer 2014), CNS 625- Legal and Ethical Issues, CNS 676- Diagnosis and Treatment Planning. CNS 790- Practicum (fall 2014, spring 2015), CNS 794- Internship I (fall 2014, spring 2015), No standards were assessed in CNS 692- Group Counseling.

Developing or Did not Meet School Counseling Standards: CNS 624- Theories of Counseling: Two students were developing in standard C1 (Theoretical Position Paper). CNS 617- Introduction to Counseling: One student did not meet standards (stopped attending and did not participate in assignments). CNS 720- Elementary School Counseling: One student did not meet standards J2 (Lesson Plans), E1 (Research Paper), M1 (Research Paper), M5 (Research Paper), and O2 (Research Paper). CNS 725- Middle/Secondary School Counseling: Many students (five) struggled with several standards including A2 (3- Midterm), C2 (1- Final), E3 (3- Midterm), E4 (1- Research Paper), G1 (2- Research Paper), H1 (1- Case Study), H5 (2- Case Study), I5 (4- Research Paper), J1 (5- Research Paper), K2 (3- Research Paper), O1 (3- Midterm), and O3 (3- Midterm). CNS 795- Internship II (spring 2015): One student developing in F1 (Faculty Supervisor Evaluation), and F4 (Consultation Paper). Another developing in D2 (Psychoeducational Group), D5 (Case Presentation), F4 (Consultation Paper), L1 (Psychoeducational Group), N3 (Psychoeducation Group).

Plan for improvement: The CNS Program will continue to work on various areas to enhance the curriculum and the learning experiences for students. Many changes have already been made. For instance, each course syllabus has been reorganized, standardized (according to CACREP national standards, CAEP, and EPSB), and updated to strengthen the focus on counseling theory, multicultural issues, and application of skills. Also, the organization of the Program itself has been restructured to offer consistency in course offering and uniformity of student expectations.

In the upcoming year, the Program will use the results of these surveys and SLO's to further develop the curriculum and Program structure. While the vast majority of the students met or exceeded the Core and program specific CACREP standards, there are some areas to review.

- ❖ Adjustments that will be made to specific courses include:
 - While all students, except one, met standards for CNS 676- Diagnosis and Treatment planning the instructor has chosen to update the course to focus more on treatment planning, case documentation, and risk assessment. In addition, the instructor has incorporated diagnostic assessment measures that students will utilize during the case studies. Assignments and rubrics will be reviewed and adjusted as needed.
 - Treatment planning, case documentation, and risk assessment has also been embedded into CNS 618- Issues in Mental Health Counseling and CNS 694- Advanced Counseling and Supervision.
 - Given the mixed results regarding theory, faculty will continue to monitor student and site feedback and determine if a change in curriculum is needed.
 - Instructor for CNS 694 will review rubric and assignment for standards I1 and J1 in school counseling to ensure those standards are adequately being assessed.
 - Instructor for CNS 671 will review assignment and rubric covering standards G2d and E2 to see if adjustments are needed (two students were developing in these areas)
 - The school counseling courses (CNS 720- Elementary School Counseling and CNS 725- Middle/Secondary School Counseling) will be reviewed. Several students did not meet standards in many areas. The instructor will review the assignments and rubrics to ensure they are accurately measuring the above listed SLO's.
 - CNS 752- Trauma and Crisis Counseling will now have a greater focus in practical application. Students will create a crisis/ trauma scenario and demonstrate how they would use an interdisciplinary treatment team to respond to the situation.
 - Overall, CNS faculty have noticed that students are struggling with case conceptualization. In addition to adding more case studies across the curriculum, the instructor for CNS 619- Foundational Counseling Techniques has incorporated a Scripted Skill Development project wherein the students are provided client scripts from which they first apply the lecture content as a class and the subsequently practice those skills.
 - In addition, faculty need to identify a process for addressing SLO's measured in CNS 795- Internship II that are not met or developing. Typically students take this course in their last semester, therefore the faculty will develop a plan of action for addressing unmet standards.
- ❖ Faculty will keep a list of students who have not successfully met each standard and identify a future class in which those standards will need to be assessed.
- ❖ Faculty will continue to enhance the advising process by using and regularly updating a database that outlines student progress through program. The CNS program will develop a Facebook and Twitter account to better reach students through social media.

- ❖ Lastly, and most concerning, is the low number in student skill in establishing a helping relationship with clients. As a faculty, we will devote more time to case study, practical experiences, and feedback to ensure this necessary component is addressed and remedied.

Changes will be made to the curriculum if they align with MSU, CNS Program and CACREP standards. Program faculty are/have:

- ❖ continuing to enhance the curriculum of courses by updating course material according to up-to-date research, the needs of students and the feedback from graduates and employers. CNS faculty have made changes to course structure and material according to CACREP standards.
- ❖ continuing to fine-tune the program organization, including course scheduling, student assessments and evaluations.
- ❖ increasing the communication between faculty and students, administration, site supervisors, etc. about program modifications by updating the CNS website regularly and contacting students in-class and through e-mail about changes. Also, CNS faculty will maintain communication with site supervisors by an on-site visit around midterm, and through phone, email, or in person contact.
- ❖ Mu Sigma Chi is starting its second year as a chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. Student projects for the year will include efforts in advocacy, personal and professional development and community service.
- ❖ reviewing the Midpoint Clinical Application Examination to ensure we are accurately assessing the case studies. In addition, faculty have added more case applications to several courses including CNS 617, 618, 619, 720, 722, 725 and 734.
- ❖ purchased study guides for the CPCE to be placed at both the Murray and Madisonville campuses to help students in preparing for the examination.

The counseling faculty is taking the proper steps to make positive changes to the structure, organization and flow of the counseling program. This will be an ongoing process, but it is necessary to meet our purpose of preparing our students for careers as professional counselors.