

## Counselor Education 2022-2023 Assessment Report

### Elements reviewed:

- **Counselor Preparation Competency Exam (CPCE) scores and the Plymouth State University Comprehensive Counseling Exam (PSU-CCE):** The CPCE is a comprehensive examination covering the core areas outlined by our accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This year we made a transition to an exam constructed by PSU faculty and had a first administration on April 1, 2022.
- **Assessment data related to CACREP Core and Specialty Standards:** The counseling program collects data on all students' mastery of each of the CACREP core and specialty standards, identified by Key Performance Indicators, through various course assessments.
- **Demographic data:** Collected from program applicants, accepted students, and graduates collected by the admissions office.
- **Survey Data:** Collected from recent graduates, site supervisors, and employers. Each year we survey recent graduates, practicum and internship supervisors and employers of our graduates.
- **Feedback and Suggestions given through an Advisory Board:** Comprised of faculty, current students, alumni, and site supervisors and held on 5/22/23.

### Exam Results Review

Scores for the CPCE taken in the fall were well over the national average, with Z scores at +.54. While all students who took the new Plymouth State University Comprehensive Counseling Exam (PSU-CCE) passed with this first administration, we have no national statistics to compare with. Instead, we reviewed the average scores in the eight core areas of counselor education that are common to both exams. In doing so, we were able to compare performance on this new exam vs. our historical performance on the CPCE.

What we noted first was that our students' scores in Professional Orientation and Ethics were high in both exams. This was something we were pleased to see, as we definitely want a strong counseling identity and understanding of ethics within our program! Some of the major differences between the two exams were related to the sections on Diversity and Assessment, where scores improved with the PSU-CCE. In contrast, scores on Career Counseling and Helping Relationships (theories) were lower with the PSU-CCE.

While interesting, without longitudinal data we can't draw any firm conclusions yet. However, we have decided to revisit the questions in all areas to rewrite where necessary, and will continue to monitor performance moving forward. Also to note was that

students' informal report of PSU-CCE experience was much improved from CPCE. Severe technical issues that were common with the CPCE were not present here, and students reported that the questions felt more connected to the content they'd studied. For future exam dates, we've decided to add a formal anonymous survey evaluation for students after the exam so that we can continue to collect feedback on the exam and the experience.

### **Assessment Data Review:**

Student performance on key assignments in classes related to the eight core areas of counselor education, as well as areas specific to Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling, were reviewed. Below are the findings for each area, which were collected using a data management software program called Taskstream.

**Professional Orientation and Ethics** - Taskstream data reports high scores for all class and field measurements in both knowledge and skills and seems to match exam data in this area. Overall, this is an area that PSU students consistently do well in.

**Diversity** - Taskstream data reports high scores for all class and field measurements in both knowledge and skills, and seems to match exam data in this area. Another area of consistent positive performance.

**Human Growth and Development** - Taskstream data reports high scores for all class and field measurements in both knowledge and skills, and seems to match exam data in this area. Yet another area of consistent positive performance.

**Career Counseling** - Taskstream data reports high scores in knowledge. Skills reporting was positive for School Counseling, however a large number of CMHC supervisors reported that they were unable to evaluate this area. This was also an area of weaker performance on exams. Outreach to CMHC site supervisors or reworking of the supervisor evaluation form is an area we will look into, as well as a revisiting of exam questions as noted above in that section.

**Helping Relationships** - This was split into two key areas.

**Theories** - Taskstream data on knowledge and skills were both high. Students overall seem to do well in talking about their chosen theoretical orientations. Exam data, as noted above, did not reflect this as well. Adjustments to the theories course to assist with theory recall, and a revisiting of exam questions are the two ways we plan on addressing this.

**Skills** - Taskstream data on knowledge and skills were high, though it was determined that a re-evaluation of the Counseling Skills course and how data is collected is needed. Current data is in a "pass / fail" format, which makes it difficult to derive meaningful evaluation of skills in this area.

**Group Counseling** - Taskstream data on knowledge is high, with students showing competency on the development and construction of counseling groups. Data on skills was consistent, but does show a possible difficulty with assessing students' skills for CMHC supervisors in particular, given the relative paucity of opportunities in clinical sites.

**Assessment and Testing** - Taskstream data on knowledge is high, with the majority of students doing very well with a few outliers. Data on skills shows this to be an area of performance that isn't as strong as others, though all students were rated as "adequate" in this area.

**Research** - Taskstream data reports high scores for all class and field measurements in both knowledge and skills, and seems to match exam data in this area. Overall, this is an area students do well in.

**CMHC** - Taskstream data reported high scores for knowledge in this area. Skills were adequate, but not as strong, so greater focus on case conceptualization and application to work with clients is warranted in the internship class.

**School Counseling** - Taskstream data reports high scores for both knowledge and skills in this area. No particular area stood out for further investigation at this time.

### **Demographic Data Review:**

Demographic data of program applicants, admitted students, and graduates was reviewed along the categories of racial identity, gender identity, age, and veteran status. The following trends were noted:

- A larger number of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) applicants are still "in process" with regard to their application status, indicating unfinished applications that might represent a "quiet withdraw" from the process. This suggests a need for greater outreach to this population throughout the process.
- While the percentage of male applicants (19%) to female applicants (78%) is a bit lopsided (though comparable to what has been seen in past years) acceptance and withdrawal rates between both groups are similar. Information on self-identified trans, nonbinary, and genderqueer students was not available with the new admissions system, and so a new system to get and process this data is needed.
- Regarding age - applicants in the 20-30 year old age group were most represented, and admissions/withdraw/denial rates were comparable between all age groups.
- There were no self-identified veteran applicants, though program faculty are aware of a number of veteran students.
- Graduation data had no significant outliers with regard to completion rates with Program of Study, Gender, or Race. All percentages roughly match admissions data for these groups.

## **Survey Data Review:**

Survey data from Site Supervisors, Alumni, and Employers of program graduates was collected via emailed invitations to complete a Qualtrics survey. Survey questions focused on professionalism and preparedness in the 8 core CACREP content areas, as well as CMHC and School Counseling specific content areas. Following are highlights of the results:

### **Site Supervisors**

0 CMHC and 12 School Counseling Site Supervisors responded. Respondents indicated that interns were either “Very Much” or “Adequately” prepared in almost every content area. High areas included Professionalism, Ethics, and Interventions. Significantly, no CMHC supervisors responded, indicating a need for greater outreach to this population.

### **Alumni**

1 CMHC and 4 School Counseling Alumni responded. Responses for content areas were mostly at a level of “Very Much” or “Adequate” preparedness. Reported employment data for recent graduates remains very high. Areas that trended lower included Group Counseling, and School Counseling academic development. The Group Counseling course has been significantly adjusted to place far more emphasis on skill development, so this area is expected to rise with future alumni. The Foundations of School Counseling course will be examined with relation to other School Counseling courses, and overall content and focus for the coming year to address the instruction on academic development in students.

### **Employers**

1 CMHC and 0 School Counseling Employers responded. Responses were very positive, at a level of “Very Much” or “Adequate” for professionalism and preparedness in most areas from most respondents. The low level of responsiveness indicates a need for greater outreach to this population as well.

In addition to the above findings, the reviewers identified a need to revisit the questions and format of the survey that is sent out, allowing for a greater focus on professional dispositions and narrative responses.

## **Advisory Board Review:**

The Counselor Education Advisory Board meeting was held on May 22nd, 2023, and consisted of core and adjunct faculty, current students, alumni, site supervisors, and employers connected with our program. The meeting began with a review of current program stats and projects, and then transitioned to discussion on specific program areas and improvements that could be made.

- There was a consensus that the supervisor evaluation process needs revisiting,

both with the evaluation form and process, and with greater incorporation of the professional disposition form.

- The fixed course schedule and the new comprehensive exam were both very well received by students, and viewed positively by alumni.
- General support for in-person with online options. There seems to be a preference for keeping an in-person identity with some online options where it makes sense. Training in telehealth is also a good thing.
- The professional disposition form changes with regard to depth over breadth were well received, and discussion on greater incorporation of this form into fieldwork was emphasized. In addition, support and instruction for faculty completing these forms was suggested as a means of ensuring meaningful feedback and greater consistency across reviewers.

## Summary of all Data Reviews

### Strengths

- Student performance on the **CPCE** remains consistently close or over the national average of all students who use this as an exit examination. In addition, the pass rate and informal feedback for the first use of the new **PSU-CCE** was very promising, and this new exam will allow for some valuable data to note specific trends over time, and to inform program modifications moving forward.
- **Assessment data** overall shows a strong performance over the 8 core areas of counselor education and each specialty area. This data largely matches with exam performance as well.
- **Demographic data** shows relatively low numbers of withdrawn applications overall. Acceptance and matriculation rates were consistent across reported gender and age groups.
- **Survey data** from recent alumni, site supervisors, and employers support the general strength of the Counselor Education programs, and preparation in most areas was rated highly.
- **Employment data** shows continued very high levels of post-graduate employment for graduates from both programs. In addition, incidental reports

from CMHC students continue to show high pass rates for the NCMHCE – used as the licensure examination by New Hampshire.

- Feedback from **Advisory Board** Site Supervisors, Employers, Faculty, and Alumni was generally positive regarding the training and preparation of students.

### **Specific Programmatic Improvement Plans**

- The PSU-CCE will be offered again in the Summer of 2023, but using different questions as enough were developed to create two versions of the exam. Afterwards, all questions will be reviewed with attention to the percentage of correct answers, question and answer phrasing and construction, and connection to course content. The goal, over time, will be for this exam to accurately reflect content provided throughout the program and thus be a consistent and valuable measurement of student learning and retention.
- The Career Counseling, Counseling Skills, Theories of Counseling, and Internship courses will be reviewed as noted in the Assessment data section above.
- The counseling programs will work with the admissions office and the new admissions system to see if demographics including gender identity, veteran status, and other dimensions of diversity can be collected. In addition, the program faculty will continue to work with PSU's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Center to improve outreach to BIPOC students and maintain retention rates for diverse students.
- The surveys for alumni, supervisors, and employers, as well as the system to send those surveys out, will be revisited and reworked. Specifically, the questions will be adjusted to better reflect personal and professional performance and preparation, and respondents will be prompted to add additional information when giving a response below "adequate." In addition, a plan for more personalized outreach will be developed.
- The evaluation process for site supervisors will be revisited. Specifically, the forms used will be adjusted to include information from the personal and professional performance rubric used for student assessment throughout the program. Site supervisors will be informed of this form so they can work it into their supervision plans for practicum and internship students. In addition, greater and more consistent outreach to site supervisors will be ensured through the development of a formal system for instructors to follow.