

Community Counseling Program Program Evaluation - 2008

Introduction to the Program Evaluation Process

The Community Counseling Program regularly assesses the functioning and performance of the Program. The Community Counseling assessment plan of program evaluation is conducted on several levels and timeframes. First, the Community Counseling Program faculty meets at least once per month and discusses both program operation and student performance issues. This manner of action-assessment is often used to review curricular offerings as future academic terms are planned. This manner of assessment also is used in discussing and evaluating the characteristics of applicants to the Community Counseling Program. Although this ongoing, informal manner of assessment does not result in tangible outcome measures, it is an essential element of the continuous and successful operation of the Community Program. In real-time, issues in courses, practica, internship and other domains are identified and dealt with by the consensus of the Community Counseling Program faculty.

Second, as each cohort of students prepares for graduation from the Community Counseling Program, s/he completes an exit survey that, along with a presentation to the cohort and a faculty member, comprises a summative evaluation of that student's experiences in the Program. The exit survey inquires broadly about students' experiences, especially as these relate to the composition and sequencing of the learning experiences within the Program.

Third, the Community Counseling Program evaluation plan involves a systematic evaluation of Program graduates and their employers. The survey for former students assesses the extent to which Program objectives have been met, to extent to which the core courses of the curriculum have helped the students in their current employment or educational pursuits, the extent to which the Program faculty helped to create a challenging and professional learning atmosphere, among other variables. The survey for employers similarly inquires about the extent to which graduates were well-prepared by the Program in core areas (i. e., those covered by core courses) of professional counseling. Both the student and employer surveys ask for global evaluations of the performance of the Community Program. The survey instruments for students (<http://www.coe.uga.edu/~astewart/ccss.htm>) and for employers (<http://www.coe.uga.edu/~astewart/cces.htm>) are available for completion online. This modality of survey administration was chosen given the ability, ease, and efficiency with which these instruments could find their way to Program graduates and be completed by them.

Fourth, the Community Counseling Program faculty evaluates the Program's performance through the student's scores on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE). In addition to students' evaluations of particular courses and the instructor's perspectives on the effectiveness of a given course within the Core

Community Counseling Curriculum, the CPCE offers an independent method of benchmarking the effectiveness of content instruction within the Community Counseling Program.

The Community Program faculty utilizes the evaluation plan to both formatively (for the coming year) and summatively (for the previous year) evaluate the performance of the Program for each cohort as the academic year draws to a close. Depending upon the performance of various content and clinical instructional methods, the Program may elect to change some aspect of the way courses or taught, when they are taught, how they are sequenced, and so forth

The results of all program evaluations are available to students, faculty, and interested persons within the community. Additionally, Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) cohort scores are made available to all students and faculty. Descriptive statistics of the CPCE scores are also available for use by prospective students on the Community Counseling Program web pages.

Synopsis of Results from Former Student Survey – Community Counseling

The above-referenced surveys were administered online to former Community Counseling Program graduates and to employers of Community Counseling graduates in the Fall of 2007.

Sample. Thirty-three former students responded to the survey, 65% of which had graduated within the last three years. On average, the survey respondents graduated approximately three years ago. One survey respondent had graduated in 2001. The former students were either working or attending graduate school in the states of: Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia. All former students were either employed or completing additional graduate training in Counseling or Counseling Psychology. Approximately 55% of the former students were employed full time, 9% were employed part time. Three (9%) former students reported they had completed their doctoral degrees and 36% reported that they were in a doctoral training program. Regarding professional licensure, six (18%) were now licensed as professional counselors and 4 (12%) were licensed as psychologists. There were 21 (64%) who were not licensed. It is likely that given the recency of program graduates in the survey sample that these unlicensed former students are either pursuing doctoral studies at this time or are in the process of completing the supervised practice requirements for obtaining licensure as a professional counselor. Fifty six percent of the former students were nationally certified counselors (NBCC) whereas 44% were not. Again this percentage of nationally certified counselors may be due in part to the number of students from Georgia's Community Counseling Program that go on to pursue doctoral study.

With respect to work settings, 22% of former graduates worked in outpatient counseling centers or clinics while 19% maintained private practices. There were 9% of former students who worked each in inpatient settings and school settings. Twelve percent

worked in college or university settings and 18% worked in other varied settings. With respect to the graduates' primary professional counseling activities, the following were reported: 39% provided adult counseling, 30% provided counseling to children, and 3% each provided offender counseling, consultation and professional counseling supervision. The graduates also were asked about their secondary professional activities. They reported: 21% conducted counseling with adults, 27% child counseling, 6% career counseling, 12% counseling assessment, and 9% counseling supervision. These results provide support that the Community Counseling Program prepares students to work within both a range of service settings and professional counseling activities.

Survey Results. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) of the survey for the 33 people who responded to it was .96. The former students were asked to provide global ratings for the extent to which the Community Counseling Program prepared them professionally for their current work. Using a 1-5 scale, with 4 corresponding to "Agree" and 5 corresponding to "Strongly Agree," the mean rating for this item was 4.24. This result suggests that the former students have the perception that the Community Counseling Program was very effective in preparing them.

A second broad item inquired: Looking back at the Community Counseling Program, to what extent do you think that it helped you to develop counseling skills that could be used in a wide variety of professional settings? The mean on this item was 4.27, again using a 5 point scale with 5 corresponding to "Helped a Great Deal." A third general item pertained to training for working with a broad range of clients: Looking back at the Community Counseling Program, to what extent do you think that it helped you to develop counseling skills that could be used with a wide variety of clients? The mean rating on this item was 4.13, which was near the "Helped Very Much" anchor. Considering primary emphasis of the Community Counseling Program's mission, "*This program is designed to be relatively broad in scope and focuses on the development of generic counseling skills that can be used in a variety of settings and with a wide range of clients*" the above data are particularly supportive from the perspective of former students. That is, the former students believe the program provided them with training to work in many settings with a diverse clientele.

Some of the remaining 39 items in the survey were combined into composites, which represent the mean score on a five-point scale of the items within that composite. The table below describes the composites and the mean scores and standard deviations on each.

Overall, the survey of former students within the Community Counseling Program were quite favorable and revealed that this Program prepared them well with respect to counseling theory, techniques, and skills, and its emphasis upon multiculturalism and personal awareness. The students also believed that their practicum and more intensive internship experiences and the supervision of both (within the Program and onsite) were very effective. The students also had favorable perceptions of the effectiveness of the overall instruction that they received while in the Program and felt the faculty were supportive and encouraging. The Program emphasis on developing and using research

skills was in the above-average range, however relative to the other composites, research was a somewhat weaker area. There are several possible reasons for this, the first of which is that not all students who enter the Community Counseling Program have had undergraduate courses in statistics or research methods. Second, there is only one research course offered in the curriculum whereas students have many more opportunities to develop counseling skills and expertise. Finally, several of the questions in the survey inquired about skills to actually conduct research. Although the ECHD 7920 Research Methods course does provide an introduction to research and help student to learn how to use it in counseling practice, the course does not have sufficient length or breadth to teach students how to do research comprehensively within one semester.

Community Counseling Former Student Survey Composite Descriptive Statistics		
Composite	Mean*	Std. Dev.
1. Effectiveness of the Program in helping students learn Counseling Theories, Techniques and Skills	4.19	.72
2. Emphasis upon Multiculturalism within the Program	4.17	1.01
3. Emphasis on developing students' Personal Awareness as counselors	4.53	.62
4. Effectiveness Program's Practicum, Internship, and Supervision Component	4.51	.51
5. Emphasis on developing and using Research skills in the Program	3.59	1.05
6. Effectiveness of overall Instruction within the Program	4.23	.65
7. Support, Encouragement, and Overall Effectiveness of Program faculty	4.31	.70
*Note: The items making up the composites were evaluated on a 5-point scale. Higher ratings corresponded to more favorable perceptions of the Community Counseling Program.		

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Synopsis of Results from Employer Survey – Community Counseling

Sample. Twenty employers and academic advisors responded to the Program's request to obtain feedback about the degree to which the Community Counseling Program prepared the former students for their current professional counseling position or for their continued graduate study in Counselor Education or Counseling Psychology. As indicated above, the survey was completed online in the Fall of 2007. Fourteen of the respondents (70%) were supervisors of the former graduates at their current agency of employment. Four (20%) were academic advisors while the remaining 10% were coworkers or professional peers of the former Community Counseling Program student. Forty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had worked with and had known the students less than one year. The remaining respondents had worked with the students anywhere from a one- to four-year interval of time. Ninety-five percent of the respondents indicated that they interacted with the graduate two times or more in a five-day work week. Consequently, 95% of the respondents felt they were either "very familiar" or "familiar" with the former Community Counseling student.

Survey Results. Similar to the student survey, employers were asked to provide a global assessment of the graduate and to evaluate the extent to which s/he was prepared for his/her current professional work. The mean for this item was 4.25 ($SD = 1.07$) on a five-point scale with 4 corresponding to "Agree" and 5 equal to "Strongly Agree" Thus, employers perceived the graduates to be solidly prepared for their current professional work. Another item inquired about the extent to which the graduate possessed the range of skills that would allow them to work in a variety of settings: "To what extent do you think that the Graduate possesses general counseling skills that could be used in a wide variety of professional settings?" For this global item, $M = 4.79$, $SD = .54$, again using a 5-point scale with 5 = "Very Much." Regarding clients, the employers were asked, "To what extent do you think that the Graduate possesses general counseling skills that could be used to help a wide variety of clients?" Using the same response scale it was observed that $M = 4.72$, $SD = .58$. The employers were also asked to evaluate the extent to which the student had developed a professional identity as a counselor. Here, the employers were in agreement that the students did seem to have a well-developed identity in

professional counseling, $M = 4.67$, $SD = .49$ (using the 5-point scale). Overall, the employer perceptions of the students are consistent with students' self perceptions in that the University of Georgia Community Counseling Program provides good training that enables graduates to function in a diverse range of professional settings and with a diverse clientele.

An examination of the descriptive statistics for the Employer Survey suggests that employers have favorably evaluated the graduates in virtually all of the areas included in the survey. On a five-point scale, the mean ratings ranged from $M = 4.14$ on skill in conducting career counseling to $M = 5.00$ concerning the extent to which students were prepared for additional studies in Counselor Education or Counseling Psychology at the doctoral level. It also is noteworthy that in contrast to students' evaluations, the employers indicated that Program graduates were skilled ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .73$) in using research to inform their counseling practice.

The findings from both the former student and employer survey provide support that the Community Counseling Program is performing consistent with its mission and objectives to train generalist practitioners who can work in a variety of professional settings with a range of different types of clients and who use research to inform their practice.

Summary of Results from the Community Counseling Exit Evaluation

Students evaluated the Community Counseling Program globally regarding the extent to which it met their needs for professional development and training. For the last three cohorts (2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007), the overall ranking of the program ranged from 7 to 10 with a mean of 8.6

The students also provided ratings of the *quality* of various components of the Community Counseling Program, again using a 1 to 10 scale with 10 being the best? The data are summarized below:

Component	Mean	Range
Quality of Classes & Instruction (overall)	8.9	7 to 10
Quality of Counseling Technique Courses	9.0	8 to 10
Quality of Instruction in Theory	8.6	6 to 10
Quality of Instruction on Research & Assessment	8.8	7 to 10
Quality of Internship	8.6	6 to 10
Quality of Supervision in Practicum & Internship	8.6	6 to 10
Quality of Group Supervision	9.4	8 to 10
Quality of Individual Supervision	7.6	4 to 10

Overall, these evaluations by exiting Community Counseling students portray perceptions of having received generally high-quality instruction across a range of program components.

The existing students also were asked to supply open-ended remarks about both the strengths of the Community Counseling Program as well as its weaknesses. The following themes were consistently observed over the three cohorts included in the analysis:

Strengths of Program

Cohort model
thesis
Mentors
Respectful environment
Variety of experiences
Clinical training
Diversity
Multicultural issues
Faculty
Supervision

Weaknesses of Program

Not enough information regarding
Holes in curriculum
No human development course
Not enough coursework on children
Not enough research opportunities
Lack of job search assistance
Too many reaction papers

Summary of Results from the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)

The data below provide the means of eight years of Community Counseling cohort scores within the Program. The University of Georgia Students have been consistently above the means of the national sample of students taking the CPCE as an exit examination. In certain years, flagged with an asterisk (*), the University of Georgia students achieved mean scores that were above the national mean by at least one standard deviation. These scores provide support, independent of student perceptions, that the Community Counseling Program is providing a solid education in the core areas that comprise community counseling.

**University of Georgia Community Counseling Program Mean Scores
On the Comprehensive Professional Counseling Examination (CPCE) from 1999 to 2006**

<u>Curriculum Areas</u>	<u>Natl. Means</u>	<u>(SD)</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Human Growth and Development	11.44	(2.36)	13.23	14.11	14.57	13.44	13.62	12.08	11.91	13.83*
Social and Cultural Foundations	10.03	(2.23)	12.08	13.44*	13.86*	11.89	12.69	11.41	12.64	13.16*
Helping Relationships	12.00	(2.18)	14.23	15.11	15.00	13.67	12.38	12.83	12.82	13.66
Group Work	11.55	(2.56)	13.85	13.88	14.29	13.33	12.92	11.83	12.82	14.25*
Career and Lifestyle Development	8.77	(2.23)	13.38	12.88	12.43	13.11	13.00	11.83	10.00	10.75
Appraisal	10.34	(1.84)	11.00	12.88	12.71	12.44	10.46	10.83	11.27	10.75
Research & Program Evaluation	10.80	(2.34)	11.11	12.55	11.86	14.44*	12.08	11.66	11.82	13.50*
Professional Orientation And Ethics	12.18	(1.99)	11.69	14.00*	14.14*	13.78*	13.46	13.33	13.73	14.83*
TOTAL	87.12	(12.25)	100.62	108.88*	108.86*	106.11*	100.62	95.08	97.00	104.75*

*Represents performance at more than one standard deviation above the national mean