



**COLUMBUS STATE**  

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**UNIVERSITY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM REVIEW**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

**DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING, FOUNDATIONS & LEADERSHIP**

**MASTERS OF SCIENCE  
COMMUNITY COUNSELING  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**2013**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR M.S., COMMUNITY COUNSELING**

### **Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity**

#### **Program Quality: Very Strong**

The **MS program in Community Counseling** has received national accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) since 1994 and is accredited through 2017. The program is designed to prepare individuals to function as professional counselors in a variety of community settings including mental health centers, community agencies, hospitals, residential treatment centers, correctional facilities, or other helping or human service oriented programs. Course work in the Community Counseling program prepares graduates for licensure as a professional counselor in the State of Georgia. A specialization in marriage and family therapy is also offered in the program with course work available to assist students in meeting requirements for state licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist. An additional specialty track in pastoral counseling is offered in collaboration with the Pastoral Institute, Columbus, Georgia. All counseling programs require a clinical experience of practicum and internship totaling 700 hours at an appropriate placement site for developing skills as a professional counselor.

All potential candidates for the program are required to complete a departmental screening process that includes an interview prior to admission to the program. Interviews are conducted after potential candidates have applied for admission to Columbus State University. The faculty in the professional counseling programs adhere to the highest standards for gatekeeping as part of the ethical responsibility of counselor educators. Prospective students for all programs must obtain and complete a departmental application in addition to applying to the university.

Evaluation of a student's performance is continuous and involves consideration of the student's academic performance in all course work and clinically related experiences. Faculty conduct a review of all students progress each term. Students receive a written letter of program progress after each review. A required student portfolio is another means of achieving this continuous evaluation of students. An exit examination is also required.

The community counseling program graduates provide a much-needed resource to the community at large. As the research shows, master level clinicians are the single largest group that work directly with individuals and families to improve the resiliency of individuals and families to manage life stressors.

## **Expected Outcomes**

Graduates will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the role and functions of the professional counselor.
- Knowledge of counseling theories and change strategies.
- Skills in the competency areas of planning and evaluation, individual counseling, small group facilitation, appraisal, consultation, and referral.
- Knowledge in the areas of social foundations, cultural issues, life span issues, and variables in the individual context which affect the counseling process.
- Competency in interpersonal relationships, communication and problem solving.
- Expertise in working individually with clients on educational, vocational, social, emotional, or personal problems.
- The ability to consult with other professionals and administrators concerning the clients' developmental needs.
- Skills in administering psychological assessment programs, including the interpretation of test results.
- The ability to conduct research.

## **Program Productivity: Strong**

Productivity in the Community Counseling program remains strong. The majority of graduates of this program continue toward licensure at the state level, and 97% of the graduates go on to become employed in local, regional and national settings. In recent years an increasing number of graduates have gone on to doctoral programs in counseling psychology and counselor education. Beginning this year an agreement has been reached with Mercer University for two CSU applicant slots for the Doctoral Program in Counselor Education & Supervision. The students in the Community Counseling program are active in professional development and organizations at the local, state, and national level. The faculty in the Community Counseling program are dedicated to providing excellence in teaching and training counseling skills for the students. The faculty are among the most published faculty members in the College of Education and Health Professions. Faculty also maintain membership and officer status in national organizations as well as on editorial boards in professional publications in the field of professional counseling.

The program is recognized among national community counseling programs in the American Counseling Association. The Journal of Technology in Counseling, published in the department, provides additional national and international recognition. As a result, students, through their work as professional helpers, have made significant contributions at the local, state, regional, and national levels. Also, through the Community Counseling US Army Chaplain Training Program, students provide counseling services throughout the world.

Finally, this program is directly responsible for training professional helpers that, upon graduation and during their internship experience, provide immeasurable care for the children, adolescents, adults, and families of this community and beyond.

## **List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality**

Though the program quality is very strong, we continue to look for ways to make improvements. Current initiatives include the following:

- The current curriculum for the professional counseling program is under review by faculty. This important review is necessary for increases in online courses.
- Prepare and implement the increased number of hours from 48 to 60 due to accreditation standards during 2013.
- Select courses from the area of marriage and family therapy for consideration as courses to meet the new 60 credit hour degree requirement.
- Implement the use of LiveText into each course to house student portfolios, course assessments, and student assignments.
- The professional counseling faculty will continue to meet on a regular basis to review program issues and make recommendations for improving program quality.
- The program faculty continue to assess students in both formative and summative staffing evaluations each semester. Students receive assessment data from the faculty in written form.
- Informal discussions by faculty, including collaboration regarding teaching techniques and approaches, are conducted and faculty make use of the video production facility for producing in class and online supplemental videos.
- Faculty provide opportunities for students to engage in research activities leading to publications and presentations at regional and national conferences.

## **List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity**

The faculty works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to students. Recommendations to improve program productivity are:

- Continue to monitor student results on the National Counselor Examination. Results are provided to the faculty (twice yearly). It compares our student results with other CACREP programs and provides a breakdown of core areas designed into our curriculum.
- Continue to maintain close working relationships and partnerships in the community with those who provide additional supervision and training for our students during practicum and internship.

- Continue recruiting initiatives to increase the numbers of students in the program. Market the newly-approved introductory counseling course for all majors at CSU and increase online offerings.
- Continue to maintain and further develop the program website as a source for information for new and current students.

### **Conclusion about the Program's Viability at CSU**

The M.S. in Community Counseling provides high-quality training for its students and leads to licensure at the state level and to the national certification of its graduates. The program meets needs in the immediate service area and the region. In the case of some graduates, service is provided in national and international arenas upon graduation. Applications to the program remain high. Community clinics, organizations and hospitals work closely with the Community Counseling program, and their support is reflected in their willingness to partner in our training efforts and to hire our graduates.

The Community Counseling program is nationally recognized through its CACREP accreditation through the year 2017. In addition, students receive training and experience that allow them to seek the best possible positions as professional helpers. Students are closely monitored and supervised during their clinical experience over the period of the year by both University and on-site supervisors. The program's intensive clinical experience is a model for other programs.

The Community Counseling program is one of four recognized nationally accredited programs in professional counseling in Georgia. Despite the uncertain economic hardships within the state of Georgia that directly impact small graduate class size, the importance of programs like the community counseling program is undeniable. Graduate programs, necessarily of small class size, should continue to receive support throughout the University system of Georgia.

The program curriculum is rigorous and is comparable to any master's level professional counseling program in the United States.

### **Program Improvement Plan**

Upgrade the current 48 credit hour degree requirement to 60 credit hours to meet the CACREP program requirement deadline for 2017. Consideration should be given to marriage and family therapy courses. Infuse LiveText into all courses as the repository for student portfolios, student assessments, and course assessments. Submit all current and future online courses for Quality Matters evaluation.

## **Summary Recommendation and Supporting Rationale**

### **Recommendation:** Maintain and Strengthen the Program

It is the recommendation of the faculty and stakeholders that the program be maintained and strengthened. The program has been evaluated by the CACREP accreditation committee and determined to be extremely strong among programs of similar size.

CSU will continue to support this viable and important program. The program continues to maintain the highest level of quality. Its graduates are committed professionals who provide critical services directly to those in need.

The *Ed.S. in Community Counseling* will continue to improve through its faculty working closely with community agencies, professional counseling organizations, and other professionals in order to train counselors who provide the very best of care to those in need; improving the curriculum; developing a retention and graduation plan to improve program viability; and intensifying recruitment efforts.

By enhancing the quality of the program, we hope to continue attracting program participants to the Ed.S. in Community Counseling.