

Evaluation of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling M.Ed. Programs by Graduates, Practicum & Internship Supervisors, and Employers (2012-2013)

Graduates of the UofL Clinical Mental Health Counseling (n = 20) and School Counseling (n = 19) M.Ed. programs, practicum and internship supervisors (n = 10), and employers of our graduates (n = 2) were surveyed to solicit their

| RATINGS OF THE CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AND SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS | |
|--|-----------|
| PROGRAM GRADUATES | |
| | % |
| Professional knowledge | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 17 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 78 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 95 |
| Professional skills | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 20 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 75 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 95 |
| Professional dispositions | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 10 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 89 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 99 |

| RATINGS OF THE CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AND SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS | |
|--|------------|
| PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP SUPERVISORS | |
| | % |
| Professional knowledge | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 45 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 53 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 98 |
| Professional skills | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 47 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 51 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 98 |
| Professional dispositions | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 25 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 75 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 100 |

| RATINGS OF THE CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AND SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS | |
|--|------------|
| EMPLOYERS | |
| | % |
| Professional knowledge | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 8 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 91 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 99 |
| Professional skills | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 25 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 75 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 100 |
| Professional dispositions | |
| ➤ Adequately prepared | 9 |
| ➤ Well prepared | 91 |
| ➤ TOTAL % | 99 |

assessment of how well we prepare our students to work as mental health professionals in schools and community agencies. We also gathered information about employment, licensure, and professional involvement.

RATINGS

The tables show how graduates, practicum and internship supervisors, and employers rated our graduates on adequacy of preparation in Professional Knowledge, Professional Skills, and Professional Dispositions.

“Adequately prepared” indicates the percent of respondents who indicated that graduates were adequately performing as a counselor either at the time of enrollment in practicum and internship (practicum/internship supervisors) or upon graduation (program graduates and employers). “Well prepared” indicates the percent of respondents who rated student preparation at the highest level (“Well prepared”).

Ratings indicate that respondents generally agreed that our program prepares students to work as counselors. A large percent rated students at the highest level (“well prepared”). Professional dispositions were rated highest, followed by knowledge, and then skills. One supervisor pointed out how skill development accelerates when the student moves into the world of work – and that it was important for the academic program to give the student a strong start.

Another supervisor stated, “Students were well prepared and enthusiastic concerning the work in which they were engaged. They mentioned classwork often and it was relevant.”

COUNSELOR LICENSURE

86% of the CMHC graduates indicated that they hold the initial provisional level of Mental Health Counseling licensure. 14% indicated they had achieved terminal licensure (autonomous functioning).

**“I enjoyed the program and am thankful for my degree.
This degree helped me get the perfect job.”**
CMHC graduate

EMPLOYMENT

Eighty percent of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates indicated that their degree was an asset in seeking employment and 75% indicated being employed in a job requiring the degree.

Seventy-five percent of the School Counseling graduates indicated that their degree was an asset in seeking employment and 35% indicated being employed in a job requiring the degree.

SAMPLE OF JOBS HELD BY GRADUATES: **Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates** reported being employed in the following positions: in-home therapist, in-home family therapist, mental health clinician, behavioral health specialist, family youth specialist/therapist outpatient therapist, senior crisis therapist, and school-based therapist. **School Counseling graduates** reported being employed in the following positions: middle school counselor, high school counselor, teacher, and behavioral-emotional-social disorder specialist. Many students who completed the School Counseling program are teachers who pursued the degree in order to meet educational requirements of their job and remained in teaching positions post-graduation. Further many of our graduates who were teachers upon entering the school counseling program have chosen to remain in their teaching positions until school counseling positions open in their building or in another building that they desire to work in.

SALARIES. **Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates** reported a wide range of salaries for part-time and full-time work up to the \$70,000 and up level. The modal salary was in the \$30,000-\$40,000 range. **School Counseling graduates** also reported a wide range of salaries slightly higher than the CMHC graduates.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. Graduates from both programs are members of a variety of professional organizations. **Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates** belong to the American Counseling Association (40%), the Kentucky Counseling Association (33%), the American Mental Health Counseling Association (13%), and the Kentucky Mental Health Counseling Association (29%). **School Counseling graduates** belong to the American School Counseling Association (40%), the Kentucky School Counseling Association (29%), and the Kentucky Counseling Association (15%).

CONTINUING EDUCATION AFTER GRADUATION: 92% of the **Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates** and 18% of the **School Counseling graduates** reported pursuing continuing education during the past year.

SUGGESTIONS FROM STUDENTS: The most frequent suggestion from graduates of both programs was more "hands-on" experiences before practicum. Here are examples from a CMHC graduate and a SC graduate: "I think more hands on practical experience with specific interventions, or specific awareness of specific areas of counseling would be a great asset. They could be offered as elective classes on CBT, solution focused interventions, or focus on trauma or attachment issues." AND "I believe the Counseling program at U of L was excellent. I think it would benefit from having some of our school counselors come (to UofL) and lecture about some of the realities of on-site school counseling for students. Their real life input would be very beneficial at different points in the program."

One recurring issue in the school counseling program is that of non-certified teachers finding school counseling positions upon graduation. Although students are informed of the difficulty of finding school counseling positions without a teaching background, many continue to pursue a degree in school counseling. Adding to this issue is that there are fewer school counseling positions available due to cuts in education funding. In order to aid them in successfully securing a job, some students have suggested more exposure to school-based personnel to allow for more networking. We are addressing this is by having speakers from the school district present in our classes and we continue to inform students about the professional benefits of attending the Kentucky School Counselor Association's annual conference and to present (or co-present with a faculty member) at the conference.

MOVING FORWARD: Both program evaluation data and individual student outcome data will be used to evaluate how well we are meeting our program goals and student learning outcomes for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs during the fall 2014 SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) evaluation and planning process required in all academic units at UofL. Implementation of the Action Plan stipulated in the SLOs will be discussed and dates for implementation determined during the Counselor Education faculty retreat in early spring 2015.. Based on the results from these surveys, program faculty will make adjustments to the programs.

“U of L has a strong program that is getting stronger. I would recommend the program to anyone and actually have recommended the program.”
CMHC graduate

M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling
Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology, Counseling, and College Student Personnel
College of Education and Human Development
University of Louisville
Prepared by Dr. Nancy J. Cunningham, ECPY professor and Counselor Education coordinator
nancy.cunningham@louisville.edu or 502-852-0626