

**Evaluation of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School
Counseling M.Ed. Programs
By Current Students, Graduates, and Employers**

Current students and graduates of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling (SC) M.Ed. programs and employers of our graduates were surveyed to solicit their 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 and suggestions for program improvement.

Survey Results

Table 1 below shows how our current students rated the level of their competency in the five key learning areas. Ratings indicate that respondents generally agreed that our program prepares them to work competently as counseling professionals. A large percent rated them at the highest level (“extremely competent”). Demonstration of personal growth and professional development was rated highest, followed by demonstration of knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, advocacy, and social justice.

Table 1. Ratings of the CMHC and SC Programs	
Current Students (CMHC, <i>n</i> = 20; SC, <i>n</i> = 13)	%
Demonstration of an understanding of theory and research in current professional practice and empirically supported approaches to therapy	
➤ Neither competent nor incompetent	12
➤ Somewhat competent	55
➤ Extremely competent	30
➤ Total %	97
Demonstration of the ability to practice within the scope of their educational expertise and training, while also adhering to the highest possible state and national professional standards, and counseling ethical guidelines	
➤ Neither competent nor incompetent	9
➤ Somewhat competent	48
➤ Extremely competent	39
➤ Total %	96
Demonstration of research, measurement, and evaluation expertise	
➤ Neither competent nor incompetent	6
➤ Somewhat competent	61
➤ Extremely competent	30
➤ Total %	97
Demonstration of personal growth and professional development	
➤ Neither competent nor incompetent	3
➤ Somewhat competent	39

➤ Extremely competent	55
➤ Total %	97
Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, advocacy, and social justice	
➤ Neither competent nor incompetent	3
➤ Somewhat competent	45
➤ Extremely competent	48
➤ Total %	96

The tables below show how graduates (Table 2) and employers (Table 3) rated our graduates on adequacy of preparation in Professional Knowledge, Professional Skills, and Professional Dispositions. “Somewhat adequately prepared” indicates the percent of respondents who indicated that graduates were adequately performing as a counselor upon graduation (program graduates and employers). “Extremely adequately prepared” indicates the percent of respondents who rated student preparation at the highest level.

Table 2. Ratings of the CMHC and SC Programs	
Program Graduates (CMHC, <i>n</i> = 5; SC, <i>n</i> = 4)	%
Professional knowledge	
➤ Somewhat adequate	22
➤ Extremely adequate	67
➤ Total %	89
Professional skills	
➤ Somewhat adequate	11
➤ Extremely adequate	78
➤ Total %	89
Professional dispositions	
➤ Somewhat adequate	11
➤ Extremely adequate	78
➤ Total %	89

Ratings indicate that respondents generally agreed that our program adequately prepares students to work as counselors. A large percent rated students at the highest level (“Extremely adequately prepared”). Professional skills and dispositions were both rated highest, followed by professional knowledge.

Table 3. Ratings of the CMHC and SC Programs	
Employers (<i>n</i> = 5)	%
Professional knowledge	
➤ Somewhat adequate	20
➤ Extremely adequate	60
➤ Total %	80

Professional skills	
➤ Somewhat adequate	20
➤ Extremely adequate	80
➤ Total %	100
Professional dispositions	
➤ Somewhat adequate	20
➤ Extremely adequate	80
➤ Total %	100

Additional Findings

- **All employer respondents** indicated that they would hire our graduates again without any reservation.

- **Sample of Jobs Held by Graduates**

CMHC graduates reported being employed in the following positions/settings: post-secondary, federal or state government agency, in-home therapy, mental health clinician, family youth specialist/therapist outpatient therapist, and school-based therapist. SC graduates reported being employed in the following positions: middle school counselor, high school counselor, teacher, and university academic advisor. Some students who completed the SC program are teachers who pursued the degree in order to meet educational requirements of their job and remained in teaching positions post-graduation. Furthermore, many of our SC graduates who were teachers upon entering the SC program have chosen to remain in their teaching positions until SC positions open in their building or in another building that they desire to work in.

- **Suggestions from Students/Graduates**

The most frequent suggestion from graduates of both programs was more “hands-on” experiences before clinical courses. Graduates noted that more hands on practical experience with specific interventions and/or specific awareness of specific areas of counseling would be a great asset to our program. They also suggested having some of counselors in the field come to class and share some of the realities of counseling. One recurring issue in the SC program is that there are fewer SC positions available due to cuts in education funding. In order to aid them in successfully securing a job, some graduates have suggested more exposure to school-based personnel to allow for more networking. We are addressing this by encouraging current students to expand their networks, particularly during practicum/internships, and we continue to inform students about the professional benefits of attending the Kentucky Counseling Association’s and Kentucky School Counselor Association’s annual conference and to present (or co-present with a faculty member) at the conferences.

- **Moving Forward**

Program evaluation data will be used to evaluate how well we are meeting our program goals and student learning outcomes for the CMHC and SC programs during the fall 2022 SLO (Student Learning Outcomes) evaluation. Implementation of the Action Plan stipulated in the SLOs will be discussed and dates for implementation will be determined during a Counselor Education faculty meeting in early spring 2023.