

Department of Counseling Master of Science in Counseling

2023-2024 Annual Assessment Report

Note: Data includes Summer 2023 – May 2024 semesters

Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Counseling is to equip students with clinical knowledge and skills to serve and advocate for their clients and communities. The department encourages critical thinking by cultivating a learning environment that promotes personal growth and honors the uniqueness of each person within their social and cultural context.

Summary

The Counseling department collects and reviews data on three priority program objectives as part of the overall program evaluation process. Additionally, the department collects data related to nine student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are measured at least two times for each student throughout students' program of study and three SLOs, one for each CACREP Specialty including Clinical Mental Health; Marriage, Couple, and Family; and School Counseling. Data from SLOs provide indicators of students' level of preparedness to work as future counseling professionals. Counseling faculty review SLOs and other program data each year and make changes as necessary to ensure high quality training and supervision.

Using the Clinical Progress Assessment (CPA), the Counseling department collects data related to clinical competencies for each counseling program student across the following clinical courses: Basic Clinical Methods, Advanced Clinical Methods, and Practicum. Data from CPAs indicate clinical skills competencies and preparedness for Internship I and II and future counseling practice.

The Counseling department collects data related to student professional dispositions recognized as essential for effective, ethical, and responsible functioning in the counseling profession (e.g., professionalism, communication skills, attitude towards peers/instructors, ability to self-regulate, and other characteristics required in a clinical or professional environment) and monitors student progress individually and aggregately.

The Counseling department collects data from key stakeholders (e.g., alumni, site supervisors and employers of graduates) every three years (last assessed in 2021-2022) to assess the stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of the students' educational experiences and clinical preparedness. This data helps the Counseling department faculty to assess and prioritize curricular and programmatic updates in keeping with professional trends.

Table 1: Program Objectives

	Data to be Collected: Program Objectives	
Program Objective	Measure(s) used to evaluate program objectives	Data

PO.1. Prepare and equip graduates with the knowledge base and skill set necessary to pass the National Counselor Examination (NCE).	National Counselor Exam (NCE) Score reports Key Performance Indicator scores	In 2023 – 2024, 25 students completed the NCE prior to graduation with a 91% pass rate compared to the national exam pass rate of 82%. Note: While the average pass rate changes from year to year, on average the national pass rate for the NCE for students who take the examination while currently still enrolled in the graduate program in counseling is 99%.
PO.2. Maintain or increase the number of prospective student applications each year with the aim of recruiting and enrolling well-qualified applicants.	1) Number of applications 2) Percentage of applicants offered admission	In the Fall of 2023, received 153 completed applications and accepted 63, which is a 41.1% acceptance rate. In the Spring 2024, received 54 applications and accepted 33, which is a 61.1% acceptance rate.
PO.3. Cultivate a cohesive, programmatic counselor identity among faculty through any of the following: professional organization involvement, professional service, publications, presentations, and/or outreach.	Annual report on faculty participation in activities related to the counseling profession.	Data is collected through a Qualtrics Survey. During 2023-2024, all Counseling program core faculty maintained memberships in Counseling organizations including American Counseling Association and/or the Texas Counseling Association. Faculty members maintained other professional association memberships related to their specialty areas including the National Career Development Association, Association for Play Therapy, and the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists. Three full time faculty held positions on professional counseling association boards (e.g., TACES President Elect, TACES Member-at-Large, & TCDA Secretary). Additional data are included below.

Faculty counselor identity data (PO.3)

Counseling related community outreach, volunteer work	
Faculty	11
# events/activities	48

Counseling Related publications and presentations	
Faculty	11
# items	22

Memberships in counseling related organizations	
Faculty	11
# of memberships	25
Organizations	AASECT
	ACA
	SMU CSI
	TAPT
	TCA

Leadership positions in counseling related organizations	
Faculty	11
# of memberships	10
Organizations	ACAC
	Wellness advocacy
	International leadership
	NCDA
	SMU CSI
	TACES
	TCDA

Table 2. Key performance indicator data

4.A.1. Data to be Collected: Student Learning Outcomes in Core Areas				
Student Learning Outcomes	Relation to KPI	T1 Measure	T2 Measure	T3 Measure
ETHICS SLO. 1. Knowledgeably apply professional ethical and legal standards in practice, and exercise ethical and responsible conduct in their profession.	2.F.1.i. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling.	HDCN 6318: Ethics I & Mental Health Final exam (selected questions) <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 91%	MoCCe Pre-Practicum Exam <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 43%	HDCN 6395 Practicum Clinical Progress Assessment (CPA) <i>(skills)</i> 2023-24 – 95%
DIVERSITY SLO.2. Integrate multicultural	2.F.2.c. multicultural counseling competencies	HDCN 6304: Counseling Diverse Communities	MoCCe exam <i>(knowledge)</i>	HDCN 6395 Practicum CPA <i>(skills)</i>

competence in counseling practice.		Final exam (selected questions) (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 96%	2023-24 – 79%	2023-24 – 94%
LIFESPAN SLO.3. Promote resilience, optimal development, and wellness for their clients across the lifespan.	2.F.3.i. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for promoting resilience and optimum development and wellness across the lifespan	HDCN 6320 Lifespan Development (<i>knowledge</i>) Note – 2017-2018 KPI was changed to Final Exam (selected questions) (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 86%	MoCCe exam (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 63%	No Time 3 measure
CAREER SLO.4. Recognize and skillfully navigate the intersections between mental well-being, work, relationships, and other life roles and factors.	2.F.4. b. approaches for conceptualizing the interrelationships among and between work, mental well-being, relationships, and other life roles and factors	HDCN 6321: Lifestyle & Career Development Autobiography/Personal Career Report (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 98%	Note: Eliminated time 2 measure due to changing MOCce Exam.	HDCN 6398: Internship Work-Life Balance Assessments (<i>skills</i>) 2023-24 – 97%
THEORIES SLO.5. Possess a broad knowledge of counseling theories, and capably apply theory to practice.	2.F.5.a. theories and models of counseling	(5a) HDCN 6301: Counseling Theories Final Exam (selected questions) (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 84%	Note: Eliminated time 2 measure from Advanced Methods due to changing the course design in 2023.	MOCce Exam (<i>knowledge</i>) 2023-24 – 79%
BASIC and ADVANCED SLO.5. Possess a broad knowledge of counseling theories, and capably apply theory to practice.	2.F.5.f. counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the counseling process	(5f) HDCN 6302 : Basic skills KPI was changed to CPA after video 3. (<i>skills</i>) 2023-24 – 89%	HDCN 6305 : Advanced Methods Final Project CPA (<i>skills</i>) 2023-24 – 91%	

GROUP SLO.6. Achieve competence in clinical skills, including interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization, in a variety of individual and group modalities.	2.F.6.b. dynamics associated with group process and development	HDCN 6303 : Group Counseling Final Exam (selected questions) <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 89%	Eliminated time 2 measure due to changing MOCce Exam.	HDCN 6395 Practicum CPA <i>(skills)</i> 2023-24 – 94%
ASSESSMENT SLO.7. Demonstrate the ability to use assessments relevant to academic/education, career, personal, and social development.	2.F.7.i. use of assessments relevant to academic/education, career, personal, and social development.	HDCN 6340: Assessment Term Test Project <i>(knowledge and skills)</i> 2023-24 – 90%	MOCce Exam <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 83%	HDCN 6395 Practicum CPA <i>(skills)</i> 2023-24 – 93%
RESEARCH SLO.8. Comprehend research findings and their implications for practice.	2.F.8.f. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods	HDCN 6349: Research Design and Statistics Final Exam (selected questions) <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 85%	MOCce Exam <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 76%	No Time 3 measure
SLO.9. Achieve and maintain a strong counselor identity through affiliation and engagement with professional organizations and professional service.	(No affiliated KPI) 2.1.c. Students actively identify with the counseling profession by participating in professional counseling organizations and by participating in seminars, workshops, or other activities that contribute to personal and professional growth.	Counselors for Social Justice (19 students) Chi Sigma Iota, Sigma Mu Chapter (61 students) Play Therapy Association (32 students) Students Specializing in Addictions Studies (24 students) SMU in the GAP (13 students) Basic skills (first semester) – 78% of students are members of different organizations. Internship (last semester) – 100% of students are part of different organizations.		
SMU Student organizations		23 - 24		
Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)		61		
Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ)		19		
Play Therapy Student Association		32		
SSAS (Students Specializing in Addictions Studies)		24		
SMU in the Gap		13		

Membership in Counseling related professional organizations		23 - 24	
Basic skills (first semester)		78%	
Internship (last semester)		100%	
4.A.1. Data to be Collected: Student Learning Outcomes for Entry-Level Specialty Areas -			
Student Learning Outcomes	Relation to KPI	T1 Measure	T2 Measure
SCHOOL COUNSELING SPECIALTY AREA			
SCHOOL COUNSELING SLO.10. Demonstrate theoretical and practical knowledge in designing and evaluating school counseling programs.	G.3.b. design and evaluation of school counseling programs	HDCN 6309: School Counseling School Counselor Notebook with First Year Plan <i>(skills)</i> 2023–24 –94.5%	Practice Exam (selected questions) <i>(Knowledge)</i> 2023–24 – 67.03%.
MARRIAGE, COUPLE AND FAMILY COUNSELING SPECIALTY AREA			
FAMILY THERAPY SLO. 12. Students will identify key theoretical and practice characteristics of the marriage, couple, and family counseling theories and models.	5.F.1.c. theories and models of marriage, couple, and family counseling	HDCN 6312: Introduction to Family Therapy Final Exam (selected questions) (knowledge) 2023-24 – 89%	HDCN 6311: Family Therapy II Final Exam (selected questions) (knowledge) 2023-24 – 95%
CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AREA			
DIVERSITY SLO.13. Integrate multicultural competence in clinical mental health	5.C.2.j. Cultural Factors relevant to clinical mental health counseling	HDCN 6304: Counseling Diverse Communities <i>(knowledge)</i> Final Exam (selected questions) (knowledge) 2023-24 – 96%	MOCce Exam <i>(knowledge)</i> 2023-24 – 79%

Table 3. CPA score (2023 – 2024)

Course	KPI: 2.F.5.f. counselor characteristics	KPI: 2.F.7.e. assessment	KPI: 2.F.1.i. ethical standards	KPI 2.F.5.a. theories & models	KPI 2.F.2.c. multicultural	KPI 2.F.6.b. Group	Supervision & Professional Conduct (Disposition)
Basic skills	94%	90%	97%	89%	95%	94%	96%
Advanced	93%	91%	92%	91%	93%	93%	96%

Practicum	96%	93%	95%	92%	94%	94%	96%
Total	94%	91%	95%	90%	94%	94%	96%

Data to be Collected: Student Professional Dispositions		
Disposition	Time 1 measure	Time 2 measure
PD.1. Personal motivation and enthusiasm	Student Update (SU) Reports	CPA disposition scores practicum
PD.2. Ability to communicate (written)	Application Essay Scores	Student Update Reports
PD.3. Ability to communicate (verbal)	PONI Interview Day scores (Introductions and Group Interview)	Student Update Reports
PD.4. Attitude towards peers	PONI Interview Day scores (Group Fit)	Student Update Reports
PD.5. Concern for others (empathy, compassion, etc.)	PONI Interview Day scores – (Warmth and Approachability)	Student Update Reports
PD.6. Overall rating of student	Admissions Application and PONI Interview Day scores	Student Update Reports
PD.7. Attitude towards instructor/staff	Student Update Reports	CPA disposition scores (feedback) practicum
PD.8. Ability to self-regulate	PONI Interview Day scores (Emotional and Professional Maturity)	Student Update Reports

Table 4. Disposition data

	2023-2024
Disposition 1 - Personal motivation and enthusiasm	
Time 1 - SU report Average of Personal motivation/enthusiasm %	85%
Time 2 – CPA Counselor characteristics average of all classes	96%
Disposition 2 - Ability to communicate (written)	
Time 1- PONI	No data
Time 2 - SU report Average of Ability to communicate (Written) %	75%
Disposition 3 - Ability to communicate (verbal)	
Time 1 – PONI Average of Speak Attire %	75%
Time 2 - SU report Average of Ability to communicate (verbal) %	76%
Disposition 4 - Attitude towards peers	
Time 1 – PONI Average of Group_Fit %	76%

Time 2 - SU report Average of Student's attitude towards peers %	84%
Disposition 5 - Concern for others (empathy, compassion, etc.)	
Time 1 – PONI Average of Warm %	75%
Time 2 - SU report Average of Concern for others (empathy, compassion) %	83%
Disposition 6 - Overall rating of student	
Time 1 - PONI total Average of Eval_Total %	76%
Time 2 - SU report Average of Overall rating of student %	70%
Disposition 7 - Attitude towards instructor/staff	
Time 1 - SU report Average of Attitude toward instructor /staff %	85%
Time 2 - CPA Supervision & Professional Conduct Average of all classes	98%
Disposition 8 - Ability to self-regulate	
Time 1 – PONI Average of Emotion_Maturity %	75%
Time 2 - SU report Average of Ability to regulate self inside and outside the class %	72%

Table 5. Student Update Reports versus Program Enrollment

2023-2024	# of Students who got concerns (NO FYI)	Program Enrollment (including Withdrawn)	# of Enrolled Students Withdrawn	% of Students who had concerned forms filled out for them
Summer 2023	6	206	2	2.91%
Fall 2023	12	282	3	4.26%
Jan 2024	1	74	1	1.35%
Spring 2024	18	286	3	6.29%
May 2024	3	66	2	4.55%
			Average	3.87%

Observations and Program Modifications

Each year faculty engage in a formal assessment review process, review approved changes, document program modifications, review the most recent year data collection as well as 5+ year trend data, and make decisions on any additional program modifications needed. The faculty met October 1, 2024, to review this data. Additionally, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) published new

standards in May 2024 and faculty reviewed new standards that need to be formally addressed and incorporated into policies and procedures during academic year 2024-2025.

During academic year 2023-2024, the counseling faculty completed a strategic planning process that included aligning the department strategic plan with the Simmons School of Education and Human Development plan as well as updated the mission statement as follows:

The mission of the Department of Counseling is to equip students with clinical knowledge and skills to serve and advocate for their clients and communities. The department encourages critical thinking by cultivating a learning environment that promotes personal growth and honors the uniqueness of each person within their social and cultural context.

Feedback from stakeholders and constituency groups including adjunct faculty, staff, and advisory board members has been positive and the mission statement has been incorporated into our faculty and student handbooks and orientation processes.

Documenting previous program modifications, recommendations, and changes

During the 2022-2023 annual assessment meeting, faculty analyzed data and made several program modifications and recommendations related to diversity recruitment, student retention, specialty enrollment, admissions considerations in view of the Supreme Court decision, and the need for increased resources to match enrollment growth in the department.

- Faculty noted trends in applicant data whereby Black/African American applicant numbers had declined, and Black/African American and Hispanic applicants and enrollment are significantly lower compared to the local demographics. Faculty discussed the need for more targeted marketing, and it was noted in discussion that, in addition to the centralized efforts of the Moody Graduate School, the Department of Counseling reached out with a postcard mailing to 39 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 80 Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and 22 international universities.
- Faculty suggested an increased focus on retaining students in the program, particularly students who self-identify as first-generation college students or first-generation graduate students. In 2023-2024, faculty updated the new student survey administered during new student orientation at the beginning of each semester when students are admitted asking students to self-identify in relationship to first generation status. Faculty also updated the survey to request information about gender and pronouns, noting the University only collects gender data on the gender binary. This survey was updated and administered for the first time in Spring 2024 and will continue to be administered. Faculty are then notified of advising assignments and reach out to first generation students earlier in the first semester to provide connection and support.
- Faculty noticed the School Counseling (SC) and Marriage, Couple and Family (MCF) Specialties have significantly smaller representation in the program. During this past academic year, the Department of Counseling was able to secure a scholarship offering from the West Dallas Stem School (WDSS) initiative in Simmons as a means of recruitment to the School Counseling Specialty.
- Faculty noted the Supreme Court ruling in 2023 would have an impact on admissions processes in college and universities and reviewed the program admissions application in relationship to the ruling and the internal guidance at SMU. Last year, the faculty adjusted the admissions question related to cultural background to be in compliance with University guidance as well as remain in compliance with CACREP admissions process standards. Faculty updated the admissions essay to ask applicants how their background and significant experiences may have impacted their interest in pursuing a degree in counseling. Additionally, the Department of Counseling adjusted the diversity scholarship criteria to follow the Supreme Court ruling and internal guidance. The Constellation Diversity Scholarship was renamed the Constellation Opportunity Scholarship awarded to a highly promising incoming student, based on prior academic merit and demonstrated commitment of volunteer service with under-represented or marginalized populations. Similarly, the Aurora Diversity Scholarship for current students was renamed to the Aurora Opportunity

Scholarship awarded to a current student who has completed at least one regular semester of enrollment in the SMU Counseling Program and who has demonstrated a commitment of volunteer service with under-represented or marginalized populations.

- The faculty noted enrollment headcount has increased steadily since our move from Plano in 2019. This scaled growth was intentional as the program needed to make headcount adjustments after switching from a 10-week term to a 15-week semester system. The additional headcount initially resulted in flat enrollment growth. Since 2021, the slow but steady enrollment growth has reached a point where additional resources were needed. During 2023-2024 the Department successfully petitioned the Simmons School for additional resources including extra space in the current building and resources to support the purchase of electronic notetaking system for the Practicum clinic. Additionally, the Department received approval in 2023-2024 to increase the faculty by one full-time faculty member, which allowed for a search in 2024-2025 for a start date of August 2025.

Review of 2023-2024 assessment data

In terms of data review and analysis of program evaluation data, the overall observation is that Master of Core Competencies exam (MOCCE) scores are relatively depressed across all student learning outcomes where the MOCCE is used as a Time 2 or Time 3 measure. In addition to efforts from last year to continue to improve section parity, the faculty discussed the need to create a study guide for the exam and this will also be responsive to student requests for support materials related to the exam that we have received in pre-registration surveys. The faculty agreed a study guide would be created by the Content Area Coordinators and would be implemented by the end of academic year 2024-2025.

Faculty discussed the change in the measure of SLO.9: Achieve and maintain a strong counselor identity through affiliation and engagement with professional organizations and professional service. This year was the first year we assessed current student membership in counseling professional associations. We noted 78% of students enrolled in the first term Basic Clinical Methods course had a membership and by the time the students were in Internship and near graduation, 100% of students had a professional counseling association membership. We will continue to use this as a measure of professional engagement and professional identity.

Faculty noticed a trend related to the acceptance rate percentage. In 2019-2020, the program accepted about 90% of applicants compared to 2022-2023 when the acceptance rate was approximately 63% of applicants. In 2023-2024 the program accepted 46.37% of applicants (on average across fall and spring). While the program application numbers continue to increase, the overall percentage acceptance rate is decreasing which makes application to the program more competitive.

Faculty noted the need to expand capacity in Practicum in the clinical sequence, particularly in the Summer session. An opportunity to consider a partnership with a local ISD and its mental health clinic was discussed and approved by faculty. Assuming partnership agreements could be established, the faculty voted to implement this new partnership effective Summer 2025.

Review of new CACREP standards effective in May 2024 standards

According to new **CACREP standard, 2.C.3**, “*The counselor education program has a systematic process in place for communicating feedback to students on their individual assessments of knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.*”

Faculty discussed that students receive feedback during advising appointments and identified two points in time where this feedback and guidance could be formally documented. The faculty will update the Practicum Eligibility and Conferral Form to formally document the CACREP requirement, and it will be implemented in Spring 2025.

According to the **new CACREP standard, 1.H.**, “*The counselor education program has a process for identifying underrepresented populations and makes continuous and systematic efforts to recruit, enroll, and retain students that enhance and support*

*the diversity of the program. Also, the updated **CACREP standard, Section 2.E.3**, states, “As part of identifying underrepresented populations and the continuous and systematic efforts to recruit, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and faculty, the counselor education program analyzes, by program delivery type and CACREP specialized practice area, demographic data with regard to:*

A) Students

- 1. Applicants*
- 2. Enrolled students*
- 3. Degree completion rates*

B) Full-time faculty

- 1. (if applicable) applicants for open faculty positions,*
- 2. Employed faculty, and*
- 3. Retention rates”*

Faculty reviewed existing diversity-related recruitment efforts and noted we are in compliance with this new standard, although we will continue to increase our participation in face-to-face recruitment events. Faculty noted the admissions and enrollment process cannot consider race/ethnicity as factor in admissions decisions based on the 2023 Supreme Court ruling, but we can collect data on enrollment decisions. Faculty noted degree completion rates reflected across underrepresented groups has not been collected in the past, but staff will work with internal reporting systems and institutional effectiveness office to begin collecting this information.

Faculty decided to formally collect information from current students to assess their experience of the program in relationship to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility. The faculty decided to add questions to an existing survey related to inclusive classroom experiences, course assignments, experiences with faculty, and program opportunities related to DEIBA. The Diversity Committee agreed to write the questions for review and approval by the faculty. The faculty agreed the Department would implement these new survey questions in academic year 2024-2025.

According to a new **CACREP standard, 1.N.6.**, “*all syllabi must contain a “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accommodation statement.”*

Faculty discussed this new standard and decided the internal Diversity Committee will develop a statement to be reviewed, edited as needed, and ultimately approved by the faculty in Fall 2024 so all syllabi will be in compliance with this new standard in Spring 2025.

According to **CACREP Section 3 (Foundational Counseling Curriculum)** there are now 107 foundational counseling curriculum standards in the 2024 standards compared to 73 in the 2016 standards. Counseling faculty will identify where all the standards are being delivered and assessed in the curriculum. Syllabi will be updated in Fall 2024, and new syllabi with all Foundational Counseling Curriculum and Specialty Curriculum will be updated and implemented by Spring 2025.