**Student Learning Outcome Report**

**For Academic Year 2020-2021**

**Program Assessment Activities**

Faculty engaged in a number of assessment activities during this academic year.

* We assessed students individually on every SLO across multiple points in time, with multiple measures.
* Each year we also choose one SLO or one aspect of an SLO to assess with a “deeper dive.” This year we looked at the SLO “Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice.”
* We worked with college IT to put the entire assessment process and all practicum paperwork online. Everything was input for 2020-2021 except for the fall 2020 practicum supervisor ratings. The supervisor ratings in this report refer to spring 2021.

**Sources of Data**

We used the following sources of data in this report:

* Signature assignments (e.g., papers, essays)
* Exams
* Dispositions forms
* Practicum professor and site supervisor ratings and feedback
* Student perceptions of their professional identity, using a standardized measure
* Graduating student surveys (fall 2020 and spring 2021)
* Alumni survey (2020)
* Employer survey (2020)
* Program Advisory Board met January 28, 2022
* Licensure exam pass rates

**General Methods and Measures**

Specific methods and measures are described for each of the five SLOs and Dispositions. We indicate that department expectations are “Met” or “Not Met.” Sometimes there is a “Mixed” rating, which typically indicates that the average across students was met but that the percentage of individuals scoring below expectation was higher than we would like.

* In rubric scoring of signature assignment evaluations, we use a scoring system of 1 – 6 to indicate that the student’s performance: *exceeds* expectations (5-6), *meets* expectations (3-4), or is *below* expectations (1-2). Our criteria for success is to have the means for each item be 3 or higher, and ideally each student would obtain a score of 3 or higher on each item.
* When we use exams, our criteria for success is to have means of 80% or higher, and ideally each student would obtain a score of 80% or higher.
* Practicum supervisor scoring of student skills is also on a scale of 1 – 6 but 4-5 “meets standard” and 6 “exceeds standard.” Our criteria for success is 4 or higher.
* We conduct an *indirect* assessment of learning goals through a number of surveys (see the department website for the complete survey results).
  + Graduating students (criteria for success: at least 80% “met” expectations)
  + Alumni (criteria for success: at least 80% indicate “moderately well” or above)
  + Employers post-graduation (criteria for success: at least 80% rate our students as “above average” or higher, and for 100% to be at least “average”)
* See our website for details on the 5 department SLOs, the CACREP core competencies, the clinical mental health specialty, and dispositions. We assess aspects of all the CACREP competencies and requirements; these are embedded within the SLOs.

**Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice (2020-2021 academic year)**

Assessable outcomes (our focus within this broader SLO):

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of: (a) the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the counseling profession; (b) ethical and legal guidelines of the profession; and (c) professional counseling credentialing, certification, and licensure.

Methods, Measures, and Data Collection:

Earlier in the program, we assess students’ beginning knowledge using:

* *Measure 1:* Multiple choice exam in Coun 526 (the Ethics course)
* *Measure 2:* Multiple choice exam in Coun 530 (Beginning Practicum)

Later, in Coun 584 (Advanced Practicum), students are seeing clients and are evaluated by both professor and site supervisor on skills:

* *Measure 3:* Professor rating of “dependability, reliability, and ethical behavior” (part of Dispositions)
* *Measure 4:* Professor assessment of signature assignment (A.2 of the rubric)
* *Measure 5:* Site supervisor ratings of ethical and legal knowledge and skills

Some additional data were gathered at the beginning of the program and again later in the program (as part of our “deeper dive” focus on this SLO):

* *Measure 6:* Data from a standardized measure on professional identity from 2018-2020

More data were gathered at the end of the program or after graduation:

* *Measure 7:* *(indirect assessments):* Graduating student, Alumni, and Employer surveys; licensure pass rates

Summary and Analysis of Results:

The results for this SLO were mixed.

The exam in Coun 526 has produced highly varied results over the years, with some sections receiving 100% correct and other sections doing quite poorly, and although there was improvement in this cycle, it remained an issue. The average across students (N = 51) more than met the desired 80% minimum and 82% of students individually met expectations (a strong improvement from 52% the previous year). The trend is positive but we should look at why there is still such variability across sections (e.g., teaching, timing).

The new exam in 530 was implemented to reinforce some of what had been taught in the earlier Coun 526 and assess whether beginning practicum students were well enough aware of professional issues. The average across students in for the year (N = 56) did not meet expectations and a large percentage of individual students did not meet expectations, suggesting that too many are not understanding or retaining the information. Many are also overwhelmed by the demands of beginning practicum and may not give this adequate attention.

For students later in advanced practicum (Coun 584; N = 58), there were “concerns” and “needs improvement” in two of the four fall 2020 sections, and in two of the three spring sections regarding Part C of Dispositions (*dependability, reliability, and ethical behavior)*. This suggests a more widespread issue, not related to just one faculty. Almost all the concerns within this global disposition were issues related to *timeliness* of assignments and paperwork. Students’ ability to keep up may have been impacted by the demands of telehealth during Covid. There were no concerns on any of the global dispositions the previous year. We look for 100% “no concerns” and only 79.5% were rated with no concerns. However, the average scores from site supervisors on legal and ethical issues from spring 2021 met expectations. We also looked at site supervisor ratings of “Professional documentation” once we saw the data from practicum faculty. Site supervisors from spring 2021 gave an average of 5 (meets expectations) and no individual students fell below. The discrepancy between the professors’ ratings and the site supervisors’ ratings may be that the problem related to timeliness was primarily in the practicum course assignments, rather than in the site paperwork. On a different measure, the comprehensive signature assignment, practicum professors rated all individuals as demonstrating adequate knowledge of legal and ethical standards.

We used the *Professional Identity Scale in Counseling* (PISC; Woo & Henfield, 2015) in a study of our students (for research purposes, as well as assessment) across two years (2018 – 2020) in two courses. Response rates for beginning students was 84% and for advanced it was 71% (N = 156). The relevant factors are in the chart below. Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of these data was that both beginning and advanced students appeared to feel better (i.e., have a stronger identity) about *attitude*, *professional roles and expertise*, and *philosophy of the profession* than they did about *professional values* and *knowledge of the profession*.

Data from all three indirect measures indicated that students, alumni, and employers rated our students and program highly with regard to development of professional identity and ethical skills. You can find the survey responses in full on the department website. Data from alumni self-report and state statistics indicated that our students met expectations (well over 75%) in passing the law and ethics portions of the LPCC licensing exam the first time they took it.

In conclusion, our students seem to do very well out in the field, but demonstrate some gaps in their knowledge of the field (particularly its values and requirements in comparison to other helping fields). Improvement in professional behavior/dispositions was also indicated for a small minority of students.

**Improvement actions:** Faculty met to discuss issues of teaching and timing of assessments, and how to move forward. The faculty who teach Coun 500 (“The Counseling Profession”) have made significant recent changes to their course, particularly in the area of counselor identity, ethics, and social justice. It may take another year or two to see the impact more fully. Although the results for the Coun 526 exam have varied for some time now, the trend is good, and the faculty who teach 526 (Ethics) plan to keep their current teaching for another year of data before significantly altering anything. They suspect that Covid had impacted the variability in scores most recently because they had rectified some earlier issues (such as standardizing the timing of the exam across sections and making sure the assessment scores were part of the course grade). Faculty made changes to the exam in Coun 530 (beginning practicum) starting spring 2022. Faculty also discussed ways to increase students’ involvement in the profession, while being mindful of financial strain. The California Association for Licensed Professional Counselors (CALPCC) has recently grown in its scope and utility, and is cost-effective for students. Going forward, faculty plan to engage students in CALPCC in their first semester and throughout the program.

**Diversity Awareness and Sensitivity (2020 - 2021 academic year)**

Assessable outcomes:

Students will be able to: demonstrate awareness of the major cultural influences on human behavior, how those intersect with the mental health of their clients, and how they influence their own perceptions and biases regarding clients.

Methods and Measures:

Earlier in the program and prior to students beginning practicum, we assess:

* *Measure 1*: In Coun 523 (Counseling & Culture): Cultural Genogram Signature Assignment.

When students are in beginning practicum (Coun 530) and advanced practicum (Coun 584), they are assessed by their course professor and site supervisor, both of whom have directly observed the student’s clinical work:

*Measure 2*: We use a section of practicum instructors’ ratings of students’ clinical skills called “Diversity awareness and sensitivity” (Coun 530/584 Practicum Instructor Final Evaluation).

*Measure 3*: We use the site supervisors’ ratings of students’ skills in “Human diversity” which also assesses students’ work with clients (Coun 530/584 Site Supervisor Final Evaluation). We have these data for spring of 2021.

*Measure 4*: We use a section of advanced practicum (Coun 584) instructors’ ratings on diversity knowledge and skills (see B.1 – B.4 on the Rubric for Assessment of Practicum Signature Assignment).

More data were gathered at the end of the program or after graduation:

*Measure 5 (indirect assessments):* Graduating student survey, Alumni survey, Employer survey

Summary and Analysis of Results

Students met expectations overall, and exceeded expectations in many areas.

*Measure 1 (Coun 523 Cultural Genogram):* The average for each item was above 3.0, which meets expectations. In fact, students on average scored slightly higher than previous years on knowledge and awareness of personal biases, stereotypes, and social justice. However\*, almost 10% scored lower than 3.0 on social justice. These scores came from a single section, suggesting that the professor may have had somewhat different expectations.

*For Measure 2 (Coun 530/584 practicum instructor final evaluation)*. The practicum professors rated students on a variety of diversity clinical skills. Means and individual performance met expectations for both courses.

*For Measure 3: site supervisors provided ratings* for students in both practicum courses (Coun 530/584 site supervisor final evaluation) for spring 2021 (530 N = 32; 584 N = 22). The mean score for the “human diversity” skill area (Competency 6) met expectations for all sections of each course, with no individuals scoring below expectations. Means for advanced students were higher than those for beginning, as expected.

*For Measure 4* we use a section of the practicum signature assignment. All averages met expectations and 100% of students individually met expectations.

Indirect measures using surveys all indicated that the department had met expectations.

In conclusion, our students are doing very well across multiple measures and at different points in the program regarding diversity knowledge and skills. Not only did averages meet expectations, but the vast majority of students individually also met expectations. Indicators of the social justice were slightly lower than other elements.

Improvement Actions

The faculty has been making progress, following last year’s assessment and the need to improve curriculum and teaching in this area; however, this is still very much a work in progress. Faculty are still working on integrating more of a social justice focus. We believe it will be another year or so before we obtain a more accurate picture of how changes to the curriculum affect students’ scores.

**Clinical Skills (2020 - 2021 academic year)**

Assessable Outcome:

Students will be able to: demonstrate awareness of the social and cultural influences on human behavior; demonstrate effective counseling skills; evaluate clients’ progress; recognize and mitigate countertransference; and conduct counseling with appropriate awareness of ethical and legal issues.

Methods, Measures, and Data Collection:

Earlier in the program we assessed using the following:

* *Measure 1:* Professor ratings of beginning clinical skills in Coun 511 (Pre-Practicum)
* *Measure 2:* Signature assignment in Coun 528 (Group Counseling and Group Work)

Later, students were assessed in practicum (Coun 530 and 584) by their course professor and site supervisor, both of whom had witnessed the student’s clinical work:

* *Measure 3:* Site supervisor ratings in Coun 530 (Beginning Practicum) and Coun 584 (Advanced Practicum) for spring 2021
* *Measure 4:* Professor ratings of clinical skills in Coun 530 and Coun 584
* *Measure 5:* Professor rubric assessment of Coun 584 signature assignment

More data were gathered at the end of the program or after graduation:

* *Measure 6: (indirect assessments):* Graduating students, Alumni, and Employer surveys

The Advisory Board provided information as well.

Summary and Analysis of Results

Professor ratings of beginning and advanced students’ global skills were strong, with 100% of students meeting at least minimal expectations. A higher percentage (99%) of advanced practicum students met or exceeded expectations, versus 95% of beginning practicum students, suggesting that students’ skills increased with experience (as expected).

Scores on individual skills across the practicum sequence were in the expected ranges (1-2 for Coun 511; 3-4 for Coun 530; and 5-6 for Coun 584).

Advanced practicum (COUN 584) students also demonstrated strong skills on a comprehensive signature assignment, with “interventions and intersectionality” slightly lower than the others:

Site supervisor ratings for spring 2021 (530 N = 32; 584 N = 22) supported impressions by practicum professors. All students met at least minimal expectations and averages across skills all met expectations. Some beginning practicum (COUN 530) students received “met minimal expectations,” and this is not entirely unexpected, as students adjust to the demands of practicum somewhat differently and arrive with varying skills. Beginning students appeared to have relatively strong skills in crisis management and more struggled with treatment. In advanced practicum (COUN 584), all students met or exceeded expectations across all three elements.

Students also met expectations on group knowledge. However, ratings by site supervisors suggested that many beginning practicum students may struggle with group skills. The data also suggest that these skills grow stronger over time, with students obtaining a higher average in advanced practicum, and most of those students meeting or exceeding expectations.

Indirect measures using surveys all indicated that the department had met expectations.

In conclusion, assessment at multiple times and from multiple sources suggests that students did very well clinically. Not only did averages meet expectations, but the majority of students individually also met expectations. This was also during Covid-19 when many students were conducting therapy via telehealth. The Advisory Board members, which consist primarily of site supervisors and directors, reported that they were very pleased with our students. Specifically, they indicated that students are eager and well prepared to see clients, and that they often demonstrate a good mix of confidence and humility.

Improvement Actions

As a result of our last assessment, faculty has worked towards consensus on what we expected in clinical skills across the practicum classes, and there was less variability across sections of a course. We also began assessing for group work in COUN 530. Future actions will include assessing group in the summer COUN 590 course. In accordance with our broader efforts to improve teaching regarding intersectionality, we will also work to improve this in the beginning and advanced practicum courses. Clinical skills will be the focus of next year’s “deeper dive.”

**Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning (2020 - 2021 academic year)**

Assessable Outcome

Students will demonstrate knowledge of counseling theories and a bio-psycho-sociocultural framework and apply them to case conceptualization. They will demonstrate the ability to appropriately use the DSM-5 (diagnostic manual of mental disorders). They will construct relevant treatment plans.

Methods, Measures, and Data Collection

This SLO encompasses a number of the CACREP core competency requirements and we use a variety of methods at multiple times throughout the program.

Earlier in the program we assess using:

* *Measure 1:* Exam on biological, neurological, and physiological factors affecting human development in Coun 518 (Human development and functioning)
* *Measure 2*: Signature assignment on diagnosis, biopsychosocial conceptualization, and treatment planning in Coun 522 (Diagnosis and treatment planning)
* *Measure 3*: Exam on theories in Coun 527 (Systems of family counseling)

Later in the program we assess using:

* *Measure 4*: Assessment exam in Coun 560 (Appraisal in counseling)
* *Measure 5*: Signature assignment on career theory and application in Coun 590 (Summer advanced counseling techniques)
* *Measure 6*: Professor ratings of case conceptualization and treatment planning skills in Coun 530 (Beginning Practicum) and 584 (Advanced Practicum)
* *Measure 7*: Professor rubric assessment of Coun 584 signature assignment
* *Measure 8*: Site supervisor ratings in Coun 530 (Beginning Practicum) and 584 (Advanced Practicum)
* *Measure 9:* Professor rubric assessment of Coun 538 (Crisis intervention and trauma treatment) signature assignment

Anytime in the program:

* *Measure 10*: Career exam in Coun 502 (Career counseling)

After the program:

* *Measure 11 (indirect assessments):* Graduating, Alumni, and Employer surveys

The Advisory Board provided feedback as well.

Summary and Analysis of Results

Students’ performance, on average, met expectations in this broad conceptualization SLO, including aspects of neurobiology, counseling theories, assessment, and career. However, most include not insignificant percentages of individual students who did not meet the minimum.

Earlier in the program and before students begin practicum, they are assessed in COUN 522 (Diagnosis and Treatment Planning) on an intake and treatment planning paper (with a mock client). This is a precursor to the paper and presentations they do in practicum with real clients.

In both practicum classes, professors rate students’ skills based on their work with clients. Beginning practicum (COUN 530) students met expectations both on average and individually. Scores were closer to 3 than to 4, suggesting some room for improvement.

Students in advanced practicum (COUN 584) are held to a higher standard. The averages all met expectations, except for use of DSM diagnosis and evidenced-based approaches were slightly under the expected 5.0. These lower scores were mostly in one section, suggesting that that one faculty might have had different expectations of students’ abilities than the other faculty. Some students also have more opportunity to use the DSM in their sites than others. Individually, some students scored in the 3-4 range on 4 out of 6 elements. It is acceptable and expected that students may need more time on certain skills so this still meets expectations but is a somewhat mixed picture.

Given the higher standard expected in advanced practicum, students are also evaluated further by their professors on a comprehensive signature assignment. All students scored within expectations and averages were all within expectations.

Site supervisors provide another view of students’ case conceptualization and treatment planning skills. Similar to site supervisors’ evaluations of clinical skills, and as expected given counselor development, advanced practicum students for spring 2021 (530 N = 32; 584 N = 22) obtained higher scores than beginning practicum students did.

The surveys (indirect measure) indicated that the department was meetings its goals. The scores were slightly higher than the previous year for the graduating student survey.

In conclusion, there is a mixed picture of students’ performance in this area. Although averages met expectations all but twice, too many individual students did not obtain minimally acceptable scores, particularly on the exams. This may relate to test-taking skills, but other forms of assessment (signature papers, site supervisor ratings) also shared areas of minimal expectations met. In COUN 538, 18% of students did not meet the minimum expectation, and this was one of the largest such percentages. This is a relatively new signature assignment and students have performed better with each semester as the professor has made adjustments to teaching. A good deal is expected of advanced practicum students. The two areas where the average fell slightly below expectations was in the professor rating of DSM diagnosis and evidence-based treatment approaches. The lower scores were largely limited to one section, and two other assessments indicated students were within expectations. Still, professors’ ratings of a broad range of skills, while meeting expectations, were on the low end (low 5s in a range of 5-6), suggesting that while we have made improvements, students may need additional assistance. Some Advisory Board members (consisting of site supervisors/directors) suggested that students could use more practice with intake interviewing and couples work, and more understanding of somatic symptoms and the importance of mind-body-spirit integration.

Improvement Actions

Faculty have been implementing more “mastery” learning to better prepare students and address when individuals are falling below minimal expectations. For example, in COUN 522, students must redo their diagnosis, intake, and treatment plan papers if they are not the expected quality. We have added instruction and assessment of some specific elements of case conceptualization (e.g., neurobiology of trauma in COUN 538, occupational/work in COUN 590) and are helping students to connect all the ways in which they are learning about case conceptualization throughout the program. We plan a “deeper dive” focus on this area in 2023.

**Research and Professional Writing (2020 – 2021 academic year)**

Assessable outcomes (our focus within this broader SLO):

Students will be able to: critically analyze research methodology and the professional literature regarding a counseling topic; construct an original research project; and demonstrate professional writing skills in accordance with APA guidelines.

Methods, Measures, and Data Collection:

We directly assessed students’ knowledge and skills in a variety of ways:

*Measure 1:* signature assignment in the first semester Coun 500 (The Counseling Profession) class.

*Measure 2:* signature assignment, capstone research project in Coun 597 (Research Project) during the last semester in the program.

*Measure 3: (indirect assessment):* Graduating student, Employer, and Alumni surveys

Summary and Analysis of Results

Results suggest that students continue to do well in this area. The averages in the first semester course (COUN 500) are relatively high, with only 2% of students falling below the minimal requirement. This suggests that students are entering the program with good skills and that faculty are working with students to improve their skills. The averages in the final project class (COUN 597), taken the last semester in the program, reflect growth and in many ways exceed expectations. Students and faculty work closely together in this process. The scores are especially impressive during a year of Covid and multiple demands on students in their final semester.

Results from the surveys indicated that the department was meeting its goals.

Improvement Actions

All faculty are currently engaged in training and discussions of decolonizing syllabi and how this may impact what we require in terms of writing and research. The faculty who teach the research sequence (COUN 521 and 597) will be discussing possible changes to the courses in 2022-2023.

**Dispositions and Professionalism (2020 – 2021 academic year)**

Assessable outcomes:

Students will demonstrate fitness for the field through four broad categories within Dispositions and Professionalism: (1) effective and professional communication and collaboration; (2) emotional maturity, self-awareness, and counselor presence; (3) dependability, reliability, ethical behavior; and (4) respect for diversity and openness to other world views.

Methods, Measures, and Data Collection:

We directly assessed students’ dispositions and professionalism in all Coun 511 (pre-practicum) courses and all Coun 584 (Advanced Practicum) courses. Using a comprehensive form, students are rated with “concern,” “needs improvement,” or “no concern” on four categories (noted above). Our criteria for success is to have each student obtain “no concern” on every category. Practicum site supervisors also rate students on dispositions and professionalism: personal qualities, documentation, professionalism, and supervision.

Summary and Analysis of Results

We expect all students to receive a “no concern” on dispositions regardless of where they are in the program and the vast majority of students met this expectation. However, it is not concerning that a few would need improvement, especially early on as they acclimate to the program and profession. Both professors and site supervisors noted that between 2 and 7% of beginning practicum students (Coun 530) needed improvement on a number of dispositions and professionalism aspects. Of greater concern, was that small percentages of students in the advanced practicum received concerns. These seemed mostly related to timeliness with assignments and appropriate communication, as explained earlier in the report. In addition, site supervisors rated these students highly, suggested that they were performing well outside the class. A strength across the three courses, from the first semester Coun 511 (Pre-Practicum), to beginning practicum, and then advanced practicum, was “Respect for diversity.” All students received a “no concern” in this area.

Improvement Actions

Students’ demonstration of counselor dispositions has generally improved since the department implemented formal evaluation of them. Students seem to have a better understanding of what is expected in the field, as a result. However, we do not want to see “concerns” at any stage of the program, particularly in advanced practicum.

**Final Conclusions**

The data suggest numerous strengths in students’ learning. The strongest results (consistently meeting or exceeding expectations across multiple measures) were in *Diversity Awareness and Sensitivity* and *Research and Professional Writing.* We believe that recent shifts in diversity teaching are already having an impact, and we expect more changes as the focus on social justice becomes stronger. The individualized attention to student research and writing that we implemented a few years ago appears to continue to be effective.

Student performance in *Clinical Skills* and *Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning* was also strong but more mixed, with some students meeting “minimal” expectations and a number of students scoring less than minimal expectations on exams. Site supervisors rated students highly overall, and this was especially impressive given the continued strains of Covid-19 and telehealth. Site supervisors also rated students highly in *professional behavior/dispositions* and in *ethical/legal knowledge and behavior*, so although there were some concerns regarding timeliness (*dispositions*) in practicum courses, students did very well out in the field. There is room for improvement in *Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice*, and faculty are currently implementing improvements and changes to their teaching.

Advisory Board members echoed much of what the other data showed, and although they noted areas where students could be better prepared, they overwhelmingly indicated that students were very well prepared and a pleasure to work with.

The program assesses student learning on every aspect every year; however, we will focus on one or two SLOs more deeply each year in terms of making changes and then assessing whether those changes seemed to help produce the desired results. Below is the tentative long-term plan, beginning with 2019-2020. This may change, depending on what the data indicate each year, and what the faculty determines is most pressing.

**ASSESSMENT TIMELINE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SLO | Assessment | “Deeper dive” closer focus on an SLO | Improvement actions | “Closing the Loop” (Closer examination of whether or not there has been progress) |
| Diversity Awareness & Sensitivity | Every Year | 2019-2020 | 2020- | 2023-2024 |
| Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice | Every Year | 2020- 2021 | 2021- | 2023-2024 |
| Clinical Skills | Every Year | 2021-2022 | 2022- | 2024-2025 |
| Conceptualization & Treatment Planning | Every Year | 2022-2023 | 2023- | 2024-2025 |
| Research & Professional Writing | Every Year | 2023-2024 | 2024- | 2025-2026 |
| Dispositions | Every Year | Every year | As needed | As needed |