Annual Report

2022-2023

Counselor Education Department

Viterbo University

The purpose of this annual report is to transparently communicate the progress and achievements of Viterbo University’s Counselor Education Department over the 2022-2023 academic year. In alignment with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2016 standards, this report serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to continuous improvement, educational excellence, and the professional development of our students and faculty. It highlights our program's efforts in evaluating and enhancing our curriculum, pedagogy, and clinical experiences to meet the evolving needs of our students and the counseling profession at large. Through a detailed review of program evaluation results, subsequent modifications, and other significant changes, we aim to provide our community of students, faculty, administrators, and cooperating agency personnel with a comprehensive overview of our program's strides towards achieving the highest standards of counselor education. This report underscores our dedication to not only maintaining accreditation standards but also fostering an environment of transparency, accountability, and collaborative growth.

**Program Evaluation**

Our department employs a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to assess the effectiveness of our counselor education programs, aiming to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This approach integrates feedback from all program stakeholders, including current students, site supervisors, faculty, alumni, and employers. Annually, we conduct a thorough program evaluation each summer to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, assessing our alignment with educational missions and the department's overall effectiveness. This process involves conducting surveys among current students, faculty, employers, alumni, and site supervisors to evaluate various aspects of the program, from mission fulfillment and clinical skill development to the quality of instruction and supervision. Additionally, the Board of Advisors reviews program and curricular assessments, offering expert insights to enhance our offerings. Student academic progress and key professional dispositions are also evaluated annually, with results shared for reflection and action. Similarly, faculty are assessed through student-completed course evaluations, providing valuable feedback on teaching practices and course design. This holistic evaluation strategy ensures our commitment to providing a quality education that prepares competent and ethical counseling professionals, maintaining our program's dynamic responsiveness to the needs of our students and the counseling profession.

The annual program evaluation for the 2022-2023 academic year has yielded significant insights into our counselor education programs, with particular focus on the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) programs. These findings provide a comprehensive overview of student learning outcomes, faculty performance, clinical experiences, and other critical areas assessed in relation to CACREP standards.

**Vital Statistics**

The chart below provides vital statistics summarizing key outcomes for the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) and Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) programs for the 2022-2023 academic year. It illustrates the programs' achievements in terms of the number of graduates, pass rates on credentialing examinations, completion rates, and job placement rates, underscoring their effectiveness in equipping students for professional excellence in the counseling field.

**Table 1:** Vital Statistics for January through December 2023

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Program | CES | CMHC |
| Number of Graduates | 2 | 18 |
| Pass Rates on Credentialing Examinations | 100% | 93% |
| Program Completion Rates | 93.45% | 92.11% |
| Job Placement Rates | 100% | 98% |

These outcomes affirm the strength and quality of our counselor education programs, attesting to our faculty's dedication, our rigorous curriculum, and our commitment to student success. The high pass rates on credentialing examinations, exceptional completion rates, and stellar job placement figures not only highlight the effectiveness of our program designs but also our graduates' readiness to make meaningful contributions to the counseling profession. As we move forward, these findings will serve as a foundation for continuous improvement and innovation in our programs, ensuring alignment with CACREP standards and the evolving needs of our students and the communities they will serve.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

The KPI evaluation results from the Fall 2022, Spring 2023, and Summer 2023 terms are discussed below. Thorough faculty review highlights a thoughtful and rigorous approach to assessing the effectiveness of various courses within the counseling program. During these semesters, faculty members engaged in detailed discussions on courses across key performance indicators (KPIs), focusing on ensuring that the curriculum effectively supports student learning and professional development.

In the Fall 2022 KPI review, faculty members engaged in a nuanced assessment of student work, ensuring that performance standards align with academic expectations. In the course COUN 725, Instructional Design, revisions to the syllabus are planned to clarify to students the necessity of including rubrics and backward design templates. These changes were made from course evaluations and feedback provided by students. Meanwhile, consistent challenges with academic writing noted in the master’s level COUN 660: Research have prompted the faculty to seek strategies for strengthening writing skills earlier in the program. Although a few students scored below the expected threshold, these instances were outliers in an otherwise commendable set of KPI results and, where extenuating circumstances were present, faculty displayed sensitivity and accommodation in their evaluations.

In the Spring 2023 KPI review, faculty delved into course-specific challenges and contemplated enhancements to elevate the student learning experience. For COUN 660: Research, Evaluation, and Evidence Based Practices, discussions centered around the persistent issue of poor academic writing within the Action Research Project (ARP), leading to considerations on how to make the ARP more approachable for students and mentors alike. In COUN 675: Techniques of Counseling, there was omission of a KPI assignment by three students. It was reported that students may not have completed the assignment since they did not need the points to pass the course. This has brought forth suggestions to increase the assignment's weight, ensuring its completion, or possibly reducing the overall number of assignments to streamline course workload. At the doctoral level concerns in COUN 712: Research Methodology I, about the feasibility of covering an extensive syllabus across three weekend sessions, coupled with an assignment perceived as too simplistic for doctoral candidates, prompted a re-evaluation of the course structure and expectations. Faculty suggested creating a new scope and sequence for the doctoral level research sequence. Specific proposals for creating a new sequence are under discussion. Meanwhile, COUN 750: Brain, Behavior and Psychopharmacology faced challenges with student engagement, as evidenced by a student withdrawing and another not fulfilling all requirements, signaling a need for possible course adjustments and additional support measures. It was believed that the mode of instruction may be a part of the challenges in this course since it was taught asynchronously online. Faculty made the recommendation to teach this class synchronously in the future and to focus the class in more applicable material to practicing professionals. The course has a new faculty instructor and a different book. These insights are instrumental in guiding course refinements and supporting the department's mission to provide a rigorous yet supportive academic environment.

In the Summer 2023 review, the focus was on refining assessment tools and assignments to improve student learning outcomes. For COUN 714: Research Methods II, updates to the rubric for a mock dissertation proposal were planned to enhance detail and clarity, addressing the need for more precise guidance for students. At the master’s level the review also identified the need to reconsider the placement of a KPI assignment currently in COUN 635: Prevention and Interventions in the schools. Students struggled with submission issues and suggested a strategic adjustment to better align with student skill development. This scope and sequence concern will be considered the next time the course is offered. Additionally, potential language barriers for international students in COUN 570: Couples and Family Counseling, were noted, with plans to continue monitoring and addressing these challenges to support all students effectively.

Overall, these KPI evaluation results demonstrate the program's commitment to continuous improvement, responsive curriculum development, and the effective preparation of students for the counseling profession. Through targeted adjustments and ongoing assessments, the program aims to uphold high educational standards and support student success.

**Key Professional Dispositions (KPDs)**

Key Professional Dispositions (KPDs) were collected in COUN 530: Multicultural Counseling, COUN 580: Crisis and Trauma: An Integrated Approach; COUN 690: Counseling Practicum, COUN 695 and COUN 696 Internship in Counseling for the master’s level students. Faculty teaching the above courses completed the dispositional traits measure and uploaded a copy of the completed form into the course Moodle site for students to view feedback. Faculty reviewed the dispositional traits of students, faculty who noted concerns regarding dispositional traits provided specific information to the program director for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. For this cycle of KPD’s, the director reached out and had private conversations with students.

Evaluation of the KPD process by faculty noted a couple difficulties with the process currently used: 1. The form falls upon only a few faculty to complete which limits the scope of the assessment to a few courses, and 2. The report is provided to students in the class in which they are evaluated, but not in their student file. The assessment coordinator, Dr. Brittany Massengale, recommended that KPDs are completed for each student after a faculty discussion. The form is completed during the meeting by the advisor and a copy of this form is provided to students and is kept within the students’ file. This new process will be instituted during the next academic year. Further evaluation of the KPD process will be continued.

**Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)**

All master's students within our program are required to undertake the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) prior to graduation. This critical assessment serves not only as a benchmark for students' readiness to enter the counseling profession but also as an invaluable tool for our department. By comparing our students' scores against national averages across the eight core areas/domains, we gain insightful feedback on the effectiveness of our teaching and curriculum. This comparative analysis helps ensure that our educational practices are aligned with national standards and are effectively equipping our students with the knowledge and skills they need to excel in their future roles as counseling professionals. Through this process, we continually assess and refine our program to maintain the highest standards of excellence in counselor education. Below is a comparison of the Counselor Education Department student scores compared to the national averages across the 8 core domains.

Results below are from the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 terms compared to the national averages of graduating master’s students in counselor education.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2022 | | Spring 2023 | |
| CPCE Exam | Viterbo University (n=6) | National Average (n=640) | Viterbo University (n=11) | National Average (n=1437) |
| Section | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| C1: Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice | 11.2 | 10.8 | 11.6 | 10.9 |
| C2: Social and Cultural Diversity | 7.5 | 8.3 | 9.7 | 9.8 |
| C3: Human Growth and Development | 10.3 | 10.9 | 9.5 | 10.3 |
| C4: Career Development | 9.5 | 10.2 | 10.1 | 10.1 |
| C5: Counseling and Helping Relationships | 10.7 | 9.5 | 10.0 | 9.6 |
| C6: Group Counseling and Group Work | 10.7 | 11.1 | 11.3 | 11.4 |
| C7: Assessment and Testing | 10.2 | 9.7 | 9.5 | 9.6 |
| C8: Research and Program Evaluation | 11.3 | 10.4 | 11.8 | 11.2 |
| **Total** | **81.3** | **80.8** | **83.5** | **82.9** |

The comparison of CPCE Exam scores from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 for Viterbo University students against national averages reveals notable improvements and ongoing strengths. In Spring 2023, Viterbo students demonstrated significant improvement in Social and Cultural Diversity, nearly closing the gap with the national average. Moreover, Viterbo's scores in Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice, Career Development, Counseling and Helping Relationships, and Research and Program Evaluation not only surpassed the national averages but also showed an upward trend from Fall 2022. Although there was a slight dip in Human Growth and Development, Viterbo students continued to excel in areas critical to counseling practice. The total mean score for Viterbo increased from 81.3 in Fall 2022 to 83.5 in Spring 2023, surpassing the national average once again. This progress underscores the effectiveness of faculty evaluations of courses and content, especially in areas previously below the national average, demonstrating Viterbo's commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of its counselor education program.

**Annual Surveys**

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in counselor education, our department conducts an annual comprehensive program evaluation through surveys distributed to key stakeholders. These surveys are sent to our alumni, current students, faculty, site supervisors, and employers. This broad-based feedback mechanism is designed to gather diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of our program, the quality of our curriculum, and the preparedness of our graduates for the counseling profession. By analyzing responses from these various groups, we can identify strengths, uncover areas for improvement, and ensure that our program remains at the forefront of counselor education, consistently meeting the needs of our students and the communities they will serve. This annual evaluation process underscores our dedication to fostering an environment of excellence and accountability. Below is a summary of results from each survey launched and analyzed during the Summer 2023 term.

* **Current Student Survey**: The Current EdD Student Survey from Summer 2023 indicates unanimous satisfaction with the fulfillment of the program’s mission, with all respondents rating it 'Very well'. Faculty received high marks for their availability, mentoring, teaching, and supervision, all scoring an average of '5' on a scale where '5' indicates 'Very Satisfied'. Despite this positive feedback, students noted a desire for more consistent and transparent advising and scheduling to better accommodate their professional and personal lives. This feedback speaks to the dedication and effectiveness of the faculty while also suggesting areas where procedural enhancements could further support students’ academic experiences. The Current MS Student Survey for Summer 2023 illustrates a dedicated cohort in the Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling programs, all scoring a 4 out of 5 regarding the program’s fulfillment of its mission. Satisfaction with faculty's availability, advising, mentoring, and teaching averaged a commendable 4, reflecting the department's commitment to providing robust support and quality instruction. Constructive feedback highlighted areas for improvement, with a call for more uniform instruction and clearer communication, particularly around the professional sequence and course scheduling. In addition, students also reported more transparency about the clinical placement processes and ability to apply to all clinical training sites. Overall, the students' responses reveal a positive academic experience balanced with thoughtful suggestions for enhancing the program's structure and communication strategies.
* **Faculty Survey**: The Faculty Survey from Summer 2023, which included responses from adjunct and core faculty members of Viterbo’s counselor education programs, offers a constructive perspective on the department’s operations. Faculty expressed satisfaction with the program’s alignment with its mission and goals, both scoring a solid 4 out of 5. However, feedback indicated a need for clearer communication and more structured support, especially in relation to teaching expectations and the integration of CACREP standards. Suggestions for improvement included more timely and transparent communication, as well as better organization within the department to support both students and faculty. This feedback aligns with the faculty's desire for more cohesive and unified approaches to departmental operations and teaching practices.
* **Alumni Survey**: The Alumni Survey for Summer 2023 presents a positive reflection of Viterbo's counselor education program, with overall high satisfaction ratings across various domains such as program mission fulfillment, quality of teaching, and faculty interest in student professional development. Alumni felt well-prepared to enter the counseling profession, scoring an average of 4 out of 5 in areas like advanced counseling practice and the ability to use evidence-based practices with advanced competency. The feedback also points to valuable aspects like professor expertise and the personal growth fostered through class experiences. Areas highlighted for improvement include concerns over staff consistency, the need for a more structured course schedule, and a desire for more focus on early childhood topics. The survey demonstrates alumni's preparedness and overall satisfaction, with recommendations that can help fine-tune the program's effectiveness.
* **Site Supervisor Survey**: The Site Supervisor Survey for Summer 2023 from those overseeing Viterbo counselor education program practicums provides an overall positive reflection of student performance. Site supervisors reported satisfaction with students' clinical skills, professional knowledge, and contributions to their sites, rating these aspects between 'Satisfactory' and 'Very Satisfactory'. The feedback emphasizes the value of student participation to both the sites and their personal development as upcoming therapists. Despite these positive notes, site supervisors have mentioned a need for clearer communication from the university, especially during transitions, and better clarity in evaluation processes and expectations. They also suggested more ethical training and professional development opportunities could be beneficial. The constructive feedback points towards areas of improvement that can strengthen the link between educational experiences and practical application in clinical settings.
* **Employer Survey**: The Employer Survey from Summer 2023 offers a stellar review of Viterbo’s counselor education program alumni, particularly those from the School Counseling domain, as no respondents represented the Clinical Mental Health Counseling or Counselor Education and Supervision programs. Employers rated alumni as 'Very Satisfactory' across key areas like knowledge and skills, self-awareness, and multicultural sensitivity, all scoring a perfect 5 or close, with one rating at 4. The feedback indicates that employers observe Viterbo alumni to be well-prepared, highly engaged in professional development, and contributing positively via their roles. An expressed need for more graduated students points to the high demand in the field and the value placed on the quality of Viterbo’s program graduates. Overall, the employers' feedback underscores the program’s success in preparing alumni for the professional world and their satisfaction with the graduates' performance.

**Program Modifications**

In response to comprehensive program evaluation feedback, the counselor education department at Viterbo University has enacted several significant program modifications during the 2022-2023 academic year to enhance student experience and align with best practices:

* **Revamping KPD Evaluation Process**: A significant methodological change was implemented in the way faculty complete Key Professional Dispositions (KPD) evaluations. Transitioning from individual instructors completing KPD evaluations in specific courses, we have moved to a full faculty meeting review of every student in the department. This shift towards a more collaborative and comprehensive evaluation process aims to enhance the consistency and thoroughness of our assessments, ensuring every student receives the support and feedback necessary to excel in their professional dispositions. The new KPD evaluation process will begin in the Fall 2023 term and will be conducted annually each fall semester.
* **Annual Student Academic Progress Evaluation**: In our continuous quest for academic excellence and student success, we have instituted an Annual Student Academic Progress Evaluation for all students enrolled in the Counselor Education Department. This comprehensive evaluation assesses students on two critical fronts: their cumulative GPA and their performance on each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) assignment. By systematically reviewing these aspects of student achievement on an annual basis, we aim to closely monitor academic progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that all students are on track to meet the rigorous standards of our program and the counseling profession. This addition to our evaluation processes underscores our commitment to maintaining high academic standards and supporting our students' educational journeys. The new academic progress evaluation will begin in the Spring 2024 term and will be conducted annually each spring semester.
* **Course Rotation Improvement**: Faculty have initiated the development of a new course rotation schedule. This strategic modification is designed to provide students with a clearer and more predictable path through their program of study, ensuring that course offerings are better aligned with their academic and professional timelines.
* **Clinical Placement Process**: Following student feedback indicating concerns about the equity of the placement process, we have revised our approach. Students will now be provided with a list of potential sites, empowering them to secure placements in a manner akin to job applications, fostering independence and professional initiative.
* **KPI Collection and Reporting**: A new process for collecting, storing, and reporting Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data has been established. This streamlined process aims to improve the accuracy and accessibility of performance data, which is vital for both program assessment and individual student development.
* **Expanded Course Scheduling**: The department has added new weekly course time slots to accommodate diverse student schedules. Classes are now available on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3-6 pm and 6:30-9:30 pm, as well as on weekends, offering greater flexibility and accessibility.
* **Professional Development Plan**: The remediation/gatekeeping process has been rebranded from "Corrective Action Plan (CAP)" to "Professional Development Plan (PDP)." This change emphasizes a more positive, growth-focused approach to student development and progress within the program.
* **Group Action Research Project Pilot**: In the COUN 660 course, we are pilot testing group ARP projects in the upcoming academic year. This initiative is aimed at enhancing collaborative skills among students and aligning research projects more closely with the collective and interactive nature of professional counseling environments.

These modifications demonstrate our department's commitment to ongoing improvement, responsiveness to stakeholder feedback, and dedication to maintaining the highest standards in counselor education.

**Substantial Program Changes**

In our pursuit of academic excellence and in response to the evolving landscape of counselor education, our department has implemented several substantial program changes. These adjustments reflect our ongoing commitment to enhancing our curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and clinical training opportunities to better serve our students and align with the latest industry standards and best practices.

In our continuous effort to adapt and enhance the educational experience within the counselor education department, we have undertaken several substantial program changes:

* **Retirement of Dr. Deb Murray**: The department bid farewell to Dr. Deb Murray, the previous director of the Counselor Education Department (CED), upon her retirement. Dr. Murray's leadership and contributions have been invaluable to the growth and success of our programs. We extend our heartfelt wishes for her continued journey.
* **National Search for New Director**: Following Dr. Murray's retirement, a national search was initiated to find a new director for the CED. This process reflects our commitment to leadership excellence and our dedication to finding a visionary leader who can continue to advance our mission and goals.
* **Doctoral Program Research Sequence Update**: Recognizing the breadth and depth of research methodologies necessary for a comprehensive understanding, we have restructured the doctoral program's research sequence. Starting in Fall 2024, COUN 710 will serve as an introduction to quantitative research methodologies, while COUN 712 will focus exclusively on qualitative methodologies. This division ensures that students receive a more focused and in-depth exploration of each research area, facilitating a stronger foundation for their scholarly work.
* **Admission Requirements Adjustments**: To make our Counselor Education Department (CED) programs more accessible and to align our admission process with best practices, we have made significant changes:
  + The Miller Analogies Test (MAT) requirement for admission has been eliminated, removing a barrier that may not accurately reflect an applicant's potential for success in the program.
  + The requirement for a background check at the point of admission has also been removed. This change is intended to foster a more inclusive application process.
  + Furthermore, we have reduced the number of Letters of Recommendation (LORs) required from three to two. This adjustment recognizes the importance of quality over quantity in recommendations and aims to streamline the application process for prospective students.

These changes reflect our department’s ongoing efforts to refine our programs and processes in response to feedback and evolving educational standards. By updating our curriculum and admission criteria, we aim to better serve our students and the counseling profession, ensuring our graduates are well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of their future careers.

**Conclusion**

The 2022-2023 Annual Report for Viterbo University’s Counselor Education Department underscores a year marked by significant accomplishments, insightful program evaluations, and strategic improvements aimed at enhancing our educational offerings and clinical experiences. Our commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement is reflected in the integration of feedback from a broad array of stakeholders, driving enhancements that ensure our curriculum remains at the forefront of the counseling profession. This process has yielded commendable outcomes in student achievement, faculty performance, and clinical training, as evidenced by our vital statistics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In response to the insights garnered from our comprehensive evaluations, we have implemented noteworthy program modifications, including the revamping of the Key Professional Dispositions (KPD) evaluation process and strategic improvements in course rotation, clinical placement processes, and admission requirements. These initiatives highlight our dedication to maintaining high standards of excellence, accessibility, and inclusivity in counselor education.

The achievements and advancements documented in this year's report lay a solid foundation for future endeavors. We are inspired by the potential for growth and are committed to continuous refinement of our programs to meet the evolving needs of our students and the counseling profession. Our collective efforts this year not only signify our dedication to educational excellence but also reinforce our commitment to preparing the next generation of counseling professionals for success in their careers.