

ANNUAL REPORT

Counselor Education Department

Viterbo University

2024-2025

The purpose of this annual report is to transparently communicate the progress and achievements of Viterbo University's Counselor Education Department over the 2024-2025 academic year. In alignment with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2024 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 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 2024-2025 academic year has yielded significant insights into our counselor education programs, with particular focus on the Masters of Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC), Masters in School Counseling (MSSC), and a Doctorate of Education in 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 2024-2025 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.

| Program | EdD-CES | MSMHC | MSSC |
|--|---------|-------|------|
| Number of Graduates | 4 | 20 | 2 |
| Pass Rates on Credentialing Examinations | 100% | 80% | 100% |
| Program Completion Rates | 100% | 90% | 100% |
| Job Placement Rates | 100% | 100% | 100% |

These outcomes affirm the continued strength and quality of our counselor education programs, reflecting the dedication of our faculty, the intentionality of our curriculum, and our enduring commitment to student success. During the 2024–2025 academic year, all three programs achieved 100% job placement rates for their graduates, with similarly high program completion rates. Credentialing examination pass rates were also strong, with 100% of EdD-CES and MSSC graduates passing their respective exams. Among MSMHC alumni, the reported pass rate on the National Counselor Examination (NCE) was 80%. However, we note that credentialing exam data is often incomplete; for instance, we know of four MSMHC alumni who took the NCE during this reporting period; three of whom passed on their first attempt. Because Wisconsin requires counselors to pass the NCE prior to receiving their terminal license (LPC), the timing of exam completion varies, and examinees may include graduates from recent years.

These findings reinforce the effectiveness of our programs in preparing students for professional excellence and licensure readiness. They also highlight the value of continued investment in rigorous training and individualized support. As we look ahead, this data will inform our strategic planning and ongoing improvements, ensuring our programs remain aligned with CACREP standards, licensure expectations, and the evolving needs of the communities our graduates serve.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Each semester, faculty engage in systematic reviews of course-specific KPIs to ensure student learning outcomes align with program goals and CACREP competencies. The KPI evaluation results from the Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Summer 2025 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 2024 KPI review, Viterbo University faculty evaluated multiple courses, ensuring continued alignment with program goals and accreditation standards. Key discussions included reviewing and updating rubrics for COUN 510 and COUN 520 to enhance clarity and assessment accuracy. In COUN 580, faculty considered relocating the multicultural assessment to a different course for better integration and discussed refining assignment terminology for consistency. COUN 660 was identified as needing a new KPI if the Action Research Project is removed, prompting further curriculum adjustments. Additionally, scaffolding techniques in COUN 640 were noted as highly effective, contributing to strong student performance. These ongoing evaluations demonstrate faculty's dedication to maintaining academic excellence and refining student learning experiences.

The Spring 2025 KPI faculty review reflected a strong alignment between instructional practices and program outcomes, with 100% of students meeting the benchmark of earning 80% or higher on all assessed KPI assignments. Faculty reported no concerns regarding assignment structure, rubrics, or student performance across the reviewed courses. This consistent performance highlights the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional strategies currently in place. The results affirm that students are achieving the expected competencies and that the program continues to deliver high-quality, standards-aligned education in accordance with CACREP (2024) guidelines.

In the Summer 2025 KPI faculty review, all students met the program benchmark of earning 80% or higher on their KPI assignments, reflecting strong overall performance across courses. While no major concerns were identified, faculty noted a few areas for instructional refinement. In multiple courses, including COUN 729 and COUN 675, students lost points due to underutilizing rubrics and assignment instructions, prompting instructors to emphasize rubric use more clearly in future iterations. In COUN 635, time management challenges led to rushed submissions, leading faculty to consider scaffolding assignments across the term to support student pacing. Minor concerns were also noted regarding APA formatting in COUN 510, with plans to increase instructional support in this area. These insights demonstrate the faculty's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, student support, and maintaining high academic standards.

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.

Student Academic Progress

In alignment with CACREP 2024 standards, our faculty conducted an in-depth review of individual student academic progress during the Spring 2025 semester. This review focused on key performance indicators (KPIs) and grade point average (GPA) to evaluate each student's academic performance comprehensively. Our assessment process for each student is designed to be comprehensive and reflective of their academic and practical competencies within the counseling program. We utilize a three-tiered evaluation system based on key performance indicators (KPIs) and cumulative grade point average (GPA) to categorize student performance as follows:

- Exemplary: Students achieving this level demonstrate outstanding performance, with KPI scores above 90% and a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or higher.
- Satisfactory: To be considered at a satisfactory level, students must attain KPI scores above 80% and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- Developmental: Students falling into the developmental category have KPI scores below 80% and a cumulative GPA of less than 3.5.

This structured assessment approach ensures a clear, objective, and supportive framework for monitoring student progress, providing targeted feedback, and fostering academic and professional growth in alignment with the counseling profession's standards.

Following the evaluation, results were communicated to students via email and saved in their student files for future reference. Students whose academic performance fell below expectations had a follow up meeting with their faculty advisor to discuss the results and identify pathways for improvement and/or were placed on a Professional Development Plan (PDP). This process ensures that students receive constructive feedback on their academic progress, facilitating open dialogue, and support between students and their advisors.

Below are results from the Counselor Education Department's Spring 2025 Student Academic Progress Evaluation across the three academic programs.

| Program | CES | CMHC | SC |
|---------------|-----|------|------|
| Exemplary | 73% | 54% | 100% |
| Satisfactory | 27% | 40% | 0% |
| Developmental | 0% | 6% | 0% |

The Spring 2025 Student Academic Progress Evaluation reflects significant progress in academic performance across Viterbo University's Counselor Education programs, particularly within the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) track. Notably, the percentage of students categorized as "Developmental" decreased from 17% in Spring 2024 to just 6% in Spring 2025 (a 64% reduction). This improvement highlights the impact of faculty interventions, targeted

support strategies, and curriculum refinements aimed at fostering student success. The Counselor Education and School Counseling (CES and SC) programs maintained exceptional standards, with 73% and 100% of students, respectively, achieving “Exemplary” status. These outcomes underscore the department’s commitment to academic excellence, student-centered support, and the development of competent, ethical, and well-prepared counseling professionals.

Key Professional Dispositions (KPDs)

Each year, the Counselor Education Department rigorously evaluates students on ten critical dispositions, essential for ensuring their readiness and suitability for the counseling profession. This Key Professional Disposition (KPD) assessment is designed to gauge students' self-awareness, multicultural competence, ethical decision-making, flexibility, professional communication, and psychological fitness, among other vital traits. Through this comprehensive evaluation, we aim to identify and nurture the foundational qualities necessary for effective counseling practice, supporting our students' development into well-rounded, ethical, and competent professionals equipped to meet the diverse needs of their future clients.

Our Key Professional Dispositions (KPDs) assessment utilizes a nuanced rating scale designed to precisely evaluate students' readiness for the counseling profession across ten critical areas. The scale categorizes students based on the number of dispositions rated below expectations:

- Students with "0 dispositions below meets expectations" are considered fully prepared in all evaluated areas, showcasing exemplary readiness;
- students with "1-2 dispositions below meets expectations" indicate minor areas for development but overall strong professional potential; and
- Students with "3+ dispositions below meets expectations" highlight significant areas needing improvement and development.

This scale allows us to tailor support and interventions effectively, ensuring each student can achieve the highest standards of professional competence and ethical practice in the counseling field.

Following the evaluation of student KPDs in the Fall 2024 semester, results were communicated to students via email and saved in their student files for future reference. Students whose academic performance fell below expectations had a follow up meeting with their faculty advisor to discuss the results and identify pathways for improvement and/or were placed on a Professional Development Plan (PDP). This process ensures that students receive constructive feedback on their academic progress, facilitating open dialogue, and support between students and their advisors.

Below are results from the Counselor Education Department's Fall 2024 Key Professional Disposition Evaluation.

| Program | CES | CMHC | SC |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| 0 dispositions below | 100% | 97% | 100% |
| 1-2 dispositions below | 0% | 3% | 0% |
| 3+ dispositions below | 0% | 0% | 0% |

The Fall 2024 Key Professional Disposition Evaluation for the Counselor Education Department reveals exceptional achievements among all Counselor Education Department Programs. Specifically, 100% of students in both the CES and SC programs met all expected dispositions, demonstrating their strong readiness for the counseling profession. In the CMHC program, 97% of students met all expectations, with only 3% showing 1-2 dispositions below expectations, reflecting minor areas for improvement. Notably, no students in any program had three or more dispositions below expectations. These results highlight the programs' ongoing commitment to maintaining high professional standards and supporting students in developing the necessary dispositions for effective counseling practice. These outcomes reflect our program's intentional focus on cultivating the professional dispositions essential for ethical, inclusive, and effective counseling practice.

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.

| CPCE Exam | Fall 2024 | | Spring 2025 | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Viterbo University (n=11) | National Average (n=744) | Viterbo University (n=9) | National Average (n=207) |
| | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean |
| C1: Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice | 12.4 | 12.3 | 11.5 | 12.4 |
| C2: Social and Cultural Diversity | 11.2 | 10.7 | 9.6 | 10.8 |
| C3: Human Growth and Development | 11.7 | 11.6 | 9.8 | 11.9 |
| C4: Career Development | 12.2 | 12.8 | 10.1 | 11.5 |
| C5: Counseling and Helping Relationships | 11.4 | 11.3 | 10.1 | 11.2 |
| C6: Group Counseling and Group Work | 13.1 | 12.9 | 10.4 | 12.8 |
| C7: Assessment and Testing | 11.4 | 11.9 | 9.1 | 10.5 |
| C8: Research and Program Evaluation | 11.7 | 12.3 | 7.6 | 10.4 |
| Total | 95.0 | 95.8 | 78.0 | 91.3 |

In the Fall 2024 review of the CPCE results, Viterbo University faculty observed that students continued to perform at or above the national average in most sections, underscoring their solid preparation. Viterbo students achieved notably strong results in Social and Cultural Diversity, Counseling and Helping Relationships, and Group Counseling and Group Work, with mean scores exceeding national averages in these critical areas. However, Career Development was again identified as an area for potential improvement, with students scoring below the national average. In response, the faculty have decided to transition COUN 550: Career Development from a weekend format to a weekly meeting schedule, providing students with more consistent engagement with course content. Additionally, the Action Research Project will be removed from COUN 660: Research, creating more room for students to focus on foundational concepts without the added burden of completing research projects. These adjustments reflect Viterbo's ongoing commitment to aligning the curriculum with best practices and ensuring students meet high standards of competency across all areas.

In the Spring 2025 review of the CPCE results, Viterbo University faculty identified a notable decline in student performance across multiple content areas, with overall scores falling below the national average. Areas of particular concern included Research and Program Evaluation, Assessment and Testing, and Social and Cultural Diversity, where students scored significantly lower than their national peers. While these results indicate a need for curriculum adjustments, faculty are particularly focused on strengthening research-related coursework to better support student comprehension and application. The transition of COUN 550: Career Development to a weekly format, implemented in response to previous CPCE trends, will continue to be monitored for effectiveness. Additionally, faculty will explore strategies to enhance student engagement with research and assessment content, potentially through revised instructional methods or

supplementary resources. These findings underscore the university's commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring students are well-prepared across all competency areas.

This Spring 2025 cohort was also the first to complete the CPCE early in the semester rather than near the end, as part of a programmatic change designed to support students seeking to apply for the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential. By testing earlier, eligible students can receive their CPCE results in time to register for the National Counselor Examination (NCE) prior to graduation. While this adjustment supports professional advancement, the earlier test date may have contributed to the lower performance, as students had less instructional time to engage with course content before the exam. Faculty will continue to monitor this transition closely, exploring additional supports to help students prepare effectively under the revised testing schedule. These findings underscore the university's commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring students are well-prepared across all competency areas.

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 2025 term.

- **Current Student Survey:**

Current students in the MSMHC, MSSC, and EdD programs reported high satisfaction with mission alignment and program objectives, particularly in cultural responsiveness, ethics, and integration of theory and practice. Advising was rated positively, with students highlighting advisor accessibility and support, though some noted a need for more proactive check-ins. Curriculum was seen as relevant and engaging, with strong emphasis on multiculturalism and opportunities for critical thinking. Feedback suggested a need for clearer expectations, increased academic rigor, and more integration of current research. Clinical coordination received strong marks for accessibility, responsiveness, and supervision quality, though paperwork and site clarity were noted as areas for improvement. Course rotation and scheduling were generally satisfactory, though some students desired better communication about changes. Non-traditional students reported feeling supported but cited limited campus resources, especially food, financial aid, and technology access. Overall, students praised the supportive faculty, real-world learning

experiences, and inclusive community, while recommending enhancements in consistency, communication, and academic depth.

- **Faculty Survey:**

Faculty reported high satisfaction with mission alignment across all programs, and consistently praised the department's inclusivity, collaboration, and curriculum quality. Strong marks were given for academic freedom, preparing students for the workforce, and use of current research and multicultural content. Most faculty felt well-supported in course development, use of teaching technology, and fulfillment of instructional duties. However, support for work-life balance and communication regarding contracts received slightly lower ratings. Faculty expressed interest in additional professional development, particularly in teaching technology and Moodle setup. Advising support and clarity of policies were rated positively, though challenges included adjusting to a new doctoral curriculum and low-enrolled electives. Opportunities for growth include continued focus on reducing faculty overload and expanding professional development. Overall, faculty responses reflected strong engagement and commitment to maintaining program excellence.

- **Alumni Survey:**

Alumni from the EdD-CES and MSMHC programs reported strong alignment with program missions and felt well-prepared in clinical, ethical, and multicultural competencies. Graduates highlighted strengths in supervision, teaching, research, and advocacy, with most rating job preparedness, communication, and adaptability as excellent or good. Faculty were praised for support, accessibility, and practical, real-world teaching. Many passed licensure exams on the first attempt but expressed a need for earlier exam preparation and clearer guidance on licensure steps. Alumni appreciated hands-on learning, flexible pacing, and counseling labs. Suggestions for growth included more training in documentation, gatekeeping, and emerging clinical practices like EMDR, somatic therapies, and telehealth. The majority would recommend the program, citing confidence and competence in their careers.

- **Site Supervisor Survey:**

Site supervisors expressed high satisfaction with Viterbo's Counselor Education programs, noting strong mission alignment and solid preparation in supervision, multicultural competence, and ethics. Supervisors rated students highly in clinical skills, professionalism, and responsiveness to supervision. Communication with the department was consistently rated as timely, clear, and supportive. Supervisors appreciated faculty accessibility, supervision resources, and clarity in expectations. Strengths noted included student preparedness, ethical practice, eagerness to learn, and reflective self-awareness. Suggestions for growth centered on documentation skills, EHR familiarity, and working

with minors or AODA populations. Supervisors emphasized the value of continued professional development and requested trainings in supervision models, cultural humility, and AI ethics. Several sites reported hiring Viterbo graduates and highlighted their compassion, professionalism, and clinical competence. Ongoing collaboration with sites and clear intern expectations were recommended to further strengthen partnerships and community impact.

- **Employer Survey:**

Employers reported strong satisfaction with Viterbo graduates, especially in ethics, multicultural competence, and collaboration. Graduates were described as conscientious, motivated, and receptive to feedback. Core professional competencies such as clinical skills, communication, and supervision responsiveness were rated “excellent” or “good” by all respondents. Employers noted graduates’ effectiveness in client relationship management and their commitment to ongoing learning and licensure progress. While satisfaction with graduate performance and retention was high, areas for growth included doctoral-level clinical experience, research methodology, and relationship counseling skills. Employers emphasized the importance of graduates being prepared for real-world complexities, including navigating licensure post-graduation and engaging in gatekeeping. Emerging needs include understanding neuroscience integration, generational differences, and political advocacy in counseling. There is also a call for more diverse candidates and experiential learning that benefits the community. Overall, graduates were praised as compassionate, well-trained professionals with meaningful contributions to their organizations.

Departmental Updates

The 2024–2025 academic year brought several thoughtful updates to the Counselor Education Department’s curriculum and program structure. These modifications were guided by student assessment data, faculty observation, and CACREP 2024 standards. Below is a summary of key programmatic adjustments aimed at enhancing student success and overall program effectiveness.

- **Addition of Fifth Core Faculty Member**

Dr. Cara Wood joined as the department’s fifth full-time core faculty member in Fall 2025, restoring full staffing capacity for the first time in over two years. This addition enhances faculty availability for teaching, mentorship, and program operations.

- **Revised EdD-CES Curriculum**

A fully updated EdD-CES curriculum was launched in Fall 2025 to align with CACREP 2024 standards. All current doctoral students opted into the revised plan of study, underscoring the department’s commitment to current, high-quality doctoral training.

- **Transition to CACREP 2024 Standards & KPI Updates**

The department began full implementation of the 2024 CACREP standards, including revised KPIs and assignments. All master's knowledge-based KPIs will now be assessed via final exams to promote exam readiness and improve licensure outcomes.

- **Exploration of the Professional Dispositions Competency Assessment**

The department is currently exploring the adoption of the Professional Dispositions Competency Assessment (PDCA, Garner et al., 2016), a tool that provides behaviorally anchored rating scales and clearly defined observable behaviors for each level of dispositional competency. This initiative aims to reduce subjectivity in faculty evaluations and offer students more transparent, actionable feedback regarding their professional dispositions.

- **CPCE Graduation Requirement Update**

Beginning Fall 2025, CMHC and SC students must pass the CPCE with a score of 80 or within one standard deviation of the national mean. Students who do not pass must retake the exam or complete a faculty-led oral defense. This change supports early licensure engagement and improved first-time NCE pass rates.

- **CPCE Testing Timeline Adjustment**

The CPCE will now be administered in the first month of the semester, enabling students to register for the NCE before graduation and apply for the NCC credential while enrolled.

- **MSSC CACREP Self-Study Launch**

Work has begun on the MSSC program's CACREP self-study, with anticipated submission in Summer 2026. This process ensures alignment with accreditation standards and a high-quality pathway for future school counselors.

- **Expanded Class Scheduling**

In response to student feedback, MS-level courses will now be offered on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in both afternoon (2:00–5:00 PM) and evening (5:30–8:30 PM) blocks, alongside existing weekend options. This change increases scheduling flexibility for diverse student needs.

- **COUN 550 Career Development – Weekly Format**

This course shifted from a weekend-intensive to a weekly format to enhance student engagement and deepen learning of career development theories and practices.

- **COUN 660 Research – Removal of ARP**

The Action Research Project was removed to allow more time for foundational research instruction, reducing workload and improving concept mastery.

- **Rubric & Scaffolding Enhancements**

Rubrics in COUN 510 and 520 were revised for clarity and KPI alignment. COUN 635 will now include scaffolded assignments to support student pacing and workload management.

- **APA Support in COUN 510 and 545**

To address student challenges with academic writing, COUN 510 and COUN 545 will incorporate enhanced instruction on APA formatting early in the program.

Conclusion

The 2024–2025 academic year has been a period of meaningful growth and refinement for the Counselor Education Department at Viterbo University. Through intentional curriculum enhancements, expanded faculty support, and rigorous program evaluation, we have taken decisive steps to ensure that our programs remain responsive to student needs, professional trends, and accreditation standards. The transition to the 2024 CACREP standards has provided a strong foundation for innovation across all program areas; from instructional methods and assessments to clinical training and advising practices.

Stakeholder feedback has been instrumental in guiding these changes, affirming our strengths while also highlighting areas for continuous improvement. We remain committed to fostering inclusive, rigorous, and student-centered learning environments that prepare competent, ethical, and reflective counseling professionals. As we look ahead, our focus will remain on supporting faculty and students alike, cultivating strong community partnerships, and advancing our mission through data-driven decision-making and collaborative leadership. The department thanks all who contributed to this year's successes and looks forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.