

**Results of the Program Evaluation of the
Counselor Education Program at
Texas Tech University**

by

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What does a child sampling cookie dough, a chef tasting soup, a woodcarver checking the facial features of a nutcracker, and an Olympian swimmer viewing his/her practice performance on video have in common? At first glance you might answer “nothing”, however, a closer look will reveal they share a common factor. Evaluation is the common factor for when a child says this cookie dough is good, a chef decides this soup is too salty, a woodcarver concludes this nutcracker’s face is nice and smooth, and the swimmer remarks my time must be faster, this is evaluation at its most basic level. Evaluation is deciding what is good (or bad), what is successful (or unsuccessful), and what needs to be changed (or left as is). Similarly, program evaluation is nothing more than taking evaluation to a more sophisticated level utilizing research methods to evaluate whether a program is working (Posavac & Carey, 1997).

The need for program evaluation in higher education generally (Alkin, 2003; Alkin & Christie, 1999; Alkin & Taut, 2003; Astin, 1991; Banta, 1988, Crisp, 2004; Gray & Diamond, 1989; Jennings, 1989) and counselor education specifically (Bradley & Fiorini, 1999; Engels & Wilborn, 1984; Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Hadley & Mitchell, 1995; Hansen, 2004; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Kerri, Garcia & McCullough, 2002; Loesch, 2001; Lusky & Hayes, 2001; Miller, 2004; Osborne & House, 1995; Sayers, Carroll & Loesch, 1996) has been well-documented.

In the above manuscripts, the authors document the importance of systematic program evaluation. Although program improvement was the most frequently cited rationale for conducting program evaluation, other frequently mentioned reasons include (a) accountability required by accreditation bodies, (b) compliance with state departments of education, (c) information to make available to administrators, (d) information to make available to students (prospective and current), (e) identification of strengths and weaknesses, (f) curriculum changes

and (g) the opportunity to have feedback from graduates of the program and the employers of the graduates of the program.

Although total consensus does not exist regarding all aspects of program evaluation, researchers agree on the basic components. Ewell (1997), Hansen (2004), and Lusky and Hayes (2001) suggest that the quality of a program must contain more than the perceptions of the faculty. They advocated that program evaluation must include information from the graduates of the program and the employers of the graduates. Further, Engles and Wilborn (1984), Hayes & Paisley (2002), Loesch (2001), Osborne and House (1995) and Sayers, Carroll and Loesch (1996) concluded that effective program evaluation must not only include the systematic collection of data from students and graduates, but in addition, it must include data from other sources.

Following a review of the literature on program evaluation, telephone calls and e-mail contacts were sent to various counselor education programs. After discussion, the Counselor Education Program faculty at Texas Tech University decided to use assessment inventories developed by Sayers, Carroll, and Loesch (1996) for their data collection. The faculty agreed that the purpose of the program evaluation would not only be to collect data expected by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), but in addition, the faculty's goal was to obtain information that would be useful in making both current curricular decisions as well as future curricula planning. Using this basic premise, the assessment inventories (see Appendix A & B) were sent to program graduates and employers of the program graduates. The purpose of this report is to present the results of the program evaluation of the Counselor Education Program at Texas Tech University.

Assessment Inventories

All graduates of the Counselor Education Program at Texas Tech University from 2000-2003 were mailed two questionnaires to assess their evaluations and perceptions about the Counselor Education Program. The initial questionnaires were mailed in April, 2004 with follow-up questionnaires being mailed in May, 2004. The two questionnaires were titled the Program Graduate Survey (see Appendix A) and the Employer of a Program Graduate Survey (see Appendix B). The Program Graduate Survey was completed by the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. The survey consisted of 66 items as follows: 15 demographic items, 16 items pertaining to general aspects of the program, 20 items relating to knowledge areas of the program, and 13 items on skill development. Using a 10-point Likert scale (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good), the graduates were asked to respond to items 1-64. The remaining two items were items in which the graduates were asked to list the program's strengths and the areas in which the program needs improvement. In order to have additional information about the program, the graduates of the Counselor Education Program were asked to give The Employer of a Program Graduate Survey to their employer. The Employer of a Program Graduate Survey consisted of 50 items as follows: 5 items describing the employing agency, 20 items focusing on the employer's rating of the graduate's professional knowledge, 14 items on the employer's rating of the graduate's professional skills, and 9 items on the employer's rating of the graduate's attributes. The employers were asked to respond to 48 items by using a 10-point Likert scale (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). The remaining two items (items 49 and 50) asked employers to respond by listing the areas in which the graduates exhibited strengths and the areas in which the graduate's professional preparation could be improved.

Results

Table I presents the mean ratings of the graduates concerning the general aspects of the Counselor Education Program. As Table I indicates, the overall mean was 7.74 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). All items received a mean rating of 7.0 or higher, thus indicating that graduates of the Counselor Education Program were very satisfied with the general aspects of the program and perceived their experiences in the program as definitely above average. A closer perusal of Table 1 indicates that graduates were most satisfied with the duration (academic length) of the program ($x = 8.50$), the accessibility/availability of the faculty ($x = 8.41$), the faculty as mentors ($x = 8.14$), the facilities and resources ($x = 8.14$), and the supervised experiences of practica/internship ($x = 8.14$). In considering the lowest ratings, student evaluation procedures ($x = 7.27$), professional skills taught ($x = 7.18$), and instructional classroom effectiveness ($x = 7.00$) received the lowest ratings. The overall standard deviation of the ratings of 1.71 indicated moderate variability.

*Table 1**Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of General Aspects of the Program by Graduates*

Question	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The duration (i.e., academic length) of the program(s)	22	8.50	1.23
The accessibility/availability of the program faculty	22	8.41	1.56
The faculty as mentors to you	22	8.14	1.98
The facilities and resources available for the program(s)	21	8.14	1.71
The supervised, field-based experiences (i.e., practica or internships) overall	22	8.14	1.52
The site host supervisors for supervised, field-based experiences	21	8.00	1.55
The on-campus, individual supervisors for supervised, field-based experiences	21	7.86	1.71
The program's curriculum (i.e., the curriculum in general)	22	7.64	1.29
The academic/professional knowledge taught to you	22	7.64	1.59
The in-program, on-campus supervised practice experiences	20	7.60	1.67
The on-campus, group supervisors for supervised field-based experiences	21	7.52	1.66
The academic advisement you received	22	7.46	1.99
The professional competence of the program faculty	22	7.39	2.09
The in-program student evaluation procedures	22	7.27	2.14
The professional skills taught to you	22	7.18	1.84
The instructional, classroom (i.e., teaching) effectiveness	22	7.00	1.77
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>7.74</i>	<i>1.71</i>

Table 2 presents data provided by the employers of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. The data focus on the general attributes of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. The attributes include such qualities as professionalism, dependability, relationships, professional development, general work attitudes, responsiveness, professional demeanor, sensitivity, and overall competence. As Table 2 indicates, the overall mean was 8.97 with the means scores ranging from a high of 9.42 to a low of 8.58. The items were rated on a 10-point scale (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). Employers gave their highest ratings to dependability ($x = 9.42$), responsiveness to supervision ($x = 9.25$), and professional/ethical/legal behavior ($x = 9.08$). Professional demeanor ($x = 8.83$), overall competence ($x = 8.58$), and multicultural/gender sensitivity ($x = 8.58$) received the lowest ratings from the employers. Since the highest possible rating is 10.0, the ratings of 8.83 and 8.58 were not low ratings. It appears that employers were very satisfied with the attributes exhibited by the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. The standard deviation of 0.92 reflected little variability.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of General Attributes of Program by Employers

<i>Question</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Dependability, conscientiousness and responsibility	12	9.42	0.67
Responsiveness to supervision, feedback, and/or suggestions	12	9.25	0.75
Professional, ethical and legal behavior	12	9.17	0.94
Professional development	12	9.08	0.79
General work attitude and enthusiasm	12	9.00	0.95
Relationships with other employees	12	8.83	0.94
Professional demeanor	12	8.83	1.11
Overall competence	12	8.58	0.90
Multicultural and gender sensitivity	12	8.58	1.24
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>8.97</i>	<i>0.92</i>

Table 3 presents the ratings by the graduates of the Counselor Education Program on cognitive or knowledge-based items. As Table 3 indicates the mean rating for the cognitive or knowledge-based aspects of the Counselor Education Program was 6.87 with all items receiving a mean of 5.55 or higher (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). This score indicates that the graduates were satisfied with the didactic aspects of the program and perceived their cognitive training to be above average. The highest ratings were ethics ($x = 8.32$), dysfunctional behavior ($x = 7.91$), and small group dynamics and counseling ($x = 7.82$). In contrast the lowest ratings were for case planning ($x = 5.80$), crisis intervention ($x = 5.59$), and counseling persons with special needs ($x = 5.55$). The standard deviation of 2.07 indicates that the variability of the ratings was in the moderate range.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of Knowledge Based Items by Graduates

<i>Question</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Ethical and legal issues in your profession	22	8.32	2.10
Dysfunctional behavior (abnormal)	22	7.91	1.31
Small group dynamics and counseling	22	7.82	1.97
Career and lifestyle counseling	22	7.50	1.79
Family counseling	20	7.40	1.23
Human growth and development	22	7.36	2.13
Large group dynamics and counseling	22	7.32	1.99
Theories of counseling (or student development)	22	7.18	2.11
Research and statistics	22	7.00	1.66
Accountability procedures	21	6.91	2.00
Theories of personality	22	6.77	2.05
Multicultural counseling	22	6.75	2.67
Professional credentialing	21	6.67	2.27
Professional organizations	22	6.59	2.30
Psychological (i.e., clinical) diagnosis	22	6.55	2.74
Standardized (i.e. group) testing	22	6.50	1.97
Consultation	22	6.05	2.40
Case planning/management	20	5.80	1.94
Crisis intervention/counseling	22	5.59	2.40
Counseling persons with special needs	22	5.55	2.41
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>6.87</i>	<i>2.07</i>

Table 4 presents the ratings of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program on skill-based items. As Table 4 indicates that the overall mean was 6.46 with no items being rated below 5.71 on a scale in which a score of 1 is low and a score of 10 is high. Based on the results exhibited in Table 4, the graduates rated their preparation as above average. The areas receiving the highest ratings were individual counseling ($x = 7.61$), group counseling ($x = 7.50$) and career/lifestyle counseling ($x = 7.14$). The areas receiving the lowest ratings were crisis intervention ($x = 5.86$), assessment ($x = 5.86$), counseling persons with special needs ($x = 5.73$), and case planning/management ($x = 5.71$). The lowest ratings were all above average, thus indicating the graduates rated their training as above average. The standard deviation was 2.11, thus indicating the variability of the ratings were in the moderate range.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of Skill Based Items by Graduates

<i>Question</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Individual counseling	22	7.61	1.63
Small group counseling	22	7.50	2.09
Career and lifestyle counseling	22	7.14	1.64
Large group counseling/guidance skills	22	6.86	2.15
Family counseling	21	6.71	1.82
Multicultural counseling	22	6.39	2.61
Clinical (psycho) diagnosis	22	6.23	2.49
Consultation	21	6.19	2.18
Child and adolescent counseling	22	6.18	1.79
Crisis intervention/counseling	22	5.86	2.30
Assessment	22	5.86	2.36
Counseling persons with special needs	22	5.73	2.10
Case planning/management	21	5.71	2.22
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>6.46</i>	<i>2.11</i>

Table 5 includes the ratings by the employers of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. The ratings focus on skill-based items. As Table 5 indicates the overall mean rating was 7.98 with means ranging from 6.88 to 8.50 on a scale in which 10 is high and 1 is low. The highest ratings were on child/adolescent counseling ($x = 8.50$), consultation ($x = 8.44$), and individual counseling ($x = 8.33$). The lowest ratings were on multicultural counseling ($x = 7.55$), career/lifestyle counseling ($x = 7.46$), and couples/marriage counseling ($x = 6.88$). As Table 5 indicates although some ratings were lower than others, all ratings were above average. The variability of the ratings fell in the low moderate range.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of Skill Based Items by Employers

<i>Question</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Child and adolescent counseling	10	8.50	1.72
Consultation	9	8.44	1.33
Individual counseling	12	8.33	1.37
Crisis intervention/counseling	12	8.33	1.19
Large group counseling and guidance skills	10	8.30	1.34
Small group counseling	9	8.22	1.30
Case planning and management	10	8.20	1.23
Counseling persons with special needs	11	8.09	1.30
Family counseling Assessment	10	7.90	1.60
Clinical (psycho) diagnosis	8	7.88	1.46
Assessment	10	7.60	1.58
Multicultural counseling	11	7.55	1.37
Career and lifestyle counseling	11	7.46	2.34
Couples/marriage counseling	8	6.88	1.46
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>7.98</i>	<i>1.47</i>

Table 6 presents ratings by employers. The employers rated the graduates of the Counselor Education Program on their professional knowledge. The overall mean on these items was 7.89 on a scale with 1 as low and 10 as high. Employers were most satisfied with the graduates' knowledge on ethical/legal issues ($x = 8.75$), professional credentialing ($x = 8.50$), and theories of counseling ($x = 8.36$). The employers were least satisfied with the graduates' knowledge of family counseling ($x = 7.30$), testing ($x = 7.25$), and research/statistics ($x = 6.80$). Although the above three areas received the lowest ratings, these scores were above average. The variability of the ratings fell in the low moderate range.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics from Ratings of Graduate's Professional Knowledge by Employers

<i>Question</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Ethical and legal issues	12	8.75	0.97
Professional credentialing	10	8.50	1.08
Theories of counseling (or student development)	11	8.36	1.03
Crisis intervention/counseling	12	8.33	1.67
Counseling persons with special needs	11	8.18	1.33
Consultation	9	8.11	1.62
Small group dynamics and counseling	11	8.00	1.34
Case planning and management	11	8.00	2.19
Accountability procedures	9	8.00	2.24
Large group dynamics and counseling	11	7.91	1.22
Human growth and development	10	7.90	1.45
Abnormal psychology	10	7.90	1.45
Professional organizations	10	7.80	1.55
Theories of personality	10	7.80	1.14
Psychological (i.e., clinical) diagnosis	8	7.75	1.83
Multicultural counseling	10	7.60	1.27
Career and lifestyle counseling	10	7.50	1.96
Family counseling	10	7.30	1.95
Standardized (e.g., group) testing	8	7.25	2.25
Research and statistics	10	6.80	1.32
<i>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</i>		<i>7.89</i>	<i>1.54</i>

The last two items on the Graduate Program Survey and the Employer of a Graduate Survey asked the graduates of the Counselor Education Program and the employers of the graduates to list the strengths of the program and opportunities for improvement. In reviewing the strengths of the program, the graduates listed the good teaching presented by some of the faculty, support offered by faculty, mentoring from faculty, availability of faculty, accreditation by CACREP, and opportunity for hours to apply toward LPC licensure. The employers listed the strengths of the graduates as dependable, professional, organized, responsive to supervision, eager to learn, having good rapport with clients, and having a good attitude.

In reviewing areas for improvement, the graduates of the Counselor Education Program stated they would like more training in assessment, diagnosis, techniques, crisis intervention counseling children with special techniques, more opportunities to visit sites, and more opportunities to practice counseling skills. A few graduates expressed concern about some faculty's classroom delivery. In addition, a few students mentioned the need for improvement in aspects of the school counseling program. The Employers of the Graduate Survey listed the following as areas for improvement: more experiences with assessment, treatment planning, and diagnosis.

Summary

The data presented in this report were obtained from two questionnaires, The Counselor Education Program Graduate Survey and The Employer of a Program Graduate Survey. As the titles indicate, the first survey was completed by the graduates of the Counselor Education Program and the second survey was completed by the employers of the graduates.

The survey completed by the graduates contained a total of 66 items. On items 1-64, the graduates responded to each item using a 10-point Likert scale in which a score of 1 is the lowest

score, and a score of 10 is the highest score. Items 65 and 66 asked the graduates to identify the strengths of the program and opportunities for improvement.

The survey completed by the employers of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program contained 50 items. On Items 1-48, the employers responded to questions by using a 10-point Likert scale in which 1 is a low score while 10 is a high score. Items 49 and 50 asked the employer to identify the strengths of the program and opportunities for improvement. Following the return of the questionnaires, the data were analyzed and placed into 6 tables. The tables contain information provided by the graduates and employers on the general aspects of the program, attributes of the program, cognitive knowledge, specific skills, course skill information, and professional knowledge. Using a 10-point Likert scale, (1 = low, 10 = high) the overall means on the 6 tables ranged from 6.46 (skill-based items rated by graduates) to 8.97 (general attributes rated by employers), thus indicating that the overall means were above average in all areas surveyed. Although there were areas for improvement, a perusal of the data reveals scores that were consistently high with all ratings on the individual items above an average rating of 5. Based on these data, it is evident that both graduates of the Counselor Education Program and the employers of these graduates view the program as meeting its goal of training competent counselors.

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Appendix A
Program Graduate Survey

Appendix B

Employer of Program Graduate Survey