

Program Evaluation  
Counselor Education  
College of Education  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, TX

The need for program evaluation in higher education generally (Astin, 1991; Banta, 1988; Gray and Diamond, 1989; Jennings, 1989) and counselor education specifically (Engels & Wilborn, 1984; Hadley & Mitchell, 1995; Osborne & House, 1995; Sayers, Carroll and Loesch, 1996) is well-documented in the literature. In all instances, the literature contains information documenting the need for systematic program evaluation. While program improvement was the most frequently cited need/reason for conducting program evaluation, other frequent reasons include (a) accountability required by accreditation bodies, (b) compliance with state departments of education, (c) information to make available to students (prospective and current students), (d) curriculum changes and (e) the opportunity to have a dialogue with graduates of the program and the employers of these graduates.

While total consensus does not exist regarding all of the components of program evaluation, researchers agree on some of the basic components. For example, Ewell (1987) suggested that the quality of a program must contain more than faculty perceptions. He stated that program assessment must include information from students graduating from the program, employers of the graduates and the public. Engels and Wilborn (1984), Osborne and House (1995) and Sayers, Carroll and Loesch (1996) advocated that effective program evaluation must involve the collection of data from graduates and other sources.

Following a review of the literature and telephone calls to obtain information about the practice of program evaluation by other counselor education programs, the Counselor Education Program at Texas Tech University decided to use assessment inventories developed by Sayers, Carroll & Loesch (1996). The Counselor Education Program faculty at Texas Tech University agreed that the purpose of the program evaluation would not only be to collect information expected by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), but in addition, the faculty wanted to obtain information that would assist in making current curricular decisions as well as future program decisions. Using this basic purpose, the faculty decided to distribute assessment inventories to program graduates and employers of the program graduates.

#### Assessment Inventories

All graduates of the Counselor Education program at Texas Tech from 1998-2000 were mailed two questionnaires (see Appendix A) to assess their evaluations and perceptions of the program. The questionnaires were titled the Program Graduate Survey and the Employer of a Program Graduate Survey. The Program Graduate Survey, a survey completed by graduates, consists of 66 items as follows: 15 demographic items, 16 items pertaining to general aspects of the program, 20 items on knowledge areas of the program, and 13 items on skill development in the program. The graduates were instructed to respond to the 64 items using a 10-point Likert Scale (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). The remaining two items asked the graduates to respond by listing the program's strengths and the areas in which the program needs improvement. The Graduates of the Counselor Education Program were also mailed a survey, the Employer of a Program Graduate Survey, to give to their employers. The Employer of a Program Graduate Survey consists of 50 items as follows: 5 items describing the employing agency, 20 items 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 general attributes. The employers were instructed to respond to 48 items by using a 10-point Likert Scale (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). The remaining two items asked the employers to respond by listing the areas in which the graduates exhibited strengths and areas in which the graduate's professional preparation could be improved.

#### Results

Table 1 presents the mean ratings provided by the graduates on the general aspects of the Counselor Education Program at Texas Tech University. As Table 1 indicates, the overall mean was 7.62 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good), and all items were rated above 6.74, thus indicating that students are very satisfied with the general aspects of the program and perceive their education as definitely above average. In perusing Table 1, it is evident that students are most satisfied with the duration of the program, ( $x = 8.32$ ), and accessibility/availability of faculty, ( $x = 8.21$ ). In considering the lowest ratings, students were least satisfied with academic advising and available facilities and resources. However, with means of 6.74 and 6.79, respectively, these scores did not represent low ratings, but instead, indicated that all general aspects of the program were rated well above average. The overall standard deviation of the ratings, 1.78, indicated moderate variability.

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

| Question  | N  | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|----|------|--------------------|
| The duration (i.e., academic length) of the program                             | 19 | 8.32 | 1.11               |
| The accessibility/availability of program faculty                               | 19 | 8.21 | 1.23               |
| The on-campus, group supervisors for field-based experiences                    | 18 | 8.00 | 1.5                |
| The instructional, classroom (i.e., teaching) effectiveness                     | 18 | 8.00 | 1.68               |
| The professional competence of the program faculty                              | 19 | 7.95 | 1.96               |
| The supervised, field-based experiences (i.e., practica or internships) overall | 19 | 7.89 | 1.91               |
| The on-site supervisors for supervised field-based experiences                  | 19 | 7.79 | 2.18               |
| The program's curriculum (i.e., the curriculum in general)                      | 19 | 7.74 | 1.66               |
| The faculty as mentors to you   | 19 | 7.63 | 2.06               |
| The academic/professional knowledge taught to you                               | 19 | 7.58 | 1.61               |
| The on-campus, individual supervisors for field-based experiences               | 19 | 7.53 | 1.87               |
| The in-program, on-campus supervised practice experiences                       | 19 | 7.42 | 1.95               |
| The professional skills taught to you   | 19 | 7.26 | 1.97               |
| The in-program student evaluation process                                       | 19 | 6.89 | 1.82               |
| The facilities and resources available to the program(s)                        | 19 | 6.79 | 1.75               |
| The academic advisement you received  | 19 | 6.74 | 2.23               |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation   |    | 7.62 | 1.78               |

Table 2 presents data provided by the employers of the graduates on the general attributes of the graduates of the Counselor Education Program. As Table 2 indicates, the overall mean was 9.51, and no items were rated below 9.30 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). Employers expressed their highest ratings with the general work attitude/enthusiasm ( $\bar{x} = 9.80$ ) and professional/ethical/legal behavior ( $\bar{x} = 9.70$ ) exhibited by the graduate. Overall competence and gender sensitivity were rated lowest with means of 9.30 and 9.40, respectively. However, it should be noted that the highest rating is 10.0 and responses above 9.0 are very high ratings. Thus, employers are very satisfied with the graduates of the Counselor Education Program and their attributes. In addition, the ratings reflected little variability.

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics From Ratings of General Attributes of Program by Employers

| Question                            | N  | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|----|------|--------------------|
| Professional/ethical/legal behavior | 10 | 9.70 | 0.48               |
| Dependability                       | 10 | 9.60 | 0.84               |

|   |    |      |      |
|---|----|------|------|
| Relationship with other employees                           | 10 | 9.50 | 0.71 |
| Professional development                                    | 10 | 9.50 | 0.85 |
| General work Attitude/Enthusiasm                            | 10 | 9.80 | 0.42 |
| Responsiveness to supervision, feedback, and/or suggestions | 10 | 9.40 | 0.97 |
| Professional demeanor                                       | 10 | 9.40 | 0.84 |
| Multicultural and gender sensitivity                        | 10 | 9.40 | 0.84 |
| Overall competence  | 10 | 9.30 | 0.95 |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation                         |    | 9.51 | 0.77 |

Table 3 presents the ratings of graduates with regard to cognitive items. As Table 3 indicates the mean rating for the cognitive (e.g., knowledge based) aspects of the program was 7.16 with all items in Table 3 being rated above 5.89 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). This rating indicates that students are satisfied with the didactic aspects of the program and perceive their knowledge as definitely being above average. The highest rated knowledge based items were abnormal psychology (x = 8.50) and ethical and legal issues (x = 8.42). As Table 3 further indicates, students are very satisfied with the preparation obtained in their classes. The lowest rated knowledge based items were case planning, (x = 5.94) and consultation, (x = 5.89). Although these were the lowest rated areas, they were rated above average. The variability of the ratings fell in the moderate range.

Table 3  
Descriptive Statistics From Ratings of Knowledge Based Items by Graduates

| Question  | N  | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|----|------|--------------------|
| Abnormal psychology                             | 18 | 8.50 | 1.25               |
| Ethical and legal issues in your profession     | 19 | 8.42 | 1.43               |
| Career and lifestyle counseling                 | 18 | 8.39 | 1.69               |
| Small group dynamics and counseling             | 19 | 8.26 | 1.59               |
| Large group dynamics and counseling             | 18 | 7.83 | 1.89               |
| Theories of counseling (or student development) | 19 | 7.74 | 2.13               |
| Human growth and development                    | 19 | 7.74 | 2.09               |
| Research and statistics                         | 19 | 7.62 | 2.23               |
| Psychological (i.e., clinical) diagnosis        | 19 | 7.58 | 1.74               |
| Multicultural counseling                        | 19 | 7.21 | 1.90               |
| Theories of personality                         | 19 | 7.16 | 2.14               |
| Professional credentialing                      | 19 | 6.79 | 2.55               |
| Professional organizations                      | 19 | 6.58 | 2.41               |
| Accountability procedures                       | 18 | 6.44 | 2.36               |
| Standardized (i.e., group) testing              | 18 | 6.33 | 2.68               |
| Family counseling                               | 19 | 6.61 | 2.48               |

|                                       |    |      |      |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|------|
| Crisis intervention/counseling        | 18 | 6.11 | 2.42 |
| Counseling persons with special needs | 19 | 5.95 | 2.68 |
| Case planning/management              | 18 | 5.94 | 2.24 |
| Consultation                          | 19 | 5.89 | 2.38 |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation   |    | 7.16 | 2.11 |

Table 4 presents the graduates' rating of skill-based items. Table 4 reveals an overall mean of 6.77 with no items being rated below 5.56 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good). Therefore, the graduates rated their preparation as above average. Graduates rated their preparation in individual counseling, (x = 8.37) and small group counseling (x = 8.21) highest, thus indicating they perceived themselves to be very well prepared in these areas. The lowest rated skill-based items were family counseling, (x = 5.78) and consultation, (x = 5.56), again indicating that even the lowest ratings were above average. The variability of ratings fell in the moderate range.

Table 4  
Descriptive Statistics From Ratings of Skill Based Items by Graduates

| Question                               | N  | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|----|------|--------------------|
| Individual counseling                  | 19 | 8.37 | 1.34               |
| Small group counseling                 | 19 | 8.21 | 1.72               |
| Career and lifestyle counseling        | 19 | 8.05 | 1.47               |
| Clinical (psycho) diagnosis            | 19 | 7.32 | 2.29               |
| Large group counseling/guidance skills | 18 | 7.00 | 2.22               |
| Multicultural counseling               | 19 | 6.79 | 2.25               |
| Child and adolescent counseling        | 17 | 6.53 | 1.66               |
| Assessment                             | 19 | 6.37 | 2.59               |
| Counseling persons with special needs  | 19 | 6.32 | 2.58               |
| Case planning/management               | 18 | 5.89 | 2.42               |
| Crisis intervention/counseling         | 17 | 5.88 | 1.93               |
| Family counseling                      | 18 | 5.78 | 2.6                |
| Consultation                           | 18 | 5.56 | 2.18               |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation    |    | 6.77 | 2.00               |

In reviewing Table 5 which includes the employers' ratings of skill based items, the overall mean is 8.65 with all items in Table 5 rated above 8.00 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good) thus indicating that employers reported high satisfaction with the graduates' skills. Employers were most satisfied with graduates' skills in individual counseling and small group counseling; these skill areas had means of 9.25 and 9.00, respectively. Although employers rated multicultural counseling (x = 8.14) and career and lifestyle counseling (x = 8.00) lowest, these are by no means low scores but instead clearly indicate that employers are very satisfied with the graduates' skills. Employer's ratings fell in a relatively narrow range of variability.

Table 5  
Descriptive Strategies From Ratings of Skill Based Items by Employers

| Question                              | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|--------------------|
| Individual counseling                 | 8 | 9.25 | 0.71               |
| Small group counseling                | 7 | 9.00 | 1.15               |
| Crisis intervention/counseling        | 8 | 9.00 | 0.93               |
| Clinical (psycho) diagnosis           | 8 | 9.00 | 0.98               |
| Counseling persons with special needs | 7 | 9.00 | 1.07               |
| Consultation                          | 7 | 8.75 | 1.93               |
| Family counseling                     | 4 | 8.75 | 0.98               |
| Assessment                            | 6 | 8.50 | 1.87               |
| Large group counseling/guidance       | 7 | 8.43 | 1.27               |
| Child and adolescent counseling       | 7 | 8.43 | 1.40               |
| Case planning/management              | 7 | 8.43 | 1.72               |
| Couple/family counseling              | 5 | 8.40 | 1.14               |
| Multicultural counseling              | 7 | 8.14 | 1.07               |
| Career and lifestyle counseling       | 6 | 8.00 | 1.41               |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation   |   | 8.65 | 1.30               |

A review of Table 6 demonstrates that employers of graduates of the Counselor Education Program at TTU are very satisfied with their employees' professional knowledge. The overall mean on these items is 8.57 (1 = low/poor, 10 = high/very good), and all items were rated above 7.75. Employers were most satisfied with graduates' knowledge of ethical and legal issues ( $x = 9.56$ ) and crisis intervention/counseling ( $x = 9.13$ ). Although employers rated standardized testing ( $x = 8.00$ ) and multicultural counseling weakest ( $x = 7.75$ ), these ratings indicate that employers are very satisfied with graduates' professional knowledge in these areas. The variability of ratings fell in the moderate range.

Table 6  
Descriptive Statistics From Ratings of Graduate's Professional Knowledge by Employers

| Question                            | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|---|------|--------------------|
| Ethical and legal issues            | 9 | 9.56 | 0.73               |
| Crisis intervention/counseling      | 8 | 9.13 | 0.83               |
| Small group dynamics and leadership | 7 | 9.00 | 1.00               |
| Theories of counseling              | 8 | 8.75 | 0.89               |
| Professional credentialing          | 8 | 8.75 | 1.16               |
| Professional organizations          | 8 | 8.75 | 1.04               |
| Family counseling                   | 7 | 8.71 | 1.25               |

|  |   |      |      |
|--|---|------|------|
| Consultation                             | 9 | 8.67 | 1.32 |
| Counseling persons with special needs    | 8 | 8.63 | 1.77 |
| Psychological (e.g., clinical) diagnosis | 7 | 8.57 | 0.98 |
| Large group dynamics and counseling      | 6 | 8.50 | 1.22 |
| Abnormal psychology                      | 6 | 8.50 | 0.84 |
| Accountability procedures                | 7 | 8.43 | 1.72 |
| Research and statistics                  | 7 | 8.43 | 1.90 |
| Human growth and development             | 8 | 8.38 | 1.60 |
| Case planning and management             | 6 | 8.33 | 1.51 |
| Career and lifestyle counseling          | 7 | 8.00 | 1.29 |
| Standardized (e.g., group) testing       | 6 | 8.00 | 3.10 |
| Multicultural counseling                 | 7 | 7.75 | 1.72 |
| Overall Mean and Standard Deviation      |   | 8.57 | 1.90 |

The last two items on both the Program Graduate Survey and the Employer of a Graduate Survey asked the graduates and the employers of the graduates to list the strengths of the program and opportunities for improvement. In reviewing comments about the strengths of the program, the graduates said that the class structure was good and class content was beneficial. Other strengths cited by students were expert, knowledgeable faculty, practical information given in the classes, and good individual and group supervision experiences. Students also stated that they were well-prepared to enter the counseling profession. The employers listed such strengths as graduates were well-prepared, had good knowledge of the counseling profession, and good knowledge of counseling techniques. They further described the graduates as dependable, competent, committed, professionally oriented and skilled in the implementation of techniques. In reviewing areas for improvement, the graduates stated that they would like more preparation in assessment, consultation, multicultural counseling, private practice, psychopharmacology, school counseling, supervision and substance abuse. Additionally the students wanted more financial support. The employers listed such areas for improvement as assessment, child counseling, family counseling, individual counseling, treatment and diagnosis, and psychopharmacology.

#### Summary

In summary, the data presented in this report were obtained from two questionnaires. One of the questionnaires was completed by the graduates of the Counselor Education Program, and the other questionnaire was completed by the employers of the graduates. In responding to the items on the questionnaire, graduates and employers responded by using a 10-point Likert Scale in which 1 represents the lowest score and 10 represents the highest score. Following the collection of the data, the data were analyzed and presented in 6 tables. The tables contain information on the general aspects of the Counselor Education Program, attributes of the graduates, cognitive knowledge, specific skills, professional knowledge of the graduates, strengths of the program and areas for improvement. Although there are opportunities for improvement, a perusal of the data reveal scores that were consistently high, and in fact, all ratings in all areas were above average.

### References

- Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence*. New York: Macmillan.
- Banta, T. W. (Ed.) (1988). *Implementing outcomes assessment: Promise and peril*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Engels, D. W., & Wilborn, B. L. (1984). Surveying graduating students and graduates of counselor education programs: Instruments, rationale, and genesis. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 23, 234-243.
- Ewell, P. T. (1987). Establishing a campus-based assessment program. In D.F. Halpern (Ed.), *Student outcomes assessment: What institutions stand to gain* (pp. 9-26). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gray, P. J., & Diamond, R. M. (1989). Improving higher education: The need for a broad view of assessment. In P.J. Gray (Ed.), *Achieving assessment goals using evaluation techniques* (pp. 89-109). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hadley, R. G., & Mitchell, L. K. (1995). *Counseling research and program evaluation*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Jennings, E. T. (1989). Accountability, program quality, outcome assessment and graduate education for public affairs administration. *Public Administration Review*, 49, 438-446.
- Osborne, J. L., & House, R. M. (1995). Evaluation of counselor education programs: A proposed plan. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 34, 253-269.
- Sayers, R. D., Carroll J. J., & Loesch, L. C. (1996). Follow-up survey for counselor preparation program graduates and their employers. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 35, 179-189.