

**Program Review
2006-07 Planning and Review Committee**

I. Degree: MS Mental Health Counseling

Program Director: Dr. Gary Rockwood

PRC Consultant(s): Charlie Baird and Heidi Rabeneck

Purpose of the Review: The review was conducted to assess the quality of the M.S. in Mental Health Counseling degree program as part of the ongoing seven-year review cycle of every UW-Stout program.

Committee Findings: The PRC recommends continuation of this program through the next scheduled review in 2013-14, and that the recommendations made by the committee are implemented.

II. Abstract:

The M.S. in Mental Health Counseling program prepares students for careers in the mental health counseling field and in a variety of settings, including community mental health centers, psychiatric hospitals, alcohol and drug treatment facilities, university counseling centers, and others. The program is predicated on students having already received their bachelor degrees in related fields, such as psychology, human development, sociology and rehabilitation. Undergraduate degrees in mental health counseling do not exist. The Mental Health Counseling program expands on the undergraduate knowledge base, and provides students with an experiential and knowledge base in counseling process and skills, diagnostic and assessment abilities, understanding of human and career development issues, and research knowledge. State certification and licensing criteria require that an individual has an earned master's degree.

The Mental Health Counseling program includes two program options for students; a 48-credit Community Mental Health/Agency Counseling option and a 60-credit Clinical Mental Health Counseling option. Both options are designed to meet Wisconsin state credentialing requirements and prepare students for the National Counselor Examination. In addition, the 60-credit Clinical Mental Health Counseling program option allows the opportunity for students, if interested, to develop specialized areas of training through various concentrations. These concentration areas include: Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling, Career Counseling, Child and Adolescent Counseling, Eating Disorders, Gerontological Counseling, and Health Psychology Counseling. The concentrations include advanced internship experience in agencies which provide training specific to the concentration area.

In addition to courses, the Mental Health Counseling program requires a significant amount of supervised clinical experience. The 48-credit Community Mental Health/Agency Counseling program requires 600 hours of Mental Health Counseling Internship experience. Students selecting the 60-credit Clinical Mental Health Counseling program option will complete the Professional Core Requirements and engage in a 900-hour internship experience.

The demand for graduates of the program has been strong in the past decade, and this level of demand is anticipated in the future. Due to Wisconsin licensure criteria, however, new graduates are having some difficulty at first obtaining employment.

This criteria, which requires 3,000 hours of supervised counseling experience in not less than two years in order to obtain the Licensure as Professional Counselors credential. Primarily due to billing and reimbursement required by insurance companies, some mental health agencies are unable to hire counselors who are not already licensed. This puts new graduates entering the field at a disadvantage. Once licensed, on the other hand, the program graduate survey has consistently indicated a 90-100% employment rate for graduates of the program. The most recent university survey indicated 100% of the graduates surveyed had obtained a job related to the program.

It is recommended that the M.S. in Mental Health Counseling continue as a degree program at UW-Stout and that recommendations made by the committee be implemented to further strengthen the program.

III. Process Followed for Current Review:

The PRC Chair met with the dean, program director and chair of the primary department to discuss the review process. The PRC consultants also spoke with the program director at various intervals to review the procedures and offer assistance. Under guidelines developed by the PRC, data regarding several aspects of the program were collected from students, key instructors within and outside the department, program committee members, and program graduates through surveys. The data were analyzed and returned to the program director and PRC members. There were 20 students who participated in the survey. In addition, 3 key instructors within the department and 4 key instructors from outside the department responded, along with 11 program committee members and 15 program graduates. Using this data, the program director completed the self-study report. The consultants then wrote a draft document summarizing the consultants' analysis of these surveys, institutional data, and the program directors self-study report that was distributed to the PRC with recommendations as deemed appropriate. On March 23, 2007, the program director presented a summary of his report to the committee and had an opportunity to address concerns. The Chair from the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling and the Dean from the College of Human Development were also available to answer questions. After the committee discussed and approved the consultant-based report, it was then forwarded to the dean for response. The PRC reviewed the dean's response, approved the recommendation report, and forwarded the report to the Faculty Senate.

IV. Previous Review:

Previous Recommendations

The previous PRC review of the M.S. Guidance and Counseling Program – Mental Health Counseling Concentration was conducted during academic year 1995-96. That report was written by Julie Furst-Bowe and Randy Upchurch and the committee's recommendations as well as the applicable responses are submitted below:

Recommendation #1

The program director is encouraged to pursue the concept of creating a separate degree program from each of the two concentrations, Mental Health Counseling and K-12 School Counseling, as each of these programs has separate objectives and curriculum.

Response:

An evaluation will be made to see if this recommendation is feasible.

Summation of Consultants:

In 2001, the Mental Health Counseling program was split from Guidance & Counseling and approved to become a "stand alone" program. It was renamed Mental Health Counseling (48 or 60 credits) and the program went into effect in 2002.

Recommendation #2

The program needs to make a decision as to whether it will pursue CACREP accreditation. A thorough study of the benefits of accreditation and the resources needed to achieve CACREP accreditation should be conducted.

Response:

Both deans are supportive of seeking accreditation through CACREP for this program. A committee will be formed to begin planning for this certification. Since the Mental Health Counseling program, supported in the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling, is also in pursuit of this accreditation, it would seem more efficient to form an overall CACREP Committee to analyze resource and program change needs for both programs. There have already been several meetings on this issue. Students in the Mental Health Counseling program made a strong appeal, and a follow-up meeting with faculty from the program was held. It was recommended by the dean that someone from the School Counseling (Guidance and Counseling) program also be included in subsequent meetings so that this process could move forward together. There was overall agreement to this strategy. I would recommend that there be co-chairs for this committee, the program director for each program: Dr. Denise Zirkle and Dr. Gary Rockwood. It is also a concern that this committee, as it moved forward, realizes the significant resource this accreditation will demand during this time of unprecedented budget cutbacks.

Summation of Consultants:

This recommendation still has not been brought about. However, the program Director has recently begin a self-study report for CACREP accreditation and it seems that the major hurdle would be in getting resources to hire one additional full-time faculty member.

Recommendation #3

The program needs to begin collecting specific data from Mental Health Counseling graduates regarding their perceptions of the program. Follow-up studies should be conducted at regular intervals. Data of this nature were not available for this review.

Response:

Now that Mental Health Counseling is a standalone program, appropriate data from graduates of the program will be collected as soon as it is feasible to do so.

Summation of Consultants:

UW-Stout graduate one-year follow-up surveys were conducted in both 2002 and in 2004.

V. Program Review:

Program Strengths	Source
1. The Mental Health Counseling Program has both a 48-credit and a 60-credit program option. Over 90% of UW-Stout students choose the 60-credit option. This is the only program in Wisconsin to offer the 60-credit program	Program director self-study
2. The program is very experiential in nature, good hands-on training	Program director self-study, student survey, advisory committee survey, and key instructor within the department survey
3. Quality of instruction, knowledgeable and caring professors and program director	Program director self-study, student survey, advisory committee survey, key instructor within the department survey, and key instructor outside the department survey
4. Excellent laboratory facilities. Cameras and one-way viewing mirrors for observing body behavior	Program director self-study, student survey
5. Strong core curriculum	Program director self-study, student survey, advisory committee survey, key instructor within the department survey, and key instructor outside the department survey
6. Offers coursework that goes beyond state and national requirements	Program director self-study
7. Offers a variety of concentrations (currently six) from which students can choose	Program director self-study, student survey
8. There is a 900-hour internship experience. Two semesters are required	Program director self-study, student survey
9. Graduates are employed in their field	Program director self-study
10. Offers coursework for other inter-active programs. Works well with other departments	Program director self-study

Issues of Concern	Source
1. Not accredited through CACREP	Program director self-study, student survey, advisory committee survey, key instructor within the department survey, and key instructor outside the department survey

2. Development of a practicum class. This is a requirement for CACREP-the program needs this practicum (limit of 5 students per section) before the internship requirement.	Program director self-study
3. Students would like more detailed information related to licensure. They feel they do not have enough direction to find the essential information.	Program director self-study, student survey
4. Students expressed concern about some of the concentration areas (primarily eating disorders). Course materials need updating.	Program director self-study, student survey
5. More orientation, assistance, and professional development opportunities are needed for internship site supervisors.	Program director self-study

Recommendations for the Program Director of the MS Mental Health Counseling Program

1. It is recommended that the MS Mental Health Counseling program continue the process to seek CACREP accreditation.
2. It is recommended that the Program Director seek and provide more detailed information related to licensure for students. Students need more direction on how to find this essential information.
3. It is recommended that the Program Director work with the Department Chair to enhance and update the six concentration areas and course materials throughout the program.
4. It is recommended that the Program Director work with the College of Human Development to access and provide more orientation, assistance, and professional development opportunities for internship site supervisors. This will enhance the quality of the student internship experience. A workshop on counselor supervision could be hosted by UW-Stout for the Mental Health Counseling program internship supervisors.

Recommendations for the Chair of the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling

1. It is recommended that the MS Mental Health Counseling program continue the process to seek CACREP accreditation and look at resources needed to fulfill the additional practicum course required for accreditation. Funding for a faculty position to instruct the practicum course is essential to the continued success of this program.
2. It is recommended that the Department Chair work with the Program Director to plan the development and staffing of a practicum class as required for CACREP accreditation. This practicum (limit of 5 students for each section) is needed before the internship requirement.

Recommendations for the Dean of the College of Human Development

1. It is recommended that the MS Mental Health Counseling program continue the process to seek CACREP accreditation and look at resources needed to fulfill the additional practicum course required for accreditation. Providing funding for a faculty position to instruct the practicum course required by CACREP accreditation is essential to the continued success of this program.
2. It is recommended that the Dean work with and support the Department Chair and Program Director in all above mentioned recommendations.