

**2011 – 2012 APSU Teacher Unit
Annual Program Review (APR) Report
MS IN COUNSELING
SCHOOL COUNSELING CONCENTRATION**

I. School Counseling Graduate Program

II. Annual Program Reviewers

Program Reviewers consist of the Department of Psychology Chair and Faculty Members:

Dr. Sam Fung, Psychology Department Chair

Dr. Deborah Buchanan

Dr. Shunda Brown

Dr. Stuart Bonnington

Dr. Regina Kakhnovets

Dr. Nicole Knickmeyer

III. Program Description

The School Counseling concentration within the Master's of Science degree Counseling Program is designed to prepare graduates for school counseling positions at elementary, middle/junior high and high school levels. Through a 48-50-credit curriculum, the School Counseling Program prepares school counselors to serve as advocates, educational leaders, team members, counselors, and consultants to maximize opportunities for every student to succeed academically. Graduates completing their degree in School Counseling will meet the current licensing requirements for the Tennessee Board of Education. The curriculum requirements include coursework, a 600-hour internship, and school observation hours for those who do not have teaching experience. Students completing the school counseling concentration are eligible for Tennessee certification as school counselors pending their passing of the Praxis Exam. The program works to follow the standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the Tennessee Department of Education's Comprehensive School Counseling Standards, as well as meets the credentialing requirements established by the National Board of Certified Counselors.

IV. Changes in Program

Counseling faculty have been engaged in a review of our program in light of national trends in the counseling profession and licensure, as well as the desire to attract more well-qualified applicants. Consequently, changes were made to *PSY 5410/5411* and *PSY 5420/5421* to address curriculum redundancies which will result in a more efficient use of faculty resources while simultaneously enhancing the training experiences of students.

We have merged *PSY 5410: Counseling Techniques* and *PSY 5411: Skill Development in Counseling* content into one course, *PSY 5410: Counseling Techniques*. Faculty determined that these two courses cover the same content and that we can more efficiently cover this content area (basic counseling skill development) by requiring one course instead of two. This will free up faculty resources to teach other courses in the graduate program and allow us to increase enrollment by freeing up faculty to offer additional sections of core courses. *PSY 5420: Advanced Counseling Techniques* and *PSY 5421: Advanced Skill Development in Counseling* were also merged into one course, *PSY 5420: Advanced Counseling Techniques*, for the same reasons as *PSY 5410/PSY 5411*. *PSY 5420* serves as an advanced techniques course in which students further develop their counseling skills through applied (practice sessions with 1-2 “volunteer” clients) and didactic experiences. The course description for *PSY 5420* was slightly modified to reflect the content and process of this course.

In addition to the noted revisions to *PSY 5410/5411* and *PSY 5420/5421*, the School Counseling Program created two additional required courses: *PSY 5160: Counseling Children and Adolescents* and *PSY 5150: Legal and Ethical Issues in School Counseling*. As a result of eliminating *PSY 5411* and *PSY 5421* from the Program of Study, the School Counseling Program now has the opportunity to provide more specialized training by creating two new courses. With the exception of practicum and internship, the School Counseling program currently offers only one specialty course, *PSY 6015: Foundations of School Counseling*. While *PSY 6015* is a strong foundational course, all important aspects of school counseling cannot be addressed in one course. The new courses will fill important gaps in graduate students’ training and address the specialty area requirements of CACREP for school counseling programs. More importantly, students will be prepared for internship and employment in school settings where knowledge of children and adolescent counseling interventions, and legal and ethical issues are a necessity.

All aforementioned changes have been adopted and will be implemented during the 2012-2013 academic year. Faculty will continue to monitor and evaluate student development to find better ways to address the academic needs of students. Changes will be made accordingly.

V. Program Strengths

According to the Evaluation of Professional Personnel by Administrators, new school counseling professionals have an adequate understanding of the professional knowledge expected in their fields. Moreover, new professionals know their students, families, and communities; use current research to inform their practices; create positive environments for student learning; appreciate and positively support the diversity of students, families, and communities; and, demonstrate professional dispositions.

The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) was administered April, 2012. All students passed the exam. Overall, faculty members are pleased with the performance of our students on the CPCE. This serves as a validation of our efforts to prepare future professional counselors.

VI. Program Weaknesses

The results from the Professional Personnel Evaluation survey suggest that new school counseling professionals could make improvements in the following areas: (a) explain principles and concepts delineate in professional, state and institutional standards and (b) understand and build upon the developmental levels of students with whom they work.

Student scores on the “Appraisal” domain of the CPCE continue to be an area of weakness. The scores for the “Career and Life Development” domain were slightly lower, as well. Discussion will follow in the next section.

VII. Assessment of Candidates

During the 2011-2012 school year, seven (7) students completed the School Counseling master’s degree program (Milestone IV). All of these students passed the CPCE. Additionally, all students were required to receive a passing score on the PRAXIS II and consequently, qualified for licensure as a PreK-12 school counselor in Tennessee.

A group of students was administered the CPCE during the 2011 – 2012 academic year. Students’ scores were compared to current CPCE national norms. The results indicated that the students scored (Mean = 94.2; S.D. = 9.12) above the national level (Mean = 91.75; S.D. = 14.95). Students scored slightly lower than the national mean in the Career and Life Development domain, though no significant difference was noted. Faculty will add more objective testing to *PSY 5600: Theories and Techniques in Career Development*, the course tailored to specifically address this domain. Progress will be monitored. The ‘Appraisal’ content area continues to receive the lowest score; however, this is still reflected in the national scores. It is important to note that all of the students who took the CPCE exam had already taken the core ‘Appraisal’ class, *PSY 5190: Psychological Assessment*, prior to implementing changes. Therefore, the efficacy of this class is yet to be determined.

The evaluations from Field Supervisors (Licensed School Counselors) consistently rate Interns between 4-5 points on a 5-point Likert-scale internship evaluation form. According to site supervisors’ ratings, instruction prior to the internship experience was deemed adequate. The data reveal that supervisors, in general, find students to possess sufficient knowledge and skills for successful internship and supervision experiences. Clinical supervision (planning, implementation and evaluation of guidance activities, acceptance of diversity, and administrative supervision (i.e., working relationships with staff, organizational skills,

planning, implementing, evaluating activities, collecting data to monitor effectiveness, etc.), and developmental supervision (i.e., self-awareness, integrity, commitment, respect, etc.)

There are currently twenty-four (24) students enrolled in the School Counseling Master's degree program and two (2) enrolled in the Educational Specialist program (School Counseling concentration). Twelve (12) students have fulfilled the requirements of Milestone II, having completed the admission process and submitted their Program of Study, which is required during their first semester in the School Counseling Program. Additionally, students have successfully completed *PSY 5410: Counseling Techniques* and *PSY 5000: Research Methods*, which serves to address the Research Literacy Paper requirement. Eleven (11) students have completed Milestone I and have met the requirements to be admitted in the School Counseling Program.

VIII. Assessment of Program Operations

The program continues to have selective admission for candidates. Applicants who are admitted typically have a GPA of 3.0 or above and/or new version GRE scores on Verbal and Quantitative sections of 142 or above. A variety of factors are taken into account in admissions including undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and interview. We continue to seek diversity in our student population and currently have students from various cultural backgrounds (20 Caucasian; 3 African-American; and 1 Asian American). All students must pass the PRAXIS II and CPCE before they receive their degree.

Program faculty are working closely with APSU's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) to increase alumni survey response rates by making the Program Alumni Survey available via the internet. Exit surveys will also be issued in *PSY 5725* to increase participation. Survey results will determine how many graduates have secured school counseling positions and their places of employment. The data will also be used to gauge alumni perceptions and expectations in order to create a more effective counselor training program. Also, an Employer Survey has been revised and is scheduled to be available online October, 2012.

IX. Summary of Proposed Changes

As a result of program review and the weaknesses previously noted on the Professional Personnel survey, faculty have added two (2) new specialty courses: *PSY 5150: Ethical and Legal Issues in School Counseling* and *PSY 5160: Counseling Children and Adolescents*. *PSY 5150* will be designed to examine the professional, ethical and legal issues that impact the practice of the professional school counselor. Emphasis is placed upon the understanding and application of ethical standards and legal statutes that affect school counselors when making critical decisions in a school setting. Course content will also be tailored to "explain

principles and concepts delineated in professional, state and institutional standards,” a noted limitation on the Professional Personnel survey. Due to the lower scores on “understand and build upon the developmental levels of students with whom they work,” students are now required to take *PSY 5160*. This course prepares counselors to address the specific needs of children and adolescents, with emphasis on developmental needs, common emotional needs, treatment strategies, as well as the cultural frameworks that impact interventions. Both courses will be offered during the 2012 – 2013 academic year. Faculty will continue to monitor student development and modify program delivery as deemed necessary.

PSY 5410/5411 and *PSY 5420/5421* respectively have been merged to one course to limit curriculum redundancies, as well as improving counselor preparation training. Changes to these courses will be implemented during the fall and spring semesters of the 2012-2013 academic year.

Additionally, the School Counseling Program will continue to gauge CPCE scores to assess the effectiveness of curricular changes made to improve scores on the ‘Appraisal’ and ‘Career and Life Development’ domains.

X. Assessment System

In order to continually improve the quality and delivery of instruction, counseling faculty are committed to using faculty, students, alumni, and site supervisors’ input to modify the program curriculum. To this end, faculty continue to collaborate with IRE to survey program alumni and administrators of schools where our graduates are employed. It is expected that all data will be collected by December, 2012 and will be used to revise course content and/or instructional delivery.