

The College of William & Mary Counselor Education Program

Assessment of Graduate Preparedness for Counseling Practice

Prepared May, 2014



A Report of Survey Results From Students Who
Graduated Between 2010 and 2013

Introduction

In an ongoing effort to revise and refine our pre-service educational program to better meet the needs of professional counseling practice, the Counselor Education Program has, since 1997, conducted a triennial survey of Program graduates' self-assessed readiness for their professional counseling roles. This process continues; however, beginning in 2014-2015, the assessments will occur annually, with assessments of graduates and their employers being conducted on alternate years.

This report presents the findings of the survey that targeted graduates during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 (through December) academic years. The data regarding program effectiveness in preparing student counselors for practice as well as respondent recommendations for program revision and refinement were disseminated to the Program faculty for annual planning, and made available through the online Counseling Bulletin Board to academic leaders at both School of Education and College-wide levels for quality assurance monitoring, to future applicants for assistance in their academic decision-making, and to relevant members of the local professional community for reference as employers of our graduates.

The Respondents

The respondents who were targeted for participation in this study were comprised of the 62 graduates of the Masters in Community Counseling, Masters in School Counseling, Masters in Family, and Doctorate in Counselor Education programs during the three-year period named above. Their names and addresses were provided by the faculty and the William & Mary Alumni Association.

The Survey

Survey of Program Graduates

The survey administered to graduates addressed the following topics:

- I. Demographics including year of graduation, program emphasis, current primary employment setting, current job location, and certificates/licenses awarded, and (optionally) name and employer contact information;
- II. Self-assessment of perceived mastery in the following ten areas of professional competency: professional identity, counseling theory, counseling technique, human growth and development, group counseling, career counseling, appraisal, abnormal behavior, multicultural counseling, and counseling-related technology. Doctoral graduates were asked to rate themselves on four additional competencies including: theory and practice of supervision, instructional theory and methods, quantitative and qualitative research, and consultation and collaboration;
- III. Self-assessment of perceived competence in four professional dispositions intrinsic to the School of Education's conceptual framework including: professional knowledge and skill, reflective practice, collaboration, and leadership;
- IV. Summative evaluations including:
 - a. a self-assessment of knowledge students feel they acquired at William & Mary compared to that of their professional peers;

- b. a self-assessment of technical/clinical skills students acquired at William & Mary compared to that of their professional peers;
- c. a self-assessment of abilities to anticipate and cope effectively with ambiguity and multi-tasking, and;
- d. identification and description of specific changes needed in the Counseling and Counselor Education Programs to make them more effective at preparing students for professional practice.

The Procedure

Requests for participation along with the survey document were emailed to the group of Program graduates named above. Those graduates who were interested in participating could do so voluntarily or simply delete the email. In the final section of the Survey of Graduates, respondents were asked for permission to survey their employers during the 2014-2015 academic year regarding their perceptions of the quality of the graduates' preparation at William & Mary. Those who provided authorization to contact their employers were asked to provide email contact for their employer.

Findings of the Survey of Program Graduates

Thirty-one (50%) of the program graduates contacted for the Survey of Program Graduates elected to participate in the survey. Their responses are summarized in the following pages. From that group of respondents 19 (31%) provided contact information for next year's Survey of Employers.

I. Demographics

1. The specific breakdown of respondents by program was as follows:

Item	No. Responding	% Responding
Community M.Ed. in Counseling	6	19
School M.Ed. in Counseling	11	35
Family M.Ed. in Counseling	7	23
Ph.D. in Counselor Education	7	23
Total	31	100

2. Academic Years Represented_- Graduates from all three years were represented in the respondent group. The breakdown by year is listed below.

Year Graduated	No. Responding	% Responding
2011	12	39
2012	11	35
2013	8	26
Total	31	100

3. Employment Settings Represented_- The respondent group also represented a variety of work settings. They are listed below .

Item	No. Responding	% Responding
Community agency	13	42
School	9	29
Private practice	1	3
EAP	1	3
Counselor education	7	23
Total	31	100

4. Certificates-Licenses Awarded - The following certificates-licenses were held by the respondent group:

Item	No. Responding	% Responding
Licensed Professional Counselor	8	20
National Certified Counselor	25	63
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist	3	7
Certified Substance Abuse Counselor	3	7
Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Practitioner	1	3
Total	40	100

II. Professional Competencies – Masters Level

Item	Average Rating
Professional Identity	4.7
Counseling Theory	4.6
Counseling Techniques	4.0
Human Development	4.3
Group Counseling	4.3
Career Counseling	3.9
Appraisal	3.9
Multicultural Counseling	4.6
Psychopathology	4.2
Technology	3.9

From the table, it can be seen that, on a 5-point scale, respondents reported favorable view of the program's quality in providing them with the basic competencies necessary for effective counseling practice. Regarding individual competencies, development of a professional counseling identity, a working theoretical orientation, and respect for diversity appear to be clear strengths of the current preparation program. Although well above average in their ratings, the graduates appeared to feel less competent in the areas of career counseling, appraisal, and counseling technology.

Iib. Professional Competencies – Doctoral Level

Item	Average Rating
Supervision	4.5
Research	4.6
Teaching	4.4
Advocacy & Consultation	4.0

Given our strong emphasis on high-quality quantitative and qualitative research, it is not surprising that the doctoral-level respondents rated their mastery of that competency at 4.6 out of a possible 5 points. Our required supervision theory and practicum courses likely account for a 4+ rating of the Program in preparing them for academic and clinical supervision. Although ratings for teaching and advocacy/consultation competencies were nearly as high, they reveal a potential need for faculty attention. A relaxing of Institutional standards requiring courses to be taught only by those with terminal degrees is affording our doctoral students greater opportunities for direct experience in college teaching (formally only possible in the role of teaching assistant). The need for attention to the development of similar opportunities for promoting operational understanding and skills at advocacy and consultation are indicated in this data.

III. Professional Dispositions – Masters Level

Item	Average Rating
Knowledge and Skills	4.7
Reflective Practice	4.3
Collaboration	4.1
Leadership	3.9

IIIb. Professional Dispositions – Doctoral Level

Item	Average Rating
Knowledge and Skills	4.8
Reflective Practice	4.7
Collaboration	4.8
Leadership	4.5

The faculty is gratified to see the high respondent ratings of Program effectiveness in achieving these basic outcome objectives of both the School of Education and the Counselor Education Program. We are particularly pleased that our students at both the masters and doctoral levels are graduating with clear respect for Reflective Practice and Professional Collaboration that are shown by their own high ratings in those areas. Providing students with increased opportunity for the development of leadership abilities must be a continued effort in the Program; that can be a challenging task, particularly given increasing, credentials-driven, demands for content mastery during a two-year masters program of study.

IV. Summative Evaluation – Masters Level

Item	Average Rating
Relevant Knowledge	4.4
Clinical Skills	4.3
Multi-tasking	4.5

IVb. Summative Evaluation – Doctoral Level

Item	Average Rating
Relevant Knowledge	4.8
Clinical Skills	4.7
Multi-tasking	4.9

Compared to their professional colleagues, our masters and doctoral graduates continue to perceive themselves to be well prepared for professional practice in terms of the theoretical knowledge gained, the clinical skills developed, and the ability to read and flex to an often changing, multiple-need s, and ambiguous work environment. These perceptions are supported in their narrative comments which are currently under analysis and are to be added to this report upon completion. Also to be added are the respondents' narrative recommendations for program improvement.