

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICE DOCTORAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM  
ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Receive the University Counseling Service Doctoral Internship Program accreditation report at the University of Iowa.

**Executive Summary:** The University Counseling Service Doctoral Internship Program (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. In August 2011, the University of Iowa was informed that an accreditation decision had been deferred due to lack of sufficient information regarding issues in the following domains – program, philosophy, objectives and training plan; program resources; intern-staff relations; and public disclosure. After providing the necessary information, the University of Iowa was informed in April 2012 that the University Counseling Service Doctoral Internship Program was granted continued accreditation for a period of eight years, the maximum period allowed. This report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact” as well as Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◆ **Description of program.** The University Counseling Service (UCS) is a department within the Division of Student Life at the University of Iowa. It serves as the primary mental health agency for the university’s undergraduate and graduate student population; in addition, it sponsors the doctoral internship program. The goal of the internship program is to provide training which allows interns to become competent entry-level professional psychologists. Interns develop their skills working under close supervision with both an adolescent and an adult population. Training and experiential activities include initial therapy, career counseling, group therapy, crisis intervention, supervision of practicum students, and outreach programming.

The program admits 3-4 interns each year. The interns are doctoral students who have not yet been awarded their doctoral degree. Students complete a 12-month 2000 hour internship which begins and ends in early August each year. The internship cohort includes graduate students in counseling psychology and related fields. Respect for multiculturalism and individual diversity is a major strength and emphasis of the training program. Internship graduates work in academic positions, university and college counseling centers, independent practice, and other outpatient settings.

- ◆ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification. Therefore, accreditation is also critical for recruitment of new students. Accreditation is also intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice.
- ◆ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Accreditation (CoA).

- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the University Counseling Service Doctoral Internship Program contained the responses to the following standards (domains) required by the accrediting body.
  - ⇒ *Eligibility* – The program’s purpose must be within the scope of the accrediting body and must be pursued in an institutional setting appropriate for the education and training of professional psychologists.
  - ⇒ *Program Philosophy, Objectives and Training Plan* – The program has a clearly specified philosophy of training, compatible with the mission of its sponsor institution and appropriate to the practice of professional psychology.
  - ⇒ *Program Resources* – The program demonstrates that it has resources of appropriate quality and sufficiency to achieve its training goals and objectives.
  - ⇒ *Cultural and Individual Differences and Diversity* – The program recognizes the importance of cultural and individual differences and diversity in the training of psychologists.
  - ⇒ *Intern-Staff Relations* – The program demonstrates that its education, training, and socialization experiences are characterized by mutual respect and courtesy between interns and training staff and that it operates in a manner that facilitates interns’ training and educational experiences.
  - ⇒ *Program Self-Assessment and Quality Enhancement* – The program demonstrates a commitment to excellence through self-study, which assures that its goals and objectives are met, enhances the quality of professional education and training obtained by its interns, and contributes to the fulfillment of its host institution’s mission.
  - ⇒ *Public Disclosure* – The program demonstrates its commitment to public disclosure by providing written materials and other communications that appropriately represent it to the relevant publics.
  - ⇒ *Relationship with Accrediting Body* – The program demonstrates its commitment to the accreditation process by fulfilling its responsibilities to the accrediting body from which its accredited status is granted.
  
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In March 2011, the visiting team identified strengths and concerns of the program. A number of issues were identified by the visiting team in four out of the eight domains.
  
- ◇ Program strengths identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ⇒ “Respect for multiculturalism and individual diversity is a major strength and emphasis of the training program.
  - ⇒ Interns felt the supervision is a highlight and staff were devoted to providing quality supervision.
  - ⇒ Outside staff described the counseling center as having a well-respected reputation, responsive, going above and beyond, and helpful.
  - ⇒ Former interns noted that training in ethics and modeling of ethical behavior was a primary strength.

- ⇒ Former interns identified diversity as a strength of the internship program and a place that allows open and safe discussion about a broad range of diversity issues.
  - ⇒ Training is a leading priority with the counseling center and the center does not allow service delivery duties to take precedence over training.
  - ⇒ Other offices indicated deep appreciation for the work of UCS. 'It would be devastating if the UCS was not here.'
  - ⇒ The UCS models the value of diversity in creating a supportive, respectful, and accepting environment.
  - ⇒ The center and interns were identified as being meaningful resources for important world events that impacted diverse campus groups.
  - ⇒ The UCS is unique in that it has staff fluent in a variety of languages to provide clinical services to diverse students and has made efforts to have counseling brochures available in different languages as well.
  - ⇒ The University leadership that the site visitors interacted with strongly communicated its commitment to multicultural competence among all staff, and its support and facilitation of development activities that support this growth."
- ◇ Observations/Concerns Identified by the Visiting Team. (Changes implemented/planned by the program are in italics.)
- ⇒ *Program Philosophy, Objectives and Training Plan.*
    - ☛ "The site visitors were confused by the level of expected competence regarding the goals. Six goals required that interns receive a rating from their primary clinical supervisor of 4 (meets expectations for 'entry-level independent practice' by the end of internship'), however, goal 6 (clinical supervision) and 7 (programming needs assessment) were identified as aspirational and interns could complete the internship without meeting expectations." *The goal has been changed to specify that the intern is ready for independent entry level practice. If the intern struggles to meet that goal, the program will increase the supervision of the intern with more frequent meetings to ensure that the intern meets the stated exit standard.*
    - ☛ "Training in formal psychological assessment was viewed by some former interns as insufficient."
    - ☛ "In theories and/or methods of consultation, evaluation and supervision, it seemed that interns were not required to demonstrate competence in this area in order to pass the internship as this was identified as an aspirational goal. It was unclear to the site visitors the extent that interns achieve an intermediate to advanced level of competence in evaluation." *The program has developed an annual outcome evaluation project to which the interns will contribute. They will participate in didactic training about outcome evaluation, and during the summer, they will plan an outcome project that will be implemented during the next academic year, they will implement the plan by gathering and analyzing the outcome evaluation data, and they will help to develop the subsequent evaluation project.*

☛ “Although interns receive training in the provision of supervision, there was the potential that not all interns would be allowed to provide supervision and that interns were not required to demonstrate competence in this area in order to pass the internship.” *The program will modify its exit standard for provision of supervision, consistent with a sequence of training issue. The exit criterion for the supervision domain will be successful completion of a written exam in which interns demonstrate their knowledge and awareness of supervision theory.*

⇒ *Program Resources.*

☛ “With increasing enrollment at the University and increasing number of practicum students, staff resources may be stretched thin.” *The program hired a case manager to help collaborate with community-based resources. It added a new permanent staff psychologist in 2009 and will continue to advocate for more resources within the Division of Student Life. It also promoted a staff psychologist to a newly classified Assistant Director for Research and Evaluation which will enable the program to advocate more effectively, based on greater empirically-based assessments of needs and effectiveness.*

☛ “No formal minutes of the trainee evaluation meetings were on file.”

☛ “The internship suggested that intern applicants have a minimum of 200 intervention hours, but the site team reports previous interns having a range of adult intervention hours from 55 to 1031. The program explained that the low number of adult hours was balanced with intervention hours with adolescents.” *The program clarified for the Commission on Accreditation that the UCS does not make exceptions to its own entrance criteria, but rather, it continues to review and fine-tune them as appropriate. Starting in 2013, the program will require that the sum of individual and group treatment hours for adults and adolescents, plus intake hours, exceed 260. The UCS will continue to adhere to the entrance criteria they define and announce on their website and in the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers Directory.*

☛ “Technical support is limited. Old computer equipment – ‘hands down’ from the Counseling Psychology department.”

☛ “Staff would like funding to support a fourth intern along with additional space for activities such as facilitating more groups.”

⇒ *Intern-Staff Relations.*

☛ “The certificate of completion to interns who successfully complete the internship does not indicate the date awarded, does not indicate it is a full-time nor a 2000 hour internship. No copies of certificates awarded to past interns were in intern folders.” *The director will update the certificates so they state the interns have completed an ‘internship in professional psychology’ and will ensure that copies are in the intern files.*

⇒ *Program Self-Assessment and Quality Enhancement.*

☛ “Interns suggested they would like to have had additional assessment and couples training and experience; receive training on assessing clinical change in clients to demonstrate that interventions are working; and a higher stipend. They also noted they struggled to find a meaningful focus for the scholarly project and Program/Consultation Services project which are less helpful for their professional growth.”

⇒ *Public Disclosures.*

☞ “A discrepancy was noted about the number of staff members on the website.”  
*The program has updated its website appropriately.*

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In April 2012, the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association awarded accreditation to the University Counseling Services Doctoral Internship Program for the maximum period of eight years. Based on the information provided by the program in response to the observations/concerns identified by the Commission, the Commission determined that the program is consistent with the provisions of all of the domains. The program was asked to provide an updated copy of the program’s certificate of completion by June 1, 2013.