

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**COUNSELING GRADUATE PROGRAMS ACCREDITATION REPORT  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report from the Counseling Graduate Programs in the College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa.

**Executive Summary:** The Counseling Graduate Programs include the Mental Health Counseling (M.A.) Program and the School Counseling (M.A.E.) Program. Both programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The programs were accredited with conditions for a two-year period<sup>2</sup> through March 2009. This report addresses the Board's Strategic Plan objective (1.1) to "offer high-quality programs through ongoing program improvement for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and non-degree students and special school students."

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description.** The *Mental Health Counseling Program* prepares graduates with knowledge and skills in diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Graduates are prepared to work as mental health counselors in a variety of mental health and community agencies, including hospitals, clinics, substance abuse agencies, hospice organizations, and mental health centers. The *School Counseling Program* prepares graduates with knowledge and skills to implement a comprehensive, sequential, developmental program. Graduates are prepared to work as counselors in elementary, middle, and secondary K-12 school settings. The Counseling Program is unique because it prepares graduates for K-12 certification.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation. In order to qualify for certification as a counselor, an individual must have graduated from an accredited program.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-studies prepared by the Counseling Graduate Programs contained the responses to the appropriate standards required by the accrediting body – institution, program objectives and curriculum, clinical instruction, faculty and staff, organization and administration, and evaluations in the program. Each of the programs also addressed the standards specific to the field.
- ◇ **On-Site Team Report.** In September 2006, the visiting team determined that the Counseling Graduate Programs "substantially meet the requirements for accredited status, but there are some standards which need to be more thoroughly addressed and implemented."

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<sup>2</sup> The maximum period of accreditation is eight years when all standards are satisfactorily met. When the accrediting agency grants accreditation for a two-year period, it believes that "the program substantially meets the requirements for accredited status," but there are some standards which need to be more thoroughly addressed and implemented.

◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.

- ☑ “The program has strong relationships with both on-campus and community-based professional resources, especially its collaborative relationships with the Price Laboratory School and the Student Counseling Center.”
- ☑ “In addition to providing students with instruction in multicultural/cross-cultural counseling, the program affords the students the opportunity to travel to other countries and gain first-hand experience in other cultures.”
- ☑ “Students receive, from both faculty and site supervisors, immediate individual supervision throughout the practicum. The program’s provision of 150 hours of practicum experience well exceeds the required standard of 100 hours.”
- ☑ “The University’s program for supporting graduate assistantships for students of diverse backgrounds enhances the counseling program’s recruitment policy.”
- ☑ “The program has created an evaluation plan that is comprehensive, rigorous, and well integrated for both the Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs.”
- ☑ “The program has a strong curriculum for meeting the knowledge and skill requirements for Mental Health Counseling, especially regarding general principles and practices of etiology, diagnosis, treatment, referral, etc.”

◇ Suggestions Identified by the Visiting Team.

- ☑ “It is suggested that the program apply for funds from the student technology fees in order to upgrade the program’s technological resources and videotaping equipment.”
- ☑ “Should additional faculty be hired, it would be beneficial to site supervisors for faculty to make more site visits.”
- ☑ “Adjunct faculty should be encouraged to pursue the doctoral degree.”
- ☑ “The basic knowledge students acquire regarding effective strategies for influencing public policy and government relations could/should be enhanced by assignments that require students to take a more active role in state public policy, such as following all the bills in the Iowa legislature that pertain to the profession and its clientele.”
- ☑ “All internship students, even those who take counseling jobs before they have completed the counseling program (e.g., during the internship), should have a supervisor on site rather than at another school.”

◇ Specific Requirements Identified by the Visiting Team.

- ☑ “The program needs to provide data which document that the 10:1 FTE student to FTE faculty ratio is met.” **This requirement has been met.**
- ☑ “The program needs to provide data which document that the number of graduate assistantships awarded to the program has parity with the other clinical training programs in the University.” **This is a condition that needs to be addressed.**

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In January 2007, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs awarded accreditation to the Counseling Graduate Programs at UNI for a two-year period “with conditions” through March 31, 2009. Prior to the expiration of the two-year period, the program must submit to the accrediting body an Interim Report which provides evidence and/or documentation that the condition has been met.

Details about the accreditation report are available in the Board Office.