

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REHABILITATION COUNSELING PROGRAM
ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report for the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling in the College of Education at the University of Iowa.

Executive Summary: The program (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body; (2) responded to accrediting body questionnaires; and (3) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The program was accredited for the maximum eight-year period through the end of the 2014-2015 academic year subject to responding to a number of conditions and recommendations. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents 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 of Program.** The Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Program prepares professional counselors to provide assistance in employment, independent living, and personal or economic development to persons with disabilities and other individuals who encounter barriers in meeting their functional needs. It also prepares counselors in the mental health counseling/psychiatric rehabilitation specialization to obtain licensure as professionals who provide services in community mental health settings. Graduates of the Program work as rehabilitation counselors in a variety of settings, including state vocational rehabilitation agencies and Veteran’s Administration vocational rehabilitation programs; rehabilitation centers and supported employment programs; and workers’ compensation and insurance rehabilitation agencies.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE).
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Program contained the responses to the appropriate standards required by the accrediting body – mission and objectives; program evaluation; general curriculum requirements, knowledge domains, and educational outcomes; clinical experience; administration and faculty; and program support and resources.
- ◇ **On-Site Team Report.** In February 2007, the visiting team determined that the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Program met the requirements for accredited status, although the program was required to respond to the Council on Rehabilitation Education on specific conditions and recommendations. Three of the 38 standards/requirements were not met and four needed improvement.
- ◇ **Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.**
 - ☑ “The program has an active advisory board which conducts ongoing external review. The advisory board provides effective advocacy for the program, and its members are committed to the success of the program.”

- ☑ “Evaluation ratings, interviews with students, alumni site supervisors, and employers indicate strong support that most curriculum areas, including practicum and internships, prepared students to meet knowledge domains, educational outcome requirements, and clinical experience requirements.”
- ☑ “The program is an active participant in college and university initiatives to increase diversity.”
- ☑ “Meetings with students and alumni indicated strong satisfaction with university resources, particularly library services, the writing coach, and information technology services.”

◆ Conditions to be Addressed by the Program and Institutional Responses (italics).

- ☑ “By April 1, 2008, the program shall provide evidence of a plan that assures that program evaluation occurs at least every four years.”

The program implemented a program review and self study policy that is consistent with university policy and the CORE program evaluation standard. The policy states that program review will be conducted every four years and will include external review and self-study, course reviews, and student evaluations. The university has a college, department, and program self-study procedure that has been approved by the Iowa Board of Regents. The self-study of the program by the institution will be coordinated with the self study required by university policy.

- ☑ “By April 1, 2008, the program shall provide evidence that program evaluation includes all CORE requirements as identified in the standard.”

The program implemented a program review and self-study policy that is consistent with university policy and the CORE standard on the scope of program review and assessment. The program policy states that program review will include the seven areas contained in the standard. Specific references to the seven standards were included in documents sent to the Council.

- ☑ “By April 1, 2010, the program shall provide evidence that program evaluation outcomes are communicated to university administrators and CORE.”

The program has communicated the results of the CORE evaluation outcomes to university administrators. The dean responded to conditions 4 and 5 below.

- ☑ “By April 1, 2008, the program shall provide a plan with timelines for remediation of barriers to identified campus facilities.”

The program faculty, Dean, and the College of Education Building and Grounds Committee worked with the university’s Facilities Management to identify and remediate barriers to accessibility in the building and surrounding area in which the program is housed. University Facilities Management, per Iowa Board of Regents policy, is solely authorized to approve modifications to university facilities, budget for modifications, and contract outside vendors or provide qualified staff to implement ADA required modifications. A comprehensive evaluation of ADA compliance was conducted by the College of Education Building and Grounds Committee and engineering staff from Facilities Management. Facilities Management completed an audio-visual report that documents ADA compliant and non-compliant features of the building and grounds.

- “By April 1, 2008, the program shall provide evidence that proper fiscal and program authority, within university policy and procedures, is assigned to the program coordinator and faculty.”

The Dean of the College of Education reported that fiscal and program authority rests with the program coordinator who reports to the department executive officer who, in turn, reports to the Dean of the College. Authority for use of funds, administration, utilization of faculty, and curricula is decentralized, follows the policies and procedures of the College’s administrative structure, and is uniformly applied across all departments.

◆ Recommendations Identified by the Visiting Team and Institutional Responses (italics).

- “The program is encouraged to review program objectives to clearly address the needs of people with disabilities, consistent with the program’s mission.”

The faculty and advisory board, which includes community advocates for persons with disability conditions, service providers, educators, and counselors-in-training, reviewed the mission statement. The advisory board and faculty concluded that the term “people served” in the mission statement includes people with disabilities and is inclusive of the contemporary international medical, economic, social, political models of disability. The program is attempting to recognize that the mission of rehabilitation counselor education is to prepare rehabilitation counselors, within their role and functions, to serve people with disabilities as well as families, caregivers, employers, service providers, and social institutions concerned about the welfare of persons with disabilities.

The program’s objective to prepare students to serve persons with disabilities is clearly articulated in other written materials, including the Graduate College Catalog, program brochures, and recruiting materials distributed to the public.

- “The program is encouraged to develop and implement strategies that ensure students are more aware of the student retention and review policy.”

In 2007, the program implemented a one-semester credit hour orientation course (Introduction to Counseling and the Counseling Profession), required in the first semester of enrollment for all graduate students. The course includes an orientation to the student review and retention policy. Students are required to provide a signature that they have read and understood the policy. The signed copy is placed in the student’s file. Students may also review the policy at the department website.

- “The program is encouraged to gather information from the standpoint of students regarding the adequacy of university services.”

The College of Education and the program now gather information from the standpoint of students and alumni regarding the adequacy of university services through the Seven Principles for Good Practice Questionnaire which students are requested to complete yearly and graduates are encouraged to complete upon matriculation. Student evaluations of campus, College of Education, department, and program resources have been added to the survey. Data from the survey are used in the program self-study process.

- ◆ Accreditation Status. In July 2007, the Council on Rehabilitation Education awarded accreditation to the Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling Program at the University of Iowa for an eight-year period through the 2014-2015 academic year. In November 2008, the Council notified the program that responses to all conditions and recommendations were satisfactory and that no further action was required.