

Program Evaluation M.S. in School Counseling

Students enrolled in the M.S. program in school counseling are evaluated in multiple ways to ensure they achieve competency on standards established by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP). The following reflects assessments of student learning outcomes and KSDE standards, data from Praxis School Counseling and Guidance exam scores, and feedback obtained from alumni and employers of recent graduates. These multiple information sources indicate that program graduates are proficient on learning outcomes and KSDE standards and that alumni and employers express strong support for the program.

Demographics of Students Enrolled in Counseling and Student Development

The Graduate Studies Office maintains records of all students enrolled in the M.S. program in Counseling and Student Development (CSD), which includes students in school counseling and college student personnel. CSD students are a diverse group of very capable individuals. The vast majority of school counseling students have K-12 teaching experience. The following are characteristics of CSD students admitted Summer 2005, Fall 2005, and Spring 2006:

Gender

Male	37%
Female	63 %

Ethnicity

White, Non-Hispanic	72%
Black, Non-Hispanic	13%
Mexican/Mexican American	6%
Other	9%

Aptitude

MAT Mean	388
Undergraduate GPA Mean	3.64

Achievement of Learning Outcomes

The school counseling faculty have set learning outcomes that are associated with required course work and master's comprehensive examinations. Annual assessments of student learning outcomes from 2004 to 2007 indicated that students were proficient in basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. All students achieved a proficiency of at least 80% on the tests, quizzes, and written assignments intended to assess *knowledge of counseling and consultation theories*. To assess their knowledge of *career development theories and decision-making models*, students completed objective and essay exams and wrote a career autobiography. All students achieved at least 80% proficiency on these assessments. In addition, over the past three years, all students in the program passed the

master's comprehensive exam questions designed to assess counseling theories and career development.

To assess their *skills in interviewing and counseling*, students were video taped during practicum while they were counseling undergraduate students referred to them for academic difficulties. A rubric was used to evaluate each student's skill levels. In addition, a variety of role-playing activities and discussion questions from the text were used to teach and evaluate fundamental counseling skills. All students achieved an acceptable level of proficiency on the skills assessed. As part of their indirect assessment, students also engaged in self-reflection of their achievement of counseling and interviewing skills. These assessments revealed that all students were able to reflect meaningfully on their level of skills.

Students were also required to *apply strategies for using assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques in counseling*. They were assessed on three short objective tests, one comprehensive final examination, and one applied project. All students achieved at least 80% proficiency on all these assessments. In addition, over the past three years, all students in the program passed the master's comprehensive exam questions on assessment.

Finally, *students must apply ethical standards of the American Counseling Association, American School Counselor Association, and related entities, and ethical and legal issues to various professional activities*. This outcome was assessed on a rubric assessment of case studies and a final examination question. Ninety-five percent of those assessed passed this examination.

Achievement of KSDE Standards

With respect to KSDE standards, recent assessments indicate that all students achieved at least 99% proficiency on *understanding the importance of lifelong professional development* and 95% proficiency on *understanding how current issues affect students*. Furthermore, all students achieved at least 85% proficiency on each of the following:

Demonstrates knowledge of philosophical, historical, and social foundations
Understands and implements management/consultation skills
Understands human development and behavior
Understands theories of individual and group counseling
Demonstrates knowledge of career development
Understands teaming
Understands social and cultural diversity

Seventy-five percent of students achieved at least 80% on *understanding assessment and research*. Finally, 100% of students achieved at least 90% proficiency on *completion of internship*.

Praxis School Counseling and Guidance Exam

Graduates of the K-State School Counseling Program obtained above average scores on the Praxis exam, the licensing requirement for school counselors in the state. The Praxis School Guidance and Counseling exam has a standard score range of 250-990, with a passing score of 600 set by the state of Kansas. Students assessed from 2004 to 2005 had median score of 680 on the Praxis exam; those assessed from 2005 to 2006 had a median score of 690. The median scores nationally on this standardized test were 660 in 2004/2005 and 650 in 2005/2006. Across the two-year period, 95% of K-State's school counseling graduates passed the Praxis.

Additionally, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) provided statistics that allow the comparison of K-State graduates to all examinees nationally and to those in Kansas. For the two-year period, the statistics were as follows:

	<i>All Examinees (nationally)</i>		<i>K-State 2006 Graduates</i>	
	<i>2004/2005</i>	<i>2005/2006</i>	<i>2004/2005</i>	<i>2005/2006</i>
Number of Examinees:	3,857	4,308	11	9
Highest Observed Score:	790	800	740	720
Lowest Observed Score:	330	350	620	540
Median Score:	660	650	680	690
Avg. Performance Range:	610-700	600-690	660-710	650-690

Furthermore, ETS provided information comparing K-State School Counseling graduates to the Kansas and national averages in each of the categories of the Praxis school-counseling exam. In most categories, K-State students performed comparable to or better than the state and national averages, in terms of percent correct:

	<i>K-State</i>		<i>State Avg.</i>		<i>National Avg.</i>	
	<i>04/05</i>	<i>05/06</i>	<i>04/05</i>	<i>05/06</i>	<i>04/05</i>	<i>05/06</i>
I. Counseling and Guidance	77%	74%	74%	75%	74%	71%
II. Consulting	81%	71%	77%	79%	76%	74%
III. Coordinating	85%	73%	75%	73%	74%	70%
IV. Professional Issues	88%	74%	79%	77%	78%	73%
V. Taped Portion	78%	73%	74%	76%	75%	71%

Alumni Feedback

In 2007, recent alumni of K-State's School Counseling Program rated the quality of preparation they received, using a four-point scale (1=excellent; 2=good; 3=fair; 4=poor). All respondents rated their preparation as excellent. When asked about the strengths of the program, they made the following comments:

- Wonderful support from faculty – they are great resources! Awesome real-life cases with open discussion – very helpful! Professors have great connections,

help people get jobs! Online class options are a HUGE plus – It becomes a daunting task to drive 1-2 times a week.

- Caring faculty, challenging courses.
- Small class sizes with quality teacher instruction...I thought [the classes] have all been useful in my actual counseling experiences – especially the practicum hours with “real students.” Offering a K-12 degree was great. I wasn’t even going to take the extra couple classes to be elem. cert. – but I’m glad I did because that is the job I found.
- Outstanding practicum and internship experiences. Professors always available for support, insight, and guidance. Professors’ attention to detail and personal interest in student’s success.
- The friendly, caring instructors. They are all so supportive and helpful.
- Wide range of classes covering various issues in counseling. Full year of internship that allows students to gain hands on experience with various situations and immediate feedback from professors and peers.
- Wonderful, personal interaction from all professors. Internship and practicum were hands-on and relevant to daily counseling practices.
- Caring, knowledgeable professors. Well-rounded curriculum.
- Strong faculty and focus on the counseling process and counseling skills.
- Very knowledgeable faculty. Practical experiences to expose students and prepare them to work in the field. K-12 certificates upon completion leads to being more marketable in gaining successful employment.
- The support and content.

Alumni were also asked what recommendations they would make to enhance the program. They recommended the following:

- More techniques specific to working with students and parents (i.e.: intervention strategies, working with at-risk)...Communication on licensure – I had to personally contact the state dept. to try to understand the requirements.
- Unless things have changed, the internship should be a full year. I would like to see a little bit of instruction on how to deal with everyday things in a counseling office such as credit checks, scheduling, etc. via practicing counselors.
- More emphasis on relevant multicultural issues and tools for dealing with multi-cultural issues. This class needs to be more hands on. On-line courses really need to have more feedback. Research Methods was not relevant or useful.
- More time spent on crisis intervention. Focus on the new bullying legislation passed in May 07 (so that is for students you have now).
- More emphasis on multicultural awareness and issues within the schools and relevant tools to address multicultural needs. Strategies and tools to address mental health needs.
- Increased time working and observing in the field.

- Due to increased internship hours, it's very difficult to complete this requirement while working full time. With losing its effect is there a way to make it more manageable?

Employer Feedback

Employers (i.e., principals) hiring our graduates were surveyed in 2007 regarding their views on the competence of K-State graduates in their first year of employment. Using the same four-point rating scale that alumni used to assess quality of preparation, all respondents rated graduates' preparation as excellent. Notable comments from employers about the strengths of K-State graduates included:

- Up to date with college programs and the various forms of assessment found in schools today.
- Professionalism, follow through, attention to detail.
- Professionalism, student advocates.
- Quality skills in working with a diverse population. Genuine caring about students, parents, staff. Knowledge of community resources. A "being with kids/teachers" philosophy – not sitting in an office waiting for them to come to the counselor.
- The counselors have been very attentive to detail. They are relentless about finding answers to questions. Work well and care about students. Develop good peer relationships with teachers, administration and classified staff.
- An understanding of the "big picture." The knowledge that is possessed. The desire to serve. The ability to work with all people.
- Organizational skills, counseling, working with parents, students and staff. Knowledge of all aspects of counseling and scheduling. Team players and ability to teach within a classroom.

Employers were also asked what recommendations they would make to enhance the work of graduates of the program. They suggested the following:

- Stay up-to-date with most recent SIP mandate/requirements such as OTC and Standard revision as well as KBOR changes as they apply to graduates.
- None – I am very pleased.
- Keep training counselors like the ones we have at JCMS.
- None – they are well prepared.
- None – we have two excellent counselors.

Summary and Future Directions

Students' achievement of SLOs and KSDE standards and their performance on the Praxis indicate a very high level of proficiency. Feedback from alumni and employers communicates that the K-State program is doing an excellent job of preparing school counselors. These are not surprising findings given that we (a) have highly qualified faculty, (b) set high standards for admission, and (c) have high expectations for student performance based on CACREP and KSDE standards. However, based on the

information described in this document, school counseling faculty have made or plan to make the following changes in the program:

1. We have written new objective items for our master's comprehensive exam that assess students' knowledge of philosophical, historical, and social foundations of counseling practices and ethical behaviors.
2. We have developed a rubric for assessing program management and consultation skills in EDCEP 857 and EDCEP 871.
3. We have created new master's comps items to assess stages of human development.
4. We have created new objective items to assess applied counseling and group practice theories on master's comps.
5. We have added new items to the research section of master's comps.
6. We have modified questions on comps concerning career development. We have also created a rubric for assessing application of knowledge related to career development during EDCEP 887.
7. We have created new questions for assessing student knowledge of teaming, consultation, collaboration, and coordination on master's comps.
8. We plan to administer a take-home segment of master's comps to assess student knowledge of current issues.
9. Students must now assemble a portfolio at the completion of their program. This will be an ongoing process because students are already creating many of the materials that will be included in the portfolio.
10. We will develop a rubric for assessing graduates' achievement of KSDE standards during their year of supervised internship following graduation.
11. We will try to encourage more student self-reflection during practica and internship.
12. We will encourage more students to attend professional conferences
13. We will examine additional opportunities for candidates to team and consult with teachers on academic achievement issues.
14. We will examine additional opportunities for candidates to work in counseling settings with diverse learners and clients.
15. We will examine additional ways to emphasize multicultural issues and awareness in the curriculum.