



*College of Health Sciences & Professions
Department of Counseling*

2020 Program Evaluation Report

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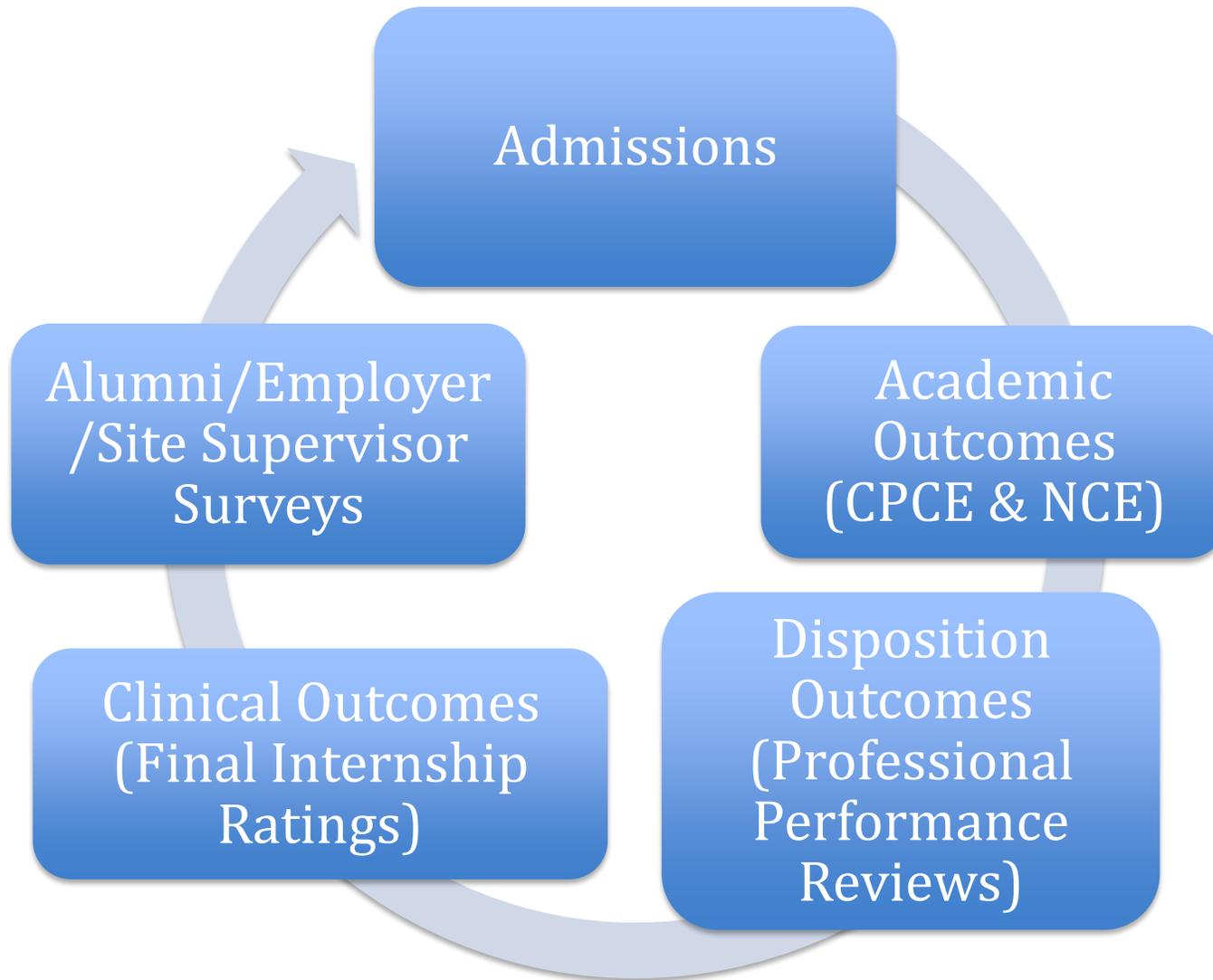
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Vital Statistics

	2020
Applications	67
Acceptance Rate	37.3%
Enrollment	64
Graduates	14
Employment Rate	100%
NCE Pass Rate	100%

*Employment rate indicates proportion of students who desired employment who were employed or engaged in full-time advanced academic study within six months of graduation. Many graduates secure employment prior to graduation. All graduates reporting.



ADMISSIONS

Students are admitted as a cohort during the Fall semester of each year. When applicants meet the minimum criteria (GPA and GRE), then applications are forwarded to the Department of Counseling for the faculty to review and admit students. The faculty created a formula to determine those candidates best suited to become professional counselors. Factors related to the admission process for the M.S. in Counseling include:

1. Hold an earned baccalaureate from a regionally-accredited, 4-year institution with at least a cumulative grade point average of 2.75 (4.0 scale) calculated in accordance with Graduate Studies admission procedures. Undergraduate GPA
2. Have achieved a score of no less than 290 on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) (verbal and quantitative sections combined). Only those scores that are less than 5 years old will be considered. GRE
3. Submit a resume. Work/Life Experience
4. Submit 3 University of North Georgia Recommendation Forms from persons who are able to address academic potential, professional experiences in the helping professions, and non-academic experiences that add breadth in understanding the human condition. Letters of Recommendation
5. The personal statement (3-5 pages) includes a brief autobiography, why the applicant wants to be a professional counselor, attributes that contribute to becoming an effective counselor, characteristics which may inhibit relationships with clients and what they are doing/can do to resolve those issues. Personal Statement
6. Participate in a group interview with Counseling faculty. The group interview covers a brief introduction, traits that the individuals possess that will make them a good counselor and how they have prepared for the minimal 3-year commitment of a graduate program in counseling; aspects of the counseling profession that may present challenges, experiences with diverse populations and which population may be the most difficult, and sharing a moment of self-awareness/insight. Group Interview

Applicants are assigned scores based on the previous mentioned items and calculated (total 28 points). Applicants who receive a score of 22 (80%) or above are ranked and the top students are invited for admission based on the number of spots available and predicted number of hours students will take in order to maintain FTE ratio of 12:1 required by CACREP.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Course Grading Policy

All Counseling lecture courses are graded on a 4.0 scale with the following values: A=90% or above, B= 80% - 89%, C=75% - 79%, D=70%-74%, and F = below 70%. A grade of A or B is required in all courses. Students must retake a course if they receive a grade of C in order to apply the course toward graduation. See policy below regarding grades of D or F.

Academic Standing Policy

Graduate Counseling students whose academic performance is unsatisfactory will be subject to the following:

1. Probation — A student will be placed on probation for any of the following reasons:

- a. Student's cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0.
- b. Student earns a C in any required or elective course.

No student may be a candidate for the degree or sit for the comprehensive examination while on probation. Probation will be removed when (a) the student's GPA reaches 3.0 or higher, or (b) when the course(s) is/are repeated and the grade is a B or greater, and the overall GPA is 3.0 or greater.

Core and Elective Courses: Students who earn a grade of C in a required/core or elective course must repeat the course and receive a grade of B or better on the second attempt or be expelled from the program. Students who are on probation should not register until advised.

Lab Courses: Students must also receive a grade of B or higher for all laboratory courses. Students who receive a grade of C for any laboratory course must complete both lab course and the corresponding co-requisite.

2. Repeating a Course – A student who is on probation for grades (they earned a C in a course) must repeat that course and earn an A or a B. To protect the integrity of the repeated course, the student may have 3 options for repeating the course:
 - a. The student can take the same course again with the same instructor.
 - b. The student can take the same course again with a different instructor (if possible).

- c. The student may take the same course as a transient student at another university. It is the student's responsibility to provide the Department of Counseling's Curriculum Committee with a syllabus from the course before taking said course. The curriculum committee will determine if the course is or is not equivalent to the UNG course.
- d. The student may contract with another Counseling faculty member to take the repeated course as an independent study.

The determination of which of these 3 options for how the student will repeat the course will be a joint decision between the student and the Department Chair. If the instructor is the Department Chair, then it will be a joint decision between the student and the Curriculum Committee.

3. Expulsion — A student will be expelled from the program for any of the following reasons:

1. Student earns two grades of C in any required or elective course(s).
2. Student earns one grade of D or F in any course in the program (including electives).
3. Student has already served three consecutive terms (i.e., semesters) on academic probation.

No student may enroll in graduate courses at UNG during the first 12 months of their expulsion. Courses taken at another institution during the period of expulsion will not be recognized for transfer credit by the Counseling program.

In order to be readmitted into the UNG Counseling program, any student who has been expelled for academic reasons would be required to reapply to the program by: (a) submitting a new application, (b) writing a letter to the Dean of the College of Health Sciences & Professions, after a period of 12 months from the date the student was removed, laying out a rationale for their readmission, and (c) attend the interview day with all other applicants (if the student is offered an interview). They will be readmitted only upon approval of the Dean and the Department of Counseling Admissions Committee.

Comprehensive Exams

The Counseling Program is a competency-based degree program. Before students successfully complete work in the program, they are expected to demonstrate knowledge of theories of human development; knowledge of counseling theories and techniques; knowledge of social and cultural foundations; skills in individual, group, and family counseling; a thorough understanding of ethics; understanding of the counseling needs of multicultural populations, career and lifestyle development, and professional orientation;

understanding of appraisal, research and evaluation in counseling; satisfactory performance as a member of a community/mental health agency during their clinical field placement; and demonstration of the personal and professional qualities expected of entry-level counselors.

Students enrolled in the Counseling program are required to pass a comprehensive exam during their last year of enrollment. Comprehensive exams must be completed by the last day of classes of the graduating term. Each student will receive two opportunities to successfully pass the Comprehensive Exam. Report of successful completion is due in the Registrar's Office by the end of the final examination period. If a student is unable to pass the comprehensive exam after the second attempt, they will have an opportunity to re-take the exam during the next administration.

PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Potential counseling effectiveness cannot be assessed in the same manner as academic performance in typical college classes. Students must communicate effectively, be open-minded, tolerate ambiguity, exhibit a high degree of patience, acceptance of diversity, and demonstrate emotional stability and self-acceptance. Counseling faculty at UNG will evaluate student's professional and personal aptitude at the end of every fall and spring terms. Students are required to meet with their advisor to discuss the outcome of the evaluations. This process is designed to enhance communication and mentoring within the program

Students are expected to be able to adhere to the following professional performance criteria:

1. Openness to new ideas
2. Flexibility
3. Cooperativeness with others
4. Willingness to accept and use feedback
5. Awareness of own impact on others
6. Ability to deal with conflict
7. Ability to accept personal responsibility
8. Ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately
9. Attention to ethical and legal considerations
10. Initiative and motivation

It is the objective of the University of North Georgia Counseling faculty to identify concerns regarding student competency as early as possible and to initiate remediation. Students with competency and impairment concerns can be identified both in and out of the classroom at any time during matriculation in the Counseling Program. Students are assessed on counseling competencies at the end of the fall and spring semesters by the entire faculty. Students also complete a self-assessment each semester. The focus will include the ten core competencies identified in the counseling profession.

Occasionally, students experience discomfort and struggle with awareness of issues during matriculation in the program. However, faculty members are ethically required to bring attention to any personal impairment issues (e.g., substance abuse, violent behavior,

verbally abusive language, intolerance) that compromise the safety (emotional and physical) of classmates, clients, and future clients. The following procedures were developed in order to address such issues:

1. When a concern arises, the faculty member will informally bring that concern to the student's attention either in a face-to-face conversation or via e-mail or phone contact.
2. The professor will report the informal conversation at the next available faculty meeting under "Student Issues" on the agenda as documentation of the incident. The professor will seek consultation with other members of the Counseling faculty for suggestions or recommendations to address the issue. At this point, remediation may be considered or the student may be given time to address and rectify the issue on his/her own. Follow-up documentation will consist of end-of-semester evaluations.
3. When an instructor believes a student is not making adequate progress after an informal intervention, the faculty member(s) and Department Head will consult and formally meet with the student to discuss lack of progress in the program. At that time, the student will be placed on probation and recommendations or requirements for remediation presented. Faculty will complete the Student Remediation Form, which will include expectations and the specified time period the student has to meet expectations. If the student feels remediation is unjust or unfair, the student can appeal the faculty decision by following the procedures listed below. The student will be referred to the UNG Office of Student Integrity.
4. All documentation will include signatures of faculty, students, and Department Head and kept in the student files located in a locked cabinet in the Department of Counseling.
5. Faculty members will monitor students who are participating in remediation during weekly faculty meetings and will collectively determine whether students are making progress. Faculty will meet with students periodically to review progress of remediation. Minutes of these meetings will be kept on file.
6. Unsatisfactory progress occurs when either the student does not meet the expectations of the faculty or behaviors worsen during the specified time period of remediation. A meeting will be called with the student, all counseling faculty, the department head and one representative chosen by the student for support. The student will be suspended from the program and conditions for re-admittance presented.
7. If the student believes the evaluation is inequitable, the student is allowed to appeal the decision of the faculty for suspension or dismissal.

SUPERVISED CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

Three levels of supervised clinical work in the counseling program at UNG are required of students matriculating towards the M.S. degree: labs, practicum, and internships. The following is a brief description of what these components entail.

Labs

In conjunction with most core counseling courses, co-requisite lab experiences are offered. These lab activities allow students to directly apply knowledge from a specific course in a supervised clinical experience. For example, students in the Counseling Theories lab record themselves using several theory-based counseling interventions with a volunteer client.

Practicum

In counseling practicum, the primary focus is becoming oriented and integrated in a clinical placement and demonstrating individual counseling skills. Students complete a supervised practicum that totals a minimum of 100 clock hours. The experience provides for the development of counseling skills under the supervision of a faculty member and a chance to become familiar with professional activities other than direct service work.

Internship

During the counseling internship process, the focus shifts to the actual practice of the role of counselor as an entry-level counselor. A student completes 2 semesters of internship for a total of 600 clock hours, after successful completion of practicum. The internship provides (1) an opportunity for the student to perform all the activities that a regularly employed staff member in the setting would be expected to perform, (2) familiarity with professional activities other than direct service work, and (3) supervised experience in the use of professional resources (e.g., appraisal instruments, computers, print and non-print media, professional literature, and research).

POST-GRADUATION

Students have the option to take the National Counselor Exam (NCE) during their last year of their program. The exam is offered on campus and when students take advantage of this opportunity, the overall scores are sent to our program. Although we have good relationships with alumni, we don't have any assurances we can obtain individual scores to correlate with all other data, but we can determine those who passed the exam. Further, many of our students are employed upon graduation or at least within six months of graduating. Alumni surveys are distributed in October (following May graduation) to determine employment status.

We maintain contact with our alumni primarily through social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook.

Program Evaluation Report

Sources of Data

The following sources of data were utilized in developing this report

- Graduate performance on the National Counselor Examination (NCE)
- Student performance on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)
- Student performance on final internship ratings from instructors and site supervisors
- Alumni follow-up surveys
- Site-supervisor surveys
- Admissions, enrollment, and graduation data for the AY18-19 cycle
- Faculty observations and discussions during periodic faculty meetings held bi-weekly, systematic student assessment meetings held toward the end of each fall and spring semester, and the annual planning retreat held at the end of each summer semester.

Objective 1: Students admitted to the program will have the potential to be excellent professional counselors

Of the 67 applications received, 59 applicants were invited for one of two half-day group interviews. Ranked admissions scores led to an offering of admission to the top 27 applicants. Of those, 18 accepted and enrolled in the fall. Through seven invitations, five applicants from the wait list accepted admission. In summary, 23 of our top 34 applicants accepted admission and enrolled in Fall 2020.

Objective 2: Students will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the field of counseling through successful performance on the Comprehensive Exam.

The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination is used as an exit exam to ensure that students have the requisite knowledge to become professional counselors. As per the test developers' recommendation, we use 1.5 Standard Deviation below the mean score to set the pass rate.

All students passed the exam on the first attempt. The mean scores for each of the eight core areas rank higher than the corresponding national mean scores. *Group Counseling & Group Work* and *Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice* received the highest ratings. *Social & Cultural Diversity* and *Human Growth & Development* received the lowest ratings. Mean ratings are highlighted below.

	Items	Mean	SD
Human Growth and Development	17	9.8	2.0
Social and Cultural Diversity	17	8.5	2.4
Counseling and Helping Relationships	17	11.2	1.5
Group Counseling and Group Work	17	13.6	2.1
Career Development	17	11.3	2.6
Assessment and Testing	17	10.1	3.1
Research and Program Evaluation	17	11.1	2.1
Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice	17	11.4	1.8

Objective 3: Students will be able to demonstrate effective counseling skills as well as provide other direct and indirect services expected of entry level counselors in a multicultural setting.

Students are evaluated on their clinical judgment and counseling skills during their field experiences. These include the practicum, internship I, and internship II, where they are on-site a minimum of 700 hours with 280 in direct contact with clients. The evaluation consists of 36 items, rated on a 1 to 5 scale, that are broken into the following three content areas: (a) Supervision Dispositions (7 items), (b) Counseling Dispositions (12 items), and (c) Counseling Skills (17 items). The goal is for 100% of students who have completed their internships to receive an average of no less than 4.0 in each of the three content areas (i.e., Supervision Dispositions,

Counseling Dispositions, Counseling Skills) on the final internship evaluation. For the 2020 graduates, 100% (N=12) of students scored at least an average of 4 in each of the three content areas. The mean score for all students on the full evaluation was 4.65 with a standard deviation of .35.

The data for the three content areas of Supervision Dispositions, Counseling Dispositions, and Counseling Skills are highlighted below.

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Supervision Dispositions	4.66	4.0	5.0	.36
Counseling Dispositions	4.68	4.0	5.0	.37
Counseling Skills	4.61	4.0	5.0	.33

Objective 4: Students will demonstrate the professional and personal aptitude and behavior required for effective clinical mental health counselors, as specified in and measured by the UNG Professional Performance Review (PPR) form.

Professional Performance Reviews are completed at the end of each semester in order to evaluate non-academic characteristics needed to develop therapeutic relationships and make ethical decisions. Faculty have determined that a score of 3 (out of a possible 5) for each of the 10 criteria meets expectations for their professional development stage. Therefore, the measure is that 100% of students will score at least 30 on the final PPR, which will take place in the semester prior to graduation. For the 2020 graduates, 100% (N=20) of students scored at least 30 on the final PPR. Mean ratings are highlighted below.

	Mean	SD
Openness to new ideas	3.79	0.67

Flexibility	3.29	.67
Cooperativeness with others	3.39	.66
Willingness to accept and use feedback	3.54	.77
Awareness of impact on others	3.08	.43
Ability to deal with conflict	3.39	.85
Accept personal responsibility	3.43	.70
Ability to express feelings effectively & appropriately	3.29	.67
Attention to ethical and legal concerns	3.50	.80
Initiative & Motivation	3.64	.79

Other Quality Indicators

- Alumni rated their overall satisfaction with the program favorably (M = 4.44, SD = .61) on a 5-point scale, with 5 being “very satisfied.”
- Alumni noted that they were prepared for counseling employment (5-point scale, with 5 being “very effective.”)

Survey Item	Mean	SD
Providing knowledge to help you develop the requisite skills for working in a counseling work setting	4.00	1.12
Developing the knowledge necessary to demonstrate professional behavior consistent with the ethical guidelines of the counseling field	4.13	1.22
In providing knowledge and skills in counseling and consultation processes	4.20	.98
In providing knowledge and skills in group work	4.13	.86
In assisting you to engage in personal and professional behaviors that promote self-growth and student learning, including intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm, reflection, and responsible behavior.	4.44	1.17

In providing the knowledge and skills to use evaluation data to improve aspects of my professional responsibilities	3.81	.95
Teaching competency of the faculty	4.50	.50
Relevance of curriculum to your professional duties	4.50	.71
Quality of supervision offered by faculty during practicum/internship	4.56	.70

- Narrative exploration of written feedback by alumni indicated identified strengths:
 - Exceptional faculty
 - Quality supervision
 - Welcoming environment
 - Student-centered
 - Dedication to quality education

- Areas for growth included requests for:
 - More focus on the business of counseling
 - More training in substance use disorders
 - More training in crisis counseling
 - More opportunities for students to engage in research

Program Changes and Improvements

Given the themes in the feedback from alumni on the previous page, the following programmatic changes were made.

1. A new elective was created and offered in the Spring 2021 semester. It was titled, “The Business of Counseling” and included topics related to starting, developing, and maintaining a private practice. Other topics included billing, marketing, and legal/ethical considerations.
2. The department now offers four (4) courses in addictions counseling and a track in addictions counselling.
3. More training in crisis and trauma counseling is available to students either through required or elective curriculum or through extracurricular workshops.
 - a. Dr. Laura Land has taken over as the instructor for the Crisis and Trauma Counseling class. Her clinical background, research, and training are extensive in these areas.
 - b. Dr. Land received a grant to develop and offer a trauma-competency workshop. This workshop was free to current students and alumni.
 - c. Current students complete an emergency room simulation in their coursework. The simulation involves a standardized client (trained actor) exhibiting symptoms of depression and suicidality in a simulated hospital setting. Students must conduct depression and suicide screenings and report their findings and recommendations to the instructor.
 - d. Students receive more training during their coursework on suicided assessment.
 - e. Students receive the Darkness to Light (regarding child sexual abuse) training the Assessment class.
 - f. A new elective was created and offered titled “Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Abuse.”
4. The following changes have been made to allow interested students more opportunities to engage in research.

- a. The department secured permanent funding to create three (3) new research assistantships that we offer to incoming students.
- b. Faculty are openly inviting students to join research teams.
- c. Faculty are openly inviting students to join writing projects.
- d. Faculty are openly inviting students to co-create and present conference proposals.