The mission of the counseling program is to prepare interpersonally skilled and culturally competent professional counselors who facilitate the psychological growth and development of those they serve. These counselors also help those who experience difficulties in overcoming or resolving interpersonal, vocational, and emotional adjustment problems associated with modern living.

Annual Program Evaluation: Counseling Programs 2017-2018

The Annual Program Evaluation is a way for the counseling program faculty to measure both student and overall program effectiveness. The key assessments that follow attempt to provide evidence that inform counseling faculty regarding progress and assist us in considering ways we might continue to develop and enhance the counseling program.

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Montana State University
Department of Health & Human Development
• School Counseling
• Marriage, Couples & Family Counseling
• Mental Health Counseling
Introduction- Overview of MSU Counseling Program Assessment Plan

The following is an overview of the assessment plan and process of the MSU Counseling Program. This assessment plan is put in place to assist with measuring and tracking program outcomes, and assist faculty in identifying key assessments in order to measure whether students in the program are meeting/exceeding expectations.

The assessment plan for Montana State University-Bozeman starts with the interview and proceeds through a series of benchmarks and portfolio assignments designed to meet specific learning outcomes in each specialty area. The final overall assessment of student learning culminates with the final benchmark - the comprehensive exam. The assessment process comprehensively addresses both knowledge and skills/practices outcomes for Mental Health, Marriage, Couples & Family, and School Counseling programs. Knowledge Areas in the 2009 Standards are demonstrated using portfolio assignments and Skills/Practices are demonstrated in benchmark or professional dispositions. Students’ progress through a series of four dispositions in which Skills/Practice are evaluated, as well as Knowledge Areas reviewed.

Skills/Practices: is measured in a series of four benchmarks for MFC, MH and SC students. These benchmarks are outlined below:

- **Benchmark 1- Counseling Skills (December –mid- 1st year)**

Benchmark one is determined during HDCO 521: counseling skills in which students submit a final tape. This benchmark uses that tape, as well as the overall course grade and feedback to determine the benchmark disposition of the student. Any disposition of a “3”, on a 5 point likert scale, which represents the equivalent of a B- grade, will most likely result in a remediation plan to address areas of concern. While this is a passing grade, it suggests concern for counseling skill. However, it should be noted that at this point in a student’s training it can be difficult to determine if he or she lacks the skill or, perhaps, needs additional time to develop it, thus more leeway may be given regarding this benchmark, versus benchmarks at other points in the program. A remediation plan will be constructed in consultation with the student’s committee. A disposition of 4, the equivalent of a C+ or lower grade, will result in a student retaking the skills course. Passing this course demonstrates the potential of the student to meet future benchmarks and skills/practices in each specialty area. Please see Appendix A for an example of a remediation plan for a disposition of a 3 or 4.

- **Benchmark 2- Practicum (May – end of 1st year)**

Benchmark two is determined during practicum in the spring semester. This benchmark is measured using the practicum supervisor’s evaluation completed at the end of the semester. It is expected that feedback given throughout the semester has been integrated into the student’s work with clients. Any benchmark disposition of 4 will most likely result in a remediation plan. A disposition of a 5 will result in a student re-taking practicum and, possibly skills if it is determined that there is a serious skill deficit or that deficits evident in Benchmark 1 have not been remediated. If students pass benchmark 2, they will be allowed to proceed to internship. In addition to the review of students’ skills, students’ portfolios are reviewed and tracking sheets collected at this meeting.
Benchmark 3- Internship (Qualitative Evaluation mid-fall semester & Benchmark meeting in December - 2nd year)

Benchmark three is determined by the evaluation of the student by the internship site supervisor in combination with the observation of skills by the internship course instructor (usually the faculty program leader) as well as student performance in internship class, HDCO 598. Students will be given a disposition indicating what areas of improvement are needed, as well as areas that the student is doing well. In addition to the skill review, portfolios are reviewed and tracking sheets collected.

Also, students are required during their internship course (HDCO 598) to complete a qualitative evaluation mid-semester of the feedback they have received throughout their program of study. This form is utilized to help students stay accountable for the feedback they have received throughout the program, as well as help them see areas that they have made improvements in.

Benchmark 4- Comprehensive Exam (March of 2nd year)

Benchmark four is the comprehensive exam. Students must successfully pass this exam, which is a written paper demonstrating skill in theory based case conceptualization and treatment planning, in order to proceed to graduation. The exam is blindly graded by two faculty readers. If a student receives one pass and one fail then a third faculty member is asked to read the exam. If the third reader grades the exam as a pass, the student passes comprehensive exam. If the student receives two fails the student must re-take the exam after a 3 month period, which may be during the summer semester but is determined at the committee’s discretion. If the student fails the exam a second time, he or she will not be allowed to graduate from the counseling program. Graduation hinges on successful completion of the comprehensive exam.

Checkout- (April of Final Year)

Students will complete a final checkout with their program leaders during the last week of internship class during their final year. During this checkout students’ portfolios will be given one final review. All tracking sheets will be collected and students will be given their final evaluations from their site supervisors.

Knowledge for both core and specialty area outcomes are measured by portfolio assignments. Each course in the program has at least one assignment designated as a portfolio assignment. The matrices for each program documents the standards, which courses those standards are being met in, and how the standards are being measured (portfolio assignments).

Knowledge areas in each program specialty are measured through carefully selected portfolio assignments that specifically meet those standards. Other course assignments may meet those standards; however, the portfolio assignment is an agreed upon assignment by all core faculty. Each portfolio assignment is clearly marked on all syllabi.

Students will collect portfolio assignments in a binder and keep track of the grade and corresponding assessment value in a tracking sheet located in the front of the binder. An example of this tracking sheet is in Appendix D. If a student receives a score of 5 indicative of “does not meet standard”, the student will need to complete remediation. This may include repeating the assignment until he/she receives a score indicative of “meets standard.” If a student receives a 4 “Meets standard with concerns,” the student may have remediation. This determination is based upon student performance in previous courses and if this
particular issue has been a pattern throughout the student’s program of study.

In addition, students will be asked to fill out an assessment of their progress during their meetings for Benchmarks two and three. Please see Appendix C for this student assessment form. During their meetings for benchmarks two and three and the final checkout, program faculty will review tracking sheets with students to ensure that students are keeping track of their progress. This data will be collected and used to determine how successful we are at meeting the knowledge area outcomes for SC, MH, and MFC.

The flowchart below provides a visual of the process throughout a student’s progression in the program.
MSU Counseling Program Yearly Outcome-based Report

Application and Acceptance into the program

For the 2017/18 Academic Year, the program received 46 applications to the counseling program: 13 in School Counseling, 12 in Marriage & Family Counseling, and 21 in Mental Health Counseling. The School Program accepted 6 applicants with 5 withdrawing from consideration, the Marriage & Family program accepted 8 applicants, and the Mental Health Program accepted 8 applicants for a total of 22 applicants. As of May 2018, 19 applicants have indicated they are coming into the program in the summer of 2018.

Portfolio Assignments

The average score of portfolio assignments per program area were:

- MFC- 1.09
- MH- 1.26
- SC-1.15

For more detailed scores per portfolio assignment raw data from each portfolio assignment is available. Overall, what these averages suggest is that within program and between programs, our students are scoring well within the range of 1-2 on their portfolio assignments.

A=1, A-/B+ = 2, B= 3, B- =4, and C+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1, 2 or 3. Anything lower and the student will have remediation of the assignment.

Benchmark/Professional Disposition Data

*The following data is Benchmark/Professional Disposition average scores across program area.

Benchmark 1

Benchmark 1 comprises basic counseling skill demonstration on a final tape. Students must successfully
pass skills in order to progress to Practicum (Benchmark 2). For the 2017 cohort of students the average benchmark score per program area was:

- MFC Students – 2
- MH Students- 2
- School Students- 2

Overall Average across all three specialty areas: 2

A=1, A-/B+ = 2, B= 3, B- =4, and C+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1, 2 or 3. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

**Benchmark 2**

Benchmark 2 is comprised of a demonstration of basic counseling skills with community clients as well as a demonstration of greater conceptual ability. Students must successfully pass practicum in order to progress to internship (Benchmark 3). For the 2017 cohort of students the average benchmark score per program area was:

- MFC Students- 2
- MH Students- 2
- School Students- 1

Overall Average across all three specialty areas: 1.66

A=1, A-/B+ = 2, B= 3, B- =4, and C+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1, 2 or 3. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

**Benchmark 3**

Benchmark 3 is comprised of a demonstration of advanced counseling skills in a community agency or school setting. The benchmark is based upon university observation, case conceptualization grade and site supervisor evaluation. For the 2017 cohort of students the average benchmark score per program area was:

- MFC Students- 1
- MH Students- 2
- School Students – 1

Overall Average across all three specialty areas: 1.33

A=1, A-/B+ = 2, B= 3, B- =4, and C+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1, 2 or 3. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

**Benchmark 4**

Benchmark 4 is the comprehensive exam distributed in the spring of the students’ second year. See narrative below.
Comprehensive Exam Data

Fourteen students took the comprehensive counseling exam in February 2018. Of the 14 students, 1 exam went to a third reader and passed. For 2017/18 we had a 100% pass rate for the comprehensive exam. As of May, we do have one additional student who will be taking the exam during the summer.

Internship Site Data AY 2017/18

Students report being satisfied with their internship site experiences. Areas of common concern are lack of career counseling experiences, networking in the community, group counseling experiences (for some sites), and case coordination. The sites that we utilize for internships are very strong in terms of the quality of onsite supervision, relevance to career goals, exposure to a wide range of clientele and clinical issues.

The counseling program continues to explore ways to integrate more career counseling in the program. For example, for the comprehensive exam in 2018, career theory was added. Additionally, the program would like to explore how to partner between the advising center and our practicum students for additional career counseling experiences.

Internship Site Supervision Data AY 2017/18

Overall, students report being satisfied and supported by their site supervisors. There were no areas of concern reported. Students reported being supported and appropriately challenged by their site supervisors.

Vital Statistics for AY 2017/18

In 2018 there were 13 graduates of Montana State University’s Counseling program: 8 graduates of the Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling program, 2 graduates of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, and 4 graduates of the School Counseling program. Of the admitted students for the Marriage, Couples and Family program, 100% graduated in the expected period of time and 5 students had reported
employment upon graduation. Of the admitted students for the Clinical Mental Health Program, 50% graduated in the expected period of time, and one student reported employment by graduation. Of the admitted students for the School Counseling program, 100% graduated in the expected period of time and 50% had obtained employment on or before graduation. Data regarding the NCE examination is not available for 2018; however, our graduates are very successful at obtaining licensure both in and out of state.

The Human Development clinic offered over 2000 hours of low cost counseling services, and for 2017/18 the counseling practicum and internship students offered over 10,000 of free mental health services to schools, community agencies and at the Human Development Clinic. Additionally, counseling students conducted three advocacy outreach projects to the community. Mu Tau Sigma, our local chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, helped at the Help Center 5K “Run for Your Life” and sponsored a dance for residents at a local assisted living center.

Program Modifications based on Evaluation Data

- We continue review using blended coursework in the program. The counseling faculty have decided that we need to make this change for a few more years to really understand the impact. From the program perspective the move to hybrid for some courses works better to deliver the content, and in some cases is better for student self-care (i.e. busy spring semester transitioning to practicum for first year students). Additionally, the program is considering ideas and options for how to meet the needs of the greater state of Montana. For some people, Bozeman is too expensive to move to. We will continue to have these discussions in our faculty meetings for the next academic school year. Areas of discussion include: how to incorporate a distance component into the program for applicants who are more place bound. The graduate coordinator and office personnel continue to receive phone calls regarding if the program is online. There is an increase in the number of online programs offered in the state. Montana State’s counseling program continues to hold regional and national recognition as a quality program; therefore, in the spirit of our land grant mission we would like to explore how to offer the program in some type of distance capacity.

- The MSU Counseling program submitted a title change to the degree in 2016/17 that went into effect this academic year. The degree title changed from MS Human Growth and Development to MS Counseling with options in Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling or Mental Health Counseling. These changes were submitted based upon feedback from our last accreditation report.

- When the degree title changed, The Marriage and Family Counseling Program submitted a Level 1 Board of Regents change to adjust the title of the program to- Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling. This will go into effect for the AY 2017/18. This change was submitted based upon feedback from our last accreditation report.

- The program will schedule a supervisor training in the Fall of 2018 with site supervisors to retrain in our evaluation process, as well as provide time to answer questions related to supervision they may have. This
training will be provided based upon feedback from students and supervisors at the internship sites.

-Given that we had a number of new faculty teaching, feedback from students suggested that we needed to communicate paperwork expectations differently. Therefore, during our faculty meeting dated 3/8/16 we reviewed a chart that Dr. Koltz put together outlining paperwork flow throughout a student’s program of study. We believe that this chart will contribute to less confusion for students and faculty. The chart will be communicated during the HDCO 508 Professional Issues course. Additionally, Dr. Hurt-Avila will take one week during the HDCO 508 course to communicate expectations regarding the portfolio.

Other Substantial Program Changes

The MSU Counseling Program experienced four substantial program changes:

1. We added two additional faculty, Dr. Kara Hurt-Avila and Dr. Ed Dunbar to the counseling program. They replaced two faculty who left, Dr. Cristen Wathen and Dr. Adina Smith.
2. The HHD Clinic director, Dr. Katey Franklin, moved into a full time NTT position with the addictions counseling certificate program, and Dr. Heidi McKinley was hired as the clinic director as of May 15, 2017.
3. The university made the decision to start three, 4-week summer sessions; therefore, the counseling program decided to switch our program to the 4 week model. As a graduate program, we did have a choice to not make this change; however, after discussions we decided to try it as it allowed for students to spread the number of courses they were taken at a time out.
4. This is the first year we are offering the NCE Exam through our testing center, so that students may take the exam before graduation and apply for the NCC upon graduation.