

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REHABILITATION AND COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS**  
**ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report from the Rehabilitation and Counselor Education Subtrack Programs in the College of Education at the University of Iowa.

**Executive Summary:** The Department of Rehabilitation and Counselor Education offers three programs that underwent the accreditation process – Master of Arts Program in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling; Master of Arts Program in School Counseling; and Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision. These are subtracks within the Rehabilitation and Counselor Education Program. The three 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. In July 2011, the College of Education was informed that the three Rehabilitation and Counselor Education Subtrack Programs were accredited for the maximum period of eight years. All of the required standards were met and no further reports are required to be submitted. This report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact” as well as Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

◇ Description of Programs.

- ⇒ The **Master of Arts Program in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling** requires 60 credit hours. The curriculum blends academic coursework in such areas as the nature of psychiatric disorders, diagnosis, treatment planning, intervention, and outcome evaluation, with a supervised clinical experience. The program meets the educational requirements for licensure as a mental health counselor in community mental health settings in Iowa. The program prepares professional counselors to coordinate resources and provide assistance in employment, independent living, and personal or economic development to persons with disabilities. In Spring 2011, there were 27 students enrolled in the program.
- ⇒ The **Master of Arts Program in School Counseling** requires 54 credit hours, including a counseling practicum and an internship. The program prepares students to provide individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, and consulting services to teachers, parents, families, and other professionals and leads to K-8 and 5-12 school counselor licensure in Iowa. In Spring 2011, there were 22 students enrolled in the program.
- ⇒ The **Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision** requires completion of a master’s degree in counseling or a related field and at least one year of professional counseling or related work experience prior to admission. The program requires 96 credit hours, including courses in an area outside the department; an empirical research project; and a dissertation, and addresses the professional leadership roles of counselor education, supervision, advanced counseling practice, and research competencies expected of doctoral graduates. Students are prepared to be counselor educators, counselor supervisors, advanced counseling practitioners, researchers, and/or evaluators and leaders in academic and clinical settings. In Spring 2011, there were 24 students enrolled in the program.

- ◇ Purpose of Accreditation. An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification.
- ◇ Accrediting Agency. The accrediting body is the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).
- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the three subtrack programs contained the responses to the standards required by the accrediting body – The Learning Environment – Structure and Evaluation; Professional Identity; Professional Practice; Clinical Mental Health Counseling; School Counseling; Counselor Education and Supervision – Doctoral Standards; and Doctoral Learning Outcomes.
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In February 2011, the visiting team identified strengths of the programs. The team also noted that all of the standards had been met and that no required changes were identified. Suggestions were made for program enhancement or improvement; however, these do not require an institutional response.
- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ⇒ The rehabilitation counseling program is ranked #4 by *U.S. News and World Reports*.
  - ⇒ There are exceptionally productive faculty members as scholars and leaders in the counseling profession.
  - ⇒ There is strong support from the University in the form of technical equipment and advisory personnel, reference librarian services, space, and number of faculty.
  - ⇒ Students are pleased with the preparation they are receiving in the Master of Arts Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and with the special emphasis on rehabilitation and feel well prepared to work as counselors in both mental health and rehabilitation settings.
  - ⇒ Students in the Master of Arts Program in School Counseling are being prepared in a comprehensive school counseling model and trained to become leaders in the school counseling profession.
  - ⇒ The approach to professional practice in the Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision is unique by offering students an opportunity to experience the scope of practice from disciplines other than their own.
- ◇ Sample Suggestions for Program Enhancement/Improvement. (Institutional changes are in italics.)
  - ⇒ “The two master’s degree programs and two doctoral degree programs currently operate independently and could benefit by more interaction among program faculty and program graduate students.  
  
*Students from all programs are being encouraged to interact more through the Chi Sigma Iota professional honor society which has increased its efforts to provide all students in the department with increased professional development and support experiences.*

- ⇒ Consider merging the rehabilitation counselor education and counselor education doctoral programs into one with two specializations to achieve a united professional identity as counselors and to give doctoral graduates in rehabilitation counselor education programs the opportunity to become faculty members in CACREP accredited counseling programs.

*The department has been meeting to review these issues and to discuss options for the future of both doctoral programs through merging.*

- ⇒ Some core courses in the clinical mental health counseling and school counseling master's programs could be taught in classes in which students from both specializations are present to foster a united identity.

*The department is planning to combine master's core curriculum courses more often over the next few years as faculty retire and lines are prioritized in the couple and family therapy program.*

- ⇒ Site supervisors in the school counseling program reported that they would like to have access to the supervision training, perhaps through distance education, taped sessions or uploading training modules on You Tube, for example. They also would like consultation time with faculty members on some of their projects, although they had not expressed that to the faculty.

*The program is working on additional avenues and opportunities to provide site supervisor training at different times of the year and to make these experiences more accessible and flexible.*

- ⇒ Add a clearer differentiation in the doctoral program between the activities expected/conducted during practicum versus internship in the student handbook.

*The internship syllabi have been revised this year to specifically address differential training experiences and requirements by site.*

- ⇒ Separate the doctoral program objectives from the master's program objectives."

*Doctoral program objectives are distinct from the master's program and will be more clearly noted in future self-studies.*

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In July 2011, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs awarded accreditation to the three subtracks of the Rehabilitation and Counselor Education Program – Master of Arts Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling; Master of Arts Program in School Counseling; and Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision - in the College of Education at the University of Iowa for the maximum period of eight years to 2019.

The programs were commended for receiving accreditation for the eight-year period. There are no required changes for the programs. However, the faculty have discussed the suggestions made by the site team for program enhancement and are following through with many of the suggestions.