

## Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

**Program: Counseling MA (533)**

**College: Education and Human Development**

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**Date: May 8, 2023**

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**Date: May 26, 2023**

**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

**Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Mission.** The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network to assist children and their families related to learning and development.

**Counseling (COUN) Program Mission Statement:** The mission of the Counseling Program at Northwestern State University is to prepare candidates with the knowledge, skills, and practices to become caring, competent, reflective counselors within a dynamic and multicultural society. A key aim of the program faculty is to approach their pedagogy with intellectual vigor and enhance their students' preparation through quality research, scholarship, and service. The instructional efforts of program faculty are committed to ensuring a seamless integration of theory into practice.

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessments provide results on candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions as appropriate for professional education programs.
- (2) Annually, program faculty and stakeholders review data to make data-driven, curricular decisions. COUN faculty determine what changes will be made.
- (3) The NSU Counseling Program is fully accredited by the Council for Accreditation Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) through October 31, 2023. The program was accredited under the 2009 Standards and has now fully implemented the 2016 Standards. This accreditation is about quality assurance and the promotion of

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continuous improvement of programs. While there are aspirational elements included in the CACREP Standards, the Standards clearly delineate the program components that must be in place in order for a program to be accredited. The accredited status of our program assures the public that the program has gone through an extensive, multi-level external review process ensuring these critical quality-related components are in place. In addition, as a CACREP accredited program, we are committed to ongoing reporting and continuous and systematic program evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make data-informed program modifications for improvement over time.

### Student Learning Outcomes

#### SLO 1

#### Course Map: Core CACREP Courses

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge (SPA #1)	Demonstrate a knowledge of core CACREP content areas as evidenced by earning an "Acceptable" score or higher on the MC and oral comprehensive exams.

#### Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

SLO 1 is assessed through a multiple-choice comprehensive exam/oral comprehensive exam in the last semester of the program. The assessment instrument evaluates student knowledge using a 160-question multiple choice exam and a 45-minute oral exam, and the benchmark performance is that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level (70%) or higher.

**Finding:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

#### Analysis:

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data (n=10), in AC 2022-2023 faculty focused on improving students' scores in Group Counseling. The lower scores in Analysis and Research followed the national trend for counselors on the National Counselor Exam. The quantitative nature of those courses does not typically come naturally for those who lean toward being more verbal, such as counselors. However, the downward trend in Group Counseling scores was of concern; the average in that category was 14.4/20. The following actions were taken in the AC 2022-2023: (1) a new text was selected which better aligned with CACREP Standards, and (2) COUN 5580, the Group Course, returned to a face-to-face format for the Summer of 2022.

As a result of these changes, in 2022-2023 the target was met. Fifteen students completed the Comprehensive Exam in the 22-23 AY. Of the 15, 12 candidates scored 70% or higher; 3

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scored below 70% but still within the passing range. The scores in the core areas are as follows: Multicultural (16.9/20), Counseling Skills (16.6/20), Career Counseling (16.1/20), Group Counseling (15.7/20), Theories (15.6/20), Human Growth & Development (15.6/20), Analysis of the Individual (14.6/20), and Research (14.3/20). The changes made during the 22-23 AY had a direct impact on the comprehensive exam scores within the area of Group Counseling.

### Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. COUN 5580, Group Counseling, will be offered in a face-to-face format. Additionally, renewed focus will be placed on Human Growth and Development. Emphasis will be placed on applying the theories to real life scenarios in order for students to make meaning of the information they are learning. This will be accomplished through integrating observations and interviews into discussion forum assignments. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting human growth and development theories with practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

### SLO 2

#### Course Map: Field Experience Courses (COUN 5550, 5570)

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice (SPA #2)	The Individual Counseling Evaluation Form will be used in COUN 5550 and 5570. This aligns with the Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP standards below.  CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues  SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement

#### Measure: 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

SLO 2 is assessed through the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form in COUN 5550 and 5570. This aligns with the program's Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP Standards, which are concentration specific for Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling (SC): (1) CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of

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mental health issues and (2) SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement.

**Finding:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

### **Analysis:**

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, in conjunction with a survey completed by site supervisors and changes made by the Licensed Professional Counselors Board of Examiners, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2022-2023, faculty placed additional emphasis on training for telehealth counseling. This continued the multi-year roll out, with the goal being that all students have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course. This was accomplished through embedding a three-hour telehealth counseling into COUN 6500, the Ethics course students must have prior to enrollment in field experiences. A mandatory quiz was designed and required to track student learning.

These changes improved the student's ability to apply techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues and to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in 2022-2023 the target was met for CACREP Standard, CMHC 3.b. No students were enrolled in COUN 5570 in AC 22-23, so CACREP Standard SC 3.h did not have data from the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form. Six students were enrolled in COUN 5550 during AC 22-23. The average score on the evaluation was 4.47/5. Scores ranged from 4.3 to 4.6. The changes made during the 22-23 AY had a direct impact on students' abilities to utilize counseling techniques and interventions, especially in relation to teletherapy.

### **Decision or Recommendation.**

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. This will be a multi-year process. COUN 6500 will be only offered once per year as it averages around 10 students for each offering; COUN 5550 averages around 10 students per year as well; therefore, more data will be collected during these courses determining if additional changes are required. Additionally, students will have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course.

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### SLO 3

#### Course Map: COUN 6500

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and characteristics (SPA #3)	Know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling (2016 CACREP Standard 1.i.).

#### Measure: 3.1. (Direct – Skills, Dispositions)

The SLO is assessed through the COUN 6500 Research Paper.

Finding: In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

#### Analysis:

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, faculty implemented changes in the rubric in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2021-2022, faculty redesigned the rubric to provide more specific feedback and focus their writings on the critical parts of the assignment. The first implementation of this redesigned rubric was in the Summer of 2021.

Mean scores for the COUN 6500 Research Paper were calculated to analyze the data for the Summer of 2022. One hundred percent of students (n=9) earned a mean score of Acceptable (80% or above) or Target (90% or above) on the Research Paper.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-2023 the target was met. The assignment change had a direct impact on the student's ability to model professional behaviors and reference specific ethical standards.

#### Decision or Recommendation.

**In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.**

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, faculty will implement the third year of rubric changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. This is the final year of this multi-year process. With data from the upcoming AC 2023-2024, faculty will have a data set of over 30 students. COUN 6500 is only offered once per year and averages around 10 students for each offering. Summative data analysis from this multi-year process will allow faculty to improve strategies which ensure the student's ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal

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considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### SLO 4

#### Course Map: COUN 5000 and 5610

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline (SPA #3)	Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.).
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline (SPA #3)	Articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others (2016 CACREP 2.d.).

#### Measure: 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

**Finding:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

#### Analysis:

In AC 2021-2022, the target was met.

SLO #4 was assessed in COUN 5610 through the Class Journal/Portfolio, also a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 CACREP Standards. This assignment is a compilation of the students' work throughout the semester regarding specific prompts designed for students to reflect in-depth on their attitudes, beliefs, experiences and then to articulate how that impacts their work with clients. The benchmark performance is that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level or higher. This standard was met in the Spring 23. Sixteen students were enrolled in COUN 5610. Of the 16 students, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the Class Journal/Portfolio.

Faculty also assessed SLO 4 in COUN 5000 through a 45-minute counseling session that students facilitated in the role of the counselor, which was also a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 CACREP Standards. A session transcription identifying skills used, case conceptualization, and an essential skills rating form was completed as part of the assignment as well. The benchmark performance was that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level or higher. Data for this SLO was collected for COUN students in the Fall of 2022. Fifteen students were enrolled in COUN 5000. Fourteen students completed all portions of this Key Performance Indicator. Of the 15 students, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the assignment. The

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remaining student did not submit the work by the due date and received a zero on the assignment. Data for this SLO will be collected again in the Fall of 23.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, feedback from students, and site supervisors, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2022-2023, faculty again offered an 8-week Counseling Skills (COUN 5000) course that met twice weekly. This was scheduled as a hybrid A-term course. As part of this offering there was an increased emphasis on case notes as part of the case conceptualization skills. For COUN 5610, data from the Class Journal/Portfolio continued to be monitored for another cycle prior to any changes being made.

The changes made in 2022-2023 made a direct impact on the student's ability to articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, and students were able to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills.

### **Decision or Recommendation.**

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the results the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. Students who enrolled in COUN 5000 in the Fall of 2022 will not be eligible for a field experience course until the Fall of 2023. Therefore, no field experience supervisor feedback nor student feedback will be available until December of 2023. In the interim, an additional lecture on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation will be incorporated into COUN 5000 to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, previous changes to the assignment/rubric will be implemented. The multiple-choice comprehensive exam scores for the Multicultural Counseling core area have risen over the past two years; in 2022-2023 it was the area in which students scored the highest (out of the eight core areas). Faculty believe the new changes and continuing the implementation of previous changes will improve students' ability to articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others and to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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### SLO 5

**Course Map: COUN 5560 and EDUC 5010**

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Make responsible decisions and problem- solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate (SPA #5)	Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.).
Make responsible decisions and problem- solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate (SPA #5)	Know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice (2016 CACREP 8.a.)

#### **Measure: 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)**

**Finding:** In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

#### **Analysis:**

In AC 2021-2022, the target for CACREP Standard 5.g was met; the data was incomplete for CACREP Standard 8.a.

Faculty assessed SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 7.e.) in COUN 5560 through the Case Conceptualization Presentation, a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. In this assignment students (1) Identified the presenting problem, (2) Assessed and interpreted client’s strengths and needs, recognizing uniqueness in cultures, languages, values, backgrounds, and abilities, (3) Detailed appropriate comprehensive assessment interventions to assist in diagnosis and treatment planning, with an awareness of cultural bias, (4) Detailed treatment plan that includes a behavioral definition, 5-axis diagnosis, goals, objectives, past interventions used, theoretical approach used, multicultural considerations, and family systems considerations; differentiate between diagnosis and developmental appropriate reactions during trauma-causing events, (5) Included progress notes, (6) Documented consultation with collaborating professionals to discuss the differential diagnosis, (7) Videotaped session and summarize intervention. Intervention must be based upon documented research findings. Sources must be cited. If applicable, provide appropriate counseling strategies when working with clients with addiction and co-occurring disorders; if not detail appropriate strategies that could be used, (8) Summarized future plans based upon research findings. Sources must be cited. (9) Identified appropriate referrals and/or community resources and the procedures utilized for making those referrals. For the Personal Reflection Component students were asked to (1) Discuss personal limitations in working with the client and the nature of the supervision received, (2) Discuss the legal and ethical issues related to the work with the client, (3) Discuss personal awareness of the issues presented related to diversity



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and how multicultural competencies were met. Data for this SLO is collected for COUN students each Spring and Fall semester.

Sixteen students were enrolled in COUN 5560 in AC 2021-2022; 100% of students earned a score of 80% or higher.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2021-2022 data, in conjunction with feedback from site supervisors, in AC 2022-2023, faculty continued placing additional emphasis on training on progress notes. This will be a multi-course, multi-year emphasis. It involved completing a sample counseling plan in COUN 5530 and additional lectures/discussions included in COUN 5550 and COUN 5560 and expanded to include the completion of case notes in COUN 5000. These additional assignments/discussions were completed in AC 2022-2023. Fifteen students were enrolled in COUN 5560 during AY 2022-2023 and 100% earned a score of 80% or higher from their site supervisors.

Previously faculty assessed SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 8.a.) in EDUC 5010 through the Article Screening, a Key Performance Indicator assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. For this assignment students were asked to critique a set of articles using specific guidelines. They also discussed the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession.

Fourteen students were enrolled in EDUC 5010 in AC 2021-2022. Due to the loss of a program faculty member, there was no single section for COUN students; they were included in sections with a variety of other majors. Three different instructors taught EDUC 5010, and there was no uniformity in how this assignment was implemented (since the assignment is for COUN students only and no other majors).

For this reason, in AC 2022-2023 the assignment was moved into COUN 5550 and COUN 5570 and merged with a similar assignment. These are COUN specific sections (the practicums for each concentration) and could be implemented uniformly. The updated assignment was renamed to Research Article Critique/Presentation and remains a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the program. This first went into effect for the Fall of 2022. No students were enrolled in COUN 5570 during the AC 22-23; six students were enrolled in COUN 5550. Of those six, 100% earned a score of 90% or higher on the Research Article Critique/Presentation.

### **Decision or Recommendation.**

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results the faculty will implement the following in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty will provide an additional lecture on clinical case notes/conceptualization and collaborative documentation in COUN 5000 and monitor previous changes to collect a larger data set. Data for the Research Article Critique/Presentation will be collected to gain a larger data set (currently n=6); previous changes will continue to be implemented. Collectively these changes will improve the students' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case

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conceptualization skills and their ability to know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2021-2022 and took the following steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2022-2023:

- For SLO #1, in AC 2022-2023, faculty focused on improving students' scores in Group Counseling. The lower scores in Analysis and Research follows the national trend for counselors on the National Counselor Exam. The quantitative nature of those courses do not typically come naturally for those who lean toward being more verbal, such as counselors. However, the downward trend in Group Counseling scores was of concern. The following actions were taken in the 2022-2023 AC: (1) a new text was selected which better aligned with CACREP Standards, and (2) COUN 5580, the Group Course, returned to a face-to-face format for the Summer of 2022.
- For SLO #2, in AC 2022-2023, faculty continued placing additional emphasis on training for telehealth counseling. This continued the multi-year roll out, with the goal being that all students have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course. This was accomplished through embedding a three-hour telehealth counseling into COUN 6500, the Ethics course students must have prior to enrollment in field experiences. A mandatory quiz was designed and required in order to track students' learning.
- For SLO #3, in AC 2022-2023 faculty are implementing the rubric changes that went into effect in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. The assignment change had a direct impact on the student's ability to model professional behaviors and reference specific ethical standards. This multi-year process will be completed during AC 2023-2024.
- For SLO #4, in AC 2022-2023, faculty offered an 8-week Counseling Skills (COUN 5000) course that met twice weekly. This was scheduled as a hybrid A-term course. As part of this offering there was an increased emphasis on case notes as part of the case conceptualization skills. For COUN 5610, data from the Class Journal/Portfolio was monitored for another cycle prior to any changes being made.
- For SLO #5, in AC 2022-2023, faculty placed additional emphasis on training on progress notes. This was a multi-course, multi-year emphasis. It involved completing a sample counseling plan in COUN 5530 and additional lectures/discussions included in COUN 5550 and COUN 5560. It was expanded to include the completion of case notes in COUN 5000. In AC 2022-2023 the Article Critique assignment was moved into COUN 5550 and COUN 5570 (the practicums for each concentration). This first implementation went into effect for the Fall of 2022.

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### Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

- For SLO #1 the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. COUN 5580, Group Counseling, will be offered in a face-to-face format. Additionally, renewed focus will be placed on Human Growth and Development. Emphasis will be placed on applying the theories to real life scenarios in order for students to make meaning of the information they are learning. This will be accomplished through integrating observations and interviews into discussion forum assignments. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting human growth and development theories with practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- For SLO #2 faculty will place additional emphasis on training for telehealth counseling. This will continue the multi-year roll out, with the goal being that all students have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course. This is being accomplished through embedding a three-hour telehealth counseling into COUN 6500, the Ethics course students must have prior to enrollment in field experiences. A mandatory quiz is designed to track students' learning.
- For SLO #3 faculty will implement the rubric changes that went into effect in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. The assignment change has a direct impact on the student's ability to model professional behaviors and reference specific ethical standards. This is a multi-year process because faculty will be examining low numbers.
- For SLO #4 faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. An additional lecture on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation will be incorporated into COUN 5000 in order to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, previous changes to the assignment/rubric will continue to be implemented.
- For SLO #5 the faculty will implement the following to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty will provide an additional lecture on clinical case notes/conceptualization and collaborative documentation in COUN 5000 and monitor previous changes in order to collect a larger data set. Data for the Research Article Critique/Presentation will continue to be collected to gain a larger data set (currently n=6); previous changes will continue to be implemented. Collectively these changes will improve the students' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and their ability to know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.