

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Counseling MS

The 2022-2023 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Counseling MS program in the College of Health and Human Development (HHD) concluded with a culmination meeting on October 27, 2023. The program is accredited by Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and submitted accreditation documents in lieu of program review documents.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Elaine Frey (AVP for Graduate Studies, AVPGS), Kate Bono (Interim Dean, HHD), Matt Englar-Carlson (Department Chair), Leah Brew (Previous Department Chair), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost commended the program for successfully completing the reaffirmation process, receiving excellent reviews from the reviewers, and making significant contributions to the university. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The program has a culturally responsive curriculum and a clear commitment to social justice advocacy that is embedded through assignments, projects, and lectures.
- The program significantly impacts the community's overall well-being by training highly effective, culturally competent counselors with critical pedagogical practices such as the *Ánimo* program, a signature program recognized nationally by the Excelencia in Education. The *Ánimo* program is a powerful program that impacts student's professional and personal identities, as well as the surrounding communities.
- The program provides preparation for the California Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist credentials.
- The faculty are devoted to student development and the program's continued success.
- The department is dedicated to the retention and well-being of its faculty and lecturers, providing informal mentorship, retreats and events, constant communication, and nurturing strong collegial relationships.
- The program has an extensive assessment practice that aligns with accreditation and CSUF-specific needs. Faculty are involved in the process, and data is utilized to improve the curriculum and program.
- The program adopts a holistic, culturally-responsive admission approach that takes much care to ensure a fair, equitable, and personable process. Additionally, it is clear the department makes significant efforts to recruit and retain a diverse group of students – the program has a strong applicant pool and is highly competitive.
- The department, the Clinical Training Director, and the Fieldwork Coordinator maintain a comprehensive fieldwork program. The Provost commended the program for the use of lecturer as the Director, as teaching expertise is needed to understand clinical training needs.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the accreditation process were discussed as follows:

1. *Ánimo* program:
 - The external reviewers recommended increasing awareness of the *Ánimo* program (and the associated emphasis) to internal and external stakeholders, and expanding it to become a signature program for the university.
 - The Chair agreed that awareness of the *Ánimo* program/emphasis should be increased.
 - The Chair stated the program would like to consistently recruit 18 students into the emphasis. While the department would like to eventually expand the *Ánimo* program, it would require significant increase in the department's FTES and the number of bilingual faculty. Adding more students to the *Ánimo* emphasis could mean that there are not enough faculty to teach the core

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courses of the program. CACREP, the accrediting body, requires that 50% of sections be taught by core full time faculty. Perhaps with future retirements of monolingual faculty, more bilingual faculty could be hired to allow the expansion of the *Ánimo* emphasis.

- The previous Chair shared that great care is taken to ensure qualified students are accepted into the emphasis. The program is exploring and reconstructing the admissions process to address any unconscious bias that may prevent students who are interested and qualified to be in the emphasis from being admitted.

2. Cohort model:

- The external reviewers suggested the program to consider a cohort model and/or to strengthen student organizations to establish more sustained peer contact amongst students.
- The Chair concurred that peer contact should be improved, and reported that the program is actively working to enhance the student organizations and the events they host as one method to improve peer support.
 - The previous Chair commented that students desire more social interactions, which is primarily facilitated by the program's graduate student association. The association needs to be strengthened particularly given that more students are coming from non-local areas or out of state.
- The Chair stated that the program disagrees with the cohort model for the following reasons:
 - The program attracts students who have experienced emotional trauma, who often underestimate the psychological and emotional growth required in the program as well as the academic rigor of graduate school. Many students need to adjust courseload during their career in the program, which makes the cohort model challenging.
 - When developing a cohort model, courses will often be offered during one semester each year or during the summer only. As many courses require particular expertise, this would negatively impact the full time faculty's teaching assignment as some faculty do not have any courses they are qualified to teach in the cohort model. Resources would be needed to re-educate some of the current full time faculty so they could teach other courses or hire additional faculty.

3. Clarification of program focus:

- The external reviewers recommended the program to clarify the program's focus and commitment to clinical mental health counseling while highlighting additional opportunities such as the licensures and the *Ánimo* Latinx Counseling Emphasis.
- The Chair agreed that the program is different from the MS Psychology (clinical), which needs to be better communicated to the students.

4. Autonomy over fieldwork:

- The external reviewers recommended that the department should maintain autonomy over fieldwork coordination, including event planning for site supervisors, site quality evaluation, internship database management, etc.
- The Chair stated that the faculty strongly support this recommendation since the program navigates both licensure and accreditation requirements, which are different from other departments' requirements. The program will continue to work with the college on this issue.

5. Potential doctoral program:

- The previous Chair stated that with the recent signing of AB 656, the department can proceed with plans to offer an accredited doctoral program in Counseling Education. A doctoral program in Counseling Education is unique in the region, so there would not be much competition.

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- The Provost supports the idea of a doctoral program, and encouraged the department to work with the AVPGS on it. The AVPGS stated that the CO will put out Tital V languages to guide the steps forward.
 - The Chair expressed enthusiasm to pursue a doctoral program, but asked for resources to support this effort – the new program would require faculty to plan and carry out. The Provost recommended the department to work with the Deans' office on resource support.
6. Assessment practice:
- The program's self-study brought up the need to continue to align assessment practices with accreditation, licensure, and university needs, and continue to utilize assessment for improvement, as seen with the recent integration of social justice values.
 - The SAVPIEP recommended the program to consider streamlining assessment and keep sustainability in mind when making changes.
 - The Chair stated that the department has a good assessment practice, and is currently exploring ways to simplify assessment. The process is currently complicated (partly due to the accreditation requirements), and would be difficult to transition to a new assessment coordinator without extensive training. The simplification effort requires dedicated time and effort (e.g. release time).
7. New faculty hires:
- The Chair stated that accreditation requires 50% of the program's classes to be taught by core full time faculty. Adding 2 new faculty members leads to 9 faculty, still short of the traditional faculty size of 10. With 9 faculty members, the program consistently falls below the 50% expectation when more than 2 classes per semester are released due to sabbatical, grants, or service. The department averages 4-5 non-service-related releases per semester, which means the program risks not meeting accreditation standards.
 - The Chair requested to hire 2-3 counselor educators to replace two psychologists who are retiring. The program needs faculty with doctorates in counselor education to show its identity as clinical mental health counselors.

The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the current and previous Chairs for their leadership and hardwork. The Chairs expressed appreciation for the Provost's support.