

**Department of Counselor Education
Academic Program Review
Response to Site Team Report and Action Plan
April, 2016**

It was with great pride that we received the official report of the Academic Program Review Site Team following their review and visit in January, 2016. We have found this process to be thorough and rigorous, and even though the department went through its re-accreditation site visit by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) three years ago, we found that this forward-looking exercise allowed the department to identify strengths and goals for the future.

Site Team Report

In addition to the goals that have been outlined by the site-team, we would like to highlight several of the findings of the site-team's report:

- *"The faculty commitment to teaching, along with the excellent student ratings and comments by the students during the program review, is commendable."*
- *"Over the past few years, the Department procured two grants contributing \$3.8 million in school counseling and rehabilitation counseling. The Department submitted 12 grants in the past three years."*
- *"there is a great deal to celebrate in the accomplishments and future potential of this outstanding Department of Counselor Education. The faculty members are very productive scholars who submit many grants for external funding. They are excellent teachers who generate accolades from students. They are also faithful and hard-working servants of both the university and their counseling professional organizations... **With continued administrative support and enhanced future funding, FAU's Department of Counselor Education will continue to thrive and rise in the national rankings.**"*

Response to Site Team Report

The Department of Counselor Education, in response to the Academic Program Review Site Team report dated January 21, 2016, have developed the following goals:

1. Support the Maintenance of CACREP Accreditation

From the site team report:

- *"...CACREP requires that 50% of courses be taught by core faculty, and the department currently exceeds this standard."*
- *"...The counselor education faculty members do an excellent job documenting SLOs, consistent with CACREP and CAEP requirements. Faculty has done an excellent job aligning CACREP and CAEP standards and integrating the standards into LiveText"*
- *"...When the program areas were being evaluated for reevaluation from CACREP in 2013, only four core faculty were identified, thus falling below the necessary five faculty required by CACREP and resulting in provisional accreditation."*

- *“...To maintain accreditation efforts, integration of the 2016 Standards into LiveText should take place immediately, which would allow for monitoring of student outcomes across multiple years, thereby benefitting future accreditation efforts. We recommend that a faculty member receive release time in order to complete this integration into LiveText.”*

The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education are highly cognizant of the increasing importance of CACREP accreditation is for graduates' ability to obtain employment post-graduation. Many states, as well as programs within the Federal government, are beginning to explicitly require graduation from a CACREP-accredited program in order to become licensed and/or to bill for reimbursement. The Counselor Education programs are one of the only CACREP accredited programs in the area. However, several competing private institutions (Palm Beach Atlantic, Lynn University, South University) are starting the process to become CACREP accredited. Therefore, what was once a strategic advantage has become a necessity in order to maintain a competitive edge in the region. Aligning to the new 2016 standards is a time-consuming process that requires a review of the curriculum in every track, as well as re-align the student learning objectives (SLOs) and the systems used to track these (currently Live Text). Our next site visit will be in 2021 (five years from now), and while we were eventually successful in getting full-accreditation, the faculty are committed to maintaining this with the proper resources from the university.

2. Support High Research Productivity-

From the site team report:

- *“...the Department procured two grants contributing \$3.8 million in school counseling and rehabilitation counseling. The Department submitted 12 grants in the past three years.”*
- *“...In the past two years the department has contributed approximately 25% of the publications in the College of Education and has a record of procuring external grant funding, placing the program at a competitive level...”*
- *“The 3/3 teaching load creates challenges in procuring grant support, so the current culture of activity in the Department of Counselor Education truly is commendable.”*
- *“...The combination of research productivity and grant procurement exceeds what is typically seen in doctoral-level counselor education programs across the country.”*
- *“...To be consistent with doctoral granting institutions with strong research productivity and grant procurement, administration should support an eventual move to a 2/2 faculty teaching load.”*
- *“...Given the current teaching load of 3/3 and the current teaching assignments by core faculty, an additional 1.5 faculty would be needed to support the move to a 3/2 assignment, anticipated for Fall, 2016...To be consistent with doctoral granting institutions with strong research productivity and grant procurement, administration should support an eventual move to a 2/2 faculty teaching load.”*

The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education have felt that this has been necessary for a long time. As academics who are mindful of the obligation to contribute to the body of research and scholarship, and who seek to create a department that is one of the highest producing and nationally recognized, we know that a 3/3 faculty load has been a significant obstacle. Yet, despite that, the Department of Counselor Education has made the significant strides towards *prominence* that was outlined in the APR Site Team Report. While the COE Dean has agreed to move the faculty to a 3/2 teaching load, we feel that a move to a 2/2 faculty teaching load would not only be commensurate with other units in colleges outside the COE at FAU, it would be in line with many premiere doctoral-granting Counselor Education programs at tier-one institutions.

In addition, we propose a goal of first restoring the faculty to 12 full-time faculty, immediately. As it stands now, there are only 8 full-time faculty (not including the chair, who serves in an administrative capacity). When our PhD program was approved in 2004 by the Florida Board of Governors and the FAU Board of Trustees, both approved a full time faculty of of 12. This number has never been achieved. Currently, there are 2 senior level searches ongoing, and we have requested an emergency Visiting Assistant Professor Line for Fall, 2016 in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling in order to fill an immediate need tied into grant-funding for students to be trained as Rehabilitation counselors. We will seek to convert that to an Assistant/Associate tenure-track line which would fill a vacancy left by Dr. Larry Kontosh in 2008. Following from the recommendations from the site team, a second tenure-track position with a rehabilitation specialty in addictions and substance abuse treatment. This would bring the department to a total of 12 full-time faculty, and must receive the highest priority.

Looking forward, however, we would lay out a plan within the next 5 years to add three full-time faculty lines: one in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling, one in School Counseling, and one in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. With the addition of these three lines, the department could effectively *double* the number of degrees awarded in the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling masters program and Clinical Mental Health masters program. It would significantly *increase* the number of degrees awarded in the School Counseling masters program, and reduce the time to graduation in the doctoral program (in essence, increasing the number of doctoral degrees awarded in any given year).

The Department recognizes that resources are precious in any university setting, and especially at FAU. They should be given to programs and departments that have a proven track record of productivity, and in areas that have significant impact on the community in line with the strategic goals of the university. We believe that we have shown this over the last 10 years, in a climate where the lack of resources almost cost us our accreditation. However, we also believe that we have not yet “hit our stride” in terms of productivity. We believe that by bringing the faculty teaching load in line with other doctoral granting units within FAU and institutions outside of FAU, we can dramatically increase the research productivity of the department, increase the number of funded grants, and make the Department of Counselor Education a top national program in the field of counselor education.

3. Support High Quality Training

From the site team report:

- *“...The faculty commitment to teaching, along with the excellent student ratings and comments by the students during the program review, is commendable. Quantitative ratings of faculty are strong”*

- *“...the core faculty currently exceeds the 50% CACREP requirement of core faculty to teach courses, adjunct faculty could be hired, in the short-term, to support the transition to a 3/2 teaching load.”*
- *“...Consider re-initiating the counselor education training clinic, perhaps through a collaboration with college counseling center. In addition to creating a competitive training advantage, a training clinic can become a center for faculty research and funding”.*

There are several indicators that the training programs within the Department of Counselor Education are rigorous and highly successful. Very recently, the Rehabilitation Counseling program was ranked 24th in *US News and World Report* (the highest ranked program at FAU by US News). In order to succeed in our goal of “Transforming Counseling” in the areas of School Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling, and Clinical Mental Health Counseling, there are several directions that the department will need to make advances. This includes: creating opportunities for students to train in cutting-edge methods of intervention, creating the evidence for training methods, and creating opportunities for sustainability and dissemination.

“Transforming Counseling” will require a sustained effort to maintain rigorous standards, as well as to acquire the resources and ongoing support that will be necessary to position FAU as a thought leader in this changing field. The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education have demonstrated that they have the capacity and the commitment to undertake this task as evidenced by the extensive work that has been accomplished—both individually, and collectively. These include evidence-based practice, and transformational practice settings. This will require radical re-evaluation of the conventional models of counseling practice in terms of time spent with clients, settings where counseling takes place, and the scope or focus of counseling work. These are evolutions that will encompass all fields of counseling as counselors work in areas of human growth and development that are outside of traditional behavioral and emotional domains, and into the academic, biological, and medical aspects of people’s lives. It will also mean a transition from a solitary practice of one counselor and one client to a collaborative interdisciplinary and intra-professional modality of work. This will necessitate the training of communication to colleagues who are trained in different disciplines and being able to synthesize information from multiple perspectives in ways that counselors have not had to do before. This is a transformation that is not being well-addressed in the schools, vocational rehabilitation facilities, or the community mental health and private practice offices of clinicians.

At one time, the Department of Counselor Education had a self-sustaining clinic (the Community Counseling Network). It was deactivated in 2004 pending a re-evaluation of resources and space. It has not been re-activated as of yet, but this remains an aspirational goal of the department. In order to best serve students and provide hands on training and supervision to students in their practicum and internship experiences, as well as those taking advanced level courses, re-activating a practice based training clinic would be ideal. Many of our aspirational programs and fellow SUS schools already have training clinics where students in training are able to gain practicum and internship hours working with clients in the lab. This allows the universities to partner with the greater community and meet community needs with high quality and low to no cost mental health care, while provide students the chance to work with clients and gain experience, faculty to be directly involved in supervising, unlicensed doctoral students to receive the hours needed towards licensure, doctoral student to gain hands on supervision experience, and provide possible research opportunities to faculty and students. This would be a win-win for the community and those we partner with, students, and faculty. In addition to the benefits mentioned above, having a clinic helps to better meet CACREP standards for counselor

training. Indeed, a re-vitalized clinic could be one that is self-sustaining (with minimal support from the university), and one that will answer the needs of Rehabilitation Counseling students, School Counseling students, Clinical Mental Health Counseling students, and Counselor Education Doctoral students alike.

Lastly, the existing pay for graduate assistantships is extremely low. It is nearly impossible to recruit high-quality out of state doctoral students. SUS peer institutions are able to provide substantially more in incentives to doctoral students (i.e., UCF, UF). Doctoral-granting institutions that do not provide sufficient assistance to doctoral students are often at a great disadvantage. The doctoral program in the Department of Counselor Education has 6 20/week graduate assistantships. In the past, these were divided into 12 10/week GA positions which allowed for students in their first 2 years to receive a small stipend and full tuition remission (the third year and beyond, students were expected to pay for dissertation credits—a less than optimal situation). However, the recent policy change by the Graduate College to eliminate the 100% tuition waiver for 10 hour/week Graduate Assistantships has created a significant impediment to attracting high-quality students, as they often have more attractive offers. We believe that this should be changed immediately in order to keep up with the counselor education doctoral programs in aspirational institutions.

4. Support Faculty Involvement in University Strategic Plan

From the site team report:

- *“...Many colleges of education are adopting funded or fundable “centers of excellence” models, which become a hub for fundable faculty research. FAU’s new strategic plan merges nicely with such models. In particular, the neuropsychology and community engagement/outreach pillars have great potential, especially when considering the possibility of restarting the training clinic.”*
- *“...Substance use and addiction is a funding source for grant procurement, especially given the recent initiatives offered through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and coordinated through the (N)ational Board of Certified Counselors centered on training counselors to offer services for substance use in rural/high need areas.”*
- *“...A training clinic also promotes the university pillar of community engagement and outreach.*
- *“...FAU counselor education faculty have already embraced outcome research and evidence-based (research-based) practices as a program foundation. As such, FAU faculty actually are ahead of the counseling profession curve, which has only recently begun to promote EBPs (evidence based practices) in earnest. EBPs are a potential center of excellence for FAU faculty and students.”*

The FAU Strategic Plan: “A Strategic Plan for the Race to Excellence” offers several opportunities for the Department of Counselor Education to “put FAU on the map” toward national prominence. Specifically, the activity of the faculty can help support three of the four *pillars* of excellence. These are **Neuroscience, Healthy Aging, and Sensing and Smart Systems**. Faculty in the Department of Counselor Education are already at work in these areas and are partnering across campus and in the community to support these pillars. In addition, faculty in the Department of Counselor Education are at work supporting the *platforms* in the strategic plan. These include **Community Engagement, Diversity, Global Perspectives and Participation, and Peace Justice, and Human Rights**. Moving forward, the Department of Counselor Education may be well-positioned to take advantage of these

opportunities to support the department and the university as a whole.

In addition, creating “Centers of Excellence” in order to achieve the aspirational goal of “Transforming Counseling” would help the Department to meet this goal. Specifically, creating a cutting-edge training clinic that could create opportunities for students to train in cutting-edge methods of intervention, create the evidence for training methods, and create opportunities for sustainability and dissemination as outlined above. The opportunities for funding through SAMHSA, NIH, and NBCC and other outlets can provide the resources to sustain an integrated training clinic that can benefit students in the School Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling programs.

5. Support Department Contribution Towards Awarding Degrees of Strategic Emphasis

From the site team report:

- *“...Admissions appear to be consistent with the necessary student-faculty ratios required by CACREP. The faculty employs a screening process that includes student interviews. Faculty appear to be admitting strong students. There is no history of student appeals due to dismissal, and the department maintains over a 90% retention rate in each of the program areas.”*
- *“...Faculty are already enacting systemic efficiencies with online education and instructional technology support.”*

Over the last three years, the Board of Governors “Performance Based Funding Model” Metrics has been a key focus for the university. The programs in the Department of Counselor Education is considered to be a “Areas of Strategic Emphasis” by the Board of Governors (Metric 8.a). As a result, the number of graduates that we are able to produce directly contributes to success in this metric. However, this is not the only metric where the department can have an impact. The department has made significant contributions to the Student Success efforts. Specifically, faculty in the School Counseling track have worked with personnel in University Advising and in the Undergraduate Dean’s office to offer a Peer Mentoring program that trains undergrad students This entails pairing students who are training to be peer mentors with students who are struggling in specific areas. This potentially impacts Metric 4, Metric 5 and Metric 6 by working with freshman who are retained in the second year, graduation on-time, and bachelor’s degrees in STEM disciplines. In addition, the department has worked with the Department of Psychology to create a Certificate in Applied Mental Health Services. One of the rationales for this certificate was to create a pipeline from Psychology undergraduates to our graduate programs, which directly impacts Metric 1 (students continuing their education further 1 year after graduation).

Lastly, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the outlook for jobs in the counseling field is robust. As a result, the faculty of the department feel that—with some additional support—we are uniquely positioned to create a significant “return on investment” for the university that is several-fold. We are also mindful that we bear a portion of the responsibility for seeking support in bold and entrepreneurial ways (see Goal 4, “Support Faculty Involvement in University Strategic Plan”, above). The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education have been able to do this, securing partnerships and finding unique solution to garner resources in very difficult financial times over the last decade.

6. Support Department Faculty Leadership and Program Visibility in the Counseling Field

From the site team report:

- *“...The faculty is also engaged in national service. Dr. Paul Peluso is editor of Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, the flagship journal for AARC and among the top*

counseling journals. Dr. Peluso also serves as President of the International Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, a division of ACA. Dr. Carmen Gill is a past-president of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, a division of ACA. In 2016 the Department is hosting the National Conference for the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling.”

Faculty in the Department of Counselor Education are also heavily involved at the national level in service to the American Counseling Association (ACA) as well as several of the divisions of ACA. One faculty member is the current president of a division (International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors), while another is the immediate past-president of another (Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling). Faculty are also participating in service to the profession as journal editors. One faculty is the editor-in-chief of two journals, while another faculty member is the editor-in-chief of another peer-reviewed journal. Many other faculty currently serve on editorial boards and on other service committees within professional organizations. In addition, several faculty members have been recognized by the American Counseling Association and other state and national organizations with awards in the field of counseling.

However, a challenge to these accomplishments is the lack of recognition and publicity that the university creates around these accomplishments (relative to the attention that such recognition has garnered for colleagues at other institutions). Marketing efforts that could be centered around the department's successes would be beneficial for the university as a whole, as it creates a culture of success at all levels.

Finally, in order to continue with the upward progress towards greater national recognition, the department is acutely aware of the need for additional faculty lines (see Goal 2. Support High Research Productivity) in order to provide the time and resources to continue to create a national profile for the department while maintaining the quality of our existing programs.