

November 3, 2014

Carol L. Bobby
President and CEO
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
1001 North Fairfax Street, Suite 510
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Carol,

I would like to start by letting you know that we enjoyed our site visit experience. As you know, the preparation and anticipation of going through the accreditation process can be quite anxiety provoking. The team was highly professional and constructive, making the process less strenuous. We really valued their feedback at the final meeting and the report for our Clinical Mental Health Program (M.S. degree) housed in the College of Health and Human Development at California State University, Fullerton.

We are delighted that the team found so many strengths in our program as we have worked so hard these past years to create the kind of culture and curriculum that responds to our extremely diverse student population. We enthusiastically agree with almost all of their findings. According to the report, our program has met all standards. This purpose of this letter, therefore, is to respond to the Team's suggestions.

Section I - The Learning Environment: Structure and Evaluation

1. The Team noted that our FTES is 15 credits per students, which we agree is a high load for a graduate program. The CSU system sees itself as primarily as serving undergraduate programs and will be unlikely to allow us to modify this way of calculating FTES. But perhaps a recommendation to our administration that we seek to reduce high teaching loads for graduate faculty would be useful.
2. The Team recognized that we had only one graduate assistantship. Immediately after the meeting with the Team (which our Interim Dean attended), we were granted permission to hire two new graduate assistants (GAs) at 20 hours each! Thank you for helping to facilitate this change. We have 4 faculty members ready to put the GAs to work on various research projects. This is one example of how helpful an accreditation process can be for the faculty and students within the program.
3. The Team further noted that are resources are sometimes limited, even in terms of release time with a teaching load of 4/4. Coincidentally, the 2014-2015 budget was recently released, and we have been given a few more slots of release time for faculty members who had previously been squeezing in extra projects to their existing load. One example is 3-unit release time for an Assessment Coordinator (a need pointed out by the team) and another is a 3-unit release time for one of our faculty to establish a Center for Latina/o Mental Health. In addition, upon hearing the Team's recommendation for more resources, our Interim Dean gave us permission to hire a full time lecturer to solve a staff problem. We were unable to replace a staff member who left several years ago. She recommended we hire a full time lecturer whose position would include the advising the former staff member provided. Thank you for helping to facilitate this change as well!

Section II – Professional Identity

We are quite proud of our accomplishments in this area and appreciate that they were recognized by the team. Since our last accreditation visit we have worked to significantly improve this area that was

facilitated by California finally passing a counselor licensure law. Our students now all identify as clinical mental health counselors, and we continue to educate our agency supervisors and employers as well.

Section III – Professional Practice

The Team noted that our documentation of hours could be clearer, especially between the 100 practicum hours as compared with the 600 internship hours. Historically, we have only used forms that the state licensing board requires. However, we have already taken action to develop new forms that will document the hours in a way that demonstrates we are meeting accreditation requirements.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling

We agree with the team that we could improve our assessment of student learning outcomes. We developed a database that utilizes grades, which can be modified by faculty members. While the results did yield areas for growth for our program and consequent changes, there are additional ways that we can use the system to better individualize it for student performance.

With release time for an Assessment Coordinator beginning in spring 2015, we have already discussed how we will improve this assessment measure. We will be creating review teams that will evaluate a random sample of particular assignments related to each outcome measure. The original database will show us how students are improving overall from beginning to end. The new evaluation of critical assignments will give us a more objective and sensitive measure at the end of the program. The assignments we will use to evaluate student learning outcomes include: the final video session at the end of internship (clinical skills, conceptualization & treatment planning; cultural sensitivity); the final project (writing, and critical thinking skills); scores on exams in the Law & Ethics course (professional identity).

While the process of preparing the self-study and preparing for the site visit were (and are) labor-intensive, I must admit that I have been surprised at what we have gained from the process. As the CACREP Liaison and Department Chair, I have the unique privilege of seeing all of the pieces form into a beautiful picture that is our program. Without undergoing this process, I would not have the clarity about how we are doing, and I would not have the objective data to support our belief that we are a strong counselor education program. Thank you for helping me to get to know our program in a different way.

I understand that the CACREP Board of Directors will be meeting January 9-11, 2015. As the CACREP liaison, you may reach me during this time if you have any questions. I can be reached by email at lbrew@fullerton.edu or by cell at (714) 606-6658.

Sincerely,

Leah Brew, Ph.D.
Chair & Professor

cc: Dr. Mildred Garcia, President
Dr. Jose Cruz, Provost
Dr. Jessie Jones, Interim Dean