

## **Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning**

### **College of Health and Human Development – Counseling MS**

#### **Step 1: Student Learning Outcome**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of counseling theories and a bio-psycho-sociocultural framework and apply them to case conceptualization. They will demonstrate the ability to appropriately use the DSM-5 (diagnostic manual of mental disorders). They will construct relevant treatment plans.

#### **Step 2: Methods and Measures**

A variety of methods are embedded within coursework and assessed by faculty teaching courses or by student's site supervisor in practicum. Measures include exam scores, signature assignments, professor and site supervisor ratings, and a survey.

##### Direct:

Students' knowledge of biological/neurological contributions to human development and mental health is assessed via an exam in Coun 518 (Human Development), and signature assignments in Coun 522a/b (Diagnosis and Treatment Planning) and Coun 538 (Crisis Intervention and Trauma Treatment).

Students' knowledge and application of counseling theories is assessed in exams in Coun 502 (Career Counseling) and Coun 527a/b (Systems of Family Counseling), signature assignments in the summer Coun 590 (Advanced Techniques) and Coun 584a/b (Advanced Practicum), and professor and site supervisor ratings in Coun 530a/b (Beginning Practicum) and Coun 584a/b (Advanced Practicum).

Students' knowledge and skills in assessment and treatment planning are assessed in an exam in Coun 560 (Appraisal in Counseling), signature assignments in Coun 522a/b (Diagnosis and Treatment Planning) and Coun 584a/b (Advanced Practicum), and in professor and site supervisor ratings in Coun 530a/b and Coun 584a/b (Beginning and Advanced Practicum).

The signature assignment in Coun 522a/b assesses students' knowledge of diagnosis, bio-psycho-sociocultural conceptualization, and treatment planning. In addition to the embedded scores from four sections of the course, a committee of three full-time faculty evaluated a random, anonymous sample of the signature papers from three of the sections.

In rubric scoring of signature assignment evaluations, a scoring system of 1 – 6 is used to indicate that the student's performance: *exceeds* expectations (5-6), *meets* expectations (3-4), or is *below* expectations (1-2).

### Indirect:

Graduating students survey in fall 2023 and spring 2024. The related questions for this SLO were:

*Please indicate whether the Counseling Department met the objectives of assisting students to do the following:*

- 1. Develop an understanding of developmental aspects of human growth and appreciation for the nature of human developmental behavior.*
- 2. Develop an understanding of career development and related life factors and the effects on an individual's mental health and lifestyle.*
- 3. Gain significant knowledge of major counseling theories in the context of individual and group counseling and apply this knowledge to the actual counseling process.*

### **Step 3: Criteria for Success**

#### Direct:

Signature Assignments: means for each rubric item to be 3 or higher, and ideally each student would obtain a score of 3 or higher on each item.

Exams: means of 80% or higher, and ideally each student would obtain a score of 80% or higher.

Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning: criteria for success differ depending on level: Means should be in the 3-4 range for Coun 530a/b; and 5-6 for Coun 584a/b.

Practicum site supervisor scoring of student skills: Our criteria for success is 4 or higher.

#### Indirect:

Graduating Students Survey: at least 80% responded "met" expectations to the selected questions aligned with the outcome.

### **Step 4: Results**

#### Direct:

Targets for success were met for each measure and the scores were like those of the previous year. This suggests that students are on track at multiple points in the program. Although students did well, there is room for improvement in the application of case conceptualization and treatment planning skills to clinical work in the practicum classes.

We wanted to look in more detail at students' performance on the signature assignment in Coun 522a/b because this course is required prior to field work (practicum) and it is where they receive most of the pre-practicum training in assessment and diagnostic skills. Method 1 is the

embedded assessment given by the faculty teaching the course. Method 2 reflects an outside committee's scores of a random selection of the papers. We took a random sample from 3 sections. Scores were relatively similar across methods, with all students scoring in the 3-4 "meets" range, also suggesting that faculty agreed regarding students' beginning skills in this area.

#### Indirect:

Surveys of graduating students: (human development; career; counseling theories) N= 20; 34%. 100% of students met the target in fall 2023 in each component of the survey, while spring 2024 revealed 100% met the target for Human Development, 93% Careers, and 93% Counseling Theories.

### **Step 5: Improvement Actions**

Case conceptualization/treatment planning is perhaps one of the most difficult skill sets for counselors and can take years post-graduate to refine. Students, faculty, and supervisors have at times indicated the need for more training at the program level. Our assessments indicate that students are well on track for their level of experience and it is likely that this reflects the improvements we have made over the last 3 – 4 years. The comprehensive assessment process reinforces for faculty and for students that case conceptualization skills are taught in multiple classes, from different angles. But we believe we need a better understanding of how our graduates are performing in these skills, and whether their training in the program prepared them well for employment. The field has changed in the last 10 years as well, with much more emphasis on trauma-informed conceptualization and treatment, and an increased understanding of the role of the nervous system in the regulation of mood and behavior. We are also teaching feminist and liberation theoretical approaches, which are not always reinforced in the training sites. In addition, we are revising our surveys for alumni and employers, scheduling focus groups with current students, alumni, site supervisors, and employers, and are eager to gather more in-depth information on how students and graduates perceive the department's strength and growth areas regarding case conceptualization and treatment planning.