

## **University of San Diego and School Counseling Program Summary**

Throughout this Program Summary we share how our School Counseling specialization is geared toward providing a quality education to all of our students. The summary will address each of the three categories (Program Design, Course of Study, and Assessment of Candidates) below.

### **Program Design**

Our MA School Counseling program complies with the standards of CACREP by requiring a minimum of 48 graduate semester credit hours. The program also meets the course and fieldwork/practicum requirements set forth by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) for the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential issued to qualified School Counseling candidates. All candidates develop knowledge and skills in student advocacy, as well as in the design, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive, results-based guidance and counseling programs for diverse student populations. Each student is placed with a credentialed school counselor in a San Diego area school and accumulates a minimum of 600 hours of supervised experience. Practicum and fieldwork experiences include a combination of individual and group counseling related to social, academic, and career development issues. Each student completes a year-long applied research project in conjunction with their fieldwork.

### **Program Modifications**

In the Fall of 2014, the School Counseling specialization program began offering a second concentration (School Based Clinical Counseling) option for students interested in becoming licensed professional clinical counselors. The new concentration requires 12 additional units of study (i.e., 48 unit School Counseling PPS + 12 additional units in clinically focused courses = 60 units total). Students pursuing this concentration are eligible to become Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC) by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS). Students who opt to pursue the 60-unit PPS credential with LPCC eligibility generally have an interest in working with children and adolescents with special emotional and behavioral needs in school settings. With the addition of the School Based Clinical Counseling concentration and the new CTC Standards, the School Counseling faculty in 2019 reviewed the course sequence and content. As a result of that review, the faculty created a new school counseling specialization course, COUN 531 – Advanced Topics in School Counseling, which provides an overview and analysis of advanced topics in school counseling. This course provides students with an opportunity for in-depth exploration of a current topic in school counseling. Currently, this course focuses on the role of the school counselor in the education of exceptional children. For the purpose of this course, exceptional children will encompass the following domains: special educational, alternative and at-risk, and gifted and talented.

## **Program Leadership**

Dr. Cameron serves as Department Chair and Dr. Wendell Callahan serves as the Counseling Program Director. Dr. Cameron is the academic unit leader for counselor education and is thus responsible for oversight and coordination of all aspects of the Counseling program. She convenes monthly two-hour meetings with all department faculty and senior staff to work on common goals and department developments such as departmental promotion, community outreach, curricular issues, faculty recruitment, new research and service initiatives and strategic planning. Dr. Cameron is also responsible for faculty recruitment, evaluation, and retention. She oversees the resources, budget, and expenditures of the Department. Dr. Cameron is the primary liaison with the Dean's office and is a member of the Dean's Leadership Council. In addition, Dr. Callahan also leads monthly two-hour meetings with the Counseling program faculty and senior staff to address program evaluation, course development and review, practicum/fieldwork placement selection, and student progress. Additional meetings are sometimes convened with the full or subset of Counseling faculty members (ie., specialization specific) to address unique issues that may require additional deliberation (e.g., admissions decisions, course scheduling, accreditation document preparation). Drs. Cameron and Callahan are also responsible for the Handbooks for Counseling and they work with faculty and staff to assure accurate program information for the graduate catalog, websites, and publications. The Counseling program is also supported by individuals in key staffing roles. Specifically, Mrs. Lily Vistica, Director of Clinical Training, is responsible for developing and maintaining partnerships with practicum/fieldwork sites, coordinating student placement and student evaluation, as well as site evaluation. She make site visits and address any challenges that may arise regarding clarity in expectations of student activities, student performance evaluation, supervision responsibilities, etc. They consult with Dr. Callahan and other faculty as needed.

The Counseling program is focused on receiving and analyzing stakeholder input. They collect input in a variety of ways. Students are able to provide feedback anonymously through an online feedback form and are always encouraged to speak to their advisor and/or program and department leadership when they have questions or concerns. In addition, graduating students complete exit interviews. The data from the exit interviews are reviewed by the School Counseling faculty at the beginning of the Calendar year at the Department Retreat. That information is then used for action items and goal setting for the upcoming year. Lastly, program faculty also meet with site supervisors and adjuncts twice a year to garner feedback about the program, training, and students. The feedback from our adjuncts and community partners is invaluable to helping the school counseling program train school counselors to effectively address the needs of the community.

## **Course of Study (Curriculum and Field Experience)**

Both the School Counseling and School Based Clinical Counseling Concentrations in the School Counseling Specialization follow a cohort model course sequence. All students begin with core counseling course (Theories, Professional Orientation and Ethics, and Counseling Skills, and Human Development) before enrolling in the school counseling specialization courses (COUN 531, COUN 536, COUN 537, and COUN 544) and practicum/fieldwork. The School Counseling Program has an Applied Research Capstone Project that all School Counseling candidates complete. The project is supported by two courses (COUN 533 and COUN 534). In these two courses, students conduct field-based research at their fieldwork site related to their school counseling practice. Students learn how to design, conduct, and report on their own applied research project over the course of the academic year. Lastly, all students in the School Counseling program are required to complete an international experience. Students are able to select from course offerings that are offered abroad or complete their international requirements by attending internationally focused lectures, conferences, and workshops.

### **Practicum**

In a student's second semester of the program they enroll in their school based practicum COUN 588P (Counseling Practicum: School-based). The practicum is a school-based model, where a small group of students (4-6) are assigned to a school site with an USD faculty instructor. The instructor and students spend one whole day at the site providing direct service to students, and engaging in group and individual supervision. Throughout practicum student continue to develop the basic counseling skills introduced in the counseling skills class and prepare themselves for the advanced clinical instruction provided in the yearlong fieldwork placements. School Counseling practicum requires 100 hours at a site with 40 hours of direct client contact.

### **Fieldwork**

COUN 590F (Fieldwork in a School Setting) is a 3-unit course taken upon completion of COUN 588P (Counseling Practicum: School-based). The course provides in-depth guidance and counseling experience in public schools and in agencies working with school-aged children. The fieldwork experience is intended to enhance the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are outlined in the Counseling Program's Student learning outcomes. Interns are expected to demonstrate counseling competencies of the highest caliber. During each semester of enrollment in COUN 590F, candidates complete a minimum of 300 hours at a field site selected in consultation with the student's advisor and the Director of Clinical Training. Students applying for the credential must complete 600 supervised hours during a minimum of two semesters. The student participates in a weekly group supervision class during each semester the student is enrolled in the 3-unit COUN 590F course. A university supervisor visits the fieldwork site a minimum of two times during the course of the fieldwork placement to consult

with the site supervisors and observe the candidates. Candidates receive their individual supervision from the PPS Credentialed Counselor at the field experience site instead of from a USD faculty member.

### **Field Placements**

Currently, the school counseling program has a total of 20 fieldwork placements for the 2019 – 2020 academic year. The schools range from tradition comprehensive school sites, continuation, charter schools, and private schools across San Diego county. All school sites have a senior PPS credential school counselor on site.

### **Assessment of Candidates**

The Counseling Students Disposition Feedback Form was developed to assess the following dispositions including: Commitment and Investment in counselor identity and professional development; Openness to learning, and giving and receiving feedback; Respect for self and others including honoring diversity; Professionalism such as personal responsibility, integrity, maturity and honesty; and Self-Awareness including self-reflection, self-exploration, becoming a reflective practitioner, and awareness of how one is perceived especially with authority figures including the faculty, supervisors, and Chair. Students are rated using a three point scale: Exceeding Expectations (3), Meeting Expectations (2), Below Expectations (1), or Not Observed in a particular area. At least once each year, the core Counseling faculty review the progress of each student in the program using the Counseling Students Disposition Feedback Form. Input from adjunct faculty is solicited prior to the review. All students receive a letter informing them of the results of the assessment. Students, whose behaviors or dispositions show cause for concern, are reviewed by the Counseling Faculty in Program Faculty meetings. The process of addressing concerns usually begins with an informal conversation with the student. If the problems are not resolved within a specified time period, then a formal meeting is held with the student and faculty member, usually with the student's advisor. The issues of concern are documented in the student's file. If the matter is not resolved at that point, the Counseling faculty discusses the issue(s) at a Program faculty meeting. A Student Assistance Plan is then written for the student and is signed by the student, the student's advisor, and the Program Director. If the student fails to complete the Student Assistance Plan as specified, then the student could be suspended from taking classes, enrolling in clinical instruction courses, or expelled from the program. A copy of the form and the purpose of the form are shared with students in the Counseling Program Handbook.

### **Student Assistance Plan**

Once in the program, student progress is assessed in both academic and clinically relevant areas (e.g. dispositional characteristics). Faculty members assess students in each course and assign grades and are evaluated by fieldwork supervisors. Students identified as having a dispositional problem in class, or as having academic problems as demonstrated through poor

grades or lack of effort on assignments, are referred to their advisor by the course instructor. If a student's grades are consistently low (GPA under 3.0), the student is placed on Academic Probation. If a faculty member raises concerns about a student, the advisor meets with the student and discusses the concerns. Plans for remediating the problem are discussed and often this first intervention is enough to remediate the concern. If the issue persists, the student's case is presented to the faculty at the next Counseling Program faculty meeting. If the faculty agrees that the student requires remediation, consistent with our Student Handbook guidelines, the advisor in consultation with the Director will write a Student Assistance Plan to identify areas of remediation and goals for addressing them within a given time frame. This information is then discussed with the student in a formal meeting with the student's advisor and the Department Chair. All parties then sign the document and it is placed in the student's file.

### **Practicum/Fieldwork Readiness Form**

Students review the Clinical Instruction Benchmark Assessment form (CIBA) with their advisors. The School Counseling CIBA readiness form was designed to provide candidates with personal and professional development feedback, to assess progress in the program, and to determine the student's readiness for transitioning into practicum/fieldwork, which is the capstone stage of clinical instruction.

CIBA includes a review of:

- Instructor's Pre-Practicum Assessment and Candidate's Self-Assessment from the COUN 564:
  - Counseling Skills Course;
  - Successful Completion of Prerequisite Courses and Related Assessments;
  - Verification of Personal Counseling Hours;
  - Self-Assessment Essay reflecting on
    - Counselor Professional Identity,
    - Ethical Codes and Behaviors,
    - Use of Supervision and Feedback,
    - Interpersonal Style and Match with Clients,
    - Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks,
    - Working with Diverse Clients, and
    - Areas of Counseling Expertise and Continued Professional Growth

Counseling students at USD receive supervised clinical experience through practicum/fieldwork placements and courses. On-site and USD supervisors complete an assessment of candidates' counseling skills and discuss the assessment results with the candidates. The assessment tool is designed to assess and track a candidate's growth in skills as suggested by the Council for

Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Each skill or behavior is rated on a 5-point scale, with a desired rating of Effective (4) or Highly Effective (5) to indicate demonstrated competency equal to that of an independently functioning professional clinical mental health counselor. The practicum/fieldwork assessment form addresses the eight core curricular areas of CACREP: 1) professional orientation and ethical practice, 2) social and cultural diversity, 3) human growth and development, 4) career development, 5) helping relationships, 6) group work, 7) assessment, and 8) research and program evaluation.

### **COUN 588 School Based Practicum:**

During practicum, students complete a self-assessment and are evaluated by their USD course instructor who is providing on site group and individual supervision to students. In addition to providing oral feedback throughout the semester, course instructors will provide written feedback at the end of the semester.

### **Fieldwork Readiness Meeting:**

School Counseling candidates must have approval to register for Fieldwork in School Settings (COUN 590F). Approval is granted by the candidate's advisor and the Director of Clinical Instruction after a successful Fieldwork Readiness meeting that is guided by items on the Fieldwork Readiness Form. Two of the form items require the candidate's advisor to review the candidate's Practicum (COUN 588P) self-assessment and the instructor's assessment of the candidate. These assessments are completed electronically at the end of the semester and consists of several sections, each addressing an aspect of the developing counseling professional. All professions charge their members with the responsibility of monitoring potential members of the profession. This monitoring involves not only evaluation of potential new members' cognitive academic abilities, but also their clinical skills and personal and professional behaviors. Both assessments are reviewed by the student and advisor during the Fieldwork Readiness meeting.

### **Student Developmental Assessment: Transition Out of Program**

Guided by the American Counseling Association's (ACA) code of ethics and due process policies, if evaluations and the remediation process are not successful and/or the faculty determine that a student is not appropriate for continuing their training in the Counseling program, the Department Chair and the advisor will help the student transition out of the program and, on rare occasions, into a more appropriate area of study.