

PROGRAM EFFICIENCY and ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (PEER)

Core Question #1: What was the Counseling program created to do in the first place?

The Counseling Program began in the School of Education many years ago in an effort to provide clinical practice for students pursuing degrees and licensure in school and mental health counseling. At the end of the 2011-2012 year, the Counseling Program was removed from the School of Education as a result of the Building Capacity and Capabilities Committee who thought it would be better served elsewhere. From the fall of 2012 through the spring of 2016 the Counseling Program, which was housed in two different departments languished. Enrollment dropped, school counseling practically disappeared and little program development or recruitment was conducted. In fact, during that time period school counseling was being degreed under a 36 hour MAIS degree rather than the 60 hour CACREP designed program. Dr. Cliff Jones and Dr. Glenn Doig were hired to teach, recruit and oversee the program in Silver City in the fall of 2012 because the previous faculty, Dr. Ken Barbee resigned and Dr. Marilyn MacGregor retired at the end of 2011-2012 year.

During the 2014-2015 year, WNMU's administration made the decision to close down the Counseling Program due to low enrollment. There were two faculty members in Silver City and one in Gallup. Letters were sent out in late fall of 2014 to all current students and new applicants explaining the situation, including a "teach out" program which would allow current students to finish their degrees. However, the administration reversed itself only a month or so later, making the decision to reinstate the program for the spring semester of 2015. The Counseling Program was saved but unfortunately some current students and new applicants decided not to continue their counseling education through WNMU, due to perceived instability of the program.

Other factors that have impacted the counseling program at that time included the loss of two faculty members at the end of the spring semester of 2015. Dr. Darryl Benally's contract was not renewed (Gallup) and Dr. Cliff Jones (Silver) retired from full time employment. This left only one full time faculty member. Also, WNMU's administration decided to move the counseling program from Silver City to Gallup in the fall of 2015. The administration at the request of the Associate Dean of the School of Education moved the program back to Silver City in the fall of 2016 and placed the program back under the direction of the School of Education. Due to the above events and situations, the counseling program has been in disarray for the last several years. The good news is that the program seems to be showing signs of stabilization and growth since being returned to the School of Education.

The M.A. in Counseling program offers the only graduate level professional degree at WNMU that is centered on the clinical practice of counseling/mental health and that will lead to licensure upon graduation. The Counseling program is a Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) aligned sixty (60) hour training program. The Counseling program was awarded a CACREP grant in 2014 through the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) to facilitate full accreditation. However, the lack of stability in the program the last few years has not been conducive to pursuing CACREP accreditation at this time. As part of the School of Education the Counseling Program is currently reviewing the requirements for CAEP accreditation.

Students at WNMU may pursue an M.A. in Counseling for licensure in community mental health, substance abuse counseling and/or school counseling. Substance abuse counseling was added at the suggestion of the Chemical Dependency Program. The Counselor Education Program prepares professional counselors for a variety of settings including schools, community mental health centers, state agencies, clinics, hospitals, and private practice. The focus of the program is to assist students in developing the skills to provide innovative and effective counseling experiences for clients from a multicultural society. Students with a Masters of Arts in Counseling are eligible for licensure in school, substance abuse and/or mental health counseling in New Mexico and most other states. The program has also been designed to meet the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) requirements for students who wish to pursue certification as a National Certified Counselor (NCC). Additionally, it is important to note that approximately 65% of the graduate counseling candidates are minority students. The university and community benefit from this diverse multilingual/multicultural student body/work force.

Core Question#2: What is the Counseling program doing now?

The Counselor Education program is dedicated to providing a quality program that encourages the exchange of ideas and growth in students in all facets of their development. Our mission is focused on providing access to students from a multicultural diverse population. We believe that in providing a more accessible master's in counseling program to students, we are positively impacting our communities by providing well trained counselors:

- in schools and mental health programs;
- to administer and manage counseling programs
- to establish and maintain networks with school and community resources

- to establish leadership in the legal and ethical standards of the counseling profession
- to provide prevention activities which address current concerns such as school shooters, terrorism, substance abuse, violence and other forms of abuse; and
- to help build a strong network of advocates for children and families.

To meet the varying needs of the students in our program, the Counseling program works with each student individually to make sure that courses are taken in a reasonably sequential manner in order for the student to be most successful. Courses are scheduled throughout the year so that at least two courses a semester are available to students in their first year of the program and at least two courses are taught each semester for students who are further along in their program of study. Practicum and internship experiences are offered both during the fall and spring semesters.

The courses are based on the New Mexico and national competencies. Both WNMU Silver and WNMU Gallup are guided by the same educational philosophy, course objectives and curriculum. We are also guided by the standards adopted by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP is an accrediting body whose purpose is to work with institutions to achieve accreditation status for graduate-level preparatory programs in counseling. The WNMU Counseling program and its courses, competencies and standards are based on the CACREP model.

New Mexico statistics (NM 2014 State of the Workforce) show that the average percentage of growth for school counselors, clinical counselors, and school psychologists is predicted to be 18% during the years 2012 through 2022. These counseling occupations are in the top ranked “Star” professions for the state and would account for 1,700 jobs. <https://www.jobs.state.nm.us/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/2015SOTW.pdf> With the increase in early diagnosis of mental health problems, violence in schools, domestic/global terrorism, substance abuse use, and the aging of America, there will be an amplified need for counselors for the foreseeable future.

Hidalgo Medical Services, Sierra Counseling, and Public School Districts (i.e. Silver, Deming, and Lordsburg) in South West New Mexico continue to have numerous openings for counselors. Collaboration and expansion of participating internship sites is an area of focused growth. These local agencies/districts serve both as internship training sites and future employment opportunities for WNMU graduates. In many cases counselors who are connected and familiar with the multicultural nature of our

surrounding communities are preferred employees. There is an ongoing need in much of New Mexico for counselors who are willing to live and work in remote areas and serve the mental health needs of the rural communities. Many of the agencies and schools within the Silver City/Gallup areas are staffed with one or more WNMU counseling graduates.

Program Productivity and Efficiency

A. Major Headcount Enrollment *(by year for most immediate fall and four previous fall*

Terms, if available)

	Major	MAIS Concentration	Total
Fall 2014	n/a	n/a	36
Fall 2015	26	6	32
Fall 2016	22	3	25
Spring 2017	32	6	38

B. Degrees Conferred

06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
12	20	12	15	11	10	12	8	11	5

C. Credit Hour Production

08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
817	783	717	678	511	546	495	342

E. Average Class Size

08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
7	7	8	6	4	4	3	6

Majors for the Counseling program, including MAIS students, are at 38 for the Spring of 2017 after dipping to a low of 25 active students for the fall semester of 2016. Hopefully this indicates the beginning of a turnaround in student numbers for the counseling program.

Anecdotally, this turnaround in student numbers seems to be reflected in the number of students enrolled in the one fulltime faculty member's classes for the last couple of semesters. The number of students enrolled for his current Spring 2017 semester classes are the highest he's ever personally experienced in the five years he's been teaching at WNMU, with 30 students total between his three classes. The previous record high was 20 students just this past Fall 2016. The students also seem to be happy with the quality of education they are receiving in their classes. The most recent combined student evaluations for the program's full time faculty member are 4.7 on a 5 point scale or a 94% approval rating.

Core Question #3: Should it be doing what it's doing now?

The Counseling program at WNMU offers more flexibility in accepting students than our local competitors. This is facilitated through our evening classes, ITV, online and desk top conferencing formats which creates the opportunity for highly qualified students to obtain a graduate degree in counseling. Our class sizes are small in comparison to the large state schools, offering opportunities for seminar type instruction and mentoring from the counseling faculty. Our program is designed with a great deal of flexibility, which is particularly important for students who are employed and/or have families. Students can take one to four classes each semester, and there is no rigid sequencing of courses, although advisors make sure that there is a reasonable order to each student's degree plan and that pre-requisites are accomplished. Since our program is aligned with CACREP standards, we can offer students a degree in counseling which meets most states' licensure standards and is delivered in a highly personalized and flexible manner.

Core Question #4: If not, what should it be doing?

Core Question #5: How should it do what it should be doing?

The primary change for the M.A. in Counseling Program is the evolution and expansion of its alternative formats in offering our counseling classes, making our program accessible to more students than ever before. WNMU's counseling program has expanded its presence in the region with the implementation of ITV, online and Desktop Conferencing technology. These options for taking our classes have grown to include 100% of our class offerings over the past few semesters. Approximately 65% of our Spring 2017 students are enrolled in classes served through one of these formats. This mix of "face

to face" and alternative formats allows for an expanded pedagogical market and implementation of service to more locations (i.e. Magdalena, Lordsburg, Deming, Gallup, and even out of state).

A continued focus on personal relationships is essential for the health of the program and would be facilitated by:

- *repairing student/community relationships, stabilization of the counseling program, and increasing retention, recruitment, and matriculation of candidates;

- * increased partnerships with school districts to create pipelines for current school employees to obtain counseling licensure and funding to pay for students' tuition and fees;

- * increased availability of LPCC level supervisors to facilitate internship placement and training.