

USU School Psychology Program

Data-Based Decisions to Further Improve Candidate and Program Performance

Faculty reviewed Academic 2016- 2017 data this summer, as per policy, to evaluate candidate learning, program strengths, and areas for enhancements. Other program evaluation data reviewed include student feedback shared by student representatives at program meetings, individual student feedback at the annual interviews, feedback from field supervisors and course instructors, and student exit surveys.

We remain proud of the success of our candidates. As evidenced by the results, our program is preparing school psychologists with the knowledge and skills to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services that positively influence children, youth, families, and school systems. Data also suggest several areas for improvements. Below are outcome summaries for each goal and planned strategies to strengthen the program outcomes further.

Goal One: Students will be effective problem-solving change agents who utilize data-based decision making for assessment and intervention for diverse student populations.

Faculty review of student performance in coursework, work products, faculty, and field supervisor evaluations of applied work shows that students are meeting appropriate level data-based decision -making expectations across various assessment purposes.

Faculty review of candidates feedback suggested that content in the Psy 6320: Objective Assessment of Personality, Affect, & Behavior course was difficult to apply to the school system level assessments. The program is replacing an advanced assessment course to and replaced Psy 6320: Objective Assessment of Personality, Affect, & Behavior required by all candidates in Fall 2017. The new assessment course broadens assessment methods for multiple purposes of school-based assessment with an emphasis on neurological disorders.

Goal Two: Students will obtain a broad understanding of the educational system, the family system, and the practice of school psychology. Students will understand how to work within these systems with diverse student populations effectively.

High levels of student outcomes as measured by course performance, work products, and supervisor and faculty evaluations show that the program is meeting this goal. Our increasing ratings of candidates' performance in school-wide system practices parallel the increased nationwide focus on school-wide system services. Data also reveal that our students are providing effective support to families within the context of school settings.

Many administrators report hiring our candidates because of skills in school-wide services, and some alumni are in leadership roles in supporting system-level services. Given this sytem wide service emphasis in school settings, the program added a new system course on academic and school-family interventions and enhancing school-based mental health content to our current systems course to start in Spring 2018.

We have also noted that the program's steady increase in applied training in teamwork, consultation, and school-based mental health services over the last three years requires advanced professional skills earlier in their training experiences. Thus, the faculty is identifying and operationally defining advanced professional and communication skills with assessments measures to guide timely content, instructional strategies, and evaluation of professional skills in courses (e.g., consultation, practicum). Second, with clear behavioral metrics of professionalism, we are closely examining our recruitment procedures to assess our initial professional expectations.

Goal Three: Students will obtain skills necessary to promote positive behavioral, emotional, and social well-being of children and their families with diverse experiences within the context of a problem-solving modeling of school psychology.

The outcome grades, faculty and field-supervisor ratings combined with the portfolio data show that candidates are ready to support these services immediately in the second year practicum and are integrating data-based decision-making, consultation, and interventions and mental health services to develop social and life skills during the internship year. During the 2016-2017 year, we added a portfolio work sample that further indicates that interns are effectively implementing preventative and responsiveness crisis services. Candidates, alumni, school psychologists, and administrators expressed appreciation for this type of training and would welcome more advanced training on crisis interventions to meet school needs. Thus, we added a one-credit course on Crisis Response Management in Spring semester 2018 to supplement the current crisis content in the systems and practicum courses.

Goal Four: Students will obtain the necessary skills to promote positive academic growth for all children within the context of a collaborative, problem-solving model of school psychology.

Based on student performance in coursework over time and yearly evaluation outcome data above, the faculty has remained confident that students are meeting expectations and successfully using a problem-solving model to resolve academic problems. Although the faculty is pleased with students outcomes, a new system-level academic intervention course (mentioned in goal 2) will be taught Spring 2017 to fit the changing role of school psychologists implementing services as a team member and consultant.

Goal Five: Students will value diversity, demonstrate respect for all cultures, and strive towards culturally competent practices.

Outcomes suggest that candidates are gaining multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and culturally responsive practices that meet program expectations. The program goal, however, is to facilitate faculty and student career long practices on ongoing growth in cultural competency to continually advance inclusive practices in school settings. With the strong support of the Combined faculty, we continue to infuse multicultural training in course content to improve candidates' knowledge, awareness, attitudes, skills, and advocacy actions required for culturally competent services. This year, combined and school psychology faculty are meeting to plan learning modules on culturally responsive practices (CRP) to teach at appropriate developmental stages. Plans are to add candidate assessments of change in cultural competency while continuing to infuse CRP topics in courses, and documenting CRP in portfolio work samples.

Goal Six: Students will obtain a strong background in research methods and understand how to apply this knowledge within the school context.

Outcome data from course grades and faculty and field-supervisor ratings in research suggest that students are applying research knowledge within school practices. Student involvement in research methods are evident by the percent of students participating in research activities. Faculty goal is to improve timely completion of thesis progress while completing coursework and is exploring strategies to increase students meeting this goal.