

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM**

DATA BASED DECISION MAKING

The steering and advisory committee and faculty of the Professional School Counselor Education Program participate in ongoing self assessment and evidence-based program improvement. Program faculty share in the responsibility of reviewing outcome data and making adjustments to curriculum, methods of instruction and assessment, program organization, and evaluation procedures. The program adheres to a model of collaborative decision-making, with a goal of responding appropriately to changes in the profession and to data. A variety of data inform programmatic discussion and decision-making. These include:

- 1) Student Feedback
 - a. Graduates of the Professional School Counselor Education Program are contacted by the College and are requested to provide feedback via a written questionnaire. The form allows students to rate various aspects of the program on a numerical scale as well as to provide written comments about the program.
 - b. An on-line survey was created to assess student satisfaction on various components of the training program. In February 2009 the survey was emailed to all graduates of the USU Professional School Guidance Counselor Program. The survey included 17 items on which graduates rated their satisfaction with various aspects of the program. Respondents rated their satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale. (Please see Appendix B under the Outcome Data heading on this website for the survey in its entirety). The survey also included a section for gathering qualitative data. (Please see the Outcomes Data section for a sample of graduate responses)
 - c. During the program, student evaluations of teacher and course effectiveness are submitted by students at the conclusion of each course.
- 2) Praxis Exam II. The Praxis School Guidance and Counseling test is intended primarily for persons who are completing master's-level programs for counselors and intend to become counselors in the public schools. It measures knowledge and skills required of the professional school counselor in relation to those areas that constitute most of the work of the counselor. Students in the School Counseling Program take the Praxis Exam at the end of the second year, prior to the internship. (To view Praxis Exam II performance by our students, please see the Outcomes Data section of the Assessment Page).

- 3) Evaluations by practicum and internship classroom and site supervisors. Each student in the Professional School Counselor Education program is required to meet with their practicum and internship supervisors for evaluation. During these meetings, the evaluation form is completed and discussed. Items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale. Additionally, supervisors are asked to write comments about students' strengths and weaknesses. (Please see Appendix A under Outcomes Data to view the evaluation in its entirety)
- 4) TEAC Accreditation. The program is currently a candidate member in good standing of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council. Preparation of our Inquiry Brief and the formal site visit in fall 2011 has provided a unique opportunity for program evaluation by our faculty.

Based upon data gathered from these and other sources, program modifications have been made in the past couple of years. Examples of these modifications appear below:

Curriculum changes to PSY 6150 Evidence-Based Practice: Children and Adolescents and PSY 6370 - Practicum. Feedback from Program graduates cited the desire for additional instruction in behavior management for K – 12 students. After consultation with program faculty, steering and advisory committee members and the Director of Curriculum, additional instruction on the topic was added to course curriculum. For example, this past fall, an instructor from USU's Department of Secondary Education was paid by the Program to lecture on behavior management in K – 12 settings. Additionally, the topic was covered in greater detail in lectures in our practicum course. Finally, the Practicum and Internship Student Contracts were revised through the addition of a goal which requires students to develop a mini-lesson appropriate to the school setting, present it to a K-12 classroom, and receive feedback from the school supervisor. The formal Practicum and Internship Supervisor Evaluations now ask for a rating of skill level in behavior management.

Change in prerequisites for admission to the Program. To prepare students for instruction in behavior management, Program faculty, steering and advisory committee members changed the prerequisite requirements for the program to include a class in analysis of behavior.

All courses in the Program utilize Blackboard. Student evaluations of teacher and course effectiveness, and graduate student responses indicated that students preferred courses which utilized Blackboard. Through consultation with faculty members, the steering and advisory committee, and USU's FACT Center, all courses in the Professional School Counselor Education Program now utilize Blackboard, including the Practicum course and Internship.

Increased emphasis on communication skills. Responses to the online graduate survey, and feedback from program faculty indicated that our students may be leaving the program with a deficit in communication/presentation skills. This is possibly due to the fact that our students attend classes at broadcast sites, where they are not required to verbalize in front of large numbers of students. At our semi-annual faculty meeting in

June 2009, this topic was discussed. Consensus of the faculty consisted of a three-part intervention: 1) During program orientation and in advisement sessions, the program associate director will encourage students to engage in classroom verbal discussion, citing the need for students to develop this critical skill for professional success; 2) Instructors will encourage, and when deemed appropriate, require students to participate verbally during class. This may include additional assignments which require presentations in front of classmates; 3) During the Practicum class specific instruction on presentation skills for job interviews and formal presentations will be provided and students will practice the skills for an assignment.

Communication between the Program, interns and internship supervisors will be increased. Feedback from interns and internship site supervisors indicated that both interns and site supervisors felt the need for a stronger connection to USU during the internship experience. In consultation with Program faculty and the steering and advisement committee a decision was made to hire a liaison to increase communication between the Program, site supervisors and students. Dr. Carolyn Barcus was hired for this position. Dr. Barcus will communicate with interns and their supervisors at least once during each semester via a conference call. She and the Associate Director will be available for telephone calls and emails throughout the internship. A graduate teaching assistant was hired to assist with facilitating scheduling of the conference calls.

Program faculty will keep student projects to provide evidence needed for TEAC accreditation. At our spring 2009 faculty accreditation workshop we were informed by Richard Rhees, USU TEAC Coordinator, that we would need evidence for our claim that we meet the three Quality Principals of TEAC. While we have meaningful evidence already, it was postulated that we need additional documentation. Program faculty members committed to saving a selection of student-submitted work, including student-produced DVDs, written assignments and projects. Each instructor will file one or two appropriate items per student. The items will be referred to in the Inquiry Brief and will be available for perusal by TEAC site visitors.