

Data-Based Decision Making

Combined Clinical/Counseling/School Psychology Specialization

Psychology Ph.D. Program

The Combined program faculty engages in continual self-examination and revision of its curriculum, program activities, structure and organization to demonstrate a commitment to excellence, to find ways to meet goals and objectives more effectively, and to respond to changes in the field. The Program adheres to a model of collaborative decision-making that reflects the program's scientist-practitioner philosophy. Faculty members collectively have responsibility for the program and are accountable for working with the Director of Training to ensure that Program goals, requirements, and procedures are implemented. Policies have been created and modified as a result of this on-going process of self-assessment utilizing multiple sources of input. These include (a) solicited and unsolicited opinions of students, faculty, and graduates on policies, procedures, courses and experiences; (b) formal evaluative ratings by faculty of student competencies that reflect on the adequacy of education and training, including grades, class projects, clinical practicum evaluations, research progress, and yearly evaluations; (c) review of indicators of student performance and outcomes such as placement in quality internships and jobs, publications and conference presentations, and degree completion; and (d) student evaluations of faculty course teaching.

Student input to policies, curriculum, and evaluation. Student input on all aspects of the program is solicited extensively and heavily relied upon to enhance the quality and experience. Students' feedback is captured in several ways. First, one or two student-elected representatives attend the faculty meetings. Second, student representatives solicit students for issues to bring forward to faculty meetings. Third, monthly student program meetings with and without faculty allow students time ask questions and provide feedback. For example, the draft policy changes to our Clinical Comprehensive Exam were brought for discussion to monthly meetings. Fourth, students are involved in all program change processes (e.g., ad hoc committees, retreats). We have been fortunate to have an active student group who are invested in being part of an excellent training program.

Evaluation of program philosophy, policies, and curriculum. The core faculty and student representatives meet twice monthly to discuss the curriculum, competencies, program objectives, and other program business (e.g., information items, planning). This self-reflection on the training process also occurs during the annual review of student competencies. As previously stated student input regarding program matters is actively solicited via multiple methods (e.g., email solicitation, in program meetings, research and clinical supervision teams). In addition, formal surveys were conducted of graduates to assess their perceptions of the effectiveness of the curriculum post graduation. The input gained has had significant implications for the program policies and curriculum. In addition, faculty and student representatives also engage in retreats to address program issues in more depth. The last retreat took place in Summer 2007 and resulted in a number of program changes including the addition of a values statement to the Graduate Student Handbook, a revision of the program's goals, objectives, and competencies, and a reassessment and revision of the research and clinical comprehensive process.

Related external program evaluations. The process of self-assessment is a continuous one that

takes place at several levels within the program, department, college and university. Most broadly, USU has instituted an Office for Assessment and Evaluation to coordinate campus-wide assessments. At the College and department levels, there is regular self-assessment in line with accrediting bodies. For instance, the College and the School Counseling MS Program (Department of Psychology) are currently engaged in the reaccreditation process with NCATE and the Ed.S program in School Psychology has undergone self-assessment in line with NASP-approval (most recently in 2004, at the time it was an MS + 30 program in School Psychology). Additionally, continual self-assessment also takes place at the Departmental level. Most recently, the Department engaged in a comprehensive review for the State Board of Regents (completed April 2002).

Evaluation of faculty. As a measure of evaluation of faculty (and of program effectiveness), student perceptions of teaching are taken in every didactic course by university standard student course evaluation. Faculty members are evaluated annually by the department head and the Dean of the college, focused on effectiveness across aspects of faculty roles, and the evaluations are influential in determining recommended annual merit pay increments.

Evaluation of students. Students' progress and performance are evaluated at faculty meetings, and during the annual summer faculty evaluation meeting. These reviews provide formative and summative feedback to the students. The Combined program faculty meets each summer or fall to formally review and approve the prospective interns for internship application (often pending completion of specific activities such as successful defense of the dissertation proposal). At this time, the number of direct service (e.g., intervention, assessment) hours, clinical functioning, professional conduct, didactic preparation, and progress toward dissertation are reviewed in line with our readiness for internship criteria. The discussion of student progress and readiness often leads to program adjustments and enhancements such as refining the criteria for internship readiness (e.g., a minimum number of hours at USU), optimal timing for completion of comprehensive examinations, and increasing the frequency of internship related information to students at all developmental levels in the program through monthly program meetings.

Formal surveys of students and graduates. The Training Director frequently sends inquiries to the program graduates for input on specific issues. Their input is valued by the program faculty and used in policy and curriculum changes. For this self-study, in the spring 2009, we surveyed Current Students and Graduates in separate questionnaires. We additionally gathered data from student files (e.g., practicum evaluations) and other ongoing record-keeping over the last 7 years. As a member program of the Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP), the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP), Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs (CCPTP), and the Consortium of Combined-Integrated Doctoral Programs in Psychology (CCIDPIP), the combined program training director regularly participates in the meetings (and chaired CCIDPIP for 2 years), and participates in the periodic data collection efforts; feedback for comparison is provided to the faculty and students.