

Date: June 30, 2022

To: Katherine Shepherd, Ph.D., Interim Dean, College of Education and Social Services (CESS)

Deborah Hunter, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Counseling, Human Development and Family Science (DCHDFS), College of Education and Social Services (CESS)

CC: Counseling Program Core Faculty, Counseling Program Students, Counseling Program Alumni

FROM: Julie Welkowitz, Ph.D.; Co-Coordinator, UVM Counseling Program

Dear Dr. Shephard, Dr. Hunter and Counseling Program Stakeholders:

Please see the following annual report that summarizes the Counseling Program accomplishments, modifications and substantial changes; program evaluation results from AY 2021-2022 and plans for using this data for further program modifications.

## **Program Modifications and Substantial Program Changes**

### Temporary Reduction in Core Faculty

A significant change during the 2021-2022 academic year was the temporary reduction in Counseling core faculty. In the previous academic years, the Counseling Program had five core faculty. However, in the summer of 2021, Dr. Jane Okech, who had served as Professor in the Counseling Program and Department Chair, was promoted to Associate Dean for academic and faculty affairs in the College of Education and Social Services (and more recently was promoted to Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs). Further, Dr. Anne Geroski, who had served as a faculty member within the Counseling Program for 25 years retired in May 2021. Dr. Aaron Kindsvatter departed UVM for private practice. This left only 2 core Counseling Program Faculty, Dr. Lance Smith and Dr. Julie Welkowitz. Dr. Smith took on the role of Coordinating the School Counseling program and the CACREP accreditation follow-up report. Dr. Welkowitz stepped into the role of Coordinating the overall operations of the Counseling Program, as well as Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and the Internship and Practicum fieldwork. One of the implications of this reduction in core faculty was the increase in part-time faculty during the 2021-22 academic year. While Drs. Smith and Welkowitz continued their teaching and increased advising responsibilities during the year, the changes necessitated the hiring of 5 part-time teaching faculty for the Fall 2021 semester, 13 part-time teaching faculty for the Spring 2022 semester, and 4 part-time teaching faculty for the Summer 2022 term. In her role as a Program Coordinator, Dr. Welkowitz helped to support the part-time faculty (most of whom were new to the program) with both individual meetings and drop-in faculty meetings specific to the adjunct faculty.

## Hiring of New Faculty

A search for three new tenure track faculty (two positions specific to the clinical mental health counseling program and one specific to the school counseling program) was initiated in the Fall of 2021. Both Drs. Smith and Welkowitz participated on the search committee. The majority of the search process (review of applications, interviews) was conducted during the Fall 2021 semester, with final interviews and decisions occurring at the start of the Spring 2022 semester. As a result of this process, two new faculty were hired, Dr. Aishwarya Joshi and Dr. Nancy Thacker. Both of these faculty will start in the Fall of 2022. Dr. Joshi's areas of specialty include: clinical mental health, intersectionality, multicultural, social justice and equity competencies, crisis and trauma. She is particularly interested in the globalization of the counseling field and the experiences of counseling graduate students in the US and Kenya. Dr. Thacker's specialty is in grief and LGBTQ+ counseling. Throughout her work, she aims to be critical of systemic inequities that shape development and wellbeing. Her research explores this aim in three topic areas: grief theory and counseling, LGBTQ+ persons' mental health and development, and culturally-informed practices in counselor education and higher education.

The third position, seeking a faculty member with a school counseling background, was unable to be filled during this time because the applicant pool did not provide a candidate that was considered by the search committee to be a good match for the current needs of the School Counseling Program. The search for this position will continue next academic year (with Dr. Smith as Chair of the Search Committee). In addition, the Counseling Program has received approval from the Dean's Office to begin the search for a 4<sup>th</sup> new Counseling faculty member, given both the promotion of Dr. Okech to Vice Provost, as well as the approval of a Ph.D. program in Counselor Education (see below). We are currently awaiting approval from the Provost's Office to move forward with these searches.

## Approval of a Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision

During the summer of 2021, the Counseling Program faculty met to discuss the development of a Ph.D. Program in Counselor Education and Supervision. During these meetings, the faculty sketched out the elements of a new program, along with the specific courses. Based on these discussions, Dr. Okech took the lead on drafting the initial proposal and all three Counseling faculty developed syllabi for the new courses during the Fall of 2021. The PhD program implementation will also include collaboration with other departments (particularly for courses on research and teaching). During the 2021-22 academic year, the final proposal was submitted to the Curricular Affairs Committee, the Faculty Senate, and finally the Board of Trustees for approval. Final approval by the Board of Trustees was provided during the end of the Spring 2022 semester. While the Ph.D. Program is slated to begin in the Fall of 2023, the Counseling Program has requested an extension until Fall 2024 so that the full faculty can first be hired.

- See here for a copy of the PhD Program Proposal: [PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision proposal](#)

## CACREP Accreditation Follow-up

In May 2021, the Counseling Program had a site visit as part of the CACREP accreditation review process. The decision of the accreditation review committee was that the UVM Counseling Program was granted provisional accreditation status while it works to address the standards that were considered unmet. One of the key areas cited for improvement were concerns regarding faculty workload. The accreditation committee determined that the Counseling Program Coordinator position should have 2 course releases (which was granted during the 2021-22 academic year). The committee also indicated that the Counseling Program needed more faculty members onboard to support the growth of the Master's program (see Admissions Data below) and the upcoming PhD program (and to be in alignment with CACREP standards for student to faculty ratios). This issue is being addressed through the hiring of additional faculty as described above.

Dr. Smith has taken the lead on re-vamping the evaluation process of our Counseling Program and student progress which was one of the areas identified by CACREP for improvement. During the Fall 2021 semester, Counseling faculty reviewed existing clinical skills assessments and modified them to better reflect student development over time. Dr. Amanda Simpfenderfer collaborated with the Counseling Program in this process to develop the instruments and analyze the data (see Program Evaluation section). We will greatly miss Amanda Simpfenderfer's assessment expertise and her overall support of the UVM Counseling Program as she transitions to her new role as a tenure track faculty member at William and Mary!

To address concerns regarding curricular information specific to the School Counseling Program, an additional required course was created for students in the School Counseling and Dual Option Programs, *Leadership for Transformational School Counseling* ([Syllabus](#)). This course was slated to be offered during the summer of 2022. However, given low enrollment, it will be implemented as a required course for school counseling and dual option students during the summer of 2023. Modifications were also made to other core Counseling courses to add more content relevant to school counseling students.

The CACREP committee strongly encouraged the Counseling Program to convert most of its paper and electronic documents to the TK20 system. As such, all assessment and other paperwork for clinical courses (Counseling Lab, Practicum, Internship), disposition rating scales, and advising documents were moved to TK20 during the 2021-22 academic year. This significant process was accomplished with the leadership of Amanda Simpfenderfer and Crispina Pincus.

Another area targeted by CACREP was the need for additional professional development opportunities for faculty and students. In alignment with the social justice mission of the Counseling Program, two professional development trainings on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion were offered to faculty, students and alumni, free of charge in May 2021.

- [PD Opportunity for Clinical Mental Health Counselors](#)
- [PD Opportunity for School Counselors](#)

## New Scholarship Opportunity for UVM Counseling Students

During the Summer of 2021, the College of Education and Social Services was awarded a HRSA grant to fund the VT-Tree Program. This grant provides \$800,000 in scholarship monies for eligible graduate students in the CESS Social Work and Counseling Programs, with the purpose of diversifying the mental health workforce and enhancing their trauma informed skillset, particularly for working with children, youth and families. In the first year of the grant (2021-22), 11 Counseling students participated, each receiving \$10,000 in scholarship funds (although adjusted for some students, depending on overall financial aid package). In addition to scholarship funding, each participating student was required to take a minimum of two trauma focused courses (with the grant covering tuition for one course for Counseling student participants). Students could also choose to take an additional trauma course to earn a trauma certificate. For 2022-23, seven Counseling students have been accepted into the VT-Tree Program. Each will receive a \$10,000 scholarship and tuition coverage for up to 2 trauma focused courses (although only one course is now required).

## DEI Advisory Committee and Professional Development

Based on the Counseling Program's and the CESS mission regarding social justice, the Counseling Program established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee this past year to better align curriculum, the admissions process and other program practices with this social justice mission. The committee's membership is composed of UVM Counseling Program alumni, students and faculty ([DEI Advisory Committee](#)). In addition, as cited above, two DEI specific professional development trainings were offered, free of charge to students, faculty and alumni of the Counseling Program.

## Peer Mentoring

During the first couple years of the Covid pandemic, Counseling Program graduate students shared their sense of isolation. In response to the student need for more connection, the Counseling Program instituted a peer mentoring program in the Fall of 2021. This program connected interested first year students with 2<sup>nd</sup> year and above Counseling student volunteers. The Program organized a kick-off event in the Fall of 2021 where mentors and mentees could meet each other. Following that event, mentors were asked to check in with their mentees a minimum of once per semester. The peer mentoring was an opportunity to supplement faculty advising, by providing incoming students a student contact for asking informal questions about their experiences in the program, tips for applying to internship, and general information about Vermont (such as housing, food, recreational activities, etc.). Given the initial success of the program, we will be continuing to implement the peer mentoring program in the 2022-23 academic year.

## **Program Evaluation Results**

### Admissions Data

During the Spring of 2022, the Counseling Program engaged in its annual admissions process. Given that there were only two core faculty, two alumni (Natasha Chang and Patrice Daniel)

were recruited to assist with admissions review. The number of applications that were received in Spring 2022 totaled 148, which was the highest in the program’s history. Out of state applications comprised 69% of the application pool (N=102), with 31% being in-state applicants. Further, 20% of the applicants identified as BIPOC and 17.5% identified as LGBTQ+. The large majority of applicants were interested in pursuing the Clinical Mental Health Counseling specialty, with smaller percentages interested in School Counseling and the Dual Option program.

The chart below delineates the demographic break down of applicants who applied, were admitted, those who accepted, enrolled and deferred. There are 31 students who will be enrolled in the Counseling Program starting in Fall 2022. The in-state vs out of state ratio is 64.5% (VT): 35.5% (Out of State) students. 35.5% (N=11) of the incoming class identify as BIPOC; 42% (N= 13) identify as LGBTQ+.

### Admissions 2022 Data

<b>Admissions 2022 Total</b>		<b>Out of St</b>	<b>VT</b>	<b>CMHC</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>Dual Op</b>	<b>BIPOC</b>	<b>LGBTQ</b>
<b>Applied</b>	148	102	46	119	19	10	30	26
<b>Admitted</b>	55	30	25	38	13	4	19	19
<b>Accepted</b>	31	12	19	24	5	2	13	13
<b>Enrolled (includes 2 F2021 deferrals)</b>	31	11	20	24	4	3	11	13
<b>Deferred for Fall 2023</b>	3	3	0	1	1	1	3	0

When the admissions data for 2022 is compared to previous years, it is noted that the percentage of applicants who accepted the admissions offer for the Counseling Program in Spring 2022 that were BIPOC (42%) is significantly higher than in 2021 (23%) and much higher than any year since 2015. Further, the percentage of enrolled incoming students for 2022 who identify as BIPOC (35.5%) is also significantly higher than in any of the previous 7 years. Similarly, the percentage of applicants identifying as LGBTQ+ who accepted offers to UVM Counseling was considerably higher in 2022 (42%) compared to 2021 (15%) and any year since 2018. The links below provide a detailed overview of the admissions data broken down by different demographic categories.

- [Admissions Data 2015-2022: Applications, Admits, New Enrolls, Degrees Awarded](#)
- [Admissions & Tuition Data from 2018-2022](#)

UVM Counseling Program students who are out-of-state residents are provided a discounted tuition rate (the variable tuition rate). Specifically, out-of-state UVM Counseling Program students pay \$927 per credit with the variable tuition rate instead of the standard UVM out-of-state tuition rate of \$1720 per credit. A survey was sent to all applicants who accepted the admissions offer asking about the impact of the Variable Tuition Rate on their decision to enroll

at UVM. Of the 6 respondents, half indicated that it would be unlikely that they could attend UVM’s Counseling Program if it were not for the Variable Tuition Rate. All of the respondents indicated that the Variable Tuition Rate played a significant or very significant role in their decision to enroll in the UVM Counseling Program. As one respondent shared, “*I think that this is an incredible idea to bring more diversity into the program and have that higher margin of accessibility.*”

- For the full survey results, see here: [Variable Tuition Rate Survey](#)

Counseling Program Demographic Data

During the 2021-22 academic year, there were a total of 85 enrolled students across cohorts (see demographic chart below). The majority of the students had in-state residency (61%). Almost 72% of the students choose the Clinical Mental Health Counseling specialty, with 20% selecting the Dual Option program and 8% enrolled in the School Counseling program. It is hoped that by recruiting another faculty member who has a background in School Counseling and by enhancing the School Counseling curriculum, that we may be able to attract a higher number of applicants who are interested in School Counseling.

In terms of other demographic data for the current Counseling students, 22% of the students identify as BIPOC and 27% identify as LGBTQA+. 83.5% of the current Counseling student population identifies as female.

**Demographic Data of UVM Counseling Graduate Students (Academic Year 2021-22)**

Current Students Total	Gender			Residency		Program			BIPOC
	F	M	LGBTQIA+	Out-of-State	In-State	CMHC	SC	DO	
85	71	14	23	33	52	61	7	17	19

Retention and Completion Rates

For Counseling students who enroll in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program or the School Counseling Program full-time, it typically takes 2 years (including summers) to complete the graduate program. However, some students who take a higher credit load can complete the program slightly earlier (in May vs. August). For full-time students enrolled in the Dual Option Program, it typically takes 3 years (inclusive of summers) to complete the degree. For part-time students, the duration of their time in the program will vary contingent on the number of credits taken each semester.

There were 27 students who enrolled in the program in the Fall of 2020. Of those, 74% will have completed the program within 2 years (by August of 2022), 19% will still be enrolled by August 2022. Thus, 93% of those who enrolled in Fall 2020 will have either completed the

program by August 2022 or will still be retained. Of the 24 students who entered the program in the Fall of 2021, 100% are still enrolled. The 2 year completion rate for those entering in Fall 2020 is already higher than most previous years, going back to 2014. See chart for more detailed information:

### [CP Retention Completion Exam Pass Rate and Employment Rates](#)

#### Credentialing Examination Pass Rates

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program and Dual Option students need to take an Oral Exam prior to graduation. This exam typically involves a presentation of their clinical work (video and written summary) that is reviewed by a committee consisting of their advisor and their on-site supervisor. Students who do not pass on their first attempt are given the opportunity to redo the oral exam. Those students seeking licensure as a clinical mental health counselor must also take two Counseling licensure exams, the National Counselor Exam (NCE) which can be taken while the student is nearing the end of their graduate study and the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) which cannot be taken until all of the educational requirements for licensure have been met. The UVM Counseling Program has access to the data of its students with respect to the NCE exam only. During the 2021-22 academic year, 100% of those taking their Orals passed and 100% of those taking the NCE exam passed.

Students in the School Counseling Program and those in the Dual Option Program are required to submit a Portfolio that is typically reviewed by two faculty. If there are sections that need revision, students are given the opportunity to do that. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 100% of the students successfully completed their portfolio.

The high rate of successful completion for Orals, Portfolio and NCE exam, has been consistent for the past 8 years. See chart for data on prior years: [CP Retention Completion Exam Pass Rate and Employment Rates](#)

#### Employment Rates

The UVM Counseling Program sent out a survey and follow-up emails to recent alumni (those just graduating in May 2022) inquiring about employment status. Of those May 2022 graduates who responded to the survey (N=10), 90% (N=9) already reported have obtained jobs in their field starting either this Summer 2022 or the Fall 2022. See Reported Employment chart for comparison data of previous years: [CP Retention Completion Exam Pass Rate and Employment Rates](#)

#### UVM Graduate Student Exit Survey

The Counseling Program sent a survey in May 2022 to students who are about to graduate, asking them about their experience in the program. Of the respondents (N=7), 100% rated their clinical skill training as above average or higher. All but one student rated the preparation for a career as above average or higher (with one student rating their preparation as average). The aspects of the program that students most valued included: the clinical applied experiences (such



as practicum and internship), opportunity for small group discussions, the cohort model (and the close relationships formed with classmates), and an emphasis on personal identity development. Many of the comments regarding the most challenging parts of the program related to the desire for an expanded curriculum and additional support for school counseling students. However, respondents were also pleased that an additional required school counseling course would be added to the curriculum in the upcoming year. Another common challenge included having 3 out of 5 faculty leave the program and consequently having a high number of part-time faculty for this past year. As indicated, additional faculty have already been hired. One respondent identified needing more support in working with clients with dominant identities who had harmful beliefs when the counselor was of a marginalized identity.

### UVM Counseling Program Alumni Survey

In May of 2022, an alumni survey was sent out to all UVM Counseling Program alumni on the Counseling Program alumni listserve. Only two individuals responded to the survey, one who had completed the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program and one who had completed the Dual Option Program. Both respondents were employed in private practice as Mental Health Counselors. Among the aspects of the program that respondents reported to be most helpful were the applied clinical experiences. In terms of suggested changes, one respondent indicated that they would have liked more check-ins with students around self-care. Given the low response rate, it is not possible to know if the experiences of these two respondents were generalizable.

### Site Supervisor Feedback of UVM Counseling Program

At the end of each Spring (or following the end of an internship site experience), on-site internship supervisors are asked to complete a survey regarding their experience with the UVM Counseling Program. Surveys were sent to 52 on-site supervisors during the 2021-22 academic year, with a 100% response rate. Internship sites included both clinical mental health counseling sites and school counseling sites. The vast majority of respondents (over 90%) found the internship handbook helpful. 73% attended the internship orientation provided by the Counseling Program prior to the start of the academic year and approximately 81% described that as helpful. 84% of respondents indicated that the amount of contact they received from UVM was just right, with 15% indicating that they would have liked additional contact. 96% of respondents shared that the organization of the internship was helpful to them. Internship supervisors were asked about topics for professional development. Based on feedback from last year, 2 professional development trainings were offered on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in May. One of the survey respondents indicated that they “loved the panel discussion” from the DEI training. There was a wide range of suggestions for upcoming PD events, including trauma informed care, ethics, eating disorders, OCD, supervision models, narrative therapy, internal family systems, more on social justice topics. Among the common themes that emerged from the open-ended suggestions, school counseling supervisors wanted more of a curriculum focus on the practical aspects of the position vs a primary emphasis on clinical skills. Several of the comments related to the overlap of class schedules with on-site time at internship (the Counseling Program is



working hard to keep open 2.5-3 days in the course schedule for on-site internship) . Some supervisors wanted more regular contact with the internship instructors. Many of the site sites also employ our Counseling graduate students.

- For a partial summary of results, see here: [Site Supervisor Feedback of UVM Counseling Program](#)

### Student Assessment of Clinical Skills

As mentioned earlier, the Counseling Program revamped its measurement tools for the assessment of student clinical skills to reflect both progress over time and outcomes. Given that this was the first year of data collection with the new assessment tools, we will not be able to see progress over the time in the program until after next year's data is collected.

- See here for copies of the new clinical skills assessment instruments:
  - [Lab Skills Competency Checklist](#)
  - [Counseling Practicum Competency Checklist](#)
  - [MH Counseling Internship Competency Checklist](#)
  - [School Counseling Internship Competency Checklist](#)

### **Use of Data for Future Program Modifications**

#### Hiring of New Faculty

One of the most significant changes that is in alignment with both the CACREP accreditation committee feedback, as well as comments on the recent student exit survey is the hiring of new faculty. With 3 of the 5 core faculty having left the Counseling Program this past year, it was critical that new faculty be hired as soon as possible. Students indicated that they were affected by having such a high proportion of part-time faculty teaching their courses, particularly during a pandemic when there was a higher reliance on technology which was new to some part-time faculty. CACREP expressed concerns as well regarding workload issues for existing faculty. Also, given that the program will be starting a PhD program in Counselor Education and Supervision within the next 2 years, CACREP indicated the need for at least 6 full time faculty to meet standards for faculty to student ratios. As indicated above, 2 new tenure line faculty were hired this past year and there will be another search this upcoming year for 2 more tenure line faculty, including one specifically having a background in School Counseling.

#### Curriculum Changes for the School Counseling Program

The CACREP accreditation committee feedback and the data from the Student Exit Survey both emphasized the need for additional curricula specific to school counseling students. As a result, a new three credit course was designed specific to students in the School Counseling Program on *Leadership for Transformational School Counseling*. This course will be required for all School Counseling students in the future. In addition, we have created separate internship seminar sections for students who are working in schools (and this past year, the internship seminar

section was taught by a school counselor in the field). Further, many of the core Counseling courses were modified to provide more emphasis on topics related to school counseling.

### Student Assessment Changes

As indicated above, the assessment of student clinical progress was modified significantly based on feedback from the CACREP accreditation committee. The assessment process is now designed to monitor clinical progress over time vs clinical outcomes per se. This was the first year utilizing the new assessment tools with respect to Counseling Lab, Practicum and Internship. As such, we will revisit any needed changes in the upcoming academic year.

### Enhanced Student Support

As indicated in the Fall 2020 student survey, the Spring 2022 student exit survey and the Spring 2022 alumni survey, existing and former students indicated that they benefited from the cohort model, but would like even more check-ins and support (particularly during the pandemic). In response to this need, the Counseling Program instituted a peer mentoring program this past academic year which paired second year and above students with incoming first year students. Based on the positive feedback, we will continue this program in the upcoming year. To address reported student stress during the pandemic, faculty also modified assignment and course requirements. Some faculty also gave time in their classes for general check-ins. Next academic year, faculty can consider the possibility of having these check-ins as a regular part of the smaller clinical seminars (such as practicum and internship). In addition, an optional open forum was held in the Fall 2021 for all students as an opportunity to share their experiences in the program and to voice their needs.

### Professional Development

Based on the recommendation from the CACREP accreditation review and the site supervisor survey from Spring 2021, the Counseling Program has committed to offering more professional development opportunities for students, faculty, internship supervisors and alumni. As indicated above, 2 professional development workshops were offered in May 2022 regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, one focused on clinical mental health counseling and one focused on school counseling. As indicated in the Site Supervisor Survey from Spring 2022, there is a range of topics that were of interest to site supervisors. The Counseling Program is considering offering one workshop on trauma-informed care and a follow-up DEI training in the upcoming academic year.

### **Conclusions**

The combination of a decrease in the number of core Counseling Program faculty, combined with the ongoing pandemic, made this a challenging year for students, staff and faculty alike. Nevertheless, the program is excited to welcome two new core faculty in the upcoming academic year and to have the prospect of an additional two faculty members join in the Fall of 2023. Further, a significant effort was put into addressing the CACREP recommendations which we hope will result in an expanded curriculum that will attract a diverse pool of applicants and a higher percentage of school counseling applicants. We are also excited about the approval of the

PhD Program in Counselor Education and Supervision and look forward to its start within the next couple years!