



Bi Annual FGCU Counseling Alumni Questionnaire

It is program practice to send a questionnaire to counseling graduates every other year (to maximize response rates.) A questionnaire was sent to known email addresses for the program's 300 graduates since 1997 from all counseling programs (School Counseling, Mental Health and Clinical Mental Health.) Several were not opened or were returned for discontinued addresses and a total of 50 responses were received back in the fall of 2014. Thirty-one (31) identified as school counseling majors (all female) and 15 identified as mental health counselors (four are male). Of those who reported ethnicities/races most were Caucasian except four White Hispanic Mental Health Counselors and one each of Black/African American, Asian and White Hispanic School Counselor. Respondents in both programs ranged from graduating in 1992 (from USF's predecessor program) to the most recent prior school year of 2013-14.

All respondents are employed in the field and the vast majority list their title as school counselor (25) while others listed administrative or counseling jobs at higher education institutions. Of the 28 who listed specific employers, all but one are employed locally. Starting salaries ranged from \$30,000 to 50,000 with most in the low \$40's.

Alumni were asked to rate their knowledge and skills in a variety of key areas and their ratings were similar regardless of program specialty area. Ratings were on a scale of High (1) Moderate (2) Low (3) and blank is not applicable.

Alumni ratings of Knowledge and Skill presentation in order or rating (Highest to Lowest)

Program Knowledge/Skill Rating Area	n	Means
Individual counseling]	49	1.0816
Classroom/ Large Group Presentations (school only)	35	1.1143
Ethical and legal issues in your profession	49	1.1224
Theories of counseling (or student development)	49	1.2041
Small group dynamics and counseling	49	1.2041
Facilitating the educational process (school only)	34	1.3235
Large group dynamics and counseling	49	1.3469
Professional Identity/Behavior	49	1.3878
Human Sexuality (mental health only)	17	1.4118
Human growth and development	49	1.4490
Accountability procedures	49	1.4490
Child and adolescent counseling	49	1.4898
Counseling multicultural/diverse populations)	49	1.5102
Consultation	49	1.5745
Psycho-diagnosis (mental health only)	17	1.6471
Program evaluation	49	1.7038
Working with families as part of counseling activities	49	1.7083
Case planning/ management	49	1.7447
Career and lifestyle counseling	49	1.7551
Working with addictions (mental health only)	17	1.7647
Research and statistics	49	1.7755
Crisis intervention/ counseling	49	1.7755
Professional credentialing	48	1.7826
Individual assessment or appraisal	49	1.8542
Standardized (i.e., "group") testing	49	2.0638
Counseling persons with special needs	49	2.1042

Ratings of the Importance of individual aspects of the program and related satisfaction with those areas.

	N	Importance of	N	Satisfaction with
Academic/ professional knowledge of the faculty.	49	1.3061	48	1.1458
Professionalism]	49	1.0816	48	1.1458
Supervised, field-based experiences (i.e., practica or internships) overall	49	1.0408	48	1.2083
Sites available for supervised, field-based experiences	49	1.2653	48	1.3750
Site host supervisors for supervised, field-based experiences	49	1.2449	48	1.3958
On-campus, supervisors for supervised, field-based experiences	49	1.4082	48	1.3542
Instructional, classroom (i.e., teaching) effectiveness	48	1.2708	48	1.1667
Faculty Professional Competence (no data reported for Importance)			48	1.1042
Faculty accessibility]	49	1.2653	48	1.1875
Program facilities and resources]	47	1.4255	47	1.1702
In-program, on-campus supervised practice experiences]	49	1.5510	48	1.2500
Faculty as mentors/advisors.]	49	1.3061	48	1.3542
Student progress monitoring and support]	48	1.3125	47	1.3191
Use of technology in learning process and counseling work]	48	1.3061	48	1.1458
Length of time to complete the program]	49	1.3958	48	1.2917

Generally Alumni over the years indicate satisfaction with most aspects of the knowledge and skills gained in the program, importance to them and satisfaction with various aspects of their program experiences with means representing responses in the moderate to high range. The only areas where there was more diverse opinions about knowledge and skills taught in the program were in the areas of standardized (group) testing and individual assessment/appraisal. The latter two areas are areas where students are not practicing those skills universally (mental health counselors rarely engage in large group standardized testing, for example.) Graduates also felt less certain of their knowledge and skills in working with people with special needs.

Graduates had almost perfect agreement (means between 1.0 AND 1.19) in recognizing the level of professional knowledge/skill in individual counseling, classroom large group presentations (school only) and ethical and legal issues in the profession.

The areas that they thought were least important were in-program supervised experiences (1.55), program facilities and resources (1.4255) and on-campus supervisors for field experiences (1.4082) yet they rated their satisfaction with each of these areas highly. The areas rated lowest in satisfaction were areas where the program has least control – site host supervisors (1.3958) and sites available (1.3750). Three other areas that received relatively lower satisfaction were faculty as mentors/advisors and on-campus supervisors for field experiences (means were both 1.3542) and student progress monitoring and support (1.3191). The first area may attribute to the lack of advising needed by most students since the program functions as a cohort with courses only offered annually rendering most advising unnecessary. The latter, student progress monitoring and support, is conducted every term so it is harder to determine whether students are dissatisfied with the progress monitoring frequency or rigor or if the relative dissatisfaction may be with the level of support for those who require it for their individual success. However, when all is said and done, all areas seem to have achieved high satisfaction with the range from 1.1042 to the lowest at 1.3958.

Given the wide range of years since graduation that occurs in this sample and the many changes in personnel, program design, accreditation, and implementation that has occurred during those years, an analysis was conducted to determine if years since graduation had an impact on opinions. Generally, students who have been out of the program the longest have the highest ratings of satisfaction with the knowledge and skills aspects of the questionnaire. Students who have graduated more recently have the highest ratings of importance and satisfaction. One interpretation of this data is that students who have graduated more recently are still adjusting to new work environments and continuing to learn key aspects of the profession as they get situated. This is consistent with other contemporaneous data gathered from classes and graduating students who indicate that there are more areas they would like included in the curriculum but have also indicated that they would not prefer credits added to the degree to accomplish this. At the same time these graduates are closer to the most current program improvements and rate them more highly.

All calculated, there were 41 of the 56 items where means fell between 1.0 and 1.49; all but one of the importance and satisfaction means were higher than 1.49. Thus, areas of knowledge and skills had the greatest variability.

Students identified program strengths as

- **Convenience:** "Location , Affordability
- **Integration of Technology and Accountability:** Use of technology and data, Incorporating Technology
- **Curriculum elements:** Comprehensive school counseling; individual counseling; theories, Consultation and Collaboration Class, Counseling techniques, strategies and theories, Exposure to a variety of theories, supervision feedback, practice- in the field and in class, great preparation for individual/group counseling, professional ethics, and counseling

theories, development, Group class, Knowledge of Legal/Ethical Issues, The supervisor course we took during our final term. Theoretical knowledge and the application of such as it was being learned.

- **Faculty:** Faculty. Faculty, Faculty knowledge and accessibility, Faculty professional competence, Great faculty on staff at the time - Drs Tyler, Isaacs, Sabella, Dimidjian- always available for consultation. Availability of Professors. Professors are committed to helping students succeed. Faculty support from professors. Excellent professors; The faculty is very knowledgeable and personable. I really enjoyed my professors. They were always available and interested. Knowledge of professors. The professors. They were very supportive.
- **Preparation:** I felt prepared to work with students and counsel them on a variety of issues. I felt I had adequate preparation, I like that we were required to do internships at each level of school; elementary, middle, and high
- **Program size:** Relatively small size, Small class size, Small student to teacher ratio. Small learning environment
- **Field Experiences:** Internship opportunities gave me a great deal of exposure to career expectations, instruction in a very real way. Practical internships for our personal needs. The amount of client face time I had prior to graduation. I felt competent and prepared as a new graduate. The experience from the internships provided the most practical educational knowledge and tools for work after graduation. The internship classes with Dr. Finn, Dr. Isaacs and Dr. Sabella. The internship experience. The internships (and flexibility with different levels in the school counseling program) were a major strength. The strengths were the internships most definitely.
- **Cohort model:** wonderful colleagues to go through the program with, staying with a cohort, and length of time to complete MA Program

General Comments:

- "I am currently not working in the School Counseling field. I loved being a counselor, but the demands of the job were not conducive to the parent I wanted to be.
- "I believe the MHC program was very comprehensive. I enjoyed the knowledge and professionalism from faculty members.
- "I would love to continue my education at FGCU if there was an advanced counseling/psychology degree. It would be great to have the option of work related courses.
- Excellent program, would benefit from more specialized options.
- FGCU Program in Counseling did an excellent job in preparing me for my career.
- Finally, I believe that the professionals graduated by the MHC program at FGCU are very thorough in their theoretical, practical, and ethical knowledge.
- Good experience that I feel prepared me better for counseling than Social Work.

- Great program overall-I felt I was well prepared to enter the world of counseling, very supportive professors
- I always hoped the mental health and school counseling programs would combine. I feel I could have used the substance abuse classes and other classes
- I am frequently and continuously thankful for going through this program. The skills and lessons learned have been applicable to my career.
- I am proud to be an FGCU graduate.
- I appreciated the program and the opportunities it afforded me. This education and subsequent employment with highly diverse populations and addressing their needs has been wonderful.
- I do believe that my education set me up to succeed.
- I feel that the counseling program at FGCU did a great job in preparing me to be a professional school counselor. I would have been happy if I could have also majored in mental health counseling.
- I felt very prepared as a mental health counselor as a result of my education at FGCU!
- I had a great experience overall and felt I grew personally as well as professionally."
- I loved my program at FGCU and love my career. The group of us that went through together, continue to be friends and help each other out professionally.
- I often hear my graduation peers talk about the awful wages they are earning. In any case, I am thankful that my private practice is finally starting to take off.
- I think a better idea about the types of jobs and salaries we could expect would have helped me to be prepared for the workplace.
- I would encourage the School Counseling program include more Mental Health coursework. I dealt with many self-injurious, suicidal, or mentally unstable students.
- Professors are the key to the success of students. I am grateful for the opportunity I've had to learn from the best.
- Program feel short in technology assistance; however I graduated in 1999.
- Thank you for checking in on our progress.
- The program was great. I learned a great deal about myself and what I am capable of. I questioned myself and ultimately redefined what I really wanted for my professional life.
- The USF/FGCU counseling program was an excellent program to go through and a valuable resource for our community.

Of these 49 students, nine indicated a possible interest in another master's degree – educational leadership (3), mental health counseling (2), higher education (1), Biostatistics or epidemiology (1), couples and family counseling (1), school psychology (1). Several also indicated an interest is furthering their education at the doctoral level in clinical psychology/industrial psychology (3), counseling/mental health counseling/school counseling (4) Educational Leadership (1), higher education (1), public health (1).

Finally, many students were interested in engaging in continuing education or professional development/certificate courses or programs in: marriage and family or couples counseling (13) trauma and crisis counseling (10), transition to mental health from school counseling or the reverse (5), play therapy/working with children (3), academic advising (1), agency management (1) and working with fathers (1).

Perhaps one of the most interesting finding is the number (33) of school counselors who reported continuing in targeted “Closing the Gap” impact projects in their work on areas including raising grades, attendance behavior, guiding and consulting with teachers, student retention, targeting seniors, goal planning, working with families, and creating action plans. They used a variety of evidence based practices to achieve their targets including: mentoring, frequent meeting with students, classroom guidance, pairing strong and weaker students, frequent monitoring and check-in’s, small group counseling, anger management work, test anxiety preparation, and study groups.

Summary:

Students think highly of their education at FGCU and rate most areas as both important and with high satisfaction. There is a relationship between the recency of graduation and ratings of knowledge and skills and with satisfaction. This relationship suggests that recent program improvements are validated. Students continue to value their experiences with the program, its structure and its faculty. Many are interested in continuing their professional development with advanced certificates in areas that are currently being contemplated or developed for curriculum additions.

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