



# UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

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## CONNECTICUT

### **Department of Counseling and Applied Behavioral Studies Counseling Program Evaluation Report 2020-2021**

This report is written annually and made available at the close of the academic year specifically to provide information to members of the USJ community, prospective students, site supervisors, alumna/e, and others associated with our counseling programs regarding goals and accomplishments over the course of the academic year.

It is safe to say that this past year was like no other. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic students, faculty, and site supervisors were forced to make major adjustments so all could continue toward fulfilling their respective educational missions.

#### **Program Goals 2020-2021**

##### **Goal #1 Maintain Robust Enrollment**

Despite broad concerns about the pandemic truncating program growth, the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling (SC) programs saw an increase in students entering the programs in the fall of 2020. In total 37 new students started their first semester last fall, bringing total enrollment in both programs to 108.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling: 82 students

School Counseling: 26 students

##### **Goal #2 Student Retention Over Three Years**

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Graduation Rate – 86%

School Counseling Program Graduation Rate – 88%

The most frequently identified barrier to students not completing their program of study is unforeseen life changes (e.g. family relocation, job changes, childbirths, family commitments, etc.) that do not make continuing in their programs a viable option. Due to the supportive learning environment at USJ, it is rare that a student does not complete their studies due to academic difficulties or professional role deficits.

### Goal #3 Acquire an Extensive Knowledge Base for Counseling Practice

The Counselor Education Comprehensive Exam (CECE) is administered annually to each graduating cohort of students. The faculty review exam scores generated from graduating cohorts, add the new data to a multi-year tracking graph, and assess USJ student performance in comparison to national norming data. The trending of scores year over year is used to determine the adequacy of how content is covered and delivered across the curriculum. Below are the results of the 2021 CMHC and SC graduating cohorts combined. As one will clearly see, once again USJ students exceeded the national mean scores in every knowledge-based content area.

	Human Devel	Social Cultural	Helping Relation	Group	Career	Appraisal	Research	Professional Orientation	Total
National Mean N = 1091	9.6	11.29	10.11	9.57	10.20	8.15	7.60	9.00	75.51
Standard Dev.	2.29	2.12	2.66	2.35	2.62	2.56	2.8	2.55	14.12
Median									77
Mode									78
Range (21-109)									88
USJ Means	10.52	11.52	10.48	10.70	11.57	9.96	8.70	10.61	84.04

### Goal #4 Development of Student Skills and Professional Dispositions

Site supervisors' assessments of the students with whom they work are collected at the end of each semester of Practicum, Internship I, and Internship II. The assessment is conducted across 30 defined practice domains that have been operationalized and placed into four numerically distinct groups (i.e. 1 = Not at Target, 2 = Approaching Target, 3 = Meets Target, and 4 = Exceeds Expectation). To capture the nature of development over time, site supervisor input is used for program evaluation by examining aggregated data captured at three points across students' field placement year. The faculty look for a positive shift in category loading over the field placement experience (e.g. fewer 1's and 2's and more 3's and 4's as students move from Practicum to Internship II. The evaluation by supervisors of the elements relating to professional dispositions (i.e. mature and professional behavior, ethical behavior, respect for the whole person, well being of self, respect for the counseling process, commitment to professional development, practice within state and federal laws and regulations, and consults with other professionals) are provided below.

## Mature and Professional Behavior

	Rating	Mature and Professional Behavior
Practicum	1	0
	2	4
	3	33
	4	59
Internship I		
	1	0
	2	2
	3	40
Internship II	4	61
	1	0
	2	1
	3	26
	4	96

## Ethical Behavior

	Rating	Ethical Behavior
Practicum	1	0
	2	4
	3	56
	4	35
Internship I		
	1	0
	2	2
	3	53
Internship II	4	47
	1	0
	2	0
Internship II	3	48
	4	75

## Respects the Whole Person

	Rating	Respects the Whole Person
Practicum	1	0
	2	4
	3	39
	4	51
Internship I		
	1	0
	2	1
	3	48
Internship II	4	54
	1	0
	2	0
	3	35
	4	88

## Well Being of Self

	Rating	Well Being of Self
Practicum	1	0
	2	11
	3	39
	4	46
Internship I	1	1
	2	6
	3	49
	4	45
Internship II	1	0
	2	3
	3	48
	4	72

## Respects the Counseling Process

	Rating	Respects the Counseling Process
Practicum	1	0
	2	6
	3	52
	4	38
Internship I	1	0
	2	3
	3	56
	4	44
Internship II	1	0
	2	1
	3	40
	4	81

## Commitment to Professional Development

	Rating	Commitment to Professional Development
Practicum	1	0
	2	2
	3	43
	4	51
Internship I	1	0
	2	3
	3	47
	4	51
Internship II	1	0
	2	3
	3	36
	4	80



**Practice within State and Federal Laws and Regulations**

	Rating	Practice within State and Federal Laws and Regulations
Practicum	1	0
	2	3
	3	57
	4	32
Internship I		
	1	0
	2	0
	3	63
Internship II	4	38
	1	0
	2	0
Internship II	3	54
	4	66

## Consults with other Professionals

	Rating	Consults with other Professionals
Practicum	1	0
	2	11
	3	47
	4	33
Internship I	1	0
	2	6
	3	54
	4	40
Internship II	1	1
	2	3
	3	40
	4	74

Site supervisors' evaluations across skill and professional practice domains in the USJ counseling programs, continue to provide evidence of the positive development of students as they progress toward graduation.

### Goal #5 Student Career Success

**Counselor Education Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate of Graduates: 100%**

**Clinical Mental Health Counseling Licensing Rate:** Graduates that have pursued licensure.

2015 89%  
 2016 90%  
 2017 75%  
 2018 87%  
 2019 100%  
 2020 80%  
 2021 24% At two months after graduation

**School Counseling Certification Upon Graduation:**

2015 100%  
 2016 100%  
 2017 100%  
 2018 100%

2019 100%  
 2020 100%  
 2021 100%

**Employment Rate within One Year of Graduation (2020):**

Clinical Mental Health Counseling – 100%  
 School Counseling – 100%

In terms of program effectiveness, as measured by employment, the following table provides data for graduating cohorts between 2011 – 2020. Taking the six individuals who opted to engage in activities other than work outside the home, there were 325 individuals in the pool of graduates of which 264 (81%) are working in the field of counseling. Of the total pool of graduates, 45 individuals report they have been promoted at their agency or school at least once since beginning their careers. This data speaks to the positive impact the program has had on students becoming successfully employed as professional counselors after graduation.

Categories	Number of Graduates 2011 – 2020
Total Number of Graduates	331
CMHC Counselors Employed	172
School Counselors Employed	92
Employed outside the field of counseling	22
Unemployed by Choice	6
Unemployed	1
No response/no social media platform information	29

**Goal #6 Positive Student Feedback Regarding Professional Preparation**

**Student Exit Surveys (2019 – 2021)**

Each year, students from graduating cohorts in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and the School Counseling programs are asked to complete an exit survey to assess their experience and level of satisfaction with the professional preparation they received. To provide a more robust response set the faculty look at three years of data (N = 62). The most recent data is presented below.

Which program/degree did you complete?

Response: 36 CMHC students  
 26 School Counseling

1. How effective was your coursework in preparing you for Practicum and Internship?

Response: Extremely effective 35%  
 Very effective 52%  
 Somewhat effective 16%  
 Not effective 0%

2. Did you participate in professional association activities?

Response:	Yes	77%
	No	22%

3. Please rate the overall quality of instruction that you received.

Response:	Very High Quality	38%
	High Quality	54%
	Neither High or Low	8%
	Low Quality	0%
	Very Low Quality	0%

4. How confident are you to enter the field as a counselor?

Response:	Extremely Confident	16%
	Very Confident	74%
	Somewhat Confident	10%
	Lack Confidence	0%

5. How likely is it that you would recommend your program to a friend or colleague?

Response:	Actively promote	59%
	Passively promote	33%
	Not promote	8%
	Actively Discourage	0%

### **Alumni Follow-up Surveys**

The faculty are also interested in how students who have been in practice for a time think about the education they received from the USJ counseling programs. For this reason, the faculty surveys alumni of the counseling programs every three years. In the 2017 alumni survey, there were 58 respondents and in the most recent survey of alumni, 2020, there were 60 respondents.

Items included in the alumni survey are as follows:

1. The University of Saint Joseph prepared me to work effectively as a counseling professional.
2. The University of Saint Joseph prepared me to understand my professional role identity as a counselor.
3. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand and apply ethical and legal considerations in my work as a counselor.
4. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand the nature and needs of persons at all developmental levels.
5. USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society.

6. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand career development.
7. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand group counseling (purpose, development, dynamics, theories, and skills).
8. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to integrate counselor characteristics, theories, and skills effectively within the counseling process.
9. The USJ Counseling Program prepared me to understand individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation.
10. The USJ Counseling Program equipped me to use research methods, statistical analysis, needs assessment, and program evaluation.

## Results

Item #	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>1 - Counseling professional</b>	56.9%	32.76%	12.07%	0%	0%
<b>2 - Role identity</b>	53.45%	36.21%	10.34%	1.72%	0%
<b>3 – Ethics</b>	65.52%	34.48%	0%	0%	0%
<b>4 – Development</b>	51.72%	34.48%	8.62%	5.17%	0%
<b>5 – Multicultural</b>	55.17%	31.03%	8.62%	3.45%	1.72%
<b>6 – Career</b>	32.76%	50%	13.79%	3.45%	0%
<b>7 – Group</b>	48.28%	36.21%	10.34%	3.45%	1.72%
<b>8 - Helping relationships</b>	53.45%	36.21%	6.90%	1.72%	1.72%
<b>9 – Assessment</b>	36.21%	55.17%	3.45%	5.17%	0%
<b>10 – Research</b>	53.45%	36.21%	5.17%	5.17%	0%

### Goal #7 Assess the Curriculum Base on Evaluation Data

At the end of each semester, the faculty meet to engage in a review of each student's academic performance and assessment of professional readiness based on rubric data. This review includes performance on graded assignments, demonstrated competence on the Skills and Dispositions Rubrics, and site supervisors' evaluations if the student is in Practicum or Internship. The faculty use these inputs to assess strengths and weaknesses for each student and look for patterns that emerge that may suggest changes to curriculum content or design that would be advantageous.

When deficits in the curriculum are noted, additional faculty meeting sessions are scheduled so that potential curriculum changes can be addressed as per the USJ Faculty Handbook. An example of this process occurred in 2017 when the faculty noted concerns over skill deficits for students who were entering their practicum semester. In response, the curriculum was adjusted in 2018. The content covered in COUN 541- Counseling Skill and Techniques was segmented and an additional course, COUN 585 – Advanced Counseling Skills, was added to the curriculum to cover material over a longer duration. This change allowed for better pacing of skill-oriented content over two semesters instead of one semester and

provided more opportunities for students to practice skills. It also provided for students to receive more faculty feedback and instruction over an extended period. In this case, not only was a course added to the curriculum, but the sequence of courses was also adjusted so that students would have four contiguous semesters of counseling skills practice in the first four semesters of their respective programs. The new course sequence is presented in the table below.

Semester		CMH Counseling Course	School Counseling Course
Fall Semester	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	COUN 541 Counseling Skills	COUN 541 Counseling Skills
Spring Semester	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	COUN 585 Advanced Counseling Skills	COUN 585 Advanced Counseling Skills
Summer Semester	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	COUN 506 Counseling Children and Adolescents	COUN 506 Counseling Children and Adolescents
Fall Semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	COUN 531 Group Counseling	COUN 531 Group Process and Dynamics

Subsequent evaluation of students by site supervisors and on-campus faculty supervisors, suggests this change has had a positive impact on students’ abilities to better provide effective counseling services to clients. As more data is collected from future cohorts moving through this course sequence a clearer picture will emerge.

### **Changed in 2021**

#### **Formal Path to LPC Endorsement for School Counseling Students**

Since 2019 when the State of CT provided a tiered licensing pathway for school counselors to obtain the LPC credential, increasingly school counseling students have submitted requests to have the option to complete the required clinical mental health internship in addition to the school counseling program. Starting this year, the program determined that a formal process was necessary for those students interested in applying and being approved to pursue this option. School counseling students must now formally declare intent to take a CMHC internship by the beginning of the summer semester of their first year in the program. Faculty then review and inform students of their school counseling/LPC status prior to the fall semester of their second year. This streamlines the process and helps faculty to support students in making the decision that is best for them given their academic and professional record in their first year.

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Modifications**

Though these changes will not remain in effect for the next academic year, it is important to note and share some of the efforts made to support student progress through the program while managing the complexities of a public health crisis. Prior to 2020, all classes, with the exception of two, were held fully on campus. During 2020-2021, due to policy changes within the University and following state and federal guidelines, the program moved most classes to fully remote learning or Hyflex with some students in the classroom and some joining remotely. Furthermore, all practicum and internship site visits, advising appointments, and student meetings were moved to a remote format as opposed to an in-person format. As stated above, there will be a pullback of these accommodations for the 2021- 2022 academic year.