

Master of Arts in Counseling at Saint Martin's University
Annual Report
December 2023

The following report addresses methods of informal and formal evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, a summary of findings, changes made to- date, and anticipated changes as a result of the assessment and evaluation process for calendar year 2023.

Substantial Program Modifications Prior to this Report

In AY 2021-2022, the MAC Program received permission to hire three, new tenure-stream faculty – Dr. Tessa Davis-Price, Dr. Stalina Harris, and Dr. Ann Maureen McCaughan – in support of its CACREP Accreditation application process. Each of the three new hires hold doctorates in counselor education and supervision. Biographical information for each faculty can be found on the Program website.

Following publication of this report, the MAC Program will submit the full self-study for CACREP Accreditation under the 2016 Standards, including the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialty area.

A systematic plan for student assessment and program evaluation was created in Fall 2022 and implemented beginning in Spring 2022. Results from that process are presented in this report.

Dr. Johanna Powell began service as the Chair of the MAC Program in Summer 2022. Dr. K. Alex Onno began service as the Clinical Coordinator in Summer 2022, following her tenure as Chair which concluded in Spring 2022. Dr. Ann McCaughan began service as the Accreditation Liaison and Assessment Coordinator upon her hire in 2022.

CACREP standards for clinical practice (i.e. Practicum and Internship) were implemented in 2018, which included creation of a required Practicum course to precede the Internship experience.

The 5 Areas of Assessment protocol to measure student resonance with the program was created in 2022 and implemented program-wide in Spring 2023.

Evaluation Measures

The MAC Program at Saint Martin's University employs a number of measures to assess our Program Objectives, Student Learning Outcomes, and professional dispositions, including course-level assignments, clinical practice, Five Areas of Assessment in the MAC Program, and feedback from stakeholders. The stakeholder survey process was implemented in alignment with our measures of the assessment of student learning and professional dispositions (which are designed to meet the 8 CACREP Core areas, and the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialty area) in addition to gathering additional feedback about the program including the program objectives.

Student Learning Outcomes Summary

Course-level Outcomes

Based on primary (i.e. course-level) measures of student learning outcomes, MAC Students were consistently demonstrating meeting or exceeding expectations ($m = 3.00$) for knowledge across the 8 CACREP Core and Clinical Mental Health Counseling specialty areas.

Internship Evaluations

MAC students' skill across the 8 + 1 CACREP areas (as well as a number of additional areas of focus) is formally measured during the Internship via the Evaluation of Internship student. A review of that data indicated that MAC students are demonstrating *skill* at above the 80% benchmark for all areas.

Stakeholder Surveys

Student Survey Responses

Based on secondary (i.e., Stakeholder Survey) measures of student learning outcomes ($n = 19$), MAC Students assess themselves at the highest levels of *knowledge* in the areas of Human Growth and Development, Group, and Research and Program Evaluation; and lowest in the areas of Appraisal and Helping Relationships.

In regard to *skill*, MAC students ($n = 11$) assessed themselves at the highest levels of *knowledge* for Appraisal and Social and Cultural Diversity; and assessed themselves at the lowest for Career Counseling and Group Counseling.

In addition to assessing across the 8 CACREP Core and CMHC specialty areas, the survey assessed for perceived knowledge and skill regarding systemic thinking, trauma, and documentation and treatment planning. Of those additional areas, current MAC students also rated themselves lower in the area of documentation and treatment planning for both *skill* and *knowledge*.

It should be noted that the group of respondents for questions regarding *knowledge* were larger than that of the group responding to *skill*, as *skill* was only self-assessed by those students who report being in Practicum or Internship, while *knowledge* is measured across all students responding.

Alumni Survey Responses

In regard to both *knowledge and skill*, MAC Alumni ($n = 46$) rated themselves highest in the areas of Social and Cultural Diversity and Human Growth and Development; and lowest in the areas of Appraisal and Research and Program Development.

Similar to the student survey results, additional insight gathered from the Alumni survey included lower levels of *knowledge* and *skill* in the areas of Documentation and Treatment Planning. In addition, alumni indicated a need for additional focus on the licensure application process.

Supervisor/Employer Survey Responses

Due to the low number of respondents (n = 4) for the site supervisor/employer survey, review of and conclusions drawn from the data is not feasible at this time. The MAC faculty will work with the Advisory Board to develop strategies for increasing response numbers in the future. In the interim, the end-of-semester evaluations of students that are required to be completed by site supervisors each semester may offer an opportunity to gather additional information beyond assessing students' clinical skill.

NCE Pass Rates

The National Counselor Examination (NCE) is a 200-item multiple-choice examination designed to assess knowledge, skills and abilities determined to be important for providing effective counseling services. The NCE is a requirement for counselor licensure in many states. It is also one of two examination options for the National Certified Counselor (NCC) certification. It may also be accepted by military health systems to become a recognized provider. Data reported by the National Board for Certified Counselors indicates that MAC students/graduates who took the National Counseling Exam in 2023 have 100% pass rate.

Conclusions

Based on the information gathered, initial changes made include additional focus on documentation and treatment planning at multiple points in the program, including the Foundations of Clinical Mental Health class, Appraisal Class, and module in Practicum. The licensure application process is now further reinforced through multiple points in the program.

In addition, MAC faculty noted challenges in analyzing and interpreting data in regard to multiple rubric scoring methods being used. In order to address this challenge and increase the ease of analyzing and comparing between measures, the MAC faculty will work on adopting a common rubric.

A summary of the preliminary assessment and evaluation data and trends was presented to the MAC Advisory Board in September 2023, including evaluation of Program Objectives. Preliminary observations indicated a trend toward inclusion of Trauma in the Program Objectives. Those objectives will be revisited in AY 2024-2025 with the support of additional assessment data from the preceding (i.e. AY 2023-2024) Academic Year.

Additional discussion of dispositions will be presented to the advisory board in March 2024. Feedback and recommendations are elicited at each Advisory Board session and are integrated into the Program and Evaluation Plan. The Program will continue to gather and analyze data, and determine any course or program-level changes that will be made as a result.

Professional Dispositions

Professional dispositions are measured via the “Five Areas of Assessment in the MAC Program” process, which is completed by students during each Spring semester of their training program. In addition, each student is evaluated by the MAC Faculty each spring to determine any deficiencies that may need to be addressed.

Aggregate data for 2023 across the Five Areas of Assessment in the MAC Program indicate students are achieving a “meets or exceeds standards” rating for four (Academic Rigor, Person of the Counselor, Counselor Skills and Dispositions, and Ethical Standards) of the five areas assessed at or above the 80% benchmark. For “Clinical Skill”, the number of students assessed at meeting or exceeding standards fell below the 80% benchmark – at 67% meeting or exceeding standards; however, when controlling for those students who have entered into the clinical practice sequence of their training program, clinical skill assessed exceeds the 80% benchmark.

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Applicant, Student and Graduate Characteristics

Having a diverse student body can foster diverse thinking. The MAC Program attracts individuals from a diversity of backgrounds, which is reflective of the University’s high diversity profile (the University meets the requirements of a Minority Serving Institution/MSI as well as Asian American and Pacific Island Serving Institution/AANAPISI). At the same, time, the Program recognizes the importance of intentionally seeking out diverse candidates from outside of the University community, and faculty are making concerted efforts to recruit from Programs and Institutions with diverse student bodies.

In calendar year 2023, MAC had a total of 44 applicants across two admissions cycles. Of those applicants, 23 (53%) report belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group. Sixty-one percent of applicants (n = 27) identified as female.

In calendar year 2023, MAC graduated a total of 22 students, six (27%) of whom reported belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group, two (9%) of whom reported a non-binary gender identity, and 11 (50%) of whom reported identifying as female, and 9 (41%) who identified as male.

In 2023 (N = 76), 27 (36%) MAC students identified as a marginalized race/ethnicity, nine (12%) reported being a first-generation college student, and 19 (25%) reported military affiliation, 59 (78%) identified as female, 2 (2%) identified as non-binary, and 15 (20%) identified as being male.

The Program also notes limitations in terms of the institutional data reported, as it does not include data regarding sexual orientation or non-binary gender identity. Any information included here is based on applicant and students' indication during their interactions with the MAC Program. The introduction of an additional demographic survey, to be administered anonymously during students' first course could provide a richer picture of the demographics of our student body. This would be in better alignment with our department's position statement which includes the statement "We work to deconstruct the walls of sexism and transphobia by integrating feminist and trans-valuing theories into our practice. We actively counter ageism, ableism, classism, racism, and heterosexism in our communities by admitting their pervasiveness and implementing corrective actions." Finally, the Program believes our commitment to diversity is best evidenced in our position statement and community presence:

Position Statement

We strive to embody social justice through a continuing cultivation of ethical and culturally relevant methodologies. In resonance with the values of the American Counseling Association, the National Board for Certified Counselors, accrediting organizations for counseling programs, and the Benedictine framework, we recognize the dominance of white/euro-centric norms and teach cultural humility by rejecting anti-immigrant rhetoric and action.

We affirm the self-determination of Indigenous and Native communities by hearing their stories and supporting decolonization. We work to deconstruct the walls of sexism and transphobia by integrating feminist and trans-valuing theories into our practice. We actively counter ageism, ableism, classism, racism, and heterosexism in our communities by admitting their pervasiveness and implementing corrective actions. In the spirit of Benedictine sincere hospitality, we extend welcome to members of all faiths and to those who do not identify as having a religious membership.

Community Presence and Action

MAC's commitment to diversity is most transparently evidenced in the program's community presence. Specifically, MAC serves community schools, agencies, and groups that lack the resources to address the mental health needs of our area without the support of counseling interns. In order to fulfill these needs, MAC Clinical Coordinator, Dr. K. Alexandra Onno, has cultivated relationships with these sites and maintains close contact to ensure that the clients' needs are supported through support of our interns and continued relationship with the sites. These sites are primarily serving high-need marginalized populations and include:

- One such site that is working innovatively to provide support to local underserved communities is the site "Connections, a Center for Healthy Families." Connections operates at some distance from the more resourced urban hub of our local communities, serving the more socioeconomically challenged region of Grays Harbor County. Connections began as a child advocacy center, and still maintains that identity and serves as an essential provider of resources for children who have experienced abuse and their families. In addition to continued commitment to including a child advocacy center as part of the resources they provide, Connections

states that “While this work is still a cornerstone of what we do, we have grown to include other programs that go beyond that work. Our broader goals now encompass efforts to ensure both children and their families can thrive as safe, secure and healthy” (<https://harborconnections.org/about-us/>). The site has a particular emphasis on and expertise in support for children in foster care and the parents who tend them, bringing both skill and sensitivity to integrating support around the many social identities intersecting in the lives of those they serve. MAC Students have been in support of this site from the beginning of their history of providing counseling care; the first intern to serve there was a student in the MAC program, who did two semesters of internship there in the Spring and Summer semesters of 2023.

- An example of truly unique shift in paradigm is “Quixote Village,” a local non-profit organization that began as a collaborative response to the need for a sustainable path to address the struggles houseless community members experienced around a tent city and evolved into an organization that supports now three permanent tiny home “villages” that provide both dependable housing and a supportive community structure. All three villages support those who have struggled with houselessness; the second and third are dedicated to the needs of houseless veterans. As a key element of reducing barriers to treatment, the leadership of Quixote Villages reached out to the MAC Program with the hopes of being able to provide counseling services that came to the Village, rather than requiring the residents to address the many costs of reaching a traditional setting for mental health services. In Fall Semester, 2023, a MAC Practicum student became the first counselor in training from a partnering school to provide counseling services on site, providing both scheduled appointments, and milieu availability, an open-door approach that has quite literally opened the door to congruent and community based mental health support.

While the above affiliations are indirect recruitment efforts, the program nonetheless realizes they are effective means of making MAC’s presence and commitment known in the community, and that by increasing MAC’s visibility we are increasing our attractiveness to potential students from diverse backgrounds. This assertion is reinforced by studies (see Hipolito-Delgado, Estrada, & Garcia, 2017; Umbach & Kuh, 2003) that indicate that an environment supportive of issues of cultural diversity and inclusion is most impactful in attracting and retaining culturally diverse students.

Admissions Outreach

In alignment with the University’s current pursuit of designation as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), Dr. Tessa Davis-Price in coordination with our Graduate Admissions team will contact constituents (via emails and through visits) in MSIs in the Pacific Northwest to forge a pathway for their graduates to pursue a Master of Arts in counseling at Saint Martin’s University. The MSI Washington State universities specifically identified are Columbia Basin College, Edmonds College, Green River College, Heritage University, Lake Washington Institute of Technology, North Seattle College, Pierce College District, Seattle Central College, South Seattle College, University of Washington – Tacoma Campus, Walla Walla Community College, Wenatchee valley College, and Yakima Valley College. The MSI Oregon universities specifically identified are Portland State University and Warner Pacific University. Continued

efforts to reach out to these and other MSI will occur annually. Dr. Davis-Price will also continue conversation with the university admissions team to continually refine outreach to ensure that it is in alignment with ethical parameters and accurately portrays our depth of commitment to providing opportunities and a hospitable program for underserved populations as well as other applicants.

Fostering a Climate of Diversity and Inclusion

Strategies for promoting marginalized student recruitment and retention have historically been a challenge to colleges and universities, and liberal arts institutions tend to have lower diversity profiles. As Umbach and Kuh state “In the context of liberal arts colleges, most of which tend to be relatively small, apparently the magnitude of the number of students from different backgrounds does not matter as much to deriving the benefits of diversity experiences as does the quality of interactions across differences that the campus environment encourages and nurtures” (p. 16). Further, a study by Hipolito-Delgado (2017), found that [students were] attracted to counselor education programs that demonstrated a commitment to issues of multiculturalism and social justice.

MAC prides itself on the attention to issues of inclusion and diversity that are woven throughout our program, from our program objectives to our professional skills and dispositions, as well as through our dedication to community involvement that is centered around providing services to marginalized populations. Encouraging critical intergroup dialogues and creating an atmosphere of risk-taking, wherein students from diverse backgrounds can engage in meaningful experiences, is an intentional goal of the MAC curriculum. To facilitate these interactions, faculty are committed to continuing to examine their own cultural identity and cultural humility, to actively engaging in issues of social justice, and to advocating for marginalized populations. These values are in alignment with research findings that indicate that an environment supporting issues of cultural diversity are most impactful in attracting and retaining culturally diverse students.

Planned Program Modifications

Further operationalization of professional dispositions will enhance that evaluation process. Suggestions will be made to, and gathered from, the Advisory Board in our Spring 2024 meeting.

Revision of rubric scoring categories is necessary to separate out “meets” and “exceeds” standards. A four-point scoring category will be implemented beginning in Fall 2024, for all areas of assessment and evaluation.

Closing the feedback loop on the 5 Areas of Assessment process is essential; following annual student self-assessment and MAC Faculty review of self-assessment and additional assessment input, summary letters will be sent to each student.

The Program will further solicit information regarding cultural identity from students during the admissions interview and advising process, via open-ended questions that provide a range of responses beyond those categories limited by the institution’s admissions form.

The Program will further articulate the KPI process, including minimum performance expectations and remediation processes for individual student performance. A database will be created to track individual student performance for KPIs and dispositions to be updated each semester for academic coursework, and evaluated following each Spring semester for dispositional categories.

Summary

In summary, this report summarizes the MAC Program Outcomes, including data from Student Learning Outcomes and Professional Dispositions evaluations; Program Characteristics; and Stakeholder Surveys. We observe that we continue to meet our Program Objectives through classroom, curricular, and community-based activities, and look forward to continuing to evaluate and make data-driven revisions, where necessary/recommended.