

AC 2025 – 2026 Assessment

Counseling, MA (533) - Annual Report

Division: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Department: School of Education

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Date: 5/11/26

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Date: 5/28/2026

Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Mission. The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service.

Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network to assist children and their families related to learning and development.

School of Education Mission. The School of Education offers exemplary programs that prepare candidates for career success in a variety of professional roles and settings. As caring, competent, reflective practitioners, our graduates become positive models in their communities and organizations. This mission is fulfilled through academic programs based on theory, research, and best practice. Further, all graduates learn to value and work with diverse populations and to incorporate technologies that enrich learning and professional endeavors.

Counseling (COUN) Program Mission Statement: The mission of the Counseling Program at Northwestern State University is to prepare candidates with the knowledge, skills, and practices to become caring, competent, reflective counselors within a dynamic and multicultural society. A key aim of the program faculty is to approach their pedagogy with intellectual vigor and enhance their students' preparation through quality research, scholarship, and service. The instructional efforts of program faculty are committed to ensuring a seamless integration of theory into practice. The NSU Counseling Program is fully accredited by the Council for Accreditation Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) through October 31, 2031.

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Methodology:

The assessment process for this program includes:

1. Data from assessments provide results on candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions as appropriate for professional education programs.
2. Content and key assessments in each program/course are aligned with the respective professional preparation/application standards, and candidates apply the standards in all their coursework.
3. Data from assessment tools are collected and returned to the program coordinator.
4. The program coordinator analyzes the data to determine student learning and whether students have met measurable outcomes and discusses the results with program faculty.
5. Annually, program faculty and stakeholders review data to make data driven, curricular decisions.
6. The program coordinator, in consultation with program faculty and other relevant stakeholders, proposes needed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period, and the curricula and overall program.

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Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1: Demonstrate Discipline-Specific Content Knowledge

Course Map: Candidates' Last Semester

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge. 160 Multiple-Choice Question Exam	80% of candidates will meet proficiency by demonstrating a knowledge of core CACREP content areas as evidenced by earning an "Acceptable" score or higher on the multiple-choice comprehensive exam.

Measure 1.1. (Direct—Knowledge)

SLO 1 is assessed through a Multiple-Choice Comprehensive Exam (MC Comps) in the candidates' last semester of the program. The assessment instrument evaluates student knowledge using a 160-question exam. The benchmark performance is that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level (70%) or higher. The MC Comps was designed by the professors of the Counseling Program and aligns with CACREP Standards, textbooks used within the core courses, and the National Counselor Exam (NCE), which is required for licensure as an LPC. For candidates to achieve proficiency, they must correctly answer 112 of the 160 questions.

The Comprehensive Exam covers the eight core areas identified by CACREP: Multicultural Counseling, Counseling Skills, Career Counseling, Group Counseling, Theories of Counseling, Human Growth & Development, Analysis of the Individual, and Research. There are eight sections of the exam with twenty questions specific to each of these core areas. In keeping with scoring on the National Counselor Exam (NCE) where answering 56-64% of the questions correctly earns a passing score, the designation of the scoring ranges differs from other assignments in the Counseling program. For the Comps Exam, below 60% is designated as Unsatisfactory and is not a passing score; 60-69% is considered Satisfactory; 70-79% is Acceptable; 80% and above is Target.

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis. In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was **met**.

One hundred percent of the candidates (n=10) achieved proficiency, a score of 70% or higher, on the Multiple-Choice Comprehensive Exam in 2024-2025. The scores in the core areas were as follows: Multicultural (16.7/20), Counseling Skills (16.1/20), Career Counseling (16/20), Group Counseling (16/20), Theories (15.6/20), Human Growth & Development (15.4/20), Analysis of the Individual (14.5/20), and Research (13.6/20). Of note was the subscore within Theories; the

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mean increased from 13.8 to 15.6.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, candidates scored lowest in Research and Analysis of the Individual. However, these were traditionally lower scores and track national trends, so they were not concerning. However, the drop in the Counseling Skills score was of concern; in 2023-2024 the average score was 17.3/20 and in 2024-2025 the average score was 16.1/20). Faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, skills-related vocabulary, and identification of types of skills. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting counseling skills to practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

These changes improved candidates' ability to demonstrate a knowledge of core CACREP content areas as evidenced by earning an "Acceptable" score or higher on the Multiple-Choice Comprehensive

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to achieve proficiency (70% or higher) on the Multiple-Choice Comprehensive Exam.

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Ninety percent of the candidates (n=10) achieved proficiency, a score of 70% or higher, on the Multiple-Choice Comprehensive Exam in 2025-2026. The scores in the core areas were as follows: Multicultural (16.4/20), Counseling Skills (18.1/20), Career Counseling (16.4/20), Group Counseling (14.1/20), Theories (14.7/20), Human Growth & Development (15.9/20), Analysis of the Individual (13.1/20), and Research (13.3/20). Of note was the subscore within Counseling Skills; the mean increased from 16.1 to 18.1.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, candidates scored lowest in Research and Analysis of the Individual. However, these are traditionally lower scores and track national trends, so they are not concerning. In 2026-2027 faculty will focus on Group Counseling. In 2024-2025 the average score was 16/20; in 2025-2026 the average score was 14.1. Group Counseling is currently offered as an 8-week Summer class. Moving forward faculty have made the decision to change it to a 16-week class during the regular Spring semester in order to give students more time to fully grasp and apply the material. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

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These changes will improve candidates' ability to demonstrate a knowledge of core CACREP content areas as evidenced by earning an "Acceptable" score or higher on the Multiple-Choice Comprehensive Exam, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 2: Apply Discipline-Specific Content Knowledge in Professional Practice

Course Map: Practicum (COUN 5550 for CMHC; COUN 5570 for SC)

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice. Evaluation of Individual Counseling Skills	80% of candidates will meet proficiency which is defined as scoring a minimum of 80% on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form which is completed by site-supervisors (not affiliated with NSU). The Individual Counseling Evaluation Form will be used in COUN 5550 and 5570. This aligns with the Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP standards below. CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement

Measure 2.1. (Direct—Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions)

SLO 2 is assessed through the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form in Practicum, COUN 5550 for CMHC students and COUN 5570 for SC students. The assessment aligns with the program's Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP Standards, which are concentration specific for Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling (SC): (1) CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues and (2) SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement. Candidates typically enroll in Practicum (COUN 5550/5570) at the beginning of their second year. For candidates to be successful on this evaluation, they must score a minimum of 80%.

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There are twenty criteria site supervisors use in evaluating the candidate after observing them conduct an individual counseling session. The score for each prompt can range from between one and five, with five being the best possible score. The levels of performance are outlined below.

Levels of Performance:

- 5 – Demonstrates high level of competence
- 4 – Demonstrates competence, consistently
- 3 – Demonstrates some competence, needs improvement
- 2 – Demonstrates low level competence
- 1 – Demonstrates no competence

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis. In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was **met**.

One hundred percent (n=11) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a mean score of 80% or above on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form which is completed by site-supervisors. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the students' ability to achieve proficiency by earning a mean score of 80% or above on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form.

Ninety one percent (n=11) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a mean score of 80% or above on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form in 2025-2026. Scores ranged from 4.5 to 5.0.

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the previous AC year changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. CACREP, the counseling accreditation body, is requiring all programs to move to the 2024 CACREP Standards by July 1. Therefore, the COUN program will be implementing these new standards into the coursework in AC 26-27 and will be planning for the redesign of assessments in AC 27-28 which better align with

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the new standards.

Given the circumstances, program faculty will continue incorporating the NCE testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will continue to improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

SLO 3: Model Professional Behaviors and Characteristics

Course Map: COUN 6500 (offered each summer)

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and characteristics. Research Paper	80% of candidates will meet proficiency by scoring 80% or above (Acceptable or Target) on the COUN 6500 Research Paper. Know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling (2016 CACREP Standard 1.i.).

Measure 3.1. (Direct—Dispositions)

The SLO is addressed through the COUN 6500 Research Paper and assessed using the rubric designed for the assignment. Candidates complete this assignment in COUN 6500, which is a course they take during their first year in the program. Depending on their starting semester, this assessment takes place in their first, second, or third semester. The assignment and accompanying rubric were created by Counseling faculty and aligned with CACREP standards. For candidates to be successful they must score 80% (80/100) or higher on the assignment.

The first four components of the rubric are worth 20 points each and are as follows: (1) Identification of the Dilemma: The ethical dilemma(s) is clearly identified, including conflicting factors, dimensions and variables included in the professional quandary. The dilemma is described in relationship to ethical standards, laws and professional ideas or aspirations. (2) Proposed Ethical Action: The proposed action the counselor should take, including: (a) clearly articulated professional interventions; (b) persuasive justification for proposed action; and (c) a description of the professionally recognized decision-making model or process used to arrive at decisions. (3) Use of the ACA Code of Ethics: The paper cites appropriate sections of the ACA

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Code of Ethics and, if appropriate, other ethical guidelines considered. A clear rationale regarding selected sections of the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics and any other ethical guidelines is cited. (4) Use of the Ethical Decision-Making Model: The steps of the decision-making model were clearly followed and skillfully applied to the case. Components five and six are worth 10 points each and are as follows: (5) Scholarly Writing: Research provides exceptional connection to topic/issue and supports claims in thoughtful ways. Paper reflects exceptional attention to professional vocabulary specifically related to the field. Quality of use of APA formatting when using in-text citations and development of a reference section including at least 5 professional sources. (6) Writing Mechanics: Clearly organized, thorough, and free of grammatical and spelling errors. Reflects the work of a graduate student who went above and beyond the basic requirements of the assignment. The assignment is worth 100 points in total.

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis. In AC 2024 – 2025 the target was **met**.

Ninety four percent of students (n=17) achieved proficiency by earning a mean score of Acceptable (80% or above) or Target (90% or above) on the Research Paper. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on performance, candidates scored lowest on section two of the rubric because they did not correctly identify the proposed actions a counselor should take; the mean score was 15/20 (75%) for that portion. Approximately 25% of students indicated they would break confidentiality and contact law enforcement, which was not warranted in the given case study. Program faculty incorporated additional resources to help students better understand the limits of confidentiality, including a 20-minute recorded lecture that examined the different circumstances and factors involved when determining whether to break confidentiality.

These changes improved candidates' ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and especially the applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to achieve proficiency by scoring 80% or above on the COUN 6500 Research Paper.

Ninety one percent (n=11) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning 80% or above on the COUN 6500 Research Paper in 2025-2026.

Decision.

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In AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the same improvements/interventions in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. This change has only been in effect for one cycle and with one group of students (n=11). A larger data set is needed to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.

In 2025-2026, candidates improved their mean scores on section two of the rubric from 15/20 (75%) to 17/20 (85%). Program faculty will continue incorporating additional resources to help students better understand the limits of confidentiality, including the 20-minute recorded lecture that examines the different circumstances and factors involved when determining whether to break confidentiality.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and especially the applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 4: Exhibit Creative Thinking that Yields Engaging Ideas, Processes, Materials, and Experiences Appropriate for the Discipline

Course Map: COUN 5000 (a) and COUN 5610 (b)

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline. COUN 5000 – Counseling Session Video and Components COUN 5610 – Class Journal/Portfolio	80% of candidates will meet proficiency by earning a designation of Acceptable (80%) or higher on the Counseling Session Video and Components and the COUN 5610 Class Journal/Portfolio. a. Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.). b. Articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others (2016 CACREP 2.d.).

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Measure 4.1. (Direct—Knowledge and Skills)

Faculty assess SLO 4a in COUN 5000 through a Counseling Session Video and Components; it is a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 CACREP Standards. Candidates enroll in COUN 5000 their first year within the program; depending on their start date, the assignment is completed during their first, second, or third semester. The assignment was designed by counseling faculty and aligns with CACREP Standards. For a candidate to be successful, they must score an 80% or higher.

For the assignment, students facilitate a 45-minute counseling session in the role of the counselor. In addition to being evaluated on their essential interviewing and counseling skills, students also complete a session transcription identifying skills used, a case conceptualization, and an essential skills rating form.

SLO #4b is addressed in COUN 5610 through the Class Journal/Portfolio and assessed with the rubric designed for the assignment. Candidates enroll in COUN 5610 their first year within the program; depending on their start date, the assignment is completed during their first, second, or third semester. The assignment was designed by counseling faculty and aligns with CACREP Standards. For a candidate to be successful, they must score an 80% or higher.

This assignment is a compilation of the students' work throughout the semester regarding specific prompts designed for students to reflect in-depth on their attitudes, beliefs, experiences and then to articulate how that impacts their work with clients. The rubric is divided into three sections and are as follows: (1) The candidate has demonstrated responsibility taking by having 90% of all course discussion forums and weekly papers. These assignments are included in one continuous document with great attention to detail and presentation of material (30 points). (2) The candidate provides meaningful reflection on the learning derived from the course (35 points). (3) Special attention is given to the impact of heritage, etc. on themselves and future clients through numerous specific examples (35 points).

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis. In AC 2024 – 2025 the target was not met.

In AC 2024 – 2025 the target not met. Unfortunately, an older version of the COUN 5610 syllabus was updated and uploaded and did not include a previous revision to the Portfolio Rubric in the syllabus description. Therefore, students who simply read the syllabus and did not read the rubric did not include all of the required information within the assignment. While students could not be penalized for the instructor's oversight, it does mean the SLO was not met.

Fifty percent (n=14) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a designation of Acceptable (80-

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89%) or Target (90-100%) on the COUN 5610 Class Journal/Portfolio in 2024-2025 (SLO 4b); 100% of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a designation of Acceptable (80-89%) or Target (90-100%) on the Counseling Session Video and Components (SLO 4a).

Based on data from 2024-2025, candidates scored lowest on the COUN 5610 Class Journal/Portfolio Rubric, sections two and three; these sections were not listed in the syllabus assignment description. In 2025-2026, program faculty ensured the stated sections of the rubric matched the assignment description given in the syllabus and continued implementing the changes from 2023-2024 AC. These changes improved candidates' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. In COUN 5610, 91% (n=22) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a designation of Acceptable (80-89%) or Target (90-100%) on the COUN 5610 Class Journal/Portfolio in 2024-2025 (SLO 4b); two students did not submit the assignment. In COUN 5000, 95% of candidates (n=19) achieved proficiency by earning a designation of Acceptable (80-89%) or Target (90-100%) on the Counseling Session Video and Components (SLO 4a).

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. While candidates technically performed well on the Counseling Session Video and Components, feedback from students indicated the large class size for such a skills-intensive course was a challenge and there was confusion regarding the assignment. With that in mind, two sections of COUN 5000 will be offered in the Fall of 2026 in order for students to receive more individualized attention. Also, professors will introduce the assignment earlier in the semester to allow students more time to process expectations and prepare effectively. They will also incorporate a dedicated question-and-answer period during class time to address any confusion and will specifically explain how this particular assignment differs from earlier video submissions in the course. This will include clearly outlining each component of the assignment, such as the video demonstration, transcription, and overall expectations, and walking students through how they will be evaluated using the rubric.

For COUN 5610, the faculty will implement the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. The instructor will revise the required format of the submission by having students organize their portfolios into clearly defined sections: all discussion board posts grouped together, all weekly papers grouped together, and the final summary placed at the end. This structure would improve

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clarity and make the grading process more efficient.

These changes will improve candidates' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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SLO 5: Make Responsible Decisions and Problem-Solve, using Data to Inform Actions when Appropriate

Course Map: COUN 5560 and COUN 5550/5570

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions. Case Conceptualization Presentation (COUN 5560) – 5.g. Research Article Critique/Presentation (COUN 5550/COUN 5570) – 8.a.	80% of candidates will meet proficiency by earning 80% or higher on the Case Conceptualization Presentation and the Research Article Critique/Presentation. Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.). Know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice (2016 CACREP 8.a.)

Measure 5.1. (Direct—Knowledge and Skills)

Faculty assess SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 7.e.) in COUN 5560 through the Case Conceptualization Presentation, a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. This assessment takes place in the last semester of the program. The assignment and accompanying rubric were created by Counseling faculty and aligned with CACREP standards. For candidates to be successful they must score 80% or higher on the assignment.

Faculty assess SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 8.a.) in COUN 5550/COUN 5570 through Research Article Critique/Presentation, a Key Performance Indicator assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. This assessment takes place at the beginning of the second year in the program. The assignment and accompanying rubric were created by Counseling faculty and aligned with CACREP standards. For candidates to be successful they must score 80% or higher on the assignment.

The parts of the Case Conceptualization Presentation assessment are as follows. Students (1) Identified the presenting problem, (2) Assessed and interpreted client's strengths and needs, recognizing uniqueness in cultures, languages, values, backgrounds, and abilities, (3) Detailed appropriate comprehensive assessment interventions to assist in diagnosis and treatment

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planning, with an awareness of cultural bias, (4) Detailed treatment plan that includes a behavioral definition, 5-axis diagnosis, goals, objectives, past interventions used, theoretical approach used, multicultural considerations, and family systems considerations; differentiate between diagnosis and developmental appropriate reactions during trauma-causing events, (5) Included progress notes, (6) Documented consultation with collaborating professionals to discuss the differential diagnosis, (7) Videotaped session and summarize intervention. Intervention must be based upon documented research findings. Sources must be cited. If applicable, provide appropriate counseling strategies when working with clients with addiction and cooccurring disorders; if not detail appropriate strategies that could be used, (8) Summarized future plans based upon research findings. Sources must be cited. (9) Identified appropriate referrals and/or community resources and the procedures utilized for making those referrals. For the Personal Reflection Component students were asked to (1) Discuss personal limitations in working with the client and the nature of the supervision received, (2) Discuss the legal and ethical issues related to the work with the client, (3) Discuss personal awareness of the issues presented related to diversity and how multicultural competencies were met.

For the Research Article Critique/Presentation assignment, students were asked to critique a set of articles using specific guidelines. They also discussed the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession.

Finding. AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met.

Analysis. In AC 2024 – 2025, the target was **met**.

Ninety five percent (n=23) of candidates achieved proficiency by scoring 80% or above on the Case Conceptualization Presentation and 91% the achieved proficiency by scoring 80% or above on the Research Article Critique/Presentation.

Based on the results from the 2024-2025 AC, the faculty implemented the following to drive the cycle of improvement in AC 2025-2026: Faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling research. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in articulating the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025 – 2026 the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the student's ability to achieve proficiency, meaning earning a grade of 80% or higher, on the Case Conceptualization Presentation and the Research Article Critique/Presentation.

Ninety-five percent of candidates achieved proficiency, defined as earning a grade of 80% or higher, on the Case Conceptualization Presentation and 91% on the Research Article Critique/Presentation in 2025-2026. In COUN 5570, two students were enrolled. Both students

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scored 90% or higher. Therefore over 80% of students scored 80% or higher. In COUN 5550, nine students were enrolled. seven students scored 90% or higher; one student scored 89% and one did not submit the assignment. Therefore over 80% of students scored 80% or higher. In COUN 5560, 23 students were enrolled. Twenty-two students scored 80% or higher on the Case Conceptualization Presentation; one student has an incomplete in the course and has not completed the assignment.

Decision.

In AC 2025 – 2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the previous AC year changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, over 80% of the candidates achieved proficiency and no areas of concern were noted. As previously mentioned, CACREP, the counseling accreditation body, is requiring all programs to move to the 2024 CACREP Standards by July 1. Therefore, the COUN program will be implementing these new standards into the coursework in AC 26-27 and will be planning for the redesign of assessments in AC 27-28 which better align with the new standards.

Given the circumstances, program faculty will continue incorporating the testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will improve candidates' ability to make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Seeking Improvement Based on Analysis of Results.

Program faculty made several decisions after examining the results of 2024-2025 data analysis which resulted in improved learning and program improvement for AC 2025-2026.

- SLO 1 - Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, candidates scored lowest in Research and Analysis of the Individual. However, these were traditionally lower scores and track national trends, so they were not concerning. However, the drop in the Counseling Skills score was of concern; in 2023-2024 the average score was 17.3/20 and in 2024-2025 the average score was 16.1/20. Faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, skills-related vocabulary, and identification of types of skills. The average score for 2025-2026 was 18.1/20. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting counseling skills to practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- SLO 2 – Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026 faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement. As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. These changes had a direct impact on the students' ability to achieve proficiency by earning a mean score of 80% or above on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form. Ninety one percent (n=11) of candidates achieved proficiency by earning a mean score of 80% or above on the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form in 2025-2026. Scores ranged from 4.5 to 5.0.
- SLO 3: Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Candidates scored lowest on section two of the rubric because they did not correctly identify the proposed actions a counselor should take; the mean score was 15/20 (75%) for that portion. Approximately 25% of students indicated they would break confidentiality and contact law enforcement, which was not warranted in the given case study. Program faculty incorporated additional resources to help students better understand the limits of confidentiality, including a 20-minute recorded lecture that examined the different circumstances and factors involved when determining whether to break confidentiality. The average mean score for section two improved from 15/20 (75%) to 17/20 (85%), thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

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- SLO 4 - Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Candidates scored lowest on the COUN 5610 Class Journal/Portfolio Rubric, sections two and three; these sections were not listed in the syllabus assignment description. Program faculty ensured the stated sections of the rubric matched the assignment description given in the syllabus and continued implementing the changes from the 23-24 AC along with making the necessary revisions. The average score for 2025-2026 improved from 50% to 91%. These changes improved candidates' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.
- SLO 5 - Based on the results from the 2024-2025 AC, the faculty implemented the following to drive the cycle of improvement in AC 2025-2026: Faculty incorporated a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling research. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in articulating the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2025-2026 and will take steps to continue to improve candidate learning in AC 2026-2027:

- SLO 1: Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. In 2026-2027 faculty will focus on Group Counseling. In 2024-2025 the average score was 16/20; in 2025-2026 the average score was 14.1. Group Counseling is currently offered as an 8-week Summer class. Moving forward faculty have made the decision to change it to a 16-week class during the regular Spring semester in order to give students more time to fully grasp and apply the material. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- SLO 2: Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the previous AC year changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. CACREP, the counseling accreditation body, is requiring all programs to move to the 2024 CACREP Standards by July 1. Therefore, the COUN program will be implementing these new standards into the coursework in AC 26-27 and will be planning for

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the redesign of assessments in AC 27-28 which better align with the new standards. Given the circumstances, program faculty will continue incorporating the NCE testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will continue to improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

- SLO 3: Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the same improvements/interventions in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. This change has only been in effect for one cycle and with one group of students (n=11). A larger data set is needed to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention. In 2025-2026, candidates improved their mean scores on section two of the rubric from 15/20 (75%) to 17/20 (85%). Program faculty will continue incorporating additional resources to help students better understand the limits of confidentiality, including the 20-minute recorded lecture that examines the different circumstances and factors involved when determining whether to break confidentiality. These changes will improve candidates' ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and especially the applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.
- SLO 4: Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. While candidates technically performed well on the Counseling Session Video and Components, feedback from students indicated the large class size for such a skills-intensive course was a challenge and there was confusion regarding the assignment. With that in mind, two sections of COUN 5000 will be offered in the Fall of 2026 in order for students to receive more individualized attention. Also, professors will introduce the assignment earlier in the semester to allow students more time to process expectations and prepare effectively. They will also incorporate a dedicated question-and-answer period during class time to address any confusion and will specifically explain how this particular assignment differs from earlier video submissions in the course. This will include clearly outlining each component of the assignment, such as the video demonstration, transcription, and overall expectations, and walking students through how they will be evaluated using the rubric. For COUN 5610, the faculty will implement the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. The instructor will revise the required format of the submission by having students organize their portfolios into clearly defined sections: all discussion board posts grouped together, all weekly papers grouped together, and the final summary placed at the end. This structure would improve clarity and make the grading process more efficient. These changes will improve candidates' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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- SLO 5: Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the faculty will continue implementing the previous AC year changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. Based on their latest performance, over 80% of the candidates achieved proficiency and no areas of concern were noted. As previously mentioned, CACREP, the counseling accreditation body, is requiring all programs to move to the 2024 CACREP Standards by July 1. Therefore, the COUN program will be implementing these new standards into the coursework in AC 26-27 and will be planning for the redesign of assessments in AC 27-28 which better align with the new standards. Given the circumstances, program faculty will continue incorporating the testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will improve candidates' ability to make responsible decisions and problem-solve, using data to inform actions, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.