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Using Data to Integrate School Counseling Field Experiences Into a Partner School Network

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The College of Education (COE) coordinates field experiences and clinical practice for teacher education through its Partner School Network (PSN) and the Office of College of Education Services and Field Experiences (SAFE). The Partner School Network is made up of school personnel within the CSU service area who have agreed to collaborate with the COE in designing, delivering, and evaluating field experiences and clinical practice. Exceptions are made when students are employed in a school system outside the PSN.

In recent semesters, the M.Ed. School Counseling program has been integrated into certain aspects connected with the PSN. Most notably, the placement process for school counseling field experiences within the PSN has become more efficient due, in part, to decisions grounded in data obtained by the SAFE Office and School Counseling Program faculty. For example, these data sources help in identifying which sites contain interested and qualified prospective supervisors and in providing feedback from advisory committee members to enhance program development related to clinical field experiences.

Field experiences for counseling practicum students and interns placed in the PSN have become established through collaboration among the program coordinator, the director of the SAFE Office, and appropriate parties within the partner schools, thus centralizing placement procedures in a way that is consistent with other COE programs of study. In addition, the process addresses unique needs associated with school counseling field experiences and integrates relevant data (e.g.,

number of counselors in a school) to facilitate quality placements.

Candidates in the M.Ed. School Counseling program complete field experiences designed in accordance with standards outlined by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2001). In general, students must successfully complete 700 hours in the field, with 600 hours of internship being performed in a school setting. Practicum students and interns are placed in the network as a first priority when possible. Given the large number of positions needed, additional placements are made through collaboration between the program coordinator and appropriate school district personnel as a second choice, preferably in schools that have housed practicum students and interns previously and have a history of being quality placements. Regardless, sites and site supervisors must meet CACREP guidelines.

The placement process begins each semester with an orientation for prospective counseling practicum students and interns led by the program coordinator. The coordinator reviews requirements and expectations pertaining to field experiences, including information about the PSN, and collects data from graduate students (e.g., desired setting for field experience) in order to make recommendations to the director of the SAFE Office about placements. The director of the SAFE Office then coordinates Network field placements with prospective site supervisors at each school (i.e., the school counselor) based on recommendations from the program coordinator and information from the Field Placement Database, which includes

information to ensure that counselors' credentials are in compliance with CACREP standards (CACREP, 2001). This database is maintained by the SAFE Office and used to ensure experiences in diverse settings by tracking each candidate's field placements. COE students must have experiences in schools that are diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, gender, race, and ethnicity and that have P-12 students with exceptionalities. Students then complete applications with their prospective site supervisors to document demographic information, counselor credentials, and administrative consent; and the program coordinator conducts follow-up contact with each on-site supervisor. Students' performances in the field are evaluated by on-site and university faculty supervisors. These evaluations are kept on file by the program coordinator.

School counselors in the PSN are invited to meet each semester with the SAFE Office Director and the program coordinator to receive information about the placement process, CACREP requirements, and site supervisor qualifications. Counselors also provide verbal and written feedback via a "School Counseling Program Advisory Survey" about field experiences and other aspects of the counselor-training program.

Counseling program integration into the PSN and collaboration with the SAFE Office have resulted in greater consistency of field experience placements for students in school counseling practica and internships. Data sources have been utilized to insure that students work with qualified supervisors in diverse settings and have field experiences that meet standards of accreditation. Furthermore, the placement process insures that program needs are met while also being consistent with practices across the College of Education.

Reference

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs. (2001). The 2001 standards. Retrieved January 4, 2007, from <http://www.cacrep.org/2001Standards.html>.

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