

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. **Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed:** Clinical Psychology M.A. Program (CIP: 42.2801)
3. **Date:** 01-14-2021
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5. **Overview**

Our program has developed the following Mission Statement, which is reviewed annually and revised accordingly:

The Master's of Arts in Clinical Psychology is designed for students with career interests in master's-level clinical practice or those who plan to obtain a Ph.D. or Psy.D. The foundation of the Clinical Psychology program is the scientist-practitioner model with training rooted in theoretical knowledge and ethical practice. The clinical training component provides students with instruction in empirically-based psychotherapies, assessment, and diagnosis, culminating in a practicum and a two-semester internship. The research focus of the program is designed to develop students' critical thinking and quantitative skills, and includes coursework in research design and analysis, and a required thesis.

Since the last IBHE review, our program was renewed in 2017 for First Choice designation from the EIU Graduate School, demonstrating that our Mission Statement and activities to uphold that statement are consistent with the Mission of the Graduate School.

Graduate programs achieving the distinction of "First Choice" have applied for and been subjected to rigorous review from EIU's Council on Graduate Studies — with oversight from The Graduate School — to ensure they meet the highest standards of scholarly excellence as evidenced through sustained achievement of criteria developed and adopted by the council in 2006 (EIU Graduate School Website).

Specifically, programs must meet the following five criteria by documenting sustained achievement in: (1) strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni; (2) fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics; (3) expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry; (4) research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty; and (5) developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.

To ensure that we are upholding our Mission Statement, we have developed the following learning objectives, each of which are addressed didactically in courses as well as through capstone experiences (i.e.,

practicum/internship and thesis): (1) students will develop the theoretical knowledge and skills related to the assessment and diagnosis of clinical disorders; (2) students will develop theoretical knowledge and skills related to clinical treatment and treatment planning; (3) students will develop a thorough understanding of statistics and research methodology; (4) students will demonstrate ethical reasoning and ethical behavior related to clinical practice and research as reflected in American Psychological Association Ethical Standards; (5) students will demonstrate oral, written, and critical thinking skills at the graduate level; and (6) students will develop computer skills and technological proficiency, including use of statistical and data management software, use of technology for research, and word processing software. In 2017, we added a seventh learning objective: Students will develop skills in acting as a professional in the field, including acting ethically, being a good colleague, and being a good citizen of the department and in the field. This goal was added to ensure that our students have the applied professional skills needed to enter the workplace or to go on for additional education in a doctoral program.

In terms of strengths, our emphasis on the scientist-practitioner model and upholding high academic rigor has allowed us to provide students with the needed backgrounds to excel in both applied settings (i.e., approximately 70% of our students successfully obtain M.A.-level licensure) as well as academic settings (i.e., 23 students have entered doctoral programs since the last review). To this end, our curriculum is designed to provide in the classroom both the science and applied elements of clinical psychology. For example, to increase integrated learning, many of our courses have applied components such as role plays (e.g., PSY 5070 involves students co-leading a mock therapy group). Likewise, the Internship and thesis requirements, which serve as our capstones, exemplify integrated learning and provide both aspects of the scientist-practitioner model. Our program also allows some flexibility in allowing students to tailor their experience according to their specific career goals. For example, students who intend on applying to doctoral programs are encouraged to take Independent Study during their first semester, which allows them to gain additional research experience, even prior to initiating the thesis process.

Our program also is competitive in attracting quality graduate students. Over the last 8 years, the average GRE score for our incoming students has been 1144 (converted to old GRE scores). We also have had success in attracting diverse graduate students. For example, over the last 8 cohorts admitted, 18 International students from a wide variety of countries (e.g., China, Eswatini, India, Japan, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom) have enrolled.

A large part of our success at attracting such strong students is attributable to our corresponding success in helping students obtain Graduate Assistantships. We currently have 4 departmental GA positions and 1 Fellowship, which we use for recruitment purposes. We augment these with other on-campus and external GA positions. We are particularly pleased with the strong relationships between the program and external agencies in the region, who consistently hire our students for external GAs.

Our program is one of three terminal Master's-level Clinical Psychology programs in Illinois, along with Western Illinois University and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. Each of these programs, including EIU, are a member of the Council of Applied Master's Programs in Psychology, which certifies that programs meet standards of training and education. Our program differs because of its emphasis on rural mental health. We have internship sites throughout central Illinois, most of which are small community mental health centers in rural areas. Many of our students stay in this region and continue working at these agencies – thus providing vital services to under-served areas of the state.

With regard to changes since the last IBHE report, our program has continued to refine our comprehensive assessment plan to ensure that we are meeting our program goals. During each assessment period, we have received the highest scores from EIU's Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning. We have consistently used these data to improve our program. For example, one concern has been students not

completing the thesis in a timely manner. We responded by having the thesis process start during Spring of the first year, which has improved our thesis completion times.

6. Major Findings and Recommendations

- a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/disciplinary context, e.g., (1) changes in the overall discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal needs; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other.

(6.a.1) Changes in the overall discipline

The Clinical Coordinator regularly monitors and reviews changes in the field. Specifically, he is on the Executive Board of the Council of Applied Master's Programs in Psychology (CAMPP), which focuses on professional issues for master's-level clinicians. In particular, CAMPP has been advocating for APA to become involved in the licensure process for M.A.-level clinicians as well as accreditation for M.A. programs. In 2019, APA's Commission on Accreditation formed a Master's Accreditation Workgroup, and in 2020, they announced that a proposal will be forthcoming. Having APA involved in this process would help facilitate alumni in obtaining licensure across states, which has been an ongoing difficulty for our students. Of course, such a move would mean that the program will need to be provided with the resources to seek and maintain APA Accreditation.

Another change in our field is the increasing demand for empirically-supported treatments (ESTs). Agencies now routinely require that clinicians be conversant in ESTs, and managed care often demands that clinicians use these treatments with their clients. These interventions always have been included in the program, but we have consistently increased the degree to which they are emphasized across our treatment and assessment courses as well as in our clinical supervision of Interns.

6.a.2. Student demand

Student demand for our program remains high. The M.A. Clinical Psychology program receives approximately 35 to 50 applications per year. The program has decided that a cohort of 10-12 students is ideal, given the high supervision requirements for students because of the thesis project and Internship process (we did temporarily decrease that number to 8 following the retirement of a long-time clinical faculty member). Accordingly, we have met our target in 7 of the last 8 admissions cycles. Although our program was affected by the recent Covid-19 global pandemic, we still met our admission target for the 2020-2021 cycle, including successfully recruiting 3 International students. In fact, we received notice from EIU's Provost for increasing our enrollment by 92% over the previous year. The only way we could increase these numbers and still maintain the high academic rigor of the program would be to hire a fourth clinical faculty member, allowing the program to return to our previous, full contingent.

6.a.3. Societal need

Students in our program serve an important societal need in providing clinical services during their Internship at a range of external agencies across Central Illinois, many of which are located in under-served areas. In addition, many of these students remain in the area after graduation. This need is illustrated by the Chair of APA's Master's Accreditation Workgroup, Ellen Koch, who reported that, "Projections indicate that relying only on doctoral-level providers does not fully address current requirements for mental health services. There are significant difficulties accessing mental health treatment, particularly for individuals in rural or urban areas including many underrepresented minorities" (APA, 2020). Each year, several of our clinical Interns train at mental health centers in rural areas. The Illinois Department of Public Health has stated that their primary goal is "to improve access to primary health care in rural and underserved areas of Illinois and to encourage community involvement in health issues" (IDPH website). According to the Health

Resources and Services Administration, 4.8 million Illinois residents live in communities with a shortage of mental health professionals, with 85% of them residing in rural areas. Another way we contribute to the community is by placing at least two Interns at EIU's Counseling Clinic. Starting in July, 2020, the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act (110 ILCS 58) dictates that public colleges must increase access to mental health services on college campuses.

After completing the program, our students are successful in finding jobs. Exit survey data demonstrate that 75% of second year students already have a job offer in hand before completing the program. Finally, the Occupational Outlook Handbook projects a 25% increase in jobs for mental health counselors between 2019 and 2029, which is much higher than most professions.

6.a.4. Institutional context for offering the degree

The Clinical Psychology M.A. Program attained First Choice designation from the EIU Graduate School in 2012. In response to our First Choice renewal application in 2017, EIU's Council on Graduate Studies noted:

The CGS Review Board considers that the MS in Clinical Psychology meets and in some cases exceeds the expectations of a First Choice Graduate Program. Many aspects of the program were evaluated with very high ratings, all of which indicates that this program is successfully achieving its mission, and exceling while doing so. The Board was especially impressed with a number of aspects of the program, including its ability to secure external partnerships, external assistantships, and the graduate coordinator's leadership.

The program is one of two graduate programs in the Department of Psychology. Psychology is a popular major at EIU (we currently have approximately 430 majors); in the last 8 years, we have admitted 13 EIU students into our program, averaging 1.6 each year. Since the last review, 46 students have obtained their M.A degrees from the program. Our students also are successful on campus. For example, during our last two-year assessment cycle, 10 current or former students were co-authors on 9 conference presentations; 3 students were recipients of EIU Student Impact Grants for Faculty Mentors (\$1500 each); and 6 students received Williams Travel Awards to fund their travel. Additionally, one of our students this year received the Thesis Award of Excellence from the Graduate School for the College of Arts and Sciences.

6.a.5. Other elements appropriate to the discipline in question

N/A

6.b Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement;

Currently, we have several methods by which we assess whether the learning goals of the program are being met. These include: (1) faculty ratings; (2) Comprehensive Examinations; (3) internship supervisor ratings; (4) thesis projects; and (5) exit survey ratings. We gather information from a wide variety of sources, and our assessment data continues to be comprehensive and complete. The results of our assessment methods demonstrate the success of our learning objectives and our students. Benchmarks are set for each area we assess, which are being met by 90% or more of our students each year. The program consistently has received the highest possible ratings on our assessment efforts by the Center for Academic Support and Assessment.

Despite the strength of our assessment, we are continually improving our methods. For example, in Spring 2013, we began requiring that students complete an Activity Report each semester regarding their progress in the program, particularly on the thesis project. This form will help us better monitor whether students are having difficulties in the program and need assistance or remediation. In Fall 2019, given the importance of

students possessing strong communication skills in professional settings, we initiated greater formal assessment of student oral communication skills in various settings. For example, during Fall of their second year, students are required to do a formal oral presentation on their thesis to the clinical graduate students and faculty. They are rated by the faculty and clinical students on their communication skills across various categories, and this feedback is provided to the speakers, with the intention of helping them improve their presentation skills, especially during their subsequent thesis defense presentations.

6.c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

The primary challenge of our program is hiring and maintaining qualified clinical faculty. Due to retirements and faculty accepting jobs at doctoral granting institutions, we have had significant turn-over and difficulty remaining at three clinical faculty. We have hired two new faculty (first and third year), and we are hopeful that we will be allowed an additional hire in the near future so that the program can again be at four clinical faculty.

To help increase student training in ESTs, several courses have been changed. For example, changes have been made in the content of several courses to allow greater coverage of child therapies, given that students have increasingly had child cases while on internship and expressed interest in careers working with children. A series of Clinical Brown Bags have been implemented; these meetings allow faculty to present on ESTs and their research, helping to increase the students' exposure to the scientific aspects of our profession.

6.d. Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.

A number of curricular changes have been planned in recent years, and now that the program has had two successful hires in recent years and again is composed of three faculty members, we will be implementing these changes. For example, we are developing a one-credit Thesis Seminar course for Fall of the first year, to help students initiate the process of thesis; this course will focus on issues pertaining to the thesis process, e.g., how to select a topic and how to find a Chair. We anticipate that this course will facilitate timely thesis completion.

Our high rates of external GA positions has been a tremendous strength of our program and helped us attract extremely strong graduate students; this has been accomplished by carefully cultivating relationships with local agencies over the years and having our students do excellent work for these agencies. The Graduate School has generously provided tuition waivers for students who obtain these GA positions, which has resulted in 90-100% of our students having a GA during any given year. However, due to recent budget concerns, these have been curtailed by the Graduate School; this year, we were allotted only 5 tuition waivers to accompany external GA positions. Due to increased enrollment this year and in anticipation of another robust admissions cycle for 2021, we face the challenge of not being able to allow all of our current first year students to seek a GA position during their second year. Students have routinely provided feedback to our program that the quality of the program and the availability of GA positions were prime factors in their decision to enroll in our program, so we are concerned about the possible impact of this change.

Finally, we are currently functioning with only three clinical psychology faculty, after periods of just two. Given the numerous other unfilled vacancies in the department, we are unsure when we will be able to fill that empty position and return to our minimum of four clinical faculty. Having at least four clinical psychology faculty would allow us to provide students with a variety of theoretical orientations across their coursework and clinical supervision as well as ensuring that we provide students with research opportunities that will allow them to be competitive if they opt to apply for doctoral programs. Competing institutions

have far more faculty. For example, SIUE has 9 clinical faculty across two tracks (Clinical and Child Clinical), and two EIU programs also have higher numbers – School Psychology (4) and Counseling & Higher Education (5). Our small faculty puts the program at a disadvantage both in attracting students as well as providing them with adequate resources in their training.

7. Responses to Institution-Assigned Issues: N/A

8. Outcome

Dean's Comment:

The MA in Clinical Psychology remains a successful program with a high completion rate and clear student outcomes: 46 students have completed the program since the last review. The program's curriculum has also been updated to reflect changes in the discipline and in response to societal need. There is strong interest in this program which normally receives up to 50 applications for 12 spots per cohort along with 4 internal graduate assistantships and one fellowship (though students in the program have been successful in obtaining external GAs, as well). Student success is evident in that 70% of students have obtained M.A. level licensure and, since the last review, 23 students have advanced to doctoral programs. In another indicator of quality, the program's "First Choice" status at EIU has been renewed. Programs are designated "First Choice" after meeting high standards of scholarly excellence.

We recommend a decision of **Program in Good Standing**.

8.1 Decision:

X Program in Good Standing

Program flagged for Priority Review

Program Enrollment Suspended

8.2 Explanation

The program is a high demand and high quality degree. Academic Affairs concurs with the dean and notes the program consistently meets and exceeds the IBHE benchmarks for productivity and enrollment. The program is to be commended for efforts to reduce time to degree and increasingly timely completion by focusing on the thesis process. With respect to the IBHE criteria, the report documents need, impact, and quality. Further, the program documents program excellence through the first choice designation and is to be applauded for program outreach based on external GA positions.

Jay Gatrell

Provost & VPAA