

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. **Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed:** Specialist in School Psychology (CIP: 42.2805)
3. **Date:** January 15, 2021
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5. Overview

The primary goal of the program is to train school psychologists (1) who are *scientist-practitioners*, grounded in the scientific method and research, (2) who are *ethical*, (3) who *respect individual differences and diversity*, (4) who *foster personal and professional characteristics*, and (5) who are *lifelong learners*. This goal is consistent with Eastern's mission that encourages free and rigorous inquiry and scholarship, commitment to diversity and inclusion, and reasoned and clear communication skills to become responsible citizens and leaders. The program goal also reflects the mission of graduate education: strengthening diversity, advanced scholarship, and the rigor of the curriculum.

The Specialist in School Psychology Program provides candidates advanced training for working in public schools, private schools, hospitals, medical schools, department of education at the state and national level, and the private sector. The program is based on the scientist-practitioner model, informed by the scientific literature and data. This is a three-year program, two years of coursework and one-year full time internship; and thesis is required. There are six public and three for-profit institutions that train school psychologists in the state of Illinois. Eastern students are highly competitive statewide and nationally; they continue to achieve 100% passing rate on the state (Illinois State Board of Education) and national (National Association of School Psychologists) certification examinations. They are also found in leadership positions in school districts and professional associations.

The primary learning objective is to meet the NASP and ISBE training standards for certifying school psychologists. These standards include 1) Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability, 2) Consultation and Collaboration, 3) Interventions and Instructional Support to Develop Academic Skills, 4) Interventions and Mental Health Services to Develop Social and Life Skills, 5) School-wide Practices to Promote Learning, 6) Preventive and Responsive Services, 7) Family-School Collaboration Services, 8) Diversity in Development and Learning, 9) Research and Program Evaluation, and 10) Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice. The majority of our graduates practice in the public school system, a few teach in community colleges, and about 3% eventually pursue doctoral degrees.

Since the last review, program faculty published 75 research articles (20 with student authors), conducted 171 presentations (20 with student authors), and received 7 Achievement and Contribution

Awards (5 in research, 1 in teaching, and 1 in balanced). Faculty have received a total of 10 awards related to teaching and/or research and 4 Professional Advancement Increases (PAI). Faculty served/serve on peer reviewed journals' editorial boards and two extramural research grants were secured.

6. Major Findings and Recommendations

6.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. Change in the Overall Discipline

As reported in the previous report, changes in the discipline include "Prevention is intervention" (the medical model), increased emphasis on mental health, and Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). It is understood that (1) prevention is more effective and less costly than intervention, (2) there is a relationship between mental health and learning outcomes, and (3) intervention (all services) must be subjected to on-going evaluation to monitor response to intervention, i.e., to determine if the intervention is effective. This preventative and data-based approach is reflected in the current curriculum.

6.a.2. Student Demand

Demand for the program continues to be high, partially because of good job prospects for school psychologists. Each year, the program receives about 30-40 applications for 8 to 10 seats, and those who are accepted are highly qualified. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment growth for school psychologists will reach 26.4% by 2029.

6.a.3. Societal Needs

The demand for school psychologists is high because the services of school psychologists are mandated by state and Federal laws in all public schools. The demand is fueled by the severity of psychological and learning challenges school children experience. Intervention and prevention of such challenges require a scientific and evidence-based approach, which school psychologists are trained to provide. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), "Employment of school psychologists will continue to grow because of the increased awareness of the connection between mental health and learning and because of the need for mental health services in schools. School psychologists will be needed to work with students, particularly those with special needs, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. Schools rely on school psychologists to assess and counsel students." In addition, there continues to be a shortage of school psychologists nationwide.

6.a.4. Productivity

Six public institutions in Illinois offer the Specialist in School Psychology degree. Our program began offering an MS degree en route to the Specialist degree in 2015. Candidates earn their MS degree at the end of their second year in the program (before internship) and their Specialist degree at the end of their third year (after internship). Since the last review, our program has graduated 53 students with Specialist degrees (7 students a year on average) and 48 students with MS degrees (7 students a year on average). Most students (98%) obtain an MS and SSP degree from our program. Since 2015, one student has obtained an MS degree and then obtained a PhD at a School Psychology Doctoral program (rather than completing the Specialist degree at EIU). Another student completed her MS and SSP degrees at EIU and then obtained her PhD at a School Psychology Doctoral program.

Our students also produce scholarly research. Since the last review, 20 students have co-authored peer-reviewed articles, 20 students have co-authored presentations at state, regional, or national conferences. In 2018 and 2020, two students were awarded Minority Student Scholarships from the Illinois School Psychologist Association (ISPA).

6.a.5. Institutional Context for Offering the Degree

The training of school psychologists is highly regulated by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Therefore, our program is designed to meet the training standards identified by these accreditation bodies. The program is also approved by the Counsel for the Accreditation of Educator Preparedness (CAEP), and we collaborate with the Certifying Officer in the College of Education for processing certification forms. The program has membership in the Directors of University School Psychology Programs (DUSPP) that addresses school psychology related issues in the state of Illinois.

6.a.6. Other

Effective August 2019, the Illinois State Board of Education eliminated the requirement that school psychology candidates pass a test of basic skills to receive a Professional Educator License (Public Act 101-0220). As a result, this requirement was also eliminated from the program.

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

Learning Outcomes: The student will

- Develop theoretical and background knowledge related to successful practice as a school psychologist (i.e., 10 NASP Training Standards presented under item 5 above)
- Apply knowledge and demonstrate problem solving, communication, and critical thinking in practicum
- Develop an understanding of statistics and research methodology and demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles and standards in classes and in applied settings
- Demonstrate technological proficiency for research and practice.

Throughout the program, benchmarks are in place for assessing candidates' progress. First, to be admitted to the program, candidates must meet the criteria for prerequisite courses, GPA, GRE, Personal Statement, Interview, and three letters of reference. Once in the program, program faculty evaluate candidates each semester on their academic progress and dispositions and provide them with feedback. Candidates participate in three practica (over three semesters) and are evaluated by their field supervisors and university supervisors. During the second practica, candidates participate in two experiences (school-based and clinic-based). The clinic-based experience includes participation in the Academic Intervention (AI) Clinic via the Psychological Services Center. At the end of the semester, families whose children received services also provide feedback regarding candidates' knowledge and professionalism. Before internship, candidates complete a portfolio to demonstrate *knowledge competency*, present the portfolio to the faculty, and complete oral comprehensive examinations. Candidates also successfully propose their thesis. On internship, candidates are evaluated by field supervisors; they complete a second portfolio for demonstrating *performance competency* and defend their thesis. Candidates are required to pass the Illinois Certification Examination (content area) and the Nationally Certified School Psychologist Examinations (PRAXIS II). Finally, during graduates

first year of employment, the program solicits feedback from graduate supervisors/mentors who speak to graduates' competency related to the 10 NASP practice/training domains.

Since the last review, 53 candidates successfully completed the program and passed the Illinois State and Nationally Certified School Psychologists examinations. The program has 100% internship and job placement. Our students are highly regarded in the state of Illinois and are also employed across the nation. These results indicate program candidates meet the program's learning objectives. The program continues to receive positive reviews from the Center for Academic Support and Assessment. The School Psychology Program was one of the first programs to achieve the First Choice Status among EIU graduate programs. We continue to maintain our First Choice Status (our last review was completed in 2019).

6.b.1 Changes due to Assessment

In the portfolio assessment, candidates a) provide evidence (i.e., supporting artifacts) that they met each of the 10 NASP training standards and b) provide a self-assessment rating (i.e., exceeds standard, meets standard, below standard). Faculty also provide a rating to indicate whether the student has exceeded, met, or falls below expectations for each of the 10 training standards.

To better assess candidates' impact with the students/clients they serve, candidates began calculating the effect size for at least five of their applied experiences (e.g., AI clinic, individual counseling case, group counseling case, behavior consultation case, academic consultation case). Effect sizes are documented in the second year and internship-year portfolios. In the fall 2019, the program began soliciting employer feedback from graduates in their first year of employment as a school psychologist. Finally, a satisfaction survey was added in the fall 2018 when students began participating in AI clinic. Feedback is solicited from families whose children receive intervention services.

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

Faculty turnover continues to be a challenge for our program. Institutions with doctoral programs benefit from our loss. Since the last review in 2013, two tenure-track faculty were hired. One tenure-track faculty left after spring semester 2016 and was replaced by a non-tenure track faculty from 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. We successful hired a tenure-track faculty who began this fall 2020.

Regarding the curriculum, school psychology is always in a flux trying to serve the changing needs of society. The immediate challenge for the public-school system is how to provide appropriate and meaningful education to culturally diverse and English learning students. Thus, almost all our courses address these topics in context (the infusion model). In addition (as mentioned above) beginning fall 2018 students participate in the Academic Intervention (AI) Clinic via the Psychological Services Center. This is a 10-week clinic where candidates screen school-age children for reading concerns, assess reading concerns and determine an appropriate, evidence-based intervention, implement intervention, and evaluate their impact. This clinic operates with the support of a single graduate assistant and very minimal (if any) funding.

To encourage timely thesis completion, we continue to require candidates to successfully propose their thesis prior to internship. Ninety percent of candidates from the last three cohorts have completed their thesis on time.

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

No curricular changes are indicated due to this review. The program is a member of the Directors of University School Psychology Programs (DUSPP) in Illinois that monitors developments in the field; and we will make the necessary changes when new developments emerge.

Given the budget cut from the state since the last review, resources for instructional needs have been extremely limited. Assessment tools are restricted and must be purchased, e.g., intelligence tests. However, we have been using technology to access free (or minimal fee) training resources and we will continue to do so.

Regarding instructional resources, technology for student training continues to be a challenge. In spring 2019, the coordinator submitted an Academic Technology Support Grant to update outdated technology used to train graduates in both the school psychology and clinical psychology programs. Specifically, candidates use video rooms to record their proficiency administering standardized assessments and conducting counseling/therapy. Current video technology is old and requires students to burn their recordings onto a DVD/CD; however, most computers (personal or university owned) do not have the capability to play DVD/CDs. This grant was unfunded.

In terms of student support for attending at least the state conference, the students have an association for volunteering and fundraising to offset the cost of attending a conference. In a small town where many other student organizations engage in fundraising, the return has been limited. Candidates do take advantage of graduate and department level awards/grants, which help. Over the last three years, 8 students have received a Williams Travel Award and 5 have received the William Bailey Research Award.

7. Responses to Institution-Assigned Issues - NA

8. Outcome

Dean's Comment:

The Specialist in School Psychology program remains a high demand and successful program with notable outcomes and a high completion rate. There is strong interest in this program which typically receives up to 40 applications for 10 slots per cohort. Since the last review, the program's "First Choice" status at EIU has been renewed: programs are designated "First Choice" after meeting high standards of scholarly excellence. The program has also modified curriculum in response to changes in the discipline and profession. Some of the challenges facing the program are the result of faculty turnover and declining resources and it is hoped many of the existing needs can be addressed prior to the next review cycle.

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

8.1 Decision:

Program in Good Standing

Program flagged for Priority Review

_____ Program Enrollment Suspended

As a “First Choice” program, the school psychology program continues to meet and exceed IBHE productivity and enrollment benchmarks. Further, as the data indicate, the program is competitive. Consequently, the program is relevant to the state, responds to k-12 needs, and aligns with ISBE standards. With respect to assessment, the program clearly details how assessment data are used and the report documents how client/parent feedback improves the student experience and contributes to a broader portfolio initiative/assessment process. In closing, the program is in “good standing” and please know the outstanding work of the faculty and students is recognized and much appreciated.

Jay D. Gatrell
Provost & VPAA