



Part I: Follow-up Assessment Report Template

Date of Follow-up Report Submission:

Name of Department / Unit: University Counseling Services

Name of Contact Person: Anmol Satiani, Ph.D.

Name of Person(s) Completing Follow-up Report:

I. Follow-Up on Last Year's Assessment Report Recommendations

We did not follow through with recommendations of adding an additional group during winter or spring quarter. We did successfully max out on the two groups we had running. We had 10 members in each group. There were a couple of reasons we didn't launch another group: Although we had some referrals (all were also in individual therapy at UCS, so they were getting other services), finding a different day that worked for those students was challenging. Also, we were down two staff members which made it challenging to find additional staff to take on launching an entirely new group. The other limitation was we could not see out of state students so that limited our ability to have enough members to launch a group in time. I will say for the upcoming academic year, if services return to in-person, it is worth considering offering an online group in addition to in person groups. The online format seemed to increase consistency in attendance and group members seemed to still grasp the essence of group and do some really meaningful interpersonal and intrapersonal work.



Part II: Annual Assessment Report Template: Needs or Benchmarking
Academic Year: 2020-2021

Date of Report Submission: 6/28/2021

Name of Department: University Counseling Services

Name of Contact Person: Anmol Satiani, Ph.D.

Name of Person(s) completing report or contributing to the project: Anmol Satiani, Ph.D.

Type of Assessment: Needs

I. Abstract

This needs assessment project examined Externs' perceptions of their needs from University Counseling Services' advanced therapy externship program, as well as how these needs were being satisfied in the program. This project was particularly important given the multiple pandemics of the last year and a fully remote training program. All 11 Externs participated in a Qualtrics survey and focus group conducted at the end of fall quarter 2020 by the Training Director. Data analysis demonstrated that, despite a fully remote training experience this year, the UCS training program was meeting Externs' needs and was also often addressing these needs in ways that were unplanned by the staff. Should UCS rebuild a training program in the future, these findings could be helpful in developing the program.

II. Assessment Question

What do UCS Externs need to be successful in their experience and to what extent are these needs currently being met through the Externship experience?

III. Introduction & Context
Project Overview

The context of the project is that we are experiencing multiple pandemics and have needed to adapt to these and, for example, have a fully remote training program during the 2020-2021 academic year. We had the opportunity to also use information to examine past procedures and activities, given how much we have relied on in-person activities. This is important not just for our department but to better help our Externs work with DePaul students either in a psychotherapy role, outreach/telereach with students, or in consulting with campus partners who are assisting students. The work of the Externs is ultimately to serve DePaul students and support their well-being, retention, and persistence and this project was focused on their training needs to perform this important work.

Over the last three decades, the field of professional psychology has shifted toward identifying core competencies in order to define and measure trainee learning outcomes (Fouad, et al., 2009). Scholars and practitioners have proposed competency benchmarks to help to both develop and measure students' development through the stages of training to become psychologists (Fouad, et al., 2009). These benchmarks are now applied widely in the field, including at most of the local doctoral training programs in the area. Site supervisors are now evaluating students according to these benchmarks as the academic program evaluation forms include them. Though studying all of the competencies was beyond the scope of this project, the goal was to understand to what extent DePaul UCS' training program is helping Externs with some of the skills discussed in the literature related to these benchmarks. These skills were adapted to the specific UCS training environment and included the following: acquire clinical knowledge, gain clinical skills, cultivate cross-cultural awareness and a commitment to diversity and social justice, interface with DePaul colleagues for outreach/telereach purposes, develop information-based programs and workshops (outreach), learn to practice in a virtual environment, cultivate an environment to advance intrapersonal learning. This project was also to better understand in what ways the training program addresses these skills (i.e. in which training activities).

IV. Data Collection & Methodology

Population and Sample

The entire population of 11 Externs within UCS were invited to participate in this assessment project. They are all advanced doctoral students in local academic training programs. They are earning either doctorates in psychology (Psy.D.) or doctorates in Philosophy (Ph.D.). Our Externs this year were from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Adler University, Loyola University, Wheaton College, and Midwestern University. They come to UCS to receiving training in college mental health and are with us for one academic year. One of our students this year completed her second, consecutive year of training with us. They receive a range of training experiences, including individual supervision, group supervision, outreach supervision, supervision of group counseling, didactics including seminars, and a variety of other experiences along with the experience of conducting individual and group counseling, intake sessions, urgent evaluations or time-sensitive appointments, etc. The Externs were a diverse group with respect to race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. We had one international student in this group. This group was important to answer the research question above as they are the recipients of our training in UCS.

Data Collection

Two methods of data collection were utilized concurrently. An existing Qualtrics survey that assesses the satisfaction of various training experiences is distributed at the end of every quarter to our Externs was modified to collect additional information about student needs related to their training experience. I received consultation from Dr. Tharp, the Assessment and Effectiveness Specialist, in developing these questions and adding them in an appropriate format to the qualtrics survey (Appendix A). All 11 Externs completed this survey. The due date was

12/11/2020 and they had a period of 2 weeks to complete it. In this section of the survey, the Externs were first asked “How important is it for your UCS externship to help you develop in the following ways?” Multiple categories of skills were listed. Following this, they were asked to rate how well each activity helped them to develop a particular skill. For example, how well Orientation, Wednesday Morning Training Seminars and presentations, and other activities helped them to develop the skill of practicing in a virtual environment. This was on a 5-point likert scale with 5 being extremely well and 1 being not well at all.

In addition, I conducted a virtual focus group for 40 minutes during a previously scheduled Winter Retreat on 12/9/2020. This is an annual event and was planned for this group; the goal is relationship building and some reflective activities so the focus group prompt fit in with the overall purpose of the day. I incorporated the focus group into the structure of the day. Dr. Tharp also helped to modify these prompts for the focus group (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Data were organized and analyzed with the help of Dr. Tharp. Externs’ scores on a 5- point likert scale were averaged from the qualtrics survey and then analyzed. Based on the numerical data, a chart was created to show the results and notes from the focus group were also reviewed (Appendix C).

The ratings table included the questions and responses from the qualtrics survey. The questions from the survey were on the left side in rows and the specific training experiences were listed in columns on the right side. Prior to looking at the Externs’ responses, I considered what I expected the Extern ratings to be and added these to the table. After this, the Externs’ actual averaged ratings on the 5 point likert scale were added to the table.

Data from the focus group were analyzed using thematic analysis. This level of analysis was useful to identify additional areas of need or common themes across the Externs’ training experience.

Participant Consent

Externs consent to providing anonymous, confidential feedback through surveys on a regular basis during their training year. They are aware that they need to provide confirmation that they completed the survey but that the confirmation is not associated with any survey results. They also meet with the Training Director regularly to provide feedback about their training experience, both in a group and individually. In the focus group, this was obviously a group format without anonymity. This sharing of feedback to the program is an expectation in psychology practicum training programs nationally. It is made clear in UCS that this expectation is for the purpose of improving the program during the academic year and for future years; it is explained that we have often modified the program based on previous Extern feedback and there are no negative consequences for their candid feedback.

V. Data & Findings

Response Rate and Demographics

All 11 Externs invited to participate in this project provided their data resulting in a 100% response rate. Given that we had only 11 Externs and we don't collect demographic data on this survey, conclusions related to demographics and responses could not be drawn in this project.

VI. Discussion & Interpretation of Findings

The data demonstrated that the UCS training program met the needs of the Externs across the relevant domains. Externs indicated that they do believe it is important for them to gain the following during the UCS Externship: clinical Knowledge, clinical skills, awareness/commitment to diversity and social justice, ability to interact with other colleagues at DePaul University, developing skills to present information (outreach), and practicing in a virtual environment, and being able to be vulnerable and be your full self in order to effectively learn and grow/intrapersonal skills. Ratings ranged from 4.0 to 5.0 on a 5 point Likert scale indicating all of these skills are very important to them. These ideas were also discussed in the focus group, reinforcing that these skills are valuable to the Externs.

In all cases across the various training experiences (i.e., Orientation, Wednesday Training, Group Consult, Individual Supervision, Supervision of Group Counseling, Supervision of Outreach/Consultation), the actual score was higher than what was expected. In other words, the UCS training program was helping Externs to develop across all activities more than what was expected. This seems important to underscore as our staff or I may have “undersold” what we offered through the training program. This may have been more the case this year as we shifted our training program to a virtual format given the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also noteworthy that, as the staff adapted to virtual work with DePaul students abruptly, the Externs indicated that they were able to develop competencies to work in a virtual environment across training activities (scores ranged from 3.60 to 4.70).

In addition, the Externs benefited in ways not planned by our staff. Orientation seemed to help Externs to acquire clinical skills and clinical knowledge which was not expected to receive ratings of 3.80 and 3.56. The Individual supervision scores are important given critical given the importance placed in the field on clinical supervision. All scores related to this activity are 3.70 and higher indicating that Externs were getting many needs met in individual supervision; this was also discussed within the focus group. In this activity, clinical skills, intrapersonal learning, and clinical knowledge had the highest scores (4.73, 4.60, and 4.55 respectively) and they also indicate learning about outreach more than expected within this context. Relatedly, it was not expected that Externs would gain clinical knowledge or skills in the supervision of outreach and consultation (expected rating was 0), yet Externs' average score was 4.0/5.0. The cultivation of a commitment to diversity and social justice is occurring across all activities.

Every activity seemed to help with intrapersonal learning, the lowest rated was staff meetings, which is expected given that they tend to be more business oriented and focused on resources within the university. Orientation and supervision of outreach also seemed to promote this learning, average scores were above 4.0/5.0.

The focus group data were also helpful. One thought about the Externs' responses during the focus group is that not all the activities don't account for relationship building and being "seen" and respected as a human being, voicing concerns, etc. some of which they discussed in focus group. One example of a training was given that didn't address needs in part because of the limited rapport between Externs and staff early on in the year; one Extern described not being able to fully benefit due to the lack of rapport with others who were in the training. This was especially challenging during our virtual meetings during this pandemic. Some technology challenges were also raised in the focus group which was directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and needing to shift our services and training program online.

These data are important within the Division as they demonstrate that UCS offered a positive training experience for Externs with skill development in a variety of domains. Though this was not studied in this project, one would hope that the development of these skills positively impacts DePaul students, faculty, and staff as Externs engage with all three categories of individuals during their time at UCS.

VII. Recommendations and Plans for Action

Recommendations

Unfortunately, the UCS training program has been closed for the time being. If we had the opportunity, we could maintain many of the same activities and approaches that we have been using in training as it obviously has been working well. Externs are reporting that they are getting their needs met. This coupled with the satisfaction surveys that we typically conduct tell us a great deal.

One strategy may have been to more regularly assess whether or not these needs are being met and through which activities. This could have continued to help us fine tune our training. We might have also put this section at the start of the survey to reduce any potential for fatigue while completing this section of the survey. We might have also expanded the likert scale to increase the range of possible scores.

Based on this information, the UCS training team could have shifted our mindset about outreach and consider it as more of a clinical activity and also consider how Externs are benefiting clinically from these discussions. Also, we could have shifted our thinking and highlighting that we have been training them to use their clinical skills in these activities and that we cannot and should not separate these skills from the practice of outreach. Outreach may be offering opportunities to utilize these clinical skills, such as active listening, reflecting statements, attending to diversity, etc.

I would have wanted to consider if there are ways to incorporate the fostering of commitment to diversity and social justice into Orientation and supervision of group counseling, particularly as this is the highest rated need by the Externs (5.0).

Action Plan

Given that the training program has been closed, I am unable to specify any action steps at this time.

Sharing the results

Our department is undergoing significant staff attrition and some staff have already left DePaul UCS. I could forward this report to the remaining staff. We will not be meeting again as a full staff so it would be via email. If there are plans to re-build a training program within UCS in the future, these findings could be utilized.

References

Fouad, N. A., Grus, C. L., Hatcher, R. L., Kaslow, N. J., Hutchings, P. S., Madson, M. B., Collins, F. L., Jr., & Crossman, R. E. (2009). Competency benchmarks: A model for understanding and measuring competence in professional psychology across training levels. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 3(4, Suppl), S5–S26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015832>