

Keene State College  
Graduate Studies  
School Counselor Program

The School Counselor Program at Keene State College is a 48 credit Master's degree program with a 39 credit Post Master's option. The program meets *New Hampshire Certification Competencies for Guidance Counselor: Grades K-12* and is approved by the New Hampshire Department of Education. The School Counselor Program follows learning standards and learning outcomes set forth by the national standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) and is aligned with the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (American School Counselor Association, 2003). The KSC Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education Programs is an integral part of the program design.

The Keene State College School Counselor Program is designed to encourage the development of school counselors who are actively involved in school transformation, and who serve as "catalysts for educational change ... [playing] a leadership role in educational reform" (ASCA national standards, Campbell and Dahir, 1997, p. 3). The program prepares future school counselors to work as advocates and to create developmental school counseling programs that are comprehensive in nature and focused on equity and success for all students. The program promotes an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor in the 21st century and the enhancement and development of relevant school counseling skills and strategies.

Developmental, ecological/systemic, and multicultural perspectives provide the theoretical frameworks. The program's developmental perspective focuses on the needs, tasks, and challenges of children and adolescents as they grow and of the school counselor throughout her or his career. Therefore, we emphasize the evolution of self-awareness and the skills required to be a lifelong reflective practitioner. The program is designed to create the conditions for self-reflection and awareness within the context of the role of school counselor in order to foster this awareness and these skills.

An ecological/systemic perspective prepares counselors to work effectively with the systems that form the context of students' lives. These systems include the peer group, school, family, and community. An ecological perspective considers the impact of community, national, and global events on students and the spectrum of effective school counselors' responses to these events.

A multicultural perspective is woven throughout the program; we are committed to preparing counselors who can work sensitively and effectively with diverse populations, including the range of cultural, ethnic, gender, class, and racial diversity that exists in schools and in society. This emphasis includes attention to the range of learning differences and abilities of the student population.

The ASCA national standards are "the essential elements of a quality and effective school counseling program. The standards address program content and the knowledge, attitudes, and skill competencies that all students ... develop as a result of participating in a school counseling program....The content of school counseling programs focuses on three widely accepted and interrelated areas: academic development, career development, and personal/social development" (Campbell and Dahir, 1997, pp. 3-5). The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (American School Counselor Association, 2003) focuses on "a comprehensive approach to four elements: program foundation; delivery; management; and accountability" (ASCA p. 10). According to the ASCA national model, the foundation is based on the beliefs and philosophy of the individual school, its mission statement, and the ASCA national standards. The delivery system includes the school guidance curriculum, planning for individual students, responsive services, and system support. The management system includes organizing advisory councils, gathering and using data to make decisions and plan programs and interventions, and the use of action plans and other organizational tools to document and assess the program and how it is making a difference for all students. "School counselors must be proficient in retrieving school data, analyzing it to improve student success and using it to ensure educational equity for all students" (ASCA p. 10). A commitment to advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change provides the overall framing of this approach.

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) focuses on the development and enhancement of high-quality standards for graduate programs in counseling. The CACREP standards are the national standard for designing and assessing graduate programs in counseling, therefore, these are the standards we use in conjunction with the New Hampshire state standards to design and assess the Keene State College program.

In order to work effectively with students, faculty, staff, families, and community stakeholders, school counselors need to have effective skills in communication, individual counseling, small-group guidance and counseling, and classroom guidance. Leadership in facilitating communication and team-building among faculty and staff members and with families and students are critical components of the school counselor's role. Effective leadership requires interpersonal and consultation skills and the ability to mediate and resolve conflicts. Skills in behavior management, crisis intervention, and referral and provision of services are crucial, as is an understanding of how to work with learning differences and emotional and health-related problems.

School counselors need to be well grounded in current ethical and legal standards. Ethical practice must be infused in and guide all of their work. Awareness of the guidelines of professional organizations is of the utmost importance. Legal and ethical considerations include understanding the parameters surrounding confidentiality and knowing one's own biases and limits, when it is necessary to consult with colleagues, and when to refer students to another individual or agency. An ethical school counselor actively seeks to continuously learn more about this ever-growing field and is careful to seek appropriate peer review and clinical supervision throughout his or her career.

The School Counselor Program is field-based; each course requires students to apply course content to a school or counseling context. The program is also sequential in design, with each course cluster providing a base for subsequent courses. Two semester-long School Counseling Internships (elementary and secondary) include a weekly seminar and require students to demonstrate mastery level counseling in a school setting. Program flexibility and individualization occur within the courses as students design and try out interventions based on interpretations of theory and research into identified best practices.

The School Counselor Program is currently in its third year of a newly redesigned program. Program changes were based on extensive feedback from an advisory group of school counselors and our liaison at the State Department of Education, new NH state standards, CACREP standards and extensive student, mentor and instructor feedback. Program changes included increasing the number of credits from 39 to 48, the introduction of three new required courses and an infusion of new content areas into the curriculum. We are continuing to compile data, such as surveys of employers who have hired graduates of the new program and exit interviews with graduates of the new program who have worked in the field for over one year to assess the effectiveness of the program changes and to prepare for the next round of program improvement and change.

**1. How have you used your data to make changes in the following areas of your program?**

a. advisement practices:

Advising is integrated throughout the school counselor program. Program planning sheets for both the two year (full time) and three year program options are made available to all prospective and admitted students. Advisors serve as mentors to students and given the small size (current total number in the program is 43) and intensive nature of the program, advising is a regular and consistent process. Feedback from program participants and the Graduate Studies Office has led to strengthening the advising component of the initial Program Orientation for the incoming cohort group as well as a new version of the Orientation Handbook (August, 2009), which included significant student input.

b. assessment practices or tools:

Despite the fact that the area of School Counseling does not have a Specialty Program Assessment (SPA), we are part of a unit that is comprised primarily of teacher preparation programs with SPA assessments. Therefore, we use the same program assessment approach that all other certification programs utilize through their SPA reports. We now have eight key assessment areas with rubrics designed for each. Data from the eight key assessments for the School Counselor Program are now being collected on the TK20 system which provides a comprehensive way to analyze the data from the key assessments in order to continue to improve our program.

Although we have always consistently utilized assessments in the program, we have refined our assessment process over the past three years. For example, our key assessment rubrics now explicitly link components of assignments to CACREP standards. One example of how we used data to improve our rubrics is illustrated in the transformation of the two key assessments that are used in the internship experience. Based on an assessment of the old rubrics, and the results of surveying our partners in the field, we determined the need to develop new rubrics that better capture data about specific school counselor competencies and skills expected of our interns in the field. This resulted in a newly designed evaluation rubric now being used to assess our interns during their field experience. This new rubric explicitly links expectations for interns to the newly developed ASCA competencies for professional school counselors and crosswalks these competencies to CACREP standards for School Counselor preparation programs. In addition, the Internship Portfolio rubric has also been redesigned. This rubric also explicitly links expectations for interns to the newly developed ASCA competencies for professional school counselors and crosswalks these competencies with both CACREP and the state of New Hampshire standards. All key assessment rubrics, now contain clear articulation of what it means to meet, exceed and not meet standards. These changes are ones that our partners in the field requested specifically for the evaluation of students during their Internship. We are currently field testing these new rubrics as part of our key assessments in TK20, and eliciting feedback from mentors in the field as well as our interns in order to continue to improve these new rubrics.

Another major change in our key assessments was to develop a new set of dispositions with a new rubric specifically designed for school counselors, and a new accountability model for using this rubric to assess dispositions. See the section on disposition data for further details. In addition, we created a new survey for employers of our alumni that include questions about knowledge, skills and dispositions of our graduates.

We are currently in the implementation phase of this first full set of key assessments on TK 20 and look forward to the many new and improved ways that we will be able to use the data that is collected on TK20.

#### c. curricular design

A detailed program review aligning the curriculum with the CACREP standards in the School Counselor Program was conducted in 2008 by instructors in the program. This resulted in refinements in course content to ensure that all standards are met and in the appropriate courses. A matrix was created to identify in which courses each standard is covered. This matrix is available for review in the School Counselor Program Folder in TK20.

Another example of how we use data to improve curriculum in the School Counselor Program is the curriculum change in the Research and Capstone Experience courses. Although the School Counselor program, through its existing program structure, has participated in research and capstone experiences, data from a review of the rubrics and student interviews demonstrated the need to add three credits in order to integrate the

new expectations for the research and capstone experience into the program. With this curricular change, all options in Graduate Studies will now follow a systematic program for assessment of data. Once these anticipated changes take effect the School Counselor program will be able to participate in the common program assessment across all M.Ed programs.

Other data used to improve curriculum design include the following qualitative sources:

- 1) Exit Interviews with all students upon program completion
- 2) Regularly scheduled meetings with instructors in the School Counselor Program which includes both KSC faculty and education professionals, two of whom are also mentors for our student interns
- 3) Meetings of advisory group of school counselors/mentors
- 4) Employer survey-developed in order to gather feedback on the first graduates of the new program after they have completed their first year in the field. The survey has been sent to employers with the permission of graduates.
- 5) Students from the first cohort to graduate from this program have been interviewed to gather more feedback from alumni of our new program after one year in the field

d. Other:

The Coordinator of the School Counselor Program serves on the Governing Board of the New Hampshire School Counselor Association and is Vice President for Post Secondary Education. This close connection with the state professional organization is a critically important way in which the program continues to grow and respond to key developments in the field.

The Coordinator of the School Counselor Program is also involved in a research and teaching collaborative with school counselors in the region which is exploring the benefits of using mindfulness in education. This group has developed and piloted a curriculum and has conducted research on the impact of teaching mindfulness to students in public schools. The fruits of this work have been integrated into the School Counselor Program in several ways. For example, graduate students have participated in the research project and curriculum development and the research findings and methodology have been infused into course content in the School Counselor Program.

## **2. How do evaluation instruments and feedback from pre-service candidates and partners (formative/summative) directly inform your program design and delivery?**

The following methods are used to collect data from current students, alumni and partners in the field:

- 1) Current student feedback elicited at meetings with students and from student evaluations of instructors.

- 2) Exit Interviews with all students upon program completion
- 3) Regularly scheduled meetings with instructors in the School Counselor Program. This group includes KSC faculty, the Chief Officer for Diversity and Multiculturalism and education professionals in the field, two of whom are also mentors for our student interns.
- 4) Meetings of advisory group of school counselors/mentors
- 5) Employer survey (new instrument)

One example of how we have used feedback from the above sources involves improvements to the Internship experience. Specific changes currently being implemented include increasing the contact between Keene State College and the cooperating professionals we work with through increasing the number and changing the format of site visits, and re-instituting a former tradition of holding an on-campus event for site mentors each semester. Examples of new content in the internship seminar, based on feedback, will include increased emphasis on dealing with challenging behaviors in students and on the role of school counselors in relation to 504 plans.

The internship rubric is used to developmentally assess candidate progress and performance during both internship field experiences. Based on feedback from our partners in the field and in an effort to capture more competency and skill based assessment, the rubric has been completely redesigned; the new rubric is a competency based assessment utilizing the recently published ASCA competencies. The CACREP standards for school counselor preparation programs are cross walked with the ASCA competencies. The new rubric articulates what it means to meet, not meet and exceed expectations.

Mentors in the field rate a candidate's performance midway and at the completion of each 300 hour internship. The rating for each component and the rubric as a whole is used for candidate evaluation and for the purpose of program assessment.

Data collected over the past three years from the former Field Evaluation (Assessment 5), show that 100% of candidates met or exceeded expectations on all components of this assessment.

### **3. How is technology used in your program curriculum:**

- a. to gather data and inform curriculum

With the recent implementation of the TK20 software program, Keene State College has made a major commitment to systematic and comprehensive program management and data analysis. We are now using TK20 to systematically collect data and to provide more immediate access to information for faculty and students. Another advantage of TK20 is that we will now be able to more easily disaggregate data. For data collected prior to the launch of TK20, we created Excel spreadsheets to analyze data for each assessment. We utilize this data to help guide us in curricular and program wide improvements.

Faculty use technological tools to inform curriculum such as CESNET (for counselor educators) and Counselors for Social Justice which are two of the online communities that are particularly helpful for informing curriculum and program improvement along with the CACREP, ASCA and the New Hampshire School Counselor Association websites to cite a few examples.

- b. to engage our pre-service candidates by modeling best practices in our classrooms

Instructors in the School Counselor Program use various forms of technology in our instruction including PowerPoint presentations, Blackboard discussion groups; MS Word track editing; and frequent email communication and consultation. Dyads of students in the Methods and Skills of Counseling class (EDUCSC 651) meet weekly for most of the fall semester to digitally record their microskills of counseling practice sessions as well as their final individual counseling session(s) with a child/adolescent. Students review and reflect on their recordings each week and portions of the weekly audio-visual recordings and the entire final session are viewed in individual meetings with the instructor. Extensive feedback is given, goals are set and progress assessed in these one on one sessions with the instructor. These individual meetings provide rich data for the instructor to assess development of counseling skills for each student and to provide intensive feedback. Faculty from the Mason library provide advanced research skills sessions for students in the Research class to assist them in doing sophisticated searches on data bases and in peer reviewed journals related to their areas of research for the Capstone Experience. Individual students have created electronic portfolios in the past; this year all students will create electronic portfolios in the Internship class.

Technology is used in the School Law class as a social learning tool, a research tool and as a presentation tool. Students are required to complete “learning journals” – syntheses and reflections on the readings and class discussions. They are required to post these to a Discussion Forum (using BlackBoard). They are then required to read and reply to their colleagues’ postings, creating a social learning community. Students are also required to use technology to research school law related precedents, policies and cases using the article search functions found in Ebsco, on the College Library website, and several web sites provided (such as National School Board Association website, West Law, Supreme Court on-line, sections of the US Department of Education and the NH Department of Education websites, etc) to conduct their research. Technology is also used as a presentation tool in the School Law class. Freely available audio clips from National Public Radio broadcasts, video clips from news programs such as Frontline, web based video enhanced programs such as the Dover v Kitzmiller case (produced by Nova), PowerPoint presentation software, etc are used as a matter of routine in class. News feeds from Boley Law Library on Twitter, etc. are also used to demonstrate that there are many ways in which technology can aid school leaders in obtaining information about trends and issues in school law.

- c. To inform the curriculum design and pedagogy with students in the field?

School counselor students use online searches and draw on the resources of websites such as the ASCA website to support developmental guidance and group curriculum projects that they use with K-12 students. In the career counseling class they learn to use on line career counseling/assessment websites, and learn to explore college and post secondary options for students. This information is applied during their internships.

**4. For your program, please list all forms of technology used to develop and/or reinforce content mastery for our pre-service candidate and in service candidates.**

- a. PowerPoint
- b. Track Edits
- c. Computer assisted searches for on line databases, websites, professional organizations and peer reviewed journal articles
- d. Blackboard
- e. TK20
- f. Digital audio and visual recordings
- g. Microsoft Office Excel
- h. Scanner
- i. Use of on line surveys from professional organizations such as ASCA to conduct research
- j. Email consultation

**5. How have you made program adjustments and changes through the examination of dispositional data (include unit and SPA related dispositional data) for our candidates over the past three years?**

We determined that a rubric designed specifically to assess the dispositions of students preparing to become school counselors was necessary, as the dispositions used in the Teacher Education Program were not providing all the data we needed to assess future school counselors given the different dimensions that are key areas for school counselors. We researched best practices and worked closely with partners in the field and with the School Counselor Program Coordinator at Plymouth State University as well as the University of New Hampshire system lawyer to create a new set of dispositional expectations as well as a new protocol for using these dispositions. We determined that a new protocol was needed because the data we were collecting on dispositions needed to be collected more frequently and in a more systemic manner. TK20 provides the technological tool we need to collect this data systematically throughout the program.

The new rubric for assessment of dispositions is used to obtain a variety of professional evaluations of the dispositions (behaviors and attitudes) of KSC School Counseling Candidates at various points in their pre-service training. These dispositions are linked to CACREP standards and are based on the conceptual framework of KSC's Teacher Education and School Counseling



Program, Plymouth State University's rubric for monitoring personal and professional performance and research-based professional educator preparation literature.

**6. If you did not provide student work samples demonstrating “did not meet” quality, please explain why:**

Students in the School Counselor Program are graduate students and are expected to provide work that meets or exceeds expectations. Students whose cumulative grades drop below a B can no longer continue in the program until they have brought their work up to expectations. Students have the opportunity to revise their written work submitted for assessment. Continued revision of written work is allowed, for example, on the Capstone Research Report until final submission. Students with extenuating circumstances who do not meet expectations on certain sections of the final Capstone Research Report are given an In Progress (IP) status. A student with an IP status must meet with their faculty advisor to sign a contract of conditions for completion.