2024 Program Assessment Summary Report

The ETBU Counseling Program is dedicated to continuously evaluating and enhancing its curriculum to meet CACREP (2016) standards and to prepare students for successful careers in clinical mental health counseling. The program's assessment strategy encompasses a wide range of data sources—including performance-based assessments, faculty evaluations, site supervisor feedback, alumni surveys, and current student surveys—that together provide a holistic view of student learning outcomes, professional dispositions, and overall program effectiveness. This report summarizes key findings from the 2023–2024 assessment cycle and outlines both areas of strength and opportunities for ongoing improvement.

Key Areas of Student Competency and Performance

1. **Foundational Knowledge and Self-Assessment:**
   - *Knowledge-Based Assessments:*
     Measures such as the Final Identity Paper (COUN5304) and Self-Assessment Paper (COUN5330) reveal that students possess a solid grasp of professional identity, ethical practice, and research principles. High mean scores and minimal variability indicate that the majority of students not only meet but often exceed the targeted benchmarks.
   - *Research and Program Evaluation:*
     Although students demonstrate strong foundational knowledge, the Research Evaluation Paper shows significant score variability. This suggests that while some students excel in critiquing and integrating research findings, others require additional support to develop consistent research evaluation skills.
2. **Clinical Application and Mastery:**
   - *Internship and Practicum Performance:*
     Assessments conducted during the clinical phase—such as the Self-Evaluation Paper in practicum (COUN6313) and various case presentations—demonstrate that students are well-prepared for real-world counseling. Uniform high scores in these measures (with many students scoring at the mastery level) confirm that the program's hands-on training is effective in translating theoretical concepts into clinical skills.
   - *Treatment Planning and Case Conceptualization:*
     While overall performance in case conceptualization is strong, some measures (e.g., the Final Case Conceptualization Checklist) show moderate scores with slight variability. This indicates a need to further support early-stage skill development, particularly in treatment planning and intervention techniques.
3. **Diversity, Multicultural Competence, and Group Work:**
   - *Multicultural Competence:*
     The program emphasizes culturally responsive counseling. Data from assessments such as the Cultural Competence Assessment (COUN5327) and related self-assessment measures indicate that students develop a solid understanding of multicultural issues. Consistent high scores in later-stage assessments (e.g., practicum case presentations) confirm that students are adept at integrating cultural perspectives into their clinical work.
   - *Group Counseling Skills:*
     Evaluations related to group counseling—such as the Group Leadership Skills Demonstration and Group Processing Video assessments—demonstrate that most students meet or exceed expectations in applying group work strategies. This competency is critical for effective counseling in diverse settings.
4. **Professional Disposition and Personal Development:**
   - *Faculty and Site Supervisor Evaluations:*
     Both faculty and site supervisors have provided valuable insights into student professional dispositions. Faculty assessments across categories like professional behavior, personal boundaries, and openness to feedback reveal stable, high performance. Site supervisor evaluations, in particular, highlight improvements in

emotional stability, self-awareness, and overall professional comportment as students progress into their internships.

- o *Comparative Trends:*
  Notably, site supervisors consistently rate students slightly higher than faculty in areas such as emotional control and professional interaction. This difference underscores the impact of real-world experience in enhancing students' professional growth and reinforces the value of hands-on learning in the program.

Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Trends

- **Enrollment Stability:**
  The program has maintained a stable enrollment over the past three years, with 35 students in 2022, 34 in 2023, and 35 in 2024. This consistency reflects both the program's reputation and its ability to attract a diverse student population.
- **Retention and Withdrawals:**
  Retention rates have shown notable improvement, rising from 68–74.3% in 2022–2023 to 91% in 2024. Concurrently, withdrawal rates have decreased from 3% in previous years to 1% in 2024, largely due to enhanced recruitment practices, refined interview processes, and increased faculty engagement. All withdrawals were voluntary, driven primarily by financial or health-related challenges.
- **Graduation Outcomes:**
  Graduation numbers have fluctuated slightly—with six graduates in 2022 and 2024 and two in 2023—which is common in small graduate programs. Although the lower graduation rate in 2023 may reflect transitional challenges or external factors, the rebound in 2024 illustrates the program's resilience and its commitment to student success.

Program Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Strengths:

- **Robust Student Competencies:**
  High performance in foundational knowledge, clinical application, and self-assessment demonstrates that students are well-prepared to meet professional demands. The consistently high scores across multiple assessment measures confirm the program's effectiveness in building core counseling competencies.
- **Clinical Excellence:**
  Internship and practicum assessments show that students excel in applying theoretical knowledge to practice, indicating that graduates are equipped to handle real-world counseling scenarios.
- **Commitment to Diversity:**
  The program effectively attracts and retains a diverse student body, and assessments in multicultural competence validate that students are prepared to serve culturally varied populations.
- **Professional Disposition:**
  Positive evaluations from both faculty and site supervisors confirm that students demonstrate strong professional behavior, emotional regulation, and cultural responsiveness—qualities essential for effective counseling.

Areas for Improvement:

- **Research Evaluation Skills:**
  Significant variability in scores on the Research Evaluation Paper indicates a need for enhanced support and instruction in research critique and integration.
- **Consistency in Treatment Planning:**
  While students perform well overall, variability in early-stage assessments of treatment planning and case conceptualization suggests that further structured support could help achieve more uniform outcomes.

- **Enhanced Integration of Social and Cultural Diversity:**
  Although students show competency in multicultural aspects, continued emphasis on integrating cultural diversity more thoroughly into both theoretical and practical coursework could strengthen overall performance.
- **Early Skill Development:**
  Continued focus on enhancing introductory-level measures—particularly those assessing foundational counseling skills—may provide a more uniform platform for later clinical success.

Program modifications and changes based on the programmatic assessment results.

Based on comprehensive programmatic assessment data, the CHMC program has identified notable strengths alongside targeted areas for improvement. In response, the program faculty, in collaboration with the program advisory board, has initiated a series of evidence-based modifications aimed at enhancing both curricular delivery and operational effectiveness. These strategic adjustments are meticulously designed to align with the program's mission of cultivating competent, culturally responsive counselors. By continually refining instructional methods and streamlining operational processes, the program underscores its steadfast commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in counselor education.

- **Pedagogical/Curricular Delivery Improvement**:

The report identified three key course-related issues, prompting the program faculty to propose minor modifications to the course delivery method rather than a comprehensive overhaul of the syllabus. Evidence indicates that students are successfully integrating research into their clinical decision-making and effectively applying multicultural skills in subsequent mastery courses, such as Diagnosis and Treatment Planning. Faculty are confident that these targeted adjustments will further enhance student learning outcomes without requiring extensive changes to the established curriculum.

  - **Research Evaluation Paper:**
    The faculty has implemented a series of strategic modifications to enhance student engagement and proficiency in research. Comprehensive guiding questions have been added to support students in completing the journal review exercise (see Appendix E). Furthermore, the faculty is integrating journal critique demonstrations and emphasizing the daily application of research and statistics in students' lives. These initiatives are designed to demystify research and alleviate students' apprehension regarding research and statistical methods.

  - **Case Conceptualization Checklist:**
    The Case Conceptualization Checklist serves as an introductory exercise in the Counseling Techniques Course, designed to familiarize students with initial intake procedures and treatment planning. In this exercise, students are required to conduct a 30-minute counseling session using Ivey and colleagues' Interviewing Microskills and to develop a brief treatment plan. Faculty have observed that, although students are eager to demonstrate mastery, the exercise can become overwhelming. In response, additional treatment planning demonstrations will be integrated into discussion and practice sessions. This hands-on approach is intended to provide students with enhanced practical experience in formulating and applying effective treatment plans, thereby reinforcing their clinical competence and overall learning outcomes.

  - **Enhanced Integration of Social and Cultural Diversity:** Although students perform well in multicultural assessments, the variability in scores reveals that our current approach does not uniformly equip them to incorporate diverse perspectives into their clinical practice. Simultaneously, developing a strong, enduring counselor identity — critical for professional success —requires more than a single assignment. To address these challenges, faculty will allocate dedicated class time to discuss the Final Identity

Paper assignment, framing it as the initial step in an ongoing process of self-reflection and professional identity formation. This assignment will serve as a launching point for continuous dialogue throughout the coursework, ensuring that students both appreciate the importance of a cohesive professional identity and actively integrate it into all aspects of their training. Furthermore, to standardize and enhance the integration of cultural and social diversity, we propose implementing a structured pre- and post-cultural assessment. This targeted strategy will provide measurable benchmarks for students' progress and underscore the necessity of embedding diverse perspectives within both theoretical frameworks and applied practice. Together, these initiatives will create a more consistent and comprehensive educational experience, better preparing our students for the multifaceted demands of professional practice.

- o **Health Maintenance Organization Treatment Planning:** The Advisory Board recommended that the program expose students to Health Maintenance Organization treatment planning alongside textbook treatment, given that some students may end up in private practice or work for an agency that serves insured clients. The Board, comprised of former students of the program, noted they had to learned this on their own. The faculty teaching the course will incorporate this into the course during the fall semester when it is offered.

  Collectively, these targeted improvements underscore the program's commitment to continuous improvement and pedagogical innovation, ensuring that students are not only engaged with the course content but also equipped with the necessary skills for professional success.

- **Program-level Modifications**

The program faculty identified several challenges within the program's operations. The Advisory Board confirmed these issues. These include the program delivery format, data collection, the program's alumni relationship, and the site supervisors' relationship.

- o **Program delivery format:** Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent emergence of a Zoom-centric culture, face-to-face residential education has experienced significant attrition. Although the CHMC program successfully transitioned to a hybrid model in response to these challenges, recent analyses indicate the need for further adaptation. In collaboration with the Dean, the faculty has proposed a shift to a fully asynchronous delivery format—a proposal that has been approved by the Dean's Council and is currently pending approval from the Provost. This transition is designed to enhance student enrollment and attract

qualified faculty by addressing the limitations of traditional residential models. Given the University's unique geographic and socioeconomic context, a fully asynchronous format promises to offer increased accessibility and flexibility, thereby creating a more robust and sustainable academic environment. Ultimately, this adjustment reflects a proactive approach to evolving educational demands and underscores the program's commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in counselor education.

- **Data Collection**: Data collection has emerged as a critical challenge during the program review period. In response, the program faculty, in collaboration with the Assistant Provost, have implemented an initiative to integrate program assessment rubrics into Canvas. This integration streamlines access to course-specific data on a semester-by-semester basis and ensures that professional disposition evaluations are completed via Canvas at the end of each semester. By mitigating the difficulties associated with coordinating multiple calendars for annual assessments, these measures not only simplify the data collection process but also enhance the availability of valuable data. Ultimately, this improved data collection will support continuous student development through more effective curricular and pedagogical planning, reinforcing the program's commitment to excellence in counselor education.

- **Establishment of an Alumni Committee:** The program will establish an Alumni Committee composed of the current program director, the clinic director, and a staff member from the University's Offices of Alumni and the Dean of Students. This committee will serve as the formal liaison among alumni, current students, and faculty, facilitating regular communication, providing mentorship opportunities, and advising on curriculum enhancements to ensure that educational content remains closely aligned with industry needs.

- **Regular Networking Events and Webinars:** Faculty will host quarterly networking events and webinars that bring together alumni, site supervisors, and current students. These sessions will provide a forum for sharing best practices, discussing emerging trends in counseling, and creating collaborative opportunities. In addition, the faculty will offer free continuing education training to site supervisors and alumni to further support ongoing professional development.

- **Structured Mentorship Programs:** A formal mentorship initiative will be implemented to pair experienced alumni and site supervisors with current students. This program is designed to provide personalized guidance, promote professional development, and facilitate the transfer of practical knowledge, thereby reinforcing the skills acquired in the classroom with real-world insights.

- **Enhanced Communication Channels:** Investment in digital platforms will enable streamlined communication among all stakeholders. Through a dedicated online portal, alumni and site supervisors will have convenient access to program updates, resource libraries, and opportunities for professional development, ensuring continuous and effective engagement.

- o **Site Supervisor Engagement and Support:** Although the program has traditionally engaged supervisors through scheduled visits and frequent phone calls, recent concerns raised by a site supervisor, combined with turnover among faculty and clinical directors, have prompted renewed efforts to support site visit needs. In response, the Dean has allocated funds to enable the internship instructor to conduct structured site visits and engage directly with students. This initiative is designed to foster a more productive educational and training relationship among all stakeholders, ultimately strengthening the program's operational framework and enhancing the quality of field supervision.

By integrating these initiatives into its operational framework, the CHMC program aims to establish a robust, supportive network that not only improves educational outcomes but also fosters a culture of continuous professional growth. This strategic approach addresses current challenges in stakeholder engagement, positioning the program for sustained success in a competitive academic and professional environment.

Conclusion

The ETBU Counseling Program's comprehensive assessment data for 2023–2024 reveal a program that is both robust and responsive. The program excels in preparing students through strong academic foundations, effective clinical training, and an integrated approach to diversity and professional development. While there are areas—such as research evaluation and early treatment planning—that warrant targeted improvements, the overall trajectory is highly positive. The ongoing use of data to inform curricular revisions, faculty development, and student support services underscores the program's commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in counselor education.

These findings affirm that the ETBU Counseling Program is well-positioned to prepare competent, ethical, and culturally responsive counselors who are ready to meet the evolving demands of the mental health field.