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The Graduation Rates of Professional School Counselors in North Atlantic States:

Numbers of Graduates from CACREP and Non-CACREP Programs

Susan R. Boes, Brent M. Snow, Mary Hancock, and Julie Chibbaro

University of West Georgia

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Abstract

The production of professional school counselors in the North Atlantic region of the United States was explored. Comparisons are made to the numbers of graduates from both nationally accredited and non-accredited universities within this region. Discussion of the top producing school counseling programs in the North Atlantic Region of the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision is presented.

The Graduation Rates of Professional School Counselors in North Atlantic States:

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Professional school counselors (PSCs) work for the welfare of students as they help to prevent and resolve student issues. School counseling was originally associated with vocational goals and often called vocational guidance (Baker & Gerler, 2008) but with the myriad of issues students bring to the schools today, PSCs must be trained differently and more well trained PSCs are needed in many schools. Training for school counselors must begin with good counselor education programs (CEPs). Many CEPs utilized the vocational guidance aspect of training but began to look somewhat like medical models until The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) ignited the spark to connect the work of PSCs back to an academic mission (Martin, 2002). In addition the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) developed National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) to create the P-12 framework PSCs could use to structure programs with appropriate academic, career and social/emotional interventions in order to put students back in the classroom quickly.

TSCI was perceived as a national perspective and forerunner before the ASCA National Model came to fruition. According to Martin (2002), TSCI was the force PSCs needed to make fundamental changes to P-12 school counseling programs so their programs would become an integral component of a school's mission. TSCI and the ASCA initiatives share the educational focus connecting school counseling programs to

the total school program (Snow, Boes, Chibbaro, & Sebera, 2008) and this, in turn, allows PSCs to help teachers and administrators fulfill the mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation. The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) also has core and specialty standards for school counseling programs (CACREP, 2001). CEPs integrate standards, principles, and requirements of district, state, and national mandates because good school counseling programs begin with PSC training.

Unfortunately many of our nation's school counseling programs are larger than the American Counseling Association (ACA) suggests is appropriate (Baker & Gerler, 2008). ACA's (2007) recommended ratio of school counselors to students is 1:250. No doubt our nation's schools need well trained PSCs to meet the needs of our school children. Because there is little means to assess the production of school counselors, it is difficult to assess if enough PSC are being graduated (Chibbaro, Boes, & Snow, 2008). Graduates from counselor education programs with curriculum goals developed to meet 21st Century student demands within reasonable case loads are the real answer. As such this brief study focused on the number of school counseling graduates being produced by various CEPs in the north Atlantic region of the country, whether or not an institution was accredited by CACREP. Because there is no body overseeing if ASCA standards and TSCI are taken into account in CEPs, CACREP accreditation which incorporates concepts from both was the means to compare the number of school counseling graduates from programs accredited and not accredited. While CACREP accreditation does require conforming to standards this does not mean counselor education school counseling programs that have not acquired CACREP

status are not viable programs. Many programs aspire to CACREP accreditation but for various reasons are not able to seek the accreditation although many have adopted concepts from these standards.

Are Counseling Programs More Alike or Different?

There has been a dearth of literature related to graduates of CACREP versus non-CACREP accredited programs and while studies are being conducted (see Adams, 2006, Brew, 2002, McDuff, 2001, Scott, 2001), more are needed. More practically, earlier studies concentrated on the barriers to seeking CACREP accreditation (Bobby & Kandor, 1992). The 600 clock-hour internship and the student-to-faculty ratios set by CACREP appeared to be the largest barriers. Additionally concerns arose about the 48 semester hour program (72 quarter hour), the full-time faculty needed within a program and the ratio of advisor to advisee. Generally financial and administrative support was deemed the most difficult requirement.

When counselor training programs do not desire or seek CACREP accreditation, the ASCA national standards and National Model, and TSCI are excellent means to create an integrated CEP. Yet, a general reason CACREP accreditation is sought is the connection of specific standards to similar curricula across CEPs which ultimately benefits our nations' school children.

Method

The information collected was based on a review and compilation of data found in the directories of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2001, 2002). Each directory presents an analysis of the productivity at AACTE member institutions. Member universities/colleges

submit annual reports through the AACTE/NCATE Professional Education Data System. Information is presented for teachers, administrators, and was teased out for school counselors prior to 2002. After the 2002 directory information for school counseling is not identified specifically but is subsumed within “advanced” programs. Direct information about school counseling graduates (or completers as used by AACTE), then, was available only through the 2002 directory.

The data collected by AACTE is considerable and is specified for each member institution and school counseling was previously delineated. There are no other databases that approximate the information about school counselors that was collected by AACTE. Considerable information about counselor education programs in the United States has been collected (see Clawson, Henderson, Schweiger, & Collins, 2004; Hollis & Dodson, 2000; Hollis 1997; Hollis & Wantz, 1990, 1994). This data can be helpful as related to admission and graduation rates yet generally numbers appear as estimates. Additionally these data have not been published on a regular basis with specific data for each year.

Using the AACTE database, every college or university reporting school counseling graduates (completers) in the north Atlantic region was identified. Then accreditation status by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) of each reporting institution was acknowledged. Those accredited by CACREP were identified with the year accreditation was granted. In the analysis of data, only graduates who completed the school counseling program during or after the year accredited were considered CACREP graduates. Thus, an institution may have both graduates from a CACREP program and graduates from a non-

CACREP program. Finally the number of graduates for the top 10 graduating North Atlantic Region of the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (NARACES) programs was calculated. Interestingly three of the top 10 graduating programs in NARACES were accredited in the last 2 years (CACREP, 2009).

Results and Discussion

Top Ten Graduating Programs in the North Atlantic ACES Region

In NARACES a review of the top 10 producing universities with school counseling graduates from both CACREP accredited programs and programs that are not CACREP accredited, found there was only one CACREP accredited program at the time the data were retrieved. There are, however currently four programs accredited by CACREP (CACREP, 2009). The top 10 producing programs in the north Atlantic region include: Fordham University, Lincoln Center (non-CACREP), Canisius College (CACREP as of 2009), University of Pittsburgh (CACREP since 1989), New York University (non-CACREP), Indiana University of Pennsylvania (CACREP since 2008), Rowan University (non-CACREP), Providence College (non-CACREP), Montclair State University (CACREP as of 2009), Temple University (non-CACREP), and Hofstra University (non-CACREP) (see Table 1 for numbers of graduates) (AACTE, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2001, 2002).

Currently, four of the top producers are CACREP accredited, nine programs are not accredited. Forty percent of the programs are in the state of New York, with only one of these programs having acquired CACREP accreditation. Thirty percent of the programs are in Pennsylvania with two programs that are CACREP accredited. In the state of New Jersey there are two programs that are top 10 producers and only

Montclair State University has acquired CACREP status. Providence College in Rhode Island has not acquired CACREP accreditation. Canisius College, Montclair State University, and Indiana University of Pennsylvania were not accredited by CACREP during the years the data in the present study were compiled. It would be interesting to examine if program graduates at these institutions were reduced in number once CACREP accreditation was acquired or if faculty were increased to keep graduation rates higher in order to accommodate shortages in school counselors across the nation.

[Place Table 1 about here]

Conclusions

While small faculty to student ratios and in-depth clinical experiences were barriers to seeking CACREP accreditation (Bobby & Kandor, 1992), these standards add to the quality of training. The 600 clock-hour internship plus a 100 hour Practicum provide graduates a minimum of 700 hours of supervised work in a school counseling setting. This clinical experience allows PSCs to work with all issues presented in schools (Snow, et al., 2008). While not all CEPs are able to seek CACREP accreditation, integrating ASCA and TSCI concepts can strengthen opportunities for training knowledgeable PSCs. The need for well-trained school counselors is mandated both because of the types of 21st Century needs our school children bring to counselors as well as the numbers of school children that are on the case load of the majority of school counselors across the nation (Snow, et al., 2008; Boes, Snow, & Chibbaro, 2009).

Developing similar curricula ensures the advancement of comparable learning objectives that are fairly consistent across programs. Curriculum developed to meet

standards both national and state, allow PSCs to meet the academic, career, and social/emotional needs of students (Boes, Snow, Chibbaro, & Sebera, 2008). While accreditation with CACREP was not a central focus of this study, it is considered the basis for specialty programs, a powerful quality statement. Generally school counseling training programs, which have acquired accredited status, tend to graduate fewer PSCs and develop similar school curricula leading to counseling programs in the schools that benefit students (Snow et al., 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

Studies that examine the difference between accredited and non-accredited school programs for similar/dissimilar curricula are appropriate for future research and these are in fact beginning to take place (see Adams, 2006, Brew, 2001, McDuff, 2002, Scott, 2001). A study that examines whether the newly acquired CACREP status does increase or decrease the number of program graduates and if the PSCs do build similar comprehensive programs is worth pursuing. Reviewing CEPs that adopt ASCA Standards and National Model and the school counseling programs of these graduates to examine whether they have aligned/not aligned with these Standards and connected their programs to their schools' mission would also be interesting (Boes, et al., 2008). Checking with department chairs of CEPs about their desire/lack of desire to acquire CACREP status could be a valuable study. Finally, reviewing all regions of the country to compare the top 10 producers in each region, their accreditation status and the number of school counselors produced according to need could be insightful.

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Table 1

NARACES Top Producing School Counseling Programs

Top Ten Universities (1995-2002)

		N	x
Fordam University, Lincoln Center	(N/A)	604	76
Canisius College	(2009)	485	61
University of Pittsburg	(1989)	384	48
New York University	(N/A)	347	43
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	(2008)	310	39
Rowan University	(N/A)	309	39
Providence College	(NA)	301	38
Montclair State University	(2009)	280	35
Temple University	(N/A)	275	34
Hofstra University	(N/A)	238	30

NOTE: These numbers represent the totals as reported to AACTE in a given year. They may not reflect actual numbers for each year as a university may collapse data and report numbers at different time frames.

Dates: Indicate the year first accredited by CACREP.

(N/A): Indicates non-CACREP status.