

## **IBHE Review Summary**

- 1. Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
- 2. Program Reviewed:** M.S. in College Student Affairs
- 3. Date:** January 4, 2012
- 4. Contact Person:** Richard Roberts, Ph.D., Chair; 217-581-2400; [rlroberts@eiu.edu](mailto:rlroberts@eiu.edu); 217-581-7800 (fax).

### **5. Overview**

The mission of the M.S. in College Student Affairs is to provide a dynamic curriculum for students interested in leadership careers in the field of student affairs in higher education. The program provides a strong foundation for knowledge and skills development needed for effective administration, efficient use of technology, and humanistic support of undergraduate and graduate education. Upon completion of the program, students will be prepared for entry and mid-level student affairs positions in post-secondary public and private education as well as state and federal agencies. Students are encouraged to pursue additional studies in doctoral (e.g. Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D.) and other terminal degree programs.

Like other Higher Education and College Leadership programs, the department seeks to follow the standards as proffered by the Council on the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). There is no accrediting body for programs in Higher Education Leadership or College Students Affairs so aligning with these standards is voluntary. However, the department believes these standards best represent the goals of top tier programs in Higher Education. The program also uses the Department's learning goals and the Graduate School Student Learning requirements to guide its curriculum.

The department has seen significant changes to the program since the last IBHE review. We have increased faculty and student research output, received two assessment awards and secured First Choice Status from EIU's Graduate School. Graduate programs achieving First Choice have applied for and been subjected to rigorous review from EIU's Council on Graduate Studies – with oversight from the Graduate School to ensure they meet the highest stands of scholarly excellence as evidenced through sustained achievement of criteria developed and adopted by the council in 2006" (2011-2013 Graduate Catalog).

### **6. Major Findings and Recommendations**

#### **6.1 Description and assessment of any major changes in the program**

The field of student affairs continues to evolve, reflecting changes in student demographics, higher education policy, and legal and ethical issues. Although the department has been graduating students from its program since the 1950's, it too has been evolving to meet the current demands of college students. The mission of the M. S. in College Student Affairs is to provide a dynamic curriculum for students interested in leadership careers in the field of student affairs in higher education. To that end, in 1996 the department (formally the Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance) began the process to align program offerings with the standards of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). After an external review in the spring of 2000, the department worked to establish the

48 credit hour M. S. in College Student Affairs. The program now provides a strong foundation for knowledge and skills development needed for effective administration, a strong theory to practice component tied to our graduate assistantship and internship requirement and enhanced understanding and application of research through our thesis requirement. Upon completion of the program, students will be prepared for entry and mid-level student affairs positions in post-secondary public and private education as well as state and federal agencies. Some students also decide to pursue additional studies in Ph.D. programs and other terminal degrees. Since 2000, the program has achieved enormous progress toward our mission resulting in a name change (Department of Counseling and Student Development), revised mission, goals, and objectives, a systematic revision of the curriculum, a new degree (M.S. in College Student Affairs), revised assessment measures, admission and retention policies, and a greater focus on achieving high standards for the program and its students. This commitment to excellence is ongoing and continues to be evaluated to insure that future college student affairs graduate students are highly prepared for professional practice.

The field of administration in Higher Education continues to be a growth oriented occupation. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the field will grow by about 8% through 2018 which is as fast as the average for all occupations. Specifically, “postsecondary level of students is expected to grow more rapidly than other student populations”. Employment change for student affairs professionals is projected to increase by anywhere from 2% (postsecondary administrators) to 24% (education administrators, all other) through 2018. Administrators considered “other” in higher education typically refer to student affair positions so the 24% growth rate is more accurate for our graduates. Median salaries for “other administrators” in higher education range from \$54,000 to \$141,000. In 2011 the department realized 100% placement rate of its graduates with many job offers occurring before they completed the degree.

Our department works very hard to maintain a productive and efficient program. In reviewing the latest state data available comparing similar programs in the state of Illinois, our department was lowest in costs per credit hour at \$333.35 compared to the highest at \$600.43. In 2010 our fall enrollment was on the lower end of the range at 44 students compared to enrollments in other programs ranging from 41- 74). Degrees conferred were lowest (15 compared to 20-33) compared to other state institutions with CSA programs. This is most likely due to our requirement of a thesis which has delayed some students from graduating in May, although most graduate by summer. We continue to improve the thesis process and our completion rate is trending in the right direction (see table below).

## **6.2. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement;**

The College Student Affairs program utilizes the Council on the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), the Department’s learning goals and the Graduate School Student Learning requirements to guide its curriculum. Specifically, the program measures its success using the following six objectives: 1) Candidates will display the required academic preparation and professional dispositions necessary to succeed in the graduate program in Counseling and Student Development; 2) Candidates will display evidence of skills in the areas of written, verbal, interpersonal and technological communication; 3) Candidates will display evidence of critical thinking and problem solving skills by demonstrating the application of theory to practice; 4) Candidates will display evidence of maintaining professional dispositions, academic rigor, and legal and ethical practice while in the program; 5) Candidates will

display evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity; and 6) Candidates will display evidence of content knowledge that meets or exceeds the criteria set forth by the Council on the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).

Learning Objective one is focused on **recruiting and training the very best graduate students**. As mentioned earlier, our admission process follows a comprehensive process that exemplifies best practices. As a result, the quality and diversity of our student population has increased. The data from 2006 to 2011 indicate a robust and highly selective student population with an average of 86 applicants a year with 21 being accepted or a 25% acceptance rate (note – we interview an average of 50 additional people each year that we don't invite to make formal application to the graduate school which represents the 86 applicants) .

Our second learning goal is that **Candidates will display evidence of skills in the areas of written, verbal, interpersonal and technological communication**. We measure this goal in the student's first semester during CSD 5500 (Research Methods) and CSD 5715 (Individual and Group Intervention in Student Affairs). The data indicate that from 2006 to 2011 100% of our students have met our expectation in technology, 97% have met our expectation in written proficiency and 99% have met our expectation in verbal/interpersonal expression.

Our third learning goal is that **Candidates will display evidence of critical thinking and problem solving skills by demonstrating the application of theory to practice**. We measure this goal in the student's third semester during CSD 5880 (Internship in Student Affairs). The data indicate that over the last six years 96% of our students have met this expectation in critical thinking. Many of our students receive prestigious ACUHO-I internships throughout the country.

Our fourth learning goal is that **Candidates will display evidence of maintaining professional dispositions, academic rigor, and legal and ethical practice while in the program**. The CSA faculty meet once in fall and spring to review each student in the program to determine if students maintain departmental expectations on the Student Review Rubric (Motivational Appropriateness, Personal Maturity, Flexibility, Emotional Stability, Engagement in the Learning Process, Academic Rigor, and Legal and Ethical Behavior). Faculty rate their advisees based on personal observation and feedback from instructors and supervisors. Students who fall below expectations for the first time receive a warning and participate in an informal discussion with their advisor. Students identified a second time enter a formalized retention process to target needed change. The data indicate that over the last six years an average of 34 students per semester were reviewed with an average of 6 per semester being warned and 0 being formally placed in retention. Most warnings in the CSA program have been about delayed thesis production.

Our fifth learning goal is that **Candidates will display evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity**. We measure this goal in the student's second and third semester during CSD 5950 (Thesis). The data indicate that over the last six years 97% have met this expectation in advanced scholarship. Taking a sample from 2007-2011, students completed 70 theses and 29 presentations and local, regional and national conferences. In 2011 a CSA student was named a Hammond Scholar.

Our sixth learning goal is that **Candidates will display evidence of content knowledge that meets or exceeds the criteria set forth by the Council on the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)**. We measure this goal using a variety of input measures including completion of thesis, exit, alumni, supervisor and employer surveys. See attachment “A” for a summary of the data.

The data from 2007-2011 indicate a problem in getting students to complete their thesis in a timely manner. In 2007, we only had 77 % of the students complete their thesis by the end of their scheduled program. We have spent considerable time and energy looking for ways to improve in this area. We have written a thesis manual, instituted timelines, written incentive policies and met with Graduate Assistant Supervisors. In 2011 we increased the percentage of completers to 90%. We continue to reach out to those students who have not completed the thesis and have several from previous classes be done with their project.

Thesis Projects	Thesis completion by 2 <sup>nd</sup> year deadline	Current % completion
2011	N= 18/20 or 90%	90%
2010	N = 14 /15 or 94%	100%
2009	N = 12/15 or 80%	80%
2008	N = 16/21 or 77%	81%
2007	N = 10/13 or 77%	77%

As attachment “A” indicates, our students, alumni, supervisors and employers are 90% satisfied in their overall evaluation of the program. Strengths of the program are recognized as “supportive faculty, graduate assistantships, expertise of faculty, limited cohort size, diversity of students, thesis requirement and internship”. The emphasis on competitive admissions is also highly valued. Areas that needed improvement were academic advisement, assistance seeking first position and more content in Research and Student Development theory. As a result of this data, we have added a one hour lab to the Research class, we now require a second developmental theory course entitled Advanced Student Development Theory, and we have changed some advisement procedures resulting in a perceived satisfaction increase from 33% in 2007 to 97% in 2011. Although our placement record is excellent, we will continue to monitor our assistance to students seeking employment to see where improvement can be realized. Lastly, our overall effort to monitor assessment data and improve the program has resulted in 2009 2<sup>nd</sup> place award and 2010 1<sup>st</sup> place award in the Provost’s assessment award.

### **6.3 Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices and curricular changes**

Since our last IBHE review, the department has increased efforts to strengthen the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the department’s student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni.

The department utilizes a well-focused series of annual recruitment tools that include web based video and print material distributed via multiple platforms. As a result, the department attracts a broad range of students characterized by diversity and high quality. For example, the program has achieved an average of 84 applications over the last three years and made admission offers to 25% of those applicants. With rare exception, applicants reject those offers. The average diversity rate of 16% exceeds the average rate of 8% for all graduate programs at EIU and the 6% diversity rate of the College of Education and Professional Studies.

Due to the excellence of our recruitment class, assistantships/scholarships/awards have increased since the last IBHE report. We award on average 20 graduate assistantships yearly (100% of our CSA students received GA positions). In addition, the program awards the Warner-Reeves and Schaff scholarships and in 2011 a CSA student was recognized as one of the first Hammond Scholars at EIU. Dr. Eberly was also awarded the prestigious NASPA IV-E Outstanding Contribution to teaching Award and the AFLV Wilfred Butler Award.

The graduation rate averages 20 students per year with most completing the degree in the scheduled two year time. The program attempts to track graduate placements and has documented evidence of 97% placement rate over the last four years in multiple states and several doctoral programs.

**Other actions taken since our last review have been summarized as follows:**

- Chair of the department was awarded 2004 Chair Leadership Award by EIU.
- President Emeritus Lou Hencken joins the faculty.
- Awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Provost's Assessment Award.
- Awarded Graduate Leadership Award.
- Awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place in Provost's Assessment Award.
- Completed three National Searches and one internal search resulting in three new tenure-track faculty hired and one new annually contracted faculty member hired.
- Revised Admission criteria and strengthened CSA Days.
- New Faculty member Dianne Timm joins the CSA faculty.
- Created Entering Student Profile on website.
- Enhanced "CSA Days" which coordinates departmental admission with GA placements. This is a 3 day event involving most student affairs departments at the university.
- Enhanced the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Tour with three universities now participating.

**6.4 Description of actions taken as a result of this review, including instructional resource and practices, and curricular changes.**

In anticipation of the IBHE program review, we revised the following course syllabi to meet CAS standards.

- CSD 5500 – Research Methods – we added a one hour lab component.
- Developing an Advanced Student Development Theory class.

We are also revising our student manual, creating an internship manual and planning for a future external review of the College Student Affairs program.

## Attachment A

### Average Percentage of Student Exit Interviews and Alumni, Supervisor and

#### Employer Surveys for CSA 2006-2011

<b>College Student Affairs: Program Objectives</b>	<b>Required Courses</b>	<b>% Objective Was Met</b>
1. Foundational Studies	EDF 5510	88%
2. Student Development Theory	CSD 5720	77%
3. Student Characteristics	CSD 5735	91%
4. Individual and Group Intervention	CSD 5715	94%
5. Organization and Administration of Student Affairs	CSD 5710 CSD 5750 CSD 5760	87%
6. Assessment, Evaluation, and Research	CSD 5500 CSD 5740	78%
7. Supervised Practice	CSD 5880	95%
9. Satisfaction with Academic Advisement		75%
10. Assistance seeking first position		70%
11. Overall Evaluation of the Program		90%