



10/14/2015

**2015
ALUMNI
SURVEY
REPORT**

**COUNSELING & MARITAL AND FAMILY
THERAPY DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO**

Report Prepared by USD-SOLES Accreditation & Assessment Office

Executive Summary

Alumni Survey Overview

The School of Leadership and Education Sciences (SOLES) - Office of Accreditation and Assessment administers the Alumni Survey to University of San Diego (USD) alumni with graduation dates ranging from six months to five years of the survey administration period. The Alumni Survey affords alumni the opportunity to share their post-graduation outcomes and to provide valuable feedback utilized for program review. General survey items address employment, alumni involvement, and application of knowledge and skills. USD-SOLES alumni are also provided with open-ended questions regarding their effectiveness in the workplace, the quality of faculty advising and mentoring, benefits of the program, and recommendations for improvement. This report is specific to alumni of the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department within USD-SOLES.

Response Rates

During the Spring 2015 semester, SOLES Office of Accreditation and Assessment at USD administered an alumni survey. Sixty-seven of the three hundred twenty-four SOLES Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni responded to the survey, yielding a 21% response rate (see Table 1). Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by graduation year and Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents by specialization or program.

Table 1

Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Survey Response Rates

Program	Number of Graduates*	Number of Respondents	Alumni Survey Response Rate
Clinical Mental Health Counseling	67	10	15%
School Counseling	109	33	30%
Marital and Family Therapy	148	24	16%
Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department Total	324	67	21%

*Refers to the number of alumni for which correct email addresses were obtained.

Figure 1. The Distribution of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Survey Respondents by Academic Year (n=67)

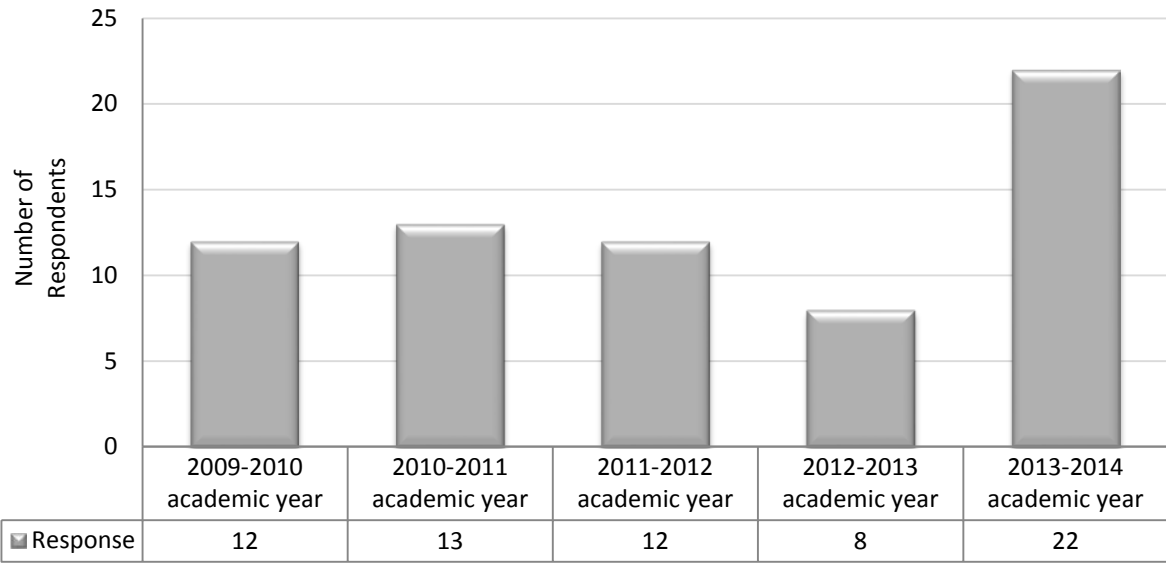
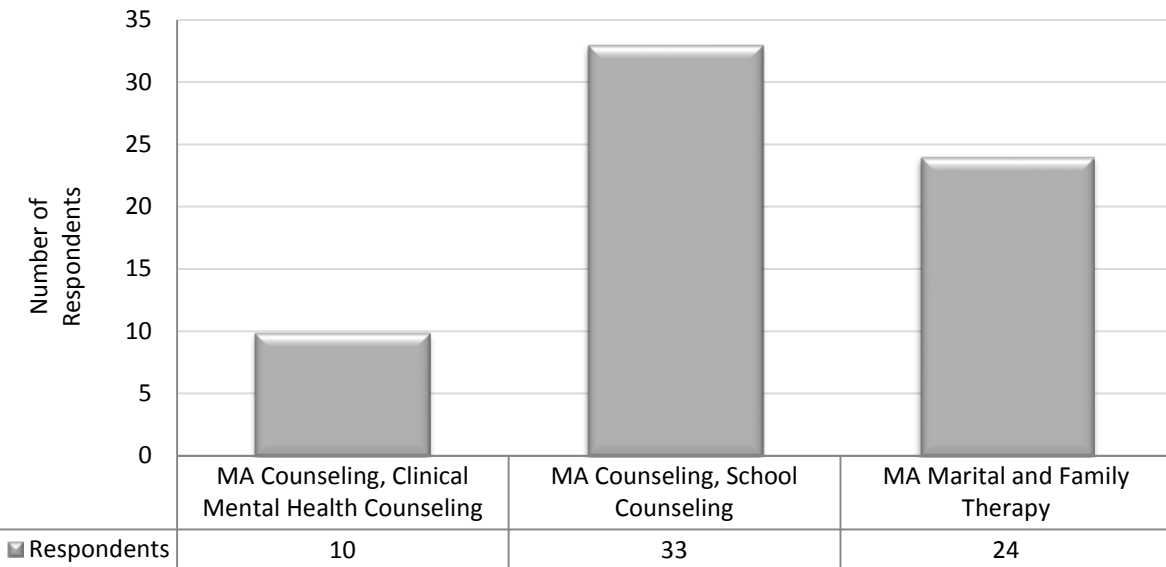
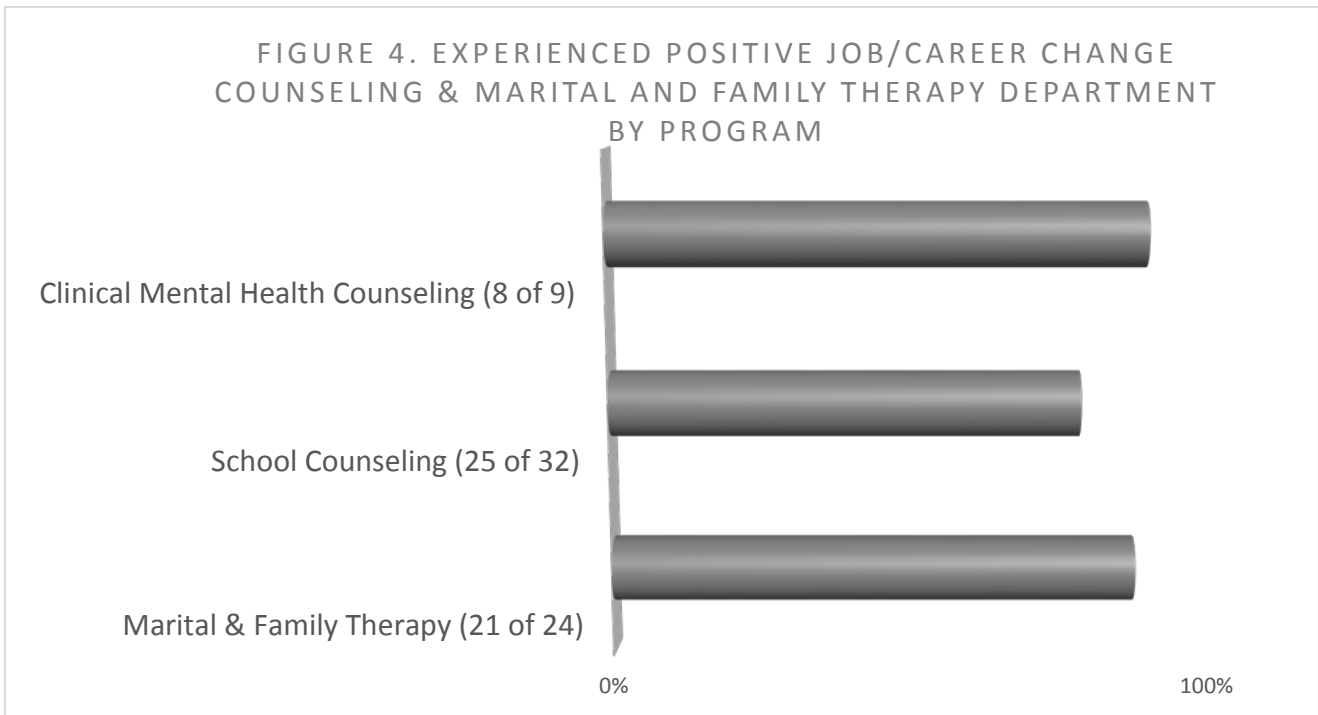
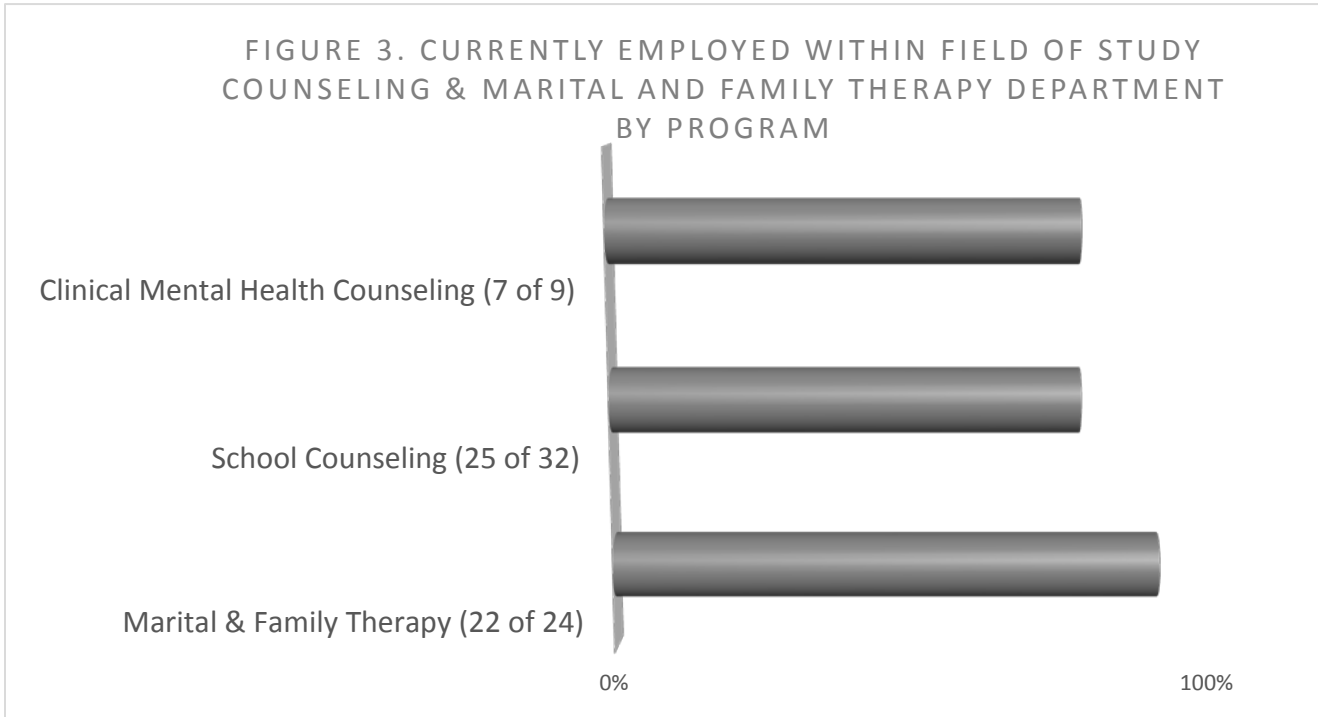


Figure 2. The Distribution of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Survey Respondents by Specialization or Program (n=67)



Alumni Changes in Employment – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked about their employment search and employment status. Ninety-five percent of alumni are currently employed. Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the types of changes alumni experienced after graduation.



Alumni Regions of Employment - Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

Eighty-six percent of alumni from the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department are currently working in California, with the remaining alumni working in various states or internationally (see Figure 5). A sample of job titles for Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni can be found in Table 2. Alumni reported working at a variety of school districts, colleges, universities, treatment centers, counseling centers, and other organizations (see Table 3).



Figure 5. Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department Alumni Regions of Employment

Table 2

Sample of Alumni Job Titles - Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

Academic Advisor	High School and College Counselor
Admissions Counselor	Lead School Counselor
Autism Counselor	Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Career Counselor	Licensed Mental Health Clinician
Clinic Coordinator	Marital and Family Therapy Intern
Clinical Counseling Intern	Neurofeedback Technician
Clinical Mental Health Therapist	PK-8th Grade School Counselor
Clinical Research Coordinator	Program Counselor
Clinical Social Worker II	Program Manager
Clinical Team Lead	Psychosocial Rehabilitation Specialist
Clinician	Research Assistant
Director	School Clinician
Elementary Guidance Tech Counselor	School Counselor
FIT Therapist	Social Services Worker
Generalist Counselor & Family Advocate	Student Affairs Officer
Guidance Counselor	Treatment Coordinator

Table 3

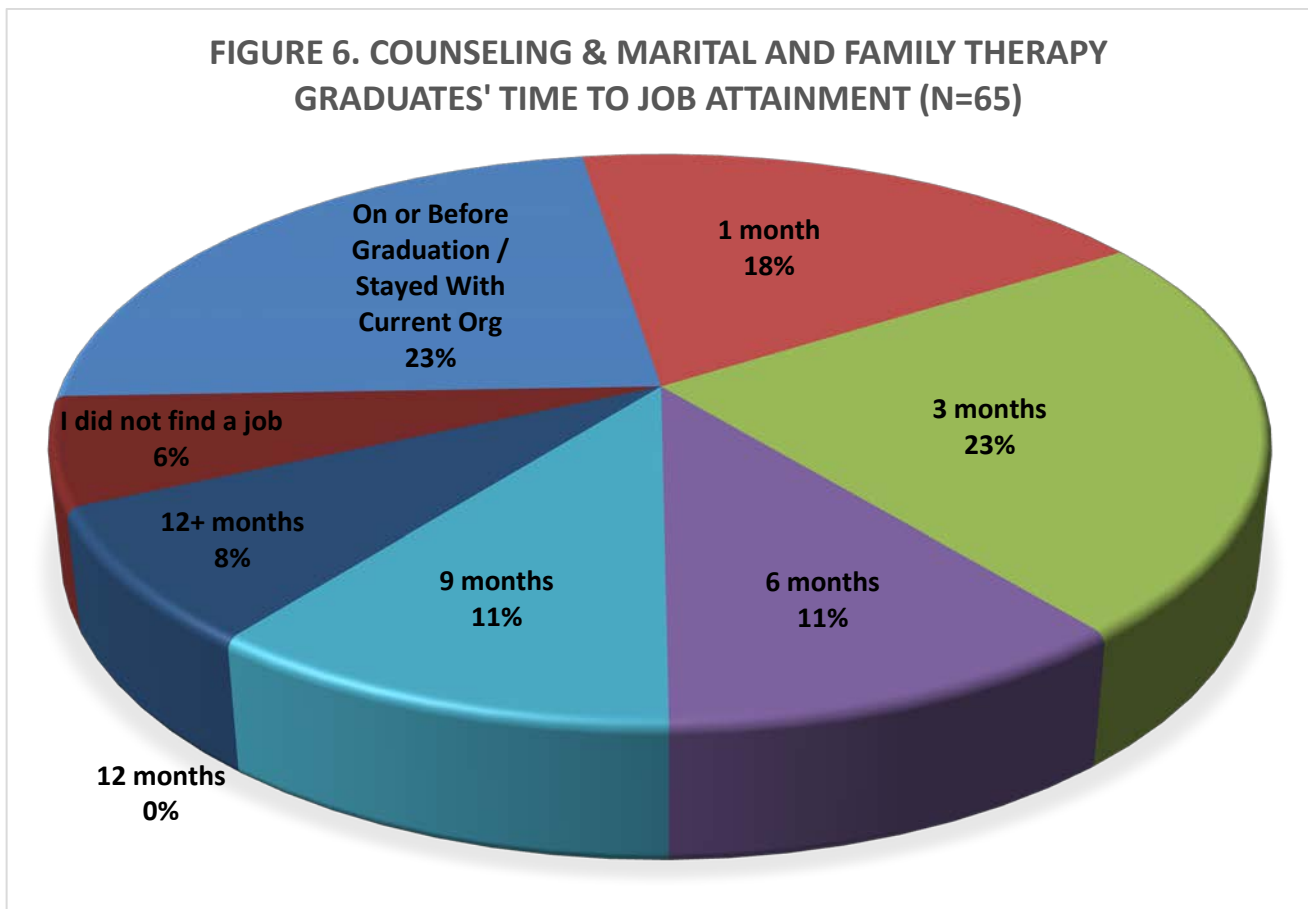
Sample of Alumni Employment Organizations - Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

Adult Protective Services County of Riverside*	Postpartum Health Alliance
Alvarado Parkway Institute*	Real Journey Academies
Archdiocese of Washington	San Antonio Union Elementary School District
Army and Navy Academy*	San Diego Center for Children
Bellflower Unified School District	San Diego County Office of Education
Brady College Counseling	San Diego Unified School District*
Cajon Valley Unified School District*	San Diego Youth Services*
Chaminade University	San Jose Unified School District
Children's Institute Inc.*	Santa Cruz City Schools
Community Research Foundation*	SDSU Upward Bound*
Dialectical Behavior Therapy Center of San Diego	St. Augustine High School*
Epiphany Prep Charter School*	Stanford Youth Solutions
Fontana Unified & Westmorland Elementary	The American School of Asuncion*
Harbor Point Behavioral Health Center*	The Grauer School
Loma Linda University	The Raleigh House of Hope*
Mt. Vision Family Therapy	The San Diego Center for Neurofeedback*
Napa County Office of Education	The Well Clinic*
National University	Tiger Woods Foundation
Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control	TRiO McNair Scholars
New Alternatives' San Pasqual Academy*	True Life Center for Wellbeing*
Oakland School for the Arts	Tumwater School District
Palm Springs Unified School District*	UC Los Angeles
Palomar Family Counseling Services*	UC San Diego*

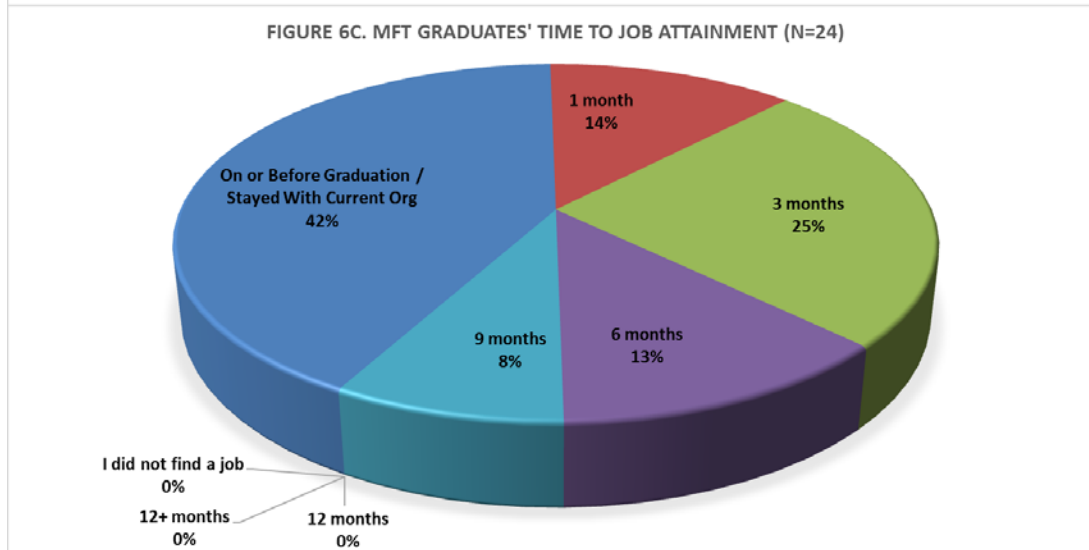
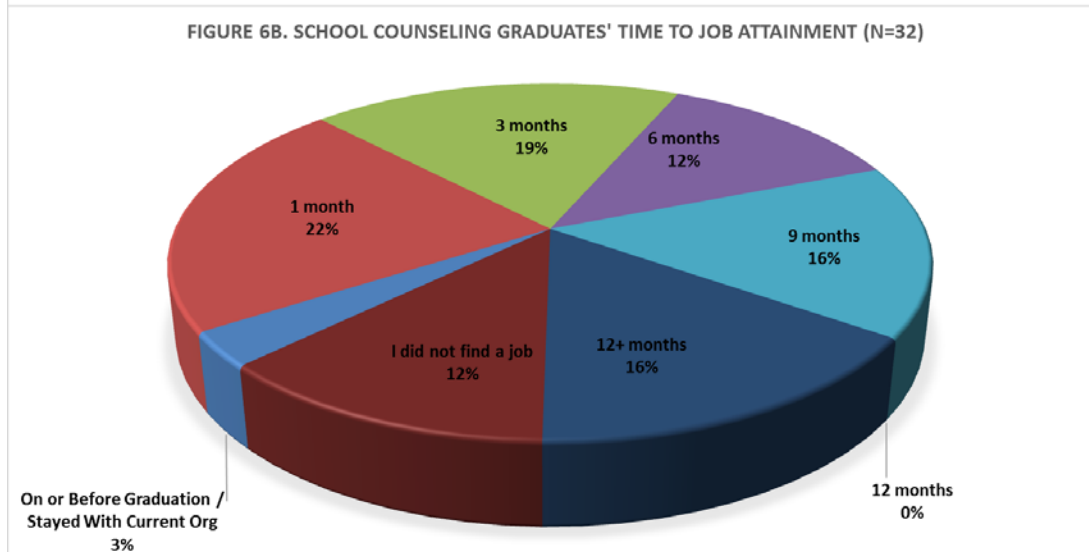
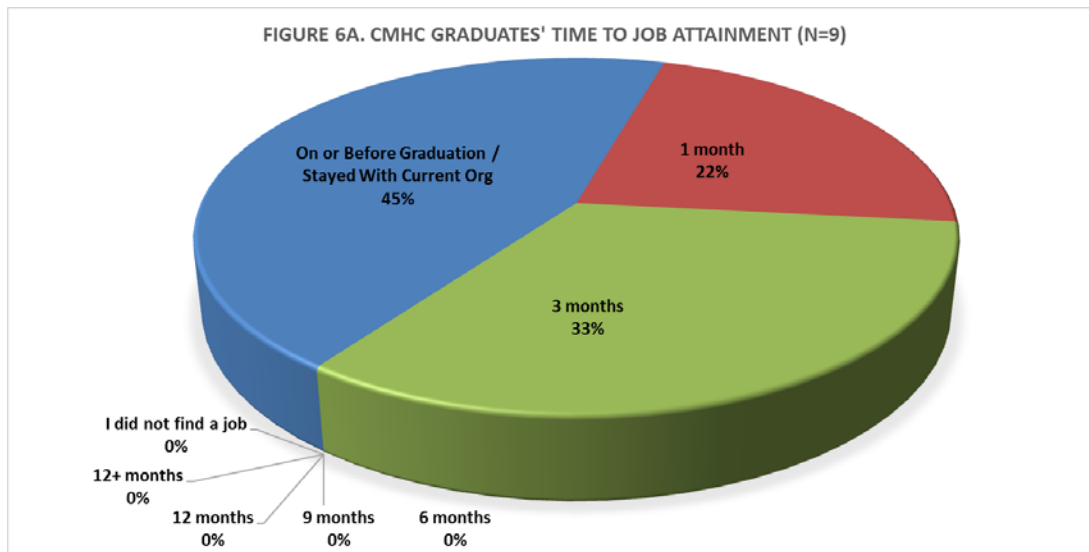
*Note: Internship or employment opportunities are available for current or graduating USD-SOLES students.

Time from Graduation to Job Attainment – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked *how long it took to obtain a job upon graduation*, 23% of alumni indicated they had obtained employment on or before graduation. The remaining alumni found employment within 1 month of graduation (18%), 3 months of graduation (23%), 6 months of graduation (11%), 9 months of graduation (11%), 12 months of graduation (0%), 12 or more months after graduation (8%), or did not find a job (6%). Figure 6 shows the graduation to job attainment distribution for the entire Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department and Figures 6A through 6C show the graduation to job attainment distribution for each specialization or program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department.

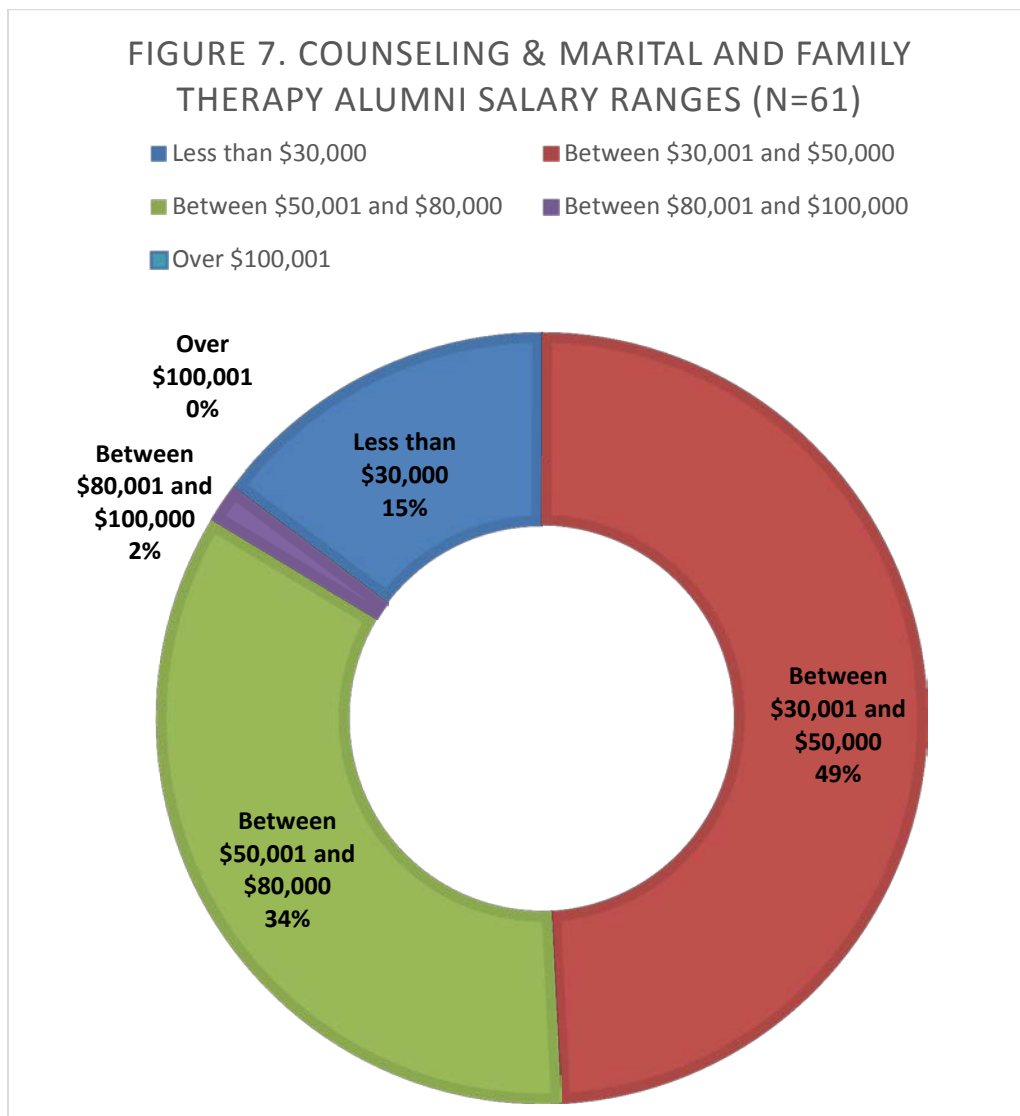


Time from Graduation to Job Attainment for each Specialization or Program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department



Alumni Salary Ranges – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked to indicate their *current salary range*, 49% of alumni selected between \$30,001 and \$50,000. The remaining alumni reported the following salary ranges: less than \$30,000 (15%), between \$50,001 and \$80,000 (34%), between \$80,001 and \$100,000 (2%), or over \$100,001 (0%). Figure 7 shows the alumni salary ranges for the entire Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department and Figures 7A through 7C show the alumni salary ranges for each specialization or program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department.



Alumni Salary Ranges – by Specialization or Program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

FIGURE 7A. CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING ALUMNI SALARY RANGES (N=8)

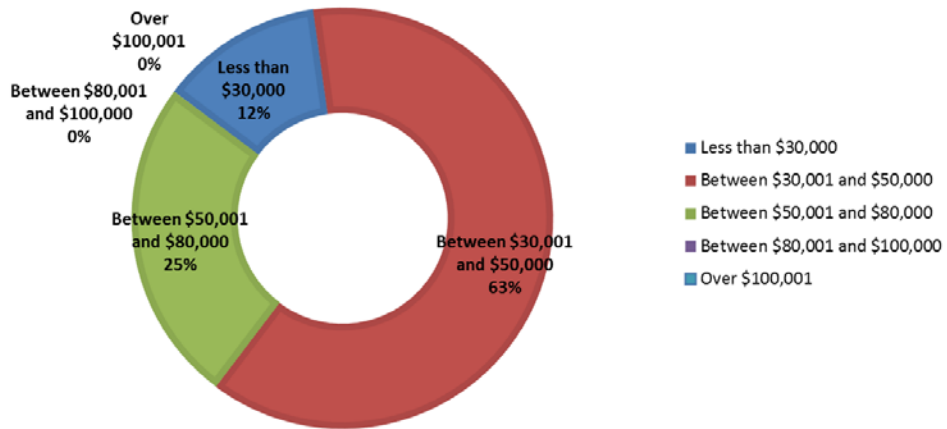


FIGURE 7B. SCHOOL COUNSELING ALUMNI SALARY RANGES (N=31)

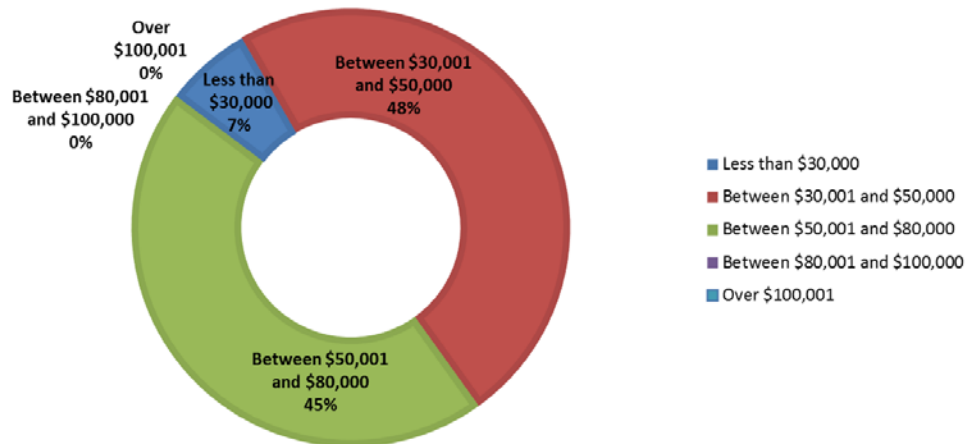
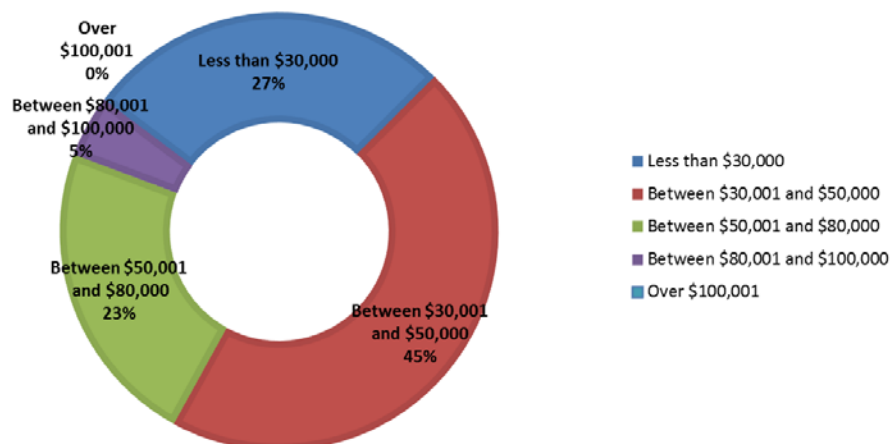
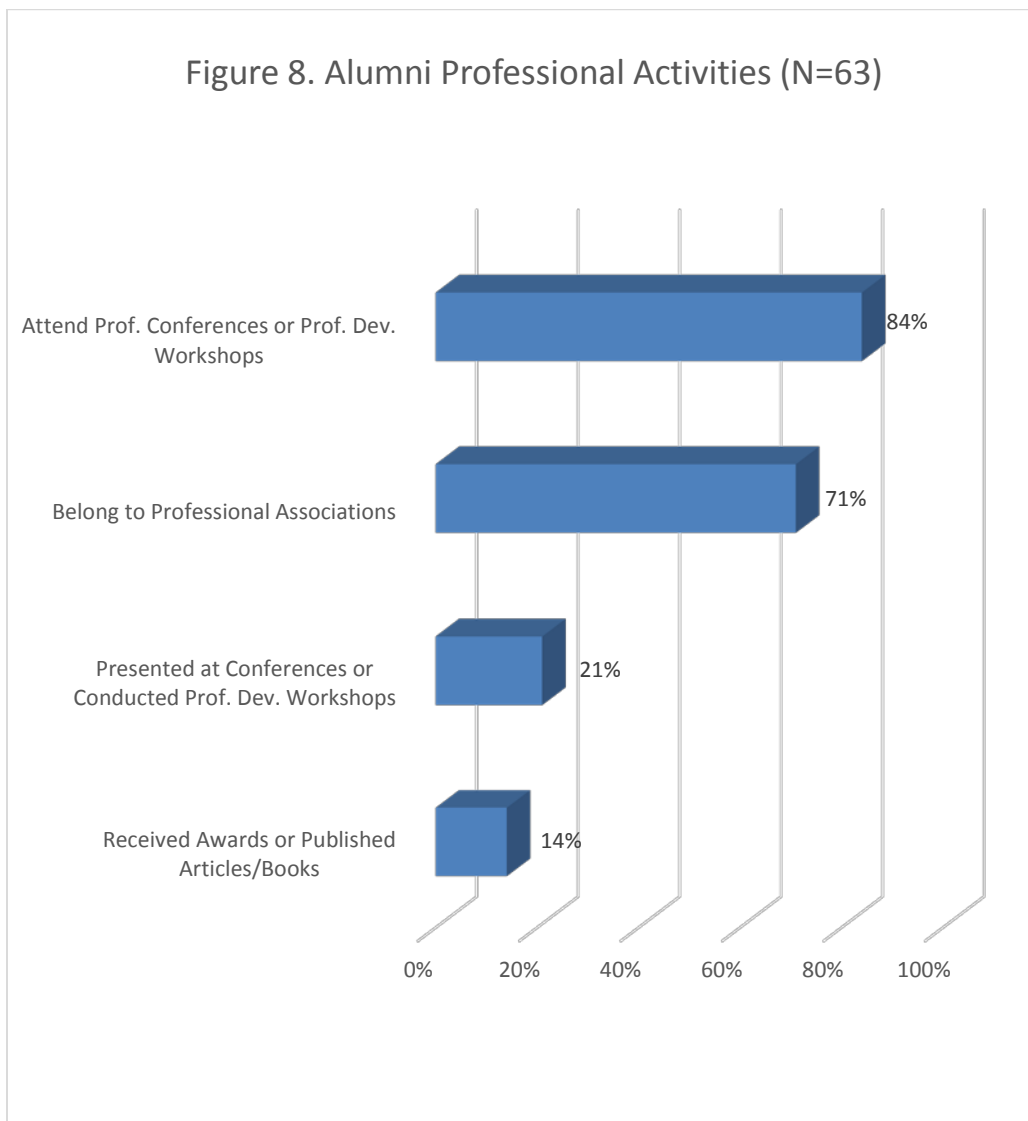


FIGURE 7C. MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY ALUMNI SALARY RANGES (N=22)



Alumni Professional Activities – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

Figure 8 shows the various professional activities alumni have engaged in since graduation. When alumni were asked about their engagement in professional conferences and professional development workshops, 84% of alumni reported attending professional conferences or professional development workshops, with 21% having presented at professional conferences or conducting professional development workshops. Fourteen percent of alumni reported receiving awards or publishing articles or books since graduation. Seventy-one percent of respondents reported belonging to one or more professional associations (see Table 4).



Note: Respondents could select multiple professional activities

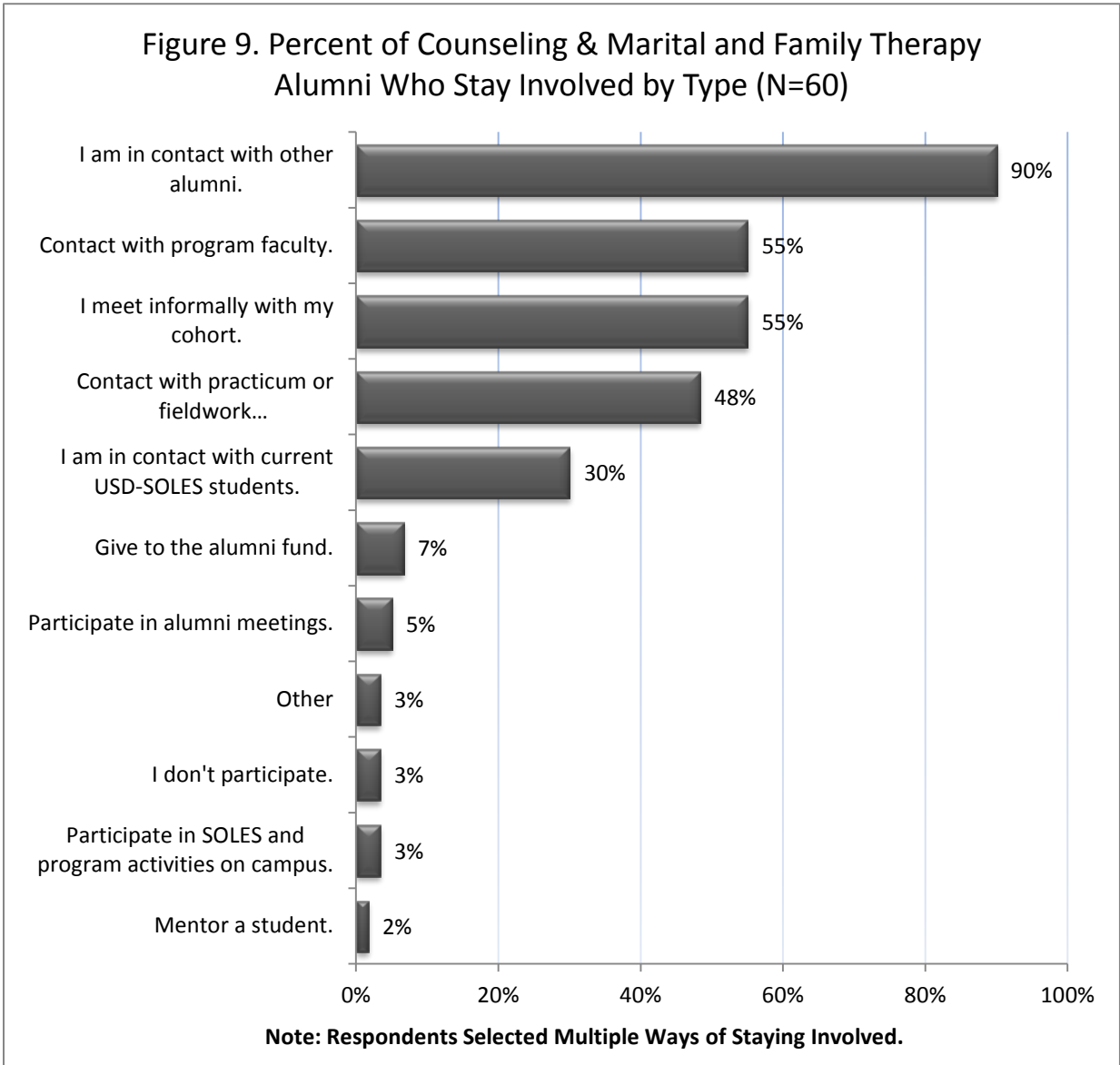
Table 4

Sample of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Membership with Professional Associations

ACMHA: The College for Behavioral Health Leadership	Forensic Mental Health Association of California
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	Girls Think Tank
American Council on Education Women’s Network	Houston Association for Marriage & Family Therapy
American Counseling Association	National Academic Advising Association
American Humanistic Counselors	National Association for College Admission Counseling
American Psychological Association	National Association for Continuing Education
American School Counselor Association	National Board for Certified Counselors
California Association for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors	Overseas Association for College Admission Counseling
California Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	Postpartum Health Alliance
California Association of School Counselors	Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
California Coalition on Sexual Offending	Western Association for College Admission Counseling
Chi Sigma Iota	Western Association of Educational Opportunity Personnel
Council for Opportunity in Education	Forensic Mental Health Association of California

Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Involvement with USD-SOLES

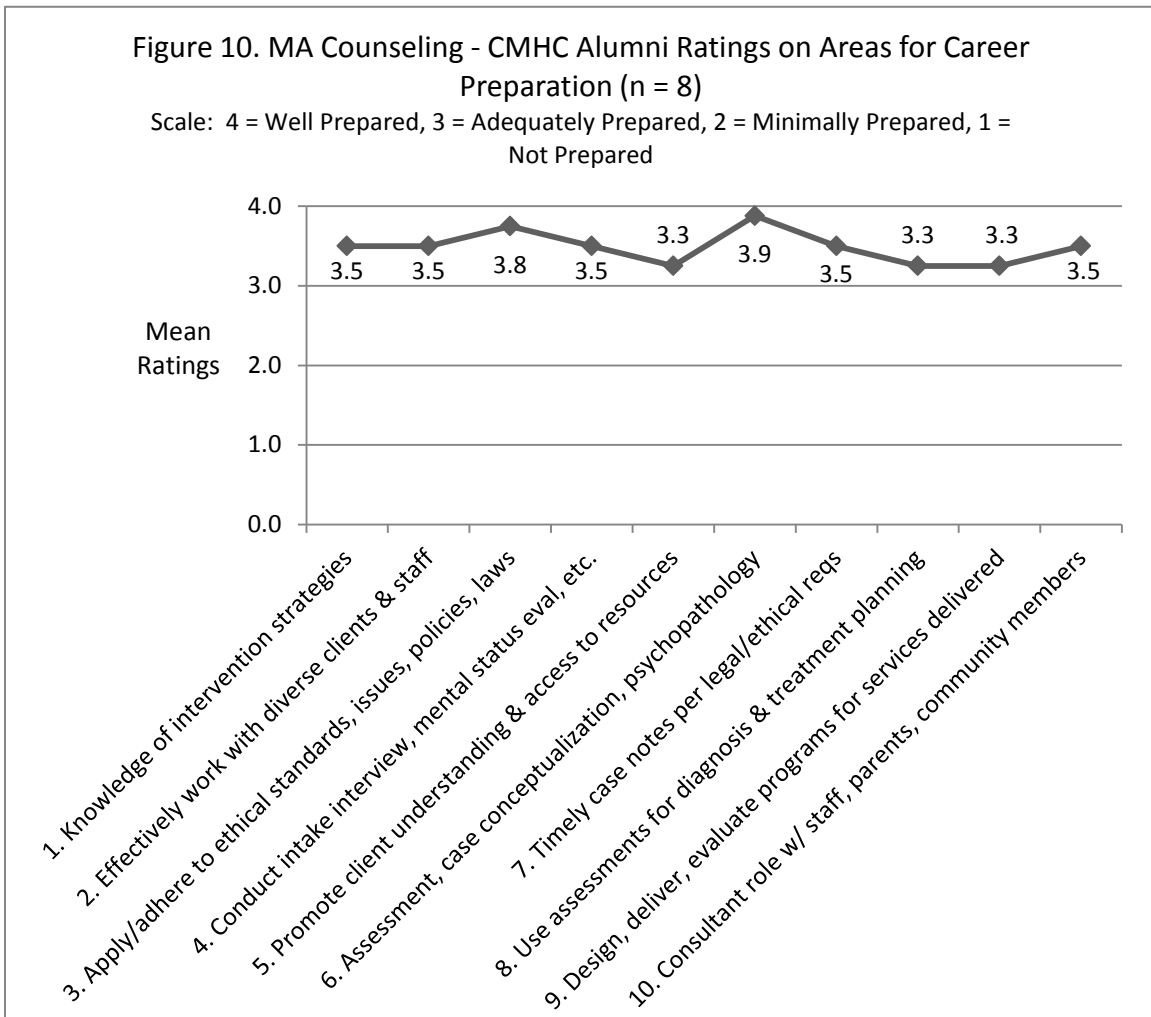
When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked *how they have stayed involved with USD-SOLES*, students reported a variety of activities. These activities included staying in contact with alumni, current students, practicum or fieldwork supervisors, and faculty, meeting with their cohort members, donating to the alumni fund, etc. Figure 9 shows the various ways the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni stay involved with USD-SOLES.



Career Preparation and Enhanced Skills by Specialization or Program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

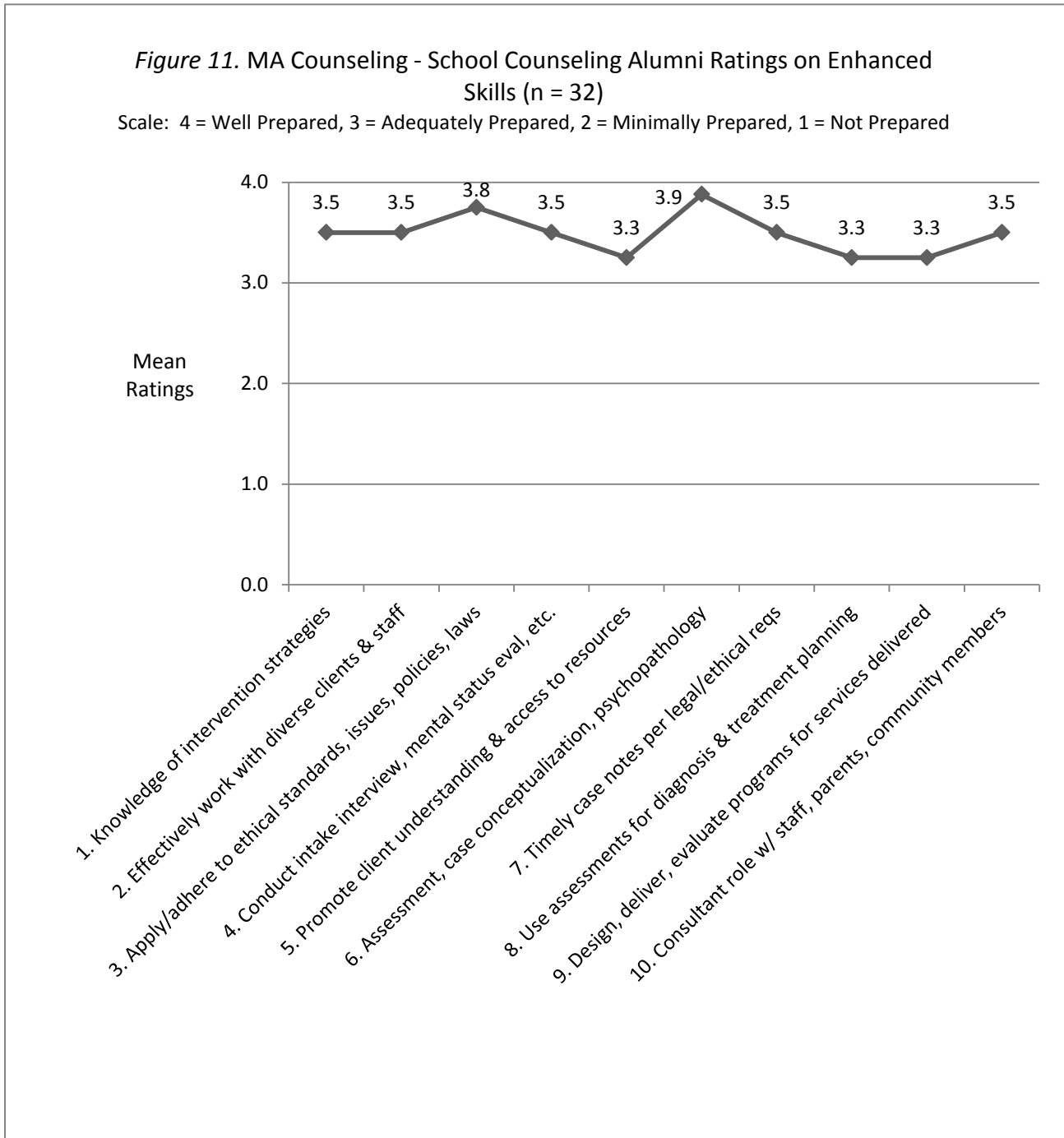
MA in Counseling with a Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked to rate how well their specialization or program prepared them for their professional careers and/or enhanced their abilities. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling specialization used a four-point rating scale where *Well Prepared* is 4, *Adequately Prepared* is 3, *Minimally Prepared* is 2 and *Not Prepared* is 1. The goal is to have response ratings in the three to four range for each item. All ten items regarding the CMHC specialization had mean ratings in the desired three to four range (see Figure 10). These ratings are supported by the 8.2 (using a 10-point scale) mean rating of their overall level of satisfaction with the knowledge and ability gained in their CMHC specialization.



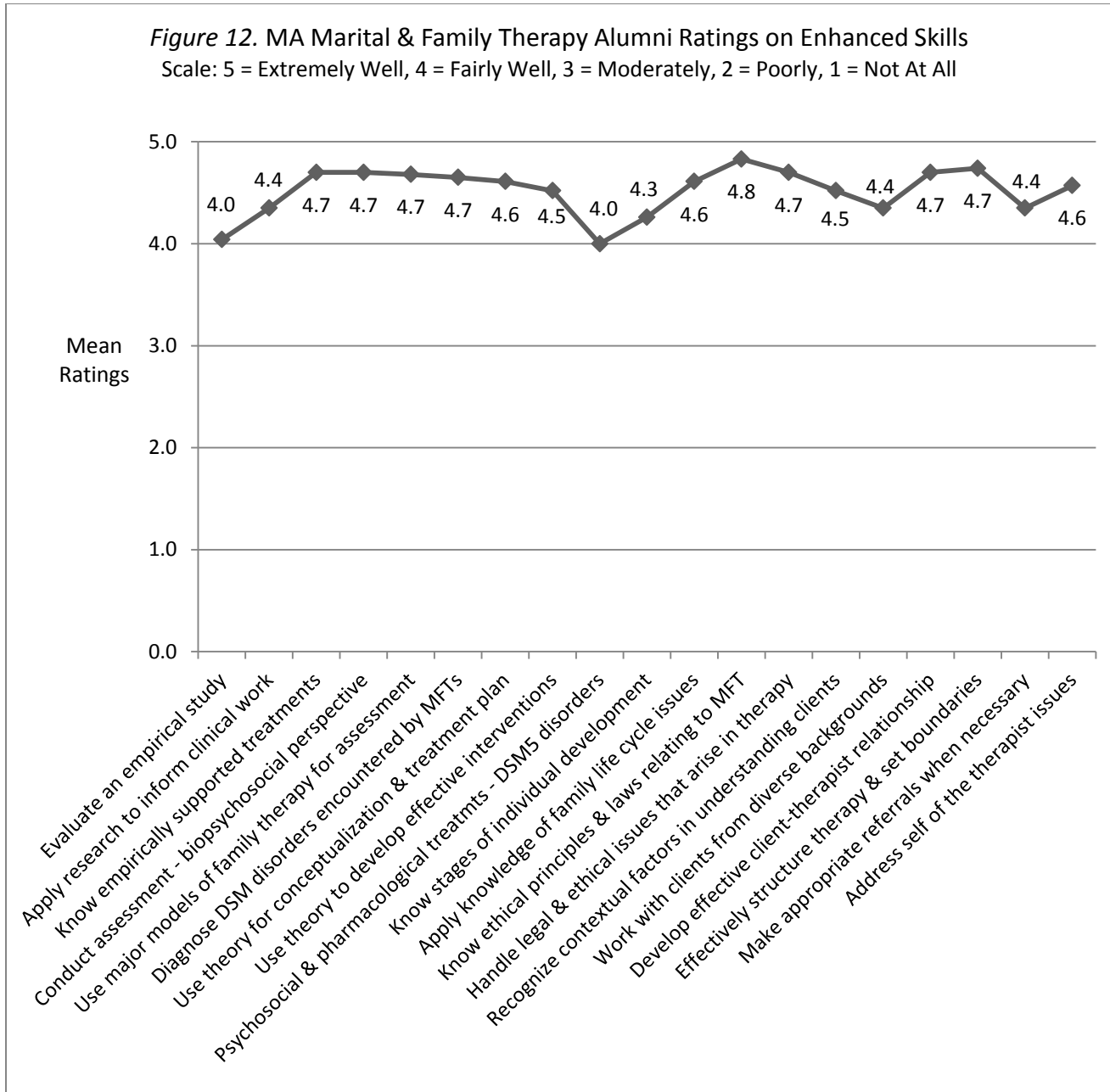
MA in Counseling with a Specialization in School Counseling

The School Counseling specialization used a four-point rating scale where *Well Prepared* is 4, *Adequately Prepared* is 3, *Minimally Prepared* is 2 and *Not Prepared* is 1. The goal is to have response ratings in the three to four range for each item. All ten items regarding the School Counseling specialization had mean ratings in the desired three to four range (see Figure 11).



MA in Marital and Family Therapy

The Marital and Family Therapy program used a five-point rating scale where *Extremely Well* is 5, *Fairly Well* is 4, *Moderately* is 3, *Poorly* is 2, and *Not At All* is 1. The goal is to have response ratings in the four to five range for each item. All eighteen items regarding the Marital and Family Therapy program had mean ratings in the desired four to five range (see Figure 12).



Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Programs

When alumni were asked about suggested skills, areas, or topics for inclusion in Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy programs, alumni commented about curriculum, additional practice or application, and career planning, as shown in Figure 13 and Table 5. A sample of respondents' comments by program can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 13. Distribution of Responses Regarding Suggested Skills, Area or Topics for Inclusion in Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs (N=43)

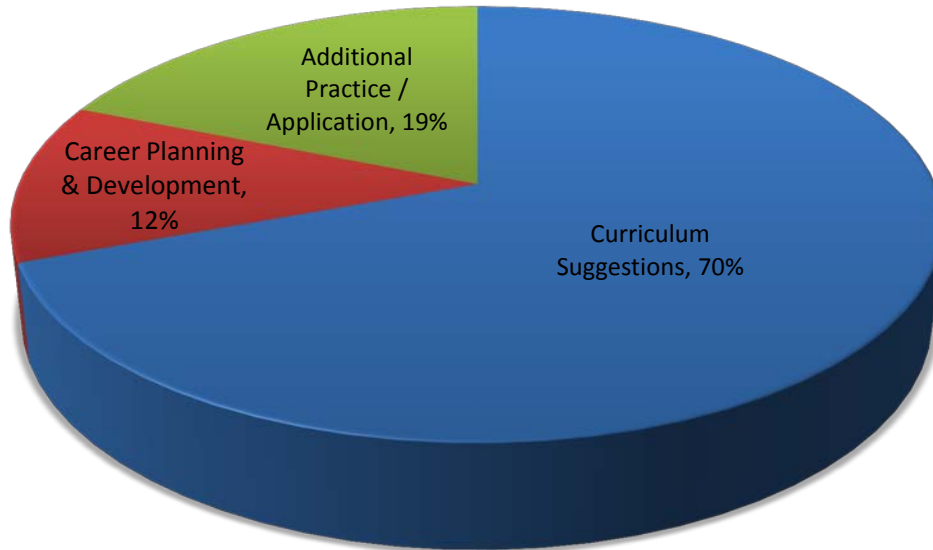


Table 5. <i>Distribution of Responses Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion in Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs (N=43)</i>	
Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Programs
70%	<p>Curriculum Suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Variety of Specific Topics • Working with Different Client Populations • More Cultural Exposure
19%	<p>Additional Practice / Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Tasks • More Application of Counseling Theories and/or Techniques • More Counseling Activities, Games, Techniques • Collaborating with Others (Faculty, Staff, Counseling Professionals)
12%	<p>Career Planning & Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Employment Assistance • More Networking Assistance

Courses and/or Experiences in the Program that Were Most Beneficial

Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked to identify one course and/or experience that benefited them the most and why. Alumni shared positive feedback regarding practicum/fieldwork, specific coursework, global study abroad, faculty, and community (see Figure 14 and Table 6). A sample of respondents' comments by program can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 14. Courses and/or Experiences in the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs That Were Most Beneficial (N=47)

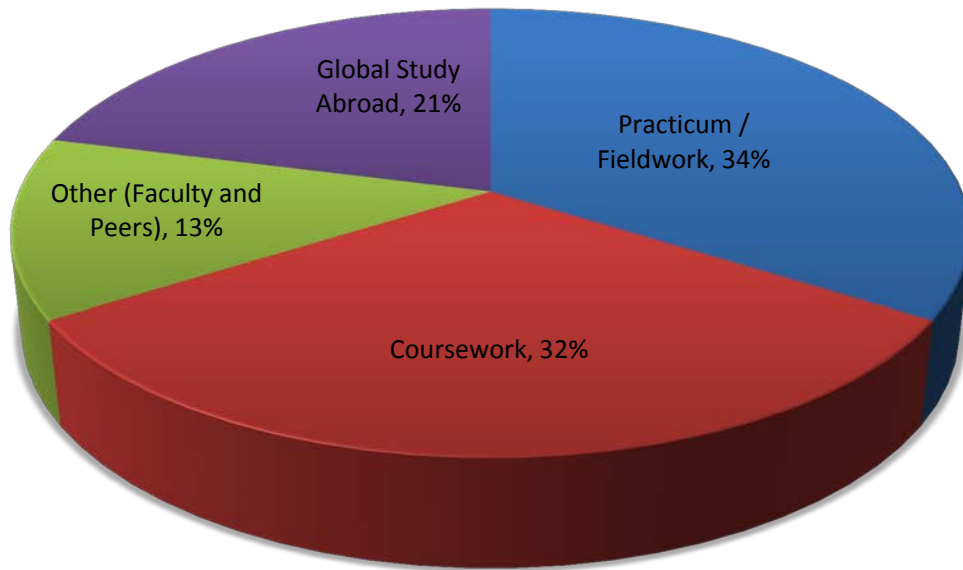


Table 6. *Distribution of Responses Regarding Courses and/or Experiences in the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs That Were Most Beneficial (N=47)*

Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Courses and/or Experiences in the Program That Were Most Beneficial
34%	Practicum or Fieldwork Experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision and Feedback • Hands on Experience and Learning from Counselors
32%	Specific Coursework / Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses within Specialization • Fieldwork Seminar
21%	Global Study Abroad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural Counseling (e.g. Japan, Costa Rica) • Daraja Academy in Kenya, Africa • Day Trip to Tijuana, Mexico
13%	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable Faculty with Excellent Teaching Styles • Relationships Developed with Peers

Ways Alumni’s Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace

When asked *what ways did your program of study enhance your effectiveness in the work place*, alumni cited enhanced professional practice, career preparation, and professional identity (see Figure 15 and Table 7). When alumni were asked: *how often do you apply the knowledge and skills that you gained in the program to your professional work*, 93% of the alumni indicated daily or weekly usage. A sample of respondents’ comments by program can be found in the Appendix C.

Figure 15. Ways Alumni's Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness at Work (N=35)

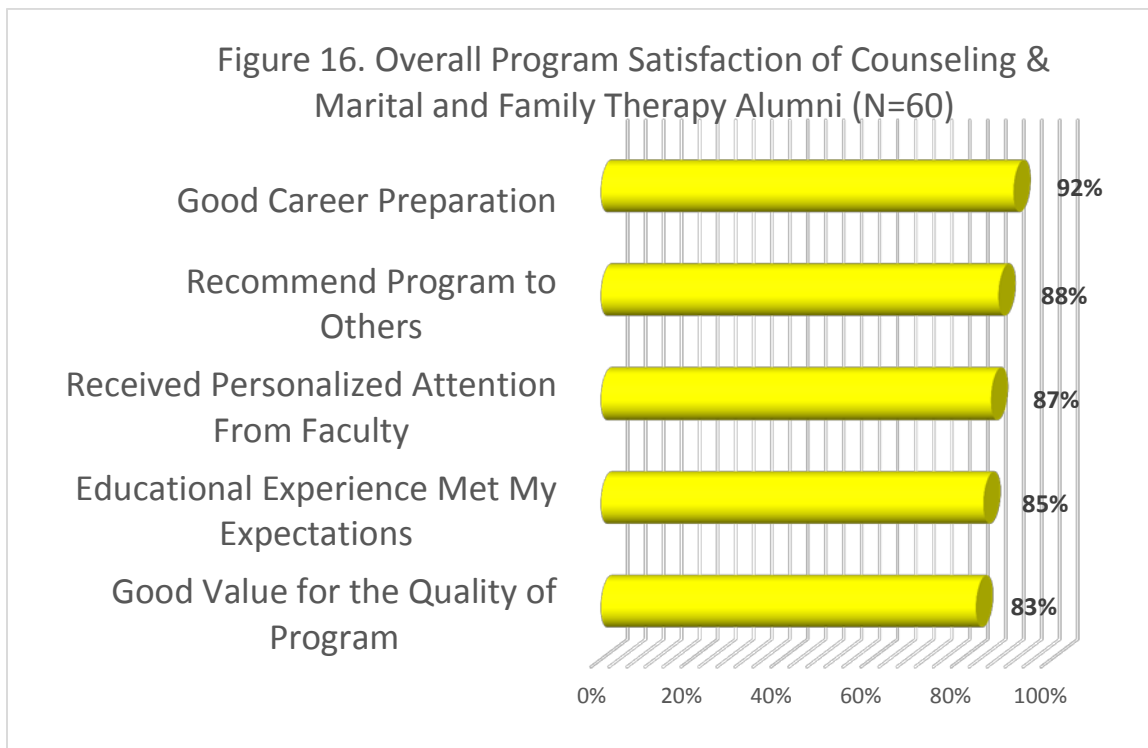


Table 7. Distribution of Responses Regarding Ways Alumni’s Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specialization or Program of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace (N=35)

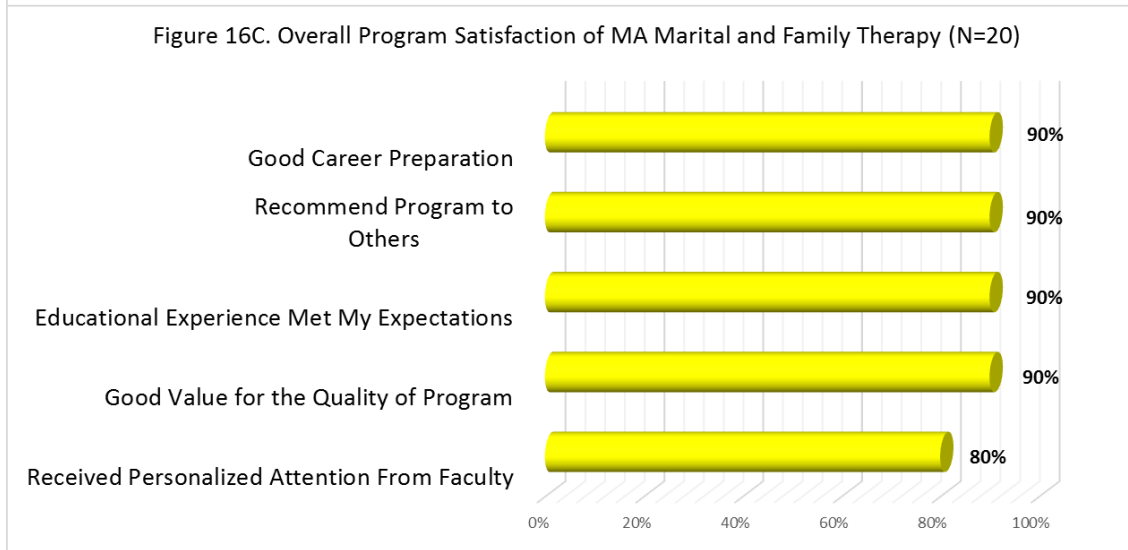
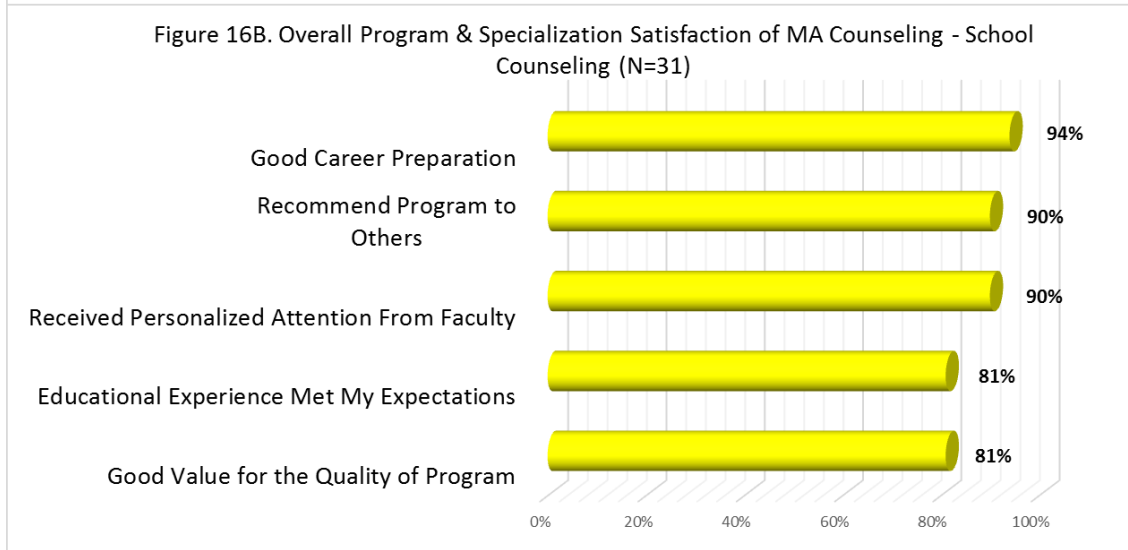
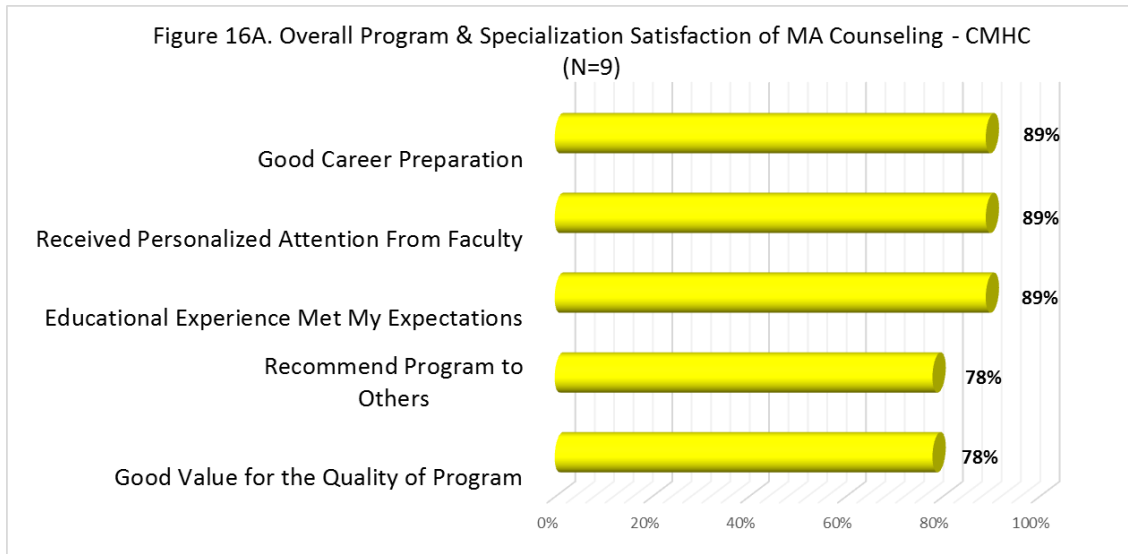
Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Ways Alumni’s Program of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace
51%	Career Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Needed for Career (Essential Skills and Knowledge) • How to Create and Implement Comprehensive Counseling Programs • Experience – Practicum, Internships, Feedback
26%	Enhanced Professional Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Work Performance and Effectiveness • Ability to Apply Learning at Work • Able to Conceptualize and Think Systemically and Critically
17%	Professional Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence / Self-efficacy • Self-care, Personal Reflection • Standards of Quality (Professionalism, Knowledge, Capacity)
6%	Other: Network of Faculty and Peers that Continue to Support

Overall Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Program Satisfaction

When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked about their *level of agreement regarding their overall satisfaction with their program*, 92% felt their program provided good career preparation, 88% would recommend their program to prospective students, 87% reported that they received personalized attention from faculty, 85% felt their educational experience fulfilled their expectations, and 83% felt that the value of the program compared favorably with the quality of the experience. Figure 16 shows the overall satisfaction ratings for the entire Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department and Figures 16A through 16C show the overall satisfaction ratings for each program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy department.



Overall Program Satisfaction – by Specialization or Program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department



Alumni Testimonials: MA Counseling with a Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

The time spent with faculty was priceless. Each faculty knew my name, my story, my passion, my clinical orientation. Not only that, they cared about making my educational experience the best for ME...

Staff recognized who could think critically, approach problems with a solutions-focused orientation, and move forward. The faculty was critical to my education.

-2014 Alumna

I really appreciated specific professors being available for career focus advice, not just the one that was our advisor. I also, benefitted from the professional aspect of being asked and included in presenting at conferences.

-2011 Alumna

I was lucky enough to make some very close friends while I was in the program, we continue to meet weekly to share personal and professional life experiences - they were the greatest gift I've received from USD.

I am also very thankful for [my Professor who] continued to keep in touch with me post-graduation and assisted with my letters of recommendation for PhD programs I've applied to. [This professor] is always quick to address any questions or concerns I have. I'm very thankful for [the] assistance.

-2010 Alumna

Alumni Testimonials: MA Counseling with a Specialization in School Counseling

The professors at USD are incredibly knowledgeable and truly individualized my education to prepare me for my specific career path. Since graduation my fellow cohort members have become trusted colleagues in my field and professors have become my mentors.

-2013 Alumna

I am very satisfied with my experience in the School Counseling program. My close interactions with professors and practical experience prepared me for a job immediately after graduation, and have allowed me to feel confident as a new employee.

-Danielle Kuzmanovic, 2014 Alumna

I felt very supported by my professors while in the program.

-2014 Alumna

My degree in school counseling from USD prepared me extremely well for my career as a charter school counselor.

-2013 Alumna

My experience at USD was challenging, exciting, and filled with opportunities to grow and learn from a variety of people and experiences. From my professors - to my colleagues - to various community members, I was surrounded by people who inspired me and pushed me to grow both personally and professionally. The USD SOLES community is a support network that I consistently utilize even after graduation.

-Rachel LeGrand, 2013 Alumna

USD has provided a foundation and guidance for my practice as a school counselor. The relationships developed with my cohort and professors has continued even after leaving USD.

-2011 Alumnus

My graduate experience at USD was one of the most amazing times in my life! I learned so much about myself and others. I received an incredible education that truly helped prepare me for real-world experience. The proof is in the pudding! I was hired within 3 months of graduation. I have received such positive praise and feedback from both my colleagues and students, and I have had such an overall successful journey within my first two years as a School Counselor. I feel so fortunate to have had this wonderful opportunity. At times I wish I could do it all over again!!

-Melissa McConnell, 2013 Alumna

Alumni Testimonials: MA Marital and Family Therapy

I had an incredible experience in the MFT program at USD and I would recommend it to anyone looking to enter the field. The professors are not only expert therapists, but they truly care about you and invest in you as an individual. The lessons I learned in the classroom, at my Practicum site and from my cohort and supervisors inform my professional and personal life every day and I am so grateful for the life-changing education I received.

-Alyssa Halberg, 2009 Alumna

The program at USD is comprehensive and integrative. From my classes to my practicum training experience, each and every element was present to fully expose me to the breadth of the MFT field. I found equal education in concepts related to integrative and collaborative health care, private practice, non-profit agencies, and government organizations. As a result, I have successfully been able to practice in all four of these areas. The faculty is highly-trained and they have a passion for imparting their expansive knowledge to the students in a way that is warm, compassionate, and inspiring. I don't think I would have experienced the same caliber of education or training anywhere else.

-Kourtney DeBoer, LMFT, 2011 Alumna

My decision to obtain a master's degree in marital and family therapy from USD has changed my life. I am currently working in a field I love and feel confident in my ability to make a difference in the lives of families, couples and individuals. My time at USD provided me with the skills I needed to fulfill my professional vocation.

-2014 Alumna

The MFT program created the jumping off point for which to become a skilled and intuitive clinician. The USD program has an excellent reputation in the community that has opened doors for me.

-2010 Alumna

Testimonials by Alumni from the MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program (continued)

I am so proud of the education I received from USD. Compared to other programs, USD faculty really took the time to put in extra effort where it counts. Before my program even began, I felt like I had the support of my faculty advisor; I was moving to a new city where I didn't know anyone, but that first interaction with him made me feel comfortable and confident about my decision.

Now that I have more experience in the field and interact with graduates from all different programs, I appreciate even more that our practicum sites were pre-selected and screened out. A proper traineeship is a critical start to this career and I'm grateful that USD minimized the stress of that process by giving us pre-selected and approved programs to choose from. This is the envy of my colleagues who graduated from different programs! The level of support that we received, the quality of our supervision, and the sincere and honest feedback has stayed with me through the years.

Further, USD's reputation continues to serve me by standing out positively on my resume, and by giving clients an extra ounce of confidence and hope that I can help, before treatment even begins. I'm honestly grateful for my experience and in retrospect, would do it all over again. Thank you USD, you've really made a difference in my life.

-Jennifer Whetstone, 2010 Alumna

Appendices - List of Tables

<i>MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling</i>	
Table	Content
A-1	<i>Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion</i>
B-1	<i>Course and/or Experience That Benefitted the Most</i>
C-1	<i>Ways Program Enhanced Effectiveness in the Workplace</i>
D-1	<i>Testimonials</i>

<i>MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling</i>	
Table	Content
A-2	<i>Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion</i>
B-2	<i>Course and/or Experience That Benefitted the Most</i>
C-2	<i>Ways Program Enhanced Effectiveness in the Workplace</i>
D-2	<i>Testimonials</i>

<i>MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program</i>	
Table	Content
A-3	<i>Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion</i>
B-3	<i>Course and/or Experience That Benefitted the Most</i>
C-3	<i>Ways Program Enhanced Effectiveness in the Workplace</i>
D-3	<i>Testimonials</i>

Appendix A

Table A-1

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion in the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Comments

In retrospect I would have liked some trainings, workshops, or optional course that dealt specifically with marketing and developing myself as a professional, especially later in the program. Early on the Professional Development course covered the basics, but it was also early enough that my knowledge of counseling as a profession was not very strong. A follow-up course or workshop for those nearing graduation would be useful.

I don't believe we focused much on community resources for our clients and that would have been helpful to have some exposure to. Also, networking experiences, such as touring hospitals, residential treatment locations, therapist offices, clubhouses, etc. would have been very helpful to my understanding of levels of care, potential jobs, and community resources.

Assessment - it is so broad that in the end, it does not cover the exact assessments used in various settings. Assessments vary from clinical, community, etc. setting but it was almost as if the class focused on being generic as opposed to saying "XYZ are used at Community Research Foundation - let's take a look at those this week."

Table A-2

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion in the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling

Comments

Special Education, Family Dynamics Class, 504s, SST interventions, Dropout prevention

More application of counseling theories. Conflict resolution.

I would like to have spent more time working on the job search during the end of our second year.

Higher education component. Career Counseling- we learned theory, but not practical application.

Nothing, I felt a real connection to my classes and the all the assignments were geared toward preparation of becoming a school counselor.

Restorative justice, more work on teaching effective classroom lessons, how to incorporate play therapy/ art therapy, trauma-informed practices.

More work on how to deal with some typical "problem types" that students may present with, and possible ways to help them through counseling activities and techniques.

Each school site is different, so it would be impossible to prepare counselors for each individual challenge or issue. I know that USD used to have a college counseling program and I would have been interested in those courses, as that is what I hope to move to in the future.

It would be nice to learn more counseling activities (maybe this could be in the fieldwork class). I am always constantly looking for new activities/games with therapeutic value that I could use in my individual sessions and groups.

More on post-secondary counseling. I had to do a lot of learning on the job and from conferences. Things like the school profile and standardized testing were never really addressed. Or proctoring exams, which I do a lot of for the college board.

I would have liked to have been able to focus some more on job readiness (by means of more fieldwork placement opportunities and professional development in the field) and the hiring process after graduation (like how to be more strategic in applications or being flexible with the type of jobs we apply to).

There is next to nothing about academic counseling in the curriculum. It would be extremely helpful for the course to discuss things like admission standards, a-g requirements for California schools, etc. I had to learn all of that on the spot at my workplace, and I would have been much better prepared if there was even one day devoted to college counseling or admissions.

I would suggest that more emphasis be placed on studying different learning disabilities and mental disabilities that affect students and strategies to better assist these students. I would also suggest helping graduate students learn the basics of important skills that fall under some administration tasks in middle and high school counseling programs (i.e. educational planning, scheduling, and writing letters of recommendation).

As an elementary counselor I find myself working in collaboration with faculty a critical part of my job. I know that we have a course to cover collaboration but I would have prefer it go into more detail about handling different personalities and teaching styles and finding the balances of accommodating the teacher and what is best for the student while keeping a healthy and professional working relationship with staff.

The program does a great job preparing us for the personal counseling issues that may come into our office, but I would've liked more training in the administrative duties of a school counselor. Things like student schedules, credit checks, graduation requirements, college applications, etc. are critical to high school counselors and it would've been helpful to have a course covering these type of things so I didn't have to learn quite as much on the job.

Table A-3

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion in the MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program.

Comments

Treatment planning

Preparing for collaborating with other providers

Mindfulness-based interventions and DBT

No- it was an EXCELLENT education and I would not trade it for the world.

I would have appreciated more support in transitioning into the workforce.

Group therapy. We did not have the opportunity to take a group therapy class or elective, and I feel at a disadvantage in regards to this.

Attention to military culture, especially given the location of the school.

Dialectical Behavior therapy, Trauma Informed Care, Case management.

Treating personality disorders, a stronger course on substance abuse (including how it impacts the family, working through co-dependency)

It would be great to include any basic business classes for those wanting to go into private practice. How to run a business, working with insurance, and creating budgets would have been helpful to learn.

One area I don't feel was touched on quite thoroughly is trauma. Perhaps I feel this way because I work so much with trauma now, but this was one area that I felt clueless about when I first started at SDYS. Also, I am working on building a private practice and that has been a tremendous learning curve as well. Perhaps a class on private practice, which is more geared toward the business/marketing side would be helpful.

More skills related to application of therapeutic techniques, a few more challenging classes, more on substance abuse - this is such a common issue in families and could be more in depth than a 2 credit class; ways to incorporate family therapy techniques with individuals. More preparation for actually getting a job, not just about licensure. Also, the cost of the program is astronomical compared to the humble pay of a counselor, so that's worth looking at.

I believe the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students are a major asset and learning opportunity that was not utilized during my time in the program. The program focused more on stereotypes instead of actually relating and understanding different cultures. The brief discussions of culture and how it impacts clients were had in an informative instead of collaborative method. As a minority I felt isolated and undervalued, I believe the program including faculty lacked cultural diversity along with the cohort.

Appendix B

Table B-1

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding One Course and/or Experience in the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling That Benefitted Them the Most

Comments

Case studies

Group supervision definitely

Law and Ethics: prepared me for at risk situations, Crisis Intervention.

A course in the leadership program proved to be the most beneficial, but only due to the instructor.

Practicum supervision - the feedback, consultation, and ability to conceptualize as a group helped prepare me with a variety of solutions and intervention strategies for current clients.

I really enjoyed the course on substances use/abuse/dependence that was provided while I was enrolled at USD. I don't believe the individual has taught again since, but I really enjoyed her teaching style, information shared, and the content of her course has certainly been helpful to me working in the field of dual diagnosis treatment.

Table B-2

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding One Course and/or Experience in the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling That Benefitted Them the Most.

Comments

Applied theories

Traveling Globally was a fantastic experience.

Multicultural study abroad trip and theory class.

Studying Abroad and Fieldwork/practicum placements

Learning about emergencies and disasters on school campuses.

Fieldwork because it allowed hands-on experience to practice skills under supervision.

Definitely my crisis class! My school has experienced a few crises this year and I have been well equipped to handle them.

The Crisis and Trauma course was extremely helpful, and my knowledge in that area helped me to get my current job.

Practicum placements - on the job experience was the most valuable, and then getting feedback from supervisors and peers.

I would say my fieldwork internship was the most beneficial. I had a great site supervisor and [Professor X] was--continues to be--a wonderful mentor.

Table B-2 (continued)

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding One Course and/or Experience in the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling That Benefitted Them the Most.

Comments

Any courses from [Professor X] because everything was so applicable to my career not just theoretical.

Multicultural Counseling because it opened my eyes and gave me new perspectives. It has been influential in my personal and my professional life.

The best experience would be practicum and interning. There was nothing like watching a counselor in action and seeing the ins and outs of what happens at a school.

My international experience. Going to the Daraja Academy in Kenya, Africa. This experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It significantly broadened my understanding of multiculturalism. I learned so much about other cultures and myself through this experience.

It would have to be studying abroad. Having gone to Japan and Costa Rica it really pushed the boundaries of multi-cultural counseling. Importantly provided a world-view respect to my practice as a school counselor.

I truly appreciate and took advantage of the trips provided by SOLES global. I was completely changed and transformed through travel and became a much more culturally competent counselor, which has really helped me to empathize with my students. The memories and experiences from each trip hold a special place in my heart, I will be forever grateful to USD for providing those opportunities.

Global Studies - Daraja Academy (Spring 2011,2012). [The Director of Field Services] was instrumental in my development as a counselor. Under her guidance and mentorship, I was able to develop my leadership and counseling skills. Hands down, Daraja Academy's Global Studies experience was the best educational experience I have received to date. It taught me skills that encompass multiculturalism, counseling and leadership.

Fieldwork seminar. Since I was not exposed to working with different types of school settings, debriefing during this class and hearing the perspectives of other colleagues helped me the most upon being called for an interview in a school setting that I was not experienced in. I think the fact that I was living vicariously through my cohort's stories allowed me to build confidence in understanding what other type of issues could arise outside of the school environments/settings I was used to.

The second year fieldwork experience was the greatest benefit. It gave me the opportunity to learn from a counselor in the school environment as regular days were unfolding. It had a great combination of personal counseling opportunities as well as the administrative duties that a counselor is faced with on a daily basis. Being able to then come together in the seminar class weekly to hear from other students about their fieldwork experience was a great addition.

Table B-3

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding One Course and/or Experience in the MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program That Benefitted Them the Most.

Comments

Study Abroad

The opportunity to travel abroad.

Couples and Sex Therapy, because those are my target clients.

Practicum class, because it addressed so many of the actual issues of doing therapy, including self of the therapist.

Practicum, because it offered real-time evaluation of what and how I was implementing with regards to techniques and interventions.

Supervision provided me with support, new ideas that were not offered at my site, and combined knowledge from all courses.

Developmental Psychopathology: sparked my interest in the effects of childhood trauma on the developing brain/neuroplasticity.

Practicum placement at UCSD Family Medicine was the most important aspect. I gained experience working with a diverse population and specialized training in medical family therapy.

Practicum placement at a UCSD facility was by far the most beneficial aspect of the program. Working with psychiatrists I learned how to diagnose, conceptualize cases in a concrete and rapid manner, and work with a variety of other mental health professionals outside working with other therapists.

Definitely my three semesters of Practicum because it threw me into the "real world" of being a therapist. I loved working at Phoenix House and I learned so much about myself through the supervision I received on site and in the classroom from the professors that worked with me in group and individual supervision.

I'm not sure it was the most beneficial (probably Ethics would be the most practically-relevant class), but one of the most informative and interesting classes I took was [the] Couples and Sex class. Of course my practicum experience was invaluable, but by far one of the best things about the program has been the enduring friendships I gained, which have supported me both personally and professionally ever since I graduated 6 years ago.

It's a toss up between Couples and Sex, and Family Systems. Couples and Sex introduced the concept of being able to address difficult issues in the therapy room in a respectful, welcoming and helpful fashion. This concept has shaped work in other areas such as trauma and sexual abuse. Family Systems was extremely beneficial in the way it taught us to think about all the different moving parts that play a role in any presenting issue. I also loved theories... the course work overall was so interesting.

Substance abuse class because I became a CAADC and provided substance abuse treatment daily for 3 years; group therapy class because I also provided daily group therapy and [Professor X] was a great teacher, and practicum because of the experience and support from different peer groups and advisors. Theories class with Michelle because it was the most challenging. I also enjoyed the day trip to Mexico. The experience working at hospice was great and I also got to work in a middle school as part of that practicum. Apparently, it is hard to choose just one because there were many valuable experiences.

Appendix C

Table C-1

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Ways the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace.

Comments

Prepared me for assessments and clinical work.

Apply skills, knowledge, competence from areas such as addictions counseling, human development, human sexuality, and risk assessment. Also able to conceptualize and think in terms of the system.

Practicum training and supervision was indispensable to being a competent counselor. It was where I got individualized attention and really dug into real-life cases with guidance. The strength of the supervision and components of the program that emphasized self-care and personal reflection/therapy made me a much stronger therapist than many graduates I see these days.

Table C-2

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Ways the MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace

Comments

I feel prepared to work with students in a variety of situations.

Teaching to me create systems for the school instead of individual work for myself

enhanced my writing skills in general, helped me be more assertive and efficient in my job

Helped me to become a visionary for counseling at my school to plan and develop comprehensive programs.

Collaborative action research helped gain a lot of insight as to the lack of interagency collaboration that occurs on a daily basis at all professional settings.

I learned how to be a school counselor through my program at USD. The practicum, fieldwork experience, and classes provided me with the skills necessary for my position.

Allowed me to think critically about school wide issues, and come up with creative solutions. I also learned the importance of constantly trying to measure my effectiveness.

I learned all the basics for creating and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, and how to evaluate it to see what is working and what needs to be modified.

My professors continue to be involved in my development as a counselor. Phone calls, emails, and skype sessions including they have met my new family.

My counseling skills were enhanced, however, I obtained much of my workplace skills during an internship in higher education, which was separate from the school counseling program.

It gave me the tools and resources I needed to land a job and be successful in what I do. It also helped me to build a network of colleagues (peers and professors) to lean on when I need to brainstorm with other professionals.

The school counseling program prepared me in a multitude of ways to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses the needs of all student populations. It also gave me a very well-rounded approach to school counseling and emphasized the importance of providing a program that is sensitive to multiculturalism. Lastly, the program stressed how vital data and action research is in our field. Completing an action research project and developing a needs assessment tool was very helpful in making my work more effective.

If it weren't for the opportunities that USD provided for me to gain hands-on experience in the field through my time in grad school I know I would not be where I am now. The Counseling program provided me with essential skills to be successful in my career. I remember how awkward it was to video-tape myself counseling someone for the first time but it was after watching the videos and receiving constructive feedback that I grew the most. The faculty was supportive, encouraging, honest and compassionate and the friends and colleagues that I have now, because of the program, are some of the best!

Table C-3

Sample of Graduates' Comments Regarding Ways the MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace.

Comments

Cultural competency, diagnoses, excellent practicum placement to prepare

Set me up with the right skills, knowledge and disposition for the clinical work.

It did in every way. I didn't work in the field of counseling before my graduate studies.

The program provided me with the basic foundation and principles to practice as an MFT.

Practicum offered real experience and constructive feedback from peers and advisors.

Research based collaborative care at a level of education that far outweighs my colleagues.

Being able to apply the appropriate evidence-based method of treatment based on the needs of the client.

The faculty taught me to dig deeper than the superficial issues that may present, to focus on process and not just the content.

It gave me a higher level of professionalism, knowledge, and capacity to do my work well in a variety of situations with varying populations.

Emphasis on theory and case conceptualization far surpasses colleagues from other MFT graduate programs. Law and Ethics is above standards compared with colleagues from other MFT graduate programs.

I know that I received the best quality education from the most exemplary faculty- spending time with my peers at my current job, I can see the ways that USD prepared me more effectively than some other schools. I really believe it started and ended with the faculty I learned from as teachers, mentors and supervisors.

The live supervision offered by my program was pivotal in my growth as a therapist. Moreover, the curriculum taught us better than other MFT programs how to think and assess from a biopsychosocial perspective. I interview a lot of interns in my current position and USD graduates by far give the best and most well-rounded responses to vignettes and clinical scenarios.

After receiving my undergraduate degree in Human Development, I worked as an entry-level mental health counselor, and I felt very unprepared (e.g., how to help a suicidal client) and fairly ineffective in this role. After graduate school I definitely felt much more competent in providing helpful interventions and dealing with crisis situations.

Appendix D

Table D-1

Sample of Graduates' Testimonials Regarding a Wonderful MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Experience

Comments

I really appreciated specific professors being available for career focus advice, not just the one that was our advisor. I also, benefitted from the professional aspect of being asked and included in presenting at conferences.

I was lucky enough to make some very close friends while I was in the program, we continue to meet weekly to share personal and professional life experiences- they were the greatest gift I've received from USD. I am also very thankful for [Professor X, who] continued to keep in touch with me post-graduation and assisted with my letters of rec for PhD programs I've applied to. [Professor X] is always quick to address any questions or concerns I have, I'm very thankful for [the] assistance.

The time spent with faculty was priceless. Each faculty knew my name, my story, my passion, my clinical orientation. Not only that, they cared about making my educational experience the best for ME. Many of my peers would complain but reassure themselves that they were simply "advocating." They weren't. They were complaining, condescending and entitled. Staff recognized who could think critically, approach problems with a solutions-focused orientation, and move forward. The faculty were critical to my education.

Table D-2

Sample of Graduates' Testimonials Regarding a Wonderful MA in Counseling Program – Specialization in School Counseling Experience

Comments

I felt very supported by my professors while in the program.

My degree in school counseling from USD prepared me extremely well for my career as a charter school counselor.

USD has provided a foundation and guidance for my practice as a school counselor. The relationships developed with my cohort and professors has continued even after leaving USD.

I am very satisfied with my experience in the School Counseling program. My close interactions with professors and practical experience prepared me for a job immediately after graduation, and has allowed me to feel confident as a new employee. (Danielle Kuzmanovic)

The professors at USD are incredibly knowledgeable and truly individualized my education to prepare me for my specific career path. Since graduation my fellow cohort members have become trusted colleagues in my field and professors have become my mentors.

My experience at USD was challenging, exciting, and filled with opportunities to grow and learn from a variety of people and experiences. From my professors to my colleagues to various community members, I was surrounded by people who inspired me and pushed me to grow both personally and professionally. The USD SOLES community is a support network that I consistently utilize even after graduation. (Rachel LeGrand)

My graduate experience at USD was one of the most amazing times in my life! I learned so much about myself and others. I received an incredible education that truly helped prepare me for real-world experience. The proof is in the pudding! I was hired within 3 months of graduation. I have received such positive praise and feedback from both my colleagues and students, and I have had such an overall successful journey within my first two years as a School Counselor. I feel so fortunate to have had this wonderful opportunity. At times I wish I could do it all over again!! (Melissa McConnell)

Advice to graduates: Allow yourself to be changed, welcome and listen to constructive criticism, don't be discouraged and always prove your passion. It can sometimes be hard to let go of some parts of who we are to allow space for who we are becoming so give yourself the time and space to do this. If you let it, the counseling profession will transform you. You will learn so much from professors, professionals, classmates and students, so be open. Human instinct tells us to be defensive when we are criticized but in fieldwork, under supervision, it is critical to use feedback to help you grow and make you a better counselor. Ask for feedback from everyone, as often as possible, you won't be sorry you did. I encourage you not to be discouraged about the lack of school counseling jobs or the state of counseling in general because you will find where you are meant to be. It might require some extra work on your part after graduation like volunteering at numerous schools or taking sub positions, don't give up! I don't really think that this one needs explanation...you will be challenged, especially in interviews and with select students, to prove your passion you won't be successful in the counseling profession if you aren't passionate about what you do. Get ready to change lives, it's the best job there is!

Table D-3

Sample of Graduates' Testimonials Regarding a Wonderful MA in Marital and Family Therapy Program Experience

Comments

The MFT program created the jumping off point for which to become a skilled and intuitive clinician. The USD program has an excellent reputation in the community that has opened doors for me.

I had an incredible experience in the MFT program at USD and I would recommend it to anyone looking to enter the field. The professors are not only expert therapists, but they truly care about you and invest in you as an individual. The lessons I learned in the classroom, at my Practicum site and from my cohort and supervisors inform my professional and personal life every day and I am so grateful for the life-changing education I received. (Alyssa Halberg, MFT)

My decision to obtain a master's degree in marital and family therapy from USD has changed my life. I am currently working in a field I love and feel confident in my ability to make a difference in the lives of families, couples and individuals. My time at USD provided me with the skills I needed to fulfill my professional vocation.

I really value my experience at USD in both my personal and professional development. My education helped me seek employment quickly; my only challenge was the license I chose as an MFT is not well recognized in my home state. I could have benefited from the counseling program; however I did choose the path of family therapy for a reason. I've been able to utilize my skills daily in my career so far, and look forward to continued growth as a therapist. I enjoyed the teachers and the small class size.

The program at USD is comprehensive and integrative. From my classes to my practicum training experience, each and every element was present to fully expose me to the breadth of the MFT field. I found equal education in concepts related to integrative and collaborative health care, private practice, non-profit agencies, and government organizations. As a result, I have successfully been able to practice in all four of these areas. The faculty is highly-trained and they have a passion for imparting their expansive knowledge to the students in a way that is warm, compassionate, and inspiring. I don't think I would have experienced the same caliber of education or training anywhere else. - Kourtney DeBoer, LMFT

I am so proud of the education I received from USD. Compared to other programs, USD faculty really took the time to put in extra effort where it counts. Before my program even began, I felt like I had the support of my faculty advisor; I was moving to a new city where I didn't know anyone, but that first interaction with him made me feel comfortable and confident about my decision.

Now that I have more experience in the field and interact with graduates from all different programs, I appreciate even more that our practicum sites were pre-selected and screened out. A proper traineeship is a critical start to this career and I'm grateful that USD minimized the stress of that process by giving us pre-selected and approved programs to choose from. This is the envy of my colleagues who graduated from different programs! The level of support that we received, the quality of our supervision and the sincere and honest feedback have stayed with me through the years.

Further, USD's reputation continues to serve me by standing out positively on my resume, and by giving clients an extra ounce of confidence and hope that I can help, before treatment even begins. I'm honestly grateful for my experience and in retrospect, would do it all over again. Thank you USD, you've really made a difference in my life.
-Jennifer Whetstone (maiden name Galvis) Class of 2010