



2017-  
2018  
ALUMNI  
SURVEY  
REPORT

6/28/2018

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 2018 semester, SOLES Office of Accreditation and Assessment at USD administered an alumni survey. One hundred-one of the three hundred thirty-seven SOLES Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni responded to the survey, yielding a 30% 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	85	28	33%
School Counseling	112	26	23%
Marital and Family Therapy	140	47	34%
Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department Total	337	101	30%

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

Figure 1. Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Survey Respondents by Academic Year (n=101)

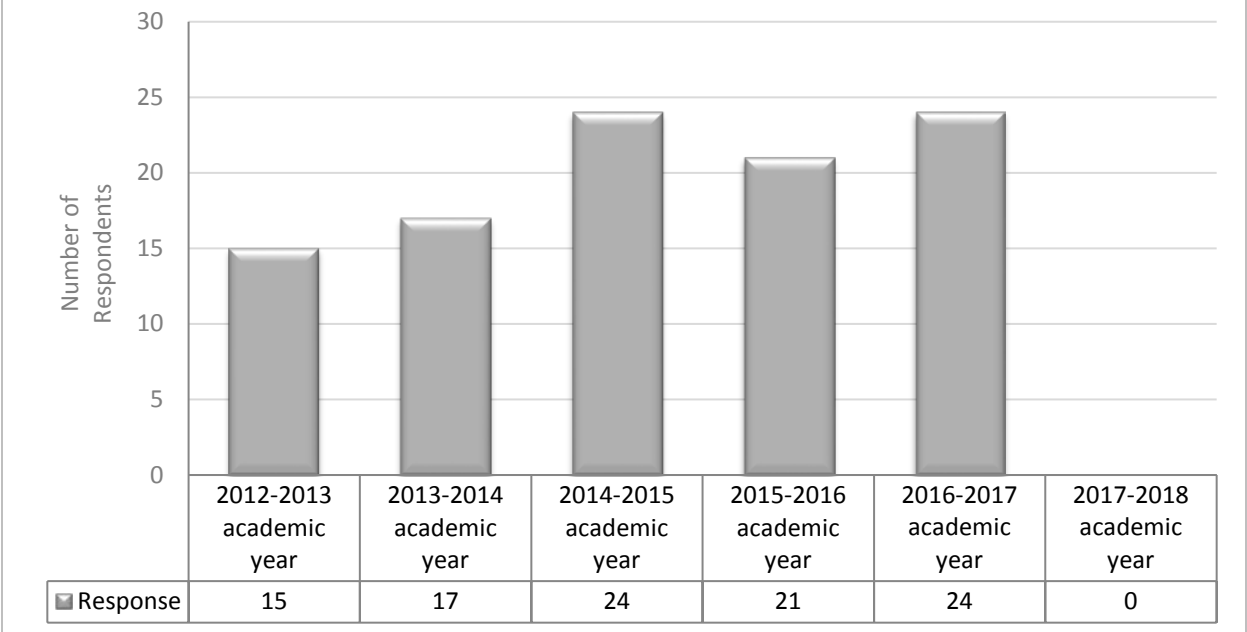
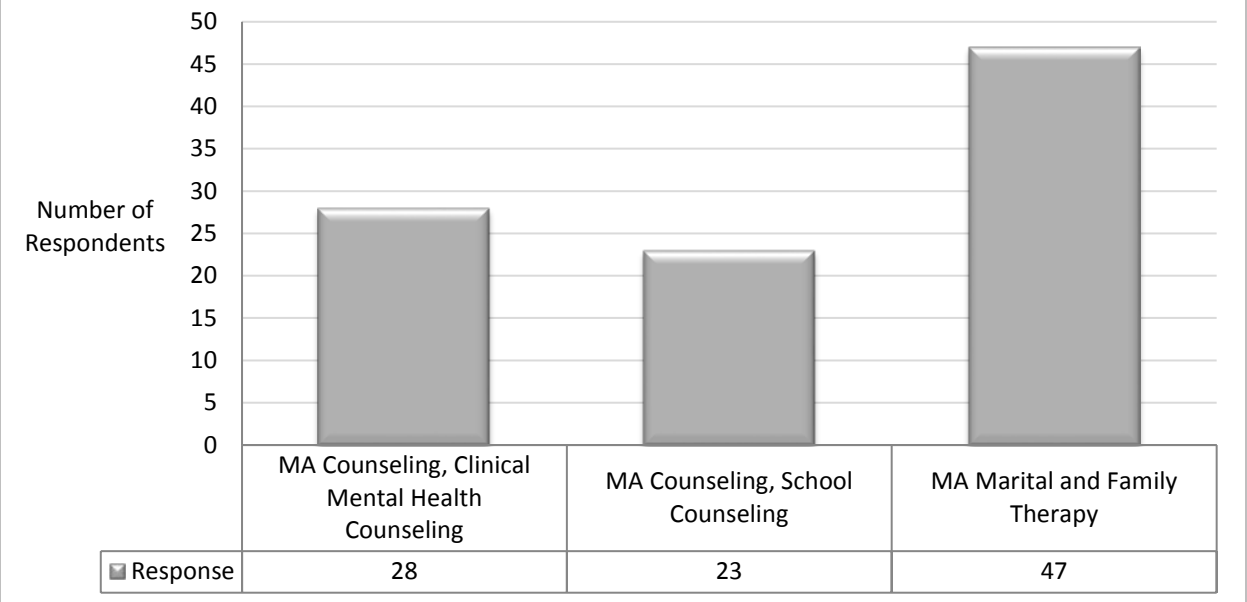
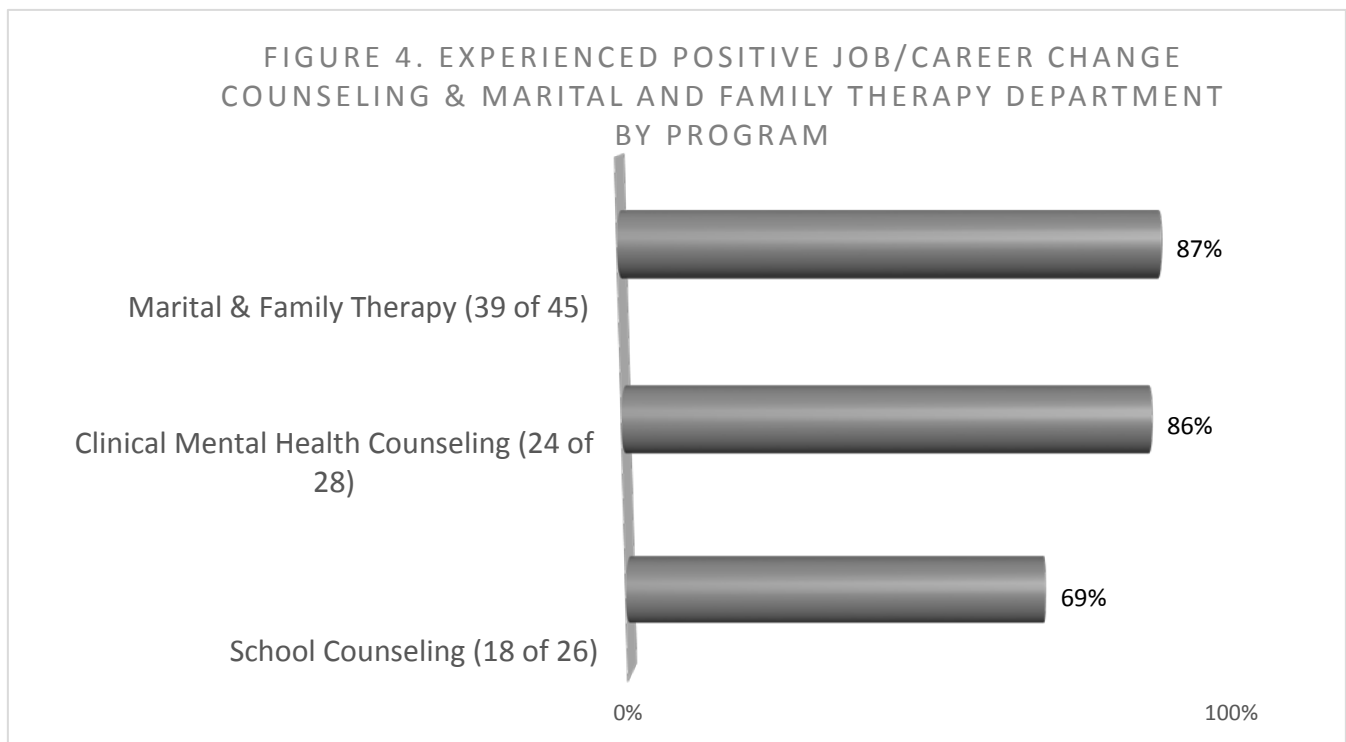
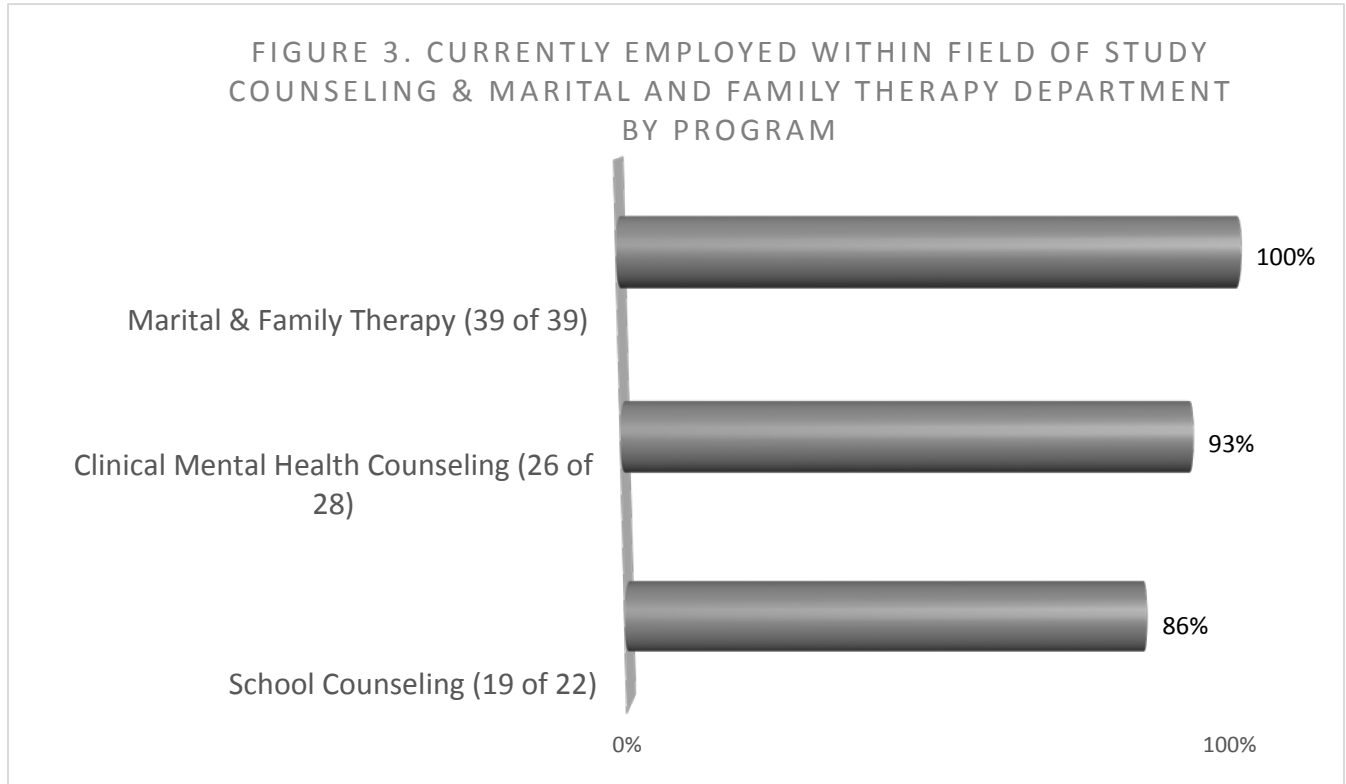


Figure 2. Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Alumni Survey Respondents by Specialization or Program (n=98)



## 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 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 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

CMFT Department Alumni Regions of Employment

<b>Region</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
California	58	80%
New York	3	4%
Washington	2	2%
Arizona	1	1%
Florida	1	1%
Illinois	1	1%
Japan	1	1%
Michigan	1	1%
Missouri	1	1%
Ohio	1	1%
South Carolina	1	1%
Virginia	1	1%
Washington DC	1	1%
Wisconsin	1	1%
Switzerland	1	1%

Table 2

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


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Adult Outpatient and Domestic Violence Program Manager	Marriage and Family Therapist
Assessment Therapist	Mental Health Case Worker
Associate Admissions Clinician	Mental Health Therapist and Mental Health Case Manager
Associate Marriage and Family Therapist	Middle School Counselor
Bilingual Staff Therapist	Office Manager
Child Youth & Family (CYF) Bilingual Clinician	Owner of Private Practice
Clinical Coordinator	Primary Therapist
Clinical Social Worker	Professional School Counselor
Clinical Therapist	Program Therapist
Clinical Training Coordinator	PSR Specialist Bilingual
College and Career School Counselor	Psychiatric Technician
Director of Behavioral Health	Psychosocial Rehabilitation Specialist
Director of Clinical Outreach	Quality Assurance Supervisor
Doctoral Candidate	Research Health Science Specialist
Family Therapist	Residential Program Director
Forensic Mental Health Clinician	Resilience Trainer
Graduate Research Assistant	School Counselor
High School Counselor	Services Coordinator
Human Services Coordinator	Social Worker
Integrative Family and Systems Therapist	Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator

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Table 3

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

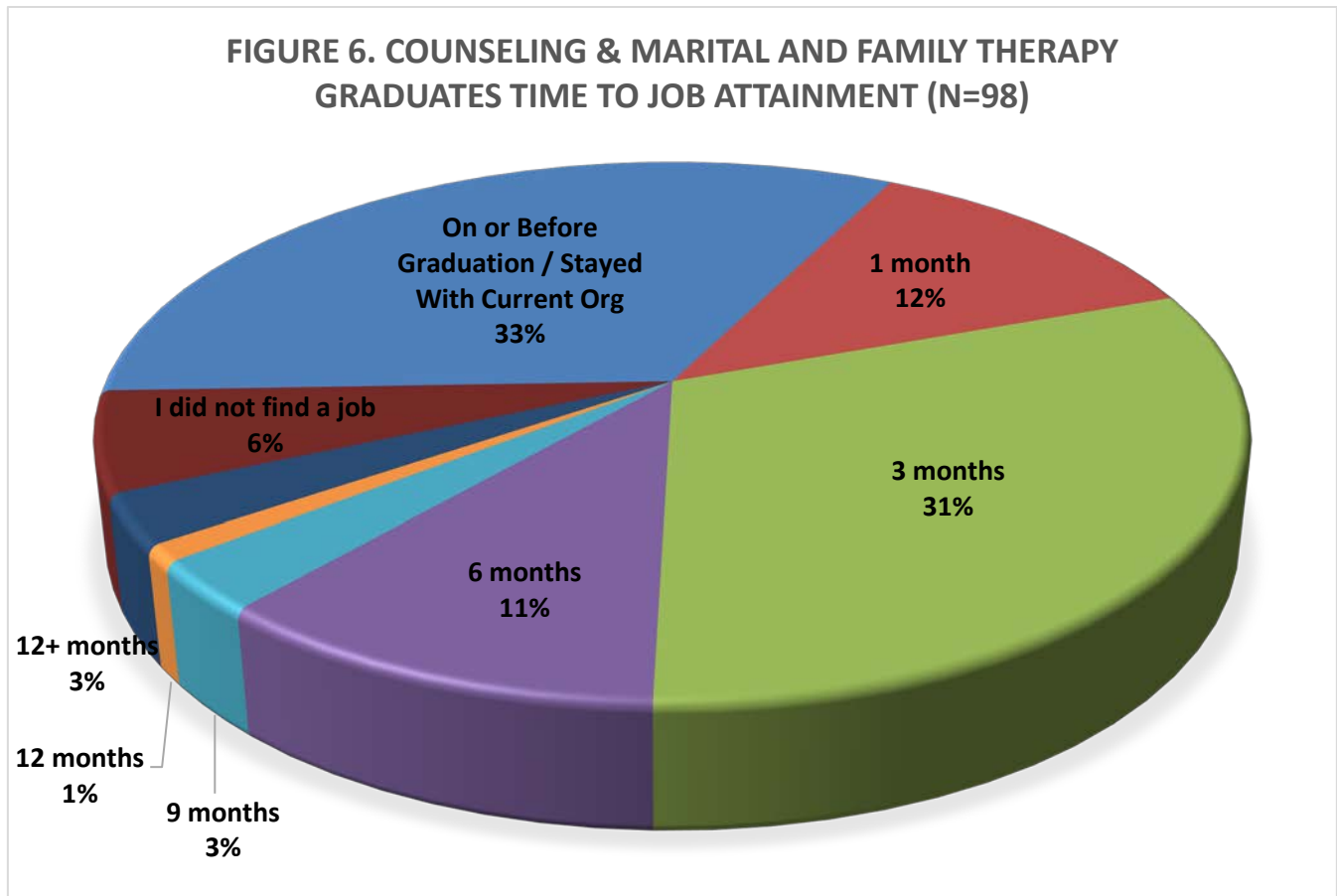
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Amanecer Community Counseling Services	Premier Fitness Camp
BAM Management	Rady Children's Hospital
Bellingham Public Schools	San Diego Center for Children
Cajon Valley Union School District	San Diego County Office of Education
Cathedral Catholic High School	San Diego Youth Services
Community Research Foundation	San Dieguito Union High School District
Felton Institute Family Service Agency of San Francisco	San Mateo County- Correctional Health Dept
Florida State University	Santee School District
Foundations Recovery Network	Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital
Gompers Preparatory Academy	Stanford Youth Solutions
Hanbleceya Treatment Center	Sweetwater Union High School District
Kansas City Public Schools	Synergy Clinical Research
Liberty Union High School District	The O'Farrell Community Charter School
Lowry and Associates Counseling and Educational Services	Thomas R. Pollicita Middle School
Mary Washington Healthcare	UC Los Angeles
McAlister Institute	UC San Diego
Mental Health Systems	Union Springs High School
Nationwide Children's Hospital	University of San Diego
North County Lifeline	Veterans Affairs
Oceanview Psychiatric Health Facility	Virginia Tech
Palomar Family Counseling Service	Vista Hill Foundation
Poway Unified School District	Western Youth Services

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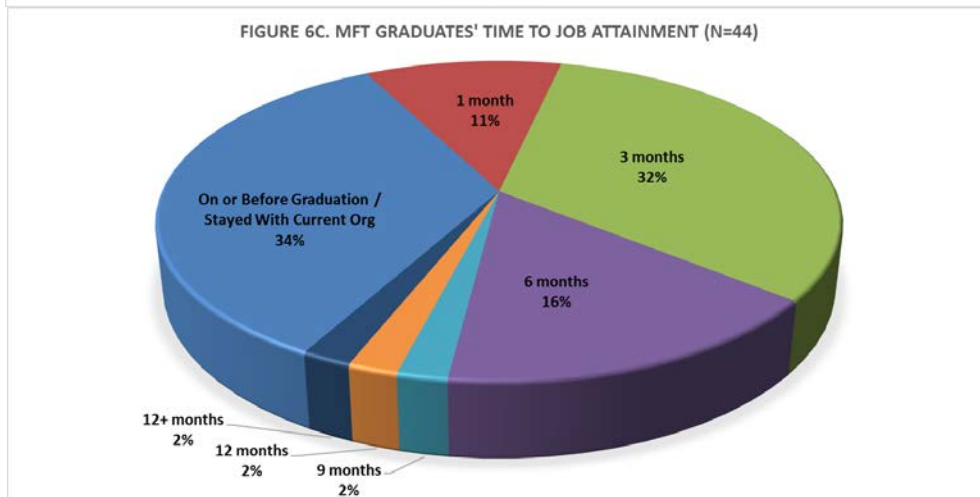
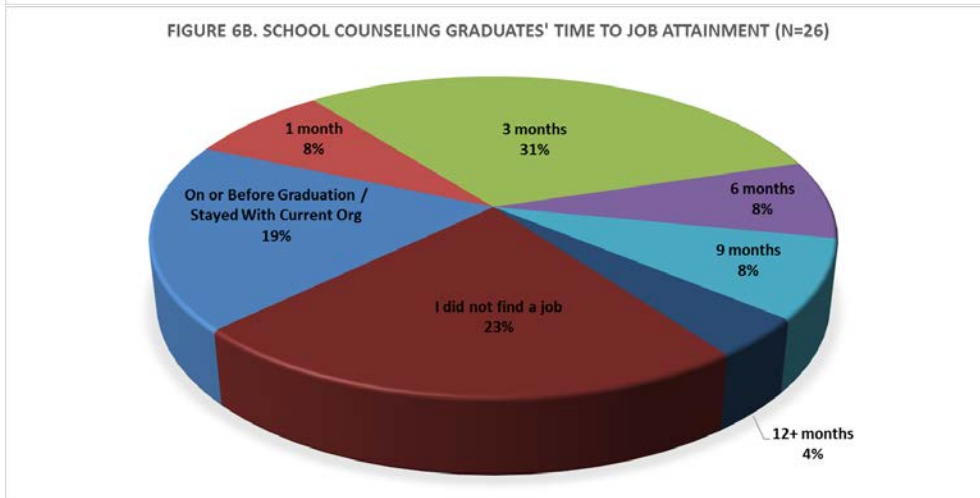
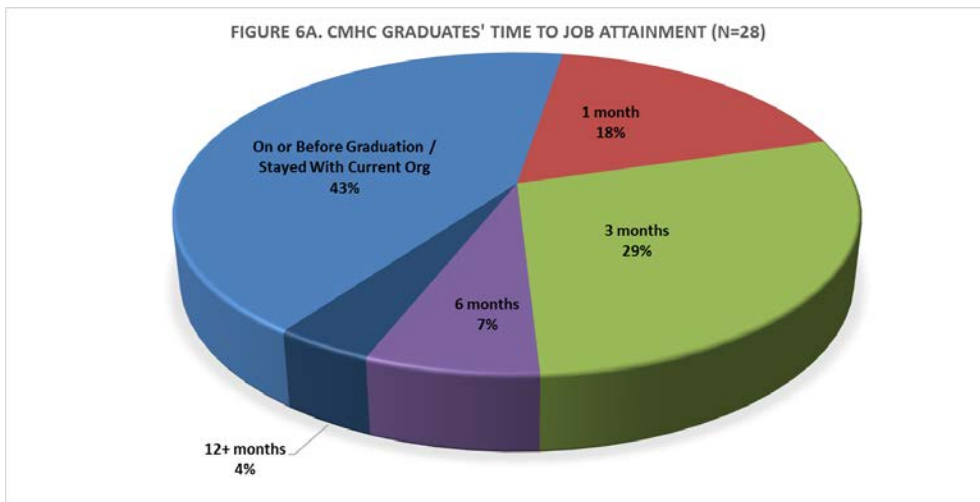
## Time from Graduation to Job Attainment – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked *how long it took to obtain a job upon graduation*, 33% of alumni indicated they had obtained employment on or before graduation. The remaining alumni found employment within 1 month of graduation (12%), 3 months of graduation (31%), 6 months of graduation (11%), 9 months of graduation (3%), 12 months of graduation (1%), 12 or more months after graduation (3%), 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.



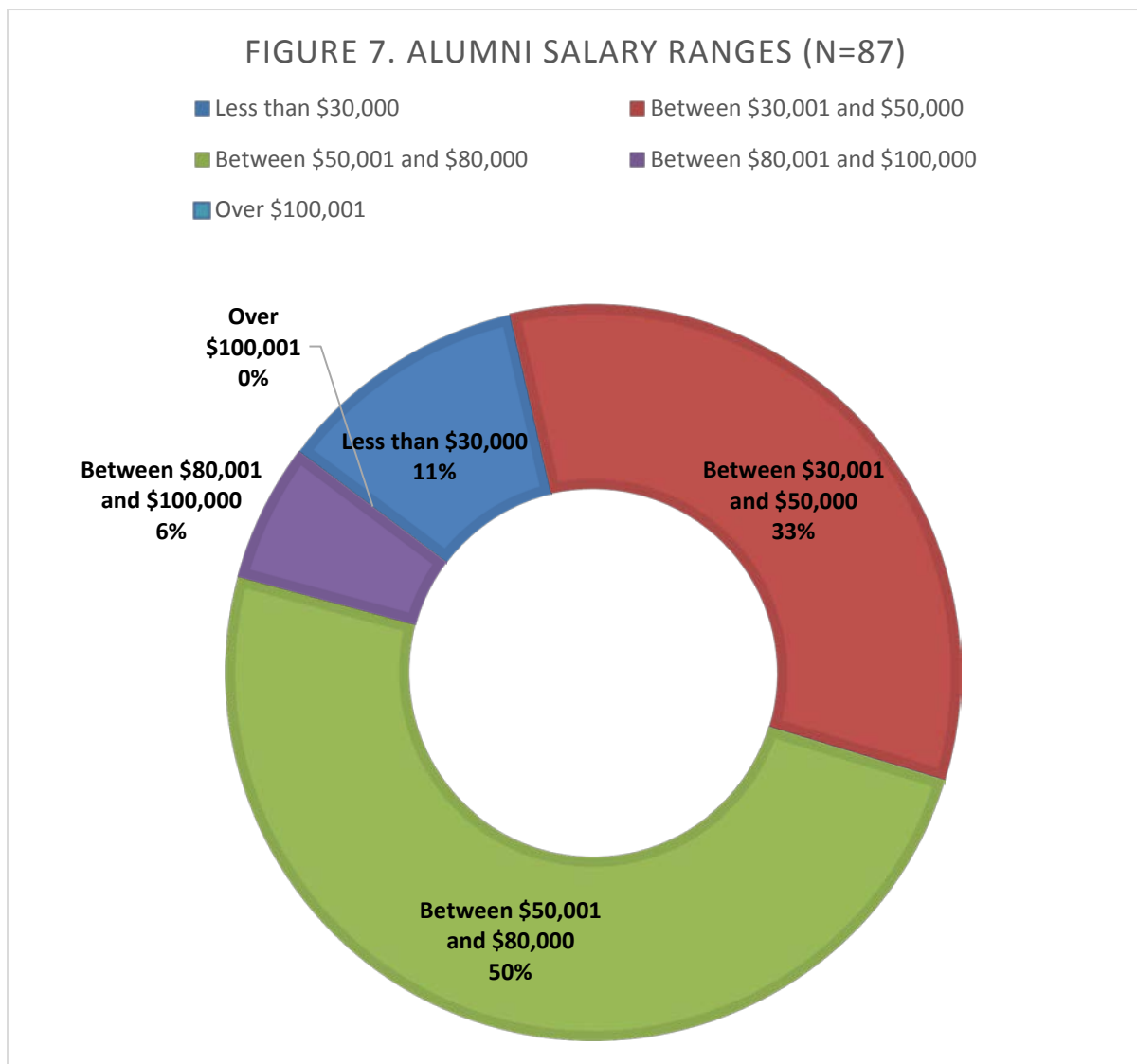


*Time from Graduation to Job Attainment for each Specialization or Program within the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department*



## Alumni Salary Ranges – Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Department

When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked to indicate their *current salary range*, 33% of alumni selected between \$30,001 and \$50,000. The remaining alumni reported the following salary ranges: less than \$30,000 (11%), between \$50,001 and \$80,000 (50%), between \$80,001 and \$100,000 (6%), 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=27)

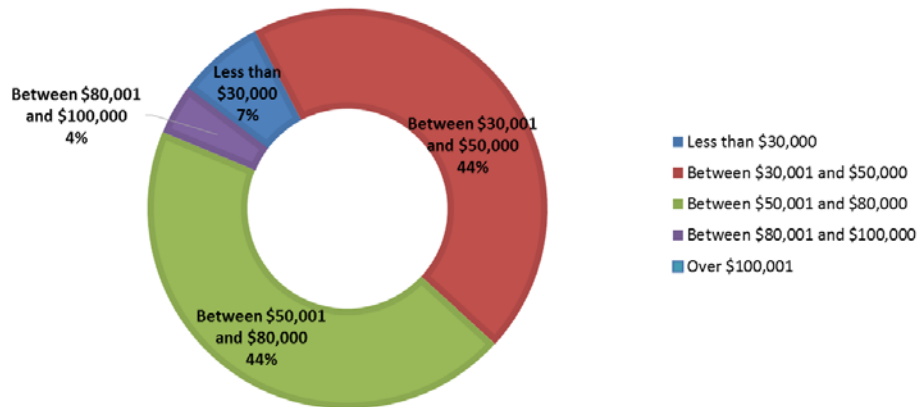


FIGURE 7B. SCHOOL COUNSELING ALUMNI SALARY RANGES (N=22)

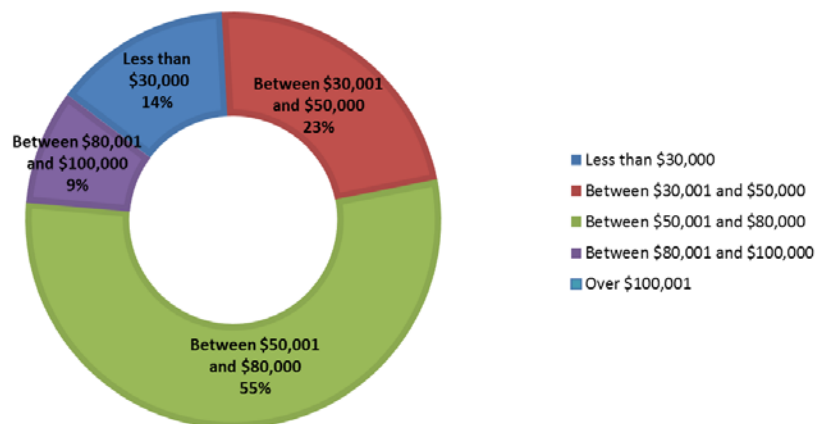
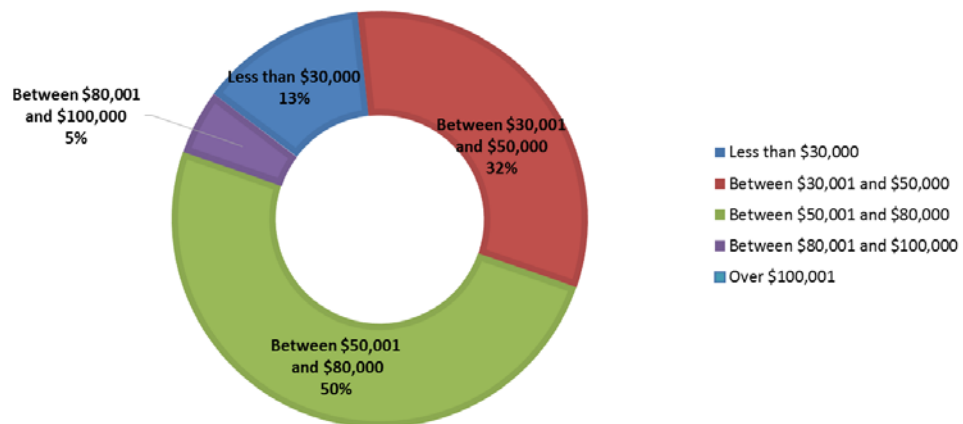
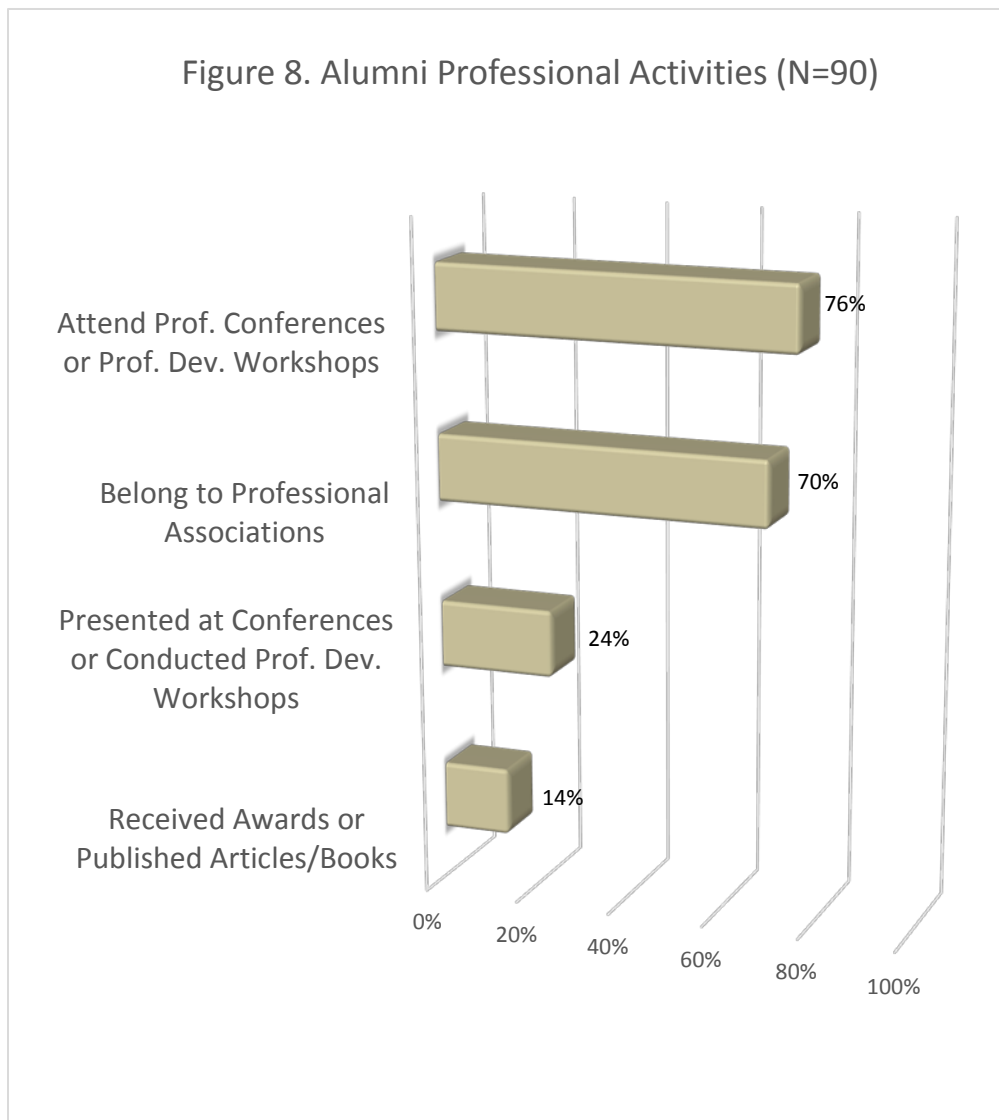


FIGURE 7C. MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY ALUMNI SALARY RANGES (N=38)



## 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, 76% of alumni reported attending professional conferences or professional development workshops, with 24% 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 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*

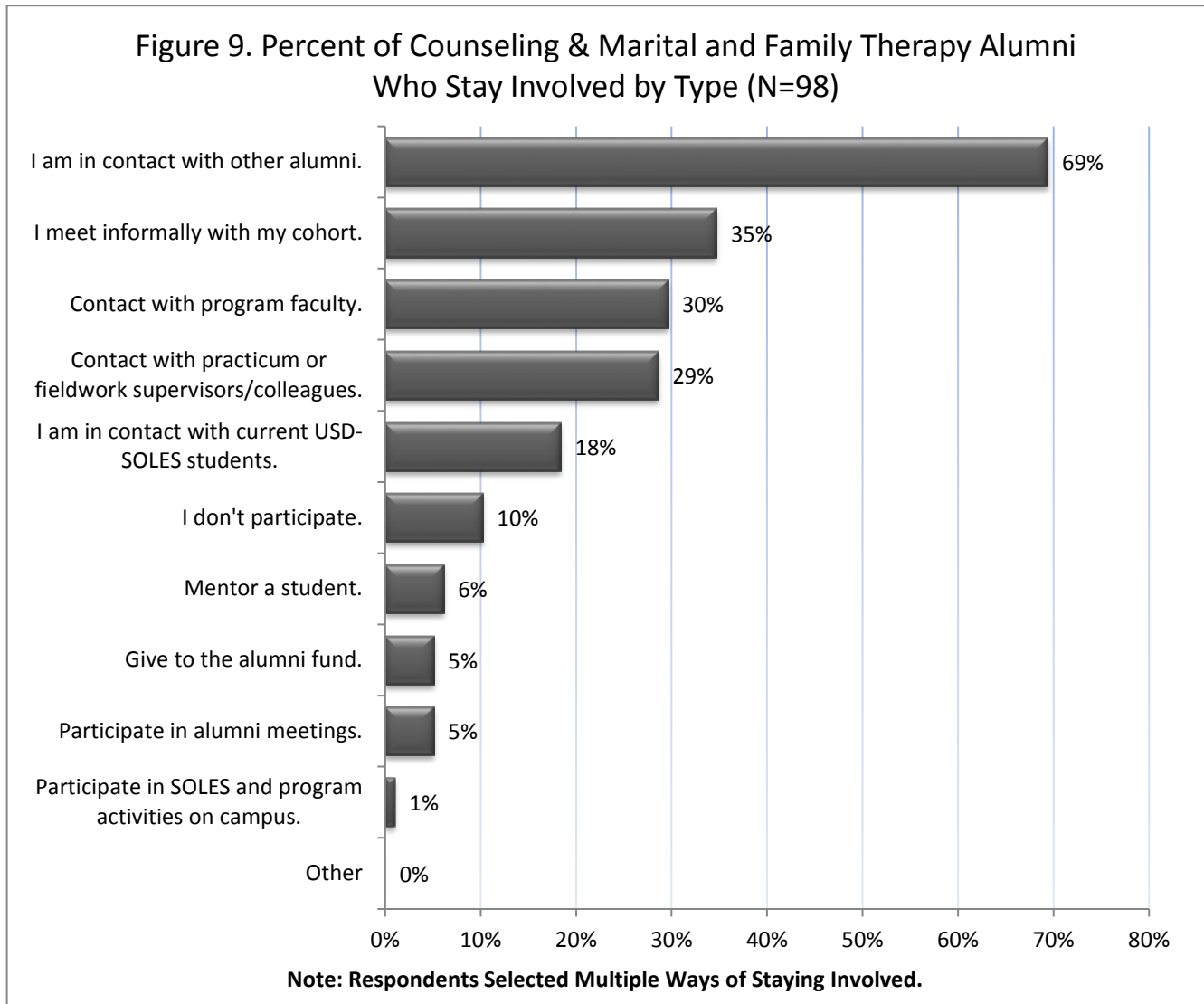
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American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	California Association of School Counselors
American Counseling Association	Chi Sigma Iota
American Humanistic Counseling Association	Collaborative Family Healthcare Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association	Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education
American Psychological Association	National Association for College Admission Counseling
American School Counselor Association	National Board for Certified Counselors
Association for LGBT Issues in Counseling	Postpartum Health Alliance
Association of African American Educators - San Diego	Psi Chi
California Association for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors	San Diego Psychoanalytic Center
California Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	

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

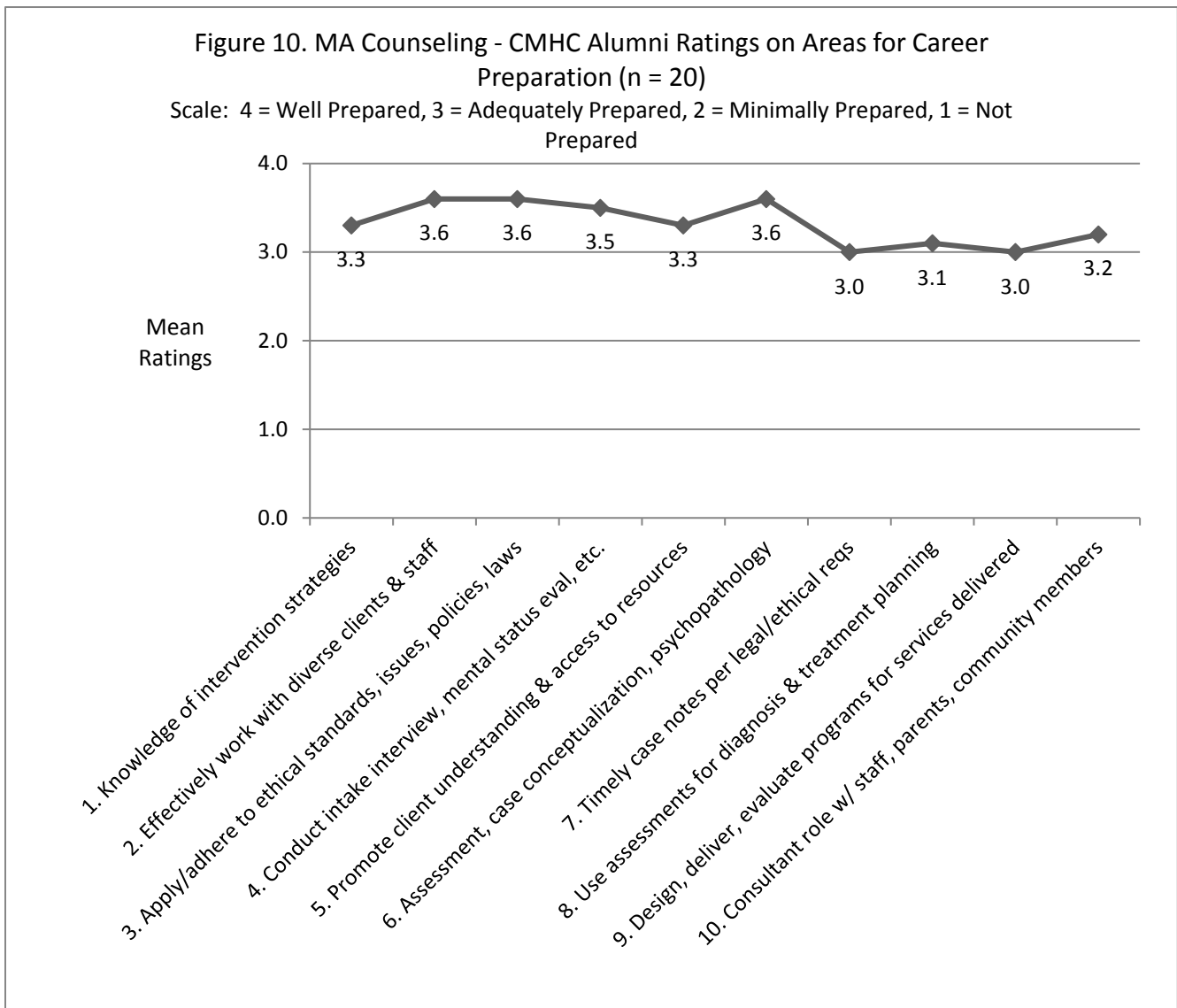
When Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy alumni were asked *how they have stayed involved with USD-SOLES*, students reported a variety of activities. These activities included staying in contact with alumni, current students, practicum or fieldwork supervisors, and faculty, meeting with their cohort 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

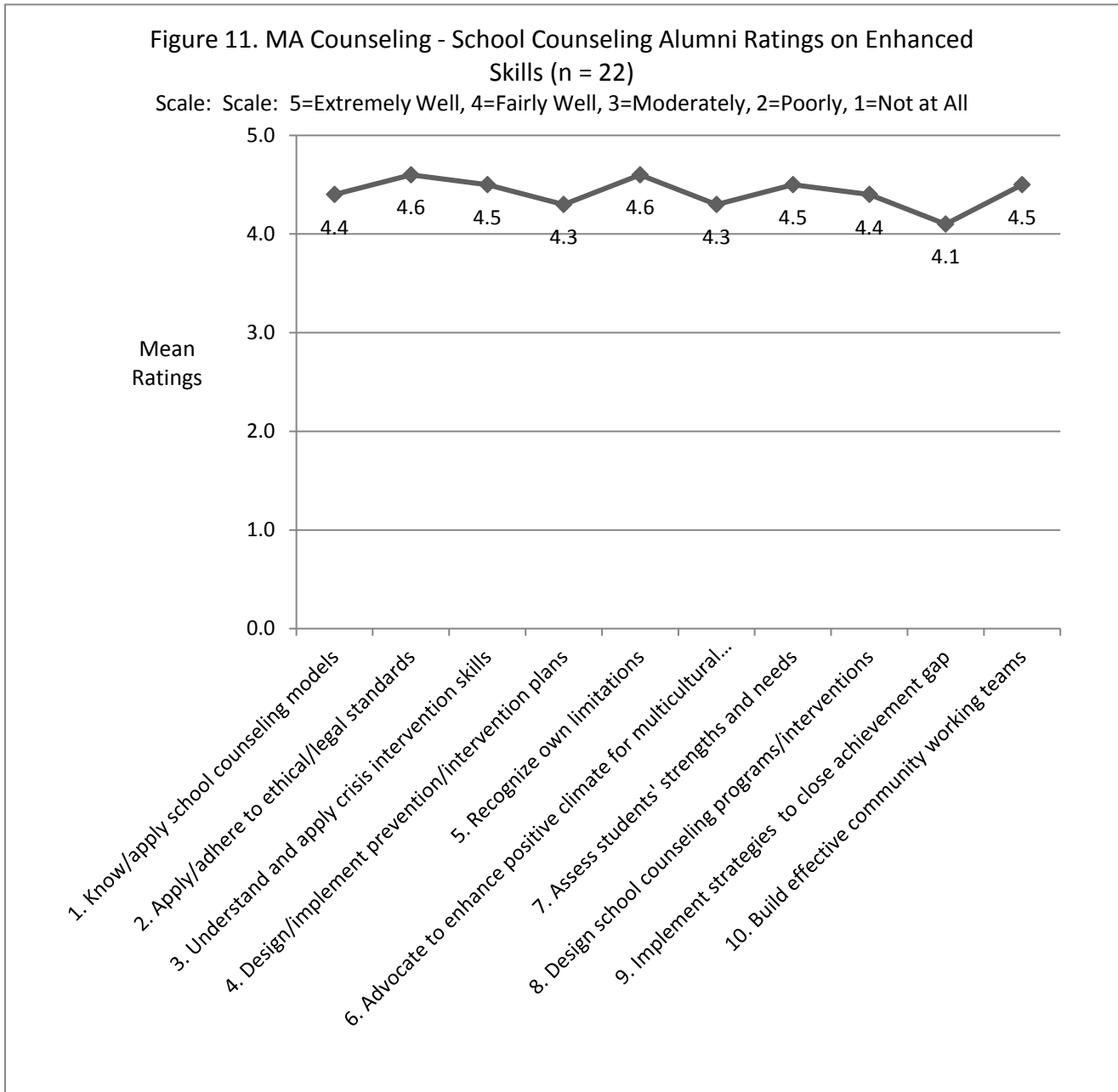
### *MA in Counseling with a Specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

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 8.8 (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 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 ten items regarding the School Counseling specialization had mean ratings in the desired four to five range (see Figure 11).



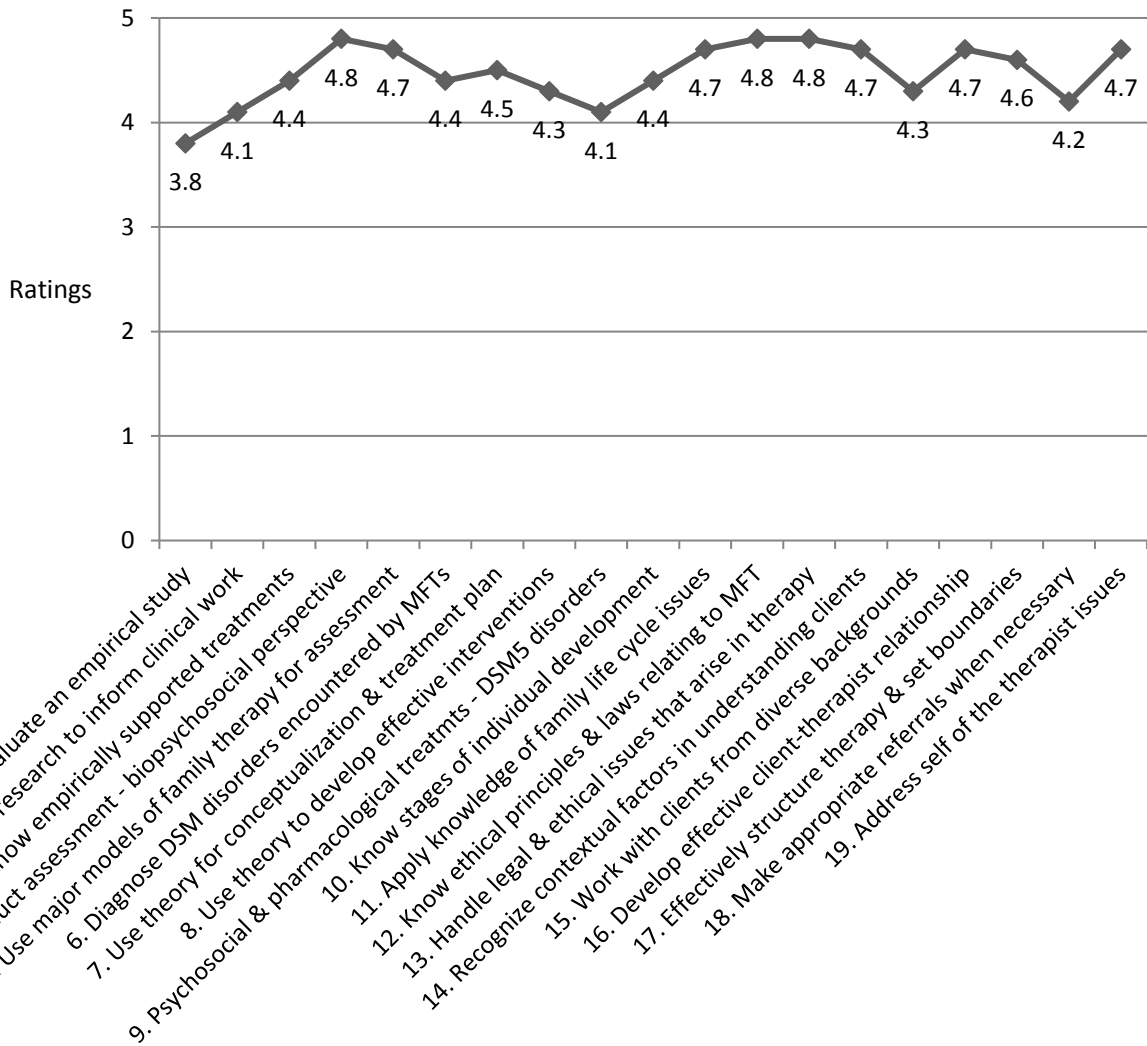


**MA in Marital and Family Therapy**

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. Eighteen of the nineteen items regarding the Marital and Family Therapy program had mean ratings in the desired four to five range (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Marital & Family Therapy Alumni Ratings on Enhanced Skills (n=40)**

Scale: 5 = Extremely Well, 4 = Fairly Well, 3 = Moderately, 2 = Poorly, 1 = Not At All



***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=49)

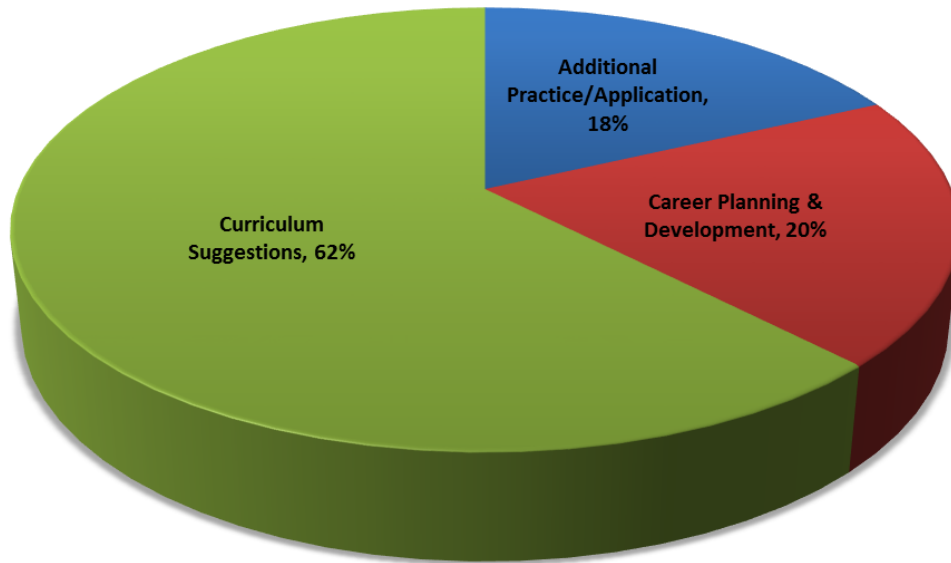


Table 5. *Distribution of Responses Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Inclusion in Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs (N=49)*

Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Suggested Skills, Areas, or Topics for Programs
62%	<p>Curriculum Suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Variety of Specific Topics</li> <li>• Working with Different Client Populations</li> </ul>
20%	<p>Career Planning &amp; Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Employment Assistance</li> </ul>
18%	<p>Additional Practice / Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative Tasks</li> <li>• More Application of Counseling Theories and/or Techniques</li> <li>• Collaborating with Others (Faculty, Staff, Counseling Professionals)</li> </ul>

## 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. Distribution of Responses Regarding Courses and/or Experiences in the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs That Were Most Beneficial (N=62)

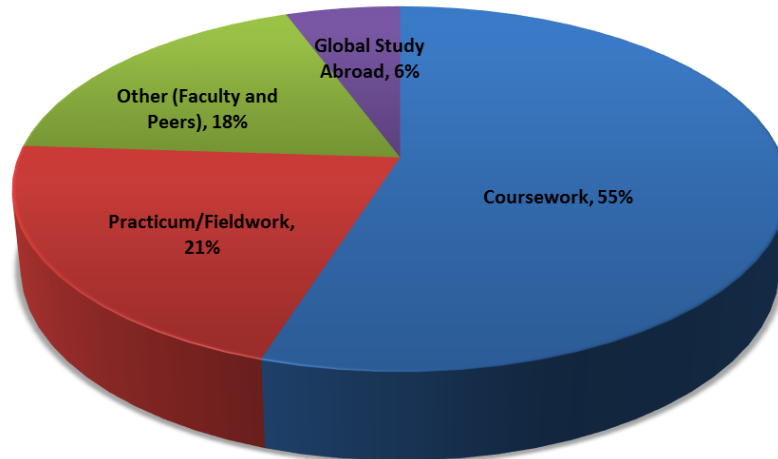


Table 6. Distribution of Responses Regarding Courses and/or Experiences in the Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs That Were Most Beneficial (N=62)

Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Courses and/or Experiences in the Program That Were Most Beneficial
55%	Specific Coursework / Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses within Specialization</li> <li>• Fieldwork Seminar</li> </ul>
21%	Practicum or Fieldwork Experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision and Feedback</li> <li>• Hands on Experience and Learning from Counselors</li> </ul>
18%	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledgeable Faculty with Excellent Teaching Styles</li> </ul>
6%	Global Study Abroad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural Counseling</li> <li>• Study Abroad Course in Jamaica</li> </ul>

## 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*, 96% of the alumni indicated daily or weekly usage. A sample of respondents’ comments by program can be found in the Appendix C.

Figure 15. Distribution of Responses Regarding Ways Alumni's Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specializations and Programs of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness at Work (N=51)

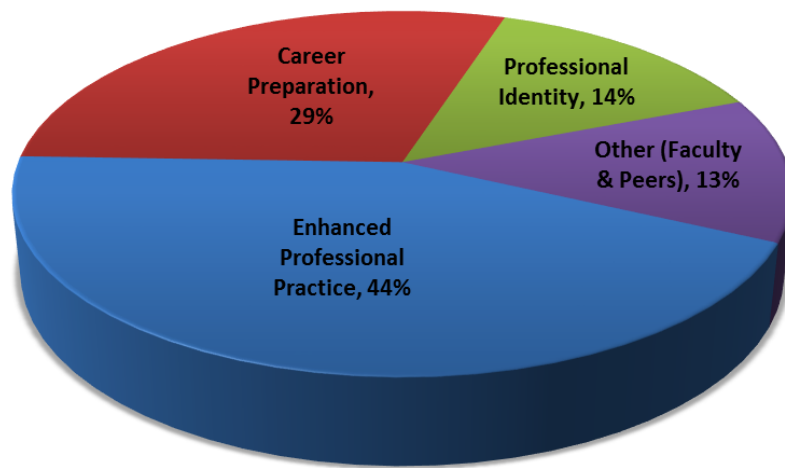
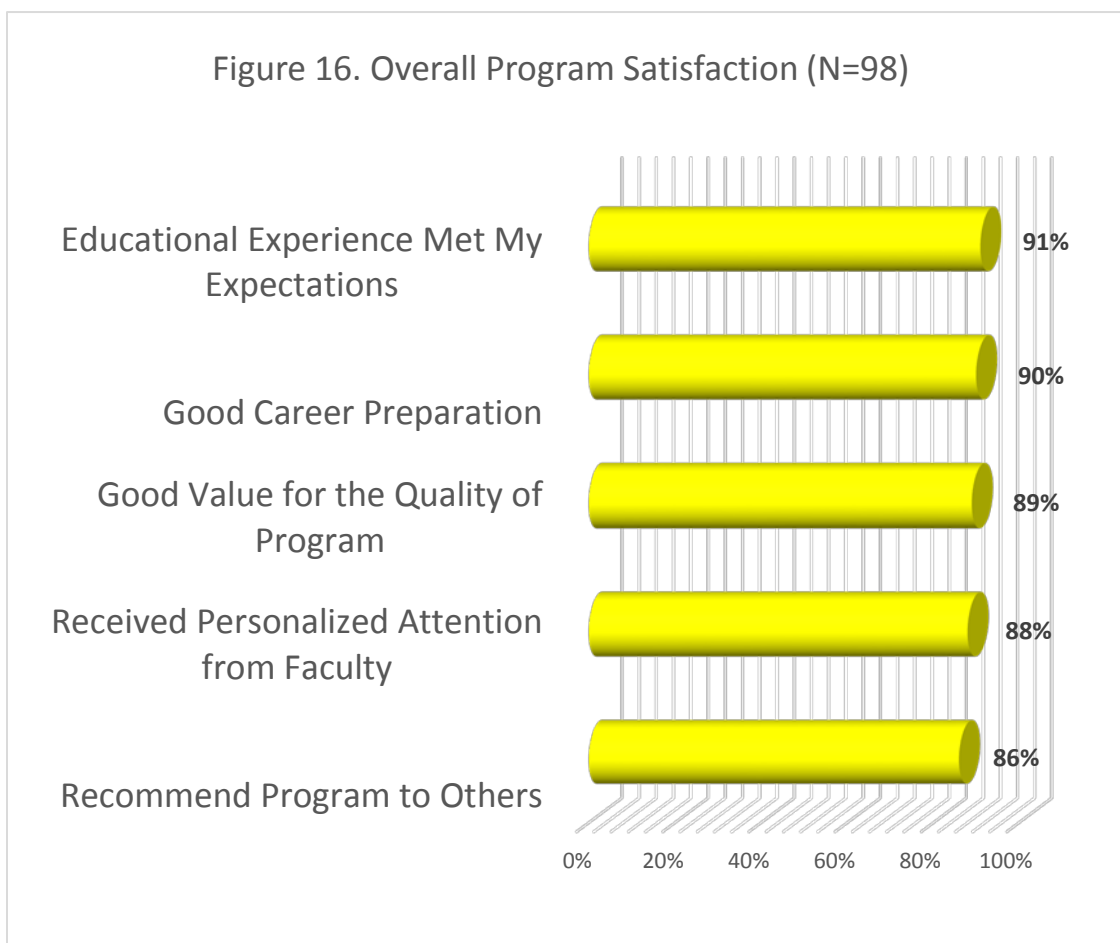


Table 7. *Distribution of Responses Regarding Ways Alumni’s Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy Specialization or Program of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace (N=51)*

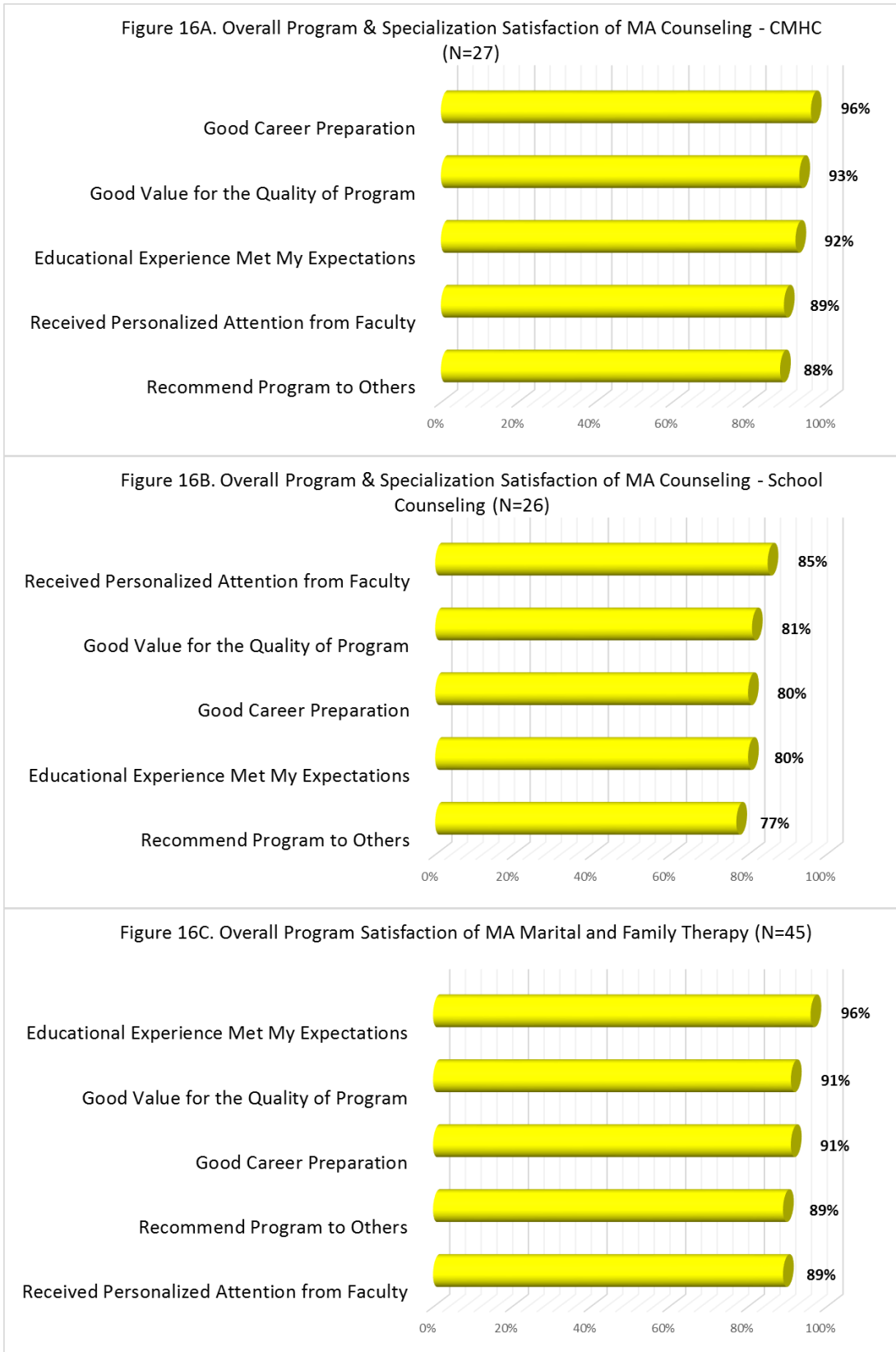
Percent of Responses	Themes Identified Within Responses Regarding Ways Alumni’s Program of Study Enhanced Their Effectiveness in the Workplace
44%	<p>Enhanced Professional Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall Work Performance and Effectiveness</li> <li>• Ability to Apply Learning at Work</li> <li>• Able to Conceptualize and Think Systemically and Critically</li> </ul>
29%	<p>Career Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Needed for Career (Essential Skills and Knowledge)</li> <li>• Experience – Practicum, Internships, Feedback</li> </ul>
14%	<p>Professional Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-care</li> <li>• Standards of Quality (Professionalism, Knowledge, Capacity)</li> </ul>
13%	Other: Network of Supportive Faculty

### ***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*, 91% felt their educational experience fulfilled their expectations, 90% felt their program provided good career preparation, 89% felt that the value of the program compared favorably with the quality of the experience, 88% reported that they received personalized attention from faculty, and 86% would recommend their program to prospective students. 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*

When I originally considered applying to different graduate schools, I insisted on a program with a solid reputation for quality, whose alumni were considered top notch. I wanted the school's prestige to open doors for me. Although USD's reputation is impressive, during my time as a SOLES student, I discovered skills and talents I didn't know I had. The faculty pushed me beyond the boundaries of what I thought was possible. By the time I graduated, I had developed into one of those top notch alumni with good job security and a career I enjoy.

-2014 Alumnus

As early as practicum, I realized the quality of education that I received at USD. The CMHC of SOLES is comprehensive and thoroughly efficient.

-2017 Alumnus

USD offered a resourceful platform for me to learn and to improve myself. The CMHC curriculum not only focused on how to improve my clinical skills, but also how to improve myself as a therapist. The amount of supervision that USD provides to students had been extremely helpful throughout my practicum year.

-2015 Alumnus

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at USD was at the forefront of the recognition of the LPCC license in California. Throughout my graduate studies and currently as a working professional in the field, I have always felt prepared, knowledgeable, and effective as a clinician and specifically as someone pursuing the LPCC license. The faculty is supportive and there are many unique learning opportunities including hands-on skills training in the community of San Diego and in many countries abroad! I highly recommend this program to aspiring mental health clinicians.

-2015 Alumnus

*Alumni Testimonials: MA Counseling with a Specialization in School Counseling*

I really enjoyed my SOLES experience, and feel like it encouraged me to reach far beyond my potential. The staff are so helpful and supportive, and create a learning environment conducive to collaboration and furthering my knowledge. Everyone challenges each other, in a way that helps us learn and grown in a professional setting. The rigor of practicum and fieldwork has shaped me into the counselor I am today- without the diverse range of experiences I obtained, I wouldn't have the knowledge I have today. SOLES is a tight-knit community that supports its students to reach for the stars (if not further!).

-2017 Alumnus

SOLES expanded my knowledge of what it means to be an effective counselor. I thoroughly enjoyed the 63-unit program with the option for LPCC Licensure. This program has wonderful combination of courses that armed me with the skills to be well trained counselor. Learning about research-based practices in tandem with hands-on field experience allowed me to begin counseling with the support of my professors. It was wonderful experience and I highly recommend USD SOLES!

-2016 Alumnus

The counseling program at USD prepared me in ways I would not have expected. In counseling, you become familiar with responding to crisis scenarios and every type of student, parent, and system concern. My professors and courses equipped me with the tools to handle these scenarios in a comprehensive way. I have yet to come across another school counseling program that is as well rounded as the program at USD, and I am thankful that I made the choice to attend. I have had a constant stream of counseling opportunities since graduation, and have had many employment options.

-2014 Alumnus

I immediately felt at home as a USD SOLES student. Having moved across the country to attend USD, I quickly transitioned into the program. The access to all my professors and the small student cohort made for an all-encompassing and rich learning environment. I made new friends and professional connections that have lasted me longer than just my time there as a student. What stood out to me most is having professors who have not only have experience, but passion for the field of counseling and teaching. The SOLES Counseling program prepared me professionally and I would strongly recommend to anyone shopping for a counseling degree.

-2014 Alumnus



*Alumni Testimonials: MA Marital and Family Therapy*

The MFT program at USD offers a well-rounded education that allowed me to feel confident in my professional career. I have felt competent utilizing different therapy modalities, adapting to procedures of different organizations, and knowing the current research and laws in the field. I was impressed by the faculty I got to work with, and I felt cared for as a student and as a person.

-2013 Alumnus

The MFT program at USD was a well-rounded experience delivered by respected professionals in the field. I felt that each instructor was fully invested in making sure that I become a great clinician. I felt that I received great individualized attention in a smaller classroom setting, but still had a lot of peer to peer engagement within the cohort.

-2015 Alumnus

Deciding to enter a program that appeared very financially draining and clinically exhaustive was rather daunting to me. However, it was immediately apparent after graduation the extensive knowledge base I gained from USD that set me up for success and separated me from my peers. Sometimes, the world of mental health can feel like a sink or swim scenario, and with the preparation and comprehensiveness of this program I never have felt like I was sinking in my career after graduation. USD has prepared me for the many roles and positions that has set me up for the success I feel today as a clinician.

-2016 Alumnus

After graduating, I received multiple job offers. Many of the job offers came from USD alumni. Many others were offered to me via the school's reputation.

-2017 Alumnus

I had a wonderful experience with the MFT program and working with the faculty at USD. I feel prepared for my work, counseling severely mentally ill adults and able to contribute to my treatment team in an effective manner.

-2016 Alumnus

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

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I wish the program will teach us more specific evidence-based therapy skills, such as DBT, CBT, CPT, PE. It will be very helpful if the evidence-based therapy class consists with different guest speakers who are expertise in particular therapy modalities. Students get to learn the overview of each therapy in a workshop model.

Providing classes, perhaps electives, that are specific to working with certain client populations (i.e. mental health with Latinos; Interventions for Children and Adolescent; Working with Veterans).

More coursework in working with children and families.

How to be a counselor in the real world.

I would have loved to spend more time learning about the different evidenced based treatments. Attempting to learn them all in one course was at times overwhelming, as we were not able to cover each EBT as in depth as I had hoped. Perhaps it could be helpful to offer EBT as a two part course.

More preparation with the art side of counseling

The program would benefit from a more thorough Diagnosis and Assessment courses with practical case studies. Coming into practicum earlier or alongside course work would also be beneficial.

Any support for bilingual therapists would be greatly beneficial as would discussions on collaboration with other staff/agencies and note taking (I don't remember one class that addressed this and documentation is an important piece in our field).

The language used to write case notes.

The program could improve its assessment course. I feel like we could benefit from using actual assessments and increase our awareness w/ the implementation process.

Case note writing and assistance in finding work post-graduation.

Billing, insurance paneling, business related

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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

I feel that there could be more information surrounding special education. Learning more about IEP's and 504 plans I think would benefit students in the future.

More on dealing with parents and confidentiality and suicidal ideation.

Behavior management, more knowledge of resources, family dynamics, and medications our students are taking

I now am heavily involved in the MTSS process. I wish my program had more of an emphasis on SSTs, MTSS, and even PTCs (Parent teacher conferences). I wish also was more informed about the 5150 process.

Yes, more exposure to working with older students such as high school students and the transition into college/career counseling.

I would love a section of a class devoted to students with disabilities and addressing common needs (a class period devoted to the autism spectrum would have been helpful).

Exposure to Counseling curriculums

College applications (UC/CSU requirements), IEP/504 plans, more practical experience, more job and application practice

Classroom management, We didn't ever talk about the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors, we also never talked about the college admissions process and that is SO important in the high school setting.

Writing 504 & behavior plans.

More time and effort should be given to real school issues, i.e.: school shooters lockdowns and mental health.

I think getting better prepared for the job field would've been helpful.

Working with students in regards to academic needs. I feel like I gained most of this from my field work and own job experiences, but more or the academic/college counseling could be beneficial. I would also be open to coming in to speak to a class or something of that nature in terms of my own experiences.

I think perhaps more structure in fieldwork class or in other classes in regards to practical application in a school setting. I would say overall the program prepared me for counseling generally and that a lot of the job specifics I learned through my fieldwork placement. I don't feel hindered in any way because I had a great fieldwork site experience, but I could see someone feeling less prepared in different circumstances.

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

I wish there was more information and instruction on conducting group therapy. Most of what I did during my practicum and now in my current positions are group therapy focused.

I would of liked to have seen more on gender identity and sexual identity, in particular issues among youth in America and globally as well. Human Diversity covered adult issues mostly on these topics from what I recall.

Stronger focus on pharmacology, DSM diagnosis

Being in the field for a short period of time, something that has come up in discussions and trainings a surprising amount is the idea of trauma-informed care. I know there is the trauma course, but I don't think it does the concept and spirit of trauma-informed care justice, particularly in how it shapes your assessment, conceptualization of a client/family, and how treatment can look like. I think it would be great if there was more emphasis on this in the program moving forward, especially because it is shaping a lot of the policies and structure of public/county mental health.

More information or practice with diagnosing and how to identify diagnoses that are more uncommon but still important to know how to identify and then treat.

More on research methods or further on being an informed research practitioner.

Treatment of children was an area that I don't feel was covered enough

I think students could benefit from learning how to recognize and treat self-injurious behaviors.

More emphasis on crisis intervention

Eating disorders were not covered very much, however I was placed in an ED program and there were many students who were as well and some preparation would've been very helpful.

Eating Disorder Class; DBT; more detail and specifics about trauma informed care; treatment of children and adolescents; more education on case management; a course on global mental health

Referrals or case management if working in a collaborative or social work position

More preparation in regards to different work settings

Additional coursework in understanding the managed care system of our local community and linked with professional opportunities in those systems.

Perhaps spending more time during the practicum class discussing the realities of being a therapist would be helpful. I know that self of the therapist issues are discussed, but I don't think that was enough.

How to write a note (general content of a note, how long it should be, level of detail, how to document SI\HI concerns would be helpful). How to assess for suicide. More instruction specifically about the assessment of suicide would be very helpful.

More treatment planning exercises and as my caseload is so trauma saturated more interventions in how to deal with complex trauma.

## 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

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Multicultural Counseling study abroad because my frustrations with the incompetency and ignorance of my cohort allowed me to reflect on my readiness and effectiveness as a counselor.

I truly enjoyed the Law and Ethic class. It deeply engraved in my brain about the importance of following the ethnic codes and knowing the protocol when emergency happens.

Evidenced Based Practices class provided practical information when working in this field.

The diagnosis class was most beneficial. He taught the course in a way that was accessible and easy to digest.

Practicum

Practicum and supervision was one of the most effective and beneficial components of the program.

Practicum - hands on experience applying learned skills.

Diagnosis and Risk Assessment course was one of the toughest, but also instilled healthy habits and values that I continue to use every day. If I could distill the most difficult aspects of counseling practice today, it would be the skills developed in the course.

Advanced Sexuality, Practicum Group both for clinical topics and experience.

The Group Counseling course was the most engaging and inspiring course that I have ever taken. Not only did I learn techniques that made a difference in how I approach both individual and group counseling but I also learned about myself as a clinician. I continuously look back on this experience and am able to apply skills learned with my current clients. I feel that this class was presented at a different level than all other courses where we were really challenged and go to really experience what a session could look like and how to handle a variety of scenarios.

Clinical Assessments and psychopharmacology

Group Counseling and Law and Ethics are two courses that benefitted me the most. These courses challenged me in ways that helped me become a critical thinker.

Theory course and being encouraged by [Professor A] to establish a consistent counseling identity.

Assessment. It is the foundation of my clinical work.

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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

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Crisis counseling was one of the most beneficial courses for me because I was able to learn strategies to support students in crisis, or crisis situations.

Assessments & Crisis/Trauma Counseling - helped me span and work with all levels of educators and in a wide variety of situations

Counseling skills.

Crisis counseling- the school I am employed at utilizes crisis counseling a lot. Knowing the basics of crisis counseling and types of situations it entails was so helpful for me.

Multicultural Counseling

Studying abroad- it gave me the opportunity to see education and counseling from a different perspective, and in a way that was hands on and engaging. I was able to relate this experience not just to my work, but to my personal perspective as well, which I think is important.

Group counseling - we are so often in groups of students (not always formal counseling groups) where I need to utilize my understanding of group dynamics. This class was beneficial in pointing out key factors that contribute to

Counseling skills provided the safe space for me to start my development as a school counselor.

Group counseling. That course challenged me the most and taught me the most relevant material.

My ethics class and my skills class

Crisis counseling, studying in Jamaica.

Internship because it was a hands on experience

Multicultural and Career Span were most relevant because we were able to work directly with students at local schools

Group Counseling: the course taught me so much and taught me how to better provide my help and assistance to students in a group setting.

All had a lasting impact in different capacities.

Fieldwork/Supervision, was able to record counseling sessions with students and be able to review with faculty and peers.

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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

Family Development with was a great experience. I also gained a lot from the severe mental illness class and both theories classes.

Practicum really helped me explore my confidence as a new therapist. Although stressful at times I felt I was supported by my clinical supervisor, USD Practicum Supervisors, USD professors and peers, all of which helped me challenge myself and apply my knowledge from this institution as I conducted therapy over the second year.

In my experience both at my current workplace and practicum site, I felt very knowledgeable about diagnosis and case conceptualization. It seems like other MFT programs do not provide as rigorous of a class to ensure students feel confident with diagnosis and conceptualization. While this is always an area of improvement, I have felt like Psychopathology and Theories I/II were the most foundational for me.

Theories courses helped me identify what worked with my personality and what did not as well as what I see working for the clients I serve.

Treatment of severe mental illness- it prepared me most for what the current MFT job climate looks like. I loved the theories classes but the reality is that few therapy jobs allow for that type of work

Human Diversity - connected me to information and mentorship that is informing my positioning as a therapist

Courses taught by [various professors]. Outstanding guidance from each of them has remained with me.

Couples & Sex

The experience that benefitted me the most was my time at my practicum site, as well as the group supervision that we had on campus. I liked the fact that we had a different group supervisor each semester because I was able to learn from supervisors who had different styles.

Child psychopathology, because it was the first time I was introduced to the benefits of mindful meditation. Not only to use as an intervention for my clients, but for myself.

Treatment of Children, as that provided me with a foundation from which to assess and provide therapy for kids and the material is not covered or discussed in other classes to the same extent

Practicum / group supervision due to the variety of placements and sites myself and my classmates experienced, as well as the quality of the clinical supervision in each semester of the year.

Self of the therapist, neuroscience

Law and ethics, developmental psychopathology, family systems, theories 1, practicing supervision, severe mental illness. Each of these classes helped to paint a comprehensive picture of what the field looks like and how to practice within in.

Being encouraged to address self if the therapist issues by identifying family dynamics, cultural, spiritual, and interpersonal experiences helped to increase self-awareness and helped me to be a stronger therapist.

Working with severe mental illness; I currently work with that population and feel that class prepared me well.

Family Development with was a great experience. I also gained a lot from the severe mental illness class and both theories classes.



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

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Case conceptualization, self-advocacy, connecting to people

Applying clinical interviewing skills, developing strong work ethics, assessing patient's mental status and diagnoses.

It provided sufficient supervision during practicum that helped me grow professionally.

Provided me with strong assessment and diagnosis skills. Taught me to see individuals from a holistic perspective.

All of the skills I learned are directly applicable to my work as a therapist. The hands-on practicum training was very influential as well as clinical interviewing, ethics, theories, and diagnosis.

My program thoroughly prepared me to be effective in my workplace by providing amazing professors, having us complete a one year practicum, by offering a global study course, and by having us record our client sessions to receive constructive feedback.

Every way

I feel more sensitive to ethical and legal implications in everyday decisions compared to my peers. I feel confident participating collaboratively on multidisciplinary treatment teams. I am comfortable working with clients from diverse cultural groups across the lifespan with a variety of presenting issues.

I had a great experience in the program and have kept in touch with several faculty members. Those connections and the support they provided led me to my current clinical work and my role as an instructor.

Overall I am able to perform my job with the best level of care in mind.

Faculty/staff were always approachable and I always felt comfortable asking for help. Individual and Group supervision were key during the 3rd year of the grad program - I still look back at my notes of supervision and apply those experiences to my current job.

Prepared me in the foundations of being a counselor.

Enhanced critical thinking

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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

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Many of the role play activities have helped when working with students on a day to day basis.

Gave me the confidence I needed to work with at-risk populations and in challenging school environments

My program taught me many ways to promote multicultural competency, crisis intervention, class room lessons, social, academic, career information and promotion, and many more counseling strategies.

In every single way. USD taught me so much it would be impossible to list them all.

I felt prepared in the social-emotional aspect of counseling students. I learned how to collaborate with students, staff, and parents through my practicum and fieldwork. The rigor of fieldwork and classes helped me to stay organized and on top of my work.

I use the skills that I learned from my counseling skills, multicultural counseling and career counseling courses every day in my current role. I also use the skills that I learned from both of my internships.

My fieldwork and internship experiences were game changing. I thought I wanted to work in elementary, but my K-12 and high school experiences were so positive that I ended up looking for a high school position. The professional network that I built at USD was amazing, from peers to community organizations. My professors were outstanding, and excellent resources after I graduated. I felt prepared with an understanding of how to advocate for the counseling profession in each of my positions.

Fieldwork supervision class was extremely valuable.

It taught me some skills that I use as a school counselor.

Understanding the social emotional needs of the students and staff. Career and college readiness.

Field work experience, knowledge of professors, research paper and all academic classes

On the job training and support from faculty while working through my internships.

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Table C-3

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

Comments

Gave me a great perspective not only through the lens of the biopsychosocial model but through a systemic approach to the family, and communal system involved in treatment. The MFT program gave me a great sense of mental health diagnoses through the perspective of the DSM and how to apply individualized and systemic interventions.

The curriculum and professors in this program has been invaluable to me. The opportunity to explore mental health globally has left a great impression on me as well.

I feel both the coursework and practicum experience adequately prepared me for my current position. The program provided a solid foundation of theory and practice that I continue to build upon.

Knowledge of theories and application of theories as well as cultural competence. Solid diagnostic base. Understanding of workplace expectations for a county funded program due to practicum site.

The family perspective is critical to our work at our clinic as well as maintaining a neutral and nonjudgmental stance.

Crucial to laying foundation for career as MFT

Greater understanding of system dynamics.

I think the program did an excellent job of exposing us to many different styles (through the various professors that we had). I liked this because it helped me find my own style when I am in the workplace and conducting therapy sessions. I know some other programs in the area tend to focus on one modality or theory, but I like the fact that USD's program had diversity in what the professor's believed in and practiced themselves.

In addition to clinical knowledge on how to be a therapist, some of the best things I learned was how to manage countertransference and set boundaries in order to maintain a work-Life balance so that I can still be the best therapist possible.

Every way from assessment to intervention and treatment. After moving away and seeing others in the field it is clear that USD's program is more than a notch above the others.

USD gave me a well-rounded, holistic, culturally competent, recovery-oriented yet evidence based perspective that certainly enhances my effectiveness within my agency that adheres to the trauma-informed care philosophy.

It enhanced my use of assessment and developmental stages of and treatments for children.

The MFT program enhanced my understanding of human behavior in the context of systems and helped me gain an ability to conceptualize cases with different contexts/factors in mind.

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For me it was about my practicum site and the experience that provided me with.

It gave me knowledge that I use regularly

I have all the skills to not only be an effective therapist but also a leader in my organization.

Clinical knowledge and assessment skills were very comprehensive at USD

Having the MFT degree is what is most important. I think the most effective component of the program that I actively apply to the workplace is with regards to law and ethics. That is where I obtained the most value.

Navigation of the behavioral health system. Addressing family and cultural issues in outpatient treatment. Utilizing theoretical concepts to provide treatment and interventions.

The strong focus on evidence based treatment, seeing people from a systems perspective, and accurate assessment have helped me be not just a competent therapist, but a great one. This is especially evident when I participate in supervision groups and am able to give good feedback to other therapists.

It gave me the knowledge necessary to conduct appropriate assessment, create treatment plans, and effectively terminate care when a patient is ready. As a practicing clinician, I can appreciate and am so grateful for being taught more than just psychodynamic theory which is all too commonly used in my department.

The program was well rounded in preparing me to utilize skills as well as using myself as a therapist.

I feel empowered to work with different populations and feel comfortable with multiple theories.

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## Appendix D

Table D-1

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

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Comments

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When I originally considered applying to different graduate schools, I insisted on a program with a solid reputation for quality, whose alumni were considered top notch. I wanted the school's prestige to open doors for me. Although USD's reputation is impressive, during my time as a SOLES student, I discovered skills and talents I didn't know I had. The faculty pushed me beyond the boundaries of what I thought was possible. By the time I graduated, I had developed into one of those top notch alumni with good job security and a career I enjoy.

As early as practicum, I realized the quality of education that I received at USD. The CMHC of SOLES is comprehensive and thoroughly efficient.

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at USD was at the forefront of the recognition of the LPCC license in California. Throughout my graduate studies and currently as a working professional in the field, I have always felt prepared, knowledgeable, and effective as a clinician and specifically as someone pursuing the LPCC license. The faculty is supportive and there are many unique learning opportunities including hands-on skills training in the community of San Diego and in many countries abroad! I highly recommend this program to aspiring mental health clinicians.

USD offered a resourceful platform for me to learn and to improve myself. The CMHC curriculum not only focused on how to improve my clinical skills, but also how to improve myself as a therapist. The amount of supervision that USD provides to students had been extremely helpful throughout my practicum year.

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Table D-2

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

Comments

I immediately felt at home as a USD SOLES student. Having moved across the country to attend USD, I quickly transitioned into the program. The access to all my professors and the small student cohort made for an all-encompassing and rich learning environment. I made new friends and professional connections that have lasted me longer than just my time there as a student. What stood out to me most is having professors who have not only have experience, but passion for the field of counseling and teaching. The SOLES Counseling program prepared me professionally and I would strongly recommend to anyone shopping for a counseling degree.

The counseling program at USD prepared me in ways I would not have expected. In counseling, you become familiar with responding to crisis scenarios and every type of student, parent, and system concern. My professors and courses equipped me with the tools to handle these scenarios in a comprehensive way. I have yet to come across another school counseling program that is as well rounded as the program at USD, and I am thankful that I made the choice to attend. I have had a constant stream of counseling opportunities since graduation, and have had many employment options.

I really enjoyed my SOLES experience, and feel like it encouraged me to reach far beyond my potential. The staff are so helpful and supportive, and create a learning environment conducive to collaboration and furthering my knowledge. Everyone challenges each other, in a way that helps us learn and grown in a professional setting. The rigor of practicum and fieldwork has shaped me into the counselor I am today- without the diverse range of experiences I obtained, I wouldn't have the knowledge I have today. SOLES is a tight-knit community that supports its students to reach for the stars (if not further!)

SOLES expanded my knowledge of what it means to be an effective counselor. I thoroughly enjoyed the 63-unit program with the option for LPCC licensure. This program has wonderful combination of courses that armed me with the skills to be well trained counselor. Learning about research-based practices in tandem with hands-on field experience allowed me to begin counseling with the support of my professors. It was wonderful experience and I highly recommend USD SOLES!

I loved the USD counseling program. Because of the program I was able to find a career that I enjoy and love.

Table D-3

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

Comments

I had a wonderful experience with the MFT program and working with the faculty at USD. I feel prepared for my work, counseling severely mentally ill adults and able to contribute to my treatment team in an effective manner.

Deciding to enter a program that appeared very financially draining and clinically exhaustive was rather daunting to me. However, it was immediately apparent after graduation the extensive knowledge base I gained from USD that set me up for success and separated me from my peers. Sometimes, the world of mental health can feel like a sink or swim scenario, and with the preparation and comprehensiveness of this program I never have felt like I was sinking in my career after graduation. USD has prepared me for the many roles and positions that has set me up for the success I feel today as a clinician.

The faculty genuinely care about you and assisting you in becoming the best therapist you can be.

The MFT program at USD offers a well-rounded education that allowed me to feel confident in my professional career. I have felt competent utilizing different therapy modalities, adapting to procedures of different organizations, and knowing the current research and laws in the field. I was impressed by the faculty I got to work with, and I felt cared for as a student and as a person.

After graduating, I received multiple job offers. Many of the job offers came from USD alumni. Many others were offered to me via the school's reputation.

The MFT program at USD was a well-rounded experience delivered by respected professionals in the field. I felt that each instructor was fully invested in making sure that I become a great clinician. I felt that I received great individualized attention in a smaller classroom setting, but still had a lot of peer to peer engagement within the cohort.