Mission / Purpose
The mission of the Counseling Psychology Master’s program is to provide the knowledge, dispositions and skills necessary to become a multiculturally competent professional counselor. We also aim to provide training in the psychological foundation required of become proficient consumers of psychological science. As such, we train students to utilize the science of psychology to inform sound diagnostic and evidence-based interventions consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of Counseling Psychology in serving their clients, community, and the profession. The Counseling Psychology program is committed to the personal and professional development of counselors by combining academic learning with experiential opportunities to facilitate students' understanding of themselves and their impact on the world around them. Consistent with the University's vision, counselors are encouraged to be active leaders in their field by applying their knowledge to the service of others. Graduates of our program are eligible for licensure as professional counselors and are also well-prepared to pursue continued graduate training or research interests.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Sufficient knowledge in core areas
All students will demonstrate sufficient knowledge base in the core areas of counseling: (a) Professional Identity; (b) Social and Cultural Diversity; (c) Human Growth and Development; (d) Career Development; (e) Helping Relationships; (f) Group Work; (g) Assessment; and (h) Research and Program Evaluation.

Related Measures:

M 1: Portfolio: Annual Evaluation
The Annual Evaluation is completed once annually and offered as a summative integration of all evaluation points (i.e., Coursework, Counseling Skills, Research, Professionalism) into a clear description of the student’s progress and suggested areas for growth during the coming year. The Major Professor will review the materials and then will present the student's progress to the faculty for formal input during regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Student's progress in each of the four areas of competency (i.e., coursework, research, counseling skills and professionalism) will be evaluated by the Counseling Psychology Program faculty on the following scale: Exceptional/ exceeds expectations, Satisfactory/ meets expectations, Unsatisfactory/ does not meet minimal expectations.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

Target:
90% of students will be rated at least a Satisfactory/ meets expectations on each competency assessed by faculty portfolio review.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
93% (14/15; spring assessment only) of students were rated at least satisfactory/meets expectations on each competency assessed by the faculty portfolio review.

M 2: Comprehensive Exam
Master's Comprehensive Examination: The Master's Comprehensive Examination is comprised of multiple-choice questions, developed by program faculty, which are meant to represent what should be expected of any Master’s level professional counselor.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam
Target:
90% of students will pass the Master's Comprehensive Examination (as evidenced by achieving a score of 70% or better) on the first attempt.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (8/8; spring assessment only) of students passed the Master's Comprehensive Examination on the first attempt.

M 3: National Counselor Exam
National Counselor Examination (NCE): The purpose of the NCE is to assess knowledge, skills, and abilities viewed as important for providing effective counseling services. The NCE is designed to be general in nature. It is intended to assess cognitive knowledge which should be known by all counselors regardless of their individual professional specialties.

Source of Evidence: Certification or licensure exam, national or state

Target:
90% will pass the NCE on the first attempt.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (6/6; spring assessment only) passed the NCE on the first attempt.

SLO 2: Professional Identity
Students will demonstrate a professional identity consistent with the counseling profession.

Related Measures:

M 4: Portfolio: Professionalism
Professionalism section of the Annual Evaluation portfolio review. Each student's professionalism is assessed across domains and activities they participate in during their time in the master's program. Criteria considered include: Student demonstrates some self-awareness; career and educational goals seem consistent with feedback; a lack of documented interpersonal difficulties; active class participation, maturity, and satisfactory assistantship and course evaluations

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

Target:
90% of students rated at least a Satisfactory/meets expectations when assessing professionalism on annual portfolio review.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (15/15; spring assessment only) of students rated at least satisfactory/ meets expectations when assessing professionalism on annual portfolio review.

M 5: Professional Organization Membership
Affiliation with local and national counseling psychology related associations (e.g., American Counseling Association; American Psychological Association, Mississippi Counseling Association, Mississippi Psychological Association).

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
75% of students will report student affiliation with local and national counseling psychology related associations.
Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
93% (14/15; assessed annually) of students reported student affiliation with local and national counseling psychology related associations.

M 6: Conference Attendance
Attendance and/or participation at local, regional and national counseling conferences.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
50% of students will report attendance and/or participation at local, regional and national counseling conferences.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Not Met
33% (5/15; assessed annually) of students reported attending and/or participation at local, regional, and national counseling conferences.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Conference Attendance
Established in Cycle: 2013-2014
In efforts to develop the professional identity of our students we encourage professional conference attendance. We have met o...

M 7: Internship Supervisor Evaluation-Professionalism
Internship Supervisor Evaluation: Clinicians that directly supervise students at external internship placement sites complete an evaluation of the students work as a counselor-in-training based on the domains of 1) interpersonal competencies; and 2) professional competencies.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:
75% of internship supervisors will rate intern as possessing the sufficient levels of professionalism as demonstrated by a rating of at least "3" on a 5-point scale.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (8/8; data from summer 2013) of internship supervisors rated interns as possessing the sufficient levels of professionalism. All students reported on here (8/8) participated in internship during the Summer 2013 semester.

SLO 3: Skills in assessment and intervention
Students will demonstrate skills in assessment and intervention consistent with entry into the professional practice of counseling.

Related Measures:

M 8: Portfolio: Counseling Skills
Counseling Skills Section of Annual Evaluation Portfolio: This section of annual evaluation relies on the written evaluation resulting from practicum instructors’ rating of students' competencies in the following counseling-related domains: 1) Relationship/ Interpersonal skills; 2) Application of Research; 3) Psychological Assessment Skills; 4) Intervention Skills; 5) Client diversity competence; 6) Ethics; 7) Professional Development; and 8) Metaknowledge/ Metacompetencies.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work
Target:
90% of students will receive ratings of at least a satisfactory/meets expectation on the counseling skills section of the annual portfolio review.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (15/15; spring assessment only) of students received ratings of at least satisfactory/meets expectations on the counseling skills section of the annual portfolio review.

M 9: Practicum supervisor evaluations: Ratings
Practicum supervisor evaluations are comprised of written evaluation resulting from practicum instructors' rating on a 5 point scale of students' competencies in the following counseling-related domains: 1) Relationship/Interpersonal skills; 2) Application of Research; 3) Psychological Assessment Skills; 4) Intervention Skills; 5) Client diversity competence; 6) Ethics; 7) Professional Development; and 8) Metaknowledge/Metacompetencies.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:
90% of students will receive satisfactory evaluations in supervised practicum courses (PSY 652 and PSY 762) as evidenced by ratings of a "3" or better in the following evaluation domains: 1) Relationship/Interpersonal skills; 2) Application of Research; 3) Psychological Assessment Skills; 4) Intervention Skills; 5) Client diversity competence; 6) Ethics; 7) Professional Development; and 8) Metaknowledge/Metacompetencies.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (8/8; fall semester) of students received satisfactory evaluations in supervised practicum courses.

100% (8/8; spring semester) of students received satisfactory evaluations in supervised practicum courses.

M 10: Practicum supervisor evaluations: Recommendation for Internship
Practicum supervisor evaluations: Recommendation for Internship--Based on the practicum II (PSY 762) instructors' ratings of students in the counseling domains (i.e., 1) Relationship/Interpersonal skills; 2) Application of Research; 3) Psychological Assessment Skills; 4) Intervention Skills; 5) Client diversity competence; 6) Ethics; 7) Professional Development; and 8) Metaknowledge/Metacompetencies) and a student's successful completion of at least 50 supervised clinical hours, the practicum II instructor provides a statement of internship recommendation which can include recommend for internship, recommend with reservation, or do not recommend for internship.

Source of Evidence: Performance (recital, exhibit, science project)

Target:
90% of students will receive a "recommend for internship" endorsement from his or her practicum II instructor.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (8/8 spring assessment only) received a "recommendation for internship" endorsement from his or her practicum II instructor.

M 11: Internship Supervisor Evaluation-Intervention & Assessment
Internship Supervisor Evaluation: Clinicians that directly supervise students at external internship placement sites complete an evaluation of the students work as a counselor-in-training based on the domains of 1) interpersonal counseling, 2) consulting, 3) assessment, and 4) interviewing.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation
**Target:**
90% of interns will be rated by internship supervisors as demonstrating sound interpersonal counseling, consulting, and interviewing skills; interpersonal competencies; and professional competencies as evidenced by a rating of at least a "3" on a 5-point internship evaluation.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
100% (8/8; data from summer 2013) of interns were rated by internship supervisors as demonstrating sound interpersonal counseling, consulting, and interviewing skills.

**SLO 4: Critical thinking skills in scientific research**
Develop sound critical thinking skills associated with scientific research design and data analytic strategies necessary to become a competent consumer of psychological science.

**Related Measures:**

**M 12: Portfolio: Research**
The Research portion of the Annual Evaluation portfolio review. Criteria considered in rating this section of the annual evaluation includes: 1) Student has regularly participated in research team activities; 2) Student has met most research milestones (i.e., thesis, independent project); 3) Student has a journal publication or research presentation at a professional conference.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

**Target:**
90% of students rated at least a satisfactory/meets expectations when assessing research competency on the annual portfolio review.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
100% (15/15; spring assessment only) of students rated at least a satisfactory/meets expectations when assessing research competency on the annual portfolio review.

**M 13: Research Project**
Research Project in PSY 659: The purpose of the research project is to apply the knowledge developed in the associated course, PSY 659-Research Design, relevant to designing a research study. The project includes the following components: Literature Review, Hypothesis, Research Questions, and Methods.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

**Target:**
80% of students will demonstrate ability to successfully apply psychological research to the understanding of clinical issues as demonstrated by successful completion of research project (PSY 659). Critical thinking will be rated as a "3" or better on a 5-point scale.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
100% of students (15/15; every other year spring assessment only) earned a rating of at least a "3" on the research project.

**M 14: Research Involvement**
Participation in research activities. Research activities include either in independent research projects, master’s thesis or supporting faculty research.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target:
100% of students will participate in research activities. Research activities include either in independent research projects, master’s thesis or supporting faculty research.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (15/15; fall data) of students participated in research activities.

100% (15/15; spring data) of students participated in research activities.

SLO 5: Sufficient knowledge in psychological foundations
All students will demonstrate sufficient knowledge in the biological, social, and psychological bases of behavior and behavioral problems

Related Measures:

M 15: Portfolio: Coursework
The Coursework section of annual evaluation portfolio review. This portion of the annual evaluation portfolio is rated based on whether the student has completed required and recommended coursework in a timely manner that is satisfactory/ meets expectations.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

Target:
90% of students will be rated at least satisfactory/ meets expectations on the course work domain of the annual review portfolio.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
93% (14/15; spring only assessment) students were rated at least satisfactory/meets expectations on the course work domain of the annual review portfolio.

M 16: Psychological Foundation Knowledge
Psychological foundation knowledge evaluation. Students complete coursework in areas of psychological foundations including biological basis of behavior, cognitive processes, research foundations, learning principles. Students are evaluated on their competencies in these areas through these courses and the coursework section of the annual review portfolio.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target:
90% of students will receive satisfactory/ meets expectations in psychological foundation knowledge by graduate faculty reviewing course performance and coursework section of annual review portfolio.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
100% (15/15; spring assessment only) of students received satisfactory/meets expectations in psychological foundation knowledge by graduate faculty reviewing course performance and coursework section of the annual review portfolio.

Other Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

O/O 6: Training for employment and/or graduate study
Students will receive comprehensive training that will prepare them for both counseling practice and continued graduate study.

Related Measures:
M 17: Employment
Initial employment in practice-oriented fields.

Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas

**Target:**
60% of graduates will report initial employment in practice-oriented fields.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Not Met**
25% (2/8) of graduates reported initial employment in practice-oriented fields. (All of our most recent graduates' degrees were conferred in August 2013.)

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Restructuring Assessment of Employment and Graduate School Accomplishments**
*Established in Cycle: 2013-2014*
During the 2013-2014 academic year, we did not meet our goal with regards to graduates' employment in practice oriented fields (...)

M 18: Graduate School
Admission to doctoral programs in psychology or related fields.

Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas

**Target:**
25% of graduates will report admission to doctoral programs in psychology or related fields.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
62.5% (5/8) of summer 2012 graduates reported admission to a doctoral program in psychology. (All of our most recent graduates had degrees conferred in August 2013.)

**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Increase doctoral program admissions for MS graduates**
Our MS program has a dual mission of training graduates for licensure and employment in practice-oriented fields and preparing students for continued graduate study in psychology. Our goal is to have at least 25% of our graduates admitted into psychology or related doctoral programs. This year only 14% or 1 out of 7 of our graduates are continuing their graduate study. We plan to increase this number by continuing to involve our students in program research teams and professional identity development.

*Established in Cycle: 2012-2013*
*Implementation Status: Planned*
*Priority: High*
*Implementation Description: Better integrate MS students into the work of research teams, specially the work that leads to publications and presentations. To increase professional identity with the field of psychology, increase the numbers of MS students attending, and especially presenting, at professional conferences. Seeking additional travel funding through grants and the Dean’s office will assist in this goal*
*Responsible Person/Group: All Counseling Psychology Faculty*
*Additional Resources Requested: Conference travel funding*

**Conference Attendance**
In efforts to develop the professional identity of our students we encourage professional conference attendance. We have met our goal of 50% of our students attending at least one conference during the assessed year for the past several years, with a 60% attendance rate last year. This year we had only a 33%
conference attendance rate among our students, resulting in us not meeting this professionalism goal.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014  
Implementation Status: Planned  
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):  
Measure: Conference Attendance | Outcome/Objective: Professional Identity

Implementation Description: To address what we hope is circumstantial drop in conference attendance, the faculty will make additional efforts to advertise and inform students through classes and research team meetings about available conference experiences. Students will be better informed of local, regional, and national conferences. Faculty will also work with the Counseling Psychology Student Government association to increase information provided through that group regarding available and relevant conferences.

Responsible Person/Group: Emily Bullock Yowell, Ph.D.

Additional Resources Requested: None

Restructuring Assessment of Employment and Graduate School Accomplishments

During the 2013-2014 academic year, we did not meet our goal with regards to graduates' employment in practice oriented fields (i.e., goal of 60% with only a 25% rate during 2013-2014). During the previous (2012-2013) academic year, we did not meet our goal with regards to graduates' pursuing further PhD-level graduate study and developed an action plan to address this deficit. Yet, this year we far exceeded our goal for graduates' pursuing PhD work with 62.5% successfully admitted to doctoral programs. Our faculty determined this highlighted a deficit in our measurement approach with the current approach not well representing the accomplishments of our graduates. Given the dual mission of our program to train students for practice oriented careers and further graduate study, the faculty determined that a new approach to measuring post-graduation pursuits is necessary to represent the ebb and flow of graduates interested in employment vs doctoral work. Given our recent numbers with regards to employment and continued graduate study, it is obvious that overall annual percentages do not well represent the data. For example, this year 6 of 8 of our graduate applied to doctoral programs and 5 were accepted. The graduate not accepted gained employment in a practice oriented field. The other two graduates initially pursued employment and 1 was employed in a practice oriented field. Therefore, all but one of our students were successful in either being employed or pursuing doctoral work. It does not seem to make sense to not meet a goal of employment rate, when such a large percentage of our graduates did not seek employment. Additionally, we had the opposite scenerio our previous year with few student seeking further doctoral work and choosing the employment route. Therefore, we propose that in the future we assess employment and further graduate study rates based on the number of students that initially seek employment or further graduate study rather than the total graduating class. Additionally, we will continue to provide adequate focus in our training on immediate employment as a mental health professional as well as research competencies that add to graduate competitiveness in pursuing further graduate study. We believe this action plan will be represent the accomplishments of our graduates, and associated achievements of our program, as well as continue to address the training needs of our students.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014  
Implementation Status: Planned  
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):  
Measure: Employment | Outcome/Objective: Training for employment and/or graduate study

Implementation Description: Amend the approach to assessment of these goals.

Projected Completion Date: 05/29/2015

Responsible Person/Group: Emily Bullock Yowell

Additional Resources Requested: None

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers
What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

The faculty see the previous year as a successful one for our program.

This assessment process particularly highlighted to us success in two main areas: Sufficient knowledge in core areas (Objective 1) and Critical thinking in scientific research (Objective 4).

With regards to objective 1, our students not only meet essential competencies in their courses relevant to the core areas of the counseling psychology field (SLO #1), but they also pass our comprehensive exam assessing these areas at one time at the end of their program (SLO #2). Additionally, our students have a long history of scoring well above the national average on the National Counselor Exam (SLO #3). This shows the training in our program and the student's learning translates outside of what competencies are emphasized in our program and to the profession nationally.

We see that our students critical thinking in scientific research (Objective 4) is increasing due to the programmatic changes around boosting this competency. Much of this is accomplished through our research teams. With students' participation on faculty research teams, this method of mentorship helps to boost their performance across many areas, including professionalism, research, and coursework. Most goals in these areas were met this year and our research team affiliation for each student provides us with a mechanism by which to continue to support students in their development, implement increased efforts such as conference awareness, as well as individually remediation students with areas for growth in these domains. More specifically 100% of our students are participating on research teams (SLO # 14) and during portfolio review all had met their negotiated research goals during the year (SLO #12). Our students are also consistently performing well on a class-based research project (SLO #13). Because of the success our students are experiencing in research, the faculty believe we are even ready to increase the rigor by which we assess this domain. We will implement the assessment of conference presentations and professional publications over the next year.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

Overall, we see our program as strong and our graduates as being especially well prepared for the mental health field and continued graduate study. Yet, our assessment did highlight some areas we could focus some continued attention.

On an ongoing basis, we seek to improve the research training and experience of our Counseling Psychology MS students. As discussed in our action plans, we had a dip in our students' conference attendance (SLO #6), which we see as an important activity to build their professional identity. Yet, conference participation also allows for development of research competencies. We will boost our emphasis on conference attendance and better inform our students of conference availability as an improvement initiative related to their professional identity. Yet, our assessment also revealed that the majority of students that did attend conferences this year also presented their research at these conferences. Presenting research at a conference likely better develops our students' professional identity (Objective 2) and additionally serves to increase their research experience (Objective 4). In the next year, we plan to assess not only conference attendance but presentations at conferences as a method by which we can assess the increased research competency of our students.

Currently, one of methods of assessing research competency is through a project they complete in a research class. As an increasing number of our students are producing research, we feel we can increase the rigor of our assessment in this area and assess publications and presentations next year rather than a class project that may not lead to research production in our field.

As mentioned in our action plan regarding the employment and further graduate study (Objective 6) assessment of our students, our assessment this year revealed a flaw in our assessment approach to this area and led to us not meeting our employment goal detailed in SLO #17. With the dual mission of our program to train graduates for work in mental health fields or continued graduate study, we now recognize that some years more students will seek one mission more than the other. Assessing employment and further graduate study across all students does not accurately assess the success of our students. Next year, we will assess
successful employment in those students that pursue that after graduation and further graduate study for those students that apply to doctoral programs. We believe this will better assess and reflect the successes and of our students.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary

The Counseling Psychology master’s program (herein referred to as the CPY-MS program) is offered in the Department of Psychology as the only terminal master’s program in the department. The CPY-MS program initially existed in a separate department within the College and merged with the Department of Psychology in the early 1990’s. Initially designed as a master’s program in Counselor Education, the master’s program has undergone significant modifications in the last few years bringing it more in line with the training mission of the Department. The CPY-MS program is one of five graduate initiatives within the Department of Psychology (others include doctoral programs in Counseling, Clinical, School, Experimental/General Psychology). All of the programs are developed from a common foundation of psychological science and research training. Significant overlaps in coursework among the initiative areas will be noted throughout. As a result of a recent restructuring of the CPY-MS program, there currently is a 75% overlap between MS CPY coursework and the CPY doctoral program. This provides good evidence for the Department and Counseling Psychology’s willingness to adapt and change in favor of efficiency. As mentioned the program has a dual mission of training practitioners and preparing students for further doctoral study. In other words, the mission of the CPY-MS program is to provide training in the psychological foundation required to become proficient counseling practitioners who are consumers of psychological science.

The program trains students to utilize the science of psychology to inform sound diagnostic and evidence-based interventions consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of Counseling Psychology in serving their clients, community and the profession. This dual mission is articulated in 3 program goals: (1) To prepare students for practice as licensed professional counselors, (2) Training scientist-practitioners who will use science to inform practice and practice to inform science, and (3) Preparing counselors for advanced doctoral study in psychology. While guided by similar philosophies and theoretical models, the scope of the CPY-MS program remains more focused on preparing generalist practitioners, whereas the doctoral level CPY program maintains a greater research focus and provides training in advanced skills. This similar-but-different distinction is important in appreciating the overlapping interests of the CPY graduate programs. Further, the dual focus on both science and practice make the CPY-MS program at USM the only one of its kind in the region. As prevention is a core theme defining counseling psychology, the MS-CPY program has worked to create training opportunities which address community-based prevention needs.

Faculty research in prevention focuses on motivational interviewing to facilitate behavior change, alcohol and drug prevention, anger management, promotion of positive parenting, and exploration of vocational issues with underserved populations. To better meet demand, the program has worked to emphasize commonalities among the research programs of the faculty and to highlight unique training opportunities not found in other counseling psychology programs across the country (i.e., evidence-based approaches in counseling psychology). Including a more clear focus on evidence-based interventions and prevention has become a highly emphasized training mission of the program. Applications to the CPY-MS program have remained steady in the last three years averaging at about 43 annually. The CPY-MS program has made a significant effort to attract highly qualified applicants to the University. First, the CPY-MS program maintains a website which includes several useful pieces of information for potential applicants, including links to faculty-sponsored individual web pages, a more clear set of admission criteria which emphasizes fit between faculty research interests/opportunities and the goals of potential applicants, and links to useful resources to assist potential applicants in making informed decisions about the profession of Counseling Psychology and the opportunities available at the University. The Program Coordinator acts as the initial point-person and spends significant time responding to electronic requests for information, providing responses to specific questions and meeting with potential applicants. Program faculty are also available to answer questions related to research goals and upcoming projects. In sum, faculty maintain an accessible and welcoming approach which intends to recruit potential applicants to learn more about our program. In recent years, the Program Coordinator and other program faculty have sought out additional recruitment opportunities, such as traveling to regional colleges and universities to speak to undergraduates groups, presenting program information at regional professional
organization meetings, and through direct mailings to colleges and universities which support the McNair program in an effort to work to recruit highly talented applicants from groups typically under-represented in graduate training. While our students are in the program, each MS student works with a faculty member on their research team. This not only provides an opportunity to become directly involved, and perhaps produce research, but also a one-on-one relationship with a particular faculty member. This faculty member serves as the general adviser for this students on issues relevant to professionalism, coursework, research, practice, remediation, further graduate study, and employment. Having a specified faculty mentor helps to assure our students' individual training and career needs are attended to fully.

All indicators suggest that these efforts have been successful. The CPY-MS program at the University is the only such program in the state of Mississippi. While other master’s level counseling programs in the state do exist, the focus on psychology and scientific inquiry, which is so firmly integrated into the program at USM, differentiates this program from other, more practitioner-focused programs. The CPY-MS program offers students specific training experiences meant to increase their employability in a changing market. An increased focus on evidence-based interventions and prevention, particularly in relation to behavioral health, has provided our graduates the foundation for successful careers in the ever-changing health care market. In an era of accountability, practitioners are required to make use of research knowledge and skills which are critical elements of the scientist-practitioner training model and elements that are lacking from other master’s level training programs in counseling. In sum, the CPY-MS program remains strong and consistently produces well-qualified graduates. This is evidenced by a multi-year 100% pass rate on the National Counselor Exam, a necessary exam for certification and licensure throughout the United States. Employers and internship supervisors regularly report a preference to hire our students due to the high level of training and readiness to practice they possess coming out of our program.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

As mentioned throughout this report, our program has focused on the enhancement of research training for our MS students through research team-based mentorship and increased opportunities for producing research. This year our assessment revealed evidence of research production of our MS students and we would like to begin assessing research production in a more planful way. Our students increasing research competencies show us that we can increase the rigor with which we assess their accomplishments. No longer is the assessment of their work on a class research project the most appropriate way to assess this competency when many of the students are in fact producing research. We will have a target for the next year that at least 20% of our students are presenting at conferences or publishing within our field of Counseling Psychology. Focusing on the assessment of this new target will also help faculty to attend to our unmet target of conference attendance over the coming year.

To additionally support our students' access to research production, we have requested renovations in our physical space to allow for research space dedicated to each research team. This will provide space for our students to complete research tasks in a quiet environment.

As mentioned in last year's assessment, we are planning to seek accreditation through Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council. This is a new body working to develop accreditation standards for unique programs like ours, terminal masters degrees in counseling with training received from psychologists. This council is seeking federal recognition of the MPCAC accreditation mechanism. We are awaiting this phase of the accreditation development before pursuing action with this council.

Closing the Loop

Last year we had an Action Plan to "increase doctoral admissions for our MS graduates." This was due to not meeting this SLO #18 in the 2012-2013 assessment cycle. We did meet the goal of this SLO #18 during the current assessment cycle, leading to a successful completion of this action plan. Yet, as has been noted throughout this assessment report, it was highlighted to the faculty this year that our assessment of employment and further graduate study success (Objective 6) is flawed. Our current method of assessing our students' employment and further graduate study accomplishments do not accurately reflect their goals and success in those goals. Therefore, we will alter the way we measure SLO # 17 and # 18 in the 2014-2015 assessment cycle and have added that as a future action plan.
Also, of note is the addition of our action plan regarding conference attendance. We will make concerted efforts over the next year to provide increased information and access to our students regarding local, regional, and national conference of relevance to their career and research goals. We believe attention to this action plan will also boost our efforts in the areas of increased research competency and production among our MS students.