



Compliance Audit Report 2010-2011 Lamar University School Counselor Certification Program Beaumont, Texas

According to Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(c) "An entity approved by the SBEC under this chapter...shall be reviewed at least once every five years under procedures approved by the TEA staff; however, a review may be conducted at any time at the discretion of the TEA staff." Per TAC §228.1(c) "all educator preparation programs are subject to the same standards of accountability, as required under Chapter 229 of this title." The Texas Education Agency (TEA) administers Texas Administrative Code required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all educator preparation programs in the state. Please see the complete Texas Administrative Code at www.tea.state.tx.us for details.

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Texas Education Agency (TEA) program specialists, Mixon Henry and Dr. Mary S. Black conducted a compliance audit in accordance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(c) on April 26, 27, and 28, 2011, regarding the school counseling program at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. Lamar University offers other certification areas, but this report focuses on the school counseling program only. The following are the findings and recommendations for the school counseling program's improvement.

Date Self-Report Submitted: March 31, 2011

The opening session held on April 26, 2011, was attended by eleven people, including Dr. Hollis Lowery-Moore, Dean of College of Education and Human Development; Dr. William R. Holmes, Associate Dean College of Education and Human Development; and Dr. Pam Monk, Interim Chair of the Counselor Program at Lamar University. Ten people attended the closing session on April 28, 2011.

COMPONENT I: COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Findings:

Component I concerns governance of the educator preparation program, or the advisory committee. The advisory committee for Lamar University consists of 23 members, as listed in

the self-report: 17 from various school districts; two from higher education; two from an education service center, and two from business and community. The composition of the advisory committee meets the requirements of TAC §228.20(b). However, the advisory committee and Lamar University would benefit from increased depth of membership by including mentors, interns, and school district human resource directors. According to the self-report, the most current advisory committee meetings were held on October 25, 2010, and April 11, 2011. Meetings are held twice a year as required by TAC §228.20(b). Agendas and attendance records (i.e. list of attendees on the minutes) were available during the document review as evidence of compliance. Minutes of the meetings were kept by the program to confirm the level of committee member involvement [TAC §228.20(b)]. The minutes of advisory committee meetings reflected limited participation of advisory committee members in the analysis of program curriculum, design, evaluation, and improvement as required by TAC §228.35(d).

Six of 23 advisory committee members responded to the electronic questionnaire sent by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) prior to the visit. Three of the six responding advisory committee members indicated that they have served on the advisory committee less than a year. The other three responding members indicated that they have served from one to five years. Five of the respondents stated that they were familiar with TAC Chapters §227, §228, and §229.

Three advisory committee members responded “no” to questions regarding participation in designing and revision of curriculum and major policy decisions affecting the school counseling program [TAC §228.35(d)]. Four of six of the respondents said that the number of candidates and clock hours of coursework had not been discussed during advisory committee meetings. Four advisory committee members out of five responded that they participated in overall program evaluation.

The delineation of Lamar University educator preparation tracks (traditional teaching certification, post-baccalaureate teacher certification, principal certification, and counselor certification) during advisory committee meetings is not adequately made for members to understand the specifics or evaluate each individual certification track. In reading the minutes from the advisory committee meetings (September 6, 2006, April 8, 2008, April 9, 2009, October 25, 2010, and April 11, 2011), the agendas are divided into updates and assorted topic presentations. Lamar University uses the meetings as an avenue to disperse information about various certification programs. These topics are addressed by university instructors from each certification area. In the advisory committee minutes from October 25, 2010, input was requested from members concerning field placement in a general manner not specific to any certification program. It is suggested that each certification area update be clearly identified on the agenda and in the minutes so appropriate feedback can be provided accordingly. The feedback by advisory committee members should be documented by each certification area requesting member input.

Three of the responding advisory committee members indicated that they do not participate in designing or revising the educator preparation program’s curriculum, but four members responded that they had participated in evaluating the program for the purpose of program

improvement. However, there is a section of advisory committee minutes which allows feedback by members (“Your questions/issues/concerns”) which is an open forum to allow feedback from advisory committee members. Specific certification areas are not identified in minutes in these open forum sections. Certification test scores are shared with members, but other methods of program evaluation were not apparent in the minutes. With the lack of documentation and questionnaire responses, it is apparent that members are not clear as to their roles and responsibilities in assisting the Lamar University school counseling program. A TEA PowerPoint regarding responsibilities of advisory committee members and suggested agendas were supplied to Interim Chair Dr. Pam Monk to assist with training and documentation of meetings.

Because of the importance of the advisory committee’s contributions and since there are ongoing revisions being made to the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), it is recommended that yearly training, such as that provided by the TEA, be provided to the members. Due to lack of advisory committee training in their roles and responsibilities [TAC 228.20 (b)], and lack of evidence concerning advisory committee participation in program evaluation, Lamar University School Counselor program is out of compliance.

Based on the evidence presented above, Lamar University School Counselor Certification Program is not in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 – GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

COMPONENT II. ADMISSION CRITERIA - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 - ADMISSION CRITERIA

Findings:

Component II concerns admission criteria to the school counseling program at Lamar University. Lamar University uses the state mandated requirements for admission to their school counselor certification program including the following: baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited university; 2.5 grade point average (GPA) or at least a 2.5 GPA in the last 60 semester hours. Students have been admitted with GPAs lower than 2.5, but these admissions remain within the allowable 10% for each cohort [TAC §227.10 (3) (b)]. Official transcripts are kept by Lamar University electronically. The paper application is not specific to any program but is one used by all individuals applying for entry into the graduate school at Lamar University. It collects demographic information, academic background, and admission tests. The only identifying feature for program choice is a check denoting the certification area for which the applicant is applying. The university has adopted the online Texas state universal application which collects more specific information about applicants applying to the new online school counseling program.

As a matter of Lamar University policy, out-of-country applicants must have the required transcript evaluation and pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. Three letters of references must be provided by candidates as the final admissions component required by the program. Admissions criteria are published on the college website and in

brochures. No interview or other screening device is currently used to determine the potential candidates' suitability for the school counseling certification, which is required in TAC§ 227.10 (6). It was suggested that the university create an admissions interview with specific questions that identify characteristics important to a counselor's success and evaluate responses using a rubric. The Lamar counseling program should keep the questions and completed rubrics for documentation in the candidates' folders. Because of the lack of an interview or other screening instrument, Lamar University school counseling certification program is not in compliance with TAC.

Seventeen new candidates were admitted to the program during the past academic year, making a total of 38 candidates enrolled as "finishers", "all but clinical," and "other enrolled" in the TEA Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP). Thirteen candidates are enrolled as interns or clinical teachers for this academic year. Dr. Pam Monk, interim chair for school counseling, stated that 250 candidates had enrolled in the new online program which began a week prior to the site visit.

Based on the evidence presented above, Lamar University School Counselor Certification Program is not in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10 – Admission Criteria.

COMPONENT III. CURRICULUM - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM

Findings:

Component III concerns the required curriculum for the school counseling certification. Three charts showing alignment of standards to curriculum modules and activities were prepared by Lamar University and reviewed by TEA program specialists during the document review. All required standards were shown to be present in the Lamar University curriculum. The first course of the new online school counselor program was initiated in April 2011.

Eighteen of 60 candidates, due to the combination of school counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor responded to the electronic questionnaires sent by TEA prior to the visit. With the understanding that the program is organized in a cohort model and therefore candidates are at different places in the curriculum, the majority of the responding candidates noted that not all state required school counselor standards were addressed in their curriculum. However, in reviewing the documentation at Lamar University and interviewing instructors, it was clear to TEA program specialists that the standards were indeed addressed in the curriculum. Many of the curriculum standards appear to be embedded in the coursework and could be difficult for candidates to identify; but instructors clearly identified where they addressed each standard. TEA program specialists suggested that all syllabi list the particular school counseling standards covered in the course so that both candidates and instructors know exactly what was covered.

Responding candidates identified several areas for improvement in the curriculum. Candidates were unsure that the following topics were included in the Lamar University curriculum: theories and techniques in pedagogy and classroom management (75%); developing partnerships with

parents/guardians, business, and other groups (50%); societal trends, including demographic, economic and technological tendencies (41.6); facilitating learners' access to community resources (41.6% same as above); and facilitating parent/guardian involvement in their children's education (41.6%).

Strengths of the curriculum identified by candidates were as follows: counseling and consultation theories and practices (100%); assessment principles and procedures (100%); career development theories and practices (100%); legal and ethical standards, practices and issues (100%); counseling related research (100%); and use knowledge of group dynamics and productive group interaction (100%).

Syllabi for each course were reviewed by TEA program specialists during the document review. Domains and competencies were listed on some of the syllabi but not all. Assignments and assessments are also identified in the syllabus for each course. Grades are monitored by the instructors and staff with successful completion of each course required prior to moving to the next course. The school counseling certification cohort also takes all Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) course work. This was by design by Lamar University, making accessibility easier for both counseling fields. Lamar University offers certification in both counselor fields with the addition of six additional semester hours of practicum.

School counseling candidates are not tracked separately from candidates for the LPC. When asked to identify the candidates by the counseling program they were enrolled in, whether school counselor or LPC, Lamar University staff and faculty could not do so. TEA program specialists suggested that separate tracking be instituted to better manage data reporting and other tasks.

For questions regarding overall effectiveness of the program's curriculum, 100% of the school counselor candidates responded in their electronic questionnaires that the program was either effective or very effective. The curriculum created by Lamar University has produced a pass rate of 100% over the last three years on the school counselor TExES certification exam, with no candidate retesting prior to passing.

Based on the evidence presented above, Lamar University Counselor Certification Program is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 – EDUCATOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM.

COMPONENT IV. PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT – Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING

Findings:

Component IV concerns the required number of hours for coursework, field supervision and mentoring. Lamar University offers a Masters Degree and School Counselor's certificate by providing 45 semester hours (675 clock hours) of curriculum and practicum. With an additional three semester hours of coursework, the candidate can add LPC licensure. The program

requires two practica of 150 clock hours each for a total of 300 clock hours. If the candidate is seeking only the school counselor certificate, the practica can be completed in a single school setting, but must still total 300 clock hours required by Lamar University. If both certificates are sought, the practicum must take place in two different settings: school and community.

The initial contact by the field supervisors with candidates during the practica takes place within the first three weeks in regularly scheduled class meetings connected to the practica. There was no documentation to verify this contact, but by reviewing course syllabi and questioning instructors, it was confirmed that initial contact took place within three weeks of placement. TEA program specialists recommended that sign-in sheets or attendance logs be kept to document this requirement. All three field supervisors for the program are university instructors, have doctorate degrees, a Texas teaching certificate, and experience in school counseling. Field Supervisors' logs document and identify specific contact with candidates and additional coaching of candidates during their practicum.

There is no handbook for mentors or field supervisors. No mentor or field supervisor training is currently provided by Lamar University as required in TAC § 228.35 (e) and (f). Lamar University faculty suggested that an online training program be developed to comply with mentor training. In questionnaire responses by candidates about their practicum experience, four of eight candidates responded that no observation had taken place; two responded only one had taken place; and two responded that two observations had taken place. In reviewing the timeline of the questionnaires, a minimum of two observations should have taken place at the point of the practicum.

Six mentors responded to their electronic questionnaires concerning the number of observations. One stated no observations had occurred. Five stated that only one observation had taken place. Thirteen randomly selected student folders were reviewed by TEA program specialists. No observation documents were found in any school counselor student folder from 2006 to 2010. It was impossible to determine if observations were completed in past cohorts. Dr. Pam Monk provided her observation evaluations from fall 2010, but had only two evaluations for four candidates and only one observation form for three others. When TEA staff members examined the current observation form used by field supervisors, several issues became apparent. The observation form does not record the start and stop time of the observations or the start and stop time of the interactive conference and has no signature spaces for interns, campus administrators, or field supervisors. All of these issues are addressed in TAC § 228.35 (f). It was suggested that training sessions be held to allow field supervisors to correct observation forms and agree on criteria to be used in observations.

Because of lack of documentation of field observation and evaluation during practica, lack of training for campus mentors and field supervisors, lack of time in/out and signatures on observation forms, Lamar University is out of compliance with TAC rule.

Based on the evidence presented above, Lamar University School Counselor Certification Program is not in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 – PREPARATION PROGRAM COURSEWORK AND/OR TRAINING

COMPONENT V. PROGRAM EVALUATION - Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 - ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

Findings:

Component V concerns candidate and overall program assessment and evaluation. Lamar University uses the satisfactory completion of the each course as a benchmark through the program. Since candidates may work on a Masters degree (M.Ed.), school counselor certification, or LPC credential, or all of these, the progress of the candidates is monitored closely by university advisors and instructors. Testing to determine readiness for the TExES certification exam is accomplished with a Counselor Preparatory exam used by the program. Other exams used to assess candidates are New Counselor Exam (NES), TExES, and an optional National Counselor Exam.

Even though advisory committee minutes and the self-report did not reveal annual evaluation of the school counselor curriculum and policy, other evidence of overall evaluation for program effectiveness was found by TEA program specialists. According to discussion with Dr. Lowery-Moore and Dr. Pam Monk, a variety of data is reviewed by faculty and advisory committee members concerning the program, including: 1) online course evaluations; 2) candidate evaluation of course instructors and curriculum; 3) candidates' observation evaluations; 4) and test results. School counseling testing pass rates for Lamar University for 2008, 2009, and 2010 are 100 % for all categories. All of this information is provided to the advisory committee for feedback and input to evaluate the program according to Dr. Lowery-Moore.

Though it was noted that much of the required documentation was not retained in candidates' files, what was kept had been retained for at least five years. When discussing the issue with the certification officer, she provided evidence of all documentation for certification and it dated back to the required time frame.

Based on the evidence presented above, Lamar University Counselor Certification Program is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 – ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the Texas Education Agency Compliance Audit. If the program is NOT in compliance with any component, please consult the Texas Administrative Code and initiate actions to correct the issue IMMEDIATELY. A Compliance Status Report will be required in sixty days on compliance recommendations.

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: A Compliance Status Report will be required in sixty days.

Component I – Commitment and Collaboration

- Provide documentation of training for Advisory Committee making available the specific information about committee members' role and responsibilities (TAC § 228.20(b)).

Component II – Admission Criteria

- Develop standard interview questions for applicants and a rubric for scoring the interview, or add other screening instruments to application procedures. Administer the interview and/or other screening instrument to all applicants who meet initial admission criteria.
- Keep records of this interview in candidates' records [TAC § 227.10 (6)].

Component IV – Preparation Program Requirements

- Develop training for campus mentors and document the training [TAC § 228.35(e)].
- Document annual training for field supervisors [TAC § 228.35 (f)].
- Provide formal observations and evaluations of each intern a minimum of three times per 160 clock hour block of first practicum [TAC § 228.35 (f) (2)].
- Provide 45 minute observation, with forms recording a start and stop time to document the time occurrence [TAC §228.35 (f) (1) (2)].
- Conduct the first formal observation within the first six weeks of the internship and document the observation with date on form [TAC § 228.35 (f) (1) (2)].
- Provide an interactive conference following the observation and document with start and stop time and intern signature [TAC § 228.35 (f)].
- Provide a copy of the observation to the campus administrator and document with signature [TAC § 228.35 (f)].

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS: No progress report is necessary.

- Ensure advisory committee members assist in design, delivery, policy making, and program evaluation; document specific input from members in advisory committee meeting minutes (TAC § 228.20(b)).
- Make sure all documentation is in candidates' records (paper or electronic); application, interviews, transcripts, all three observations (signed by all participants), and test results; and the documentation is to be kept for five years [TAC § 228.40].