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SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

November 15, 2024

Dr. T. Rhett Brown
President
Wingate University
213 East Wilson Street
Wingate, NC 28174

Dear Dr. Brown:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:
New Program-Approval
Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
Submission date:
9/25/2024
Intended Implementation date:
8/1/2025
Case ID:
SC028537

SACSCOC requested additional information on October 10, 2024 and October 29, 2024. The institution's responses on October 17, 2024 and October 29, 2024, were added to the record and reflected in the narrative below.

The institution proposes the implementation of the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MSCMHC) in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) with a launch date of August 1, 2025. The primary target audience was identified as the institution's post-baccalaureate students in the regional area. The projected initial enrollment is 15 students and will increase to 30 students. The program will be cohort-based and ongoing, and students should complete the 60-semester credit hour program in two years. A part-time option for students will be offered. The program will be offered through primarily face-to-face methdology at the institution's main campus and through limited online components. The institution was approved to offer distance education on May 17, 2018.

The strengths of the institution to offer the program include the multiple health-related professional programs offered and current strong relationships with public and private social welfare and community development partners, including the health department, regional healthcare systems, and K-12 systems. The need for the program was determined by data available through the US Bureau of Labor Statistics that projected a growth in mental health counselors of 18% from 2022-2032 and through discussions with local area healthcare providers, practitioners, and agencies. Those findings indicate an urgent demand for well-trained mental health practitioners in the area.

The new program was described in the context of the institution's mission and appears to be consistent. The proposed program's purpose is to provide individuals in the region to meet present and future bio-psycho-social needs. The MSCMHC will integrate with the interdisciplinary healthcare environment present in the College of Health Sciences; however, the program will be housed in the College of Arts and Sciences to draw from the undergraduate programs in Human Services, Psychology, and Sociology.

The former Provost was the lead investigator in determining how the institution might develop the MSMHC. In fall 2020, the EAB consulting firm was engaged to gather macro data on counseling and other programs. Dialogue with community leaders and agency healthcare personnel added necessary information. A formal prospectus for the program was drafted and presented to the New Programs Development Committee, Executive Leadership Team, and Mission and Purpose Committee of the Board of Trustees, all of which endorsed taking action to begin the MSMHC. The Founding Director for the MSCMHC was hired, who compiled the academic curriculum. The MSCMHC was formally validated by the Graduate Affairs Committee. The Wingate University Board of Trustees authority is required for approval to add any program to the institution's academic offerings. The institution received institutional endorsement for the change from the Board of Trustees. Documentation was provided.

The 60 SCH curriculum, six program goals, 12 program objectives, nine student learning outcomes, and a program schedule were provided. Assessment measures are aligned with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), as the institution intends to seek professional accreditation with CACREP. The assessment measures include course-embedded assessments such as exams; clinical site internship and practicum evaluations; and section scores on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination. Course descriptions for all program courses were provided and appear to be appropriate.

Requirements for admission into and graduation from the program were provided and are consistent with higher education practices in a graduate field. The institution stated that the program will follow existing University policies and procedures to grant credit for the courses in the program. Documentation was provided. The USDOE definition of a credit hour is used by the institution.

Administrative oversight of the program will be provided by the Program Coordinator of the MSCMHC program. Aspects of administrative oversight include program operation and coordination in alignment with accreditation standards. Qualifications for the Program Director as given by CACREP standards will be followed. Additional program oversight, including proposed feedback on student learning and professional needs and program improvement, will be provided by an external advisory board, convened by the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will also serve as the Department Chair and works closely with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to implement effective improvement plans based on assessment data. The Program Coordinator also has direct access to the provost regarding program assessments and improvement strategies.

The courses in the program will not be offered in a compressed timeframe.

The institution provided a faculty roster that listed one full-time faculty (who is the Founding Director of the program) and three to-be-hired full-time faculty, and one practicum/internship coordinator (not faculty line). The faculty member currently employed appears to be qualified to teach the courses to which they are assigned. Should qualifications listed on the roster be adhered to in the hiring process, the to-be-hired faculty would appear to be qualified to teach the courses they are assigned. A summary of the scholarship and research activity of the current faculty member on the roster was provided. The number of full-time faculty (current and to-be-hired) appears to be adequate to teach the program, according to CACREP standards. The institution will ensure that the program student/faculty ratio is consistent with those required by CACREP (maximum of 12:1).

Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications and faculty adequacy is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

The library and learning resources supporting the new program were provided and appear to be adequate. A physical description of the library was provided. The library has been intentionally moving towards virtual access to all books, journals, and other reference materials. The library provides interlibrary loan services with other institutions and reciprocal borrowing agreements through the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. The library provided samples of discipline-specific databases (ten) and full-text subscriptions of refereed journals (fourteen) for behavioral health disciplines. Electronic resources such as databases, eBooks, electronic full-text journals, and streaming media are accessible via the library's website at all hours. Students can access library resources on the *Access the Library* library webpage, under Academic Resources on the main Academic page, and through embedded links in the Canvas LMS. The primary method for graduate students to obtain information about accessing learning and information resources is through the required orientation. A LibGuide for the MSCMHC students will be created by a librarian in consultation with program faculty. Librarians provide in-person and virtual instruction in the use of the library and learning resources. All students can receive general information or in-depth research consultations with librarians via virtual (including chat) or in-person formats. During off-hours, research queries are queued and set to professional Librarians via a list-serve mailing.

Student and academic services provided for program students include disability services, health and counseling services, orientation, the Writing Center, academic advising, library, and information technology services (ITS). ITS provides help desk services include technology advising, virtual support, tutorials, problem reporting, and an institution-wide knowledge base.

Office space for the full-time faculty and any support staff will be provided on the main campus and includes access to adequate resources for instruction, student consultations, and program management. Full-time faculty receive either a desktop or laptop, along with Crowdstrike security software, Microsoft Office Suite, and Zoom. Available physical resources for the program include classrooms, computer labs, conference rooms, offices, and reception areas. Classrooms are equipped with projectors, cameras, microphones, a document camera, and webcam for video conferencing. As a part of the MSCMHC program, a new counseling clinic will be established to provide students with experiential learning opportunities under live supervision. The Clinic will be equipped with cameras and will utilize iPads for immediate feedback to students. The IT department has over 75 computers for students to borrow for loan periods of 30 to 90 days. Students have access to Office 365 licenses and a printing allowance. The addition of the program will have little to no impact on the physical facilities.

The institution appears to have a sound financial base and stability. The primary source of revenue for the new program is tuition. The institution provided an expense budget for the first four years of the program's operation. The budget expenses include faculty salaries/benefits, supplies and materials, travel and professional development, accreditation expenses, library resources, field and practicum funds, student recruiting, and miscellaneous. No resources will be directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the new program. The budget demonstrates that revenues will exceed expenses each year beginning with year two.

A contingency plan was provided that should needed revenues not materialize, the institution will consider suspension of the program and disbursement of matriculated students to other CACREP accredited programs.

The institutional planning and assessment process was described and appears to be adequate. All academic programs undergo annual assessment and planning. The effectiveness of the program will be assessed through articulation of learning outcomes and assessment of their effectiveness. Each academic unit must demonstrate the use of measurements for outcomes, provide data on student performance and achievement, analyze the data to identify areas of strength and areas of concern, and then provide actions for improvement on areas of concern. While the program faculty members are responsible for assessing SLOs, the institution's Assessment Committee focuses on the quality of student learning by examining outcomes, results, and plans for improvement. The program will be included in the existing annual assessment processes and will be required to provide operational and SLO findings, analysis, and action plans on a yearly basis. The initial accreditation by CACREP and subsequent reaffirmation will serve as the program's review.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.

An invoice for $500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. Denise Y. Young at (404) 492-5386 or via email at dyoung@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

Belle S. Wheelan

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/TBB:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Eric F. Schneider, Interim Provost, Wingate University
Dr. Denise Y. Young, Vice President, SACSCOC