WALDEN UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR GOOD®

2021-2022 Academic Year

SCHOOL OF COUNSELING (SoC) ANNUAL CACREP PROGRAM EVALUATION OUTCOME REPORT (PEOR)

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

As part of our continual efforts to provide the highest caliber of training for counselors and counselor educators, Walden University's School of Counseling (SoC) provides this report of data gathered and assessed in the 2021–2022 AY. The subsequent actions and program improvements made based on our comprehensive assessment plan and process are also included. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model used by the SoC to drive its assessment practices and, ultimately, develop competent and confident counseling professionals from each of the degree programs offered in the SoC.

Figure 1. Conceptual model in the SoC.
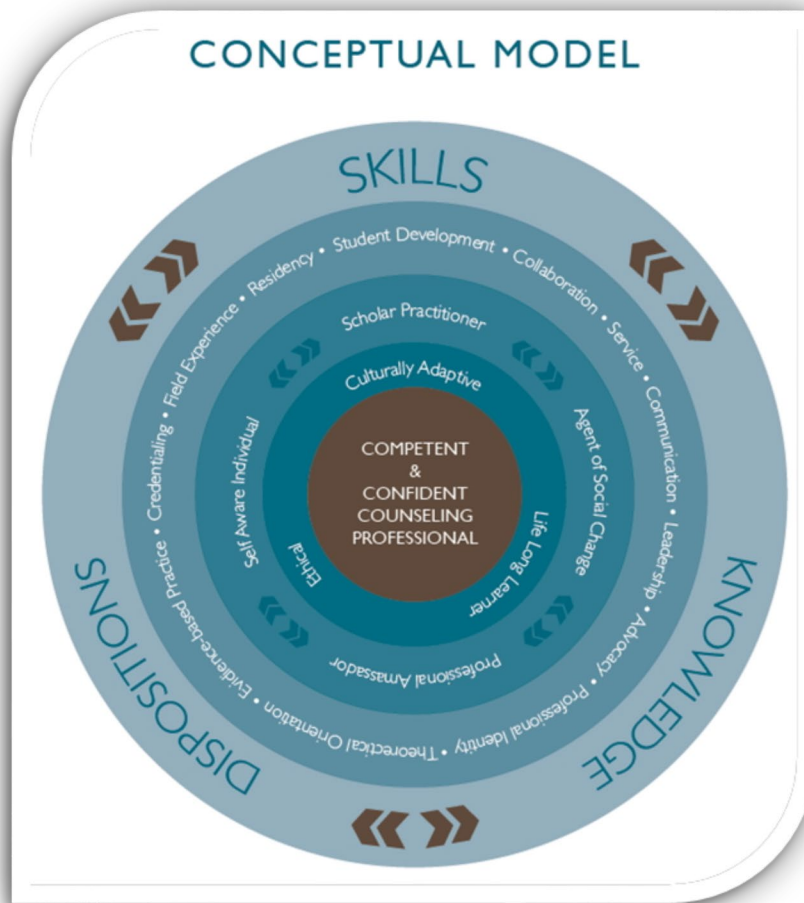
In addition, information can be found related to program changes that were made based on data gathered and analyzed throughout the year. Some of the data sources for this report include the *Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes* (*APLO*) *Plan* which identifies achievement data on key student assignments linked to program learning outcomes; data from surveys conducted with current students; and data from pre-practicum/residency, skills courses, and field experience assessments. These data supported actions that have either been completed or are in process in the SoC efforts to facilitate ongoing improvements.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS AND COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The SoC Vision and Mission Statements reflect the overarching goals of the SoC. Goals are broad, generalizable statements of what an institution, college, school, or program seeks to accomplish. They may be incorporated in the academic unit vision and mission statements or as separate statements. Their primary role is to provide overall guidance and direction to the academic unit. The Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion was adopted in January of 2021.The Vision and Mission Statements were updated during the 2021–2022 academic year in response to the Academic Program Review (APR) from April of 2020-2021.

The SoC faculty articulate their goals within the SoC Vision and Mission Statements and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:

SoC Vision Statement—To create a healthier world through fostering wellness and transforming lives.

SoC Mission Statement—We improve lives by providing accessible, inclusive, and quality counselor education that empowers students to promote wellness and social change in a diverse world.

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion—We affirm the dignity and inherent worth of all people. We strive for inclusive representation in our curriculum, communication, and climate to equip students to enact positive social change by flourishing in cultural surroundings in an increasingly inter-connected world.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

Walden University's SoC delivers four CACREP accredited degree programs:

1. MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC)
2. MS in School Counseling (SC)
3. MS in Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling (MCFC)
4. PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES)

Additionally, the SoC provides one program that offers students the opportunity to complete both the MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and MS in School Counseling simultaneously by meeting the requirements for both degrees in one program of study:

1. MS Dual Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and in School Counseling (DD)

TERM DATES IN REPORTING PERIOD

This report includes data collected from all CACREP-accredited degree programs for the four quarter terms in the 2021–2022 academic year. In past years, this report reflected a January to December calendar year, but to better align with CACREP reporting, the SoC moved to an academic year report. Table 1 provides the terms and dates of terms reflected in this annual report.

Table 1. Terms and Dates of the 2021–2022 Academic Year

Term	First Day of Term	Last Day of Term
Fall Quarter 2021	30-Aug-21	21-Nov-21
Winter Quarter 2021–2022	29-Nov-21	20-Feb-22
Spring Quarter 2022	28-Feb-22	22-May-22
Summer Quarter 2022	30-May-22	21-Aug-22

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Student demographic data in Table 2 provides the SoC information about the makeup of the student body. This information aids the SoC in identifying potential differences in program experience realized by different groups of students. It also informs the school's efforts in student recruiting and admissions as well as student success and support.

Table 2. SoC Demographics by Program for the 2021–2022 Academic Year (Fall 2021)

Demographic		CMHC	SC	DD	MCFC	CES	Total
Headcount		3,123	567	604	80	337	4,711
Gender	Female	81%	84%	87%	78%	80%	82%
	Male	15%	13%	11%	16%	18%	15%
	Unknown	3%	3%	2%	6%	2%	3%
Race	White	47%	46%	42%	25%	39%	46%
	Black or African American	34%	39%	41%	48%	47%	37%
	Hispanic or Latino	9%	8%	9%	10%	8%	9%
	Asian	2%	1%	<1%	4%	2%	1%
	Other	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
	Unknown	5%	4%	4%	11%	3%	5%
Age	17–23	7%	9%	10%	0%	<1%	7%
	24–29	25%	31%	29%	16%	9%	25%
	30–39	33%	34%	36%	40%	39%	34%
	40–49	21%	20%	18%	29%	32%	22%
	50–59	12%	6%	6%	12%	18%	11%
	60 and older	1%	0%	<1%	2%	2%	1%
Citizenship	US Citizens	98%	99%	99%	93%	99%	98%
Military	Affiliated	10%	5%	9%	18%	11%	10%
1st Gen. Student	Yes	25%	20%	27%	18%	30%	25%

The demographic make-up of the SoC included 3,880 of 4,711 students that identified as female (82%) in the Fall 2021 term. Students who identified as Black or African American represented 37% of the student body. Likewise, persons who identified as White represented 46% of the student body. Therefore, these two groups made up most of the programs. Students identifying as Hispanic or Latino

represented 9% of students. Most of the master's-level students indicated their ages were between 24 and 49 years (85%), while 72% of PhD in CES students indicated their ages were between 30 and 49 years. SoC students indicated that 96% are U.S. citizens. An important characteristic is the fact that 10% of the students were affiliated with the military. Another important characteristic is that 25% of students in the SoC programs were first generation college graduates.

ANNUAL SURVEY DATA

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) conducts several surveys of various SoC constituents, including faculty, students, alumni, and employers. This report presents data from the 2021 Student Satisfaction Survey with a response of 1,144 participants from SoC programs. The demographic data of student participants closely compared with the program demographic characteristics. The students in all the programs report a high level of satisfaction as demonstrated by responses to questions about overall satisfaction (8.2 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing *Very Satisfied*) and indications of whether they would recommend Walden to others (8.2 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing *Very Likely*). Responses to these questions across programs ranged from 7.69 to 8.40 with students in the MS in MCFC program and the PhD in CES program reported the lower ratings in the range and students in the MS in SC, MS in CMHC, and the MS DD programs on the higher ratings in the range. SoC students indicated high satisfaction with Walden instructors (4.2 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 representing *I am satisfied with ALL of my Walden professors*) *and feel faculty care about student success* (4.17 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 representing *Strongly Agree*).

This report also includes data from the 2022 Alumni Survey. The total number of MS-level alumni responding to the survey was 126, but the number of alumni from two of the MS-level programs fell below five. As a result, only the aggregate data for MS-level alumni is included in this report. The alumni survey for the PhD in CES program includes six responses. When asked how satisfied alumni are with Walden University overall, 92.9% of MS-level alumni and 83.3% of PhD in CES alumni selected a score of 6 or higher on a 1 to 10 scale with 10 representing *Very Satisfied*. In response to a question about the likelihood the alumni would recommend Walden University to others, 85.8% of MS-level alumni and 83.3% of PhD in CES alumni selected a score of 6 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing *Very Likely*.

In the 2022 Employer Survey, 10 employers provided feedback regarding skills and characteristics they observe in graduates of programs from the SoC, and these employers provided positive reflections of the graduates. For instance, the employers indicated the graduates demonstrated moderate to high ability in general skills such as oral and written communication and management of time, budget, projects, and people. When comparing these employees to others in the organization, the employers indicated that in most cases, SoC graduates exceeded the abilities of their peers (60.0% for oral communication, 55.6% for written communication, and 60.0% for time management) or nearly all were at least the same as others. Regarding other work skills such as critical thinking, analyzing issues from multiple perspectives, applying academic knowledge to professional practice, research skills, developing solutions, and influencing others, employers report that 85.7% or more of the Walden graduates demonstrate equal or superior ability when compared to their peers. When compared to their peers, employers indicated that 85.7% of the Walden graduates were equal to or superior to their peers in demonstrating leadership skills as well. Lastly, employers indicated that at least 70% of the Walden

graduates employed with them were very effective in their foundational counseling skills while the remaining 30% were rated as moderately effective.

Finally, this report includes data from the Faculty Survey which demonstrated SoC faculty report a high level of satisfaction. A total of 131 faculty were sent the survey, and 118 (90.1%) provided responses. To the question, "Overall, how satisfied are you as a faculty member at Walden?" 85.4% indicated they were *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied*. Additionally, 85% of faculty indicated they were *Likely* or *Very Likely* to still be a part of Walden in five years and to recommend working at Walden University to a colleague. Also, faculty indicated a high level of appreciation for the support for diversity in the SoC. They *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* the SoC encouraged diversity in gender (93.3%), sexual orientation (91.7%), age (90.1%), and race/ethnicity (90.1%).

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (APLO)

Building upon a strong foundation of assessment expertise and rigorous evaluation at Walden University, the SoC has a systematic process for measuring the program learning outcomes (PLOs) for each degree program. The program learning outcomes find their roots in the SoC's Vision and Mission, which are connected to the larger umbrella of Walden University's Vision and Mission that are focused on social change. In addition, each PLO aligns with the university's outcomes and the 2016 CACREP Standards.

To track student learning through assessment of outcomes, the SoC uses the university's *Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes (APLO) plan*. The APLO plan is completed on an annual basis to assess and measure attainment of program learning outcomes, analyze results, and determine action steps for continuous improvement. All PLOs are assessed over a 3-year cycle.

Three primary areas are assessed across the SoC curriculum—counseling knowledge, counseling skills, and counseling dispositions. For each program learning outcome, two or three assignment rubrics and/or skills assessments are used to measure student success across four quarters (Fall to Summer). To establish excellence, a benchmark is set for each outcome with the expectation that 90% of students who complete each activity will achieve an 80% or higher mark on the assignment rubric rows aligned to the learning outcome for knowledge assessments, 90% of students receive a rating of *proficient* for skills assessments, and 90% of students receive a rating of *consistent* for disposition ratings. The SoC Assessment Team determined that a benchmark set at 90% serves to promote continuous improvement, showing a commitment to high standards, and where benchmarks are not met, special attention is given to improve upon the results through modifications in the program curriculum and policies. A review of the activity occurs to see where students did not meet the benchmark, and then an action plan is created to address the concerns. Each year, action plans are reviewed to determine which items were successful and those that need more time or support. Results, analysis, and action plan items are then shared with three leadership groups: (1) the SoC Assessment Team made up of college faculty and administrators; (2) the SoC leadership, and (3) SoC Curriculum and Policy Committee which is made up of faculty, staff, and administrators from the SoC. SoC leadership groups also consult with Walden's Dean of Academic Success – Assessment within the OIE in the development of the action plan. The review takes place during the college summit planning in the spring of each year. Feedback and comments from the annual summit are used to refine the action plan and APLO documentation. The APLO plan is due each spring to the Dean of Academic Success – Assessment.

KNOWLEDGE

While most courses that relate to the knowledge outcomes are cross-listed for all three of the MS degree programs, the assessments reflect learning outcomes for the students within each of the MS degree programs, exclusively. In other words, while all SC, CMHC, DD, and MCFC students enroll in the same ethics course, the reported assessments for each outcome are specific to students in each of the programs. Therefore, assessment results may be different between MS programs for the knowledge learning outcomes. The SoC Assessment Team not only evaluates all eight of the MS CACREP foundational curriculum areas, but it also evaluates curriculum for each of the entry-level specialized practice areas. The five domains of the PhD in CES program are evaluated, also. The Assessment Committee identifies the percentage of students who completed the activity and achieved a score of 80% or higher on the rubric rows aligned to the learning outcome. A change in how Walden assesses student achievement of the PLOs occurred in 2021, with a move to discontinue the Learning Outcomes Report (LORbook) which used grades as the primary measure to the APLO plan that uses direct measures (i.e., rubric rows) to determine student achievement of the PLOs. The APLO plan is a continuous improvement plan that uses direct measures to assess learning. The APLO plan provides the needed time for action plan items to be implemented for the PLOs being assessed and then time to re-assess to determine whether the action plan items improved student learning. All PLOs are assessed within a three-year period.

National exams for the MS programs include the National Counselor Exam for CMHC and MCFC graduates and the Praxis Exam for SC graduates. MCFC pass rates went up from 58.3% (N=24), below the national pass rate of 79.9%, in 2021 Fall to 68.8% (N=16) in Spring 2022, above the national pass rate of 63.0%. Similarly, for CMHC, pass rates increased from 57.4% (N=188) in Fall 2021 which was below the national pass rate of 79.9% to 76.1% (N=218) in Spring 2022, above the pass rate of 63.0%. In 2022, 27 of 28 SC students met the score cutoff of 145 points in the Praxis Exam. This was similar to the national pass rate where 98.0% of test takers met the same cutoff.   Even though the more recent pass rates of CMHC and MCFC students exceeded the national pass rates, the SoC Leadership Team will continue to enhance activities that encourage participation of SoC students in these national exams and increase their pass rates. For instance, students have access to modules in the classroom to review curriculum areas covered by these exams, and the goal is to increase announcements about the availability of these resources and provide additional notification of the process of registering and sitting for the exams.

SKILLS

For the MS programs, faculty and site supervisors assess students' counseling skills at multiple points throughout the program of study. For each skill, raters select responses ranging 0 to 4 representing *Not Present* to *Exemplary*. Training for specific counseling skills is scaffolded through the Techniques Course (COUN 6316), Pre-Practicum 1, and Pre-Practicum 2, and assessments for the skills are included in each course. As with the APLO assessments, students are cross-listed in these courses, but the assessments differentiate students by enrolled degree program. Skills ratings for the three content courses demonstrated developmental improvement for each of the three MS degree programs measured (there were no MCFC students enrolled in the Techniques and Pre-Practicum 1 courses during the 2021–2022 academic year). For example, for the item "Demonstrates the appropriate use of open and close-ended questions" showed improving CMHC mean ratings of 2.30, 2.34, and 2.71 on the 0 to 4 rating scale across the three consecutive courses. Most students were rated as *Progressing* in the Techniques (67.4%) and Pre-Practicum 1 (65.7%) courses. In the Pre-Practicum 2 course, however, the percentage of

students was higher for *Proficient* (48.7%) and *Exemplary* (14.6%), demonstrating progressive improvement as expected. Further, as students moved into the field experience courses, site supervisors and faculty supervisors provided multiple assessments in each course. Again, percentages show consistent progression of a higher percentage of students being rated *Proficient* or *Exemplary* across time. For the item "Demonstrates the appropriate use of open and close-ended questions," percentages of students rated as *Proficient* or *Exemplary* increased from 59.6% to 99.4% as they progressed from the Practicum course to the end of Internship II.

For the PhD in CES program, faculty and site supervisors assess the teaching, supervision, and research skills demonstrated as part of activities in the teaching, supervision, and various research content courses. Faculty and site supervisors provide assessments for PhD in CES students' counseling skills during the Practicum course. These skills are identical to skills assessed for the MS in CMHC program. In the field experience courses, PhD in CES students develop specific criteria associated with the skills for the counseling, research, teaching, supervision, and leadership and advocacy domains, and the students, along with their faculty and site supervisors, provide assessments indicating the level of proficiency in the skill on a scale of 0 to 4. Consistently, the skills across the teaching domain show that PhD in CES students are demonstrating the skills. For instance, one of the teaching skills is "Demonstrated the ability to prepare for teaching the assigned group of students." In the Pre-Practicum Final skills assessment, 84.8% of PhD in CES students were rated as *Proficient* and 7.1% were rated as *Exemplary*. This exceeds a 90.0% threshold of students demonstrating proficiency in the skill. For the supervision domain, the majority of ratings showed that 86.0% or more were rated as *Proficient* or *Exemplary*. This provides reason to consider strategies to improve students' skill levels in supervision. Additionally, several of the research skill items that faculty assessed demonstrated that 39.0% of PhD in CES students were *Progressing* in areas of research proficiency. For instance, the item "The student demonstrates a clear understanding of alignment in relation to choosing a method for analysis" has 39.4% of students at *Progressing*, 40.8% at *Proficient*, and 19.7% at *Exemplary*. Again, these results suggest there is opportunity for improvement in the research domain.

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Professional dispositions are measured on a scale ranging 0–2, representing "Not Present" to "Consistently Present," indicating the presence of a specified behavior among students in all MS and PhD programs. At numerous points throughout the content and field experience courses, faculty and site supervisors measure student dispositions alongside the skills assessments. Scores throughout the programs of study for all degree programs show consistently low incidents of ratings of 0 or 1, indicating that nearly all students consistently demonstrate the professional dispositions of the counseling profession. The exception is in the Techniques course in the MS programs, which is the first course where dispositions are assessed. Additionally, the only lower scores are for students in the MS programs. Students who scored a zero for any assessment point were referred to the Student Development team, comprising a coordinator and committee of core faculty, for consideration of implementing a Student Development Plan, an individually tailored assignment designed to help the student increase self-awareness and proficiency in the specified professional disposition that the student was rated as deficient.

Students complete a self-assessment for cultural competency as part of the multicultural course in the MS degree programs and at four different points in the PhD in CES program. Items are scored by

students self-rating responses that range from 0 to 4, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" to 4 representing "Strongly Agree," indicating the level of agreement to the statement about the student's cultural competency. Zero is an option, indicating that the student has not yet had an opportunity to develop the skill. For all the skills identified in this assessment, the percentage of students indicating Agree or Strongly Agree was greater than 97.0% for nearly all items for each of the programs. The exception was for students in the PhD in CES program, who scored Agree and Strongly Agree at a lower percentage for four items. These items included topics such as having comfort with consultation or engaging in social justice activities for persons outside the student's culture or gender, respecting indigenous help-seeking behaviors, valuing bilingualism, and developing fluency in another language, and consulting with traditional healers and religious/spiritual leaders. Lower scores on these items may be associated with higher levels of students' self-awareness and experience given they are doctoral students, some who have served in professional roles prior to entering the degree program. These items may be addressed in changes with the updated courses planned for the PhD in CES program in 2022-2023.

PROGRAM CHANGES

The SoC made several changes in 2021–2022, some of which were remnants of the temporary accommodations implemented to address the COVID-19 pandemic while others were based upon the recommendations of the Academic Program Review (APR) conducted in 2020-2021. For instance, the SoC updated the School's Vision and Mission Statements. To reflect a more comprehensive inclusion of counseling knowledge, skills, and dispositions incorporated in the training provided in the degree programs, the SoC faculty updated the PLOs. Again, this change was initiated following the APR conducted in 2020. Also, the university encouraged a review and update of PLOs across all departments. In updating these outcomes and in accordance with best practices in program learning outcome assessment, the faculty decreased the number of outcomes for each program and incorporated appropriate outcomes for the degree level and program. Outcomes were written for the MS in SC, MS in CMHC, and MS DD programs as well as the PhD in CES program. The MS-level learning outcomes are distinguished based upon the specialized population practice areas reflected in the degree. Table 3 presents these outcomes with the distinguishing words (in red) reflecting the specialized practice area. These new PLOs are being launched in the 2022–2023 academic year.

Table 3. Program Learning Outcomes for the School of Counseling MS Degree Programs

Updated School of Counseling PLOs	Updated Clinical Mental Health Counseling PLOs	Updated Dual Degree PLOs
Synthesize counseling knowledge into evidence-based action plans for promoting wellness. *(Knowledge)*	Synthesize counseling knowledge into evidence-based treatment plans for promoting wellness. *(Knowledge)*	Synthesize counseling knowledge into evidence-based plans for promoting wellness. *(Knowledge)*
Construct collaborative relationships with diverse populations to promote social change. *(Skills)*	Construct therapeutic relationships with diverse populations to promote social change. *(Skills)*	Construct professional relationships with diverse populations to promote social change. *(Skills)*

Develop professional counselor behaviors in academic settings to foster growth and wellness. *(Dispositions)*	Develop professional counselor behaviors in clinical settings to foster growth and wellness. *(Dispositions)*	Develop professional counselor behaviors in various settings to foster growth and wellness. *(Dispositions)*
Develop a professional counselor identity relevant to school counseling. *(Knowledge)*	Develop a professional counselor identity relevant to clinical mental health counseling. *(Knowledge)*	Develop a professional counselor identity relevant to specific practice areas. *(Knowledge)*
Evaluate unique client needs within school settings. *(Skills)*	Evaluate unique client needs within clinical mental health settings. *(Skills)*	Evaluate unique client needs within practice areas. *(Skills)*
Evaluate community needs in relation to school settings and populations. *(Skills)*	Evaluate community needs in relation to clinical mental health settings and populations. *(Skills)*	Evaluate community needs in relation to professional settings and populations. *(Skills)*

The PhD in CES program learning outcomes were updated to reflect the five domains of the counselor education profession. Table 4 identifies the four learning outcomes for the PhD in CES program. These new program learning outcomes are being launched in the 2022–2023 academic year.

The updates to the Vision and Mission Statements and the PLOs have initiated an update to the Comprehensive Assessment Plan for the SoC. This update was started in the 2021–2022 academic year and will be completed during the next academic year. This timing coincides with changes that have occurred across the university with restructuring of the OIE and the assessment process directed by that group. In particular, the methods and timeline for analyzing the PLOs have changed, and these changes will be reflected in the new Comprehensive Assessment Plan for the SoC.

Table 4. Program Learning Outcomes for the School of Counseling PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision Program

Updated PhD in CES PLOs
Synthesize theories and evidence-based practices across counselor education domains. *(Knowledge)*
Create counselor education approaches to address diverse counselors-in-training. *(Knowledge)*
Develop counselor education and supervision interventions to promote social change. *(Skills)*

> Employ professional counselor educator and supervisor behaviors in professional settings. *(Dispositions)*

The SoC has initiated an update to the PhD in CES program of study that will improve the matriculation experience of students following recommendations from the 2020-2021 APR. In particular, the APR recommendations emphasized a need to enhance faculty mentoring of doctoral students throughout their program as well as instituting earlier introductions to research dissertation planning opportunities. Therefore, initial proposals for an update to the program of study includes doctoral companion courses that introduce aspects of the dissertation experience and occur from beginning to end of the program. Also, the field experience courses are proposed to be moved up in the sequence of courses so that when the student completes all courses, the student is able to immediately initiate the dissertation process. Program leadership anticipates proposing updates to all the courses in 2023 and 2024 with the intent of positively impacting the student classroom experience.

Finally, for both the MS-level programs and the PhD in CES program, a substantial change in the delivery of the program courses has been the implementation of a 10-week period for each of the courses in the SoC. Course activities occur over the first 10 weeks in the quarter while final grading, management of incompletes, and between-course activities occur in the remaining 3 weeks of the quarter. This change reduced the timeframe for in-course activities from 11 weeks to 10 weeks and expanded the time for between-term activities, including faculty providing student support regarding completion of remediation plans for students identified as deficient in counseling skills or professional dispositions. Additionally, this period between class activities is filled with continuing education experiences led by faculty and attended by students and faculty. This change in timing has encouraged greater support for student success by reducing the number of unnecessary incompletes that otherwise disrupt students' enrollment in subsequent courses. This change was welcomed by students who indicated utilizing the time for managing personal matters that go unattended during the time courses are active.