

EDINBORO UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING, SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY,
SPECIAL EDUCATION
EDINBORO, PENNSYLVANIA

2017 Alumni Follow-up Study
Counseling Program Tracks

Art Therapy
College Counseling/Student Affairs
Clinical Mental Health Counseling
Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling
School Counseling

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January 2018

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I. Introduction

During the fall semester (2017), Dr. Sue Norton, Professor of Counseling at Edinboro University, conducted a follow-up study of counseling graduates from December 2014 through August 2017. The survey itself was provided online. A total of one hundred and eleven emails with the URL listed were sent to Counseling graduates asking them to respond to the online survey. Fifty-six responses were returned for a return rate of fifty (50) percent. The initial emails were sent out on October 20, 2017. Three follow-up reminders were sent in November and December. The survey was closed December 15, 2017.

The survey asked for responses to the following areas:

1. Demographics
2. Employment
3. Professional Development
4. Counseling Program Evaluation

II. Demographics

In regard to gender, 43 (77%) of the 51 respondents identified as female; 12 (21%) identified as male and one (2%) identified as fluid. Forty-seven (84%) who responded identified as white, non-Hispanics, 6 (11%) identified as African American/ Black, non-Hispanic, 1 (2%) identified as Hispanic, and 1 (2%) identified as Multiracial. There were three (5%) 2014 graduate responses. Fourteen (25%) reported receiving their master's degree in 2015, 14 (25%) in 2016 and 24 (44%) in 2017. Four respondents were art therapy majors (7%), 21 were clinical mental health counseling majors (38%), 8 were clinical rehabilitation counseling (15%), 6 were school counseling (11%), and 16 were college counseling/student affairs (29%).

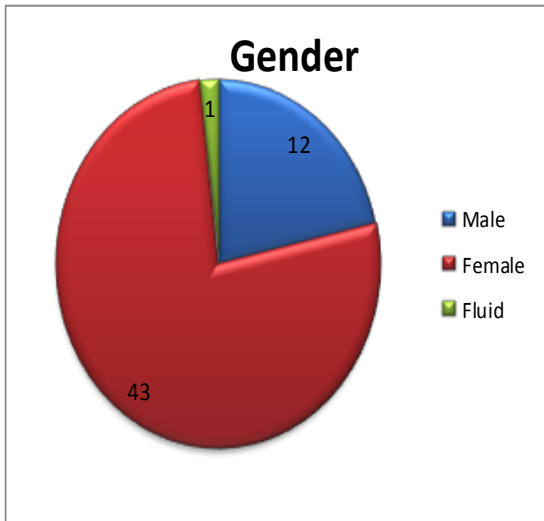


Figure 1. Respondents by Gender

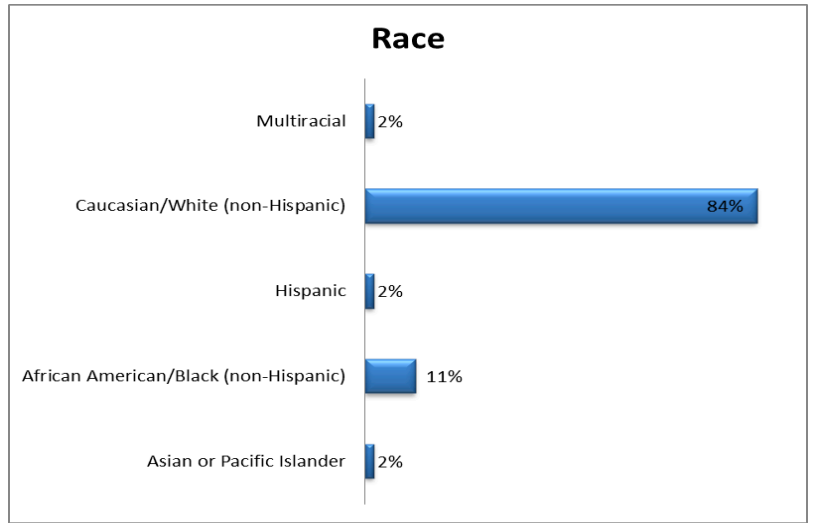


Figure 2. Respondents by Race

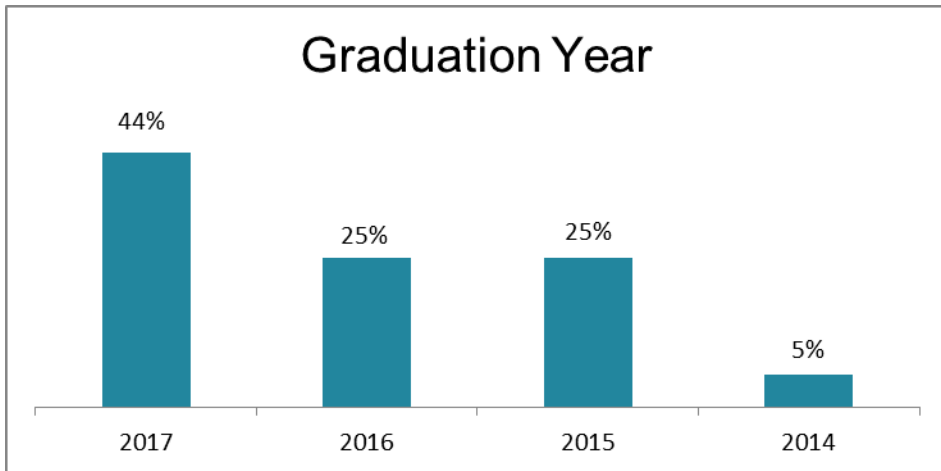


Figure 3. Respondents by Graduation Year

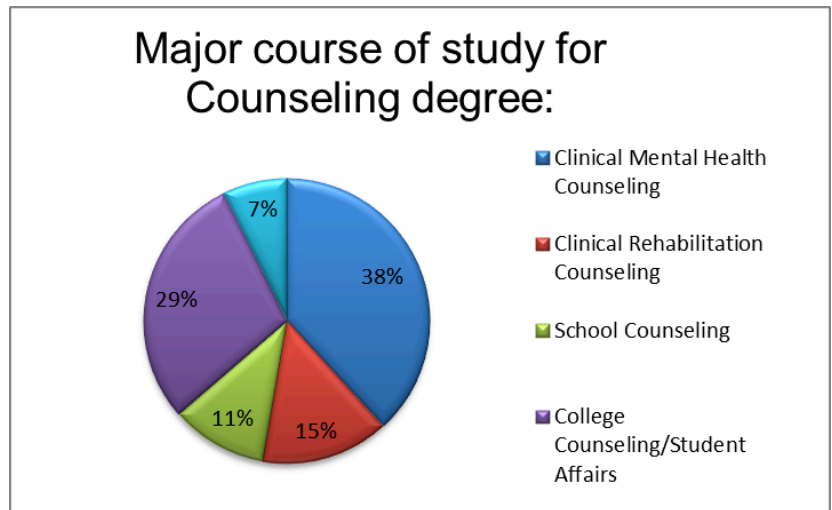


Figure 4. Respondents by Track

III. Employment

Present Status

Forty-four (81%) of those responding are presently employed full time, two (4%) are employed part-time – not seeking full time employment, while one (2%) is employed part-time, seeking full time employment, two (4%) are unemployed seeking employment and one (2%) is a full time student. Three respondents listed other. Forty-five (83%) are currently working in the Counseling field or a related area.

Type of Employment

Seventeen respondents identified counselor as a description of their primary work, 7 listed therapist, 4 administrator/manager, 2 advisor, 2 art therapist and 13 listed other. Salaries ranged from below \$20,000 (4) to \$60,000 and above (2) with the median and modal salary range \$30,000-39,999 (16). Thirty-six of the respondents (92%) had counseling positions prior to or within the first six months of graduation.

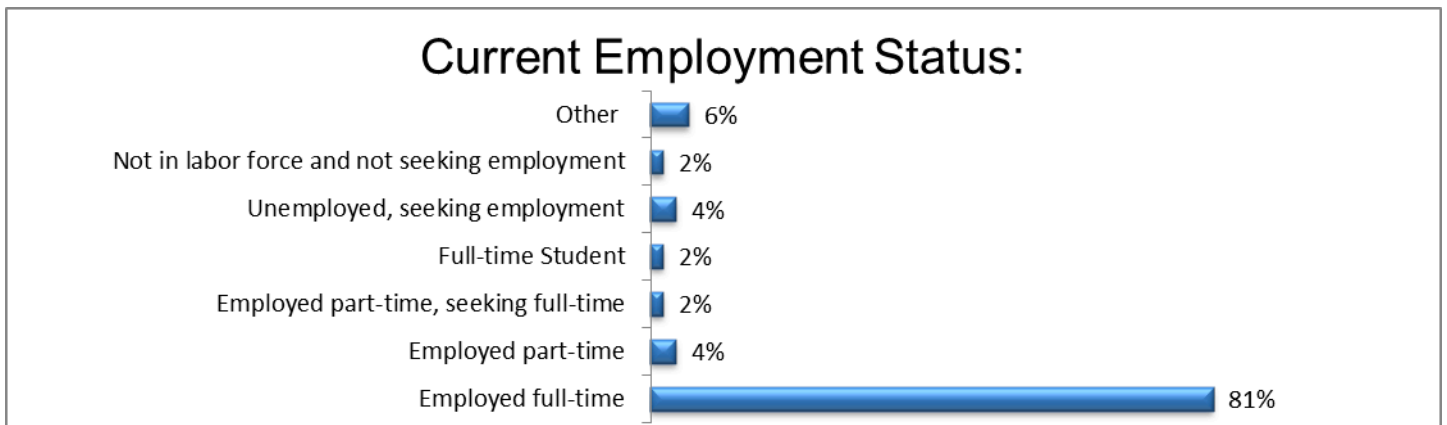


Figure 5. Respondents by Current Employment Status

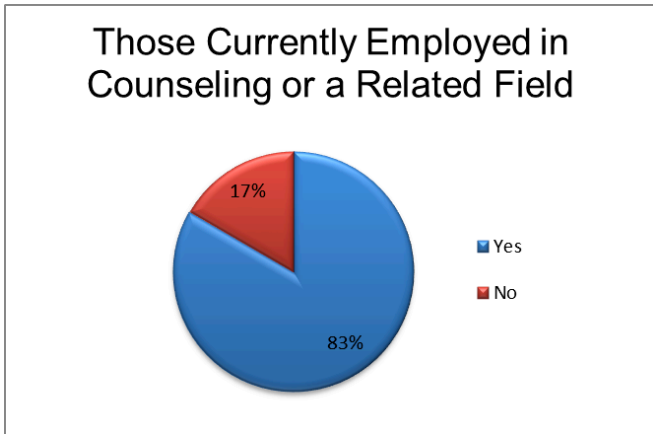


Figure 6. Respondents by Current Employment in Counseling Field

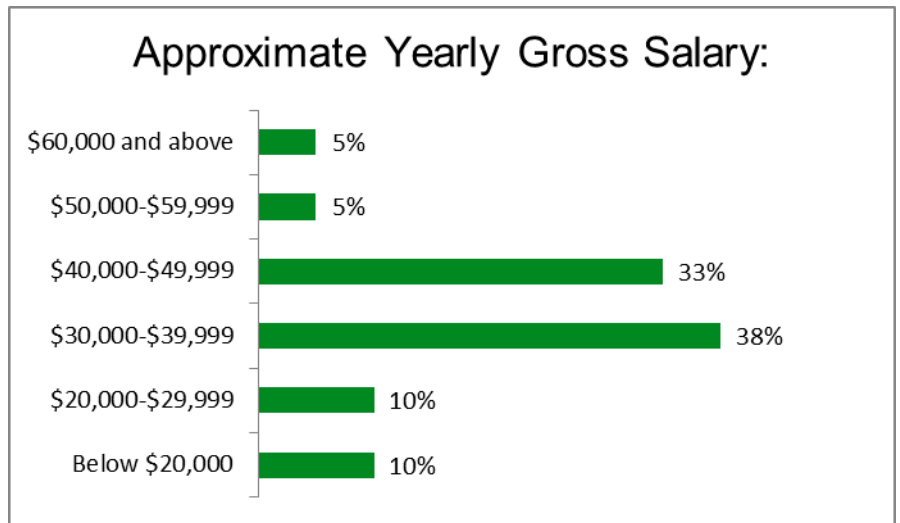


Figure 7. Respondents by Approx. Yearly Gross Salary

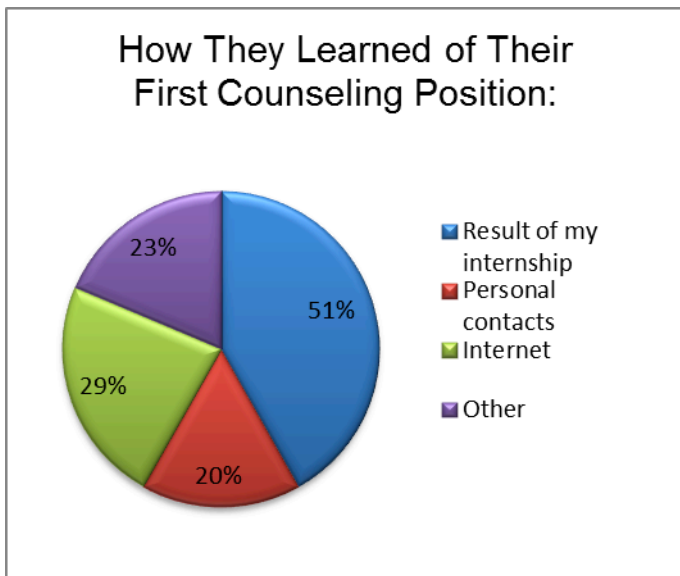


Figure 8. Respondents by How They Learned of 1st Counseling Position

IV. Licensure and Certification

When asked if they had taken the National Counselor Exam (NCE), 21 respondents said yes (44%) while 27 said no (56%). Of those who took the NCE 19 of the 21 who responded passed on the first try (90%). In addition, 16 respondents who have not taken the NCE reported that they plan to take it in the future. Seven students reported sitting for the CRC (Rehabilitation Counselor) exam. Six passed it on the first try. Four additional respondents indicated a plan to take it in the future. No students have taken the Art Therapy certifying exam, however three students indicate a plan to take it in the future. Five respondents identified that they were certified as school counselors in Pennsylvania, one additional respondent is certified in South Carolina and one in West Virginia. No respondents are credentialed as an ATR. One respondent indicated obtaining PA LPC licensure and 5 respondent reported licensure in other states (Arizona, New York, Ohio, Washington and West Virginia).

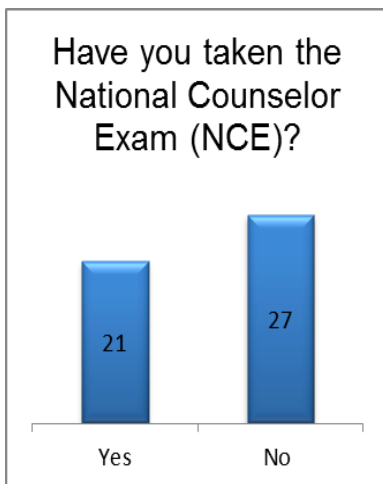


Figure 9. NCE

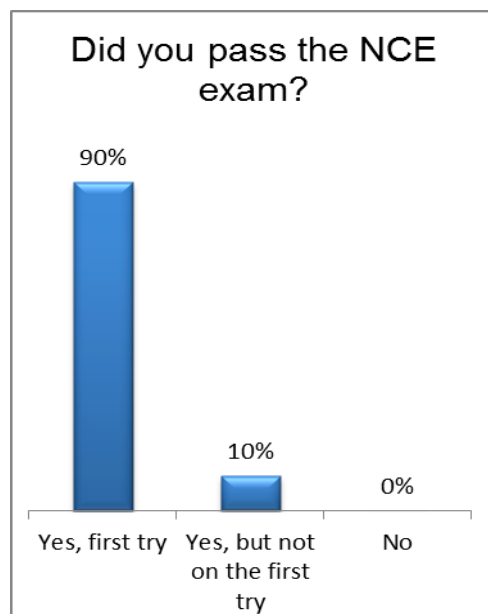


Figure 10. Results of NCE

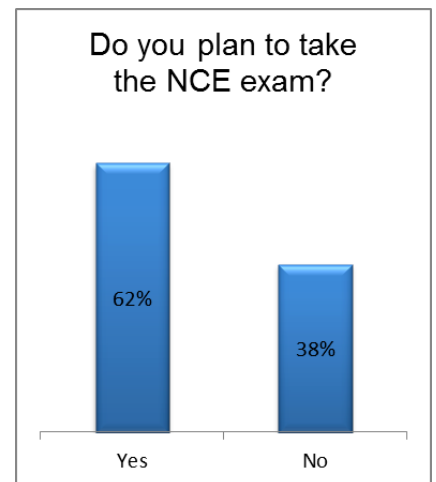


Figure 11. Future Plans to Take NCE

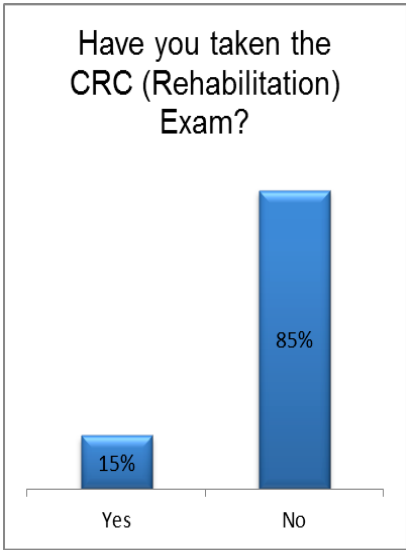


Figure 12. CRC

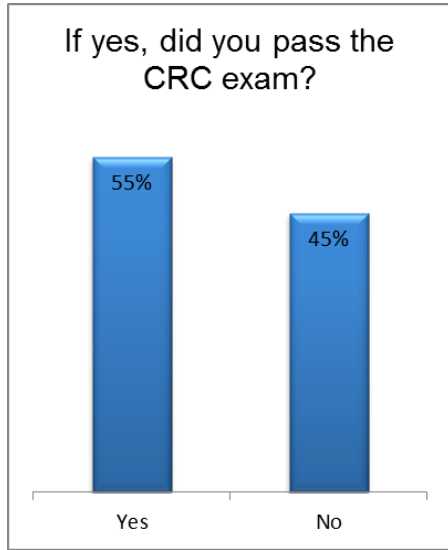


Figure 13. Results of CRC

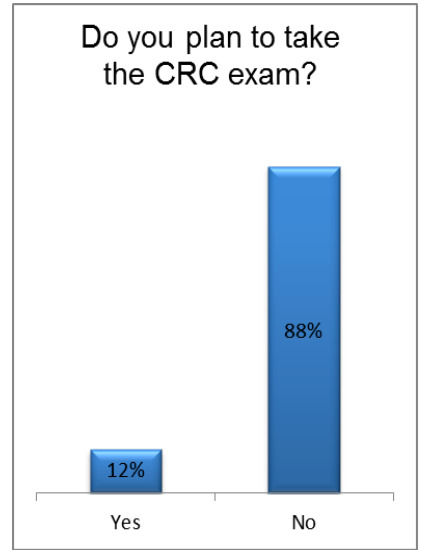


Figure 14. Future Plans to Take CRC

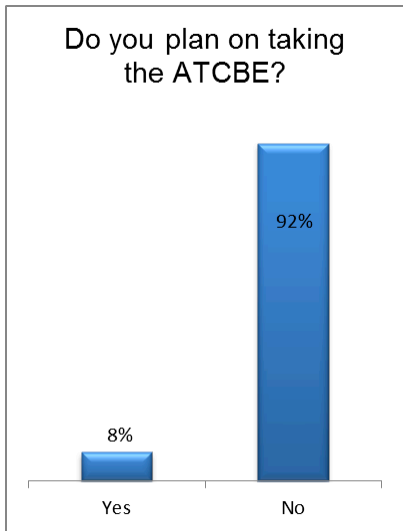


Figure 15. Future Plans to Take ATCBE

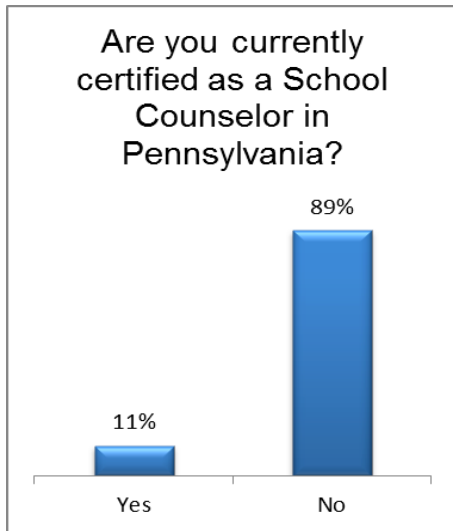


Figure 16. School Counselor Cert.

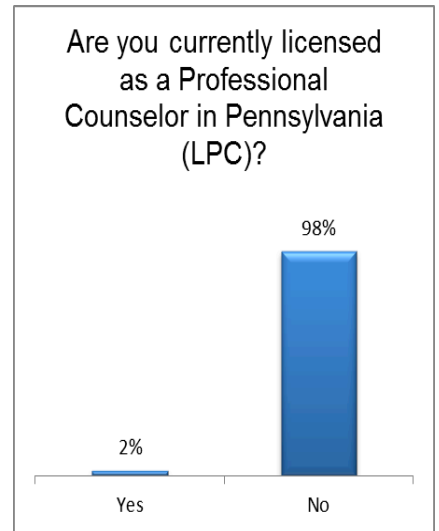


Figure 17. Licensed as a LPC

V. Continuing Education

Four respondents indicated that they have enrolled in additional formal education opportunities since receiving their master’s degree. Twenty-five respondents have participated in continuing education (non-credit bearing) since

graduation. Reasons given for continuing education included: personal growth (15), required for certification or licensure maintenance (11), needed for career or job (14) and tried to find a position but could not (2).

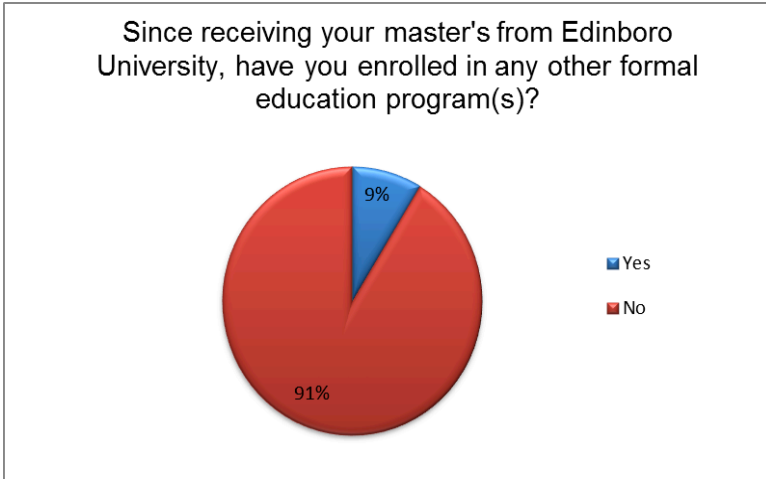


Figure 18. Post-Master's Education

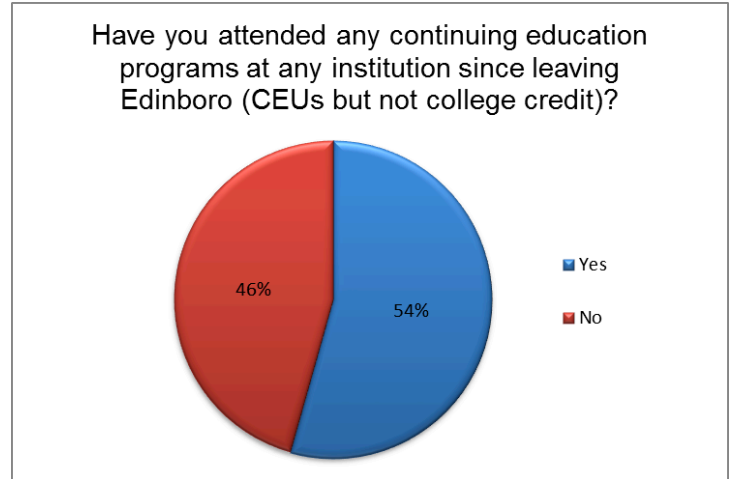


Figure 19. Post-Master's CEC

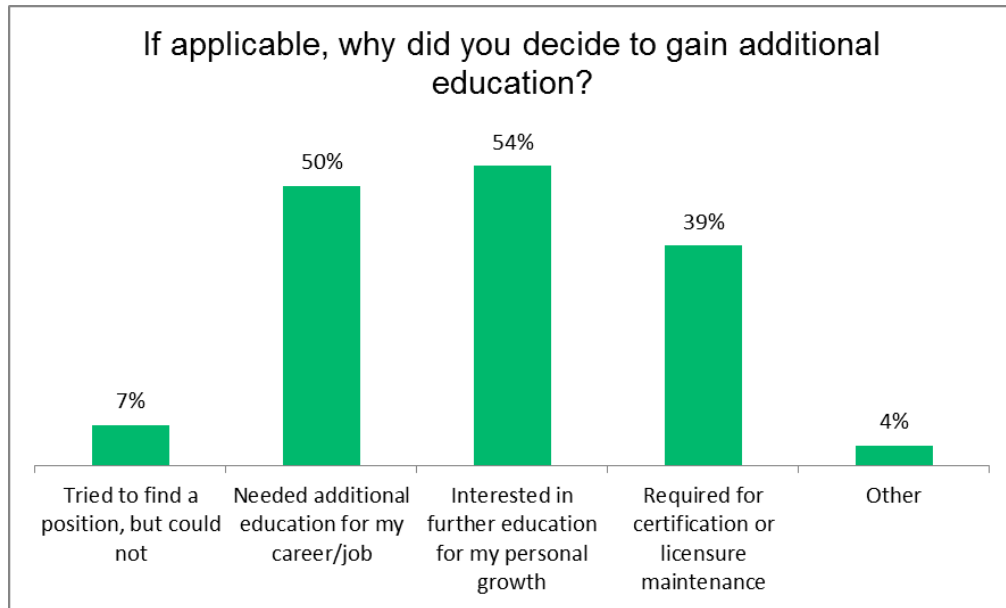


Figure 20. Reason for Post-Master's Education

VI. Professional Development

The following professional activities were reported by respondents:

- Promoted (9)
- Elected to a professional office (1)
- Presented at seminars or workshops (10)
- Presented at a professional conference (2)
- Written journal article (2)
- Written research project or grant (1)
- Conducted needs assessments (8)
- Consultation (1)

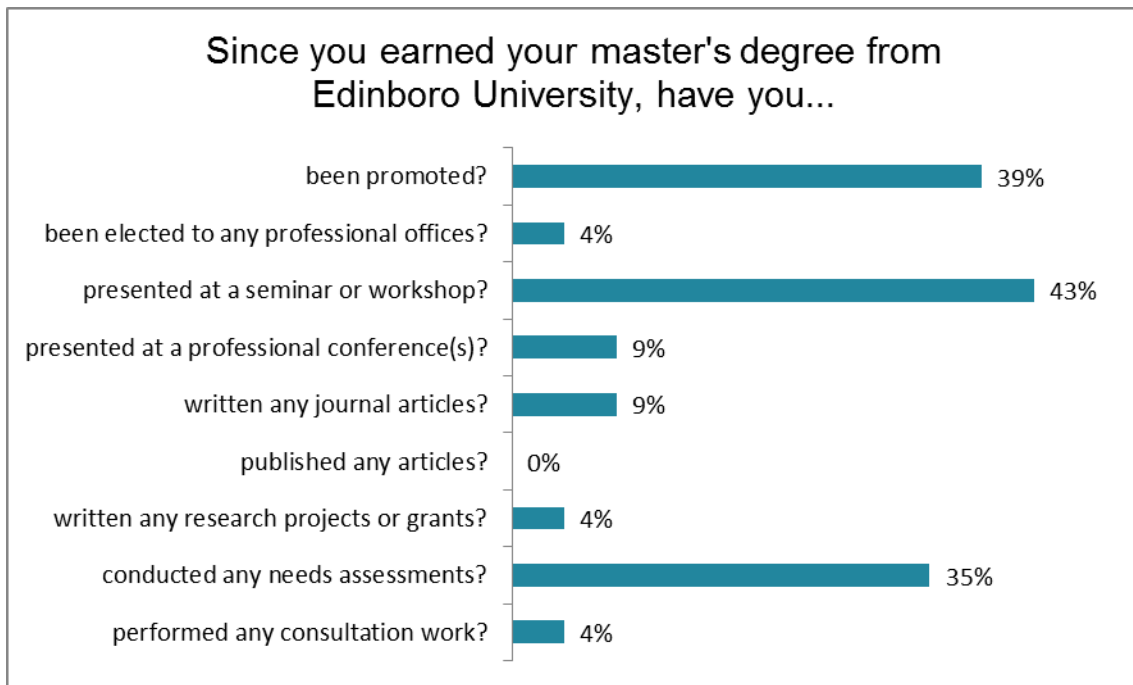


Figure 21. Professional Activities

VII. Professional Organizations and Activities

In relation to “Regular” involvement in organizations, 15 respondents (22%) indicated they are “Often” or “Regularly” involved in Community Service organizations and 20 (30%) are “Often” or “Regularly” involved with Professional Associations.

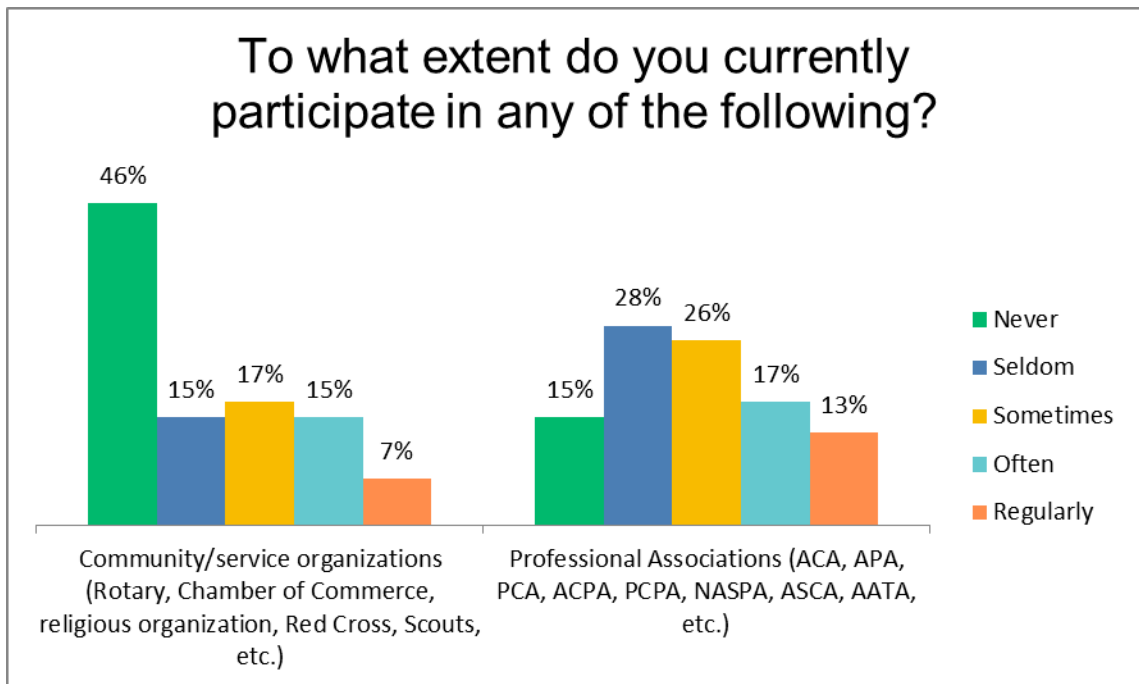


Figure 22. Participation

VIII. Quality of Edinboro Experience

A. How well did the Edinboro Counseling Program prepare you for your present occupation?

- Not Well (0)
- Fairly Well (12)
- Quite Well (22)
- Extremely Well (12)

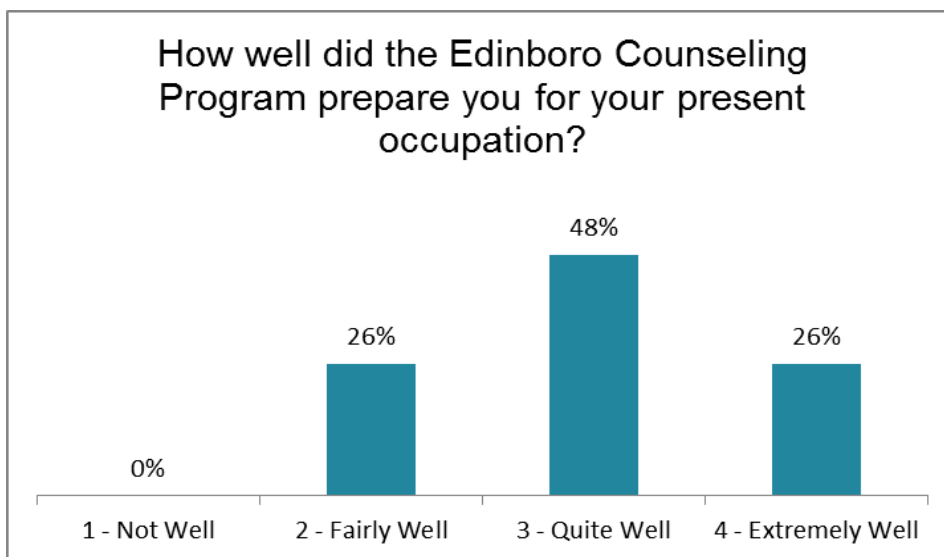


Figure 23. Professional Preparation

A. Respondents made the following comments in regard to their preparation:

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Satisfaction with Preparation:

- Loved the program would do it all over again if I had the chance
- Particularly law in secondary education-- this is not something all professionals in college settings are aware of...and they need to be!
- Even though I work in Student Affairs the counseling portion has really prepared me to work with my students. Also, Dr. N's College Counseling program/classes have prepared me more than I can imagine. She focuses on case studies which allowed for me to develop critical thinking skills in my area that I need everyday.
- I think all the professors and mentors instilled all the skills that are needed for us to be successful after completion of the program. I think the program was very well designed to support, challenge, and force me to think outside of the box. I appreciate all the skills and knowledge I have received from Edinboro.
- I can not say enough great things about Dr. P. While her classes were more difficult than the other counseling classes I took - she pushed us to develop an understanding of concepts which prepared us for careers.

Wanting for more Preparation:

- My only regret would be not having the ability to take more Student Affairs focused courses. Something with curriculum development would have been phenomenal, but that may be what I look for when I go back for a Doctorate. Overall, very satisfied.
- I believe Edinboro counseling students would benefit greatly from having an NCE prep course similar to the one Gannon offers. Friends who attended Gannon were required to take an NCE prep course and share that it made them much more prepared and confident for the NCE
- I believe that Edinboro has the means to prepare its graduates for the counseling field, however my study skills and ability to put in minimal effort to succeed has left me in a position where I feel could have benefited from a stricter curriculum. I would have benefited from more focus on making clinical diagnoses and how to implement more therapeutic interventions

Dissatisfaction with Preparation:

- Dr. C and his wife were in many ways a joke and denied many people a proper education. I am unsure why Edinboro allowed them to not only work there but be the head of the Clinical mental health counseling program. Generally, because I got a BA in Psychology, the master's program seems like a repeat for me in many ways, which was costly and redundant. I don't like jumping through the hoops for a MA just to get an LPC when I already knew a lot of the content taught from prior education.
- There were some classes that, in my opinion, were "fluff" classes that I did not learn much. For instance, the substance abuse class left a lot to learn and is something I use in my every day life. I learned more from the internship. More hands on vs textbook learning would be encouraged as well.

Preparation Unrelated to Current Position:

- In my position, I have to use more technical skills than counseling skills.

B. Were there any "holes" in your preparation that we might need to add to the program? Any additional classes you would have found useful?

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Changes in Program Design:

- Maybe a mandatory conference experience incorporated into the curriculum
- To be more multicultural sensitive and to provide the professional support for people of color they need for their professional development.
- Just more hands on learning vs textbook.
- It will be helpful to have courses that address the integration of people of color such Latinos, African American, Asians and other ethics groups in the counseling field as well as assist them to have equal access to graduate level opportunity same as white students. For example, the participating in research, presentations, scholarships and grants and be present in the decision making that concern people of color and people with disability .

Courses/Information Related to a Specific Field Function or Area:

- Insurance and Billing. Medical Terminology
- Confidentiality/documentation/working with insurance and managed care
- Counseling related work-- how to document contact notes, consultation, and conflicts. We discussed this, but offer examples.
- More focus on therapeutic interventions and how to diagnose more Mental Health disorders
- More on care planning and documentation
- Wish the program was a little more Student Affairs focused, but that's on me for choosing a counseling program.
- Student affairs counseling; Crisis management in higher education; Curriculum development
- While counseling is extremely important in what I do, having additional classes to practice the differences in conversation with more student affairs related situations could have been helpful. Such as advising versus supervising differences in conversations as well as more practice with conversations around challenge while supporting students.
- Increasing an understanding of best practice for working with specific disabilities in the learning environment. I have a minor in special education and took a terrific course, instructed by Professor U that spent a great deal of time learning about both educational law as it related to disabilities and defining disabilities under the IDEA and ADA, however when I worked as a clinical mental health therapist with adolescents upon graduation and now in my role in the college setting having more knowledge of specific techniques and best practice would be very helpful.

Assistance with Licensure and Certification:

- Course dedicated to NCE prep like Gannon had

- I did not have all educational requirements to be licensed in Ohio, which resulted in having to complete extra courses.
- More Clinical Supervision preparation and knowledge of obtaining LPC.

General Observations

- This is difficult to answer because the "holes" may depend on my own development as a student and a therapist versus a deficit in the program itself.
- Life span was helpful as well as multicultural and group
- Better professors obviously. Dr. P cared the most, although a bit too perfectionistic, the expectation was to stay and learn. She invested a lot in her students and attempted to make a well-rounded syllabus with plenty of engagement.

C. Were there any additional topics you would have liked to have offered as electives?

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Theory and Technique

- An entire course on ethics would be nice,
- Psychopathology; and Personality
- Counseling problems of everyday living; marriage & family; geriatric
- I personally enjoy pharmacology stuff as well as brain anatomy. While not totally counseling focused, those definitely would have been awesome to take as electives and be able to apply to things I see within the field to give me more context into mental health.
- Drug and Alcohol treatment courses for all majors of counseling
- Trauma, grief and loss

Track specific

- I think requiring a diagnosis course in the school counseling program would be very helpful.
- Evening studio arts classes
- Financial administration course
- Cover the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act
- Speech language path.

No

- No (2)
- N/A (2)
- Not applicable (I transferred and did not have the option for electives)

D. Were there any required courses that you feel should have been electives?

- No (2)
- N/A (2)
- No. The program is well-rounded.

- Career counseling (2)
- Educational Research
- Addiction
- Grant writing
- Perhaps organizational development
- Organizational development
- The Organization Leadership class that briefly covered grant writing was not helpful. Way too much time spent discussing non-grant info. Also the research class should have always been through the counseling department; going through the education department was confusing and not very helpful.
- Yes!! Since I already had a psychology degree I felt that many of the required classes could have been electives or that I could have had a smaller/quicker refresher course rather than a full semester. I felt that way about almost every required CACREP course.... Many classes felt dragged out because of that, although I know there isn't much that can be changed about that.

E. What did you like best about your graduate experience at Edinboro University?

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Interpersonal Contact:

- I loved the Edinboro University community.
- Being able to learn from professors and students in a classroom setting.
- Networking with classmates and creating my own art to practice interventions and techniques
- Small class sizes, great professors
- Support from professors and advisors
- Cohort
- Drs. D and N
- Staff was incredible
- That as woman and woman of color, I have to be very disciple to meet the expectations
- Professors
- Professionalism of the professors and they were willing to challenge us
- Honestly some of the professors were awesome and had wonderful stories to share. I had some great feedback which improved my techniques.
- The real life experience of the professors. Most of my professors our esteemed Professionals in the field
- The support and guidance of Dr. C and M and the acknowledgement of hard work and structure provided by Dr. P.
- Professors who got to know me and who challenged me
- The experience in the field the instructors held made their teaching very applicable to what we would likely encounter in the field.
- Getting to work with Faculty members who had much experience and a large network of connections and could help me with building my network and finding my specific area within such a broad field.
- The friendships formed because of the smaller classes

- Professors and their experiences
- The development I had with my cohort. The professors were knowledgeable and helpful.
- My advisor and cohort. My assistantship. The experiences available to me.
- My advisor was very caring and still after graduation she checks up on me to see how I am doing. That doesn't happen everywhere.
- The different knowledge each professor had to offer.
- Opportunity to engage with faculty in an intimate setting that made learning feel very personal

Program Design or Specific Opportunities at the University:

- My program prepared me for the paperwork aspect of my job.
- Projects and research done for Dr. P's classes
- Emphasis on self awareness
- Easily accessible
- Being exposed to new things, learning.
- Small student to professor ratio
- Required practicum and internship. Graduate student council. Small class sizes.
- The encouragement to and availability of funding to attend conferences and continuing education experiences
- Accessibility. I was slightly older than my cohort and busy with a new marriage, home, and lifestyle. Online classes and Saturday meetings allowed me to obtain my MA.
- Graduate Assistantship in Residence Life and the experiential education I gained from it.

F. If you had the opportunity, what would you change about your graduate experience at Edinboro University?

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Personal Choices

- Not rush it; I would take more time and more classes without worrying about finishing within a two year time frame.
- I would engage more with research.
- Would have went PhD route at different school, not MA at Edinboro. There is limited opportunity for promotion for MA in counseling, without being social worker or LPC.
- I perhaps would have chosen a more Student Affairs focused program but I am happy with my decision
- I would go to another college and probably major in business.
- Getting involved more in student activities
- I would have mixed up my internship sites a bit differently then how I did. I felt I took the easy way of doing areas I knew I liked rather than ones I was unsure about.

Aspects of the Program Design and/or Courses

- Classes offered on time; I had to push my graduation back a year because of classes being canceled.
- I would like to see recent graduate counselors come in and share their experiences of transitioning from grad school to work in the field

- The ability to pursue two tracks of my own choosing concurrently (College Counseling and Vocational Rehabilitation)
- More help preparing for the NCE
- More field experience opportunities
- Longer practicum
- The lack of mentorship for people with disability, Latinos, or people of color, and the lack research involvement from faculty that support minority students not just white students
- More hands on earlier. It seems that worked the best for me to improve and get more experience.
- I would have liked to see less group work as some students did not work as hard as others.

Online

- To keep the majority of face to face classes
- I wish I could have taken less online classes, but most of them were only offered online especially near the end.
- The online classes were not always up to par. I think they should always include a group lecture component online
- I wish I would have took more face to face classes
- I think the statistics course needs live instruction. It's difficult to teach yourself those concepts from textbooks.
- I would have avoided the online courses as best as possible

Faculty

- Some professors in the counseling department are overly-involved which made it extremely difficult to schedule meetings or get time sensitive paperwork done.
- A couple of professors could have been more organized and more responsive to questions via email.

Nothing

- Nothing (2)
- Nothing. Should went a year earlier

G. Do you have any additional suggestions on how we might improve the program?

Themes developed based on recurrent comments from respondents.

Nothing

- No/None (3)
- It's a wonderful program run by dedicated professionals. The only suggestion is continuing to provide the same level of service for future graduate students
- I think the program is great! I don't have any suggestions

Support Services for Students During Field Placement and After Graduation

- Would be nice to have the program check in on post-grads a little bit more. Reaffirm the sense of belonging to a group.
- Meeting educational criteria of licensure in other states if student intends to get licensed other than PA
- Encourage investments in useful resources like assessments that can be used after school as opposed to textbooks.
- I didn't like how graduate assistantships were decided. When applying to other programs you got a list of what was available and could apply as you saw fit and then do a big interview day and when you got accepted got told where you were placed. I disliked getting emails sporadically from Edinboro Departments and then feeling pressured to say yes to any department that outreached because something was better than nothing and not knowing if something else would come along. So I did assistantships in areas that kinda related, but also didn't and it was bitter sweet. Otherwise I think the program was fairly well done and could just use some more programming via the counseling club or graduate student council to get alumni or field members in for networking or some kind of programming.
- To support people of color, LGBTQ, and people with disability, integrating them in having experience in research, conference presentations and other academic experiences

Adjust the Program Design

- Offer an elective or two more focused in Student Affairs/High Education Administration
- Continue expanding. I think that we were limited to some specialty courses to over the summer and sometimes this felt rushed. The topics I learned in my area I really enjoyed and wish I had more time learning about them.
- I wish everyone had the same philosophy on teaching, but I know that's impossible. I feel that sometimes the lack of communication in the department caused some minor issues, but that's just a personal opinion.
- Provide more emphasis on treatment planning, note writing, ect... including all of the paperwork required as a professional.
- Less online classes and more face to face classes. A lot more can be gained by participating in a classroom with other students. Things like discussion boards just become busy work.
- Hire better professors who know how to teach. Don't allow people like the C's to cut my learning experience short.
- Employers don't like online programs. I wouldn't have received the experience I did if I completed the majority of my course work online.
- Higher standards of work and behavior

IX. Conclusions

Overall the alumni who responded to the survey were positive in response to their current employment, their preparation for the field and their experience at Edinboro University. A few areas to note:

- Comparisons were made between the respondents and the entire population who received the initial request to complete the survey, in order to determine the representativeness of the sample. Of the 111

surveys sent, the gender break down was 27 males and 83 females and 1 fluid gender identity females (24% males, 75% females, 1% fluid). The respondents were 21% male, 77% female and 2% fluid; thus females were slightly overrepresented in the response pool. In regard to race, an interesting occurrence took place. In the entire pool of survey recipients, there were 12 identified as African American, 1 identified as Hispanic, 1 identified as Asian and 1 identified as Multiracial; among the respondents, 6 identified as African American, 1 identified as Hispanic, 1 identified as Asian and 1 identified as Multiracial – so only 6 persons of color did not respond to the survey (for an 60% response rate of persons of color compared to a 49% response rate of graduates identifying as Caucasian). Survey links were sent to 13 graduates from Fall 2014, 40 graduates from Spring, Summer and Fall 2015, 29 graduates from Spring, Summer and Fall 2016 and 29 graduates from Spring and Summer 2017. Response rates rose with each year (23%, 35%, 48% and 83%), which is understandable since the longer graduates are away from the university, the fewer ties they tend to maintain. In addition, there may have been more earlier graduates who had changed emails or contact information.

- All students are eligible to take the NCE upon graduation, Clinical Rehabilitation students may sit for the CRC exam. Art therapy students may sit for the ATCBE. Either the NCE or the CRC can be used for Licensure in Pennsylvania. A total of 28 respondents sat for the professional exams (NCE or CRC – none sat for the ATCBE). There may be a number of explanations for not taking the exam, Student Affairs graduates do not typically sit for the exams as they are not usually needed for employment or advancement, the cost of sitting for the exam is quite steep which prohibits some recent grads from taking it, students may not have any interest in private practice or third party payment. Clinical Mental Health counseling graduates would be most apt to need licensure for employment – and of the 18 CMH grads, 10 had taken the NCE. Six more indicated that they planned to sit for the exam in the future. Respondents reported a 90% pass rate for the NCE on the first attempt (and a 100% pass rate overall) and a 86% pass rate for the CRC, so students appear to be well prepared for the national exams.
- Presentations and needs assessments were reported by many respondents (43% and 35%). Actual writing of journal articles and/or publications, and grant writing were negligible. Additional emphasis – and experience during the course of study - might improve this response.
- College Counseling/Student Affairs and Clinical Rehabilitation respondents were over-represented when comparing actual numbers of graduates, Art Therapy which is a new program and had only six graduates was also well represented. Clinical Mental Health was underrepresented, as was School Counseling. Actual graduation rates for the four program tracks were 15% College Counseling/Student Affairs (29% responses); 8% Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling (15% responses); 23% School Counseling (11% responses); and 48% Clinical Mental

Health Counseling (38% responses). One probable reason for the discrepancy is that those programs with smaller numbers are easier to keep track of, and faculty encouraged their grads to visit the survey and complete it. There are a number of other possible explanations, however, for future surveys it might be helpful to identify methods to increase the larger program's response rates.

- Although a 50% response rate is not unusual, we have in the past garnered a higher response rate (as high as 67%). However the last survey resulted in only a 40% response rate. We plan to continue to explore other options for surveying to increase the rate of response.
 - For the first time in these surveys, the number of negative comments concerning online offerings outweighed the request for more online courses. We need to look at this and try to determine whether there is a call for additional face to face courses, or whether this is a result of a vocal minority. It might be noted that in the past three years, a number of face to face classes have either had to be cancelled due to low enrollment or rolled over to an online platform to increase the number of students. One additional piece of information that may assist in this exploration would be to add a question to the next survey, as to whether the respondent is an online student, or primarily a face to face student.
 - It might be noted that a number of suggestions for improvement in the program have already been implemented. These include a course in Ethics and the possibility of double majors (although these require more than 60 credits).
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