

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. **Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed:** Masters en route to the Specialist in School Psychology
3. **Date:** January 26, 2024
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5. Overview

The primary goal of the program is to train school psychologists (1) who are *scientist-practitioners*, grounded in the scientific method and research, (2) who are *ethical*, (3) who *respect individual differences and diversity*, (4) who *foster personal and professional characteristics*, and (5) who are *lifelong learners*. This goal is consistent with Eastern's mission that encourages free and rigorous inquiry and scholarship, commitment to diversity and inclusion, and reasoned and clear communication skills to become responsible citizens and leaders. The program goal also reflects the mission of graduate education: strengthening diversity, advanced scholarship, and the rigor of the curriculum.

The Masters en route to the Specialist in School Psychology Program provides candidates advanced training for working in public schools, private schools, hospitals, medical schools, department of education at the state and national level, and the private sector. The program is based on the scientist-practitioner model, informed by the scientific literature and data. This is a three-year program, two years of coursework and one-year full time internship; and thesis is required. As of 2015, candidates earn the Masters en Route to the Specialist Degree. Candidates earn the Masters degree in School Psychology after completing the first year of coursework, plus two summer courses. After obtaining the Masters, students automatically matriculate into the Specialist degree program. Once candidates finish the second year of coursework and full-time internship, they earn the Specialist in School Psychology degree. There are six public and three for-profit institutions that train school psychologists in the state of Illinois (eight of which have national accreditation). Eastern students are highly competitive statewide and nationally; they continue to achieve 100% passing rate on the state (Illinois State Board of Education) and national (National Association of School Psychologists) certification examinations. They are also found in leadership positions in school districts and professional state and national associations.

The program's primary learning objective is to meet the NASP and ISBE training standards for certifying school psychologists. These standards include 1) Data-Based Decision Making, 2) Consultation and Collaboration, 3) Academic Interventions and Instructional Supports, 4) Behavioral and Mental Health Services and Interventions, 5) School-wide Practices to Promote Learning, 6)

Services to Promote Safe and Supportive Schools, 7) Family, School, and Community Collaboration, 8) Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations, 9) Research and Evidence-Based Practice, and 10) Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice. Most of our graduates practice in the public school system, a few teach in community colleges, and about 3% eventually pursue doctoral degrees.

Since the last review program faculty published 37 (11 with student authors) peer-reviewed articles, conducted 63 presentations (27 with student authors), and received 3 Achievement and Contribution Awards in Research. Faculty have received a total of 8 awards related to service, teaching and/or research (external and internal to EIU) and secured 10 intramural grants. Faculty also serve on multiple peer reviewed journals' editorial boards.

6. Major Findings and Recommendations

6.a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/disciplinary context, e.g., (1) changes in the overall discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal needs; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other.

6.a.1. Change in the Overall Discipline

As reported in the previous report, changes in the discipline include “Prevention is intervention” (the medical model), increased emphasis on mental health, and Response to Intervention (RtI) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). It is understood that (1) prevention is more effective and less costly than intervention, (2) there is a relationship between mental health and learning outcomes, and (3) intervention (all services) must be subjected to on-going evaluation to monitor response to intervention, i.e., to determine if the intervention is effective. This preventative and data-based approach is reflected in the current curriculum.

6.a.2. Student Demand

Demand for the program continues to be high, partially because of good job prospects for school psychologists. Since the last review the program receives approximately 30 applications a year for 8 to 10 seats (av. = 7.7 over the last four years). According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, overall employment of psychologists is projected to grow 6 percent from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations.

6.a.3. Societal Needs

The demand for school psychologists is high because the services of school psychologists are mandated by state and Federal laws in all public schools. The demand is fueled by the severity of psychological and learning challenges school children experience. Intervention and prevention of such challenges require a scientific and evidence-based approach, which school psychologists are trained to provide. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024), “Employment of school psychologists will continue to grow because of an increased awareness of the connection between mental health and learning. These workers also will be needed to help students whose educational, behavioral, or developmental issues impact their ability to learn.” (<http://bls.gov>). In addition, there continues to be a shortage of school psychologists nationwide.

6.a.4. Productivity

Six public institutions in Illinois offer the Specialist in School Psychology degree. Our program began offering the Masters degree en route to the Specialist degree in 2015. As mentioned above, candidates earn their Masters degree after taking the first year of coursework, plus two summer courses. Candidates then complete a second year of coursework, a full-time internship, and the thesis to earn the Specialist degree. Since the last review our program has graduated 23 Specialist degrees (7.6 students/year on average) 38 with Masters degrees (12.7 students a year on average). There were a larger than typical number of Masters degrees awarded this review because the 2021 cohort earned the Masters after their first year of classes (i.e., summer 2022). Previously the Masters was awarded after two years of classes. Most students (97%) obtain a MS and SSP degree from our program.

Our students also produce scholarly research. Since the last review, 11 students have co-authored peer-reviewed articles, 27 students have co-authored presentations at state, regional, or national conferences. Since the last review, candidates have secured 15 Williams Travel Grants, two Graduate Alumni Board Outstanding Research Award, and one Robert and Kathryn Augustine Distinguished Thesis Award. In 2021 and 2024, two students were awarded Minority Student Scholarships from the Illinois School Psychologist Association (ISPA).

6.a.5. Institutional Context for Offering the Degree

Our program last obtained National Recognition (Full-Approval) from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) on February 1, 2022, which remains in effect through September 15, 2028. The training of school psychologists is highly regulated by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Therefore, our program is designed to meet the training standards identified by these accreditation bodies. The program is also approved by the Counsel for the Accreditation of Educator Preparedness (CAEP) through June 2025. However, NASP is now recognized by the Council for High Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an accrediting organization. As of August 2024, NASP will transition to independently accrediting programs and accreditation procedures will no longer be processed through CAEP. Our program also collaborates with the Certifying Officer in the College of Education for processing certification forms. The program has membership in the Directors of University School Psychology Programs (DUSPP). DUSPP is made up of the nine school psychology programs in Illinois. We meet at least two times a year to address school psychology related issues in the state of Illinois. We also work together to create uniform internship standards (e.g., training, supervision, evaluation) for school psychology interns across the state.

6.a.6. Other

Effective August 2019, the Illinois State Board of Education eliminated the requirement that school psychology candidates pass a test of basic skills to receive a Professional Educator License (Public Act 101-0220). As a result, this requirement was also eliminated from the program.

6.b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement.

Learning Outcomes: The student will

1. Develop theoretical and background knowledge related to successful practice as a school psychologist (i.e., 10 NASP Training Standards presented under item 5 above)
2. Apply knowledge and demonstrate problem solving, communication, and critical thinking in practicum.
3. Develop an understanding of statistics and research methodology and demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles and standards in classes and in applied settings.
5. Demonstrate technological proficiency for research and practice.

Throughout the program, benchmarks are in place for assessing candidates' progress.

Admission: First, to be admitted to the program, candidates must meet the criteria for prerequisite courses, GPA, GRE (optional), Personal Statement, two-part Interview, and three letters of reference.

Ongoing Program Evaluation (Dispositions, Practicum, Clinic): Once in the program, program faculty evaluate candidates each semester on their academic progress and dispositions and provide them with feedback. Candidates participate in three practica (over three semesters) and are evaluated by their field supervisors and university supervisors. During the second practica, candidates participate in two experiences (school-based and clinic-based). The clinic-based experience includes participation in the Academic Intervention (AI) Clinic via the Psychological Services Center. At the end of the semester, families whose children received services also provide feedback regarding candidates' knowledge and professionalism.

Second-Year Portfolio Evaluation & Thesis: Before internship, candidates complete a second-year portfolio and provide evidence for *knowledge* and *performance* competencies within each of the 2020, 10 NASP Training and Professional Practice Domains. Candidates present the portfolio to faculty and answer questions (i.e., comprehensive examination). Candidates are evaluated by each faculty and expected to meet standards for *knowledge competency* on their second-year portfolio. Candidates are also required to successfully propose their thesis prior to going on internship.

Internship Evaluation & Intern Portfolio Evaluation: On internship, candidates are evaluated monthly by their field supervisors and their field supervisors also complete a mid-year and end of the year comprehensive evaluation, which corresponds to the 2020 10 NASP Practice and Training Domains. Candidates are evaluated by each faculty and expected to meet standards for both *knowledge and performance competencies*. Candidates also defend their thesis prior to graduation.

State and National Exams: Candidates are required to pass the Illinois Certification Examination (content area) and expected to pass the Nationally Certified School Psychologist Examinations (PRAXIS II).

Since the last review 23 candidates successfully completed the Masters and Specialist programs and passed the Illinois State and National (NCSP) examinations. An additional 16 candidates successfully completed the Masters and are working on completing the Specialist program requirements. The program has 100% internship and job placement. Our students are highly regarded in the state of Illinois and are also employed across the nation. These results indicate program candidates meet the program's learning objectives. The program continues to receive positive reviews from the Center for Academic Support and Assessment (last review was completed in 2022). The School Psychology Program was one of the first programs to achieve the First Choice Status among EIU graduate programs and maintain our First Choice Status (our last review was completed in 2019).

6.b.1 Changes due to Assessment

As mentioned above, our program last obtained National Recognition (Full-Approval) from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) on February 1, 2022, which remains in effect through September 15, 2028. To be considered for national recognition, programs are required to provide three-years of data across three cohorts, covering eight different assessments that demonstrate candidates are trained according to the 10 NASP Training and Professional Development Domains. In short, the NASP report is excruciatingly thorough (i.e., a 70+ page report).

Our most recent report was evaluated based on the NASP 2010 Standards. Therefore, after obtaining our most recent approval, we have updated the following assessments to align with the NASP 2020 Domains (i.e., practicum 1, practicum 2, practicum 3, internship plan and evaluation, second year and intern portfolio evaluations). In addition to updating these assessments, we moved each from a paper and pencil reporting system to Qualtrics. This was an effortful process as each evaluation (except for portfolio evaluations) includes a midterm (or mid-year) and final (or end-of-year) evaluation.

Candidates continue to assess their impact with the students/clients they serve by collecting data and calculating an effect size for at least five of their applied experiences (e.g., AI clinic, individual counseling case, group counseling case, behavior consultation case, academic consultation case). Effect sizes are documented in the second year and internship-year portfolios. We also continue to solicit feedback from families whose children receive intervention services in our Academic Intervention Clinic (embedded within PSY 6890A Practicum) or Parent-Child Clinic (embedded within PSY 5023 Preschool Assessment & Intervention).

6.c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

Faculty: Although our program is fortunate to experience stability with three of our four faculty positions, the fourth position has historically turned over every 3-5 years. Since our last review (spring 2021), we hired a tenure-track faculty in fall 2020 through spring 2023. This past fall (2022), we conducted a tenure-track, school psychology faculty search and successfully hired a new faculty for fall 2024! Unfortunately, the academic school psychology job market mirrors the shortage of school psychologists in K-12 schools. We were fortunate to secure an impressive new college for fall 2024, especially considering the academic job postings far exceed the number of school psychology faculty searching for jobs.

Curriculum: Regarding the curriculum, school psychology is always in a flux trying to serve the changing needs of society. The immediate challenge for the public-school system is how to provide appropriate and meaningful education to culturally diverse and English learning students. Thus, almost all our courses address these topics in context (the infusion model). In addition, we continue to provide candidates with clinic experiences (e.g., Academic Intervention Clinic; Parent-Child Clinic). This clinic operates with the support of a single graduate assistant and very minimal (if any) funding. To sustain and grow clinical services, hiring a part-time Clinical Director to oversee the day-to-day operations and provide clinical supervision is necessary.

Thesis: To encourage timely thesis completion, we continue to require candidates to successfully propose their thesis prior to internship. Ninety-five percent of candidates from the last three cohorts have completed their thesis on time.

Increasing Awareness & Address Shortages: This year in collaboration with Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville and Pana School District we planned to host the first Central/Southern Illinois School Psychology Expo in Pana, IL. The aim of the Expo was multifaceted. School Districts in Central and Southern Illinois were invited to bring administrative representatives and high school students. Districts were invited to host booths to recruit current and future school psychology graduate students to their districts. Central and Southern Community Colleges and Universities were also

invited to host booths to recruit high school students. In addition, graduate students from both EIU and SIUE's programs planned to talk to high school and college students to increase awareness for the field of school psychology and hopefully (overtime) address the significant shortages in Central and Southern Illinois.

6.d. Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.

No curricular changes are indicated due to this review. The program is a member of the Directors of University School Psychology Programs (DUSPP) in Illinois that monitors developments in the field; and we will make the necessary changes when new developments emerge.

Since before the last review, and since the last review resources for instructional needs continue to be extremely limited. Assessment tools are restricted and must be purchased, e.g., intelligence tests. However, we have been using technology to access free (or minimal fee) training resources and we will continue to do so.

Regarding instructional resources, technology for student training continues to be a challenge. In spring 2019, the coordinator submitted an Academic Technology Support Grant to update outdated technology used to train graduates in both the school psychology and clinical psychology programs. Specifically, candidates use video rooms to record their proficiency administering standardized assessments and conducting counseling/therapy. Current video technology is old and requires students to burn their recordings onto a DVD/CD; however, most computers (personal or university owned) do not have the capability to play DVD/CDs. This grant was unfunded. From a training perspective, it is also imperative that the Psychological Services Center is equipped with video and recording equipment and the program has not been successful in finding solutions to these technology needs.

The students have an association (Student Association for School Psychologists at Eastern; SASPE) for volunteering and fundraising to offset the cost of professional development at conferences. However, the cost of professional conferences far exceeds fundraising. As mentioned above, candidates who are involved in research do take advantage of graduate and department level awards/grants, which help. Over the last three years, 15 students have received a Williams Travel Grant.

Comments from the College Dean:

The MS in School Psychology remains a successful program with a high completion rate and clear student outcomes: 39 students have completed the program since the last review. There is strong interest in this program which normally receives up to 30 applications for 8-10 spots per cohort. Student success is evident in that the program has 100% internship and job placement rates for students who complete the requirements. Due to a predicted increase in demand for school psychologists at regional and national levels, student interest in the program is likely to continue through the next review cycle. Since the last IBHE review, the program obtained national recognition from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) which remains in effect through September 2028. The program was also recognized for its overall quality by EIU's Graduate School when it received First Choice status in 2019. The

department effectively uses assessment data to inform decisions related to the program.

We recommend a decision of **Program in Good Standing**

VPAA Decision:

- ☒ Program in good standing
- ☐ Program flagged for priority review
- ☐ Program enrollment suspended

42.2805 M.S. in School Psychology

The summary above indicates that the M.S. in School Psychology is experiencing steady enrollment and its graduates experience high demand. With the program's multiple adjustments to changing accreditation requirements and the statewide shortage of school specialists, the question emerges of how this successful program could serve more students (more than the 8 to 10 seats reserved per year). Clearly, the program is dedicated to achieving the 100% placement rate of its graduates, and to maintaining the outstanding reputation of the program in the state. Perhaps with the attainment of needed upgrades in technology for the current students, especially in their necessary training for their specialty, the program may be able to help stem the shortage in school psychologists.