Meeting the Market Needs of a School Counseling Preparation Program

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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MEETING THE MARKET NEEDS OF A SCHOOL COUNSELING PREPARATION PROGRAM

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The changing roles of school counselors are impacted by national, state, and local expectations through standards, frameworks, and guidelines in which preparation programs are held accountable to comply as evidenced by their accreditations. School counseling preparation programs are critical in addressing the needs of a changing school counselor’s role and market. An evaluation of the program provides educational leaders information to adjust the curriculum and meet the needs of their identified market. The needs of the enrolled graduate student are imperative to data driven decision making for educational leaders evaluating school counseling graduate programs. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program in an urban institution to meet the needs of their student current market. Little to no data was available on the student’s perspective of the training program’s effectiveness to address the changing role of school counselors. Through a mixed methods research
design, six mid-program graduate students enrolled in an internship course provided responses to their perspective of the program’s alignment to meet local Georgia examinations, national and personal needs through a survey questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis. The findings and recommendations of this program evaluation included information relevant to the research questions based on the researcher’s definition of terms and research design. This research indicated a strong relationship in the student’s perspective of the alignment to national and Georgia school counseling expectations, their field experiences, and personal needs; local expectations were not found to be aligned. The implications of the data analysis resulted in potential program evaluation process changes for graduate school programs, higher education recruitment and retention departments, institutional effectiveness offices, accreditation organizations, and field experience locations.
MEETING THE MARKET NEEDS OF A SCHOOL COUNSELING
PREPARATION PROGRAM

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
JOI L. CHESTER

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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I learned many lessons about others and myself through this doctoral degree journey and dissertation process. The greatest lesson I learned was that my support system is stronger than ever, even when I did not realize I needed them. For this reason, I am blessed that God has taken me through this journey and revealed these special people to me. My family, friends, professors, dissertation committee, and peers have persevered with me, and to them I am forever grateful.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

School counselors have historically focused on academic, career, and personal/social counseling domains (Baker 2000; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2001; Myrick, 1997; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Most recently, the school counselor’s role has changed and preparation programs are expected to change with them. Due to an increased effort of school reform initiatives, a greater emphasis is placed on the accountability of school personnel to impact academic achievement (Eriksen, 1997; Fields & Hines, 2000; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). The significance of school counseling programs to prepare school counselors with the skills to address the counseling needs of students and schools districts have been addressed in literature thoroughly noting its connection to academic performance (Forrest, 2004; Gysbers, 2005; Pope, 2004; Romano & Kachgal, 2004; Walsh, Galassi, Murphy, & Park-Taylor, 2002). However, researchers from American School Counselors Association (ASCA), American Counseling Association (ACA), and others (McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzman, 2010) have documented concerns of the types of responsibilities that school counselors actually perform compared to how they are trained in graduate school. More school counselors spend their time with paperwork as opposed to personal interactions with students. These administrative types of duties are stated as conflicts to their roles as mental health service providers and account for a large portion of their daily practices.
limiting their abilities to act in their trained roles (ASCA, 2005). School counseling training programs are most effective when there is a blend of theory and real world application (Thompson & Moffett, 2010). ASCA’s position on preparation programs agrees with these expectations using 11 recommendations to encompass four initiatives of effective preparation program practices. Their position states:

School counselors are best prepared through master’s- and doctoral-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2012), the ASCA School Counselor Competencies (2012), The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010). These programs emphasize training in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program promoting leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change to enhance student achievement and success. (p. 52)

Although ASCA provides a framework for preparation programs, their main focus is the school counselor and advocating for their role. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the accrediting agency that monitors the implementation of the standards by colleges and universities in the United States and throughout the world in master’s and doctoral degree counseling programs which can include a school counseling curriculum. The 11 established standards (CACREP, 2016) for the evaluation of a counseling preparation program are based on the overall program effectiveness in counseling, with an additional emphasis on foundations, contextual dimensions, and practice for school counseling programs. The minimum requirement for each program is to additionally hold institutional accreditation which
addresses other standards impacting the program but out of the scope of standards for CACREP. Since 1980, 30 higher education institutions have lost their school counseling program accreditation from CACREP. There are varying reasons to the loss of accreditation however the Council for Higher Education Agency (CHEA) supports CACREP in their programmatic accrediting practices to accept, decline, or revoke school counseling programs. These agencies encourage prospective students to attend CACREP approved programs as most employers and state standards for school counseling certification require verification of a degree from a CACREP approved program.

With the multitude of standards from ACA, CACREP, and CHEA for a school counseling preparation program, it is necessary for a school counseling graduate program to comply with those standards while also meeting the needs and expectations of their students. Most school counseling program students enroll in a school counseling program motivated to obtain employment in a school counseling setting. Therefore, it is also necessary for a school counseling program to meet the needs of the school districts and address the changing role of school counselors during the process.

Additionally, the school counselor’s role in schools is changing faster than standards can mandate. School districts express concerns with social media impact, mental health counseling access barriers, administration clarity of roles, professional development of educational changes including school counselor evaluation instruments, and many other challenges. These changing roles impact the effectiveness of the school counseling professionals, interns, and preparation programs. In some cases, these challenges have also questioned the ethics of the respective entities to adhere to professional standards. As a CACREP requirement, a minimum of 600 internships hours
are required to connect the coursework in field related experiences. The research noting a disconnection between the internship experiences, stakeholder expectations, and professional standards increases the accountability program preparation.

Programs can evaluate their effectiveness using formative or summative data. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) defined evaluation as “the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object’s value (worth or merit) in relation to those criteria” (p. 5). For school counseling programs, the analysis of the data is imperative in examining formative and summative with qualitative and quantitative instruments.

**Purpose of the Study**

This mixed methods’ study addressed the effectiveness of an urban institution’s school counseling graduate program to meet the needs of its student’s perception of the current urban market. With increased accountability, the school counselor’s role has changed and consequently the school counseling preparation programs role has changed. The purpose of this case study was to evaluate the effectiveness of meeting the school counselor’s current urban market needs in a university preparation program from a student’s perspective. The effectiveness of meeting the market needs was generally defined as the alignment between stated standards and perceived student expectations. This evaluation identified the strengths and weaknesses of a program’s effectiveness by comparing qualitative and quantitative data to understand the research problem using a convergent design.
Research Questions

This study answers five questions regarding the school counseling preparation program’s extent to meet the current urban market needs of its student’s expectations through an evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. Using a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative data (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008), a survey, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis was used to answer the research questions. The survey answers the research questions associated with the extent to which a student’s perspective can be quantified. The qualitative research answers the research questions of the ways in which the student’s perspective aligns with the documents analyzed in the standards/guidelines and expectations. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to determine if a significant relationship in a school counseling preparation program can be evaluated through the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between a school counseling student’s expectations and the market needs of the school counseling field?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the local school district’s expectations?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the national expectations?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the
Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) expectations?

RQ5: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of the school counseling program’s field experience to the CACREP approved curriculum in the school counseling preparation program?

Significance of the Study

The significance of educational global competition includes improving models and procedures in higher education institutions through program evaluations. Countries such as China, South Korea, Singapore, and others invest in their education systems; therefore, it is imperative that standards and effective teaching and learning are embedded in graduate educational programs. Additionally, globally competitive programs address their student’s needs for the market. Khamkar’s (2013) study concluded that the quality of education does not only depend upon the infrastructure, curriculum, its goal, mission, aims and objectives, but it largely depends upon the use of creating, shaping human capital into socially responsible, accountable, reliable individuals responsible to the society on the whole. The shaping of the human capital is also necessary for enrolling and graduating students. Students enter graduate programs to master the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary and relevant to the industry and their goals. The connection to the curriculum provided by the instructor and the relevance to the current urban market from the student’s perspective must be congruent for teaching and learning to occur (El-Sakran & Mesanovic, 2013). The curriculum delivery model and field experiences are two factors that address the effectiveness of a
graduate school counseling program as industry requirements for accreditation. Effective school counseling preparation programs evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and learning curriculum through student feedback to create a relevant connection and compete with other programs in a global capacity.

Thompson and Moffett (2010) provided a developmental model of assessing the effectiveness of knowledge delivery using three stages of the school counseling field experiences. This research was conducted at a private university’s school counseling program with a similar sample population and location. Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommended further studies to examine the “differences in the point of view from which preparation and supervision of school counselors-in-training is regarded” (p. 19). Using program evaluation research to address this recommendation can enlighten school counseling graduate program stakeholders in their future decisions of program strengths, weaknesses, and relevance to their students.

Mason (2010) identified the school counselor as a leader in the school. However, this can vary from school to school and the clarity of the school counselor’s role by the current leadership/administration. Another variable is the school counselor’s participation to advocate for their leadership within the school. A key quality of an educational leader is effectiveness. Based on Mason’s research, “School counselors who follow through on commitments can be seen as reliable, and they are therefore more likely to be received well and sought out by students, parents, and staff” (pp. 282-283). Ryan, Kaffenberger, and Carroll (2011) defined school counselors as educators who believe in early interventions which are components of an effective leader. As educational leaders in higher education preparation programs or k-12 field experience
offices, making decisions about school counseling program modifications is essential in their role to consider the proper preparation for effective training. This may include curriculum adjustments, field placement changes, activity revisions, and detailed matching criterion, just to name a few options. A program evaluation from a student’s perspective will allow an educational leader essential data in the decision making process.

The significance of program evaluation, or evaluation research, is to “measure the effects of a program against the goals it sets as a means of contributing to subsequent decision making about the program and improving future programming” (Weiss, 2004). Program evaluation allows an opportunity to understand the program and evaluate the effectiveness of social programs designed to draw conclusions on its intended purpose. Positive conclusions can yield program expansion; negative conclusions can yield abandoned or modified program results. Ultimately, the process of program evaluation research can provide unsolicited change or information about an organization that improves the decision making of stakeholders, service consumers, and leaders.

The significance of school counseling preparation program evaluation in meeting the market needs of its consumer spans globally, nationally, and locally. For most school counseling graduate students, the final outcome is employment. Living in a globally competitive society allows graduate students the opportunity to seek employment in other countries. School counseling career opportunities are available in many countries outside of the United States through government, private, and non-profit agencies. Similarly, local and national positions are also seeking school counselors. Therefore, a preparation
program’s career connection has to prepare graduates to maintain competitive qualities for international, national, and local opportunities.

Prior to obtaining employment, school counseling students have to enroll, matriculate, and graduate from the graduate program. The alignment between education and workplace, prepares students for employment demands. Recruitment and retention statistics in a school counseling program are also significant in an evaluation process. The knowledge and motivation of students to successful navigate the administrative process and connect with their short-term goals is also a contributing factor leading to graduation. Receiving an unbiased response of a student’s perception is an asset to the decision making of a program. Due to the varied graduate student’s profile, there is a need to understand their perspective during their matriculation for continuous program improvements (Hall & Villareal, 2015). These areas include goals, expectations, and their relationship to the program. The connection of the student’s perspective of these areas and the program accreditation requirements are worth including in evaluating a program.

Due to required internship hours, a participating school district/system is needed for internship placement has a set of expectations that are significant to school counseling’s preparation program evaluation. School counseling internship leaders in school districts and preparation program field supervisors sign agreements to allow graduate students an opportunity to practice their knowledge and obtain on-the-job experiences. Meeting the needs of the school district/system facilitates a relationship for the school preparation program and students with an indication of a shared mission between the two institutions (Thompson & Moffett, 2010). The significance of this
collaboration provides an agreed upon set of expectations prior to the graduate student’s experience. However, a post assessment of the field experience can provide additional data to the effectiveness of a program.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the purpose of this study to evaluate the school counseling graduate program from the student’s perspective to meet the market needs. Although global, national, and local standards dictate accreditation compliance, a program evaluation at a higher education institution can influence decisions that apply to continuous improvement of the program. Decision makers are able to connect the perspective of student’s expectations with the needs of the changing school counseling market. Three entity types influence the institutions ability to provide services to students; national accrediting/standards-based agencies, state standards, and local school district/system leaders. Also, noting graduate student recruitment and retention factors influence the matriculation and outputs of school counseling students; therefore, addressing their perspective is significant to a program’s institutional success. The research purpose presented in this study noted connections between the public data of standards and expectations with the experiences of students and the analysis process of the institution. This study was designed to evaluate the relationships between the graduate student’s academic and field experiences, and the extent to which it connects to the changing role of school counselors. This chapter also presented the research questions to address the identified purpose based on recommendations from a previous study and providing an additional body of work to a higher education institution.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a school counseling preparation programs to meet the current urban market needs from its student’s perception that can benefit all decision makers in program modifications based on effectiveness. This chapter examines the topics that address the transitioning factors of evaluating school counseling programs through the history of school counselors, their changing roles, and the history and changes in the preparation program guidelines. Secondly, program evaluations are described as the process in which to conduct an assessment and analysis of the effectiveness of a program. Lastly, a description of the impact of the student’s perception on the recruitment and retention of a graduate program is described.

This study investigated the connection between the school counseling student’s perspectives of the program’s effectiveness to meet the current urban market needs of the industry. Its aim was to evaluate the strengths and limitations of a masters-level program to satisfy the expected aligned of the curriculum with the school counseling student’s expectations after having exposure to the industry. Ultimately, decision makers decide if modifications to the program are needed to further align the curriculum with the study’s results using the relationship between the school counselor’s perceived current role and the industry standards/guidelines. Critical to understanding the current relationship
between these factors is having knowledge of the school counseling history, preparation programs, program evaluation, and student perspective.

**History of School Counseling Preparation Programs**

Since the early 20th century, school counseling has emerged from guidance counseling focusing on human developmental growth and prevention mixed with psychoanalysis and social theories to providing academic, social, and emotional services in schools. Frank Parsons is referred to as the founder of guidance counseling, and James B. Davis is the Grand Rapids, Michigan school superintendent that implemented a review of school counseling instruction for vocational and career instruction (Gladding, 2009). Overtime, school counselors have not been able to utilize a specific job description as the roles are constantly changing based on several factors.

**Changing Role of School Counselors**

Ringeisen, Henderson, and Hoagwood (2003) noted schools as a key component to mental health with students but the stress of the current issues can also impact them professionally and personally. The result of the changing roles can transfer personal and professional stress to school counselors. The mental health issues of students are often first directed to school counselors which can be a never-ending dynamic in a school.

McCarthy, Van Horn Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, and Guzman (2010) researched the magnitude of the school counselors stress indicating results of burnout, physical exhaustion, and emotional strains, but also note it as a rewarding career choice. Since the majority of schools do not offer direct mental health services, referrals for external services are also not made unless it is a clear impact on the academic success of the
student. This determination is also oftentimes a process that can be stressful to complete as well. However, the referral process is one of the most important roles of the school counselor and they are to be familiar with available resources for students, families, and school during a time of crisis or need. “As community leaders, school counselors initiate the support process through collaboration with the various professionals in the student’s life and by providing responsive services to the student, the student’s family, and the community” (Hamlet, Gergar, & Schaefer, 2011, p. 202). However, ultimately the school counselor is considering these resources because of its impact on the student’s academic success. These supports also aid in the awareness of counseling advocating for their roles in schools. School counselors add an additional support to schools beyond the academic structure, yet their impact must be correlated to the school’s mission of academic success. White and Kelly (2010) note six academic success interventions school counselors social support, monitoring and mentoring, personal and social skill development, parent involvement, academic instruction, and academic support. These interventions cover a wide range of services which also vary in the delivery model. As sometimes the school counselor’s role shifts from student service support to an administrative/leadership role in a position of greater authority. Covering these various aspects and possibilities of situations can be difficult for a school counseling preparation program. Additionally, this may cause some confusion in the school counselor’s role when communicated during a preparation program, field experience, or by a supervisor on the job (Trolley, 2011). Mason (2010) suggested “reliable” counselors join the leadership team of schools which is not the same perspective of seeing the school counselor as a leader.
In addition to the ambiguous and changing school counselor roles, technology is continuously changing policies and academic standards are relevant to these changes. The use of technology in schools can include emailing, texting, bringing tablets to school, cyberbullying, or plagiarism to name a few examples. School policies must address the appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology and school counselors are expected to resolve any conflicts that impact a student’s social, emotional, or academic well-being when connected to the learning institution. School counselors are often in the position to resolve conflict that may be reinforced or enhanced by technology. This is a new role requiring new interventions that may be a cultural shift for parents, students, and school staff, including a new subculture. Burrow-Sanchez, Call, Zheng, and Drew (2011) provided an example of students using technology to express themselves if they have oral or written communication deficiencies. This use of technology can work to a counselor’s benefit. However, a lack of communication between parents and students can lead to a negative use of technology when a student is cyberbullying another student. This requirement to stay abreast of the appropriate and inappropriate use of technology impacts the school counselor’s ability to adapt to changes and articulate those changes to all stakeholders involved while staying self-aware of their needs.

Self-awareness may also include a reflection of the school counselor’s expectations of their role and the sources that influenced their decision to become a school counselor. Technology and other influential sources may impact career choices for students and counselors alike while additionally influencing their thoughts on their responsibilities and role.
In 2006, Hoffner and others interviewed a group of 132 economically disadvantaged young adults resulting in a significant positive relationship of the influence of mass media and their desired jobs. This research reinforced DeFleur and DeFleur’s (1967) conclusion of children’s research to stereotype careers based on media influence. Noting that reading is not often used as a decision maker, a student’s personal connection to their personal career choice may be heavily based on the influence of media which creates awareness with the possibility of also changing one’s decision. Salem, Hanan, and Shamshad (2014) surveyed 444 college students inquiring about the role their parent’s profession, mass media and personal choice had on their career selection. Their conclusion stated the following:

The mass media has significant influence on the perception and decision making of people. In this global village, media’s influence is increasing on career choices as well because of information exposure of students to various professions. Therefore, this study concludes that the factors like ‘parent’s profession,’ ‘mass media’ and ‘personal choice’ not only influence the students’ career choices individually but collectively as well. (p. 25)

Preservice school counselors may be influenced by their parent’s profession, mass media, and personal choices. The reality of school counselor roles during field experiences may or may not meet the stereotypes or images that other sources provide.

The changing role of the school counselor involves school guidance, student planning, individual and group counseling, consultations, advocacy, referrals, psychoeducation, and interventions. Therefore, competent, motivated, and culturally sensitive school counselors are needed for proactive interventions to aid in successful student
development. ASCA also noted that school counselors no longer only focus on administrative tasks or student behavior issues; they are responsible for assisting in academic achievement, personal/social development and career exploration in an ethical manner.

The American School Counselor’s Association Code of Ethics provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for school counselors (ASCA, 2010) which cover a range of topics including confidentiality, counseling plans, dual relationships, responsibility to students, referrals, technology, responsibilities to colleagues and professional organizations, maintenance of national and state standards, and ethics in the helping profession. Evans, Zambrano, Cook, Moyer, and Duffey (2011) concluded ethics as one of the most challenging areas for new school counselors due to the school cultures and varied preparation program experiences. Assessing the student’s perspective of ethical situations during their graduate experiences is relevant program evaluation data with the changing roles of school counselors (Trolley, 2011). It is also noted that urban school counselors have specific needs in the literature of the changing role (Lee, 2005).

Urban school counseling programs have specific needs that include providing a whole child approach to address mental health concerns in an academic progressive environment. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy (1998) referenced the changing roles of urban school counselors to address student diversity, a lack of resources, poverty, family issues, violence, and high drop-out rates in urban schools. Recommendations for school counseling educators were providing to address these changing roles in their preparation models. Recommendations include experienced urban school counselor supervisors, a supportive training environment, and time management skills to focus on the student’s
needs. Ten years later, Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy and Georgina Johnston (2008) researched nine preservice school counselors’ evaluations of a practicum experience in and urban setting. Their research included an analysis of the narrative evaluations in six themed areas: Relationships and Interactions with Urban Students and Educators, Cultural Differences, Urban Schools and Environment, Urban School Counseling Skills, Urban School Counselor’s Role, and Urban Student Issues/Problems. Based on their research, it is recommended that more attention is focused on the relationships and interactions with urban students and educators. The attention to the coursework and concepts related to urban schools is also recommended by to include “master urban school counselors to co-teach classes, conduct action research and to be a full partner in the counselor preparation process as opposed to just providing field experiences is needed” (p. 20). Green, Conley, and Barnett (2005) discussed the need for school counselors to engage in an ecological perspective in order to address the complex environments in which urban youth live. Steven Bain (2012) further explained the contemporary issues job descriptions, preparation, mental health issues, families and communities, student success, leadership, and issues in technology. In a research examination of over 6500 school counselor interns’ activity logs, the identification of non-ASCA model activities were identified based on Gysbers and Henderson’s (2006) four-service delivery model. This research found that out of 67 school counseling topics, nearly one third (35.5%) of the time was used as system support activities with less time devoted to guidance curriculum, student planning, and responsive services in high schools. Nine of the 12 activity recommendations in the ASCA National Model were significantly inconsistent. With such a need for more individual attention to student’s
needs, less time is recommended to system support and participation in inappropriate
tasks such as managing the student attendance system, monitoring the lunch room,
scheduling activities, administering standardized tests, and substitute teaching.

**Program Evaluation**

The origins of program evaluation date back to the early 1840s when the
American Common School was scrutinized for its practices resulting in a printed test to
survey the school’s effectiveness. Almost a century later, researchers began to expose
theories of evaluate programs effectively using different methods. Flexner, Tyler,
Scriven, Stake, and Stufflebeam (cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 2004) researched several
aspects of program evaluation thus developing their own theories for their effective use
of targeted markets.

Since before the 1930s, the expertise-oriented approach from Flexner dominated
the education field in doctoral exams, proposal review panels, professional journals, blue-
ribbon panels, educational program site visits, and professional reviews of educators’
performance for decisions concerning promotion or tenure to name a few. Flexner’s
(cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 2004) approach to evaluations was divided within four
categories: formal professional review systems, informal professional review systems, ad
hoc individual reviews, and ad hoc panel reviews. This approach was mostly used for
educational institutions, k12 and higher education. Accrediting institutions such as
Southern Association of Colleges Schools (SACS) made use of this approach for
accreditation which is the process an organization uses for approval to become and
maintain its status as a learning institutions.
Alkin and Christie (2004) described Tyler’s 1940s Eight-Year Study as one of the major starting points for modern program evaluation. Tyler’s objective-oriented program evaluation focuses on the outcomes of objectives and measurements. He disagreed with the norm-referenced testing approach and discarded items that were answered incorrectly or correctly too many or few times. His view of those answered items was they did not indicate what was learned. His approach focused on the following factors:

1. Formulating a statement of educational objectives.
2. Classifying these objectives into major types.
3. Defining and refining each of these types of objectives in terms of behavior.
4. Identifying situations in which students can be expected to display these types of behavior.
5. Selecting and trying promising methods of obtaining evidence regarding each type of objective.
6. Selecting on the basis of preliminary trials the more promising appraisal methods for further development and improvement.
7. Devising means for interpreting and using the results. (p. 56)

Theoretical research on the evaluation and emphasis of the objective-based measurements of Tyler’s work became associated with the work of other researchers.

Scriven’s consumer-oriented evaluation provided the definition of the evaluator in the judgment value. Alkin and Christie described Scriven as “the first and only major evaluation theorist to have an explicit and general theory of valuing” (p. 2). His position was that the evaluator determines what is good and/or bad. Additionally, he did not believe that the evaluator should provide information to nonprofessionals in the field to
make the final decision on issues based on the evaluation results. Scriven noted this practice as the greatest failure of an evaluator. He expressed that comparative alternatives were key components for evaluators to use when completing program evaluations. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) noted that Scriven was able to create a distinction between formal and summative evaluations with his evaluation work. In 1960, Eigen and Komoski were also contributors to consumer-oriented program evaluations; he was referenced as a leader in establishing the Educational Products Information Exchange and aided in educational technology assessments.

Stake’s (cited in Alkin & Christie, 2004) evaluation of the participant-oriented evaluation model described the value of case studies for context and activity descriptions, and three essential components of responsive evaluations are needed:

1. The belief that there is no true value to anything (knowledge is context bound).
2. The belief that stakeholder perspectives are integral elements in evaluations.
3. The belief that case studies are the best method for representing the beliefs and values of stakeholders and of reporting evaluation results.

Stake also noted that multiple perspectives are needed in evaluations; however, the stakeholders should not participate as the evaluator. In a responsive evaluation, Stake described the evaluator’s role as the decision maker to decide the interest of the participants.

Stufflebeam’s CIPP model originated in 1965, it was the result of the American public school’s need to find meaning and ways to effectively evaluate projects. The decision or management-oriented evaluation model was the work of Guba and
Stufflebeam that later became the acronym for the four types of evaluations: context, input, process, and product (Stufflebeam, 2004). Context evaluation identifies the need of the programs objectives. Input evaluation leads to strategy and design decisions. Process evaluation identifies challenges in implementation. Product evaluation measures the outcomes to continue or modify a program. Stufflebeam considered this a cyclical process that needed to be worked strategically, but with flexibility. Also noting, continuous communication with the decision makers was key for resource allocation and access.

Stufflebeam (2004) often used the four domains from the Joint Committee for Education Evaluation as the program standards for conducting evaluation. The four domains describe the standards of the evaluator to use during the evaluation. Utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy are the domain areas. Utility standards maintain the focus of the researched information for the needs of its intended users. Feasibility standards are intended to ensure that a diplomatic, realistic, prudent, and frugal evaluation is conducted. According to Stufflebeam, this may also include a clear contract. Propriety standards include the legal, ethical, and respectfulness of the subjects as behaviors during the research process and analysis delivery. Lastly, the accuracy standards are used to validate the technical features that determine the worth or merit of the program which should include transparency of the research process. Stufflebeam’s approach allowed the evaluator to be a representation of the decision makers, “to help define the evaluation questions, shape evaluation plans, review draft reports and disseminate the findings” (p. 57).
Stufflebeam provided a six-step structure for evaluators to follow when conducting research (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004):

1. Focusing the evaluation by identifying the major level(s) of decision making to be served, for example, local, state, or national. For each level of decision making, projecting the decision situations to be served and describe each one in terms of its locus, focus, criticality, timing, and composition of alternatives. Defining criteria for each decision situation by specifying variables for measurement and standards for use in the judgment of alternatives, and defining policies within which the evaluator must operate.

2. Collection of information by specifying the source of the information to be collected, specifying the instruments and methods for collecting the needed information, specifying the sampling procedures to be employed, and specifying the conditions and schedule for information collection.

3. Organization of information by providing a format for the information that is to be collected and designating a means for performing the analysis.

4. Analysis of information by selecting the analytical procedures to be employed and designating a means for performing the analysis.

5. Reporting the information by defining the audiences for the evaluation reports, specifying means for providing information to the audiences, specifying the format for evaluating reports and/or reporting sessions, and scheduling information reports.

6. Administration of the evaluation by summarizing the evaluation schedule; defining staff and resource requirements and plans for meeting these
requirements; specifying means for meeting policy requirements to conduct of the evaluations; evaluating the potential of the evaluation design for providing information that is valid, reliable, credible, timely, and pervasive (i.e., will reach all relevant stakeholders); specifying and scheduling means for periodic updating of the evaluation design; and providing a budget for the total evaluation program. (p. 275)

The main reason for using these steps is to determine the effectiveness of a program based on established standards and guidelines. Evaluations assist in the documentation and processes used to determine the strengths and limitations of a program. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluations has provided a definition to assist in using program evaluations as a plan for conducting research.

After explaining the CIPP model at a national conference, Guba and Stufflebeam (1970) evaluated a $10 million program focused on migrant children at the Southwest Education Laboratory in Austin, Texas. Members of the migrant community were subjects of the research which ultimately provided more relevant information to the results than subject matter experts. The CIPP model was flexible in its application which allowed clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the program using the input evaluation component.

The CIPP model was also used in the Nebraska distance education program research and evaluation process. Rockwell (1999) collected data from three groups: a five member steering committee, a Delphi panel from four state colleges, and a statewide distance learning conference community of learners. These groups ranked the importance of their ideas relevant to the Nebraska distance learning program to determine
the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The results yielded more institutional cooperation, teacher preparation, distance learning educational plans, and established educational outcomes are needed.

Although, the CIPP model for program evaluation has influenced educational program evaluations, Stufflebeam (2004) recommended continual assessment and development of the model with additional research. When using a set of standards as the goal for educational improvements, it is also worth understanding the intended use of the standards before initiating the research process or method.

The standards of program evaluation (prior to 1975, the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests and Manuals) were determined to need improvements. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation was founded in 1975 as a coalition of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) were concerned with the quality of evaluation. Six years later the Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects, and Materials. According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2004), the definition of evaluation is “the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object’s value in relation to those criteria” (p. 5). Specifically, program evaluations are meant to make a decision or judgment about the object being evaluated using accuracy, utility, feasibility and propriety to judge quality. Fitzpatrick and others continued to define these areas as follows:
…[A]ccuracy (the extent to which the information obtained is an accurate reflection…with reality), utility (the extent to which the results serve practical information needs of intended users), feasibility (the extent to which the evaluation is realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal), and propriety (the extent to which the evaluation is done legally and ethically). (p. 6)

Program evaluation is an undeniable asset in the education because of its purpose to judge quality. A formative or summative approach can be used but it is must be of importance to the stakeholders. To evaluate a higher education school counseling program, the specific needs and goals of the program need to involve the stakeholders who include the students, instructors, field supervisors and institution.

The University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education, School Counseling Program Assessment Plan incorporated four sequential components of assessment into their program evaluation for CACREP accreditation. The plan encourages an internal cycle of improvement using these basic types of assessments and sources of information to structure and present their program recommendations. Table 1 outlines the relationship of documents used for internal evaluation of one component of their school counseling preparation program.

The other three areas include admissions, program completion and post-graduation. Mid-program is defined as the time period after a student is enrolled but before graduation. All four core faculty members are responsible for an assigned component and present the data analysis with discussions of the strengths, limitations, and suggested recommendations including previous details of relevant data.
Table 1

*Neag School of Education Assessment Plan (Mid-Program Component)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th>Types of Assessments</th>
<th>Source of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Program</td>
<td>• Coursework</td>
<td>• Plan of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Projects, Tests, etc.</td>
<td>• Faculty/Syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Course Grades</td>
<td>• Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Evaluations</td>
<td>• Institutional Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mid-Cycle Evaluations</td>
<td>• Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Practicum Surveys</td>
<td>• Assessment Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehensive Exam</td>
<td>• Comp. Exam Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An assessment of the 2014-15 NEAP School Counseling Program’s curriculum alignment to CACREP (2009) accreditation Core Content Standards and Student Outcome Standards is utilized with the seven sources of data: (a) Program Course Work/Plan of Study, (b) course objectives, requirements, and other course related material, (c) course grades, (d) student course evaluations, (e) mid-program evaluations, (f) practicum surveys, and (g) comprehensive exam scores. Each area is independently assessed followed by an analysis of a different assessment area and 2011-2013 data are incorporated to document the course/program improvements. All in all, this evaluation process works to improve the internal program’s effectiveness to make recommendations. Six recommendations for faculty and course improvements were made from this mid-
program assessment process which included data from the student’s perspective of the curriculum and practicum experience. One recommendation was determined as follows:

Specifically, data from students on past exit surveys and alumni surveys indicate that some students believe that program courses are not rigorous enough. Attention needs to be placed on what is occurring in classrooms to prepare students for school counseling practice. (p. 200)

School Counseling Program Effectiveness

An effective counseling preparation program has mainly been associated with a CACREP accredited certification for the institution’s school counseling program. Public research was unavailable for a standard model of assessing a school counseling program’s effectiveness outside of using CACREP’s program accreditation process. This accreditation process involved a review of the program’s effectiveness based on section four standards:

Evaluation in the program includes opportunities for counselor education program faculty to comprehensively evaluate overall program effectiveness.

Assessment of students’ knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions is integral. Evaluation data will help program faculty reflect on aspects of the program that work well and those that need improvement and will inform programmatic and curricular decisions. (p. 4)

It is expected for school counselors to know the concepts associated with these standards to obtain employment in schools which are evaluated by state approved assessments before a school counselor is certified. ASCA, ACA, and state agencies under the
The Department of Education also recommend guidelines for effective school counselors which are emphasized in preparation programs. The content connected to each organization is assessed by CACREP for program accrediting purposes as a segment of the program evaluation.

**History of CACREP**

The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) created standards and documents of accreditation-related entries in the 1960s for institutions with counseling programs to voluntarily participate in their new program approval process. In 1981, ACES approached the American Personnel and Guidance Association (which later became the American Counseling Association) about joining accreditation efforts to become CACREP. Other helping professions had also established accrediting agencies such as the American Psychological Association, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Council on Rehabilitation Education. In its 35 years of existence, it has made revisions to its standards to promote intentional growth, self-sufficiency and effectiveness in the counseling field (Urofsky, Bobby, & Ritchie, 2013). Prior to the latest 2016 changes, in 2009, modifications to the standards were made to increase the focus on student learning outcomes as a result of the increased accountability placed on higher education institutions to meet the needs of the market. Additional previous revisions include a relationship with state standards and mandates for employment considerations in federal departments such as the Department of Veteran Affairs and the Department of Defense, and for TRICARE reimbursement (TRICARE, 2014).
One consistent concept is the primary goal of CACREP to promote and administer a quality assurance process for graduate counseling programs (Urofsky et al., 2013). The vision, mission, and core values are also aligned with the primary goal as described on their website (CACREP, 2016).

The vision of CACREP is to provide leadership and to promote excellence in professional preparation through the accreditation of counseling and related educational programs. As an accrediting body, CACREP is committed to the development of standards and procedures that reflect the needs of a dynamic, diverse, and complex society. CACREP is dedicated to encouraging and promoting the continuing development and improvement of preparation programs; and preparing counseling and related professionals to provide services consistent with the ideal of optimal human development.

CACREP maintains collaborative relationships with other groups that focus on accreditation, licensing, certification, and the professional development of counselors and related practitioners.

The mission of CACREP is to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through the development of preparation standards; the encouragement of excellence in program development; and the accreditation of professional preparation programs. (http://www.cacrep.org/section-5-entry-level-specialty-areas-school-counseling/)

In March 2002, the CACREP Board of Directors developed this Statement of Core Values to provide additional clarification and support for the existing Mission and Vision statements. The CACREP Board of Directors believes in advancing the counseling
profession through quality and excellence in counselor education; ensuring a fair, consistent, and ethical decision-making process; serving as a responsible leader in protecting the public; promoting practices that reflect openness to growth, change and collaboration; and, creating and strengthening standards that reflect the needs of society, respect the diversity of instructional approaches and strategies, and encourage program improvement and best practices.

Six program standards are provided to assist graduate counseling programs with understanding the process of receiving accreditation and maintaining the accreditation status. CACREP describes accreditation as commitment to program excellence. The 2016 CACREP Standards were written with the intention to simplify and clarify the accreditation requirements and to promote a unified counseling profession. Of the six standards, standard four pertains to the program evaluation for program faculty to evaluate the program’s effectiveness. CACREP notes the reflective aspects of faculty members to use evaluation data to improve and inform their program and curricular decisions. Institutional research departments include the use of student evaluations in their program decisions which are an institutional standard embedded in the CACREP program standards. However, CACREP does not provide a standard of questions to ask; only the following statements address what evidence should prove the program evaluation includes the student’s perspective. From CACREP 2016 standards, evaluation of faculty and supervisors must include the following:

- Written procedures for administering the process for student evaluations of faculty are available to the counselor education program faculty.
• Students have regular, systematic opportunities to formally evaluate counselor education program faculty.
• Students have regular, systematic opportunities to formally evaluate practicum and internship supervisors.

Student’s Perspective

The student’s perspective is considered in many research institutions as one of the standard evaluations for assessing student feedback. “Regarding evaluation, the most widespread recommendation—and this is how it is now done at many universities—is that assessment should be carried out from several different perspectives” (p. 200).

Limited research of the perspective of graduate students during their field experience in school counseling is available. Teacher preparation programs, educational leadership preparation programs, and school counseling graduates reflections on their training program after graduation research are available and can be drawn. Most of this research is also focused on the graduate student’s perception of their experience connected to their satisfaction of a particular course curriculum or faculty member. Additionally, institutions will include a program exit survey which can focus on a combination of curriculum and faculty feedback, yet rarely are the questions asking about feeling of preparation for the career.

Summary

This chapter examined the literature that addresses the history of school counseling and its changing role to meet the needs of an effective preparation program’s evaluation criteria. It described the original purpose of school counseling professionals
and how an evaluation of a preparation program can impact a higher education institution’s decisions to effectively evaluate their program using CIPP, CACREP standards, and the student’s perspective.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In most higher education institutions, obtaining gainful employment is the current student’s most influential factor in enrolling and matriculating through a major area of study (Pryor, Eagan, Palucki Blake, Hurtado, Berdan, et al., 2012; National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2013). The importance of effective preparation for achieving this goal is based on the curriculum and delivery of the student to connect with the content. School counseling graduate programs are challenged with providing both of these factors while maintaining a cycle of improvement to evaluate their actions. CACREP mandates this evaluation as a standard to maintain accreditation and ASCA provides guidelines to assist with preparing students for certification exams and the industry needs. School counseling certification exams and local school system/district field experiences provide an avenue to assess a student’s performance through formal and summative evaluations. The success of student’s ultimately impacts the reputation of a school counseling preparation program which further warrants the need to evaluate the program from the student’s perspective.

Daniel Stufflebeam (2004) is a recognized contributor to educational evaluation based on the context, input, process, and product or CIPP model. The CIPP model is a continuing process model used for the purposes of making decisions in a three-step
process. Step one includes the collecting of information; step two is to obtain the information; and step three is to provide the information to the stakeholders. In the context element, it is necessary to study the culture and define the purpose of the specific information researched. The input element evaluates the resources needed to develop the program which includes the personnel. Process elements address the decisions that implement, manage, and control the program; it is the delivery component of the program. Product evaluation gathers the data to establish the depth at which the objectives are achieved to assist in determining whether a program should sustain, terminate, or make adjustments. This model can be used for a variety of educational research. Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2003) defined process theory as a way to evaluate how a program should be implemented which includes whether or not the target audience is receiving the intended and expected services. In school counseling graduate programs, one of the target audiences is the graduate student due to their connection to the student learning outcomes.

**Research Design**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, individuals from several diverse fields collaborated to originate a new research methodology. The formative stage, philosophical debates, procedural developments and reflective positions resulted in expansion into disciples and global recognition for mixed method research designs (Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Mixed methods answers research questions using quantitative analysis to document the frequency of an occurrence in quantitative terms while qualitative analysis provides and explanation or concludes a
rationale. Although other terms such as multimethod, integrating, synthesis, quantitative and qualitative methods or mixed methodology are used interchangeably for this research design, more recent researchers use the term mixed methods in educational settings (Bryman, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The conclusions that a mixed methods design will provide can inform audiences of the significant relationships that the school counseling graduate program meets the needs of their current market. The quantitative data will provide numerical values of the subject’s perspective while the qualitative data provides details and examples. One form of data without the other will not provide enough information for decision makers to evaluate a program. In general, mixed methods research uses a combination of both data sources to document the accessible data needed to understand the research questions.

This study used the quantitative data to compare and differentiate the qualitative data gathered from the student’s perspectives of a school counseling graduate programs. The primary strategy of semi-structured interviews was to collect qualitative data from graduate students. A document analysis of the field experience handbook, national and state organization standards/guidelines, and local school district websites was used to determine recurring themes during coding of the qualitative data. Quantitative data, in the form of a Likert scale survey, informed the extent of congruence with the semi-structured interview data and general comprehension of the national/state organization standards/guidelines. The semistructured interviews and survey occurred with the same subjects. These three sources of data connect the qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative survey data with the document analysis of standards/guidelines to
determine the extent and ways that a student’s perception is aligned with the program’s outcomes.

Student semistructured interviews can be challenging to schedule due to the accommodation needed to coordinate around competing priorities. However, department personnel may assist with identifying the best time to conduct the semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative data used cross-sectional survey research from the same semistructured interviewed subjects. The purpose for using the same group was to evaluate the qualitative answers with the quantitative responses for consistency. With a small sample size, a manual analysis was cost effective and convenient for this study. The prompt collection of data and analysis available with an electronic survey are assets to the timeline for this research (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

**Definition of Variables**

**Dependent variable**

**School Counseling Program Effectiveness** is defined as the overall degree to which programs are successful in accomplishing their objectives or in otherwise making changes (ERIC Scope Notes, 2016). This includes the utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability of evaluation standards. For the purposes of this study, it is the student’s perception of the program’s strengths and weaknesses that may result in continuous evaluations or program modifications in meeting the expectations of students based on their perception of the local, state, and national standards.
Independent variables

Markets needs are the students’ perception of current and effective school counseling responsibilities, roles, and practices including working with students, teachers, parents, administrators, local business leaders, and community leaders.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) is a national agency that provides guidance to counselors of various specialties (i.e., career, school, marriage, family, community, addiction, etc.).

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) is a national organization that provides specific guidelines to k-12 school counselors for recognized model programs that influence and align educator’s expectations with changing school counseling roles.

The Council of Accreditation for Counseling Related Education Programs (CACREP) is a national accrediting agency for counselor education preparation programs. Graduating from a CACREP accredited program is a requirement for US school counselors.

The Georgia Assessment of Certified Educators (GACE) is the required examination one must take to become a certified educator in the state of Georgia.

Other Definitions

Alignment is the theoretical connection to student expectations and experiences.

A counselor educator is a faculty member instructing graduate students in School Counseling programs.
**Current market needs** are the perceived market needs from participants that vary in expectations based on their personal experiences occurring at the present time compared to previous experiences and expectations.

**Graduate programs** are majors or studies approved by an institution after completion of a bachelor’s degree (also referenced as training programs and preparation programs).

**Guidelines** are the framework in which the industry sets expectations for effectiveness using best practices.

**Standards** are rules, principles, or criteria by which levels or degrees of adequacy, acceptability, quantity, quality, or value are measured or judged (ERIC Scope Notes, 2016).

**Expectation** is the anticipation that someone or something will occur based on the degree of probability (Dictionary.com, 2016).

**Perception** is the awareness or understanding of the something or someone using sensory information to interpret experiences (Dictionary.com, 2016).

**Perspective** is a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view (Dictionary.com, 2016).

**Student**, for the purpose of this research, is a graduate student participating in a one-time work or service experience related to his or her major or career goal.
Relationship of Variables

The student’s perspectives of the independent variables directly influence the dependent variable in the study. The effectiveness of the school counseling program includes meeting the expectations of the local, national, state, and institutional standards.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as well as the correlation between variables to support the research questions.

Limitations of the Study

The research for this study was limited by a number of factors, including the following:
1. The study was based on a single sample institution and therefore may not apply to all institutions of higher learning and cannot be generalized to a larger population.

2. The study was based on quantitative and qualitative data which includes the subject’s own interpretation of his or her opinion and experiences in different contexts, as well as scales. This may not reflect the entire institutional perspective and that of other professionals in the field.

3. The document analysis required the researcher to use publicly available information which may not be updated or accurate.

4. This study strictly focused on the institutional alignment of the structures within the institution in the School Counseling program only. It did not consider other relational external factors that can impact the institution, especially in the areas of availability of resources, organizational environment (climate, politics, and marketability), and quality of faculty, staff, and students.

5. The site selection was convenient to the researcher. Postsecondary institutions, other than the case study institution, have School Counseling Departments and could have been equally well-suited for consideration.

6. The sample size of this mixed methods study was limited to six participants which is a small quantitative sample size.

7. There was not a consistent evaluation model for the school counselors in this state. Therefore, local expectations may vary between respondents.
Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework related to evaluating the school counseling preparation program and its connection to meeting the market needs from it’s student’s perspective. The description of the school counselor graduate program variables and the standards providing institutional accreditation and state guidelines were defined providing an alignment and rationale for their continuous improvements. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables were established to support the work of this study. The CIPP model selected to guide and design this study was described with a rationale for selecting the outcomes compared to the different approaches. Additionally, the definitions of terms were provided with a list of limitations to the study. A blue-print of the research was provided in this chapter using the selected theory, research definitions, and approach as a guide.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This evaluation was conducted utilizing an exploratory case study to evaluate the student’s perspective of a program’s connection to the changing roles of school counselors using mixed methods research design. It was designed to compare the data points using qualitative and quantitative methodology for collection and analysis procedures (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). This was accomplished through a survey instrument and semi-structured interviews interview as well as document analysis. Triangulation of data included semi-structured interviews of enrolled school counseling field experience, a Likert-scale survey, and an analysis of current publicly published documents upon approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and evaluation accountability standards set by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation were followed for this study (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011).

Semistructured interviews were used to describe the experiences of students in the graduate program and to capture their expectations of the program’s ability to meet the industry standards. The goal in the mixed methods design was to find intersecting thematic data points between the qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on the intersecting data points, the themes for the program evaluation were determined.
The qualitative questions in the semistructured interviews included open-ended questions without predetermined values. The semistructured interviews were audio recorded for transcription purposes and further analysis. The thematic codes were determined after the interview data was transcribed. The survey of expectations included a Likert-scale use of statements that quantified the level of program effectiveness based on the independent variables.

The document analysis occurred after the thematic codes were determined to establish alignment with the standards based on the semistructured interviews analysis. The document analysis process included, but was not limited to, national, state, local, and institutional documents, only if semistructured interviews or survey responses made a connection to this type of publicly available information. Table 2 lists the procedures and timeframe for research activities.

Table 2

*Procedures and Timeframe for Research Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Resources Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2016 / February 2017</td>
<td>Sought IRB approval</td>
<td>IRB request form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Recording device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Survey Questionnaire</td>
<td>Survey/ Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Transcribe Interview</td>
<td>Microsoft Excel/Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Input survey results</td>
<td>Microsoft Excel/Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>Microsoft Excel/Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>Microsoft Excel/Word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semistructured Interview Protocol

Enrolled School Counseling Internship graduate students were invited to participate in the semistructured interviews based on completing the CACREP-approved curriculum with plans to complete their study at the selected institution in school counseling. Of the 48 enrolled students, six were selected based on their program of study. The remaining 42 enrolled students were not selected based on their enrollment in completing a Community Counseling program, and the varying number of completing courses that would change the impact of the variables to effectively analyze this study. The internship course was held in two semesters after the completion of a practicum field experience. The six credit hour graduation requirement included 600 total clock hours of field experience by the description as follows:

School Counseling Internship I (300 hours) Fall, Spring, 3 credits
Supervised field placement. Candidate experiences include assessment, counselor-client sessions, and follow-up of the client’s progress. Candidates receive one hour of individual supervision on-site, one hour of individual university supervision and attend a weekly group supervision class. A minimum of 300 hours is required. Prerequisite: Common Core Courses, CCPS 518, 520, 521, 522, 524 and Candidacy.

School Counseling Internship II (300 Hours) Fall, Spring, 3 credits
Capstone clinical field placement. Supervised field placement. Candidate experiences include needs assessments for the counseling program, school site and candidate achievement; counselor-client sessions, follow-up of the client’s progress and portfolio. Candidates receive one hour of individual supervision on-
site, one hour of individual university supervision and attend a weekly group supervision class. A minimum of 300 hours is required. Prerequisite: Common Core Courses, CCPS 540 and Candidacy. (School Counseling Practicum and Internship Handbook, 2014, p. 21)

Involvement in an important research project was used as an incentive for participation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using a qualitative semi-structured interviews protocol (Krueger, 2002) which included asking intentional, open-ended, focused, reflective questions with an ending final question. The research questions were asked directly, as well as, questions of “why” or dichotomous questions, if additional follow-up questions were asked. This format allowed the subjects to use their own words and explain their perspective to uncover any shared expectations or alignment connections to the independent variables.

**Survey Protocol**

The quantitative instrument was completed with the same semi-structured interview students within 24 hours of completing the interview. The survey allowed participants to complete it or close the webpage without submitting it, or without providing any negative consequences to the participant. The participants completed the demographic information and the twelve questions before replying with a submission. The participant’s information from the survey and their identifying information are linked electronically, however anonymity of the subjects is maintained.
Description of the Setting

This study took place in an urban, private, coeducational, historically black college and university (HBCU) of higher education institution located in Georgia, the southeast region of the United States. The institution serves undergraduate and graduate students in the School of Education with a current School Counseling program in the Counselor Education Department. Four full-time faculty members instruct a combination of the course graduation requirements including the department chair and field supervisor. A degree in Community Counseling is also an option for students based on their electives. The average graduation rate between the years of 2007-2011 was 67% in 3 years with an average of 7 students graduating between the years of 2010-2014 and 22 enrollees. The School Counseling program defines and highlights it’s curriculum based on the American Counseling Association’s (ACA) position of “being a professional counselor” and distinguishes in the School Counseling Internship and Practicum Handbook (2014) the following statement regarding school counselors:

*In the schools* ...School counselors are certified professional educators specially trained in counseling interventions, theories and techniques. School counselors – as an integral part school’s total education program – work with candidates, teachers, parents, administrators, local business leaders and community leaders to help candidates become responsible and productive citizens. School counselors promote educational success, interpersonal skills and self-understanding. (pp. 7-8)

The Counselor Education Department has a general mission for both program types – Community and School Counseling. The department’s mission is to further the institution’s mission by completing the following statement:
Preparing candidates to assume roles of leadership and service in society as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) through the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards based programs. To promote a more just and humane society through counseling, the faculty prepare candidates who are knowledgeable, critical thinkers, and ethical change agents. (p. 10)

Instructors use national and state standards/guidelines to specifically prepare school counselors for school counseling certification. Additionally, the program reports to prepare graduate students for the following six outcomes:

1. Work effectively with individuals and groups on educational, emotional, personal, social, and vocational concerns through the processes of counseling, consulting, assessment, referral, placement, and follow-up, coordination;

2. Adopt an eclectic approach to working with clients of diverse ethnic populations while simultaneously assimilating cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural knowledge;

3. Design and maintain a sound school guidance and counseling program as well as a sound community counseling program through planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating continuously by utilizing existing standards from professional organizations specifically referring to goals, objectives, and activities as well as involving the program's clientele of candidates, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, and community;

4. Act in a manner exemplifying the professional ethics and standards of the sponsoring organizations that prepare and guide its membership;
5. Conduct timely research for the purposes of improvement, and creative innovations in the areas of counselor effectiveness, counseling programs, issues pertinent to youth and their numerous and diverse concerns; and

6. Seek continual growth as a person and professional. (pp. 13-14)

Forty-eight students were enrolled in a 51-hour post-bachelor’s minimum course program with a maximum program capacity of 60 students. Students were able to choose between school or community counseling electives in order to obtain employment appropriate credentials and graduation requirements. Courses were offered with face-to-face instructional model, Monday through Friday between the hours of 4:00–9:00 p.m. with an exception to practicum/internship hour completion. Nine students were registered for the school counseling internship I/II course to begin January 2017.

**Participants/Location of Research**

The participants were selected based on their enrollment status for the semester in the internship course. The location of the research was convenient and familiar to the participants to increase the sample size and decrease stress and anxiety of an unfamiliar location. Internet access was available for each student to conduct the survey portion of the research without relocation of the semistructured interviews.

**Working with Human Subjects**

All subjects were over the age of 18 and considered adults that can consent to participate in the study without another person’s approval. Each participant was provided a consent form which was read and/or explained individually. Each subject was provided ample time to read and review the form and consider participating. Any questions were
open for answers or clarification if necessary. Upon approval of the consent form, participants were reminded that their participation is completely voluntarily, and their individual responses are confidential. Participants were also informed that their participation or lack thereof, will in no way impact their academic or career outcomes. This study was conducted in accordance with all IRB protocols.

**Data Collection**

Data collection details for this study included specific research questions for each independent variable. Table 3 details the alignment of independent variables with the research questions. Other tables display the use of the data collection instruments in the study. Each table provides several options which were coded based on the subject’s responses. It is possible that more than one answer aligned with multiple research questions and required a variety of overlapping instruments.

Table 3

*Alignment of Independent Variables to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Research Questions (RQ)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School District Standards</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State Standards</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. National Guidelines</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Program Curriculum</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Market Needs</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Data Collection Procedures

All quantitative data were collected using procedures approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study assessed the school counseling student intern’s perception of the school counseling program’s effectiveness using an electronic survey instrument. Preservice school counselors enrolled in Internship courses I or II received an electronic survey. Quantitative survey input methods were selected and used for an electronic survey analysis program to quantify participant’s responses. A new survey was developed by the researcher to address the specific evaluation questions for the study. Due to the unique nature of the setting and program, previous electronic surveys were not appropriate for this study. Typically school counseling program surveys are written to address an overall student perspective of the faculty or curriculum during the midpoint of the program, or the overall program after completing the field experience. This survey was offered to students during their field experience about the program’s effectiveness to align with standards and guidelines. However, the survey was modeled after one section of the Student Perspectives: Evaluating a Higher Education Administration Program (Roberts, Gentry, & Townsend, 2011).

Student Demographics

Section one of the survey collected the following demographic information: ethnicity, gender, age range, and school counseling field experience district/system. The demographic section had four questions in section one preceded by 12 questions in section two. The twelve questions in section two of the survey aligned to the research questions and variables (see Tables 4 and 5).
Table 4

Alignment of Research Questions to Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>1,2,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>4,9,10,11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>6,9,10,11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>5,9,10,11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5</td>
<td>1,2,3,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Alignment of Variables to Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Needs</td>
<td>1,3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Expectations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Curriculum</td>
<td>8,9,10,11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Effectiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative Data Collection Procedures**

This researcher obtained a list of students enrolled in the school counseling field experiences course. The semistructured interviews were scheduled based on the convenience of the student’s schedule in the month of February. Each student was
contacted via email with an invitation to participate in the semi-structured interviews and a brief introduction was held with the letter of consent. At the beginning of the semi-structured interviews the researcher explained the purpose of the interview, data confidentiality, and the informed consent process. The researcher followed the interviewing protocols while recording the session. All semistructured interview responses were recorded using a digital device and downloaded to the researcher’s password protected computer for analysis. Additionally, participants completed a Likert-scale survey to increase the reliability and validity of this research study.

Qualitative data were collected between the semistructured interviews and document analysis. The semistructured interviews were comprised of 6-to-10 school counseling field experience students with facilitation from the researcher. Fewer than six resulted in limited recurring theme interactions and more than 10 became unmanageable to follow. The researcher also took notes while the audio-recording device was in use. A script guided the semistructured interviews presented by the researcher (Appendix A).

All qualitative data were collected using procedures approved by the IRB. The semistructured interviews were the primary source of data to inform the coding of the document analysis while the survey was used to triangulate the findings of both. The research used a single-stage sampling design (Babbie, 2007) based on the names of the registered students for the school counseling field experience course. Using email and an in-person invitation, each participant had an equal probability of being selected based on the convenience sample and availability. Stratification did not occur with this study.

The semistructured interviews included a date and time to meet for the audio-record and the school counseling student’s responses to questions about their
expectations of the school counseling program. The five research questions were aligned to the research questions; however, responses varied in alignment to the independent variables (see Table 6). Table 7 shows the alignment of research variables to semistructured interviews questions.

Table 6

*Alignment of Research Questions to Semistructured Interviews Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Semistructured Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>1,2,3,5,6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5</td>
<td>1,2,3,5,6,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

*Alignment of Research Variables to Semistructured Interviews Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Variables</th>
<th>Semistructured Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Needs</td>
<td>1,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Expectations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Curriculum</td>
<td>2,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Effectiveness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After an analysis of the semistructured interviews and survey, document analysis of public information was analyzed by identifying recurring themes in the CACREP standards, ASCA guidelines, Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) certification requirements, local school district/systems school counseling job descriptions, and the institution’s field experience handbook based on interview references. These sources of data were identified as publicly available documents in accurate formats for document analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe documented material as public record or personal documents that are recorded or written materials not prepared by the inquirer. The information provided in these documents provided information of the mission, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, procedures, duties, responsibilities and additional information to establish market needs and definitions for this study.

It was expected that the document review process will vary by respondent, field experience location, and document access. Therefore, each document was strategically analyzed using a criterion to identify similarities and differences in relationship to the independent variables.

Table 8 displays the research question alignment to the five document review analysis needed. At least one document was reviewed for each respondent based on their response.
Table 8

Alignment of Research Instruments to Document Analysis Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Document Review Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

Themes were extracted from the transcription of the semi-structured interviews, and thematic units were identified. According to Shamdasani, Stewart, and Rook (2006), thematic units are “recurring systems of beliefs or explanations” (p. 129). The frequency of recurrence of the themes were noted and analyzed with coding of the independent variables. Survey data were entered into a Microsoft Excel database and the negatively worded question #7 was reverse-coded for accurate analysis. Document analysis of the recurring themes associated with the independent variables was also coded for frequency of topics referenced in the semistructured interviews and survey responses. The “winnow” technique of data use was used to focus on responses and documents relevant to the independent variables and disregard other points of information (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Five themes were targeted as recommended by Creswell (2013). Hand coding of the data was used and electronically scanned for storing and organizing purposes. After triangulating the thematic codes of the data sources (semistructured
interviews transcript, survey, and documents) to justify the converging themes for internal validity, and member checking occurred. Additionally, this researcher disclosed any bias as a self-reflection in the findings for reflectivity in this study (Creswell, 2013). To ensure external validity, a detailed account of the study, triangulation (which strengthens reliability as well as validity), and data collection and analysis was used. All phases of this study were subject to scrutiny by an external evaluator who is experienced in mixed-methods research. Reliability of the transcripts was checked by multiple reviews of the audio-recording and the creation of a codebook for the identified recurring themes. Analysis of the data included a review of recurring themes and survey results for the recorded semistructured interviews by coding each standard/guidelines category referenced in a positive “meets expectations” or “does not meet expectations” for the independent variables. Quoted segments supported the evidence for emerging themes and their connection to broader themes using a comparative method and case study analysis format (Creswell, 2013). Detailed information was provided regarding the number of subjects completing the survey and any response biases determined (Fowler & Cosenza, 2009). Each semistructured interviews question required a response from every participant and each survey question required a response for submission. Any nonresponsive semistructured interview participant responses were detailed in the descriptive analysis. For the survey data analysis, a Microsoft Excel program was used to analyze and examine the alignment between the student’s perspective and the program’s effectiveness. Due to the five independent variables and dependent variable with six respondents, a manual statistical analysis was chosen. This method assisted in relating
the variables so inferences could be drawn from the sample population (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

**Summary**

This chapter outlined the rationale for the research design. It provided a detailed description of the mixed methods use of data collection procedures and analysis of semi-structured interviews, survey, and document analysis. The alignment to the research questions and variables to the execution of the use of the instruments to answer the research questions were provided. Using a mixed methods approach includes qualitative and quantitative data protocols, validity, reliability, and human subject protective research measures as mentioned in this chapter.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program to meet the market needs from the student’s perspective. The alignment between the graduate student’s perspective of the program’s perceived needs of enrolled students, standards/guidelines, and their field placement expectations were analyzed using surveys, interviews, and document analysis. A mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative data was gathered for data reliability, validity, and triangulation (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data identified emergent themes from a variety of sources resulting in further analysis and conclusions provided in the researcher’s interpretation of the results.

Data Collection

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program from the student’s perspective to meet the needs of the market using a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was designed to document the student’s perceptive quantitatively. Administered to enrolled school counseling internship I/II graduate students, the survey questions examined the student’s perspective to meet the expectations of the preparation program, associated agencies, and dynamics of the
changing school counselor’s role based their experience. More specifically, national expectations, state expectations, local expectations, program expectations, and the preparation of addressing the changing school counselor’s role in the areas of technology, academic success interventions, mental health issues and individual/group counseling sessions were examined. Quantitatively, this study evaluated the student’s degree of satisfaction with the program’s effectiveness to prepare them in specific areas. The same six survey participants completed a semi-structured interview to allow the researcher detailed narratives regarding the “how” and “why” of their responses (Creswell, 2013).

The semistructured interviews were held at the convenience of the participant with seven predetermined open-ended questions allowing the research to ask clarification questions to obtain a deeper understanding of the responses for the research purposes. The research protocol included an IRB approval letter (Appendix B), letter of consent (Appendix C), and transcription of the interviews (Appendix D). With consent from the participants, the researcher recorded each interview and later transcribed them for analysis. Each research question was assigned to a specific variable and manually analyzed with any document references. Emergent themes were identified based on the responses of the interviews, questionnaire, and referenced external documents. Internal documents were also collected from the researched institution’s Department of Counseling Education as referenced by interviewees in their responses.

Coding

The following steps were used to manually code the respondent’s questionnaire using basic analysis techniques. Initially, the numerical values were placed on category
data rated as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The number labels formed a rational sequence based on the numerical meaning (e.g., scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for strongly agree to strongly disagree). The second step included identifying the response to the reverse question and reversing the numerical value to reflect the accurate meaning. Step three included calculating each question’s numerical value as an average to create a baseline of the scores to identify variances in the analysis. Lastly, each respondent’s questionnaire was averaged to aid in the comparison of the results and identifies the actionable trends and relationships between the qualitative and quantitative data.

**Description of Demographic Data**

Based on the six participants, 100% were African-American females with field experiences in the state of Georgia. The average age of five of the six participants (one declined to answer) was 29 years, ranging from 25 to 35 years of age. Each respondent was also completing their field experience in different schools with different supervisors in different districts. Five urban school districts/systems within one Georgia region were reported by the six respondents: Atlanta, Gwinnett, Fulton, DeKalb, and Cobb. According to the Georgia Department of Education (Georgia Office of Student Accountability [GOSA], 2017), each district represents a distinctly different population as referenced in Appendix E. The 2017 demographic differences in the population, largest ethnicity/race group of the student population and the number of schools in the system using the 2016 academic ratings from the College and Career Readiness
Performance Indicator (CCRPI) and the School Climate averages are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*School District Demographic Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Student Count</th>
<th>Top 2 Ethnicity/Race Group of the Student Population</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>CCRPI Average</th>
<th>Climate Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta Public Schools</td>
<td>51,296</td>
<td>Black/White</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>63.267</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwinnett School System</td>
<td>178,109</td>
<td>Black/White</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>81.294</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton County Schools</td>
<td>95,744</td>
<td>Black/White</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>73.665</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb County School District</td>
<td>101,086</td>
<td>Black/Hispanic</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>55.596</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb County School System</td>
<td>112,831</td>
<td>White/Black</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>78.096</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Georgia Department of Education describes the CCRPI and School Climate as follows:

The CCRPI includes four main components: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points. These components, encompassing multiple indicators, are combined for a total CCRPI score on a scale of 0 to 100, with a possibility of 10 additional points. The CCRPI also reports other information, such as the performance of student subgroups, school climate, and financial efficiency status. (http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Pages/default.aspx, 2017)
The school districts range in student count from 51,296 to 178,109 and majority student racial populations from black and white students to black and Hispanic, or white and black. There are also variances in the number of schools which are not related to highest number of students in the district. Gwinnett School System has the most students however; DeKalb County School District has more schools. Gwinnett County School System also has a higher CCRPI school average (81.294) than DeKalb County School District which has the lowest CCRPI school average of the respondent’s field experience locations. The school climate average is also aligned with the CCRPI. The CCRPI averages that are below 70 also received a lower school climate average than the systems with a CCRPI above 70. These differences between the school systems and the variances in the respondent’s field locations within these school districts strengthen the diversity of their experiences and responses from their perspectives of the preparation program’s effectiveness for this research study.

**Data Analysis of Research Instruments**

**Survey Questionnaire**

Due to scheduling conflicts, interviewees completed the survey questionnaire via email from their own personal electronic devices after their individual qualitative interview. The quantitative data combined with the qualitative interview uses the concurrent mixed-methods research approach (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). A survey questionnaire using a Likert-scale was emailed to the participants by this researcher with a response expiration of 24 hours. The questions were focused on the student’s perspective of the CACREP accredited program’s ability to prepare students for the needs
of their current market. The student’s responses addressed their agreement to statements based on the creation of learning experiences, program service setting, connection to real world expectations, alignment with the program’s mission, and school counseling services/responsibilities/expectations to evaluate their perspective of the school counseling’s preparation program. The survey consisted of four questions related to the participants’ demographics and 12 questions related to the research variables. Statistical data results were manually calculated and classified to give meaning to the survey items in the analysis.

**Survey Analysis**

The researcher analyzed the collected survey results to identify the indicators on each question for each response to discover any variance or correlations between their perspectives of the program. Individually, these factors were compared to the qualitative semistructured interview data and document analysis to cross reference the findings. A summary of each respondent’s questionnaire provided a snapshot of their individual perspective which was next compared among all of the respondents for comparison. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was created to provide a comparison of the results and calculate the average responses of the participants. Demographic data were also collected to distinguish the characteristics of the respondents in heterogeneous and homogenous factors.

In the quantitative analysis, the participants’ responses were as follows for each question:
1. The school counseling faculty creates learning experiences that do/will apply to my career in school counseling. The average score for this question was 4.6 with four students strongly agreeing that their faculty members create learning experiences that are applicable to the school counseling field.

2. The school counseling program is adequately preparing me to serve in a school counseling setting. The average score for this question was 4.5 with half of the six students reporting strongly agree and the other half agreeing that their preparation program is preparing them for to work in a school counseling setting.

3. The school counseling program is adequately preparing me to serve in a community counseling setting. The average score for this question was 3.8 is below “agree,” but above the “neutral” answer. Considering the preparation program’s option to include community counseling as a major, it was worth noting if the student’s perspective was just as prepared for their non-major area as their major school counseling area. Based on the findings, it appears that there is some preparation but it does not compare to the .7 difference in the preparation of school counseling setting (see question 2).

4. The school counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling local school district expectations. The average score for this question was 4.3 which is more than agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing the expectations of the local school district.
5. The school counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling state expectations. The average score for this question was 4.6 which is less than a strongly agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing the expectations of the state of Georgia.

6. The school counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling national expectations. The average score for this question was 4.5 which is midway between “strongly agree” and “agree” of the program’s curriculum addressing the expectations of the national programs.

7. The school counseling program is disconnected from the real world expectations. The average score for this question was 2.3 which is more than a disagreement with the program’s curriculum addressing the expectations of the real world. This average may also be due one respondent’s scoring of all 5’s or strongly agree to every question. This negatively worded question resulted in a change in the results for many positive answers stating effectiveness in the preparation program’s specific areas however there were not as strong scores in the feelings of the real world expectations connection or disconnection.

8. The school counseling program promotes a collaborative learning environment, allowing me to share ideas and learn together with other students. The average score for this question was 4.8 which is close to a strong agreement of the program’s curriculum promoting a collaborative learning environment.
9. The school counseling program prepared me to assess and/or service students with mental health issues. The average score for this question was 3.5 which is more than neutral but less than agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing mental health issues as a school counselor.

10. The school counseling program prepared me to provide academic supports including all of the following: social support, mentoring, personal and social skill development, parental involvement, and instructional interventions. The average score for this question was 4.1 which was slightly more than agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing the academic roles of school counselors.

11. The school counseling program prepared me to provide technology assistance for academic, social, and emotional services that may assist students with issues ranging from cyberbullying to alternative communication skills. The average score for this question was 4.0 which is in agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing the expectations of using technology as a school counselor.

12. The school counseling program prepared me to advocate and service students with individual and group counseling needs in the school. The average score for this question was 4.6 which is more than agreement of the program’s curriculum addressing the individual and group counseling services.

It is also worth noting that each individual respondent’s average scores (after reversing the negative score in question 7) were 4.58, 3.42, 4.67, 3.75, 4.5, and 4.75 (see Table 10).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Quantitative Analysis by Respondent</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Strongly agreed with the level of preparation for all, except neutral with mentalhealth &amp; academic support. Agreeance with technology assistance service preparation was the only remaining variation in the response.</td>
<td>4.58 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Two strongly agree responses addressing the level of preparation for national school counseling expectations and collaborative learning environments. One strongly disagree response regarding addressing the technology assistance preparation. Two disagree responses for the preparation connected to the community college and mental health issues. The question regarding the disconnecton from the real world was rated neutral with an additional neutral rating in the academic supports preparation question. Five agree responses for the remaining questions indicate this respondent selected at least one of each rating on the survey. This is the only respondent with a varying range of responses.</td>
<td>3.42 Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> Strongly agreed with the level of preparation for all school counseling matters except for the disconnection from the real world expectations.</td>
<td>4.67 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> Most answers were agreed, no strongly agreed, one neutral addressing the community counseling setting and one disagreement of the preparation for the mental health issue preparation.</td>
<td>3.75 Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong> Strongly agreed with half of the statements with agreeance to the level of feeling adequately prepared to serve in a school counseling program, opportunities to address local school expectations, and to assess mental health issues. The only neutral response addressed the opportunities to gain experience addressing national school counseling expectations.</td>
<td>4.5 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Quantitative Analysis by Respondent</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agreed with most including a disconnection with real world expectations, except for community counseling settings is neutral and only agreed to the level of preparation for meeting the local school districts expectations.</td>
<td>4.75 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high averages of agreeing to the program’s preparation to meet the market needs were agreed upon by a majority of the participants based on their responses. Therefore, the quantitative data analysis indicates that all of the participants believed the school counseling preparation program was effective.

**Qualitative Data**

**Semistructured Interviews**

The semistructured interviews were conducted with the same six participants from the quantitative data. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed several times by the researcher to understand the emerging themes from the respondent’s interviews. Initial coding consisted of examining the general responses to the seven questions. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the transcribed text, followed by a mail merge function into Microsoft Word for managing the data management and coding procedures of LaPelle (2004) to quantify the frequency of code instances and explore relationships. Columns and rows were created to identify and organize themes of each question followed by and examination of the patterns and themes. The next step included
categorizing the themes into codes and sorting/reorganizing the data to analyze the comparison data. Lastly, data validation of the emerging themes occurred with the quantitative and document analysis data to triangulate the results.

**Coding**

Each participant’s response was examined for similarities in words or phrases and coded into a related theme. The coded theme was compared to determine similarities and differences that may align with other themes related to research variables. The first analysis of the responses identified key words and phrases generating a list from each participant’s response. A second review of the transcribed interviews was completed by the researcher for an additional analysis of comparing and contrasting respondent’s answers between each other. Bazeley (2007) maximizes the process of coding by contrasting the second document with the first one to discover any additional themes aligned with the research questions. A third coding review of the transcripts is conducted to acknowledge any additional themes then organized into a chart by reoccurring themes. The tables after each transcribed response display the themes from the participant’s responses.

The findings for the semistructured interviews and document analysis were consistent with the quantitative findings. The respondents’ answers were unique but lead to the same general conclusion indicated by the summary tables in Appendix D. Due to the differences in the responses, a general summary of the student’s perspective indicates that three of the six respondents were influenced by the school’s history to enroll in the CACREP-accredited program and now feel prepared to achieve their goals after
graduation because the program is effective in aligning the national and state guidelines to address the changing roles of school counselors. Respondents would provide a positive message to others about the program while encouraging the program to increase their focus on test preparation.

Document Review

During the qualitative semi-structured interviews, participants referenced documents and organizations in their responses. For the purposes of triangulating the research and to develop a deeper understanding of the responses, a document review of the program preparation expectations was conducted for the list of documents outlined in Table 11.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Documents</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CACREP standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GACE guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCA guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Mission Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

External agency/organization documents and an internal mission statement were gathered based on publicly available documents. The external documents included standards and guidelines used by national counseling accrediting bodies that impact
school counselor’s preparation programs. These documents were beneficial to detailing the comparative purposes of the participant’s responses in relationship to the expectations of the variables and market needs. School counseling preparation program and practitioner services best practices are referenced in these documents that align with the definitions of the research variables. Analyses of the guiding statements of the documents compared to the respondent’s reference of the institution’s preparation program are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

Document Reference Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Documents</th>
<th>Respondent’s References</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CACREP standards</td>
<td>Effective program curriculum alignment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GACE guidelines</td>
<td>Test preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCA guidelines</td>
<td>Effective program curriculum alignment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA standards</td>
<td>Effective program curriculum alignment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE guidelines</td>
<td>Test preparation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Mission Statement</td>
<td>Effective program curriculum alignment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The document analysis of CACREP standards, GACE guidelines, ASCA guidelines, ACA standards, NCE guidelines, and the Program’s Mission Statement provided the details of the connection to the research questions, variables, and respondent’s expectation/needs.
Comparative Analysis

Data collected from the quantitative and qualitative sources (questionnaire, interview transcripts, and document review analysis) were combined for analysis, comparisons, and synthesizing the results to establish research based findings and conclusions. The data analysis approach maintained consistency related to the research questions, survey results, and document analysis. All findings presented compare the three sources of information noting similarities, differences, and discrepancies among the respondent’s responses.

Research Questions Findings

The diversity among the school district/systems reported indicated a strong representation of various perceptions in this study. The Atlanta Public Schools analysis included two respondents within 12 months of an age difference with the second and third highest overall averages. DeKalb and Cobb County respondents have the lowest average scores while Fulton has the highest average and Gwinnett is fourth. With each school system in Georgia selecting their school counselor evaluation method, the strength of the varying respondents’ survey answers and interview responses result in a representation of the national, state, and local current urban market needs impacting the researched preparation program.

Although the quantitative and qualitative questions addressed national, state, and local standards/guidelines, most respondents’ omitted the local expectations and focused on national and state guidelines. The responses indicated that the curriculum was perceived effective because of the alignment with the national and state standards.
However, the needs of the local market were not clearly addressed by the respondents’ as the changing roles are more visible in the expectations at the field experience level than in the curriculum. The market needs met by the program from the student’s perspective were their personal needs with national and state expectations, with exception to the noted National Counseling Exam which is not school counseling specific.

The results on the research questions further expanded on the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

RQ1: What is the relationship between a school counseling student’s expectations and the market needs of the school counseling field?

The school counseling participants in this research study addressed an expectation to meet the market needs of schools based on national and state standards. The local field experience was embedded into the program’s graduation requirements based on the national accreditation which was expected to fulfill the current market needs.

RQ2: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the local school district’s expectations?

The effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program was based on more than the local school district’s expectations from the student’s perception. The research institution’s handbook defines local expectations as conducting counseling services, consultation, coordination, career development services, planning and development, individual assessment and inventory, research and evaluation, placement and follow-up, and referral tasks. The research data found more relationships with national and state
standards, examinations, and descriptions of effectiveness connected to them, with two examples of local expectation effectiveness provided.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the national expectations?

The student’s perception of the national expectations is closely related to the student’s perception of effectiveness in a school counseling preparation program. The emphasis on the preparation program’s accreditation and compliance with program changes indicate national standards align with the student’s definition of effectiveness.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) expectations?

The student’s perception of the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) expectations is closely related to the student’s perception of effectiveness in a school counseling preparation program. The reference to state expectations was rated effective by every participant in the quantitative and/or qualitative data.

RQ5: What is the relationship between the student’s perceptions of the school counseling program’s field experience to the CACREP approved curriculum in the school counseling preparation program?
The school counseling student participants’ perceptions of the curriculum required and executed in a CACREP approved program received a high rating in the quantitative and qualitative responses. The interview answers that addressed the national standards specifically referenced CACREP among other organizations. Upon reviewing the CACREP standards and curriculum requirements in the document analysis, alignment was noted in the respondents use and reference of the curriculum framework, policies, and expectations.

Summary

This chapter used the collected quantitative and qualitative data from a survey questionnaire (quantitative), semistructured interview and document reviews (qualitative) to examine the alignment of recurring themes to answer the research questions. The process of the examination focused on analyzing the data and finding relevant facts through coding techniques and calculations to compare and contrast relationships based on the data. The survey data used Microsoft Excel to create numerical results, and the interview data were merged into Microsoft Word for developing and grouping concepts. A third data source included a document review matrix of the best practices referenced by the respondent’s to analyze the guidelines, standards, and expectations of the institution. The analysis, comparison, and synthesizing of the three data sources used a process to generate findings and conclusions for the research questions in this program evaluation.
CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to evaluate a CACREP-accredited school counseling program’s effectiveness to meet the market needs from its student perspective. This study evaluated the alignment between the perspectives of students enrolled in their field experience’s perspective of their level of preparation to meet the expectations of the school counseling market. Quantitatively, this study investigated the perspective of the student’s level of preparation for variables addressing selected market needs. Qualitatively, this study examined how well the student’s felt prepared, in what areas, and why they felt or did not feel it was connected to the effectiveness of the school counseling preparation program. Two qualitative data sources were used to examine these answers: semistructured interviews and document reviews from the same quantitative respondents. The following research questions pertaining to each independent variable were explored in the study:

RQ1: What is the relationship between a school counseling student’s expectations and the market needs of the school counseling field?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the local school district’s expectations?
RQ3: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the national expectations?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) expectations?

RQ5: What is the relationship between the student’s perceptions of the school counseling program’s field experience to the CACREP approved curriculum in the school counseling preparation program?

The research study conclusions were based on combining and comparing experiences from each respondent and the external and internal agency/organization guiding statements referenced by the respondents.

This study found that the student’s perspective of the school counseling preparation program met the market needs of the state and national guidelines/standards. However, the changing roles research suggests that the level of preparation for local expectations may need to be considered by the institution to further meet the market needs of the student during the field experience and the field experience site. The semistructured interviews and document review analysis aligned with the results of the quantitative data analysis to answer the research questions.

RQ1: What is the relationship between a school counseling student’s expectations and the market needs of the school counseling field?
It cannot be determined if there is a relationship between a school counseling student’s expectations and the market needs of the school counseling field based on the student’s perception of the market needs. The current market needs of a CACREP-accredited program suggest there is alignment with the students’ expectations of an effective program. The CACREP and ASCA national expectations referenced by the respondents are determined effective without consideration of the local market needs in their field experiences. Respondent C addressed question 4 with the following response:

Because everything in our program we do is in line with ASCA, every course that we take is based on the national guidelines that everybody follows and in line with that. I think (institution’s name) try their best to do the national and the state guidelines and keep us in line with that. (Personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Based on this response, it cannot be determined that a relationship is present.

RQ2: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the local school district’s expectations?

No, there is no relationship between the student’s perception of the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program and the local school district’s expectations. When asked about their preparation to meet the local, state, and national expectations, Respondent F stated, “I know that local or state, Georgia education standards are unique and our program is definitely making sure they are compliant with them. Students can definitely see that one. As far as state, I would say that is more so visible for us” (personal communication, February 10, 2017). However, all respondents stated the
program preparation was effective with an average survey scale score of 4.6 which is nearest to the strongly agree score of 5.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the national expectations?

Yes, there is a relationship between the student’s perception of the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program and national expectations. Five out of six respondents referenced the national standards as the standard of an effective program. Respondent F stated, “Again the program is very intentional about staying up to date and keeping abreast on all of the standards and being compliant with CACREP the accrediting body that they are under” (personal communication, February 10, 2017). Additionally, the average survey response was between strongly agree and agree that the program prepared them to meet the national expectations. The NCE and ASCA guidelines confirmed the reference program alignment requirements.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the student’s perception of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) expectations?

Yes, there is a relationship between the student’s perception of the effectiveness of a school counseling preparation program and the student’s perception of Georgia educator’s expectations. Respondent’s referenced the GACE requirement and Respondent E stated, “As far as I know, many of the school counselors in Georgia follow the ASCA national model” (personal communication, February 10, 2017). In the survey,
an average score of 4.6 indicated respondents agreed with the statement of feeling prepared to meet the state’s expectations which are also documented in the GACE analysis. This statement indicates that an expectation to meet the local market needs of the state is also connected to the national standards and guidelines.

RQ5: What is the relationship between the student’s perceptions of the school counseling program’s field experience to the CACREP approved curriculum in the school counseling preparation program?

Yes, there is a relationship between the student’s perceptions of the school counseling program’s field experience to the CACREP approved curriculum in the school counseling preparation program. Respondent A indicated that the preparation from the program has prepared her for the field experience and the field experience is adding to her curriculum based on the CACREP field experience requirement: “Currently, my internship is giving me a great deal of knowledge and I feel like it can take me anywhere and work at that school if they have a position at my internship or another one as a school counselor” (personal communication, February 7, 2017). Five of the six respondents also strongly agreed (average 4.8) that the preparation program was effective in executing their mission which is to promote a more just and humane society through counseling and faculty that prepare candidates who are knowledgeable, critical thinkers, and ethical change agents.

Respondents noted effectiveness in their responses to 80% of the questionnaire items. However, the semistructured interviews noted differences in their responses while also noting omissions to answering portions of the questions. These omissions have also
been noted as possible areas of improvement for the program since effective areas were mentioned throughout the interviews.

Of the six respondents, CACREP standards, GACE guidelines, ASCA guidelines, ACA standards, NCE guidelines, and the institution’s program mission statement were reviewed based on their references in their interview responses. The guidelines, standards, and statements aligned with the student’s references based on the context of their statements (see Table 13). Each document further detailed the respondent’s perspective of the effectiveness of the school counseling preparation program.

Table 13

*Alignment of Needs to the Documents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Documents</th>
<th>Respondent’s need</th>
<th>Program met student’s expectation (based on number of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CACREP standards</td>
<td>Effectively aligned with the program’s curriculum</td>
<td>Yes (3/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GACE guidelines</td>
<td>Effectively aligned with the program’s curriculum for test preparation</td>
<td>Yes (2/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCA guidelines</td>
<td>Effectively aligned with the program’s curriculum</td>
<td>Yes (2/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA standards</td>
<td>Effectively aligned with the program’s curriculum</td>
<td>Yes (1/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE guidelines</td>
<td>Ineffectively aligned with the program’s curriculum for test preparation</td>
<td>No (1/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Mission Statement</td>
<td>Effectively aligned with the program’s curriculum</td>
<td>Yes (5/6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The qualitative data findings suggest that half of the students were influenced by the school’s history and not the mission of the program. However, respondents feel prepared to address the current and changing roles of school counselors which correlate to the effective program curriculum perceptive even though they are unsure of the program’s mission. Most responses acknowledged the program curriculum is aligned to national and state standards, yet the omission of addressing local guidelines may be based on the program’s emphasis on general, broad curriculum CACREP standards that accredit the program. It is also worth noting that the student’s positive perspective of the program’s effectiveness translates to a positive influence in program recruitment. Lastly, respondent’s mentioned the workload, welcoming feeling, test preparation concerns, and the strong professional identities as additional comments about the school counseling preparation program.

**Conclusions**

This study found that the school counseling preparation program at this institution is effective from the student’s perspective. The Council for Accreditation of Counselor Related Education Programs (CACREP) has accredited the institution and students have reinforced the program’s accreditation in their research responses. Research showed that school counselor’s roles are changing and the current market needs of preparation programs are essential to addressing these role changes. At this institution, the field experience was embedded in the curriculum and aligned with national and state expectations. School counseling student participants enrolled in internship courses (I/II) responded to the research study with various perspectives and expectations of the
preparation program. Despite the range of field experiences, the emphasis of national and state alignment to the curriculum was emphasized over the local market needs, as evidenced by the survey and interview responses.

**Emerging Themes**

Students that are prepared to meet the demands of a changing market will be more confident and successful school counselors in their changing roles. The preparation program that emphasizes a broad, general program may continue to meet the needs of the state and national standards, but may lose the connection to “real world application” in the local field experiences. A “ripple-effect” can occur from ignoring the impact of the local field experience resulting in the loss of relationships with local school district/field sites (memorandum of understanding), loss of alumni support to encourage new students (recruitment), a poor reputation of the quality of student preparation to effectively provide school counseling services and/or withdrawing from the program (retention) among other potential outcomes.

**Implications**

With a program evaluation, the process of reflecting on the effectiveness of the program is a continuous cycle. All stakeholders were usually considered in this process but oftentimes the student data was only collected at the end of a class or program. This research included a mid-program evaluation from the student’s perception of what the strengths and weaknesses of the market needs are from their perspective. The program’s emphasis on national and state guidelines is applicable to the accreditation process and heavily reiterated in the curriculum. However, local influence of the market needs was
expressed by one respondent that the program change allowing the student’s to participate in the field experience before completing their course work may not work in the student or program’s favor. There are clear implications that the reputation and history of the impact of this potential change may impact the future effective of the local market and student’s perspective of their preparation. Educational leaders will want to continue reflecting on these changes among others in the market needs of the national, state, and local expectations without omitting the personal needs of students.

**Limitations**

- Scheduling times to interview students was a challenge due to conflicting schedules.
- Participant participation was low due to the scheduling.
- Communication between the institutions staff to conduct the research was unclear resulting in scheduling challenges.
- This study could be conducted on a larger scale by interviewing a larger population in other institutions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the research study findings, the following recommendations should be considered by various educational leaders:

1. CACREP-accredited programs could benefit from the following recommendations by creating a student mid-program evaluation in their cycle of program improvement or program evaluation process. This information could assist leaders in comparing best practices that may have evolved due to
national, state or local program mandates, in addition to the value of receiving the student perspective. An analysis of this information could provide evidence of the program’s effectiveness and need to make immediate or future changes from the student’s experience.

2. School counseling preparation programs could incorporate the local p-12 institution in the mid-program evaluation by surveying the needs of the field experience location and matching students according to the responses of the survey. An Intern Supervisor may not use the researched practices to address cyberbullying because of their lack of skills, but a mid-program survey to students might suggest that exposure to this area could be beneficial to provide them a exposure to this type of experience in a school. This type of matching may create an emphasis on the local needs and changing roles of counselors with a more strategic field experience placement process to meet the local needs of interns, schools, and programs.

3. It should also be considered to only allow field experiences in schools that have achieved the American School Counseling Associations (ASCA) Recognized Model Program (RAMP). These schools have been identified to match the national guidelines for school counseling which are aligned to the national and state standards.

4. A policy change that aligns ASCA and CACREP mandates in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) would benefit the school counseling preparation program with curriculum alignment and internship students for
field experiences that have been recognized to offer research-based school counseling practices.

**Future Research Recommendations**

The following are future research recommendations:

- Focus on more mid-program evaluations from various stakeholders.
- Focus on mid-program evaluations of different programs.
- Conduct research with the same respondents post-graduation.
- Compare the experiences of programs.
- Explore the data in a retrospection phase.

**Summary**

This chapter examined the research question findings and conclusions related to the independent variables and research questions to evaluate a school counseling preparation program’s effectiveness to meet the market needs from the student’s perspective. Quantitative and qualitative findings from surveys, semistructured interviews, and document reviews suggest emergent themes about the alignment with the needs of national, state, local, institutional, and personal expectations. Quantitatively and qualitatively, this study examined the school counseling preparation program’s effectiveness from the student’s perspective aligned with the market needs and expectations of national, state, local and personal entities. Conclusions were based upon comparing and combining the responses of the participants and considering their references of agencies/organizations in validating the responses. Implications,
limitations, and recommendations for program improvements and further studies concluded this chapter.
APPENDIX A
Semistructured Interviews Questions

Question 1: What or whom influenced you to attend this institution’s school counseling program?

Question 2: How do you feel about your level of preparation to achieve your goals after graduating from the program?

Question 3: In what ways do you believe the program is effective or ineffective in executing the program’s mission?

Question 4: In what ways do you feel that local, state, or national standards or guidelines have influenced the program?

Question 5: What would you tell anyone considering enrolling into this program?

Question 6: Research suggests that school counselor’s roles are changing to include four specific areas – technology use counseling for assistive use and/or cyberbullying, individual/group counseling sessions during the school day, academic interventions, and assessing mental health issues. How well do you feel prepared to be effective as a school counselor with these changing roles?

Question 7: Are there any other comments that you would like included in this study about the student’s perspective of the school counseling program’s effectiveness?
Ms. Joi Chester <Joi.Chester@students.cau.edu>
School of Education
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University
Atlanta, GA 30314

RE: Meeting the Market needs of a School Counseling Program.

Principal Investigator(s): Joi Chester
Human Subjects Code Number: HR2017-1-699-1

Dear Ms. Chester:

The Human Subjects Committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your protocol and approved of it as exempt in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Your Protocol Approval Code is reset to HR2017-1-699-1/A Type of Review: Expedited.

This permit will expire on January 27, 2018. Thereafter, continued approval is contingent upon the annual submission of a renewal form to this office.

The CAU IRB acknowledges your timely completion of the CITI IRB Training in Protection of Human Subjects — "Social and Behavioral Sciences Track."

Your CITI certification expires on January 11, 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office or Dr. Paul I. Musey, (404) 880-6829.

Sincerely:

Paul I. Musey, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Human Subjects Committee
APPENDIX C

Letter of Consent

Title of Study: Meeting the Market Needs of a School Counseling Program

You are invited to participate in a mid-program school counseling program evaluation research study focused on the student’s perspective. You were selected as a possible participant because of your enrollment in the School Counseling Internship (I/II) course in spring 2017. I ask that you read this letter and ask any questions before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Joi Chester (doctoral candidate at Clark Atlanta University)

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to address the effectiveness of an urban institution’s school counseling graduate program’s effective in meeting its market needs while identifying strengths and weaknesses from the student’s perspective.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study
There is not any known risk to proposed participants or subjects in this research. The benefits to participation include offering recommendations for the improvements of the school counseling program.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. Your willingness to participate through completing a survey instrument, participation in the semi-structured interviews and submission of related artifacts that may derive from the semi-structured interviews will remain strictly confidential. Selected statements and/or findings from your participation may appear in research publications; however, it will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records (including recordings) will be kept in a secured file and only the researcher (Joi Chester) and dissertation chair (Dr. Barbara Hill) will have access to the records. The data will be erased and destroyed within three years after completion of study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher, or Clark Atlanta University. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. At any time during this study, you have the right
to withdraw from the study without affecting the relationship previously identified. You may withdraw from the study by contacting the researcher and your data will be kept in secure as identified in the previous section.

**Contacts and Questions**
The researcher conducting this study is Joi Chester. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the researcher at: cauplcresearch@gmail.com or Dr. Barbara Hill at (404) 880-6126 or bhill@cau.edu. If you have any questions now, or later, related to the integrity of the research, (the rights of research subjects or research-related injuries, where applicable), you are encouraged to contact Dr. Georgianna Bolden at the Office of Sponsored Programs (404) 880-6979 or Dr. Paul I. Musey, (404) 880-6829 at Clark Atlanta University.
APPENDIX D

Transcription of the Interviews

Qualitative Responses: Question 1

Question 1: What or whom influenced you to attend this institution’s school counseling program?

Respondent A: I first heard about the program from a friend of mine at first who was actually going to (school name) for her doctorate in Social Work. I started researching and found out they have a school counseling program and decided to pursue a degree in school counseling.

Respondent B: Ahh actually, I influenced myself to join the program. I have worked in the mental health field for about eight or nine years and so many of the referrals were coming in from umm the school system. And you know, just seeing things on the back end, I was always curious as to what was going on, you know, on the front end. Why was so many referrals coming in, you know, like from the schools. And why can’t it be handled up front by the schools versus having to have them all referred out. So I was just kind of curious to see, you know, exactly what’s going on.

Respondent C: What influenced me to attend this institution is that it was an HBCU next to my old institution where I went to undergrad. I knew I didn't want to go far.

Respondent D: I went to college across the street from (*) and I took some classes there. And I looked at their programs. I researched some schools in Metro Atlanta and some other places and went to Open Houses. I felt like they would give me the best experience and also felt the most comfortable at (*) . The charisma and ability to build more relationships there.

Respondent E: Well I always wanted to attend an HBCU because I wasn't able to do that. I was also encouraged go to (*) during undergrad for a masters because I could make more money with a masters degree and pay off loans since
it's a private school and I'm from (*) and that's where I wanted to go. It was my first choice.

*Respondent F:* Uh what influenced me what the fact that I knew I was going to major in education, and prior to enrolling I was a Graduation Coach and worked very closely with school counselors and I figured that it was the closest in line with my experience as well as my interest. And as far as attending (*), I always wanted to attend an HBCU institution and it kind of all worked out.

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<th>Qualitative Responses Analysis – Question 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: What or whom influenced you to attend this institution’s school counseling program?</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Qualitative responses: Question 2**

**Question 2:** How do you feel about your level of preparation to achieve your goals after graduating from the program?

**Respondent A:** I feel like I'm very highly prepared because of the preparation at (*). The one thing is it's not only classroom instructions, but we also receive instruction that is applicable about our various career choices and the opportunities to attend various profession development workshops that allow us to extend our professional school counseling careers.

**Respondent B:** Umm, I feel like it’s more that I could have learned to prepare because doing, you know, since I have been out interning, it’s a lot of stuff that I have not been exposed to in the classroom and it’s a lot of stuff that I learned in the classroom that’s not relevant in the school. So, uh, I feel like the program and the district might need to be on the same page as far as what we are learning, so that once we are actually out there and working in the schools that we have already learned everything we need to learn.

**Respondent C:** I feel like I'm prepared to achieve because the teachers explain enough so that you can understand. They are willing to stay after to help and they just make the journey a little bit easier.

**Respondent D:** I feel very confident and will be well prepared to achieve my goals in school counseling after graduation.

**Respondent E:** I feel prepared to achieve to my goals, I say that but I feel that (*) has prepared me but I then also because feel like, I've been teaching for 7 years, so I've been able to work with school counselors at the schools I taught at, and I've been able to see a lot before I started the program. So I feel like even though I need on-the-job experience as far as my own experience as a school counselor, I know enough right now to start me off. Or at least, feel comfortable enough to get a job in a school counselor position.

**Respondent F:** Yeah, I feel pretty prepared to be a school counselor and to prepare and ahh apply and all, to do well and be knowledgeable as a school counselor as much as I can be as a school counselor.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Question 2:</strong> How do you feel about your level of preparation to achieve your goals after graduating from the program?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Well Prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Feel Prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Feel Well Prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Feel Prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Feel Prepared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Responses: Question 3

Question 3: In what ways do you believe the program is effective or ineffective in executing the program’s mission?

Respondent A: I believe the program is effective in executing it's mission. I believe the program's mission is to make sure we are appropriately trained or in some cases, we are trained above and beyond other individuals. I had an opportunity to work with a counselor that earned her masters degree from (PWI) and right now at (*) we are taking a school consultation program and she said she didn't have an opportunity to take a program like that so in some cases i think that some of the courses we take, I know some are similar and some are different than the courses that are taken at other universities so I feel that we are adequately prepared.

Respondent B: I think it’s effective, umm, due to that fact that it does teach you a lot of things like the theories, and I know the group counseling class was very helpful, you know, for like when I entered into my internship. So I think, ummm, as far as their mission it is effective. I just think that once you get out in the districts some of their policies are a little different. I hope I answered that correctly.

Respondent C: I feel like it's effective because they put what you are doing into real practice. Everything taught in class is used in the practicum and internships so I believe it's effective.

Respondent D: I think the program is very effective, it connects to students. Many of the classes are experiential and connect to different learning styles and caters to different students in the classroom.

Respondent E: hm….I don't feel like it's ineffective; I haven't noticed anything ineffective. I feel like its effective mainly because of the CACREP accreditation and courses we are required to take and those classes that do benefit in becoming a school counselor and how schools work as well as student development. I know in the program we are encouraged to do a lot of outside preparation or other professional development on our own in regards to school counseling that are sometimes provided by ASCA or other school counseling organizations.

Respondent F: Well as far as the program's mission, I can’t speak directly on that because I can't recall all of what it is. However, generally and broadly I
can speak on the program, and overall I'm pretty satisfied with my experience, my professors, my cohort, the department chair, with all of the aforementioned with a pretty close relationship. What can be improved or is ineffective...With each cohort, there have been changes, figure out what works best for the school, coursework, where you are actually coming to class versus the field experience. We didn't enter the field until our second year. The cohort two years behind us are entering their second semester within their first year. And I think that comes with challenges on behalf of the student because as an intern, you are expected to know certain things, and pretty much have taken most of the coursework as a school counselor and how that works in a school system and your role as a school counselor. And even in my past internship experience, there were classes that I had not taken, but my internship supervisor expected me to know certain things that I did not know. What they could improve on is figuring out the flow of things to make it better for the students in the program.

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Qualitative Responses: Question 4

Question 4: In what ways do you feel that local, state, or national standards or guidelines have influenced the program?

Respondent A: I feel as if the national guidelines have prepared us because we are preparing for the national counselors certification exam (NCE) so we can be nationally accredited, I mean licensed as well and receive as nationally certification. As far as the state, it is a CACREP accredited program and one must attend a CACREP accredited program in the state of Georgia and they meet the guidelines for the state of Georgia. Currently, my internship is giving me a great deal of knowledge and I feel like it can take me anywhere and work at that school if they have a position at my internship or another one as a school counselor. We are required to take both GACE parts unless he have scored high enough scores on our SAT/ACT or GRE to not have to take the program admission. I am very well prepared to meet the demands of a school counselor. The information we are learning is indeed on the GACE but since I'm preparing for comps and NCE, the study guides have prepared me which are from our classes.

Respondent B: I think it has a lot to do with influencing the program because the information is based on ASCA and ACA requirements and guidelines, so ummm, I think it aligned with, you know, state regulations.

Respondent C: Because everything in our program we do is in line with ASCA every course that we take is based on the national guidelines that everybody follow and in line with that. I think (*) try they best to do the national and the state guidelines and keep us in line with that.

Respondent D: I know that the program takes state and national guidelines very seriously and I think the program is set to specifically meet those guidelines as well as give us a more cultural and more broad approach in the program.

Respondent E: I know the program is based on the guidelines. Some of the assignments that were given focused on advocacy and I know that the ASCA national model focuses a lot on student advocacy. Also, let's see. I know the courses line up and the professors have mentioned that their may be changing standards or models to classes based on the national model.
And as far as I know, many of the school counselors in Georgia follow the ASCA national model.

Respondent F: I know that local or state, Georgia education standards are unique and our program is definitely making sure they are compliant with them. Students can definitely see that one. As far as State, I would say that is more so visible for us.

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Qualitative Responses: Question 5

Question 5: What would you tell anyone considering enrolling into this program?

Respondent A: The program is rigorous but it is coupled with compassionate instructors. The professional opportunities are numerous.

Respondent B: Umm I would tell them that towards the end of the program, it’s definitely a lot of work, interning and attending class umm all at the same time, while you may be still working full-time and/or part-time jobs. They will need to make sure that they have the time to, you know, put in the work for it. I would basically tell them that they should start studying early as far as the licensure exams. Umm what else would I say?

Respondent C: That they will enjoy it and learn at the same time. Everything I've done has been fun and I have also learned from everything I've done there as well. The people at the school, your classmates and teachers and students are very welcoming and when you feel welcomed then it makes you want to learn more.

Respondent D: I have told people is that I stand by and believe in the program. By continuing the program you will be efficient and prepared to tackle on the challenges in the profession and be successful.

Respondent E: I would tell them to mainly make sure that have good organization and good time management. I can say that for someone who's working. It can be difficult because there are a lot of courses and credits that you have to earn before you can graduate. So, there's a lot of hard work that has to be put into with going to classes, quality assignments, studying for required exams with some inside of classes and outside like the national exams or the GACE for Georgia counselors. Just be prepared for the workload. I know the professors have been understanding and some people do work so they may work with us. The professors treat, all of us are adults, so they talk to us like we are adults, they work with you and are easily approachable. I would also encourage to learn somethings on their own like with different journals that may not be written for school counselors but will have articles about some issues that school counselors deal with. For example, journals that deal with bullying or gender identity issues. There are a lot of things written for
parents but unless I'm missing it I haven't seen a lot of things written for school counselors. If there is a particular article written to help that student learn how to cope, from what I've seen, there isn't information about how the students that may be in their class know how to talk or what they should or should not do and things like that.

Respondent F: What experience do you want to have? What legacy of the institution do you want to have in this field? What experience in the field do you want? I say these questions because these are the questions that I did not ask. Simply for me, I didn't really care about the level of competitiveness in the program. To be honest, I didn't give that much thought into it and for other reasons. Enrolling into this program was not my life's dream, so it was more of a trial thing. For someone who that this is their life's dream, they know they want to be a school counselor, it's their passion, this is their life's work. I would ask those questions to see if the program can meet the needs of that student. For me, I think that I would promote the fact that it's a small department and you can have a relationship with everyone in the department and the chair.

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Qualitative Responses: Question 6

Question 6: Research suggests that school counselor’s roles are changing to include four specific areas – technology use counseling for assistive use and/or cyberbullying, individual/group counseling sessions during the school day, academic interventions, and assessing mental health issues. How well do you feel prepared to be effective as a school counselor with these changing roles?

Respondent A: I feel like the program has prepared me for the 504 plans and how to meet the needs of students with special needs, and the group counseling class with a lot of information we had to retain and remember. We also had to attend community groups and encouraged how groups are started. We also had to start and end a group. Also, we talked about 504, SSTs, IEPs, exceptional children and all types of opportunities to advocate for children. A lot of professors want us to see our primary goal as advocacy. It was amazing. If the opportunity presents itself, like in my internship, I know how to facilitate a group.

Respondent B: Umm, I would say yes and no. I would say yes because we have learned about group counseling, umm, ummm, different theories, and different theorists views, umm you know, somethings I think depends on where they are, where that particular person is, ummm, and my no would be for me as in the mental health aspect of it. They really have not geared anything toward that in the program, but with me coming from a mental health background, it gives me the upper hand I’d say because a lot of that stuff I already know towards that end. I would say just from interning and watching my site supervisor, she never really dealt with those issues. It was more so that she would just try to refer them out. She would have a conversation with them and then just send out a referral, I never saw go into any depth with a student.

Respondent C: Yes, I feel like I am very prepared to deal with those issues because in my class we talked about the 504 plan and then I sat in the meeting at my internship I was able to relate to the counselor and basically break down things due to the knowledge I learned and such as technology and cyberbully. I am prepared for that as well because we had an incident that I had to put into play and I just used the information from (*) and my internship to resolve the different issues. I just felt like the information, practicum, and internship at (*) is very beneficial and if it's
something I have a question about then like my teachers, advisors, and everyone will help me through the journey to get to where the journey goes.

**Respondent D:** Yes, the program stresses advocacy with the changing roles for our students and ourselves. So with the changing roles we have been conditioned to be flexible and meet the needs of our students while maintaining selfcare throughout the process. What I've gotten from the program, I'd be well prepared to go through the many different changes and roles as school counselors wear many different hats...for our students.

**Respondent E:** With the technology component, yes and no, I would say yes, because if a student has a disability and a 504 plan and needs technology then yes, because we discussed that in class and the importance of those. But I would say no that's not something I've seen in a 504 plan like using technology, no I don't feel prepared. For the individual and group counseling, I'd say I do feel prepared to deal with that. We had a class just for group and in my field experience I've observed a session and then run a session while being supervised. So I do feel comfortable with that, but I do know that it will be different with doing it on my own. No I don't feel prepared with the mental health issues, because with most counselors, or the ones I've spoken to, they refer out to outside agencies for any mental health issues. So I've never even seen an instance of how that work, I know it's important in schools and should be discussed, but I haven't had the privilege to be in a school and see how it works with a school counselor. Or even seeing a school counselor with a student and working with them on a mental health issue, no I haven't been able to see how that works. Academic supports - I do feel comfortable with that because that is what a lot of counselors say that do a lot. It usually pretty big in high school but I know some middle and elementary schools do it too. So I do feel comfortable with that. It's just the mental health issues that I don't think I'm prepared to address.

**Respondent F:** Again the program is very intentional about staying up to date and keeping abreast on all of the standards and being compliant with CACREP the accrediting body that they are under. So our classes reflect and our teachers always communicate that the shift with school counselors and I believe that we are being trained for the new direction that school counselors are headed in.
Question 6: Research suggests that school counselor’s roles are changing to include four specific areas – technology use counseling for assistive use and/or cyberbullying, individual/group counseling sessions during the school day, academic interventions, and assessing mental health issues. How well do you feel prepared to be effective as a school counselor with these changing roles?

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**Qualitative Responses: Question 7**

Question 7: Are there any other comments that you would like included in this study about the student’s perspective of the school counseling program’s effectiveness?

*Respondent A*: The program is very effective, but the person has to do the work. The professors go out their way to make sure students are successful.

*Respondent B*: Ummm, yes the teacher’s should really start teaching more of the information on the NCE because while studying for the NCE I recognize that there are a lot of things that were not taught and I’m having to learn them all at the end of the program on my own. And I know that programs can’t possibly cover every single thing, but I think that the curriculum or, guidelines can be based up on teaching us things that’s gonna help more towards the end for these test, like, versus learning about more of these things at the end that you’ve never been taught.

*Respondent C*: No

*Respondent D*: No

*Respondent E*: No, I don't have additional comments

*Respondent F*: Yes, I do want to add something. As I mentioned in one of the earlier questions, I think this program in particular is experimenting with the courses as far as in the field. I have researched some other institutions and their school counseling programs, and the emphasis they they have placed. Because every school has different emphasises and approaches. And I think that for this program in particular, no matter if you start earlier or later, what I can say is that the information is definitely there. The professional identity is definitely taught, I think that is the biggest thing. You won't learn everything that you need to know, even as a practicing school counselor as in with any profession. But I think they put the nail on the head with this program, especially in this program with identifying what the role of school counselor is suppose to look like, thanks to the professors and the chair.
### Qualitative Responses Analysis – Question 7

**Question 7:** Are there any other comments that you would like included in this study about the student’s perspective of the school counseling program’s effectiveness?

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# APPENDIX E

## Summary of Respondents from Urban School Districts

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<th>District</th>
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APPENDIX F

Survey Questions

Demographics

o Identifying object or number ____________________________________________
o Race _________________________
o Gender ______________________
o Age _________________________
o School Counseling field experience district/system _______________________

Please write the number of your answers using the scale on the line for each question.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

_____ 1. The School Counseling faculty creates learning experiences that do//will apply to my career in school counseling.

_____ 2. The School Counseling program is adequately preparing me to serve in a school counseling setting.

_____ 3. The School Counseling program is adequately preparing me to serve in a community counseling setting.

_____ 4. The School Counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling local school district expectations.

_____ 5. The School Counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling State expectations.
6. The School Counseling program provides opportunities to gain experience addressing the school counseling national expectations.

7. The School Counseling program is disconnected from the real world expectations.

8. The School Counseling program promotes a collaborative learning environment, allowing me to share ideas and learn together with other students.

9. The School Counseling program prepared me to assess and/or service students with mental health issues.

10. The School Counseling program prepared me to provide academic supports including all of the following: social support, mentoring, personal and social skill development, parental involvement, and instructional interventions.

11. The School Counseling program prepared me to provide technology assistance for academic, social, and emotional services that may assist students with issues ranging from cyberbullying to alternative communication skills.

12. The School Counseling program prepared me to advocate and service students with individual and group counseling needs in the school.

Adopted from Jalynn Roberts, Debra Gentry, Amy Townsend (University of Southern Mississippi) Journal of Case Studies in Education
Descriptive Statistics for Academic and Career Preparation

Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the Clark Atlanta University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Chair, Dr. Paul I. Musey at (404) 880-6829 or pmusey@cau.edu.
REFERENCES


