March 3, 2009

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan  
President  
Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan:

In the process of completing our readiness audit for the compliance certification report, we realized that we had not notified the Commission on Colleges about an increase in the length of two emphases or specialty areas within the Master of Science (MS) degree program in Counseling in fall 2008. We regret the delay in notification.

The MS degree in Counseling is offered through the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology in the College of Education. All programs in the department are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), including the master's programs in Community Counseling, School Counseling, and Marriage and Family Counseling, and the PhD program in Counselor Education. The accreditation runs through October 31, 2012.

Prior to fall 2008, students in the Community Counseling and the School Counseling emphases within the master's degree were required to complete 48 semester credit hours. Completion of the Marriage and Family Counseling emphasis required 60 semester credit hours. These requirements were consistent with CACREP's 2001 standards.

In July 2008, CACREP adopted revised standards for counseling programs. The new 2009 standards will go into effect on July 1, 2009, and will remain in effect through June 30, 2016. Under the new standards, the Community Counseling and Mental Health Counseling specialty areas will merge into the Clinical Mental Health Counseling specialty area.

The 2009 standards document states:

Beginning July 1, 2009, all applicant programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling must require a minimum of 54 semester credit hours or 81 quarter credit hours for all students. As of July 1, 2013, all applicant programs in Clinical Mental Health Counseling must require a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours for all students.

In the fall 2008 edition of the newsletter The CACREP Connection, Robert Urofsky, Director of Accreditation, discussed the topic of transitioning to the 2009 standards. He stated:

The transition of Community Counseling and Mental Health Counseling programs to Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs will occur through a phased implementation based upon when application for accreditation or reaccreditation occurs... Programs are considered applicant programs in relation to
the [semester credit hour] requirements stated above when they apply for reaccreditation under the new standards.

... Programs will need to work toward meeting the standards as they progress toward reaccreditation. The changes associated with the transition from the Community Counseling standards to the Clinical Mental Health Counseling standards are additive in nature. Therefore, programs may begin to make necessary changes at any point during their current accreditation cycle without submitting a substantive change report.

Based on the publicized proposed revisions in the accreditation standards, the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology promptly began the transition process. Following campus approvals, the department increased the length of the emphasis formerly named Community Counseling to 60 semester credit hours. The length of the School Counseling emphasis was also increased to 60 hours, reflecting a national movement to change all counseling program requirements to 60 hours. Many institutions have 60 hour programs in counseling including Texas State University and the University of Colorado at Denver.

The increase to 60 hours for Community Counseling and School Counseling was approved by the Curriculum Coordinating Committee of the College of Education and by the university Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, and Provost, as part of the approval process for curricular changes in the 2008-2009 Graduate Catalog. (Marriage and Family Counseling was already a 60-hour program.) A proposal to change the name of the Community Counseling emphasis to Clinical Mental Health Counseling did not receive complete approval at that time. Instead, the name Mental Health Counseling was approved for the 2008-2009 catalog. A proposal to transition to the name Clinical Mental Health Counseling is progressing through the approval process for the 2009-2010 Graduate Catalog.

If additional information is needed regarding the above changes, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Elavitus C. Killebrew
President/CEO

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cc: Dr. Anantha Babbili
Dr. David Billeaux
Dr. Jack Cassidy
Dr. Ted Guffy
Dr. Arthur Hernandez
Dr. Robert Nelsen
Ms. Christine Shupala
Dr. Robert Smith

bcc: Ms Kathy Winston