



# CACREP Guiding Statement

## Guiding Statement on Certification/Licensure Only Programs

### **Suggested Best Practices when CACREP-accredited Programs Offer Certification or Licensure Options to Master's Degree Graduates**

CACREP believes that its Standards for Accreditation represent entry-level preparation criteria for its various specialized practice areas (e.g., School Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling). CACREP also recognizes that graduates of one CACREP accredited specialized practice area may at some point in their career decide to seek licensure or certification in a specialization of counseling for which they have not been trained. For example, a state certified school counselor may decide to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or conversely an LPC may decide to seek certification as a School Counselor. In these cases, the state may require the graduate to take additional coursework or complete a supervised internship in a work setting appropriate to the credential they are seeking before the new license or credential is awarded. To assist with these state mandated requirements, CACREP accredited programs often choose to offer non-degree options to students seeking to satisfy the state's requirements. CACREP refers to these non-degree options as licensure- or certification-only programs.

CACREP does not accredit these non-degree options; however, CACREP believes that institutions and programs should consider whether offering such options 1) impacts the quality of their currently accredited programs, and 2) reflects the same philosophy of excellence in entry-level preparation as required in the CACREP accredited master's degree program areas. For these reasons, the CACREP Board encourages consideration of the following items:

#### **Faculty to Student Ratios**

Students enrolled in the licensure- and certification-only programs must be factored into the full-time equivalent (FTE) student to FTE faculty ratio for the accredited programs, since there are resource demands associated with higher enrollments. High enrollments in the non-degree licensure- and certification-only program options could result in not meeting CACREP Standards.

#### **Accepting Students into the Program**

Completion of a licensure- or certification-only program cannot be considered an adequate substitute for the development of counseling knowledge, skills and practices required in each of CACREP's master's degree specialized practice areas. Therefore, when programs admit students

into a licensure- or certification-only program option, the program should consider only accepting into these options students who have previously completed a master's degree in counseling that meets CACREP's entry-level program requirements.

### **Requirements and Procedures**

Program faculty should structure the requirements for completing the licensure-or certification-only programs to meet, at a minimum, the established criteria for obtaining the credential offered within the state. In some cases, these requirements may be less than what CACREP requires in its accreditation standards and in some cases these requirements may exceed CACREP's requirements. In those cases where the state's requirements are less than CACREP's entry-level criteria for master's degree programs, CACREP strongly urges using the CACREP Standards as the baseline for the program's requirements. In addition, programs should clearly explain their requirements in all program materials made available to prospective students.

### **Supervised Clinical Experiences**

If the student enrolled in the licensure- or certification-only program has not completed an internship in a setting applicable to the credential being sought or with a similar client population (e.g., school, agency, children, families), the program must require a supervised clinical experience as part of the curriculum. Although the length and requirements of the supervised clinical experience is at the discretion of the program faculty, these decisions should be based on sound educational practices. CACREP recommends completion of a minimum 600 clock hour experience under appropriate supervision.

### **Endorsements**

Program faculty should develop policies for endorsement that fairly and accurately recognize the curricular requirements completed by all students, whether they are completing a master's degree programs or one of the certification or licensure-only programs. Such policies should take into account endorsement for credentials (e.g., state licensure, state certification) and endorsements for specific counseling positions. The policies should provide faculty with the freedom to verify degree completion, as well as to endorse students and graduates for employment as counselors in the areas for which the student has completed appropriate curricular requirements. Students in all programs should be fully informed of the program's endorsement policies and procedures.